UNIVERSITAT DE
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Poetry as an act of linguistic activism in exile: The case of the *Inzikh* movement and the "choice" of the Yiddish language

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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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GOLDA VAN DER MEER
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In the loving memory of my father, who introduced me to the world of Yiddish.

To my late beloved husband, who inspired me to go beyond the imaginable.

And dedicated with heartfelt gratitude and admiration to my mother, for her strength, her generosity, and her encouragement during this whole process.

"We sit on soft cushions and talk
About eternity, death, and grammar"

- Jacob Glatstein

ABSTRACT

When the naturalness of territory has disappeared, a minority language can only strive to exist in the poem. This dissertation examines how historical factors can modify the relationship of the poet with language identity and how poetry can be employed as a political tool to preserve minority languages in a world undergoing globalization. Multilingual poets in exile, concerned with constructing a new self via language, whether that is a language of the country of former residence or the language of the new country, are faced with the dilemma of language 'choice': they can either (re)connect with their heritage or give in to assimilation. The 'choice' of language assumes a new meaning. For many of the poets choosing Yiddish, a language considered a minority language or even a 'dying' language by some, implied an act of resistance. The avant-garde poetic movement *Inzikh,* founded in New York during the interwar period, presents a unique case, as for the *Inzikh* poets behind the movement, their campaign to transform the Yiddish language went beyond the need to turn old connotations into new, modern ones. For them, the modernization of Yiddish was the only possible way for the language to persist in exile and take its rightful place in the American literary world. Via their avant-garde poetry and by the transformation of the language a new Yiddish emerged, Yiddish went from being considered a *mameloshn* (mother language) to a *liderloshn* (poetic language). After the destruction of the Jewish towns in Europe after WWII, the Yiddish language, considered as the language of diaspora par excellence, was forced to move from existing in a national diasporic space to a poetic space. Finally, this study will demonstrate how the 'choice' of Yiddish for the *Inzikh* poets was transformed from an aesthetic determination to a political urgency when they realized how the future of Yiddish would only be possible in the utopian *Yiddishland* of the poetic text. The Yiddish poets, aware of how "when a language dies, a possible world dies with it" (Steiner, 1998: xiv) restored the poem as a redemptive act—the poem being understood as the only possible *home* for the Yiddish language in exile.

Keywords: Yiddish; exile; minority languages; poetry; Inzikh; linguistic resistance; interwar period; modernism.

RESUMEN

Cuando la naturalidad del territorio ha desaparecido, solo en el poema puede una lengua minoritaria luchar por subsistir. Esta tesis examina cómo los factores históricos pueden modificar la relación con la identidad lingüística y cómo la poesía puede emplearse como herramienta política para preservar las lenguas minoritarias en un mundo globalizado. Los poetas multilingües en el exilio, preocupados por construir un nuevo yo a través del lenguaje, se encuentran con el dilema de la elección de la lengua, en el que pueden reconectarse con su herencia o ceder a la asimilación. La elección de una lengua implica un nuevo significado, y para muchos poetas elegir el yiddish, una lengua considerada minoritaria y para algunos, incluso una lengua muerta, implicaba un acto de resistencia.

El movimiento poético de vanguardia *Inzikh*, fundado en Nueva York durante el período de entreguerras, representa un caso único ya que es más que un movimiento poético. Su transformación de la lengua yiddish fue más allá de la necesidad de convertir una connotación añeja en una nueva y moderna. La modernización de la lengua yiddish era la única forma posible -estos poetas creían- para que esta lengua persistiera en el exilio y ocupara su lugar en el mundo literario estadounidense. La poesía yiddish ya no se dirigiría solo a los lectores de yiddish, sino a los lectores de todo el mundo, ya que los poetas *Inzikh* entendían su obra en las líneas de la literatura universal. A través de su poesía de vanguardia y a través de la transformación del lenguaje poético, se avecinaba un nuevo yiddish: el yiddish pasó de ser *mameloshn* (lengua materna) a *liderloshn* (lengua poética). La lengua yiddish, que en sus inicios fue una lengua vernácula para los judíos en Europa del Este, pronto comenzó a perder su funcionalidad debido a los trágicos eventos de la Segunda Guerra Mundial que presagiaron su desaparición. Desde principios del siglo veinte, el exilio también marcó una nueva tragedia para el yiddish, ya que la asimilación a otras lenguas, como el inglés, perjudicó su uso/difusión. La lengua yiddish, considerada como la lengua de la diáspora por excelencia, pasaría de existir en un espacio diaspórico nacional a un espacio poético.

En este estudio se muestran las diferentes vías que los poetas *Inzikh* utilizaron para salvaguardar la lengua yiddish a través de varios actos de resistencia relacionados con la traducción. Primero, el acto de traducir obras universales al yiddish no solo se empleó como una recreación literaria, sino principalmente como un medio de resistencia para preservar la lengua yiddish. Este tipo

de práctica de traducción a una lengua minoritaria reforzó no solo la elección de escribir en yiddish, sino que también transformó e innovó la lengua yiddish misma.

Otro tipo de resistencia lingüística fue la resistencia a ser traducidos. A través de juegos estilísticos y de la invención de nuevas palabras, emulando a su vez a otros escritores modernistas como James Joyce, estos poetas consiguieron que traducir su obra fuera prácticamente imposible. Por otro lado, y como decía la poeta yiddish Rosenfarb, la traducción era una forma de "arrebatar de las fauces del olvido lo que está en peligro de desaparecer" (2019, 189). Entre la contradicción y la responsabilidad de estas traducciones radicó entonces en lo que se tradujo de la literatura yiddish. Este nuevo *tour de force* desafiaría la elección de los poetas *Inzikh* de escribir en yiddish como único acto de resistencia, siendo las traducciones, entonces, una de las principales tareas para preservar la cultura yiddish.

Para finalizar, este estudio demostrará cómo la elección del yiddish como lengua literaria por parte de los poetas *Inzikh* pasó de ser una determinación estética a ser una urgencia política cuando se dieron cuenta de que el futuro del yiddish solo sería posible en el utópico *yiddishland* del texto poético, debido a la desaparición, no solo de sus lugares de origen, sino también de muchos de sus lectores después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Los poetas yiddish, conscientes de cómo "cuando una lengua muere, un mundo posible muere con ella" (Steiner, 1998: xiv) restauraron el poema como un acto redentor, entendiendo el poema como el único hogar posible para la lengua yiddish en el exilio.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I - Introduction: objectives, methodology and state of the art

> "The sign of exile is the transformation in one´s relation to language:
> exile denaturalizes the mother tongue"
> - Barbara Cassin

Ber Borokhov, a pioneer in the study of the Yiddish language, in writing his pivotal text "The Tasks of Yiddish Philology" in 1913 defended the premise of how the literary world can keep a language from its extinction. Following Borokhov's premise, I will explore how a poetical act can become an act of political revindication for the defense of a threatened language. I will use the case of the Yiddish language that found its 'home' in exile in the realm of poetry during the interwar period (1920s-1940s). The aim of this thesis is to explore and discuss how poetry is used as a political tool to preserve minority languages in a globalizing world, and how writing in Yiddish shifted from a poetical choice to a call of duty towards the Jewish community. My understanding is that the poetical movement that embodied that idea of how a language can become an active element through a work of literature was the *Inzikh* movement, a poetical movement that emerged in exile in the city of New York in the 1920s. This movement took the Yiddish language beyond its previous conceptual and aesthetic boundaries and transformed it into something new.

In this Chapter I will firstly, discuss the thesis' objectives and then offer a brief account of the personal reasons that prompted this research project. I will then provide an outline of the context and the major elements comprising this thesis and continue with my thesis structure. I will conclude this Chapter with a few introductory notes to provide context about the *Inzikh* movement and the concept of exile in Jewish literature.

a. Objectives

Over the course of this study, I will sought to accomplish a number of interrelated objectives: (1) to trace modern Yiddish poetry, using the *Inzikh* movement as a representative, in order to explore how exile can modify the relationship between a poet and their mother tongue, (2) to

demonstrate how poetry can become a political tool for the preservation of minority languages and (3) to show how the efforts of the *Inzikh* poetic movement led not only to innovations in Yiddish poetic modernism but foremost to the fight for the survival of the Yiddish language.

In this work, I will discuss the avant-garde poetic movement called the *Inzikh* movement as it exemplifies how the poets, while striving for international recognition, resisted linguistic assimilation. The *Inzikh* poets even resisted having their work translated as they felt these acts would be a betrayal towards the fight for the Yiddish language. This study hopes to shed some light towards the contribution that these avant-garde Yiddish poets made to the Yiddish language. A contribution, I maintain, that goes beyond any aesthetic aspiration to build on a language, since, as Glatstein, one of the founders of the *Inzikh* movement, claimed was a language for always not just for a while. In exile, Yiddish had to prevail against assimilation. While Yiddishists and linguists (such as Chaim Zhitlovsky, Max Weinreich and Uriel Weinreich) were building schools for teaching Yiddish and writing grammar books and dictionaries in Yiddish, the Introspectivists sought to achieve that prevalence of the language through their poetry. The exploration of the field of poetry as an element of language activism in the thesis does not invalidate the activism of these Yiddish linguists, who played a major role in the renovation and modernization of the Yiddish language. The aim of the thesis, however, is to demonstrate how the exilic experience can condition the 'choice' of a language for a writer, in this case, the Yiddish poets, and demonstrate how poetry can become a realm for the survival of a minority language. This relation of exile and the 'choice' of Yiddish has not yet been explored in academia and the *Inzikh* poets have not yet been acknowledged for the contributions they made to the Yiddish language. This former aspect will be explored in the thesis.

The founders of the *Inzikh* movement were all exiles from Europe. In arriving in New York at the beginning of the twentieth century, their experience was rather different than the one their predecessors had had. The Sweatshop poets (1890s-1900s), considered the first Yiddish poets in America, reflected the struggles and strains of their working condition in the sweatshops of New York in their poetry. *Di Yunge,* an American Yiddish poetic movement formed in 1907, with their eyes set on Europe, had also encountered labor hardships, finding themselves to work as shoemakers or painting walls. The *Inzikh* poets (1920-1940) experienced a better living situation, as they were able to attend American colleges to study law or literature. These improved exilic living conditions would help them approach poetry in a very different way.

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Studying in American universities also meant that their literary influences would no longer come just from Europe but would come foremost from American writers. This new cultural assimilation while writing in Yiddish is what makes this movement different from the rest. It is also the only Yiddish poetic movement that experienced a drastic change in their journal in seeing the demise of Yiddish readers due mainly to the Holocaust. This, in turn, is what makes the *Inzikh* a particularly interesting movement for my study, as this movement experienced the devastating effects against the Yiddish language. The result of seeing these effects made them decide to continue writing and defending the Yiddish language more determinedly than ever before. They were poets with a compromise, the compromise to write avant-garde poetry in Yiddish in order to bring Yiddish poetry to the world.

The ways the *Inzikh* poets strove to bring Yiddish to the world will be explored in the thesis. This study will sought to demonstrate that in order for a minority language to persist in exile, different strategies of linguistic resistance are necessary. Those were not only the innovations of the Yiddish language to equate Yiddish to any other modern language, but also translating works of world literature into Yiddish. Despite all these strategies, fate will be a key factor in the role a minority language performs in exile. In the last part of the thesis, the role that the historical factors in Jewish history played in the evolution of the Yiddish language and the *Inzikh* movement, will be explored. Due to these historical factors, the writers of the *Inzikh* journal as well as their work underwent a transformation while adapting to the changing times, having Yiddish always, as one of their main concerns.

b. Incentives and rationale for the research project and the wider context for the thesis

The reasons I chose to write about the Yiddish language are various. Being raised in a multilingual household made the 'choice' of a language a literary adventure. In order for me to read the books in my father's library (written in German, Dutch, French, Spanish, Catalan, etc.) I would first have to acquire the language the books were written in. Although Catalan and Spanish came more naturally, having been raised in Barcelona, I quickly turned to the books of Yiddish stories written in English. The first thing I wanted to search for in these books was my name, as my father had told me he had gotten it from a Yiddish story. After years of reading Yiddish literature in English I became more interested in the language as well. That is when I decided to learn Yiddish. In learning Yiddish, I was able to have access to a world of literature

I did not have before and at the same time, became aware of the importance and relevance of having chosen to learn Yiddish. The implication and responsibility that the learning of a minority language entailed is something I became aware of later. The 'choice' of Yiddish was important then, but it is also relevant and necessary today.

I find it important to note here the reason why this thesis is written in English. English is not my father's nor my mother's tongue. I first considered writing the thesis in Spanish, one of the languages I spoke at home, along with Catalan, my mother tongue. I considered this when I translated the poems from Yiddish into Spanish in the process of reading the *Inzikh* poetry in order to get a closer reading. Translating the poems helped me engage in a dialogue with their poetry and got a better understanding of their style, rhythm and choice of words. Even when Spanish was used in the process of interpreting the work of the *Inzikh* poets, English was still more suitable for writing the thesis for reasons I will explain in the following section. The work of translating Yiddish poetry into Spanish will be considered for future research.

I had also planned to write a Chapter of the thesis in Yiddish in accordance with the *Inzikh* poets' fight and defense for the Yiddish language. I felt that the best way to write about the defense of the Yiddish language was by writing in that same language the poets wanted to preserve. It would support the *Inzikh* poets' aim of a minority language being best represented/saved when there are written works in that language. But after writing Chapter Four, related to translation and the reception of their work by the anglophone reader, my aim in the language 'choice' of the thesis came into a contradiction. The 'choice' of writing the thesis entirely in English was in order to demonstrate how many more studies and translations of the work of American Yiddish poets are needed in English in order for the anglophone reader to appreciate a poetry that despite being written in a foreign language, like Yiddish is to them, it was created in America. Exploring the work of the *Inzikh* poets in English is also in the hopes that their work can be considered by anglophone scholars and maybe even included in American poetry anthologies[1].

During the writing of my master's thesis on the rabbi Nachman of Bratslav (1772-1810), who is considered the first modern Yiddish writer (Roskies 1996) and whose stories influenced

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[1] The debate of whether an author should be considered in an anthology in accordance with its language, country of residence or nationality is briefly explored at the end of Chapter Four of the thesis.

many modern Yiddish writers, I was attracted to two main aspects of his stories: firstly, the theme of exile and secondly, the 'choice' of the Yiddish language. In Bratslav's stories, published both in Yiddish and in Hebrew, the Yiddish narrative establishes the foundation of modern Yiddish literature. The characters, condemned to exile, transmit their experiences in Yiddish, just as Bratslav did with his disciples when telling his stories. Bratslav restored the Yiddish narrative after his renowned announcement that "the time has come for me to begin to tell stories" (*ikh vel shoyn onheybn mayses dersteyen*). With this action, a new Chapter begins in the history of Yiddish literature marked by the relationship between exile and the 'choice' of Yiddish.

These two themes have become the core of what I am exploring in this thesis. During my years of Yiddish research, when I was asked about Yiddish it was commonly in relation to some anecdote that reduced the language to a cliché. For a language to be alive, and not just a language of the past, one must keep building and contributing with new aspects of it. As Klepfisz states "the survival of Yiddish and its culture does not rest on our ability to find the right term for "corn flakes" or "jet lag"; but rather on our ability to find a proper place for *yidishe kultur* in our lives, a place among other commitments" (2001: 46). This commitment of finding a proper place for a minority language, that can also be related to other minority languages (such as Gaelic, Catalan, and Lemko), is what this thesis strives for.

The significance of this commitment, of this 'choice' cannot be overstated. In no uncertain terms, it was the 'choice' of Yiddish that marked the beginning of modern Yiddish literature. The 'choice' of language for a Jewish author has been a subject of debate for centuries. A Jewish author would debate between choosing the language of the country they were residing in (Russian, Polish, German) or writing in Yiddish. But the most heated debate would be between choosing Yiddish or Hebrew, the eternal battle of the languages. According to Norich (2010: 779), the divisions between Hebrew and Yiddish have also

> been mapped onto gender, political, economic, and cultural divisions in Jewish communities. Thus, Hebrew is gendered as masculine and patriarchal, Yiddish as feminine and maternal. At least to Soviets and other Communists, Hebrew was the bourgeois language and Yiddish the proletarian language of the (politically and economically redeemable) Jewish people. Hebrew was a sign of the past and then the future, while Yiddish lived in the here and now and then in the past.

Studies such as Brenner (2016) and Seidman (1997) explore the 'language of the wars' between Hebrew and Yiddish but also the bilingual element that many scholars had discussed (Ba'al Makhshoves 1918, Shmuel Niger 1941, Weinreich 1953) and authors had used. Mendele Mocher-Sforim is the most famous example of a bilingual writer, writing in both Hebrew and Yiddish and even incorporating Yiddish expressions in his Hebrew texts. This mutual relationship "has been viewed as an extraliterary symbiosis"[2] (Feldman, 1985: 45). It is because of all the possibilities that a poet faced, that choosing a literary language was beyond the stake of fate or time, beyond historical constraints or exile or the rise of antisemitism in Europe. Hence, choosing a literary language could become a political choice, a nationalistic choice, or a pure aesthetic choice. And precisely this is the crux of my argument, which is being presented in the thesis.

This 'choice' would then reaffirm itself for some writers as a way of resistance and fight for the survival of the Yiddish language when a historical situation (such as exile) threatened it with disappearance. For such writers who wrote as a way of resisting assimilation or for linguistic survival, their entire literary purpose revolved around the idea of 'choice' (Casanova, 2005). As will be seen throughout the thesis, choosing a specific language for artistic writing is not always arbitrary. There are many reasons for this choice: it could be that the writer is more familiar with it, perhaps because it is their mother tongue, or the language taught in school. The chosen language can also be the language of the new country of residence, the language therefore of assimilation. It can be the choice of a dominant language versus a minority language, for the purposes of attracting more readers and for the possibility of translation. It can be a language explored in exile, liberating the poet and the poetic language from the emotional constraints of the mother tongue. It can also be chosen in order for someone to belong to a certain linguistic community or to enter a literary movement or to achieve a certain style. But ultimately, the choice of a specific language can serve as a political act. The choice of writing in a minority language becomes a political statement when the writer sees that this language is under threat of disappearance. Writing in that language therefore becomes an act of defiance against the historical circumstances of place and time.

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[2] Contrary to this "unified system" of Hebrew and Yiddish that Feldman describes, Dan Miron (2010) established how Hebrew and Yiddish were antagonistic in that each language aimed at a different audience.

Furthermore, writing in Yiddish would become a responsibility for writers after witnessing the demise of the language occasioned both by the Nazi destruction of Jewish-language communities and by the State of Israel's nationalist imposition of Hebrew at the expense of diasporic languages[3]. The responsibility to keep Yiddish alive was in the hands of linguists, teachers, translators but also of Yiddish poets. Their poetry, and hence the Yiddish language, would be kept alive by future Yiddish readers. For the *Inzikh* movement, a Yiddish avant-garde poetic movement founded in New York by three young Jewish immigrants (Leyeles, Glatstein and Minkov), the relationship with the Yiddish language went beyond that of any other Yiddish poetic movement of that time (*Sweatshop poets, Di Yunge*). For the *Inzikh* poets, writing in Yiddish was transformed from a poetical choice to a political choice. The thesis will look at this poetic and linguistic journey that moves from the experience of exile and its relation to one's poetic language, to having one's own language as home.

The Yiddish language was spoken by over more than 10 million European Jews in the eve of WWII and it came to be known as the dominant language of the Jews. Several well-known authors of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Yiddish literature, such as Sholem Aleichem (1859-1916) and Mendele Mocher Sforim (1836-1917) who started writing in Hebrew, turned to Yiddish in order to attract more readers. This preference in their 'choice' of language would shift once Yiddish-speaking Jews, fleeing from the rise of antisemitism in Europe, were forced into a "new" exile. Between the years 1880 and 1920 more than two million Jews emigrated to the United States and settled there. Some kept their language while others assimilated into writing in English, translating not only the words bust also the Jewish customs in a way their English readers would understand. Jewish immigrant writers rapidly changed their Yiddish into English, like Mary Antin or Anzia Yezierska, whose novel *Bread Givers* tells the story of coming into the English language. These authors self-translated their work by reconstructing their multilingual past in a new language where nostalgic words, such as their nicknames, would remain untranslated (Wirth-Nesher, 1998: 214). Self-translation became a way to "make the Old World accessible to the New" (ibid).

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[3] According to Levy and Schacter, "The rise of an Israeli national literature in Modern Hebrew occasioned a massive reorganization of the relations among Jewish languages and reoriented Jewish national and cultural politics, obscuring their complex multilingual dynamics. Codifying the Modern Hebrew canon, Israeli literary historiographers also rejected the notion of Hebrew as part of an inherently multilingual field, disparaging Jewish multilingualism as a diasporic phenomenon." (2015: 104). See also Gluzman (2003).

This process of making a home in a new country became a central theme in American Jewish literature. The pivotal question of Jewish immigrants and the possibility of finding their place in America was the subject of Abraham Cahan's novel *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917). Cahan, a pioneering journalist in the Yiddish language and editor-in-chief of the socialist Yiddish newspaper *Forverts* for many decades, made Levinsky, his protagonist, the symbol of immigrants. The novel, written in English, is not just a simple triumph story but also a process of Americanization. The rapid linguistic assimilation that characterized the literature of immigrants earlier in the twentieth century, according to Wirth-Nesher (1998: 215) contrasts sharply with the recognition among later generations that translation entailed loss.

In opposition to linguistic assimilation, New York became the center of the Yiddish-American universe. In the streets of New York, Jewish immigrants shaped their lives in Yiddish with radio stations, schools, cultural centers, and literary cafes considered the *mokem koydesh* (holy place) (Howe, 1989). Jewish immigrants created theaters, another vital space where plays were staged in Yiddish. But, without a doubt, the most important cultural space was the Yiddish press. Between 1885 and 1914, more than 150 daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and yearly magazines and newspapers appeared. For a time, at the beginning of the 20th century, up to six newspapers competed simultaneously for readers, going from an approximate circulation of 190,000 copies in 1905 to 525,000 in 1915 (Sorin, 2020). These newspapers already evoked a new future in their titles: *Dos naye lebn*, (The new life), *Di naye velt* (The new world), or *Di tsukunft* (The future).

By the 1910s the phenomenon of the "little magazine" influenced Yiddish poetic movements to print their artistic credos and poetic works, reacting to the constraints and commercial purposes of the press. These modernist Yiddish poets had managed to bring with them from Europe glimpses of the past, but the new metropolis forced them to look forward into creating avant-garde literary movements comparable to the avant-garde movements in Europe. Always with an eye to Europe, immigrant Jews tried to adapt to the new world. Although connections were made between the old world and the new, there was a clear break with the intention to progress towards a new literature, feeling free, having reconquered a good part of its tradition, and in due course, radically transforming it. This new tradition in exile was not always rooted in the Yiddish classics. The Jewish modernist poets' forerunners were also R. M. Rilke, W. Faulkner, E. A. Poe, T. S Eliot but above all W. Whitman, whose poetry was translated into Yiddish among many other authors of modern literature.

Jewish immigrants who arrived in New York in the period from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century created new literary movements in Yiddish that ranged from the political to the modernist to the avant-garde. The poetry and prose of Yiddish writers of the 1880s was published primarily in periodicals devoted to ideological persuasion; it was written mainly by semi-intellectuals who considered themselves apostles of political liberation or by workers in sweatshops who fought for dignity of speech (Howe, 1989: 418). This movement, that came to be called the *Sweatshop poets*, the most recognized of these poets being Morris Rosenfeld, was set apart from both world literature and the flowering of Yiddish fiction that had begun in Eastern Europe. In these early years Yiddish literature was "unsophisticated in technique but stormy-voiced, expressing the feelings of the workers and addressing the rising disgruntlement of the Jewish masses as they tried to cope with poverty" (ibid).

In 1907, opposing the *Sweatshop poet's* movement, a new one called *Di Yunge* emerged. What soon made the *Di Yunge* a revolutionary force within Yiddish literature was that they rejected political commitment and denied any obligation to speak for national ideals. The *Di Yunge* poets never felt at home in the United States or used the English language. These young poets turned instead to world literature and, above all, to ideas of aesthetic autonomy and symbolist refinement. Most of them were poor immigrant workers: Mani Leib was a shoemaker, Landau was a house painter, and Leivik hung advertising posters in the street (Howe ,1989: 429). At the time, independent poetry magazines were being formed to free Yiddish writing from commercial pressures and the demands of the editors of larger newspapers. *Di Yunge* did not write about the growing metropolis of New York; nor did they write about the exploited Jewish life they saw in front of their eyes. They dreamed of being pure poets and saw themselves as distant cousins of the great European poets from A. Pushkin to R. M. Rilke. In short, they were considered as Esthetes, their creed being art for art's sake (ibid).

Breaking away from the Yiddish literary tradition and the Yiddish poetic movements mentioned above, the *Inzikh* movement, founded in the 1920s, marks an important turning point. The Yiddish language underwent a great transformation with the aim of creating a new poetic language through its innovations in poetic style. For many of these writers, being part of an avant-garde group allowed them to be faithful to the Yiddish language, while reaching toward a broader and more universal goal. Their objective was to be recognized as forming

part of the canons of universal literature but to be recognized as poets who wrote in the Yiddish language. Ultimately, they considered themselves proletarians of the poetic word who fought for the Yiddish language.

The *Inzikh* poets (also known as Introspectivists[4]) displayed their condition as exiles by way of their 'choice' of language. This contrasted with the *Sweatshop poets* who were more preoccupied with the message than the language itself, since for them Yiddish was the language of the masses, the language that would speak to the Jewish people. The Introspectivists did not use Yiddish as a means to reach the masses. On the contrary, they were conscious of the lack of readers their experimental poetry would have. As Howe astutely observed, "the little magazine depends on the presence of an avant-garde audience, and that the Yiddish writers could not find" (1989: 442).

The *Inzikh* movement assumed the responsibility for taking the Yiddish language a step further, to a "new *yiddishkeyt*[5] ideal". They created a new denominative: American Yiddish literature. Their poetry was influenced by W. Whitman, E. Pound, T.S. Eliot but that did not mean that they were entirely assimilated to the new country. Although their ways could be considered American, their language remained Yiddish. The ways of these *Inzikh* poets also "support the contention made by many contemporary scholars that immigrants to America did not passively assimilate into a pre-existing American culture but took an active role in shaping the way in which American culture developed" (Ponichtera, 2012: 317). The Introspectivists adopted the style, the forms and intrinsic experimentations of the modernist poets in America but decided to do so in Yiddish, the language of the "old" country. The *Inzikh* movement was the only Yiddish poetic movement that accomplished that paradox: the assimilation of the new country's culture with the simultaneous conservation of the Yiddish language's past. In order to avoid the 'anxiety of influence' of their Yiddish past, the *Inzikh* poets sought to modernize the Yiddish language in exile to transform it into something new.

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[4] The poets of this movement will be referred to as Introspectivists and the *Inzikh* poets interchangeably throughout the thesis.

[5] "Jewish character or quality: Jewish way of life: Jewishness" according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary.

c. State of the art: A theoretical foundation of the thesis

The corpus chosen embraces a wide variety of research fields that highlight the themes explored in each Chapter. However, the main material of study that I have used throughout the whole thesis has been the *Inzikh* journal which I had access to in the format of microfilm in the YIVO institute of New York. Due to the bad quality of some of the microfilm examined, not all essays and poems were readable. From the work examined of a journal that ran intermittently for over a period of twenty years, I have chosen the essays and poems that best served as examples for my study.

There are very few studies that discuss the *Inzikh* movement. Scholars that have discussed some aspects about the *Inzikh* movement, such as Ruth Wisse, Dan Miron, Janet Hadda, Yael Feldman and Abraham Novershtern, have focused on the role this movement played in the history of Yiddish literature. Little attention has been given to the effects that the exilic condition had on the *Inzikh* poets and how that condition altered their relationship with the Yiddish language. This is a main concern that I explore in the thesis. Harshav is one of the few scholars who have placed the poetry and poetics of the Introspectivists at the center of Yiddish study. He asserts that the poetry and criticism of the Introspectivists "represent the problems and tensions that have preoccupied Yiddish poetry in all generations" (2007: 6). Harshav also observes that "the centrality of language, the transformation of texts, and the continuous puzzlement over their meaning were at the heart of the Introspectivists impulse" (ibid: 7).

For the purposes of the thesis, I have followed Harshav's steps by introducing the Introspectivist movement to the anglophone reader using his essays and translation of the Introspectivist poetry. As a poet himself, Harshav has written about the contributions the *Inzikh* movement made to the world of Yiddish poetry, specifically with essays regarding free verse and modernism. Harshav, seen as the foreseer of Yiddish modern poetry, writes how "in the early 1950s, when I first published a study on free verse in Yiddish poetry from the perspective of comparative literature, I received an excited letter from the New York Yiddish poet, Leyeles, saying that he had to wait thirty years before someone understood what he had intended to do" (2007: xix). Harshav's achievements in the reevaluation of modern Yiddish poetry and his translations of modern Yiddish poetry into English, together with Barbara Harshav, have brought a body of work that was not available to readers of English before. In his Preface to the *American Yiddish Poetry* anthology (2007) Harshav ventures as far as to list the frustrations

caused by the lack of translations of such "extraterritorial poetry". This lack of translations of a vast number of *Inzikh* poets' work has prompted little attention and few studies about their work.

Zutra and Ponichtera are two of the few scholars who have focused their research on the *Inzikh* movement. Zutra with a dissertation in 2010 and Ponichtera dedicating a whole Chapter to the *Inzikh* movement in her dissertation in 2012. Zutra's dissertation focuses on the development of the *Inzikh* movement during the 1930s, foregrounding the poets who were less represented in the movement. These are what he calls "minor" figures of the movement, taking away the emphasis from the usual duo of Leyeles and Glatstein. Zutra's study proposes an integrative "group portrait" model to "open new critical horizons in the discussion of *Inzikh's* modernism" (2010: 7). Zutra takes away the center from this dualism (Leyeles and Glatstein) and establishes how scholars advocate towards one or the other poet in their discussions of the poets' contribution to modernist Yiddish poetry. Ponichtera, on the other hand, analyzes the Introspectivists' view of the self, by presenting a comparison between the Introspectivists and their contemporaries in modern Yiddish poetry. Ponichtera also presents an overview of the journal.

The two studies mentioned here (Zutra 2010, Ponichtera 2012) have increased the visibility of the *Inzikh* movement. However, Zutra and Ponichtera do not address the contributions the *Inzikh* poets made to the Yiddish language in their fight for its preservation. This omission in the two above studies has also led to a misrepresentation of the *Inzikh* poets' role in the future of the Yiddish language in exile. The exploration and presentation of the *Inzikh* poets' role and contribution is a main concern of the thesis. Although other poets will also be discussed[6] in my study, the focus is on Leyeles and Glatstein. I will argue and demonstrate that Leyeles and Glatstein participated actively in the defense of the Yiddish language before and after the *Inzikh* movement. Leyeles and Glatstein's essays and reflections, published in the *Inzikh* journal, will be used as materials to demonstrate that for them, Yiddish was in need of preservation.

Leyeles has received less attention from academics, except for Harshav who dedicates his study on avant-garde poetry and free verse mainly to Leyeles. Glatstein, on the other hand, has

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[6] A provisional list of Introspectivists is available in Birnboym's article (1972). Birnboym generated a list of 118 poets from those who published in the *Inzikh* journal.

received more attention by academics (Hadda 1980, Novershtern 1986, Zaritt 2015, Wisse 2010). The thesis aims at reestablishing and re-positioning Leyeles as a key figure within the movement in considering how the role he played in the defense of the Yiddish language has not been acknowledged.

In addition, I will explore Leyeles' involvement in publishing the poetry of lesser-known poets in the *Inzikh* journal as well as his role in the attempt to make Yiddish avant-garde poetry by women more visible. This aspect of his role will be explored in Chapters Three and Five. A pertinent example regarding the role of women avant-garde poets is that the first issue of the *Inzikh* journal in 1920 opens with a poem of a women Yiddish poet, Celia Dropkin[7] (1887-1956) titled "My hands" (*mayne hent*)[8], followed right after the "Introspectivist" manifesto,

> My hands, two little bits
> of my body I'm never
> ashamed to show. With fingers—
> the branches of coral,
> fingers—two nests
> of white serpents,
> fingers—the thoughts
> of a nymphomaniac[9].

The role Yiddish women poets had in the *Inzikh* journal has not yet been recognized by scholars. Although there have been studies on Yiddish women poets in general (Hellerstein 2014, Norich 2019, Novershtern 1988), the role they played in the *Inzikh* journal merits further investigation.

In all the writings about the *Inzikh* poets, what prevails are the descriptive characteristics of this movement. The *Inzikh* poets are often described as being exotic, avant-garde, individualist, even revolutionary. Little attention has been given, however, to the impact this movement had on the Yiddish language, beyond its literary contributions. There is the astounding fact that the

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[7] It has been argued that Celia Dropkin did not belong to the *Inzikh* movement, but her poetry did appear in several issues of the journal as did the work of other women poets.

[8] In quoting Yiddish poems, I have for the most part cited both the English translation in the body of text and the original Yiddish version -using the transcriptional system favored by the Institute for Jewish Research (YIVO)- in the footnote to make the reading of the thesis more fluent.

[9] *"mayne hent,/ tsvey shtiklekh fun mayn layb,/ vos ikh shes mikh nit tsu tsagn,/ mit a koraln boym./ mit finger, vi tsvey nestn/ vayse shlangen./ oder...vi gedanken/ fun an erotoman"* (translation into English by Faith Jones, Jennifer Kronovet, and Samuel Solomon, 2014)

Inzikh poets' 'choice' of the Yiddish language as the vehicle for their poetic expression proved how the realm of poetry was as powerful for the fight for the Yiddish language as any other political movement could be. For these poets, the modernization of the Yiddish language in their poetry would prevail as long as there would be Yiddish readers in the generations to come.

The current thesis places the *Inzikh* poetical movement within its historical and political context. The study also highlights the aspect of the 'choice' of a literary language versus other languages and the relation between the poet and the Yiddish language in exile, using the theoretical framework of studies on Jewish exile and language such as Levinson (2008), Norich (2007), Ezrahi (2000), and Wirth-Nesher (2005). I will also be using the works of the poets who participated in the *Inzikh* journal as examples in analyzing the transformation of the *Inzikh* poets' language under the impact of historical events, such as exile and then the Holocaust. I will analyze how the defense of a minority language can alter such aspects as the relation to translation or to the canon formation for writers in exile.

The thesis will also shed some light on multilingual studies and the transnational in Jewish literature. This approach is particularly applicable to the study of minor literatures in broader world-literary contexts (Spivak 1993, Damrosch 2003, Casanova 2005, Apter 2011, 2013, Yildiz 2012, Cassin 2016) which embrace world literature as a "mode of reading" and "illuminate the translingual and cross-cultural circuitry of texts, as well as their reception in new contexts" (Levy and Schacter, 2015: 24–25). According to Levy and Schacter (2015), Jewish literatures have not received serious attention in the study of world literature, with the exception of Damrosch who has presented alternative views on world literature focusing on more peripheral languages including Yiddish (2014). I take this statement further by adding that Yiddish poetry has not received practically any attention in the studies of world literature.

Despite the fact that *Inzikh* poetry was created in the United States, very few American critics or anthologists (Bloom 1971, Sollors 2000) have given any attention to Yiddish poetry. Kronfeld (1996) argues that due to the tendency of Western literary critics to focus on major languages, such as English, German, and French, minor literatures have been narrowly conceived as literatures written by minorities in a major language, rather than including literatures written by majority-culture speakers of minor languages, such as Hebrew and Yiddish.

A crucial aspect for the purpose of this study is the practice of translation into minor languages in what Venuti terms 'linguistic ecology' (2005, 199). This is a concept that cannot be reduced to ethical or political evaluation without considering the historical moment when these translations emerged. The *Inzikh* poets' condition of exile was one of the principal motivations for the vast number of translations made into Yiddish during the publication of the *Inzikh* journal. This is a practice of particular significance which I explore in Chapter Three highlighting the works of Yao (2002), Venuti (2005), Litvine (1991) Boyden (2018), and Davis (2010).

Recent studies (Anselmi 2012, Cordingley 2013, Hokenson and Munson 2006) have started acknowledging self-translation as a study in the field of Translation Studies. Most of these studies center their work on authors who are either bilingual (Nabokov, Brodsky) or have self-translated their work into dominant languages (Conrad). But hardly any studies of self-translation show the phenomenon of authors who self-translate their work from a universal more dominant language into a minor or peripheral language. This second practice is what Castro terms as a self-minorisation process, (2017: 12) which may lead to the (in) visibility of the author's work in what Xosé Manuel Dasilva (2011) has termed "opaque self-translation". To illustrate this practice, I have explored the case of Debora Vogel, a Yiddish poet who contributed to the *Inzikh* journal in the 1930s and who self-translated her work from German and Polish into Yiddish. Vogel's case is presented using the theoretical framework borrowed from the studies of Kronfeld (1996), Torres (2019), Sochańska (2003), Misiak (2008), Szymaniak (2017), Lyubas (2020) and Hellerstein (2014).

Another aspect of equal importance for the thesis, examined by Krynicka (2019), Norich (1995, 200, 2013) and Shreiber (2003) relates to the translations from Yiddish into English explored in Chapter Four. In Yiddish literature one cannot think only of what gets lost and what is found, but the importance relies on what is *saved*. For the *Inzikh* poets what needed to be saved was the Yiddish language. The *Inzikh* poets sought to defy translation as a way of defense for the Yiddish language. In doing so they would defy translations of their work into English as an act of linguistic resistance (Eaglestone 2005, Casanova 2005, Bermann 2005). Several studies in recent years (Apter 2011, 2013, Cassin 2014) have accounted for the importance in exploring the untranslatable.

Translation constitutes the recognition of a new author or a new work and the Yiddish archives have yet many works and authors that have not been translated and which remain to this day unknown to the non-Yiddish reader. Thus, canon formation is constantly changing in minority languages as every new translation reveals new works that had been left to oblivion. Canons are a way to transmit a shared inheritance but have also been subject to controversy. Some significant questions on this score include: What authors/poems are selected and in what categories do they fall into? What are the "main forces within the system of literary production and consumption that have shaped, and continue to shape the canon"? (Golding, 1995: xvi). A translation of the *Inzikh* anthology, titled *In zikh: a zamlung introspektive lider* (*Inzikh*: A collection of introspective poems) into English has not yet been made but some of the poets of the *Inzikh* movement can be found in the Yiddish poetic landscape represented in various English anthologies, from the interwar period to the present day, explored at the end of Chapter Four.

The *Inzikh* poets were not the only poets who participated in the fight for the Yiddish language. Their ideology and the struggle for the Yiddish language can also be found in other countries, such as Israel (carried out mainly by the Yiddish poet Sutzkever), and in some cities of Eastern Europe. But the *Inzikh* movement is unique in that it was not only founded in New York, the city with one of the biggest populations of Yiddish speaking immigrants in the world, but it was a movement that survived the interwar period (1920-1940). These two decades were a time in history that completely transformed the relation between Jews and their language, particularly after the destruction of the Yiddish-speaking towns in Europe. Two more reasons that transformed the relation between Jews and their language, as it has already been mentioned, are the creation of the state of Israel and the war of languages, where Hebrew was determined to be the language of the state of Israel, thus, demarcating Yiddish as a language that should be forgotten as it carried with it reminiscences of the old world.

The *Inzikh* movement comes to represent a Yiddish poetic movement that experienced the transformation from an aesthetic/linguistic aim to a political/historical actuality. Foremost in the movement was this desire to enter the canons of universal literature. Later, the priority shifts to become a responsibility to narrate its history through the poets' 'choice' of the Yiddish language. There are other Yiddish poets in America that would have been good examples for the thesis, but I have chosen to focus on one literary movement which best embraces the experience of exile and the 'choice' of Yiddish. Glatstein writes how "the Yiddish writers here,

raised Yiddish to the highest heights, as if to protect themselves from shallowness and escape the continuous funeral [...] Yiddish literature in America created language-consciousness, and for a declining generation it created a beautiful linguistic instrument" (Goldsmith, 2009: xiv).

In the following sections, I have included some necessary introductory notes in order to frame the *Inzikh* movement. These notes deal with concepts of exile in Jewish literature and how that historical condition affected the work of the *Inzikh* poets and the *Inzikh* poets' linguistic activism in the field of poetry in order to preserve the Yiddish language for posterity.

d. Ingathering exiles

> "I don't know about other cities, but in Haifa the street called *Kibbutz Galuyot*
> —Ingathering of Exiles—is definitely worthy of the name
> [...] a place not only of beginnings but also of endings."
> -Yenta Mash

Exile, understood as *Goles*, represented a physical exile and a religious exile in the Jewish tradition. According to Finkin, "in the traditional Jewish understanding, exile was a spiritual condition plotted on a temporal axis" (2017: 13). Modernized Jews saw exile not as an atemporal ailment but as a spatial one (ibid). This exile was an opposition to two major political movements in the Jewish culture in Europe: on the one hand there was Zionism, which understood Israel as returning "Home" and establishing Hebrew as the official language while disregarding Yiddish. On the other hand, there was Territorialism, a movement advocated by those who believed in a Jewish homeland where Yiddish would be the national language and Bundism a socialist political movement committed to the *here* and *now* of the Jewish life and the Yiddish culture in Europe. This was also known as Diasporic nationalism, in which the Jews of Europe understood their state as being stateless, with the aim that cultural autonomy and national self-determination could be maintained wherever they lived.

In opposition to the Jewish historical circumstances, the concept of exile has also been seen by modernists authors, such as Joyce and Pound, as a way of liberating oneself from a nationalist ideology. Thus, exile has been presented "as a vehicle for individuality, freedom, and

resistance" (Gluzman, 1998: 231) and at the same time "exile turns out to be not only a mode of life but also a form of art" (ibid: 233). Major critics, such as George Steiner, Raymond Williams, and Hugh Kenner, "describe exile almost as a necessary condition for membership in international modernism" (ibid: 234). For Steiner, modernism is an art of "extraterritoriality" as "exile is the defining characteristic of modernism at large" (ibid).

According to Gluzman, exile for Joyce[10] becomes a "creative choice." Pound also saw exile as a necessary vehicle for artistic freedom and renovation. He asserted that "if you have any vital interest in art you sooner or later leave the country" (1973: 122). And Gertrude Stein understood exile as a precondition for writing. The exile these artists experienced is one selected by choice. The significant difference between writers such as Joyce, Pound and Stein and the Jewish writers leaving Europe and immigrating to America was that exile was a condition they found themselves in not as much by choice but by fate. The historical circumstances of the growing anti-Semitism in Europe made exile necessary for these writers. Still, Yiddish poets managed to also view their exile as an opportunity to liberate themselves from the constraints of their Yiddish tradition. As Wisse (1989: 23) states,

> American Yiddish writers experienced the adventure of separation from the homeland of Yiddish with a combined sense of freedom and exile; they had more opportunity than Yiddish poets elsewhere to live and to write as they wished, but they had also to witness the very rapid acculturation of local Jewry at the expense of the Yiddish vernacular.

The *Inzikh* poets, exiled in New York, to some extent identified with modernist authors in seeing their exile as a way of "escaping the singularity of one culture into the multiplicity of all" (Gluzman, 1998: 231). Exile embodied the possibility of escaping tradition and entering the realm of cosmopolitanism. By defying their homeland, the *Inzikh* poets sought to express a sense of individualistic and artistic freedom. The events of WWII would change their condition of exile to an exile of no return or what Schwarz terms as "irreversible exile" (2005: 6). This turn of historic events would mark a change in the *Inzikh* journal where the poets' work would gradually shift from the poetic to the political. This is an intriguing aspect which will be explored in Chapter Five of this thesis.

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[10] For further discussion on Joyce and exile see Cawelti, John G. "Eliot, Joyce, and exile" (2001).

The impossibility of return can best be summarized in the popular anecdote where a Jew in a small town in Poland asks another fellow Jew who is ready to leave, "Where are you traveling to?". "America" the other one replies. "So far?" the first person asks only to have the second respond "Far from where?". This anecdote perfectly summarizes the condition of the stateless situation of the Jews in Europe and reinforces the condition of no return, as the impossibility of returning "Home" was a consequence that historically overlapped the diasporic condition of the Yiddish culture. For the Yiddish poets living in New York, the historical circumstances of the Holocaust and the creation of the state of Israel would redefine their conception of home and return (Ezrahi, 2000). According to Finkin, the notion of return has two forms, "a) a religious form, where homecoming is in effect deferred until the divinely sanctioned Messianic moment; and b) a political form, in which homecoming is conditioned on any number of real-world factors" (2017: 17). The notion of no return is understood by Finkin as the "Exile-Home" model. This is a concept I will apply to the *Inzikh* poets, whose ideologies and poetic activities are explored in the course of the thesis.

What is argued here is that in this "Exile-Home" model, Jewish poets created "little Magazines" of Yiddish poetry as a form of resistance to linguistic assimilation to the new country. This act of resisting to linguistic assimilation was a small but significant literary revolution. For the Introspectivists, the *Inzikh* journal became a reflection of their condition of exile, where amongst poems, poetry criticism, translations of world literature into Yiddish and linguistic reflections, the magazine editors also contributed with their own reflections of the demise of Yiddish in the new country, and the political situation of their times. Articles would range from Charles Baudelaire and Walt Whitman to the rise of Hitler and the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s. According to McCarthey (1972), these magazines were

> very important to exiles, and for literary expatriates they [were] morale-builders. To start a magazine [...] is to start a sort of literary government-in-exile; up to then, you were just expatriates sitting in cafés. For the genuine exile, a magazine in the native language [...] is not only a forum for discussion but also a transmission belt to the home underground.

In the field of scholarship, the concept of exile has had many definitions. For Bauman (1998, 321),

> to be in exile means to be out of place; also, needing to be rather elsewhere; also, not having that "elsewhere" where one would rather be. Thus, exile is a place of compulsory confinement, but also an unreal place, a place that is itself out of place in the order of

things. Anything may happen here, but nothing can be done here. In exile, uncertainty meets freedom. Creation is the issue of that wedlock.

For Seidel "an exile is someone who inhabits one place and remembers or projects the reality of another" (1986: ix). Seidel focuses on literary representations of exile as a narrative action and states how the representation of "exilic experience from narrative place to narrative voice" (1986: xiii). The 'choice' of a literary language explored in this thesis (discussed in Chapter Two) and the different ways of language activism it leads to (explored in Chapters Three, Four and Five) are the focal points of the narrative action. Seidel's study focuses on exiled authors from different countries (Poland, Russia, Ireland, America, England) who have written their work in English. His view of exile, however, offers significant insights into the interpretation of exile for the Yiddish writers in this thesis, since "it is precisely the metaphoric lines that exile plots along both a temporal and a spatial axis that make it so dominant a condition in narrative and so prominent an emblem for the narrative imagination" (Seidel, 1986: 198). Exile then served for the *Inzikh* poets as a narrative action for their linguistic activism.

e. Linguistic activism

> "A guest for a while/ can see for a mile"
> (*a gast oyf a vayl/ zet oyf a mayl*).
> -Yiddish proverb

A language that embodies local strength (such as the language used by Shakespeare, Montaigne and Luther) is what Steiner terms the "untranslatable" identity (1972: 4). Yiddish, a language considered stateless, changed from being in a possible physical space to a cultural space. It was created, as George Steiner said, "Our homeland, the text." Yiddish writers coined that concept by understanding Yiddish culture as a cultural space. Since the naturalness of their territory had disappeared, it was only in the poem that the *Inzikh* poets would see that Yiddish could exist. Despite all efforts for the survival of the Yiddish language, poetical works in Yiddish started to slowly disappear in the sixties and seventies, leaving translation, as Norich points out, as the only realm of existence for Yiddish poetry. What the *Inzikh* poets strove for was to modernize the Yiddish language in order to enter the canons of world literature. At the same time, their wish was to create or find "new" Yiddish readers. The untranslatable works of the *Inzikh* poets, explored in Chapter Four, ponder the paradox in which "Glatstein's reaction was

both utopian and reclusive, proposing a form of writing that encountered the world while simultaneously fleeing from it" (Zaritt, 2015: 176). Apter adds to this paradox as she observes that although translation might "preserve ethnic memory or mitigate cultural amnesia" it can also emerge "as one of many enemies to the continued vitality of living languages" (2011: 4).

The *Inzikh* poets' activism would not come from translating their work but from their eagerness for people to learn Yiddish in order to have Yiddish readers in the future. It is no coincidence that upon arriving in the United States, Leyeles, one of the chief ideologues of the *Inzikh* movement, worked on building Yiddish schools around the United States and collaborated with the *Workmen's Circle*, which is to this day a center for teaching Yiddish language and culture in New York. The Introspectivists also wrote articles in their journal praising the work that the Yiddishist Chaim Zhitlovsky was doing with the Yiddish language. They proclaimed him the knight of the Yiddish language (*Inzikh*, July 1920).

The *Inzikh* poets believed Yiddish was a modern language that should be preserved. On the other hand, the Jewish poets in Israel (Bialik being one of its chief ideologies) wanted to forget Yiddish and promote Hebrew as they believed it to be a language of the Old Europe, a language of the past. In New York there was still a possibility for the preservation of Yiddish but in order to do so, the Yiddish language would have to change. The *Inzikh* poets wanted Yiddish to be part of modernity; they wanted Yiddish to become an international language via avant-garde poetry. Yiddish poetry would then no longer be reserved only for Yiddish readers but would be available to readers around the whole world.

In order to accomplish that, the experience of exile helped in denaturalizing the language from its natural conditions. The language was then instrumentalized—used as a tool—to make Yiddish poetry a place in the literary world. In order to preserve Yiddish, it had to be modern, using literary montage, for example, as a way literature "does politics" in its form and not in its content. The Introspectivists' choice of Yiddish changed from a vehicle of literary creation to a political urgency. Zaritt (2015: 191) states how

> The work that Glatstein and his colleagues produced in the 1930s—some of the most innovative in the history of Yiddish literature [...] Glatstein in particular focused on the incongruities of Yiddish literary speech: how could one speak in the forms and genres of world literature, in particular its most contemporary modernist manifestations, while

both attempting to return to a Jewish vernacular and invent an entirely new Yiddish idiom?

For one of its founders, Glatstein, the *Inzikh* poets should be equated to what Joyce did to the English language. In this aspect Yiddish had to be considered as part of Universal literature and enter the canons of world literature. By the modernization of its language, the Yiddish language would be re-asserted for the years to come.

Throughout its history, there were many factors levelled against the preservation of Yiddish language: the pogroms in Europe, the destruction of the Jews and their culture in the hands of the Nazis, and the creation of the state of Israel that established Hebrew as the official language. Furthermore, Yiddish speakers and many authors who were exiled, assimilated and adapted to new ways by switching from Yiddish to English, leaving the Yiddish language as nothing more than an old relic. The *Inzikh* poets strove to defy that. Not only by their 'choice' of the Yiddish language, explored in the following Chapter, as an act of resistance and struggle for the survival of the Yiddish language, but by opposing the fact that Yiddish was an old relic. Both the Yiddish language and the poems written in Yiddish were to be interpreted in terms of action. Poetry should be understood as a dialogue, as an interaction between the writer and the reader. This way, the ongoing dialogue would help prolong the Yiddish language for years to come, adapting at the same time to its change of scenery, from the *Shtetl* to the streets of New York.

d. Introducing the *Inzikh* poets

The *Inzikh* movement was founded by three young Yiddish poets: A. Leyeles (penname of Aron Glants, 1889-1966), Jacob Glatstein (1896-1971) and Nokhem Borekh Minkov (1893-1958)[11]. The trio wanted to establish a cosmopolitan expression of poetry in the Yiddish language. As a result, the Yiddish language went through a major transformation through their poetical experimentations, as their aim was to create a new poetic language. In the following section, I will first briefly introduce each of the three founding poets of the movement. Then, I

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[11] Full bibliographies of these poets can be found in the *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur,* ed. Shmuel Niger, et al. (New York: Alveltlekhn yidishn kultur-kongres, 1956-1981).

will discuss the dates of publication of the journal, what it consisted of and will end by discussing the main aspects of their manifesto.

Leyeles, born in 1889 in Wloclawek, Poland, played a particularly influential role in the early years of the group's existence. He studied philosophy at the University of London (1905–08) and, after immigrating to New York in 1909, studied literature at Columbia University (1910–13). He was also politically active: in London he became part of the Territorialist movement led by Chaim Zhitlowsky who influenced him greatly upon his arrival in New York in 1909. Leyeles' first writings arose from his political involvement and despite the fact that he turned to avant-garde poetic expression in his more mature years, his political activism was a latent drive throughout his years as a poet. This can also be seen in his translations into Yiddish, as he translated works from E. A. Poe to L. Trotsky.

Glatstein, the youngest member of the Introspectivists, would later become its central voice on the strength of his poetic talent. As Leyeles later wrote, even those critics who opposed the *Inzikh* movement as a whole often made an exception for Glatstein's poetry. "He possessed a unique feel for language, erudition in both Yiddish and world literature, and an emotional honesty that demanded acknowledgement" (Ponichtera, 2012: 52). Glatstein was born in Lublin, Poland in 1896 and immigrated to New York in 1914 due to the rise of anti-Semitism in Lublin. In 1918 he studied Law at the New York University where he met Minkov, who reignited his interest in Yiddish literature. He worked briefly as a journalist in the Yiddish press until 1919, the year he participated in the founding of the *Inzikh* journal.

Minkov was born in Warsaw, Poland in 1893 and emigrated to the United States with the outbreak of WWI. His father was a Hebrew teacher, and his mother came from a family of scholars. Although once in the United States he contemplated a medical career in San Francisco, he ended up studying Law at the New York University where he met Glatstein. Minkov's participation in the *Inzikh* journal was more that of a critic than a poet. His poetry generated less attention than that of his fellow founders, Glatstein and Leyeles. Minkov also worked as a critic and professor of Yiddish literature at the New School for Social Research in New York.

The *Inzikh* journal was modelled after the Anglo-American "little magazine", a term used by the Britannica Encyclopedia for journals devoted to "serious literary writings, usually avant-

garde and non-commercial". The influences for their art came from all around the world. As Harshav (1990: 176) states,

> the Yiddish Introspectivists absorbed the ideas on art that were developed in recent Modernist movements. In their arguments one can find traces of Italian and Russian Futurism, German and Yiddish Expressionism, English Imagism and Vorticism, as well as ideas raised by Nietzsche, Croce, Freud, and T. S. Eliot.

The *Inzikh* journal was a monthly periodical but it was not published consistently. The period of publication can be divided into two phases: from 1920 till 1930 and from 1934 till 1940. There are various reasons the journal was published intermittently, financial reasons being the most predominant. Through the years the journal switched its preference from a cosmopolitan magazine, publishing translations from international literature from Europe, Asia and Anglo-America, to focus more on critical essays on issues pertaining to the Yiddish language and political affairs.

The second phase of publication (1934-1940) was a more mature period during which *Inzikh* was already established as a movement. It was then that many poets joined the journal. It is also during this time that the journal changed its tone into a more political one, showing concern over the global political events of the time, as exemplified by articles published in the journal in a variety of topics that ranged from Walt Whitman to the Spanish Civil War. The April issue of 1934 in fact opens with a political article written by Glatstein titled "For all those in demand of orientation (political/intellectual)" instead of opening with a poem, which was the common practice of previous editions.

It is important to point out that, although the Introspectivists considered themselves a group, they were never a coherent group. Even though some poets, such as Leyeles and Glatstein, did follow the premises of their manifesto at first, one can find poems of different and varied styles throughout their literary career. In the book *Yankev Glatshteyn* (1980), Hadda establishes how Glatstein, for instance, not only did not follow the Introspectivists' norms but moved beyond them through the years. Similarly, the poets who contributed to the *Inzikh* journal were not always considered Introspectivists and the poems selected were not always published because they followed the *Inzikh* style but sometimes for being innovative and original. This can be seen in a section started in the mid- thirties by Leyeles, titled *"Dos lid fun khoydesh"* (The

poem of the month), in which the criteria established for publishing the poems were mainly subjective. Leyeles would choose the poems, not under any Introspectivist criteria but because they caught his attention. Yiddish poets such as Anna Margolin, for instance, while publishing in the *Inzikh* journal also published in other journals, and so were many other poets who believed themselves to be outsiders of the so-called poetic movements.

The name *In zikh[12]* first appeared in an anthology published in 1919 titled *In zikh: a zamlung introspektive lider* (*Inzikh*: A collection of introspective poems) edited by Leyeles, Glatstein and Minkov. The collection was prefaced by a manifesto titled 'Introspectivism'. The manifesto would also be published in a shorter version in the first volume of the *Inzikh* journal published in January 1920. This manifesto would establish the aesthetic convictions of the movement and the *Inzikh* poets' "commitment to renewing Yiddish poetry and making it part of world modernism" (Zutra, 2010: 8). The anthology collected poems by several poets that were representative of the movement, including those of the founders, Leyeles, Glatstein and Minkov, who would become editors of the *Inzikh* Journal.

The Introspectivist manifesto[13], "*Introspektivizm*," begins with the definition of the term that serves as its title. The writers define "the introspective manner" by describing how

> the poet must really listen to his inner voice, observe his internal panorama—kaleidoscopic, contradictory, unclear or confused as it may be. From these sources, he must create poetry which is the result of both the fusion of the poet's soul with the phenomenon he expresses and the individual image, or cluster of images, that he sees within himself at that moment[14].

They expand on their representation as poets by stating that they want "first of all to present life—the true, the sincere, and the precise—as it is mirrored in ourselves, as it merges with us [...] in the shape of association and suggestion."[15]

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[12] The name *Inzikh* was first written in two words*, In zikh*, when it first appeared in their published poetic anthology of 1919 but was then contracted into one word, *Inzikh*, when published in their journal in 1920. *Inzikh* would then become the name of their movement and their contributors would be known as the *Inzikh*ists.

[13] The English translation of the manifesto by Anita Norich was published in Harshav and Harshav's *American Yiddish Poetry* anthology (2007).

[14] Ibid: 775.

[15] Ibid.

This interplay between outer and inner worlds is key to the *Inzikh* poetics. Introspectivist poetry arises from the internalization of an external reality, much like modernist poetry. As Ponichtera (2011: 297-8) notes,

> This bears a resemblance to T. S. Eliot's conception of the "objective correlative," but alters it in important ways. While Eliot defined the objective correlative as "a set of objects, a chain of events which shall be the formula of [a] particular emotion," the Introspectivists focus on the associations which a particular experience evokes in each individual, a set of associations that vary from person to person.

A key element of the Introspectivist aesthetic program was the use of free verse, an innovation in Yiddish literature. Like Walt Whitman, the Introspectivists saw free verse as "best suited to the individuality of the rhythm and of the poem as a whole."[16] Their interest in the individuality of the poet extended to a concern for the individuality of the poem–their aim was that the poem would be able to develop freely, without the constraints of tradition. Many of the Introspectivist poets wrote both rhymed and free verse. In their manifesto they declared how "rhyme is the mystery of life; art which is no more than an expression of life obviously must also have rhythm." They did highlight, however, that above all "each poem must have its individual rhythm."[17]

The aim of the founders of this new Yiddish poetic movement in creating the movement was to further the development of Yiddish literature, by applying avant-garde techniques in their poetical style. At the same time, the *Inzikh* poets' aim was to add the Yiddish voice to the international modernist movement in order to demonstrate that the Yiddish language was more than just part of their cultural heritage: the *Inzikh* poets believed that the Yiddish language should be considered part of a linguistic and cultural World heritage. Yiddish ceases to be a language of immigrants and is now proclaimed a language of universal letters, a language of the world. The Introspectivists are now part of the world, and as individuals they have to claim their position in it as they declare in their manifesto: "The world exists, and we are part of it. For us, however, the world exists only to the extent that it is reflected in us, to the extent that it moves us." [18]

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[16] Ibid:777.
[17] Ibid,
[18] Ibid:774.

The Introspectivists disassociate themselves from their ethnic condition, avoiding Jewish themes or traditional or folk literature. What connects them to Jewishness is the Yiddish language, which becomes no longer just an identity but a political element. Wisse states how "Leyeles and Glatstein identified modern Yiddish culture with political progressiveness, and modern poetry with revolutionary change" (1997: 138). This revolutionary change has occurred, according to Steiner, to a great extent due to "the emergence of linguistic pluralism or "unhousedness" in certain great writers. These writers stand in a relation of dialectical hesitance not only toward one native tongue [...] but toward several languages" (1972: viii). Literature in exile is perhaps then, "the main impulse of current literature" (ibid). But this 'main impulse' called exile, apart from inciting new poetic styles, also questioned the relationship between the poets and their mother tongue. Poets would be faced with the dilemma of writing in their mother tongue for the very few or assimilating to the language of the new country. Regarding this aspect, Stroinska observes that language and identity can be questioned once in exile, since language outside of its country may alter the link between "the world and our internal linguistic representation" (2003: 95). As Stroinska notes "every exile faces the dilemma whether to adopt a new identity or whether to adapt to the new environment, trying to hold on to one's old self" (2003: 97). The question then is whether the loss of the mother language in exile leads to a loss of identity.

Language is closely related to identity and in the thesis, I will expose how the Yiddish language, a stateless language and in threat of extinction, became the sole representation of the *Inzikhs'* Jewish identity. "The belief that identity is represented solely or predominantly through one's native language goes back to the German philosophy of language, represented by Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814) and Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835)" (Stroinska, 2003: 100). Studies of the relation of identity to a national language (such as by Herder, Fichte and Humboldt) formed the basis for the later development of the linguistic relativity theory (Sapir, Whorf). The 'choice' of language in exile can also be determined to be the feeling of belonging to a linguistic group, while at the same time it might cause exclusion from another group. The *Inzikh* poets felt that although they were writing in Yiddish, a factor that would determine them as belonging to a linguistic group, their experimentation with language and their cultural assimilation to American themes and styles excluded them from the Yiddish traditional reader. So, their work was aimed at whom?

The *Inzikh* poets were multilingual. They could have chosen to write in any other language, including English, the language of their new home, which they had perfect knowledge of. Levinson (2008: 141) maintains that

> the decision to write in Yiddish was itself a declaration of cultural allegiance, an affirmation that a sustainable Jewish culture, structured around socialist values and expressed in Yiddish, was possible in America [...] and as they renewed Whitman´s dream, they also imagine—and for a time, at least, seemed honestly to believe- that they were staking a claim for politically progressive Yiddish literary culture in the America of the future.

The *Inzikh* poets were "inviting its readers to remap American literary history by thinking through its margins" (Shreiber, 2003: 152). For the *Inzikh* poets, whose work and aspirations are studied in the thesis, writing in Yiddish was not just an act borne out of their nostalgia for the lost homeland, similar to Nabokov's desire for his Russian Autumn in *Pale Fire* (1963: 1987). Writing in Yiddish was much more than a remembrance of the past. It was staking a claim towards its future.

e. Thesis structure

Regarding the structure of the thesis, this work is divided in five Chapters. All the Chapters reinforce the aim of the thesis in exploring how exile can affect the 'choice' of a language for a writer and how the *Inzikh* poets contributed to the fight for the Yiddish language. These two aspects, exile and linguistic activism, are the two main aspects that tie in all the Chapters of the thesis. One is not only strongly related to the other, but one is also an effect of the other. The *Inzikh* poets' linguistic activism could not be appreciated without understanding their exilic condition and the historical consequences that affected their work. While Chapter Two focuses on the concept of 'choice' of language, Chapters Three, Four and Five explore the consequences that several historical factors had on the *Inzikh* movement which, in turn, affected not only their relationship with the Yiddish language but also the course of the *Inzikh* journal.

Overall, the thesis explores how exile can transform one's relation to language and how the historical circumstances of the twentieth century, first the pogroms in Eastern Europe that led the *Inzikh* poets into exile, and then the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel that

dismissed the Yiddish language, question its survival in the future. In order to prevent the Yiddish language from disappearing, linguistic activism was necessary and the *Inzikh* poets were pioneers in fighting and keeping Yiddish as the language of their journal and poetical expression throughout all the years of the movement. To explore this trajectory, the Chapters of the thesis follows the *Inzikh*s' poetic journal throughout the years of the movement in presenting the course of their poetic innovations and political implications.

The thesis is structured in chronological order following the *Inzikh* movement's life span. The reason I have chosen to follow a chronological presentation of the movement is to understand better how the 'choice' of a language is not the sole factor that may determine artistic creation but can be affected by the conditions of time and place. The thesis begins in the 1920s, when the movement was created, exploring first the 'choice' of Yiddish as the language to represent the *Inzikhs'* poetic movement in New York while opposing linguistic assimilation that other poets had revered. The thesis continues by demonstrating how the experimentation and renovation of the Yiddish language was not only for the aim of artistic expression but had elements of linguistic/political activism related to translation that will be explored in Chapters Three and Four. The political compromise of the *Inzikh* poets, explored in Chapter Five, became more evident in the last years of the movement.

The structure of the thesis is as follows: In Chapter one, I present the objectives, the thesis structure and a theoretical foundation of the thesis. A few introductory notes are discussed to provide context about the *Inzikh* movement. In Chapter Two I explore the reasons why the poets who contributed to the *Inzikh* journal decided to write in Yiddish versus other languages and the transformations and innovations that the Introspectivists made to the Yiddish language and its consequences that reinforces their 'choice' of Yiddish.

The aim of Chapter Three is to present the process of translation or self-translation *into* Yiddish as a literary mode and as a means of resistance in preserving the Yiddish language. This type of translation practice reinforces not only the *Inzikhs* 'choice' of Yiddish, as seen in Chapter Two, but also demonstrates how this technique helped the *Inzikh* poets transform and innovate associated techniques in the Yiddish language.

Chapter Four explores what translation from Yiddish into other languages might entail for the *Inzikh* poets, adding to the previous Chapter in which translations or self-translations into

Yiddish were made as a means of linguistic re-creation but also, as a means of linguistic ecology (Venuti, 2005). Thus, it is noted how the *Inzikh* poets' struggle towards defending the Yiddish language underwent a resistance to translation, as the *Inzikh* poets were afraid that non-Yiddish readers would not acknowledge the Yiddish language. On the other hand, translation became the only possible way of presenting the works of poets writing in minority languages such as Yiddish. Some of the Introspectivists' poetic work has been translated into English and included on several anthologies throughout the years, which is something I also explore at the end of Chapter Four.

In Chapter Five I analyze the aspirations of the *Inzikh* poets in turning their poetry from the local Jewish space to a transnational arena. In order to do so I explore their intentions of aiming for a universal reader while battling with their conceptions of Jewish survival. Their 'choice' of Yiddish was transformed from aesthetic determination to political urgency when they realized how the future of Yiddish would only be possible in the utopian *Yiddishland* of the poetic text, because of the demise of many of its readers after WWII. The Yiddish poets, aware of how "when a language dies, a possible world dies with it" (Steiner, 1998: xiv) restored the poem as a redemptive act—the poem being understood as the only possible home for the Yiddish language in exile—in their attempt to pursue an impossible *return* to that home.

CHAPTER II - The *Inzikh* movement and the 'choice' of a poetic language

This Chapter continues the theoretical discussion explored in Chapter one on how the condition of exile completely transforms the relationship that a writer has with their mother tongue. The main aim of this Chapter is to explore the reasons why the poets who contributed to the *Inzikh* journal decided to write in Yiddish versus other languages such as the language of their country of origin (Polish, Russian, or German) or the language of their host country (English). Considering that the debate on language 'choice', once in exile, is a common phenomenon and widely discussed in the case of many writers of universal letters, this comparison should be mentioned to understand that the *Inzikh* poetic movement was not an isolated case. I will explore further how for a writer their 'choice' of language may be altered due to the circumstances of place and time in the first part of the Chapter. The transformations and innovations that the Introspectivists made to the Yiddish language and the consequences that reinforce their 'choice' of Yiddish will be discussed in the last part of the Chapter.

Before understanding the concept of language 'choice', some context about the *Inzikh* movement is needed. Being in New York afforded the Introspectivists the chance for a cosmopolitan life; at the same time, their poetic themes were universal, but their language remained Jewish. For them, there was no distinction between Jewish and Universal. This fact becomes apparent in their journal in which they "explored literature from French, Chinese, Japanese, Native American, and Anglo-American traditions, while arguing with equal fervor for the further development of Yiddish literature" (Ponichtera, 2011: 309). An example of this international flavor can be seen in the essay "Introspectivism and Baudelaire" ("*Introspektivism un badeler"*) published in the *Inzikh* issue of February 1920. In this article, the editor in question, established Baudelaire as one of the true precursors of the new poetic form. They reviewed the introduction to *Poems in Prose (Le Spleen de Paris)* and explained how free verse responded to the poet's time. Baudelaire's poetic work is, they concluded, "The new poetic form of our times" (81).

Another example which established them as conscious poets of their times may be found in their reviews on international literature in different languages, which also included reviews of English works. They also translated works from Chinese poets and a Japanese Noh play that would influence their work and was also published in the journal. An example of a poem

published in the *Inzikh* issue of March 1923, that resembles the format of a Haiku, is Leyeles' poem "Snow" (*shney*): "The snow writes white verses/ on grey windowpanes in yellow walls"[19] (175). The Introspectivists established themselves as being aware of world culture but, at the same time, they were representatives of that world culture[20]. They saw themselves as creating international literature and this, they believed, would place them in the mainstream of international modernism (Ponichtera, 2011: 309). A telling instance was when Minkov titled his essay from his series "Letter to New York" in the June 1923 issue as "*Inzikh* the way to the world" (*Inzikh der veg tsu "der velt"*).

With the *Inzikh* journal, they were starting a new poetic trend unfolding in America, a poetry that moved several paces beyond the other poetical Yiddish movements (*Sweatshop Poets* and *Di Yunge*) had achieved in New York. The journal was to be the platform where the new poetic word was created. In the journal, the poems published were not all Introspectivists, but they were "good, new and different" (*gut, ney un andersh)* (*Inzikh*, July 1920). For the Introspectivists, their view of history reflected how modernity and individuality were correlated. They favored poetic techniques which "also served to reinforce their portrayal of a radically diverse inner reality" (Ponichtera, 2011: 300). What set them apart from other European modernists groups was their American state of mind. The terms authenticity, individuality "reflect the poets' knowledge of contemporary American discourse (...) For them, to be individual was above all to be modern, to be aware of internationally important intellectual currents, and to be located in an urban center" (ibid). This statement would be a reference to their modernity, even if it corresponds to the innovative language it would refer to the avant-garde currents. This new poetic trend would respond to the political and social realities of the new exile with the use of free verse as the cornerstone of their aesthetic program. Their impression of reality was perceiving the world in a kaleidoscopic, contradictory and fragmented way. The kaleidoscope method defined the principles of the movement as it brought together several modern principles, such as

> the psychology of the stream of consciousness, the multidimensional nature of modern life, simultaneity of experience, representation through splinter elements rather than through a full description, and the conscious organization of a poem as a "fugue" or a "symphony" of heterogeneous elements playing together in a single integrated whole.

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[19] *"der shney shraybt vayse lider/ oyf groye shoybn un gele vent"* (translation into English is mine).
[20] See Zaritt, Saul, "The World Awaits Your Yiddish Word: Jacob Glatstein and the Problem of World Literature" (2015),

This concept describes the art of T.S.Eliot in "The Waste Land" and "Ash Wednesday" or Pound's "Cantos"" (Harshav, 1990: 182).

This method can clearly be seen in *Fabyus Lind,* a collection of poems written by Leyeles and published in 1937. Some of the poems, however, had already been published in the *Inzikh* journal in 1928. This poem, written in a form of a kaleidoscopic diary, expresses the urbanism not in hymns to the architecture of New York, but in themes that go from the alienation to the political (Harshav, 2007: 72).

> Darkness.
> Thick, lumpy,
> Primeval, uncanny, gaping darkness.
> Suddenly- white sparks, bright stripes.
> Magnesium-flare- white, white.
> A knee- warm, soft, tight.
> A hoop around me, like the ring around Saturn.
> Tight around me. White. Motherly nocturn.
> Somber excitement.
> Brain-flood. Fall- fly. Fall- fly.
> Knee. Magnesium-glow. And again-
> Lumpy, coal-black darkness,
> Abyss.[21]

Another principle of the Introspectivists was the individuality of expression applied equally to content and form. "By individuality, the Introspectivists did not mean relativism in value judgments" (Harshav, 1990: 183), but instead, their poetic language, should reflect the complexities, associations and perceptions of "a contemporary person" (ibid). Their aim lay on how to be a modern Jewish person with an individual poetic voice while being reflective of the social and political world, but if "for them, Jewishness was a language" (ibid: 184) than what language defined the modern Jewish person? For the Introspectivists, the Yiddish language is what defined them as Jewish, but what would differentiate them from their predecessors was their use of universal themes and the transformation of the Yiddish language by turning away

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[21] "*Fintsternish./Gedikhte, knoylike,/ Uralte, groylike, umheymlekhe, moylike./ Un plutslung- funken vayse, gantse pasn./ Magnium-gli- vays, vays./ A kni- varem, veykh un shtayf./ A reyf arum mir, vi der ring arum saturn./ Shtayf arum mir. vays. muterlekher nokturn./ Sumne reytsenish./ Markh-farfleytsenish. fal- fli. fal- fli./ Kni. magnium-gli. un vider- /knoylike, koylike fintsternish./ Farfalenish.*" (English translation by Harshav and Harshav 2007, p 139).

from the Yiddish literary tradition and innovating it. They would not give way to linguistic assimilation, but they did to a cultural one[22].

The *Inzikh* poets viewed the Yiddish language as being suitable for any type of high-artistic expression, and for the language to reach that level, they had to liberate it from its prior ways, when, in Yiddish literature, Hebrew words were written in their original phonetic form. As Jewish writers independent from their tradition they rejected the Jewish conception of maintaining the orthography of Hebrew root words in Yiddish and they wrote them phonetically instead, in an effort to take the Hebrewness out. This was a practice that was also done by the literary groups in Soviet Union but for political ends in order "to deprive the hebraic component of any pride of place" (Wisse, 2000: 167). Ultimately, what they did was to uncircumcise[23] the language, take the conceptions of Jewishness out of Yiddish and equate the language to its more modern American peers. They incorporated sounds and vocabulary from other languages, especially English, in order to gain more independence from their Jewish literary predecessors.

Furthermore, through their poetical experimentations, the Yiddish language went through a major transformation in the aims of creating a new poetic version of it. Yiddish went from being a *mameloshn* (mother language) to a *liderloshn* (poetic language). These two terms of *mameloshn* and *liderloshn* will be elaborated upon in the following sections of this Chapter. What was in its beginnings the function of the Yiddish language of being a vernacular language for the Jews in Eastern Europe, soon started to lose its validity due to the tragic events of WWII that foreshadowed its disappearance. Since the beginning of the twentieth century exile also marked a new tragedy for the Yiddish language, as assimilation to other languages, such as English, left Yiddish behind. The Yiddish language, considered as the language of the diaspora par excellence, would move from existing in a national diasporic space to a poetic space: "a literary culture defined by language rather than national borders" (Schachter, 2012: 4).

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[22] This cultural assimilation was also something common with the Jews living in Europe "The *Wissenschaft* was influenced by the legacy of cultural synthesis and interfaith accommodation in Islamic Spain (in Hebrew, Sepharad; in Arabic, al-Andalus), where acculturated Jews produced masterpieces of Hebrew literature influenced by Arabic literary models. German Jews adopted this legacy as a cultural ideal they could emulate to gain acceptance into German society." (Levy and Schacter, 2015: 94)

[23] This concept is taken from the similar conception of what Jean Bollack uses when he attributes Celan the concept of circumcising the German language in order to transform the German language into Jewish. The Introspectivists did just the opposite, transform the Yiddish language out of Jewishness. Just as Paul Celan introduces Hebrew into German in some of his poems, so does Leyeles in introducing English into Yiddish. See Bollack, Jean, "La ironía en hebreo" (2005) pp. 127-152.

Leyeles established that poetry was a means to keep Yiddish alive, and with it the culture and history of an entire people. Thus, poetry had to be written now more than ever in the Yiddish language in view of the rapid assimilation of many Jews in exile who switched their writing from Yiddish to English. Being in exile meant for these poets assuming the responsibility of choosing Yiddish amongst other languages but its task of accomplishing was not easy. As the leading Yiddish critic Shmuel Niger asserted, one language was never enough for the Jews. The question remained, of all the languages acquired in the family house (Hebrew and Yiddish), in school (Polish, Russian) and to be learned in exile (English, Spanish, French), why choose Yiddish?

a. The 'choice' of a Poetic Language

> "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"
>
> Psalm 137

We could rephrase the question in Psalm 137, in asking not only *how* 'shall we sing', but most importantly, in *what* language 'shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land'. The 'choice' of language is not merely a means of expression. Deeper study is required regarding its relation to historical factors and its association with identity and creation. Choosing a language for poetic expression can depend on several factors and the language chosen may be altered due to the circumstances of place and time. Language is modified according to its historical situation and as Paul Fordham reaffirms, "language is frequently the most important basis of cultural identity and often of political as well" (65). Fordham understand language 'choice' as either the language one learns in school or has been taught at home, the mother tongue. The general assumption establishes that authors tend to write in their mother tongue, but certain circumstances has shown that this is not always the case. The experience of exile for example, marks a new route for authors who switch from one language to the other. The reasons may vary but nevertheless, that 'choice' is marked by a cultural or political identity. The 'choice' of a language depends also not only on the receiving language but also on the audience's language. An author may find his or her mother tongue to be restrictive as it may not arrive to

broader audiences. This may alter or reshape the 'choice' as an audience's demand might incline an author from writing in a minority language to start using a language of wider diffusion.

The languages that are learned by an author vary depending on where and when she or he is living. This conditions authors who are raised in multilingual environments, who are often confronted with having to choose between the 'language of first sight' (language learned in school) and the 'language of first hearing' (language learnt at home, mother tongue[24]) (Fordham, 1994: 66). The circumstance of exile situates the author, in many cases, in a place where the widely spoken local language is not the mother tongue, hence "this language, or the relevant world language [...] may be the favored choice in these circumstances". Moreover, "the way in which both migrants and refugees take up new languages and either discard or modify their mother tongues, *often* provides rapid insights into the ways in which languages change everywhere, albeit more slowly" (ibid: 66-68).

Throughout history, the 'choice' of a poetic language varied for multilingual writers. In southern Spain, in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries texts were written in Arabic and thus many Jewish poets as Ibn Gabirol or Yehuda Halevi wrote their poetry in both Hebrew and Arabic. Furthermore, "In medieval literature, as H.J. Chaytor pointed out, there was 'a convention which laid down that the choice of language was determined by the literary genre in question, not by the nationality of the author'" (Foster, 1970: 16). Leonard Forster uses Ramon Vidal de Besalú as an example, who "at the end of the twelfth century declared that French was the best suited to certain poetic genres- *romanz, retronsas* and *pasturellas-,* while Provençal was more appropriate to others- *vers, cansos* and *sirventes.* He does not consider his own native language, Catalan, at all in this connexion." (ibid).

The use by a poet of a variety of languages that were not his or her mother tongue was possible because of how poetry operated and was centered more on the subject matter and style, which were part of a general European cultural heritage. "This remained true in the Renaissance and the seventeenth century, when the most poets wrote their first verses not in their mother tongue, but in Latin, at school. Latin was not a mother tongue for anyone" (Foster, 1970: 19) but it was

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[24] To understand a varied definition of the mother tongue, see Schultz, Karla Lydia "At home in the Language: The Case of an Exile and an Immigrant" *Yearbook of German-American Studies 20.* (1985). pp125-32.

"the only fit vehicle for 'everything intended to be universal and permanent'" (ibid: 52)[25]. This choice of the Latin language though was used more in the field of philosophy and science than of literature, especially in countries of Romanic languages. The end of use of the Latin language for literature varied between countries. In England for example, Shakespeare (1564–1616) was already writing in English, in Spain, Cervantes (1547–1616) was writing in Spanish and in Italy Dante's *The Divine Comedy* was written in the Tuscan dialect, which is the basis of modern Italian, at a time when Latin was still the cultured language of the country.

During the Renaissance and the Baroque period, works of poetry where published in several languages, in order to reach a wider audience. The purpose of multilingual works was to adapt the language to the audience of each specific place: "One can change one's language as one changes one's clothes, as circumstances may require" (Forster, 1970: 28). An example is John Milton, who wrote in Latin, Greek, Italian and English. In his early poems, his editor observed how when Milton spoke of his own feelings, he would do so "veiled by the use of a foreign language'" (ibid: 45) and how "the choice of language was determined by the literary genre" (ibid: 47). Language 'choice' varied then not only because of genre but the audience intended. The Emperor Charles would go as far as to say that, "I speak German to my horses, Spanish to my God, French to my friends, and Italian to my mistresses." (Kellman, 2000: 13). Language was then used as a medium that poets would use to work with, or one they were expected to use according to the conventions of their time. It was also a way of concealing one's emotions. Milton was not an exceptional case, were a poet would choose a foreign language so he could speak of his feeling more freely, with no inhibitions.

During the seventeenth century "French began to supersede Latin as the *lingua franca* of cultured intercourse" (Forster, 1970: 52) This can be seen in Russian novels up till 1917 where certain dialogues between Russian aristocrats where written in French (a typical example would be Anna Karenina). Goethe wrote letters and some verses in French and in English. In 1894 Oscar Wilde wrote *Salomé* in French, as he states in a letter to Edmond Goncourt in 1891, 'out of artistic rebellion and nationalistic ressentiment'. This act was seen as a scandal as "language loyalty had supervened" (Forster, 1970: 54). Such as reaction may be understood if examined under the light of the Romantic revival, as "in the meantime the Romantics had discovered that languages had souls, that each language, nay each dialect, was unique and

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[25] For a better understanding of Latin functioning as a world language, see Casanova, Pascale (2015).

characteristic; and this discovery had been utilized by the rising forces of nationalism. The energies of writers were devoted to the production of 'national literature'" (55).

The preference of 'choice' changes, and now the preference of a language choice was determined by the emotional or political allegiance of the author (Forster, 1970: 55). It was also determined by the place the author would be living or migrating to, as exile played a key role in the 'choice' of a language. As Forster (55-6) explains,

> The Alsatian author René Schickele, "who so far had written entirely in German, left Germany in 1933 and in 1938 just before his death published his only work in French, *Le retour*- the 'return' to the language of his childhood. Arthur Koestler, since his emigration, has written exclusively in English. The case of Joseph Conrad is a striking one, though it has little to do with politics and more with English as the international *lingua franca* of seamen. For Rilke political considerations played no part, yet his French poems are a profession of attachment - attachment not so much to French culture as to the Canton Valais where his last happy years were spent.

The choice of the language in which a poet writes can be a declaration of allegiance, perhaps not to the culture of that language as a whole but to a specific social circumstance. It is thus that a poet chooses to write in a certain language depending on the circumstances of that moment, depending on aspects affected by a specific time and a specific place. T.S. Eliot wrote four poems in French, he redrafted part of his French poem *'Dans le Restaurant',* in a section of *The Waste Land* under the title 'Death by Water' (Forster, 1970: 75). His work then consisted of a self-translation of a previous work done in a foreign language, translated into his mother tongue as an act of personal reinvention. Although there have been poets who have proven to write well in more than one language, Eliot was not the case, and declared in an interview for *The Paris Review* (1959) how although he had intended in his stay in Paris to follow the steps of the symbolist poets by writing in French, he believed English offered "more resources". He went further to say that a poet cannot write well in two languages as he did not believe that one could be a bilingual poet. His choice of French, Eliot explained, was undertaken as a means of *tour de force* because he had not been able to write for a while and took this, writing in another language, as a sort of experiment to reverse his writer's block.

Multilingual poets may also use their knowledge of different languages to distance themselves from a certain language in order to use it solely for artistic purposes. Overall, "The use of a foreign language affords a further possibility: the words are not burdened with irrelevant

associations for the poet, they are fresh and pristine[26]" (Forster, 1970: 66). This was the case with the Dada movement where poets such as Jean Arp, wrote in German and French as "for him, as for the medieval and renaissance poet, language is simply material" (ibid). It was a form, a technique that was structured and molded in the hands of the poet, just as a sculptor chooses either wood or stone to do his work (ibid: 87). Poets choose one language over the other to suit better their artistic aim. This aspect of language as an instrument is what possibly made authors such as Tristan Tzara, Eugène Ionesco and Samuel Beckett write in French, as language was an instrument to be used for solely artistic purposes.

a.1 A language of one's own

"The creative heresy becomes a linguistic heresy"
Helene Cixous

Steven Kellman (2000) follows Forster's *The Poet's Tongue (*1970) in presenting us further examples of multilingual authors from around the world. He examines more closely the circumstances and the theory behind the relation of an author with his or her poetic language. The relation of an author with their poetic language varies and we find cases of authors who switched from their mother tongue to a foreign language once in exile, or multilingual authors who decide to write in their mother tongue despite their country of origin or their country they have been exiled to. Authors raised in a multilingual environment, despite choosing to write in their mother tongue, may experience a certain transformation regarding their relation to that specific language, because of the associations related to that language. This may be seen with authors such as Paul Celan and Elias Canetti, who wrote in German as the language transmitted by their mother in a multilingual upbringing[27]; This choice of the German language was understood by Celan as truth can only be expressed in the mother tongue and Canetti related feeling reborn under his mother's influence of the German language. It is not only the

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[26] There is a counterargument to be made here where we'll further up in this Chapter, that by writing in a foreign language many of the nuances and associations a proficient speaker would have may be lost.
[27] To understand this multilingual upbringing see Canetti, Elias, *Die Gerettete Zunge* (1977).

relationship one has with the mother tongue but the association one recalls of it and the process of learning that language that makes it the prime source for their poetic expression.

Contrary to the authors mentioned above, the authors that decide to write in a language that is not their mother tongue may experience a sense of alienation, otherness in the new chosen language. This is the case of Nabokov's experience writing in English in which, as Kellman states, "there seems something not only painful but unnatural, almost matricidal, about an author who abandons the *Muttersprache*" (3). This strangeness of a new adopted language is expressed by Nabokov in his memoirs *Speak, Memory* (1999) where his memoirs, although experienced in Russian, are written in English: "This re-Englishing of a Russian re-version of what had been an English re-telling of Russian memoirs in the first place, proved to be a diabolical task, but some consolation was given me by the thought that such multiple metamorphosis, familiar to butterflies, had not been tried by any human before" (6). To add a more complex twist, Nabokov explains how his memoirs originated from a story titled "Mademoiselle O", that was written in French and published in Paris in 1936. It was later translated into English and added to *Speak, Memory* as Chapter 5.

Gerda Lerner, upon coming to New York and writing in English, felt that living in translation, was like "skating on wobbly skates over thin ice" (Kellman, 2000: 5), contrary to others who chose to keep "literary loyalty to the native language far from the native land" (ibid: 6). Kellman understands as modernism is largely a literature of exile and its relation to language when uprooted from one's own land, "how poets have become 'unhoused and wanderers across languages'" (Steiner, 1992: 11). In her New York exile from 1948 till 1956, Rose Ausländer, a German poet from Bukovina, decided to write around 30 poems in English. In her essay Ausländer (2014: 25) writes:

> Late 1946. Emigration to the United States. You fight for existence. Change of orientation. Provocation. The new world of modern American and English literature was a more vital and impetuous stimulus. After several years of silence, I surprised myself one afternoon writing poetry in English. One of my first texts in the English language started like this: "In search of a definitive beginning". Many of those poems were published in literary magazines in the United States, the radio station WEVD broadcast some. Why have I been writing in German again since 1956? Mysteriously, as it appeared, the English muse disappeared. There was no external reason for the return to the mother tongue. Secrets of the subconscious[28]

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[28] The English translation is mine.

Ausländer's poem "*Mutterland*" reads: "My fatherland is dead/they have buried it/in fire./I live/in my motherland/word" (*Mein Vaterland ist tot/sie haben es begraben/im Feuer/Ich lebe/in meinem Mutterland/Wort*). The poem is a perfect example where words and language become one's home. In the poem Ausländer does a play on words with *Vaterland,* which for her is dead, and *Mutterland* which is the word, in this case, the German word. Many are the poems where she refers to the *muttersprache* (mother tongue) or to the *Heimat* (Homeland). Being raised in a multilingual environment, having experienced WWII, and having to go into exile marked her poetry but at the same time awoke a consciousness of which language to choose to write her poetry in.

According to Kellman, it is the demographic environment that "dictates language choice in much realistic fiction." (2000: 16). Such is the case of Eva Hoffman and her relation to English, which was not a deliberate choice but the language that inevitably supplanted her native Polish. The second half of the title *A Life in a New Language* from her memoirs *Lost in Translation* (1998), manifests this transition from one language to another, from her mother tongue to the language of the new country. That her memoirs are titled in relation to language, places emphasis on how language shifts catalyzed a major transformation in her experience as a writer in exile. For Hoffman, learning the new language meant entering a new world. This entrance into a new world could also be seen by some authors as the possibility of escaping from an old world. This is the case of Joseph Brodsky[29], who once in exile also decided to switch from his native Russian to English, as he explains in his essay "A Room and a Half" (1987). Brodsky explains that the language chosen to narrate the memoirs of his parents had much to do with the associations that came with that language. He notes (1987: 460-1) that

> I write this in English because I want to grant them a margin of freedom: the margin whose width depends on the number of those who may be willing to read this. I want Maria Volpert and Alexander Brodsky to acquire reality under "a foreign code of conscience," I want English verbs of motion to describe their movements. This won't resurrect them, but English grammar may at least prove to be a better escape route from the chimneys of the state crematorium than the Russian. To write about them in Russian would be only to further their captivity, their reduction to insignificance, resulting in mechanical annihilation [...] Besides, even if I had written all this in Russian, these

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[29] See Rulyova, Natalia E, "Joseph Brodsky: Exile, language, and metamorphosis" (2003).

words wouldn't see the light of day under the Russian sky. Who would read them? [...] May English then house my dead.

In this essay, the author's experience of leaving testimony is deeply related with the choice of language. The essay also raises the question as to how the choice of a language versus another can determine or can ensure an audience for a memory to persist. This relation to language and testimony is also present in authors like David Fogel or Elie Wiesel, which are discussed further in this Chapter in the section a.2.

Other bilingual writers felt the urge and craving of writing in another language, but that option was not always feasible, as it was in Franz Kafka's case: "Kafka was already a formed German writer by the time he began to hunger for Jewish language, which was too late for him to adopt one even had he wanted to" (Wisse, 2000: xiv). The German language was for Kafka in a way 'the usurpation of an alien property'. Manea goes as far as to call it linguistic 'piracy' (2012: 338). In conversations with Max Brod, Kafka mentions the situation of the Jewish writer writing in German and of the impossibility of writing in German among other impossibilities of writing. Manea (2012) lists these impossibilities as: the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing in German, the impossibility of writing differently, and the impossibility of writing altogether. On the impossibility of writing in German, the acquisition and the writing in German is seen by Kafka according to Manea, as a betrayal to his identity (2012: 337)[30].

Similarly, when Samuel Beckett was asked in 1954 why he decided to write in another language rather than his mother tongue he answered that it was out of a "need to be ill-equipped" (Slote, 2015: 119). This last statement of Becket could be interpreted in many ways, but in its French version *d'etre mal armé,* sounds exactly as *d'être mallarmé*. Thus, the need to be another comes into focus, with its implication that writing in another language changes not only the style that one writes in but also our perception of oneself. In this sense, language becomes a medium in itself, where the message remains in the background while language takes on greater relevance. James Joyce[31], an Irishman just like Becket, shared the same feeling of working against their

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[30] Kafka's search for his Jewish identity is seen by Stéphane Mòses (2008) as an act of rebellion against his father, but also his writing in German is an act of rebellion that rejects the 'otherness' of his father and towards assimilation.

[31] There is also the complex relation to the colonial past of UK and Ireland, with English being the language of the colonizer which had usurped Gaelic.

own language, "because of the complex linguistic, political, and national circumstances they confronted" (Kager, 2011: 41). Although also threatening to write in another language, Joyce[32] decided instead to completely reshape his own language, while Becket chose to write directly in another language. Their sense of style and choice of language was forged while being in exile. Exile became the new haven where one could free oneself of the standardized tradition expected of their mother tongue.

For Alice Kaplan, choosing French was her way of "leaving home". French was the linguistic and cultural equivalent of a place where she could try to find herself in another language and culture, as she recounts in her memoirs (2018). Kaplan, in her essay "On Language Memoir", defines a memoir as a book that has to do more with language and identity and she therefore categorizes it as a new genre she calls "language memoir" (1994: 59). Kaplan further explains that "Language memoirs are closer in genre to the classic *Bildungsroman*- the novel of education and development. The difference, in language memoir, is that it's not yourself you're growing into, but another self, perceived as better, more powerful, safer. The change in language is the emblem of a *leap* into a new persona" (1994: 69). Her upbringing, although mainly in English, also included other languages, such as Yiddish. During her childhood, words in Yiddish, although were related to her family, felt foreign as her family had transitioned "from diaspora Yiddish to American English in a quick generation" (2018: 9). The switch from one language to another was conversational, emotional or out of a deeper need. She narrates how her choice of French was "out of love and necessity" (ibid: 217) as French "saved me" (57), "I felt safe and warm [...] protected from myself" (102), "Made me an adult" (141). For Kaplan, French was "A sacred language" (210), "a liberation" (211), "my storehouse language" (214). Living in another language that is not one's own[33] was a way of being in exile from oneself.

Exile marked for many writers a new way of writing, whether it was by choosing to write in another language (like Becket and Brodsky) or by simply altering one's own language to transform it into something new (like Joyce). Being away from home allowed a sense of estrangement to one's own language, permitting the writer to inhabit it in a completely different way. This experience would also create a linguistic nostalgia, a yearning for a language of one's

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[32] "In an often-cited letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver, Joyce wrote: "What the language will look like when I have finished, I don't know. But having declared war I shall go on *jusqu'au bout*" (Letters I 237) (43). See Maria Kager's "Of Sirens Silent and Loud: The Language Wars of Joyce and Kafka" (2011), for a better understanding on the multilingualism in Joyce and Kafka.

[33] For this concept see Derrida, Jaques, (1998) and "Language is never owned" Fordham, (2005).

own even if it meant serenading the lost language with a new language. This is the case of Charles Reznikoff, whose "poems about Hebrew, as well as his own translations of Halevi, are restorative examples of poems borne out of the conviction that one's own language can be renewed through an active relation to the language of another" (Shreiber, 2010: 37). Reznikoff, though "married to the speech of strangers", he's nevertheless "romantically attached to Hebrew" (ibid: 45) as can be seen in the following poem that opens the volume of *Jerusalem the Golden* (1934):

> The Hebrew of your poets, Zion,
> is like oil upon a burn,
> cool as oil;
> after work,
> the smell in the street at night
> of the hedge in flower.
> Like Solomon,
> I have married and married the speech of strangers;
> none are like you, Shulamite.
> (Complete I, 107)

Wirth-Nesher (1998) understands assimilation as translating not only the words of a language, but also the customs of its culture in a way that readers would understand. Immigrant writers, like Mary Antin or Anzia Yezierska, rapidly changed their Yiddish into English, the most known example being Isaac Bashevis Singer whose self-translation became a way to "make the Old World accessible to the New" (1998: 214). The road to Americanization for this immigrant writer was by reconstructing their multilingual past into a new language where nostalgic words remained untranslated (like the nickname of the writer). Their relation to a new learned language was more than an artistic tool. There was a sort of an "Erotic attachment (to English) as it embodied their desires to be made over by their new country" (ibid). Jacob Glatstein went further as to create a new language in his poem *"Zing Ladino"* ("Sing Ladino") written in 1929, to advocate minority languages such as Ladino and Yiddish in a Jewish language hybridity:

> Sing Ladino, you blond songer,
> Our magicjargonino,
> Multicolored chattering,
> Multitongued languageing
> Sundownino, nino-nino,
> Finegolden radiating, bursting—

Multicoloredthoughtingness.
All the breads, all the deaths,
All the taigas, all the tundras,
All the wonders multicolored,
Multirhymerino,
Multiguesterino,
All the wicks, all the skins,
Yellowred and Falashino,
Palestino speakerino,
Ours, our universladino,
You, blond Alladino, sing.[34]

For these writers, their entire literary purpose, consequently, revolved around the idea of 'choice' (Casanova, 2005), where that choice became erotized, converted and turned into a subject in itself for stylistic purposes, but yet and moreover, due to certain historical factors (exile and war), that choice of language became crucial to bear witness.

a.2 From a historical account into a work of art: The choice of language as testimony

"I feel myself to be like an anachronism wandering about a page of history on which I don't belong. If writing is a lonely profession, the Yiddish writer's loneliness has an additional dimension. His readership has perished. His language has gone up with the smoke of the crematoria. He or she creates in a vacuum, almost without readership, out of fidelity to a vanished language - as to prove that Nazism did not succeed in extinguishing that language's last breath, and that it is still alive."

- Chava Rosenfarb

Out of fidelity[35], Chava Rosenfarb decided to write her memoirs in Yiddish despite knowing the few readership it would have. She decided to narrate in Yiddish her experience as a survivor in the Łódź Ghetto in her three-volume novel *Der boym fun lebn* (The tree of Life)[36] (1972)

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[34] "*zing ladino, blonder zenger,/ undzer tsoyberzhargonino,/ alkolirte rederay,/ altsetsungte shprakheray/ zunfargino, gino-gino,/gingoldiker oyfshtral, oyfpral —/ algefarbgedankeray./ ale broytn, ale toytn,/ ale teygn, ale tundren,/ ale vundren alkolirn,/ alkharuzin,/ alushpizin,/ ale knoytn, ale hoytn,/ gelroyt un falashino,/ palestino daberino,/ undzer, undzer universladino,/ blonder aladino zing.*" Translation by Asya Vaisman Schulman published in Words Without Borders, September 2016, from the The original published in *Unzer bukh IV* (Sept-Oct. 1929), p4. Republished in *Yidishtaytshn* (Warsaw: H. Bzshoza, 1937):

[35] The Catalan poet Josep Carner, when asked to complete the "The Proust Questionnaire" in 1966 while being in exile, answered the question 'what is the main feature of his character', in a blunt and direct manner: fidelity. Carner went on to expand on that concept by defining his fidelity, "Fidelity to our language (...) The Catalan language is our identity, our implicit history and philosophy" (Carner, 66). Translation is mine.

[36] The English version was translated by the author herself with the help of her daughter Goldie Morgentaler and published in Montreal in 1985.

once she exiled to Canada. The historical circumstances of WWII made many writers debate in what language to write their testimony.[37] Some writers, like Elie Wiesel went from writing their testimony in Yiddish to making a new version in French that would reach a broader audience. Other writers chose differently; David Fogel for example, went from writing in Hebrew to Yiddish. The *Inzikh* movement, during WWII, reflected upon what would happen to the Yiddish language, and despite the forthcoming of the demise of a Yiddish readership, they continued to write in Yiddish. In fact, writing in Yiddish at that moment was, due to the tragic circumstances of the war, more important than ever, as poetry in Yiddish would give voice to all those who perished during the war. As Levinas stated, "the suffering of anti-Semitic persecution can only be told in the language of the victim. It is conveyed through signs that are not interchangeable" (1994: 46*)*. Writing in Yiddish also became a fight for its survival, as Sutzkever declared in an interview by Joseph Berger in 1985 for the *New York Times,* how "the very act of writing, is an opposition to that danger of the destruction of Yiddish".

Survivors who found themselves with the conflict of what language to write their experience in, went from self-translation[38], in order to reach a broader audience, or writing in Yiddish in order to give voice to those who couldn't speak anymore. The victims might have perished, but their native language had not. Elie Wiesel opted for self-translating his testimony from Yiddish to French or as Ruth Wisse states, "transposed" (2000: 212) more than translated. The two versions[39] vary in many aspects, one of the most visible ones being their respective length. The Yiddish version is said to have been more than 800 pages before he edited it to the 245 pages of the published edition. Whereas the French version was edited down to 178 pages. The English translation is a version of the French edition. Wiesel believed that a testimony should not be reserved for the diminishing Yiddish speakers alone, "for the world at large could not be usefully accused in Yiddish alone" (Astro, 2014: 140), but had to be told for all audiences around the world. That is why his Yiddish version *Un di velt hot geshvign* (And the World Kept Silent) became *La Nuit* (Night) in the French version. According to Elie (or Eliezer in the Yiddish version) Wiesel, the Yiddish memoirs were written and published in 1954 in Buenos Aires. The French version was written and published in 1958 and the English version *Night* in

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[37] See Suleiman, Susan Rubín "Monuments in a Foreign Tongue: On reading Holocaust memoirs by Emigrants", (1998) pp 397- 417.

[38] For a broader understanding of this concept see Chapter three section b.2 of this dissertation.

[39] For a comparison of the different versions see Seidman, Naomi, "Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage". (1996), Astro, Alan "Revisiting Wiesel's Night in Yiddish, French, and English" (2014): pp 127-53. This last article questions Seidman's reading of Wiesel's work in various languages.

1960. In this 1960's English version, the book was treated as a novel. The Yiddish version remained unknown until Wiesel wrote the preface for his new English version in 2006. This new English version was translated by Wiesel's wife Marion and consulted by him, offering an improved version of the 1960's translation by Stella Rodway. Despite the translations, which lead the reader to believe that all other versions come from the same source text, according to Naomi Seidman, in Wiesel's testimony, there are two survivors, the Yiddish and the French (1996).

A similar situation with two initial versions may also be observed with David Vogel's[40] last testimony written in Yiddish after having dedicated his entire literary career to write in Hebrew. There could have been many reasons Vogel decided to write his last work in Yiddish, but "Vogel's choice to write in Yiddish contributes significantly to the shaping of the experience that the narrative portrays. For a native speaker who had never applied the language creatively, such a decision entails a number of symbolic investments." (Goren, 2013: 41). Vogel, who is considered a pioneer of modernism in Hebrew poetry, is also considered as a "linguistic oddness" (Alter, 1993: 3), as he was born in Russia, lived in Vilna for some time and arrived in Vienna in 1912 where he learned German.

Vogel, in his diary entry of April 12, 1913, notes how he is "now entering a world that is foreign to me, entering a foreign tongue- a period of transition" (ibid, 4). This period of transition would not last long as he would limit his literary dedication and experimental writing to Hebrew only. It is quite striking that he would choose Hebrew as a language to create his modernist poetry achievements when living in Vienna and later, in 1920, in Paris when "Fogel's attachment to Hebrew was neither sentimental nor nationalists" nor "a committed Zionist" (ibid). Vogel experienced a sense of linguistic isolation, as he states, which took the form of not having Hebrew books to read but also no one to speak Hebrew to. This sense of linguistic isolation of writing in a language foreign to the country of residence was a feeling shared by poets in exile. Vogel's 'choice' of Hebrew, however, had more to do with his "literary ambitions", as "no European language- Russian, German, or later French- could have served as his medium of expression because he was not sufficiently at home in any of them. Yiddish, the one obviously viable alternative to Hebrew for the young Fogel, lacked the aura

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[40] The last name of David Vogel has been transliterated from Hebrew to English as Vogel or Fogel in different papers. I will use the name Vogel but will keep the original transliteration Fogel when cited so.

of literary prestige" (1993: 5). Despite his depiction of Yiddish "for reasons that are not entirely clear" (ibid), Vogel decided to write his last fictionalized diary in 1942 entirely in Yiddish. This could be understood as nostalgia socialization which Avineri (2018: 28) describes as

> a public attention to and affective appreciation of the past to understand one's place in the present. Nostalgia socialization involves a simultaneous distancing from and closeness to the language, which can be manifested in the phenomenological reality of Yiddish endangerment (Avineri, 2014b), contested stance practices (public demonstrations of language ideologies that reveal internal and external tensions) (Avineri, 2017), and heritage narratives.

In her essay on nostalgia socialization in Yiddish Literature, in which Avineri discusses literary texts published in Yiddish both during and after WWII, Avineri (2018: 29) explains how

> Many authors wrote meta-Yiddish[41] literature during World War II as a revolt against the fate of Yiddish and the Jewish people, while meta-Yiddish literature written afterwards expresses nostalgia for a Yiddish past that was cut short and sorrow about a future that many believed would never be." while being "consistently engaged in and anxious about its survival.

The survival of the Yiddish language also meant the survival of the Jewish legacy and the Jewish culture. This sense of loss can be found in Glatstein's poem "I keep recalling" written in 1967:

> I saw very clearly
> How the quiet, cultivated Yiddish
> Was Dying on her lips
> [...]
> My dear mother, my wise mouth,
> My own mother-tongue,
> Which developed so gently for me
> In the whispering twilights of Lublin.
> My mother-tongue, with her waxy face
> And pain-frightened, Half-closed eyes—
> This too I must recall. (Glatstein, 1993: 286)" (ibid: 34-35)

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[41] Avineri terms meta-Yiddish the Yiddish that is used as a secondary vehicle of communication and that carries a more symbolic value. This term Avineri uses it after Shandler's term of "postvernacular" Yiddish (2006). According to Davis "the symbolic meaning of the language increases as its functional use diminishes. It becomes a 'metalanguage' " (2010: 15).

In the poem Glatstein juxtaposes the loss of his mother with the loss of his mother-tongue. His poetry, written in Yiddish, is a sign of resistance and endurance of that legacy. It was a way to outlive the fate of Yiddish and to speak to future audiences in the language that was no more. As for the Yiddish poet in the U.S, Yiddish went "from being the language of his home to the instrument of his poetry to a language that is embraced and then in large part rejected" (Avineri, 2018: 37).

The other poet that Avineri uses as an example is Abraham Sutzkever. It is no coincidence Avineri uses two of the most renowned poets in Yiddish who had publicly defended not only the Yiddish language but had also transformed and modernized it. Both poets published in the *Inzikh* journal, Glatstein being one of the founders and Sutzkever being one of the most loyal contributors. Both poets experienced exile: Glatstein in New York before WWII and Sutzkever in Israel after WWII. Sutzkever is considered as one of the most prominent poets of the Yiddish letters and a great advocate of Yiddish, not only because he was a member of the *Paper Brigade* where they rescued Yiddish documents from being destroyed by the Nazis during WWII, but for continuing to write in Yiddish until his death in 2010 in Israel. Once in Israel, and despite the oppositions and the struggles he faced with Yiddish, he began to edit, the first publication in Yiddish in Israel and under the auspices of the Histadrut, Israeli CGT, *Di Goldene Keyt* (The golden chain), where renowned poets from all over the world published essays or literary works. Sutzkever's poetic work, which constitutes the most vivid lyrical testimony of the last half century of Jewish history, is expressed entirely in Yiddish.

As has been shown in this section, the choice of language as testimony is due to several factors. One of them being self-translating one's work into a universal language due to the need to be read by a vast audience in order for their testimony to prevail. Another reason is choosing Yiddish, their mother-tongue, as a means of fidelity or as resistance for the language to prevail. Other reasons why the authors decided to choose Yiddish for their literary work will be further discussed in the following section.

a.3 Choosing Yiddish

The fact of writing in two or more languages, was, according to literary critic Bal Makhshoves, "an essential characteristic of Jewish literature in the diaspora" (Finkin, 2010: 6). Makhsoves goes on to state that there was one literature but written in at least two different languages, mainly Hebrew and Yiddish, but also German, Polish and Russian. But what might have seemed something natural, flirting with more than one language in the Diaspora, completely changes once in exile. Writers no longer exercised their bilingualism, despite the fact that some felt tempted to play around with the language of the new country. Once in exile, choosing Yiddish was of a greater importance. In some cases, it became a matter of an ongoing fight for the survival of the language. Defiance became their literary credo, as language in exile changed its relationship with writers and readers. Hence, according to Finkin, for Bal Makhshoves, the "nebulous characteristic of language is a function of *place* (that is, where a work is written) and *time* (the language´s historical baggage)" (2010: 7).

It then follows that, for Jewish writers, unlike the other writers mentioned at the beginning of the Chapter, it was then not only a matter of bilingualism between Hebrew and Yiddish or Yiddish and the language of their country of origin. It was, as Brenner explains and citing from Shmuel Niger, how "one language" was, and continued to be "never enough for the Jews."

For Jewish writers, choosing Yiddish as their literary language was not such an obvious choice. Literary critic Hillel Halkin explain in a review how "it is indeed not entirely obvious why poets like Glatshteyn and Halpern, who arrived in the United States at the ages of 18 and 22 respectively, and who seemed emotionally quite able to turn their backs on Eastern Europe, chose to go on writing in Yiddish, a language that clearly had no future in America even then" (1987, 45). The choice of Yiddish for some writers was prompted by the historical context of their time. For others, it was the best way to reach a broader audience; for others still, it was the political enterprise for the fight of its defense. For other writers, choosing Yiddish was simply the language that best fitted their creative purposes. The latter is what defined the *Inzikh* movement. Despite the fact that in its beginnings, in the 1920s, there were no political or social claims behind their agenda, as times changed their view on the Yiddish language changed with them. The *Inzikh* writers were 'world conscious individuals' with one objective: to write poetry in Yiddish. Their aim was to have modern Yiddish poetry enter the canons of universal literature for the simple reason that the Yiddish language was as modern as any other language

could be. But was Yiddish, a diasporic language of more than seven centuries, the "genuine" vehicle for a modern Jewish literature? Many writers faced such contradictions as "the same opportunities that allowed the Yiddish poet in America to cultivate his cosmopolitanism and selfhood also encourages his fellow Jews to switch over to English - so that they might read English rather than Yiddish verse" (Wisse, 2000: 168).

This conversion into other languages may be traced back to the 19th century in Europe where the *Maskilim*[42] were promoting German and Hebrew as the official languages for the "Intellectual Jew" in Europe. As Davis informs us (2010: 7),

> For many of the prominent Yiddish writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, their preferred choice was not to write in Yiddish. They saw Hebrew as the natural language of literary and intellectual expression, whilst others, such as Shimen Frug (1860-1916) and Sh.An-ski (Shloyme Zaynvl Rapaport 1863-1920) found, for a time, their most natural expression in Russian. Here, at least, they were surrounded by many millions who spoke the language, and this was not then the case with Hebrew. Writing in Hebrew was an aesthetic choice, as well as a political one, especially in the case of Zionists. At that time, if a writer wrote in Hebrew, it was less for wider communication of ideas, but more to develop the potentialities of the language as a modern vehicle of expression.

By the end of the nineteenth century, many other writers (such as Peretz, Sholem Aleichem and Mendele Mojer Sforim) decided to switch from Hebrew to Yiddish, as they saw that most of their readers read only in Yiddish. They also viewed writing in Yiddish as a way to modernize a language that had been considered an oral language for centuries. Soon these writers became the great classics of modern Yiddish literature, since, as Roskies (1999: 234-35) observes,

> in order to reach the totality of one's potential Jewish readership, intellectu-als now had to translate the same work, pay to have it translated, and oth-erwise learn to adapt to an audience differentiated as to language, class, educational level, ideological outlook, and geography.Thus Abramovitsh became the "grandfather" of two literatures by translating his major Yid-dish novels into a modem Hebrew style of his own invention. Sholem Aleichem gained an international following by writing primarily in Yiddish but also in Hebrew and Russian. Abraham Cahan (1860-1951), whose first literary language was Russian, learned the craft of fiction writing for the Commercial Advertiser, a "progressive" English-language newspaper in New York City, before

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[42] Followers of the Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment. A movement that took place in Central and Eastern Europe between 1770's and the 1880's. Haskalah is a Hebrew translation of die *Auklärung*, or the Enlightenment (Feiner 197, 199–200; see also Pelli 92) which promoted the revival of the Hebrew language and its literature with Moses Mendelssohn as its chief ideologue.

becoming the czar and chief architect of the American-Yiddish press. Until 1914 a Jewish writer limited to a single language was the exception rather than the rule.

The pursuit of a wider readership led one of these writers, I.L. Peretz, to go even further and proclaim in 1908 in the first Yiddish Language Conference in Czernowitz, that Yiddish was *the* national language of the Jews, instead of *a* language of the Jews. This statement would change the course of the history of the Yiddish language. The defense of the Yiddish language in the 20th century became even more diligent once Jewish populations were forced into exile due to the rise of fascism in Europe and were faced with linguistic assimilation. Many of the Jewish writers and poets exiled in America decided to switch from Yiddish to English, as we have seen in the first Chapter. Writers such as Abraham Cahan, who understood the political and literary as being intertwined because he believed that writing could change the world. It is therefore that his writing in English (his novels) would serve as a testimony of the Jewish immigrant. This can also be seen with the poet Malka Heifetz Tussman, who as a young immigrant came to America in 1912 and decided there to start writing her poetry in English despite Yiddish being her mother tongue: "America: a new country, a new language. I am going to forget for a while about Me. I am going to learn fast about America, about English. I am going to love it all. It will never be 'you', 'I'. I will make it just 'we'" (1992: 17). It was not until her teacher and mentor Kalman Maror urged her to write in Yiddish, although she was already fluent in English, that she decided to write her poems exclusively in Yiddish (18).

Tussman was not the only Yiddish poet who started writing in another language and then switched to Yiddish. Many of the Yiddish poets who wrote in Yiddish, initially wrote their first poems in another language, mainly in the language of their country of residence. Dropkin wrote in Russian but after coming to America, Abraham Liessin influenced her to change from Russian to Yiddish (Liptzin, 1970: 192): "A Yiddish poet could switch from writing Russian poetry to Yiddish, as did S. Frug in Russia or Dovid Edelshtat in America [...] or from Hebrew to Yiddish and vice versa, as we see in Bialik and most Hebrew poets of the early twentieth century" (Harshav, 1990: 144). Leyeles knew Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian, German, Polish, English and some French. His first book, a political essay was written in German, but his poetry was written entirely in Yiddish. In the case of Debora Vogel, she started writing poetry in German and Polish and decided to learn Yiddish late in her adult years even when Yiddish was never considered her native language. So was the case of the well-known Yiddish linguist Ber Borokhov, who despite his *maskilim* upbringing learned Yiddish at the age of 26. For the

Introspectivists, the choice of Yiddish went beyond artistic preference; their choice was a way of resistance, resistance to linguistic assimilation.

But language was not only a matter of choice, it was also a matter of fate, as Ruth Wisse states: "The fate of Yiddish in America points to an essential difference between the Jewish experience in the new country and the old" (1997: 132). Wisse goes on to explain that the Jews in America became full participants in the cultural life of the new country and disagrees with Cynthia Ozick's statement of Jews in America creating a *New Yiddish.* Ozick, for whom English became her native language while Yiddish was the language of her parents, belongs to the second generation of Jewish immigrants in New York. Although Ozick translated Yiddish poetry into English she recounts the disappearance of the Yiddish language in a tragic, yet comical story titled "Envy; or, Yiddish in America-A Novella" (1971)[43]. According to Shreiber (2010: 38), for Ozick

> it was impossible to think that a work of real 'Jewish imaginative genius' could be written in a 'Gentile language.' Searching for a solution to this dilemma, she proposes the creation of a new Jewish language, a 'New Yiddish'—an English-based discourse that includes, and depends upon, Hebrew and "Old Yiddish" words and concepts as central to its system of meaning.

This view of the language as an adapted blend dependent on its speakers' language of residence could not be further from what the Introspectivists understood as *New Yiddish.* They viewed *New Yiddish* as a language which had undergone a transformation following the modern standards of modern literature, to equate Yiddish to any modern language: "Glatstein adapted Joyce, endorsing the Joycean technique[44] as a natural option for Yiddish [...] If anything, the Yiddish writers were much more radical in their political and literary experimentation than the generation that functioned in English" (Wisse, 1997: 137). The Introspectivists believed

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[43] For a further explanation of this story see Chapter Four of this thesis.

[44] "For Joyce, all experience of reality must filter through language, or rather is lived through language (...)" (Cixous, 363). The writer embraces a relation with language seen as the "other person", a sense of strangeness and sensuality: "He loves or fears words as he would love or fear actual people, even going so far as to adopt the necessary artifice of making his native language into a foreign tongue; he does this, it seems, in order to guarantee being sufficiently distant from it for his feelings of being different to encourage his desires." (ibid) "(...) everywhere, language is the property of others before he apropiates it for himself (...)" (ibid). Language was a tool to define reality, a reality of exile "to a society which was torn in pieces and abandoned to the disorder of history;" (ibid, 406) (...) "make" his own language (...) towards a new language" (ibid, p415)

themselves to be the spokespeople of the new poetic word. An essay[45] published in their July 1920 journal ponders "who knows where we will arrive, as we start a new Chapter in Yiddish poetry" (270). The essay uses words like 'new', 'way', 'direction', and 'world' to define the *Inzikh* movement. They believed it to be the new Yiddish poetry, unfolding in America at the time, judging by their statement that "with this journal we have begun a new work [...] A poetry that goes several steps beyond everyone else"[46] (270). With the creation of this new poetry the Yiddish language underwent a transformation. As the Introspectivists were adapting their new poetic style to its times, the task of Yiddish was similar: it was becoming a language that was now in contact with cosmopolitan cities and was chosen to be the carrier of the new avant-garde poetry.

b. Creating a 'new' *mameloshn[47]*

> "We have no tradition. We have found very little that
> could serve as tradition for us. The tradition begins
> perhaps with us, strange as it may sound."
> *Inzikh, 1923*

After the exploration of other writers' use of Hebrew, Yiddish and translanguaging, I now return to the *Inzikh* movement and the way the Introspectivists saw and used language in their writings. The term *mameloshn* has been used to title this section as it gives a clearer connotation of transition from the old to the new language, from the oral usage of the language to a use primarily in literature. The Introspectivists used this transition to their advantage. Their condition of exiled gave way to a freedom and detachment of the mother-tongue. The renovations of what was in their countries of origin in Eastern Europe the oral language of *mameloshn*, gave way to a new transformed Yiddish. The transformation of the language went beyond the need to turn an old connotation into a new modern one, the modernization of Yiddish was the only possible way, they believed, for the language to persist in exile.

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[45] Titled "*di treger fun idish*" (The carrier of Yiddish). The word *treger* carries a symbolic association as in Eastern European Jewish towns (*shtetls*), the person in charge of selling books from town to town would be called *pakn treger*.

[46] Translations from the *Inzikh* journal from Yiddish to English, unless otherwise mentioned, are mine.

[47] Mother-tongue. The definition of this term and its historical context can be found in Chapter one.

According to Harshav, the early 1920s were the best years for Yiddish poetry. Those were also the years that saw the *Inzikh* movement rise to glory. As mentioned in the quote introducing this section, the Introspectivists hardly looked back at the Yiddish classical writers or folklorists, choosing instead to get their inspiration from T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and foremost from Walt Whitman. In the Introspectivists' style, one could find traces of Italian and Russian Futurism, French Symbolism[48], English Imagism, and ideas from Oriental mysticism, with Nietzsche and Freud among other influences. Their impression of the world would come from within and free verse was what better suited the noises of the big city. They could talk about anything, but the Yiddish language itself was one of their most important subjects. The innovations of the Yiddish language were what was modern in their poetry, and as T. S. Eliot's had stated: "the duty of the poet is only indirectly to the people: his direct duty is to his *language*, first to preserve, and second to extend and improve" (1957: 20). Writing in Yiddish and wanting it to become part of the world was a way of not only vindicating a threatened language, but also making a statement. The poet became an artisan of the language, a proletariat of the word, as in Glatstein's poem, "*Mir, di Wortproletarier*" (We the Wordproletariat): "Night. In the darkest places sparkle traces/ Of words. Loaded ships with ideo-glyphs/ Sail away. And you, armored in silence and wisdom, / Unwrap word from sense".[49]

These revolutionary writers were constructing a new path. Their responsibility was not to worship the ashes but to keep the fire alive. Poetry becomes then their new haven and Leyeles uses the image of construction as to point out that in exile, the construction of their new home would be through the usage of words: "A tower-of-words" (Harshav, 2007: 25). The poem written by Leyeles titled "A Dream Under Skyscrapers" shows in a nostalgic way the dreams and hopes of the young poets who emigrated to New York. The poem also "reveals the essential role of Yiddish on the broader Jewish culture, and places Yiddish culture in America where it belongs: at the center of discussions of literary modernism and cultural modernity." (Norich, 2007: 3)

> In the soaring checkered buildings
> Of the magnificent, tumultuous metropolis New York,
> Young people sit cramped-in, careworn, careless,

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[48] The *Inzikh* poet Minkov was compared to French Symbolist's poets in an article published in the *Inzikh* Journal of January 1930. In that same article, one can also find translations into Yiddish of Mallarme's poetry or a citation of Remi de Gourmont (1858-1915).

[49] *"Nakht. In di tunklste erter finklen verter./S'geyen op gantse shifn mit bagrifn./ Un du, bapantsert mit shvaygn un klugzayn,/ Viklst op vort fun meyn."* (Translation into English by Harshav and Harshav 2007, 275).

And the skyscrapers are alert witnesses
To a new edifice being erected- here, in the marketplace,
With the heritage of the fathers and grandfathers,
A tower-of-words is built; the builders are young,
They lay the bricks in joy and in sorrow[50]

Leyeles argued that a poem had to be ductile, that is, a poem is not an object to be admired in a shrine or placed in a showcase, a poem is a means for dialogue. Unlike the critical trend of the times, *New Criticism*, the Introspectivists used the historical and cultural contexts to analyze and create their poetry. Hence in many of Leyeles' poems, as in the series "Subway", his experience of exile may be perceived as a form of dialogue between the narrator and the city of New York. This American experience for Leyeles is also the experience of what he read in Walt Whitman's poetry: "For these poets, the real America is the imagined place in Whitman's poems" (Levinson, 2008: 139). For the exiled Jewish poets, Whitman represented more than a cultural space or a model, he was seen as the modern version of a biblical prophet[51]. In Leyeles' poem "A dream under the skyscrapers" (an excerpt is cited above), the poet rhymes the word "Whitmanian" with "American", implying that the two words have the same meaning. In a similar vein, Walter Benjamin interprets the social experience of the *flâneur* in the streets of Paris through the verses of Baudelaire, in which the knowledge of experience is no more than the knowledge of what is read. "Benjamin" reads "Paris because he fundamentally" reads "Baudelaire"[52] (Kohan, 18), just as Leyeles reads America because he reads Whitman: "By taking Whitman as model, one could be a universalist, an American, a free lyricist, a lover-a full-blooded person. And not only Whitman's thoughts, but also his style became an example for Yiddish writers" (Hadda, 1973: 250). The *Inzikh* poets identified with New York City following the footsteps of Walt Whitman. Their poetic experience claims or defines a space, and it is through the poem that Leyeles seeks to establish and promote Yiddish cultural autonomy. An autonomy that would begin with the individual.

As it has been described, the influence of modernists on Yiddish poets came more from poets they read in their new homelands in the English language than from poets of their own tradition.

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[50] "*In di hoykhe un gekestlte gebaydes/ Fun der vunderbarer, tumldiker shtot New-York/ Zist geengt a yungvarg,/ i mit zorg, i on shum zorg,/ Un di volknkratsers zenen vakhe eydes,/ Vi mit der yerushe fun di tates, zeydes/ Vert geshtelt anayer binyen-do, inmitn torg./ S'iz a verter-binyen, s'boyen yunge boyer,/ Un zey leygn tsigl mit a freyd un troyer.*" Translation into English by Harshav and Harshav, (2007: 25).

[51] For more information on the influence of Walt Whitman on Yiddish poets see: Prager, Leonard. "Walt Whitman in Yiddish." (1983), pp 22-35.

[52] Translation into English is mine.

The most significant Yiddish poet who did mark their steps and was for them of great influence for having "crossed the boundary of his time", was Yehoash, a Yiddish-language poet, scholar, and translator who immigrated to the United States in 1890. He was considered by Introspectivists, and by many Yiddish poets, as the most important figure of Yiddish poetry in their times. They went as far as considering him one of their group, a poet who could have perfectly been a comrade or even a pioneer of their poetic movement.

Despite denying being influenced by Yiddish poetry, and despite their keen connection with the American Imagists, the Introspectivists did acknowledge a number of certain "intermediate steps" of previous poetic movements, as was the case of "the so-called *Yunge*" (1907-1908; the Young Generation). This previous group of poets, they declared in their manifest, "led Yiddish poetry out onto a broader road" (Harshav, 2007, 782) and opened a new way of writing poetry in Yiddish, towards "pure poetry" and rejecting political themes. *Di Yunge* did contribute to a certain renovation and modernization of the language but overall, for the Introspectivists, these contributions remained on the surface and came to a dead end: "The refreshing, enriching, and refined became ossified and degenerated into a fruitless wasteland" (ibid: 783). In their manifesto, the Introspectivists conclude by saying how *Di Yunge* belonged to another period, a time that was finished but did serve a bridge to the time of a new poetry. However, the Introspectivists go on to express their affinity with the American Imagists, as Yiddish poetry can no longer feed their intentions as they regarded "the internal situation of Yiddish poetry-chaotic, faceless, characterless, and increasingly an obstacle to further development" (ibid: 784).

An important question to be considered here would be: Given that the Introspectivists completely, or mostly, denied being influenced by the Yiddish poetic tradition, could we speak of a lack of tradition? Or were they poets who purposely overlooked their own tradition in order to establish a new tradition? As Harshav states, "in modern Yiddish poetry, the lack of tradition was far more radical since hardly any poet learned Yiddish literature in school (...) Quite often, the first poetry they read was not in Yiddish" (Harshav, 1990: 143). This would have been the case of Leyeles, for instance, who attended Hebrew school and a Russian commercial school in the city of Lodz as a young boy.

As opposed to Harshav's theory, there *was* a Yiddish poetic tradition and women were the pioneers of that tradition in old Yiddish poetry, according to Katz: "We usually don't know

whether it was men or women who actually wrote the special Yiddish prayers for women. In either case, this genre eventually inspired women to start writing individual Yiddish poems and have them published under their own name" (2004: 104-105). In addition, Korman, who compiled the first anthology of Yiddish women poets in 1928, regarded these women poets as pioneers of Yiddish poetry. It is hard to say how this first contribution of poetry written by women could have inspired modern Yiddish poets, but we can find certain parallels in poets like Kadya Molodowsky and Rukhl Fishman. These poets continued the tradition of women Yiddish poets into the twenty-first[53] century and thus, began the struggle between the Jewish poet's traditional obligation to the community and the romantic or modern poet's responsibility to his individual voice and vision.

Although the Introspectivists' poetry contained very few Hebrew or Yiddish influences, it did incorporate, as Harshav maintains, a poetic language that was "adapted from other cultures" (1990: 144). Despite what Harold Bloom advocates, that the influence of precursor poets cannot be evaded (1997), the Introspectivists did start a new poetic tradition: "Yiddish poetry itself, in any given generation, had an autonomous existence in each cultural center—in the United States, Warsaw, Vilna, or the Soviet Union—and the differences between them were like the difference between American and British poetry" (Harshav, 1990: 145). Therefore, the norms of Yiddish poetry were established not so much from a Yiddish poetic tradition, but from the poetic norms that were established in the poetic languages of each place where the poets resided. This was seen with the flow of Jews immigrating to New York in the interwar period, were they incorporated into their personal style the *receiving literature*. The *Inzikh* poetry could culturally be considered as part of the American poetic tradition, but linguistically, the poems have been considered as part of the Yiddish poetic tradition. For these revolutionary poets, Yiddish ceases to be a language of immigrants or a language from the old country, and it is now proclaimed as a language of Universal letters. The *Inzikh* poets dissociated themselves from their ethnic condition, avoiding Jewish themes or traditional or folk literature. What the *Inzikh* poets ultimately strove for, by the usage of modern techniques in their poetic language that modernized and reshaped the Yiddish language, was to assert that the Yiddish language was as part of their own cultural heritage as well as of the World heritage. In the following section, I will emphasize on the importance of poetry as a cultural space for a minority language

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[53] See Kay, Devra, "Words for "God" in Seventeenth Century Women's Poetry in Yiddish", in Dovid Katz (ed.), *Dialects of the Yiddish Language* (1988), pp. 57-67.

and how the Introspectivists relegated the usage of the Yiddish language to function foremost in the poetic realm.

c. A re-constructed new language: *liderloshn*[54]

> "Poetry is, to a very high degree, the art of language -
> and Yiddish poetry is the art of the Yiddish language"
> - *The Inzikh Manifesto*

As the *Inzikh* quotation makes very clear, for the *Inzikh* movement, Yiddish was their *poetic instrument* where one could attain high achievements through its language. A language, that in addition to being a Jewish language was also, as they declared in their manifesto, part of the general European-American culture, "a particular stream in the whole contemporary poetry of the world" (Harshav, 2007: 780). On one hand, Yiddish literature written in Eastern Europe was far more distinct than the Yiddish literature written in exile, as the Yiddish written word in the *shtetls* was in contact with the oral that "brought to bear an additional layer of "spoken" [...] to the language constructed as literary" (Finkin, 2010: 8-9). On the other hand, while in exile, the Jewish immigrants had to face their new condition by recreating the language, and the way to do so was by seeking new forms. Yiddish went from being considered "as a literary language" to becoming "features of that literary language written in Yiddish" (ibid: 8).

Yiddish was an independent language; it had its autonomy. Yet Yiddish was not as any other language, as Yiddish had no state, no country. Yiddish had once a Pale of Settlement, even the attempt of a possible country, Birobidzhan. Now in exile, the language being in contact with its new setting, was forced to turn to a new path. For the Introspectivists, the new prime oral contact was with Walt Whitman and modern poetry but despite recognizing the influence of universal modern poets, their fight for their own true voice and originality was very present.

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[54] Poetic language. I invented this word to work as a correlative to the term *mameloshn*. In Eastern European countries before WWII, the term *mameloshn* was a correlative of *loshn koydesh* (sacred language, Hebrew). I use *liderloshn* as a correlative of *mameloshn* once in exile, a term that has taken the place of the sacred language.

What distinguished the Introspectivists from their modernist contemporaries was that they experimented with a distinguished element that made them unique. That was none other than the Yiddish language: "the Yiddish poet must create his own language, his own "*newword*" to describe his own unique experience" (Rubinstein, 2009: 502). The Introspectivists were conscious that language became a more influential element than what the themes in their poems would represent. The form became the new content, and thus, they established the *imperative of re-creation*, which in its essence represents Pound's "Make it new" or the value of novelty. Leyeles asserted that one should write poems that resembled the process of creating as Archipenko[55] sculptures, in that, just like cubism, the sole creation of a new artistic language is what defined a painting or a sculpture by its geometric forms rather than by its themes. And although Yiddish was not a 'new language', the Introspectivists did transform it into become something new. Yiddish went from being considered a *mameloshn* to a *liderloshn*: a reinvented language for the sole purpose of creating poetry and using poetry to modernize a language to adapt it to its changing times. As Wisse remarks, the Introspectivists succeeded in doing this by exploiting "the suppleness of their vernacular by incorporating vocabulary and sounds from other languages, paralleling the modernists, like Ezra Pound and James Joyce, who had re-imagined English as the universal tongue" (2000: 167-168). But they also realized that "the fun-filled literary style that James Joyce pioneered in English perfectly suited Yiddish, a European language that had integrated at least as many linguistic strands as English and could take at least equal delight in showing off its wit" (Wisse, 1997: 137).

The inclusion discussed above came with its own set of consequences, as in doing so, the Introspectivists had to break free from Hebrew, which they considered the father of the Yiddish language. Hebrew had, after the Enlightenment, gained more followers and readers and had slowly become more present in the Yiddish language. The Introspectivists comprehended that incursion as a problem, and they were to write a new Yiddish separated from its influential languages of German and Hebrew. Therefore, the Introspectivists reformed traditional Yiddish orthography by spelling Aramaic and Hebrew words phonetically. Traditionally, Semitic words in Yiddish kept their non-phonetic original spelling. A similar spelling reform would be implemented a few years later in the anti-clerical Soviet Union. This orthographic system, unique to *Inzikh*, remained intact until the very last volumes of the journal and was abandoned

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[55] Alexander Archipenko (1887-1964) was a Ukrainian-born American avant-garde artist, sculptor, and graphic artist known for his cubist sculptures.

entirely only after the Holocaust (Weinreich, 1959: 427-428). Writing in Yiddish took this radicalization a step further. If the poems spoke of worldly matters, the Yiddish language was the only evidence that made the poem Jewish. Its identity lay solely in its language.

The Introspectivists believed their movement emerged just at the right time when the Yiddish language could reach its highest potential in the world of poetry. In doing so, they followed their own path, in which individuality in a poem was everything. The poem did not have to be beautiful or ugly; it ought to, however, represent the truth seen within oneself. The path that led to that self-exploration and to creation was what they named in their manifesto "internal redemption" (Harshav, 2007: 779), a concept which will be elaborated on further in the third Chapter. That individuality of the poem had "to do with what is generally known as *form*" (ibid: 780), because the *Inzikh* poets considered form and content were the same, mirroring Paul Valery's thesis in that the creative process is in itself a work of art. The intention of the created piece of art, focuses then not so much on a final picture that the reader can apprehend, but on arranging a hypothesis of the image created in the poet's mind, since a poem is nothing but a chain of associations and suggestions of what life constitutes, "a cluster of external appearances we call life" (ibid: 776). An example of the individuality of a poem that had to do with *form* is the poem titled "Vesper" by Leyeles published in the *Inzikh* issue of July 1920,

א. לעיעלעס :

VESPER

1.

נאָלד-שנור אין גרויע כוואַליעס פון א ברײַטען טײך.
נאָלד-שנור נידערט אראָפ אין גרויע כוואַליעס.
מוקט זיך טיפער, זוכט זיך דאָרט אַלײן,
ווערט צעבראָכען, גרוי צעפאַלען.
און קוקט מיט בענקשאַפט ארויף.
נישט מעהר דער נאָלד-שנור.
גרויקיים קנוילט זיך בלויז.
בלײערנער —
זיפען.
נאָלד.
פליסיג נאָלד
אין גרויע כוואַליעם.
טיף און טיפער זינק איך נאָך דיר,
געצויגען פון דער פײן פון דיין שעהנקיים,
פון'ם טרויער, וואָס שאַטענט פון יעדער שעהנקיים,
זינק און ווייס, אז דו ביזם גאָר דאָרטען נישם דאָ
זינק און זוך דיך, כאַטש ביזם דאָרם קיינמאָל נים געווען.
זוך דאָס נאָלד, וואָס איז מיר נאָם באַשערם מעהר צו האָבען.

קיינמאָל נים באַשערם.
(יאָהאָן וואָלפגאַנג פאָן געטהע.
הענריק איבסען.
וואָיל דעם, וואָס זוכט דאָס וואָס נישמאָ מעהר.
וועה דעם, וואָס קאָן נים זאָגען : ס'איז פאַרגאַנגען.)

2.

וואַרטען.
וואַרטען.
וואַרטען.
איך האָב נים קיין גאָם און קיין גען.
איך בין אַהן ליבשאַפם און אַהן אויצערעם.
אָבער מיין האַרץ איז פול מים מפילעם.
קו'ה איך,

Free verse was the main mold of their poetic creation as it was considered the poetic form best suited for imitating the noises of the big city. Their predilections towards free verse were influenced by American-English poetry but, despite this influence, they considered themselves as being not only better and most masterful than their Anglo-American counterparts, in this respect, but that the Introspectivists free verse was actually the best in all languages (Leyeles, *Inzikh*, June 1923). The poets understood rhythm as being the 'mystery of life' and to represent that each poem had its own individual rhythm, making each poem unique. The poets viewed a rhythm adapted to its contemporary life and so for them the need arose, with the changing of times, to create "a new art and new and different rhythms" (Harshav, 2007*, 778).

In presenting critical views of *Inzikh's* free verse, Uriel Weinreich showcased Leyeles's commitment to the modernization of Yiddish rhyme while for Harshav true free rhythms are a

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deviation from any given metric norm (2014: 221). Leyeles's poetry is labeled as "Free Dynamic Rhythms", poems "(a) whose rhythmic impact is unlike that of normal spoken language, but (b) which have no predetermined ordering device" (ibid, 246-250). Harshav analyzed the various strategies Leyeles employed to achieve his *renowned big-city tempo*: short sentences, the aggregation of parallel linguistic units, and the abrupt shifting of the situation and diversity are the elements that express the kaleidoscopic effect *Inzikh* promoted (ibid:248). Many essays were written in the *Inzikh* journal regarding their view on how a poem should be made. In their majority, the focus was laid on the rhythm, discussing a multiplicity of rhythms versus the monotonous rhythm. Rhythm was the inner essence of a poem, the soul, that bound together the "poetry of feeling" and the "poetry of thought".

According to Harshav, Leyeles' poetry in free rhythms is one of the better versions of this trend in modern Yiddish poetry and a sign of the poet's fruitful engagement with poetic form. Harshav shares Leyeles' belief that content through form is the most fundamental principle of poetry (Zutra, 2010: 21). Leyeles goes on to write that "Free verse is needed only because it gives the poet a greater possibility to express a complex internal life and in the most individual, most fitting way for him [...] makes the poem richer, even truer, more responsive to contemporary psychic experiences" (*Inzikh*, July 1920). In this aspect, Leyeles turns to free verse, not so much as a trait of modern poetry, but as an expression of the inner self. The rhythm of the poem would express the emotions of the individual poet which may vary according to the mood, thus creating then a "natural flow of language" (Ibid). An example of a poem where its foremost sense of rhythm evokes a tone rather than a theme can be found in a series of poems by Leyeles titled "In the subway" (*In sobvey*). In these series of poems, the words emulate the rhythm of the trains. In the excerpt below for example, Leyeles rhymes the word *ban* (train) with the prefix *van* (which by itself has no meaning but Leyeles uses this prefix up to three times to then form the word *vanzin* (madness). This rhyme that connects *train* with *madness* is an example also of the effect and rhythms the new city evoked on the Jewish immigrant coming from a small town in Europe. The title of the poem (*In sobvey*) which is in English with Hebrew letters,
is also an example of the exilic experience where the new language intrudes the mother tongue.

> To the station comes
> A dead train.
> Pierced eyes.
> Bloody mouths.

In dead holes-
Golden coins,
Flashing blades,
Dropped by a hand
In a subway train
In the underground
mad-mad-madness.[56]

The *Inzikh* poets aimed to break the traditional frameworks, so for Wisse,

> unlike his Yiddish contemporaries and predecessors who were raised mostly on Russian, Polish, and German literatures, Glatstein also read Anglo-American literature, including T.S.Eliot, Ezra Pound, and James Joyce- expatriates like himself, who rendered the disintegration of their inherited traditions as masterworks of wasteland and exile. In a short essay, "If Joyce wrote Yiddish", Glatstein demonstrates how playfully a Yiddish poet could write ultramodernist prose, by using perceived breakup of his native language to reinvent it in new combinations. (2010: xii)

This language experimentation was not something that interested the *Inzikh* poets alone. After WWI, Yiddish modernists in Germany, the Soviet Union, Poland, and America were engaged in an extensive avant-garde artistic activity. Postwar Yiddish literary groups can be divided as follows: the Kiev Group (1918-1920), the Berlin *Milgroym* group of the same period, the New York *Inzikhistn* and the *Khalyastre* group of Poland (1919-1924) (Wolitz, 1981: 6). Kiev, in addition to Moscow and Minsk, became centers for Yiddish culture after the Bolshevik revolution. Poets in these centers were torn between the drive to be socially and politically concrete and the desire to express individualistic tendencies (Novershtern, 2008: 1373).

For these modern Yiddish poets, the question of how a Yiddish poet can write seeking the abstraction of universal humanity from the perspective of a particular community – in their case, the Jewish community, was thoroughly debated. Furthering that question, Chana Kronfeld asks, "To what extent to these poems, construed in the historical context of their multiple/partial trend affiliations, reveal a concern with their own marginality and modernism?" (1996: 194). Did these poets really think they were writing in the margins?

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[56] "*Kumt tsu der stantsie/ a toyter tsug./ durkhgeshhtokhene oygn./ tseblutikte msyler./ in di toyte lekher-/ goldene mintsn,/ blitsike sharfn,/ vos di hant hot gevorfn/ in der sobvey-ban/ oyf dem untererdishn van-van-vanzin.*" (Translation into English by Harshav and Harshav, 2007, p. 103).

The Introspectivists, although formed as a group, were conscious of that marginality, a marginality that came, not as much as of the extravagances of their style but because of their choice of language. They encountered then a double marginality, the estrangement of belonging to an avant-garde group that was incomprehensible to their own tribe but most of all, by the marginality of witting in the Yiddish language[57]. For the Introspectivists, this sense of estrangement came with an exile of no return and therefore, made them adhere to the Yiddish language, not only as a matter of belonging to a certain group but in order to feel this would represent their state of home. Kronfeld seeks to counterpose this "alternative tradition" from Raymond Williams' "wide margins of the century" (1993: 3) by seeking those margins. But not in terms of "writers outside the cartographic and linguistic mainstream" (ibid: 4), with Yiddish literature among them, but in terms of genre as well. One can understand this better when consulting Modernist anthologies. It is in those anthologies that one understands what is missing. This marginality is, according to Williams, ideological and the state of emigree is what turns this ideology into a normal condition. The exiles that Williams refers to, are exiles as D.H. Lawrence and E. Hemingway, whose choice of living elsewhere was more ideological than for the purpose of survival, as it was for the Jews leaving Europe. This condition of exiles that Williams talks about, is what created a work of art, a modernism, where artists would work together and exchange perceptions as well as "ratify as canonical the works of radical estrangement" (35).

It is in this light that in his introduction to Williams' *Politics of Modernism*, Pinkney understands Modernism as being *re*active (5). He goes on to state, that this social position, as understood by Williams "tends to come through as a proposition about language: 'ordinary' language is clichéd, one-dimensional, abstract; and 'poetic' language will accordingly embrace difficult, experimental forms in an effort to revitalize perception" (ibid). The only possible way to respond to their situation as exiles in a modernizing era was through the transformations of its language, adapting the language to its changing times. American Jewish immigrants had long observed the quick evolution of Yiddish poetic movements that went from the social proletarians of the Sweatshop Poets to the young impressionist *Di Yunge*. None of these

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[57] As stated in some editorials in their journal, the Introspectivists were conscious of the few readers they had, those who knew Yiddish were not experienced with avant-garde poetry, and those who were experienced in avant-garde poetry did not know Yiddish. I will further this phenomenon in Chapter Three.

poetical groups responded so exceptionally to the effects that the changing times had had on the Yiddish language as the Introspectivists did.

What demarcated this group so exceptionally was that the *Inzikh* movement found itself in the midst of the Holocaust years. This historical situation made them reevaluate their conception of art. Starting in the 1930's the journal started to shift into a more political involvement, as "the plight of the Jews in Europe diverted the critical focus from the theory of poetic language to the problem of art in an age of destruction." (Harshav, 1990: 177). The destiny of Yiddish speaker immigrants in New York was going to be a very different one from that of other immigrants, as is the case of the Italians or the Irish, for instance, who had a country to return to, at least in theory. With the rise of fascism and anti-Semitism in Poland and in the Eastern European countries, return to their homes became an impossibility for Jewish immigrants.

In 1934, Jacob Glatstein, who was already living in New York, took a journey back home to his native Poland against all odds, to visit his dying mother. After what he had seen and experienced in Europe during that journey, things were never going to be the same for him. Once back in New York, he published a serialized novel in the *Inzikh* journal, narrating his experiences in the novel titled *Ven yash iz geforn*[58]. Glatstein's trip back to Europe would change the line of his poetry and with it the course of modern Yiddish poetry. During those years, the *Inzikh* journal had already started shifting the emphasis of its articles from a literary perspective to a more political one. Articles that were written in the 1920s, which were more focused on poetry, poetic theory and criticism with essays on Baudelaire or Walt Whitman, would then start shifting to a more politically inclined articles in the mid—1930s, with essays on Maxim Gorki or even the Spanish Civil War.

Not only did the articles in the journal became more politically inclined but also its poetry was changing. The sentence in their manifesto where they stated "The world exists and we are part of it" became the assertion of a more conscious poet, aware of their historical times. A pertinent example is the poem titled "Spanish ballad"[59] written by Leyeles and published in 1939 in the

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[58] Translated into English by Maier Deshell and Norbert Guterman as *Homeward bound* and published later together with his other novel *Homecoming at twilight* in the book *The Glatstein Chronicles*, with an introduction by Ruth Wisse. These novels will be discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis.

[59] The relation and perception of the Spanish Civil War in the *Inzikh* journal will be explored in an article I will be publishing in the volume *Jewish Imaginaries of the Spanish Civil War: In Search of Poetic Justice* (Bloomsbury Academic Publishing House expected in 2022). The *Inzikh* case is thus proposed as an example to

special 50th edition of the *Inzikh* journal. The poem itself relates the arduous journey on foot of a Spanish boy who is forced to flee from Spain due to the rise of fascism. But the most remarkable example of this change was the poem *"A gute nakht, velt"* (Good Night, World) written by Glatstein and published in 1938 in the *Inzikh* journal. This poem was to be the epitome of a movement lured by universal themes to claim the Jewish world to go back to their origins, to the Ghetto, as he writes in the last line of the first stanza. A Ghetto defined by Glatstein as the Yiddish literature, a place reserved for the great Yiddish classics, Mendele, Sholem Aleichem and Peretz (*Inzikh*, May 1938). The last verse of the poem alludes to that coming back in a metaphorical way: "the joy of coming" meant going back to their Jewish traditions, to their roots.

It was so that the Introspectivists managed to turn political activism into poetical activism. Above all, their aim was the preservation of their homeland language, the Yiddish language. The focus on the Yiddish language had always been central to the Introspectivists and representing it in its most modern artistic forms had always been their credo. Many articles in their journal gave rise to questions around the Yiddish language, whether it was the problematics of Yiddish in America, or in Israel or Yiddish literature in the world. By the near end of their poetic achievements, their concerns with the Yiddish language went from being a poetic linguistic choice to a political determination. This question is discussed in the following Chapter, in which despite their view of the demise of Yiddish readers, the Introspectivists advocated to write in Yiddish more than ever to safeguard the language from falling out of use.

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illustrates the interest, shared with other Yiddish poets of the interwar period, in international affairs such as the Spanish Civil War and how it affected their poetical work.

CHAPTER III—*Farbesering* the Yiddish language

> "Every allegedly great age is an age of translations"
>
> - Ezra Pound

As seen in the previous Chapter, the focus on the Yiddish language had always been central to the *Inzikh* poets and representing it in its most modern artistic forms had always been their credo. Changing or inventing new Yiddish words with the use of various languages would establish a new contemporary nature of the Yiddish language. The neologism *farbesering*, which is part of the title of this Chapter, comes from the Yiddish term *farbesern* which means to improve, correct. This term was used in translations done in the nineteenth century from universal languages into Yiddish. In front the translator's name, instead of the more common use of 'translated by', it would be written *fartaysht un farbeser*t (made comprehensible and improved). This mode of generative interaction between languages by combining the Yiddish word *farbeser* with the English -ing was a common practice of the *Inzikh* poets. By introducing a foreign element into the Yiddish language, it would make Yiddish part of the world, and at the same time, it would get rid of the common misconception of it being *the jargon* of the old world.

This re-creation[60] of the language came largely in part inspired by the translations of modernists poets into Yiddish. Translations into Yiddish played a major role in the *Inzikh* journal. This mode of translation as a literary technique has not been theorized and this discussion is essential to understand the Introspectivist's relation to the Yiddish language. The aim of this Chapter is to present the process of translation or self-translation *into* Yiddish as a literary mode and as a means of resistance in preserving the Yiddish language. The first part of the Chapter discusses the very interesting phenomenon of how, in the twentieth century, translations into Yiddish, though fewer in number, were done for an entirely different purpose. Translating into Yiddish was a common practice of the *Inzikh* movement, similar to the practice in the late 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. This type of translation practice reinforces not only their 'choice'

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[60] In the *Inzikh* issue of January 1920, Leyeles wrote an article titled "Poetic re-creation" where he explains how the poet must cut off the thread with tradition in order to find a new mode of poetic expression.

of Yiddish, as seen in the previous Chapter, but also demonstrates how this technique helped them transform and innovate associated technique in the Yiddish language.

The Introspectivists were more concerned with translating world literature *into* Yiddish than translating their work into English, as other authors did (Sholem Asch, I. B. Singer) in order to gain wider recognition. In this Chapter I will explore how translation *into* minority languages can either be seen as a practice in forming national identities (Venuti 2005) and as a literary mode to transform the language itself (Yao 2002). The second part of the Chapter explores the phenomenon of self-translation. While most multilingual authors self-translated from minor languages to world languages in order to gain a bigger audience, other authors, as is the case of Debora Vogel, choose to self-translate her poetry from German and Polish *into* Yiddish. This self-translation from major to minor presents a unique case and reinforces the battle for the Yiddish language that the Introspectivists were doing in their journal in New York in the 1930s.

For Yiddish modernist writers, translating into Yiddish was far more relevant than translating from Yiddish to world languages. In the *Inzikh* journal, one could find translations from a variety of sources, such as French writers, including Baudelaire or Rimbaud to American poets, such as Whitman or Native American chants. The Yiddish modernists poets understood translation as a literary mode, similar to Ezra Pound's understanding of translation (Yao 2002), where translation was a technique that served primarily as a means of innovating the target - in this case Yiddish - language. Their aim was to invigorate the Yiddish language, as for them the "engagement with the modernist scene via translation could serve as an assertion of modern and American, as well as cosmopolitan and transnational" (Rubinstein, 2009: 488). It is through these translations that the Yiddish modernist poets engaged with the American culture. However, due to the lack of translations from Yiddish, the American culture was not so much aware of the Yiddish poetry that was being created there at the same place and time. The consequences of this aspect will be discussed in detail in the following Chapter.

The *Inzikh* poets such as Leyeles would translate from E.A. Poe, J. Keats, W. Whitman, P. Verlaine, A. Lowell, J.W. Goethe, M. Lermontov, A. Pushkin and S. Spender (Harshav, 2007: 8), to L. Trotsky, foreshadowing his style from modern poetics to political activity. Translating into Yiddish became first a necessity and then a literary exercise, without losing the sense of preservation of the language. The role that translation played in the making of modern Yiddish

poetry served as a primary source of inspiration, innovation and achievement of the Yiddish language for the Introspectivists. Yao (2002: 234) succinctly sums up the Yiddish poets' tactics when he writes that

> Modernists writers employed translation not simply as a transparent procedure for reproducing the exact semantic or even pragmatic meaning of foreign texts, but instead as a complex strategy by which to engage in different discursive arenas ranging from gender to politics to language.

Before analyzing the Yiddish poets' translation practice *into* Yiddish, I will discuss two important aspects that pertain to translation and are closely associated with the *Inzikh* movement. Firstly, translation into a national language was a common practice in the Renaissance in Germany and France as way of nationalizing languages. The Yiddish language also went through the process of nationalization as political and nationalists' leaders translated a vast array of literary and political works into Yiddish. For minority languages translation became more relevant as what it was at stake was not just the nationalization of the language but its prevalence. Lawrence Venuti writes on how translation helps form national identities "through both the selection of foreign texts and the development of discursive strategies to translate them." (2005: 180). However, "nationalisms cannot be viewed simply as forms of class dominance: translations must be accepted by a mass audience to be effective in constructing national languages, cultures, identities" (qtd. Easthope 6–8, 178).

This practice of translation into minor languages is what Venuti terms 'linguistic ecology' (2005: 199), a concept that cannot be reduced to ethical or political evaluation without considering the historical moment when these translations emerged. This is a crucial concept for the purpose of this study as one of the principal motivations of the vast number of translations made into Yiddish during the years of the *Inzikh* journal was their condition of exile, which creates the specific circumstances of the historical moment Venuti refers to. In exile, Yiddish had to prevail against assimilation, and while Yiddishists and linguistics (sucha as Chaim Zhitlowsky, Max Weinreich) were creating schools for the learning of Yiddish, and writing grammar books and dictionaries in Yiddish, the Introspectivists sought to achieve that foregrounding of the language through their poetry.[61]

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[61] At the arrival to New York in 1909, Leyeles was also involved in the founding of Yiddish schools and Yiddish institutes as the still existing Workmen's Circle in New York, where Yiddish classes are still being taught today. The Introspectivists also wrote articles in their journal praising the work that the Yiddishist Chaim Zhitlowsky was doing with the Yiddish language.

The Yiddish linguist and ideologue Zhitlowsky, who was seen by the *Inzikh* poets as the knight of Yiddish (*Inzikh*, July 1920), believed translations into Yiddish would be a revitalization of the Jewish national and cultural autonomy. The basis of this autonomy was the Yiddish language. Zhitlowsky envisioned that the autonomy of a secular Yiddish culture would carry Jews forth into modernity. According to Joshua Price (2015),

> In his 1910 essay, "On the Worth of Translations," Zhitlowsky saw in the translation of works of world literature a way to establish Yiddish as a *kultur-shprakh,* a language of culture as modern, capacious, and expressive as hegemonic European languages. And for Zhitlowsky, echoing the philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744 – 1803), linguistic vitality was synonymous with national legitimacy. Relatedly, translation was a means to attain *bildung* (education), to broaden the horizons of Yiddish readers in tandem with political mobilization, and to create the basis for a grand symbiosis of Jewish and European culture. Zhitlowsky's theory of translation sought to reveal how the terms "nationalism" and "cosmopolitanism" were in fact mutually constitutive, no more so than in the case of the famed poet Yehoash's translation of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*, for which Zhitlowsky's essay originally served as an introduction.

There is a subsection in Venuti's article (2005) centered on the Catalan language[62], which has a special affinity to my own study, as the role of translation in invigorating national identities but also protecting and developing a language that is not only seen as marginal but is considered threatened is discussed (2005: 199). The connection here is very clear: the nationalizing of the Catalan identity with translations made *into* Catalan was very similar to the Yiddish nationalizing. Both minority languages (languages without a state) felt the urge to translate world literature into their threatened language as a means to not only reinforce the language but also to enrich it. Venuti uses the Catalan poet Josep Carner as an example, who was a poet in exile, yet another similarity with the Yiddish modernist poets. Carner, "considered the translation of canonical literary works as a means of developing the Catalan language and literature so as to construct a national identity" (Venuti 2005, 194). Carner's understanding of translation is very much similar to that of the Introspectivists poets, as they too believed that Yiddish cannot solely be enriched from within itself but "must be enriched through literary

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[62] In 1913 Yiddish philologist Ber Borokhov wrote about the Catalan language, among other minority languages, and their fight for prevalence as examples that could serve the Yiddish language. The *Inzikh* poets must probably have read Borokhov's text as Leyeles refers to the Catalan language in an essay written in the *Inzikh* issue of March 1937. To see a further comparison of the two languages (Catalan and Yiddish) see Holger Nath "The first international Conference of the Catalan Language in Barcelona (1906): a spiritual precursor to Czernowitz (1908)?" in *The Politics of Yiddish* (1998).

translation" (Venuti, 2005: 194). The Introspectivists also show that the Catalan identity "is largely a linguistic construction that requires translation to be viable" (ibid.).

As we have seen in the previous Chapter, the Introspectivists believed that there was a limited Yiddish poetical tradition to build upon, and that with them a new Yiddish poetic tradition was created. Although, they did get influences from previous Yiddish poetic movement as *Di Yunge* or from Yehoash, they still strove to create a new literary tradition in a minor language that would become universal. Carner, just as Leyeles, used "architectural metaphor to describe the work that Catalan poets must perform on their language and literature" (Venuti, 2005: 195). Carner exemplifies this with his article in 1908 titled "De l'acció dels poetes a Catalunya," (where the word *acció* signifies not so much action as military or political engagement but of architectonic construction (Venuti, 20015: 195). Similarly, Leyeles with the use of the image of construction points out that in exile the construction of their new home would be through the usage of Yiddish words: "A tower-of-words" in his poem "A dream under Skyscrapers". As can be seen from such examples, the Introspectivists were reinventing their own Jewish identity using translation to achieve stylistic innovation in the Yiddish language. As such, Yiddish poets were becoming the new architects of the Yiddish language, acting by enriching their literary tradition through such constructions. By doing so, they were creating, they believed, a new literary tradition that would put Yiddish poetry on the map of the universal literary world.

The second significant point that needs to be addressed is that this practice of translation from world literature into the literary language is seen by Yao (2002) as a literary mode as opposed to a mode of literary production, a conception commonly explored in Translation Studies. In Yao's study, this focus of a cross-cultural poetic practice is centered on the English modernists' poets and writers. In what follows I will employ his thesis to better understand the importance and the role that the act of translating world literature into Yiddish had on the Introspectivists. Yao establishes in his study several inter-related objectives that can help us understand the Introspectivists objectives in their translations into Yiddish. These objectives (234) can be

> (1) to trace the changing terms for the practice of translation as a mode of literary production during the period of Anglo-American Modernism; (2) to demonstrate the ways various Modernist writers employed translation not simply as a transparent procedure for reproducing the exact semantic or even pragmatic meaning of foreign texts, but instead as a complex strategy by which

to engage in different discursive arenas ranging from gender to politics to language; and (3) to show how these efforts in turn led to innovations in poetic and novelistic form associated with Modernism as a literary movement in English.

Although this literary mode of translation may differ within various national and historical contexts, the Introspectivists share with the modernist writers of the English language the experience of how "renewal and discovery require deep, transformative contact with other cultures and other systems of linguistic representation" (Yao, 2002: 238). Translation as a literary mode was a practice not limited solely to the Introspectivists. It was done by many poets and critics whose translations helped remodel and transform their own writing, from Ezra Pound[63] to T. S. Eliot to W.B. Yeats. H. D's translations from Greek for example significantly affected her development as a poet (Yao, 2002: 3-4). Equally, for Pound "translating constituted not just a sustained, but more important, a generative writing practice" (ibid: 4). Pound produced an impressive list of translations from various languages and subjects to the extent that "the age of modernism, was quite literally, an age of translation" (ibid: 5). The focus for these modernists writers was in the usage of language "as sources of both instruction and inspiration for renewing their own culture and expanding the possibilities of expression in English" (Yao, 2002: 5)[64]. This also led to multi-linguistic dimension of the poems, which were often multilingual. The use of various languages in the titles for example was practiced by E. Pound, T. S. Eliot, W. Stevens and J. Joyce. A practice that was also very common in the *Inzikh* journal, with titles in Latin or in English, as in such work as Leyeles' poems *"in subvey"* (In Subway) and *"vol strit"* (Wall Street). This usage of foreign languages was taken to such an extent "that Pound's famous injunction to "Make it New" seems in large measure to have meant "Make it Foreign"" (Yao, 2002: 6).

For the Introspectivists, translation meant more than just a literary exercise or cultural renewal. Incorporating different cultures also meant for the Introspectivists a breaking away of their Jewish traditions as these traditions had been understood in the Yiddish literary history[65]. In

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[63] Another interesting example of this cross-cultural practice influenced by the works of E. Pound is Pessoa's Haikus. For more information on this see Patricio Ferrari, Carlos Pittella-Leite "Twenty-one Haikus by Fernando Pessoa" *Pessoa Plural: 9* (P./Spring 2016).

[64] In 16th century England the sonnet (with Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey) as poetic form was introduced through translation. This points as there is a long tradition of specifically poets using translation for this purpose and rejuvenating literature in the process.

[65] According to Levy and Schacter (2015) "Literary translation from European languages was a primary mechanism of self- modernization. Writers throughout the Jewish world sought to develop modern Jewish-language literatures by translating contemporary European literature. Jewish writers in eastern Europe embarked

their manifesto they already stated as "We have no tradition. Tradition starts with us". This breaking with tradition acquired a visual and aural aspect, in its phonetic detachment from Hebrew words but also by incorporating foreign words into their poems. It was thus that the Introspectivists began establishing themselves as modern poets of the world. Their tradition was the American tradition, and this led to translations of Anglo/American modernists poets as W. Whitman, W. Stevens, and E.A. Poe among others into Yiddish. This incorporation of foreign words[66] (esp. English words) in their poems was also a method of resistance to translating their poems into English. Their new Yiddish poetry, they believed, was already part of the American culture.

For modernists writers, translation also served as a technique for the composition of their own 'original' works by "expanding the very linguistic dimensions of English literature as a whole. Through the practice of translation, modernists writers undertook to extend the limits of English itself, which in turn led them to discover new possibilities for their own expression" (Yao, 2002: 7). The *Inzikh* poets, as modernists poets, used translation as a "compositional and a conceptual strategy" (ibid: 8-9) in defining their national cultural identity and as a writing practice. Leyeles not only translated into Yiddish poems of universal writers such as, P. Verlaine, W. Goethe, and A. Pushkin, but he also translated a "book of *Aesthetics* by Broder Christiansen (who influenced the Russian formalists) from German into Yiddish" (Harshav 1990: 164). All these translations influenced his poetry in that his poems, "echo themes from Buddhism, psychoanalysis, American architecture, the Russian Revolution, the Bible, and Baudelaire" (ibid).

This mode of translation and recreation created some of the major Yiddish modernist literary achievements while at the same time presenting a diversity of world literature. Some poets who translated from foreign languages had little knowledge of the source language (such as translations from Chinese poetry[67] or a Japanese Noh Play[68]) and therefore the objective lay

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on broad translation projects to bring the classics of European literature to the Jewish masses. As they embraced the European novel [...] Thus, translation served as an intermediary between the broader world and the Jewish world, not by bringing Jewish texts to a global audience but by bringing the literary world into a burgeoning Jewish literary modernity." (96-7)

[66] See Adorno, Theodor, "On the use of Foreign Words" (1991).

[67] For an understanding of Pound's theory of translation instigated by Fenollosa's essay on the idiographic nature of the Chinese written language and which later became the catalyst for *Cantos* see Williams, R. John. "Modernist Scandals: Ezra Pound's Translation of 'The' Chinese Poem." (2009).

[68] These translations are unfortunately unsigned, and the original source is not cited. It is likely the translator worked from a translation of the Chinese into a European language.

not in faithfully rendering the original text into the target language, but in using the text as a practice of their own work and in rendering a cultural awareness. The concern was not the quality of the translation and the fidelity of the text translated from its original but the implications of the writers' renewing of the Yiddish language by incorporating different languages. Translation, for them, was after all, "a manifold cultural activity" (Yao 2002, 13) and a way to reinvent and reclaim the Yiddish language. With these translations, the *Inzikh* journal was not representative of the classical Jewish literary magazines because its universal content made it as international as it could be. The *Inzikh* poets Jewishness was proclaimed solely by the usage of Yiddish.

a. Translations into Yiddish

> *Valt Vitman bin ikh, a kosmos, der zun fun mekhtigen manhaten,*
> *Shturemdik, gufik, zindik, un ikh es, un trink un frukhper zikh,*
> *Kin sentimentaler,*
> *Kin muster iber man un froy, kin muster bazunder fun zey,*
> *Azoy fil basheydn vi umbasheydn.*
> —Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself", translated into Yiddish, 1919

As it has been noted already, it is through the translations from English into Yiddish that modernist poets where much engaged with the American culture, but the American culture was not so much aware of Yiddish poetry. Translations made by the *Inzikh* movement, as I have discussed, were exercises not only in transposing world literature into Yiddish but in using translation as an exercise to recreate and reshape the Yiddish language. In order to understand how/why the Introspectivists poets practiced that mode of translation, it is necessary to briefly examine the history of Jewish literature in relation to translations into Yiddish, as translation was a process that dominated the history of Jewish literature. Translations *into* Yiddish were far more numerous and more widespread than translations *from* Yiddish. This phenomenon may be partly explained by the multilingual identity of the Jewish people that facilitated translations from foreign languages into Yiddish. Another possible explanation is that

translating into Yiddish provided an important function in Yiddish cultural history (Litvine 1991, 2). This established the Jews early in history as "*a nation of translators* par excellence, and in part also determined the character of the process of translation" (ibid, 4) corroborating how translation is "one of our (Jews) most ancient traditions" (Litvine, 1991: 5) conditioned by history[69].

The first translations, or transpositions as Litvine terms them, into Yiddish were mainly religious texts which formed the history of Yiddish literature for centuries (1991, 6). These translations were a way of making the Hebrew religious texts comprehensible to the Jewish non-Hebrew reader. This phenomenon of transposing was called *taytshn*, which means 'to make comprehensible'. One of the most translated religious books from Hebrew into Yiddish until today is the *Tsene- Rene* (also called the women's bible)[70]. These translations had more of a practical use than a literary purpose. "The primary significance of translations *into* Yiddish stands out in the place they occupy in language and literature from the nineteenth century up until the Second World War. This is the period marked by the critical historical process of modernization of Jewish society" (ibid) which was also marked by national movements. For political movements, such as Zionism and the Haskalah, translations into Yiddish played a very important role as Yiddish was the language that could reach the masses, whereas Hebrew was then limited to the very few.

In an attempt to modernize the Jewish life and society, a wave of translations from world literature, including texts that were philosophical, historical, scientific, economic and political, was translated into Yiddish. "Not only Balzac and Tolstoy, Heine and Zola but also Darwin and Marx, Block and Kant, Rousseau and Kropotkin and many more" (1991: 7). This wave reached its climax around the First World War. During the interwar period "the emphasis shifts from quantity to quality, in the selection of material and in the standard of translation itself" (1991: 8). There is an increase in poetry translations, including those of works by medieval Hebrew poets.

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[69] See Even-Zohar's (1978/2000) The position of translated literature within the literary polysystem, in Venuti (2000) *The Translation Studies Reader* who examines exactly how translations into the target culture are used to form new literary and linguistic models.

[70] These first translations of religious texts into Yiddish from the seventeenth century, were mainly aimed at the female reader and in doing so, women incorporated their poetic works in some of the translation of these religious books as the *tkhines* (Kay 2004). Thus, according to Katz, women became the pioneers of Yiddish poetry (2004: 104).

After WWII, translation into Yiddish dropped dramatically as the Yiddish populations had experienced a significant decrease. At the time, the focus started to shift from world literature to Jewish literature. An example is Yehoash's translation of the Bible into Yiddish in 1941. Yehoash, who made his major contribution to literature as a translator into Yiddish, gained worldwide reputation to the point where his translations into Yiddish were being read by literary critics such as Harold Bloom. Bloom (1972: 304) recalls Yehoash's translation of Longfellow's' "Hiawatha" as being "personally dear to me because I first read it, as a small boy, in the eloquent Yiddish translation of Yehoash". Another reason for the decrease of translations into Yiddish was language assimilation. The motivation of these translations was another, they went from being utilitarian to serving the author's literary creative interest for the act of translation itself. This shift can be better understood by observing the statistics of the YIVO library where it shows how up to 1918 there were 169 translations into Yiddish; in the interwar period there were 175; and between 1945-1975 the number of translations dropped to 43 (Litvine, 1991: 11). The motive of translating into Yiddish after the Holocaust was more symbolic, as there was no longer "much of a Yiddish-reading public. By then, the motive was no longer 'utilitarian but rather for literary, creative interest in the act of translation itself'" (Davis, 2010: 13). The language most translated from was Russian, followed by French and then English. (Litvine, 1991: 11). It is interesting to compare the statistics, again from the YIVO library, of translations made from Yiddish into English. Up until 1945 we can find 80 titles translated; from 1945 till 1968 there were 248 and from 1969 till 1974 the number dropped to 28 titles (ibid: 12).

As explained in this Chapter, translations into Yiddish went from mainly being done to reach a greater audience or to make incomprehensible religious texts comprehensible, to modern translations into Yiddish out of a translatorial creative sense and for the purposes of acknowledging Yiddish as a modern language. "More than items of linguistic or literary interest, translations can be regarded as sites of cultural engagement that reveal the contingent nature of Yiddish vis-à-vis other languages at a given time and place" (Shandler, 2005: 3). Most of the earliest works in Yiddish literature are translations "ranging from Yiddish versions of the Bible, legends, ethical guides, liturgy, and other texts originally written in *loshn-koydesh* to works of secular literature from non-Jewish sources- such as Aesop's fables and the romance of King Arthur" (ibid).

Shandler raises the question that translations of world literature done by the turn of the twentieth century had the implication of ideological matters. Yiddishists were concerned that the Jewish youth would start preferring to read the work in their original languages and hence, translating world literature into Yiddish would help combat language assimilation (2005: 5). These translations were also reinforcing and transforming the language and were therefore a great contribution to Yiddish. "Some translators position their efforts as defiant acts of linguistic and cultural legitimization" (2005: 5). Many intellectuals of the Jewish illustration movement, called the Haskalah, had scorned the fact that works of literature written by authors such as Goethe were impossible to translate into Yiddish. Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) was one of them, who during the Haskalah, chose to use the German language for the culturalization of the Jews. He translated the Bible into German[71] using the Hebrew alphabet. It was not 150 years later that Yehoash translated the complete version of the Bible into Yiddish. That translation, among many others, considering the time and place of its creation was above all a defense of the Yiddish language.

Another interesting purpose attached to the phenomenon of translations into Yiddish was its intent to vindicate the Yiddish language. Renderings of great modernist writers such as James Joyce and T.S. Eliot into Yiddish proved that Yiddish was as modern a language as the language of the works of the authors they translated. In the *Inzikh* issue of July 1928, Glatstein wrote a parody titled, "If Joyce wrote in Yiddish" (68-70) where he simulated Joyce's writing in *Finnegans Wake*. Glatstein in his later poems also adapted Joyce's associative technique of fusion terms (Hadda, 1998: 57). "The fun-filled literary style that James Joyce pioneered in English perfectly suited Yiddish, a European language that had integrated at least as many linguistic strands as English and could take at least equal delight in showing off its wit" (Wisse, 1997: 137).

The second example of a rendering into Yiddish with the sole purpose of vindicating the language, was the poem *"Der shir hashirim fun Mendl Pumshtok"* ("The Song of Songs of Mendel Pumshtock") through which Saul Bellow and Isaac Rosenfeld made a version in

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[71] For more information on the battle between Yiddish and German related to translation see Groiser, David: "Aber wie soll ich denn aus dem Jiddischen übersetzen?": Gershom Scholem and the Problem of Translating Yiddish" (2007).

Yiddish of T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"[72] in the 1930s. According to Wisse, this was "one of the most celebrated poems of American Jewish literature" (1997: 129). This statement is surprising considering that the *Inzikh* poets were heirs of T.S. Eliot's style in their Yiddish poetry but what Wisse acknowledges is not the original Yiddish versions of the *Inzikh* poets, but the rendering/translation of Eliot's poem into Yiddish proving the significance a translation had versus an original. According to Boyden (2018, 182),

> Wisse might have chosen another, more serious Yiddish encounter with Eliot as her starting point for an American Jewish tradition, such as Aaron Leyeles's Fabius Lind poems, which through the device of the interior monologue are clearly indebted to Prufrock (Waldinger). The crucial difference, of course, is that, while the poems of Leyeles have been largely forgotten (and in fact are almost impossible to find), Rosenfeld and Bellow would go on to pursue successful writing careers in English.

The importance given to this work and the resonance it had, lies in the translation itself. Ironically, the resonance of this rendering *into* Yiddish was much greater than the poetic contributions the *Inzikh* poets had ever made. Bellow and Rosenfeld translated the first part of the poem into Yiddish and in doing so adapted it into Jewish themes. The poem's translation into Yiddish becomes more of a satire, a response to Eliot's anti-Semitic comments, by making the new version of the poem Jewish. The verse "through certain half deserted streets" in Eliot's poem is translated as "through streets that curve/Like the rabbi's beard" and when in Eliot's poem "the women come and go/ Talking of Michelangelo," in Bellow's and Rosenfeld's version the women "are talking of Marx and Lenin". Another clear example of the Judaization of the poem is how Eliot's sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells become kosher restaurants with gefilte fish.

This poem "marks a rare moment in American Jewish history when writers poised between two languages, representing two cultural communities, could still move in either direction, ahead if they wished into English high culture, or back into the immigrant culture from which they had just emerged" (Boyden, 2018: 131–2). This bilingualism, discussed in Chapter Two, was something not that common in second generation Jewish immigrants. Immigrants who were exiled to America in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century wavered between two languages (their Yiddish mother tongue and the new

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[72] "By the 1930s, Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," completed in 1911 and published in 1915 in the Chicago-based magazine Poetry at the instigation of Ezra Pound, had come to be regarded as the quintessence of American modernism." (Boyden, 2018: 184).

adopted English language). But this was not the case for Bellow and Rosenfeld, who were sons of immigrants moving away from their European Jewish past and into the assimilated American culture.

This new Yiddish version of Eliot's poem is clearly addressed to a Jewish reader, as the poem is full of Jewish references and was therefore not intended to be translated into English. Years later we can find an English translation of the Yiddish version of the English original. According to Wisse, this Yiddish parody was not intended for Yiddish readers either "but for aspirants to high English culture like themselves who were proud of transcending the same immigrant background" (Boyden, 2018: 131). But "what the Prufrock parody has in common with post-Holocaust uses of the Yiddish language is a marked consciousness of contingency that, rather than merely blocking creativity, allows for a reshuffling of the bond between language and identity" (2018: 191).

The Yiddish version of Eliot's poem acquired heightened cultural significance in the 1970s and "can be said to straddle this critical moment in the reconfiguration of the Yiddish language" (Boyden, 2018: 178). As Boyden (2018: 178) further notes,

> the Prufrock parody can be framed as part of a translational practice that rendered classics into Yiddish *fartaytsht un farbesert*, translated and improved—meaning that they were creatively adapted to an audience at home in at least two cultural codes, that of Judaism and of the non-Jewish host society. The point of these translations was not to make mainstream literary culture available to the immigrant but rather to reflect on the boundary between major and minor languages, high and low culture, and to invert their values in a kind of mock-heroic gesture.

Following is the poem *"Der shir hashirim fun Mendl Pumshtok"* ("The Song of Songs of Mendel Pumshtock") in Yiddish with the English translation[73] in each stanza. The Yiddish version is necessary to appreciate the rhyme.

> *Nu-zhe, kum-zhe, ikh un du,*
> *Ven der ovnt shteyt unter dem himl*
> *Vi a leymener goylm af Tisha b'Av*
> (Well then, come, you and I
> When evening stands under the sky
> Like a clay golem on Tishebov)

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[73] The version of the poem was reproduced in *Yiddish* 7.1 (1987), pp. 54–55. The English translation in this section is from Boyden (2018).

Lomir geyn zikh
Durkh geselakh vos dreyen zikh
Vi di bord fun dem rov.
(Let us go,
Through streets that curve
Like the rabbi's beard.)

Oyf der vant fun dem koshern restorant
Hengt a shmutsiker betgevant
Un vantsn tantsn karahod. Es geyt a geroykh
Fun gefilte fish un nase zokn.
(On the wall of the kosher restaurant
A filthy bedspread hangs
And bedbugs are folkdancing. There is the odor of gefilte fish and wet socks.)

Oy, Bashe, freg nisht keyn kashe, A dayge dir!
Lomir oyfefenen di tir.
(Oh Bashe, don't ask, what do you care!
Let us open the door.)

In tsimer vu di vayber zenen
Ret men fun Marx un Lenin
(In the room where the women are
They are talking of Marx and Lenin.)

Ikh ve ralt...ikh ver alt...
Es vert mir in pupik kalt.
(I grow old, I grow old
And my belly-button is getting cold.)

Zol ikh oyskemen di hor,
meg ikh oyfesn a floym?
(Shall I comb my hair?
May I eat a plum?)

Ikh vel onton vayse hoyzn
un shpatsirn bay dem yom.
(I will put on my white pants
And promenade near the sea.)

Ikh vel hern di yam-moydn zingen khad gadyo
Ikh vel zey entfern borukh-habo.
(I will hear the mermaids singing "An only kid"
And I will answer them, "Welcome.")

There are a lot of uncertainties relating to the date of composition of this Yiddish version and to who translated the poem. In the 1970s the poem acquired popularity and the press attributed its writing to Bellow as he was during those years better known. Some experts point out,

however, that Bellow's Yiddish[74] was insufficient and that Rosenfeld was probably the creator of the poem as he had previously written some works in Yiddish. Both writers had not considered writing in Yiddish, as "in the 1940s Rosenfeld tried his hand at Yiddish prose, but this experiment was short- lived. Bellow occasionally toyed with the idea of writing in Yiddish but never acted on it" (Boyden, 2018: 180). Despite their ambivalent relation to Yiddish, both writers did contribute with translations from Yiddish into English in *A Treasury of Yiddish Stories*, edited by Eliezer Greenberg and Irving Howe (1960). In this collection we can find Bellow's translation of I. Bashevis Singer's story "Gimpel the Fool" which, as a result of this translation, launched Singer's literary career in the Anglo-American world. The story became so famous that Singer believed that the critics were paying more attention to the translation than the story itself. After that, Singer decided to find his own translators and translate his own work along with them[75].

In post-vernacular translations, as Shandler calls them "the use of Yiddish, no longer a language of daily life, is highly self-conscious, especially as a tenacious signifier of Jewishness" (2006: 124). Many relevant literary texts were translated into Yiddish and that helped to promote the Yiddish language, as readers were able to access the Yiddish texts instead of reading the originals. This was a way of reaching a broader audience of Yiddish readers and of proliferating the publishing of Yiddish books. This situated translation in the act of translation itself being central. For herein "one observes a transformative act in which Yiddish is not lost in translation, but found, and the foundational role that translation plays in creating Yiddish culture is renewed and, inevitably, remade" (2006: 125).

A final note should be added regarding the very prominent role of the translations made from the work of modernist Anglo-American poets, relating to the influence that the translation of Walt Whitman's poetry had on modernist Yiddish poetry. This fact is highlighted by the inscription at the beginning of this Chapter. Whitman was a poet that aroused great interest in the Yiddish literary world as he was considered both a native American and a cosmopolitan modern man. As Prager very aptly observes "Identification with New York City was to become a motif of the Whitman voice in American Yiddish poetry." (1983: 26).

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[74] For more information on Saul Bellow and his relation to Yiddish see Gitenstein, Barbara, "Saul Bellow and the Yiddish Literary Tradition" (1979).

[75] This phenomenon of self-translation with the aid of a vast number of translators through the years, the majority of which were female, is best explained in the documentary "The Muses of Isaac Bashevis Singer" (2014) by Shaul Betser and Asaf Galay.

A first publication of Whitman's selected poems first appeared in Yiddish translation in 1934, while some poems appeared prior to that date in Yiddish periodicals. In 1899 Yoysef Bovshover wrote an essay in which he included selected verse passages of Whitman translated into Yiddish. In 1934 Eysen translated 25 poems of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* into Yiddish (*Volt Vitman/finf un tsvantsik lider)*. Eysen (Prager, 1983: 26),

> a dentist by vocation, devoted much of his life to translating British and American authors into Yiddish. Like Bovshover (who translated *The Merchant of Venice*), Eysen was also attracted to Shakespeare, whose *King Lear* and *Sonnets* he rendered into Yiddish. He also translated Byron, Tennyson and Longfellow.

An improved version of Whitman's translation into Yiddish appeared in 1940 by L. Mile (pseudonym of Eliezer Meler [1889-1967]), which is considered "to this day the fullest and most satisfactory translation of Whitman's verse and prose into Yiddish" (1983, 27).

Although some of Whitman's verses were already translated/versioned into Yiddish by Boshover in 1899, it is most probable that the *Inzikh* poets read him in English[76]. Whitman's influence in the *Inzikh* poets' work was to such an extent that they proclaimed Whitman the prophet of modern times. "By taking Whitman as model, one could be a universalist, an American, a free lyricist, a lover- a full-blooded person" (cited in Hadda, 1973, 44, 29).

Despite the importance of Whitman's poetry translations into Yiddish, according to Prager, these Yiddish translations of Whitman have not been acknowledged by Whitman scholarship.

Translations *into* Yiddish transitioned throughout the years and the reasons for their fluctuation varied, as we have seen in this section. From nationalizing and modernizing the language by translating World literature into Yiddish, especially in exile, to furthering the language and establishing its continuity. This wanting to establish a continuity of the Yiddish language can also be seen in authors who self-translated their work from universal languages into Yiddish as was the case of Debora Vogel.

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[76] The founders of the *Inzikh* movement had had a better living condition upon arriving to New York than that of the previous Jewish immigrants (1880-1900) who dealt with strenuous poverty and hard labor conditions. Leyeles studied literature at Columbia University and Glatstein and Minkov studied law at the New York University reaffirming that they certainly had a good level of English comprehension.

b. The practice of self-translation

"The practice of self-translation is never innocent"

- Christopher Whyte

From translations *into* Yiddish to translation *from* Yiddish, there are an exceptional number of authors who decided to translate their own work or as Wisse puts it, 'transpose' as the original version written in Yiddish varies from the work written in other languages. In the first part of this section, I will discuss some of the authors who self-translated, such as Abraham Cahan, Isaac Bashevis Singer, or Elie Wiesel. These authors self-translated from a minor language to a more universal language to attract a wider readership. Self-translating from a universal language to a minor language (Cronin 1995) is quite uncommon and even more so when that language is not the writer's mother tongue. This is the unique case of the Polish Yiddish poet Debora Vogel, who wrote primarily in German, Hebrew, and Polish, but transposed her work into Yiddish in her mid-twenties. This turn to Yiddish and her contributions to the avant-garde is what shrouded her invisibility that is only now starting to be lifted by scholars and academics. Her choice of Yiddish was not an innocent one and her contributions to the *Inzikh* journal, which I will discuss in the last part of the section of this Chapter, is what reinforces my thesis discussed in Chapter Two where the 'choice' of language for a writer may be altered due to the circumstances of place and time.

Before discussing Vogel's choice of Yiddish an introduction to some of the concepts of self-translation are required. Recent studies (Anselmi 2012, Cordingley 2013, Hokenson and Munson 2006) have started acknowledging self-translation as a study in the field of Translation Studies. Most of these studies center their work on authors who are either bilingual (Nabokov, Brodsky) or have self-translated their work into dominant languages (Conrad). But hardly any studies of self-translation show the phenomenon of authors who self-translate their work from a universal more dominant language into a minor or peripheral language.

Self-translation was defined by Anton Popovic as "the translation of an original work into another language by the author himself" (cited by Popovic, 1976,19, 323). Throughout the years, scholars and academics have added to the definition and have refined and made it more specific. Hokenson and Munson define self-translators as "recreators producing *a new original*

on the model of the old" (2007: 199). Because of this observation, it is then that writers are recognized as self-translators instead of "regular" translators. In addition to writers creating another persona, or another 'self', self-translators "are often seen to have much more leeway in the decision-making process of translation" (Grutman and van Bolderen 2014: 324). Self-translators differ from translators in that they have the freedom to rework and rewrite their work. "They typically claim not loyalty, but freedom" (2014: 330). An example of this poetic license is I. Bashevis Singer who by self-translating from Yiddish into English created two different originals. He would call the English versions his "second originals". His translations from Yiddish into English were not only linguistic transpositions but each version had its intended audience. The English versions were Americanized editions of his Yiddish originals, in which he left out and changed Jewish festivities, and even names, into non-Jewish names. With this case and many others, by self-translating works from minority languages such as Gaelic, Catalan or Yiddish, the original work can be thought of being dispensed with competing with languages of more diffusion such as English, German or Spanish, achieving thus "the status of "second originals"" which in turn, "may indeed marginalize, dwarf, or even disqualify work initially written in a minority language" (2014: 325).

Castro's definition of self-translation is a translation of one's own work from a source language to a target language (2017: 2). She identifies three scenarios of self-translation: "First, self/translation between to "dominating" literatures; second, self-translation between two "dominated" literatures; and third, self/translation between the "dominated" and the "dominating" literatures." (ibid, 8). Using Gutman's (2013) terminology self-translators can either go uphill "(into the "dominating" literature and prestigious language of the state to which they officially belong) or downhill (into "dominated" literature and non-prestigious language, which is often their mother tongue)" (Gutman 2013a, 230, Castro, 8). These self-translations can be tinged with political and ideological reasons but may also be motivated by aesthetic reasons.

Multilingual authors who opt for translating their work become "their own ambassadors, agents, and even career-brokers" (Grutman and van Bolderen 2014: 325). One of the most common reasons of self-translation is to gain a larger audience particularly of those authors who have been forced into exile. This self-translation in exile has served for many authors as a "rite of passage" (ibid: 325) and as a means to acquire and learn the new adopted language. "Displacement, whether forced or not, acts as a catalyst for self-translation" (2014: 326). An

example is Eva Hoffman who at the age of thirteen left Poland for Canada. Hoffman writes of emigrating into a new language as a kind of self-translation in her autobiographical book (1989).

Self-translators are usually either bilingual or multilingual authors and this practice of transposing one text from one language to another goes back to the middle ages, as it was discussed in the previous Chapter. While this practice was common in poets who traveled around Europe, it diminished during the consolidation of the nation-states, in the long era of the nationalistic "monolingual paradigm" (Yildiz, 2012) only to resurge in the postcolonial era (Hokenson and Munson 2006). American writers of the immigrant generation, such as Abraham Cahan, Mary Antin, Anna Yezierska discussed in Chapter One, self-translated from Yiddish into English. Cahan, a native Yiddish speaker born in Russian Lithuania in 1860, used self-translation when coming to the United States at 21, as a way to fit into the standard models of the new acquired American culture. For, as Davis (2010: 14) observes,

> not only did he seek to assist the acculturation (but not assimilation) of Yiddish speakers into the English-speaking world, but also to educate them by translating into Yiddish works by Marx, Darwin, Spencer, Tolstoy and Hardy. His well- known *Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto* (1895), later adapted as the film Hester Street (1975, directed by Joan Micklin Silver) was also published serially in Yiddish as *Yankel der Yankee* (1895-1896). The two versions addressed very different audiences and concerns, with the Yiddish focused more on international Jewish issues and the English on Americanness. The audiences were markedly different - working-class men and women for the Yiddish, middle-class women for the English - and so profanities which appeared in the Yiddish did not appear in the English.

While works of Mary Antin or Abraham Cahan where not in the forefront of aesthetic modernism, they did serve as cultural ambassadors from the Yiddish culture to the American culture by redefining their experience of being American in transposing one text from one language to the other. Thus, these writers who self-translated could adapt their work more freely in opposition to the translator.

Self-translations can then be seen as a form of gaining a wider readership by authors transposing their text into a universal language. They may also be seen as linguistic resistance, by transposing from a universal language to a minor language in order to promote minority cultures. This second practice is what Castro terms as a self-minorisation process, (2017: 12) which may lead to the (in) visibility of the author's work in what Xosé Manuel Dasilva (2011)

has termed as "opaque self-translation". Self-translation from major to minor can also be viewed as a reclaiming of one's national identity. It can function both as "an act of self-minorisation" and as a way of detaching oneself "from the dominant language" (2017: 18). Self-translating into Yiddish in the interwar period for example, was away of vindicating a language against political movements (Haskalah, Zionism) that promoted the use of Hebrew or against the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe (that prohibited or tried to destroy the Yiddish language altogether). Choosing to self-translate works from dominant languages into Yiddish, poets as Debora Vogel, were creating resistance to cultural assimilation, asserting their own Jewish identity and claiming the Yiddish language. Beyond any political or national proclamations, translingual writing also becomes a redefinition of the self. "In this way, self-translation becomes a liberating and empowering act" (Castro 2017: 18).

In the following section I will discuss the case of Debora Vogel, whose work of poetry was first written in German, Polish and Hebrew and then in Yiddish. This self-translation into Yiddish was a way to claim her Jewish identity in a Europe which was striving to destroy it. It was a cry for the prevalence of the Yiddish language, while at the same time an attempt at reinventing the poet's 'self' in a new language. This Vogel accomplished by "being "author" twice, making translation absolutely invisible and presenting it as an original" (Castro 2017, 13). Translating this new original would open a new discussion, as the work would go from translation to self-translation to non-translation. Vogel used self-translation as the rewriting and negotiation of cultural identity and thus became a cultural and ideological mediator "situated in a privileged position to challenge power, to negotiate conflicting minorized versus hegemonic cultural identities" (Castro 2017, 14). Although the term self-translation has not been used in the studies of Vogel's work, neither the concept of writing across languages, her choice of Yiddish for her poetic work late in her adult years is significant and unique and still uncertain. This implies not only a creation of a new 'self' in another language but the creation of a new poetic style in the chosen Yiddish language.

b.1 From self-translation to the world: the case of Debora Vogel[77]

> "The streets are like the sea:
> they reflect the color of longing
> and the difficulty of waiting"
> -   Debora Vogel

This section of the Chapter aims to present self-translators as cultural and ideological mediators, "situated in a privileged position to challenge power, to negotiate conflicting minorised versus hegemonic cultural identities" (Castro 2017: 14). This exploration is viewed within the wider context of how historical events can shape not only the content of a literary work but can also modify the relationship with language identity when self-translating from a major language to a minor language. Self-translation, for the purposes of this study, is seen as an act of cultural mediation, a way of creating a new 'self' or as a way of asserting one's national identity. For many of the poets who chose to write in Yiddish during the interwar period, that 'choice'[78] implied an act of resistance, as Yiddish was considered by many a peripheral, and for some even a 'dying' language. By writing in a minor language, the author, Debora Vogel, affirms her national and cultural identity and "challenges the myth of the nation's monolithic culture" (Cordingly 2013, 7). In the following section, I will be discussing how Vogel challenged culture through her choice of languages.

Debora Vogel[79] (1900–1942), a Polish avant-garde Yiddish poet, presents a unique case as she decided to learn Yiddish in her late twenties. She started writing her poetry in German, Polish, and Hebrew but then decided to translate her work into Yiddish, creating a whole new poetic language she called "White words". In recent studies on Vogel (Misiak 2016, Werner 2019,

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[77] Part of this Chapter was presented in the online seminar "Between the nation and the world: The role of translation in the circulation of small/minor/peripheral/less translated literatures" on Monday, June 29th, 2020 Organized by the *ERC StG project Social Networks of the Past: Mapping Hispanic and Lusophone Literary Modernity (1898-1959)* (Grant agreement No 803860), led by Diana Roig Sanz. IN3- Arts and Humanities Department, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya for the "Sixth European Congress on World and Global History: Minorities, Cultures of Integration, and Patterns of Exclusion". The conference will be published as an article in a special issue of the CLS- Comparative Literature Studies journal (Penn State University Press) titled *Decentering Global Literary History: The Role of Translation and Cultural Relations in 'Peripheral' Literatures*' edited by Diana Roig-Sanz, Elisabet Carbó-Catalan, and Ana Kvirikashvili.

[78] For a better and more detailed understanding of the 'choice' of a language see Chapter Two of this thesis.

[79] Dvoyre Fogel is the standard transliteration from Yiddish of her name. In Polish, her name is written Debory Vogel. In German she signed her name as, Debora Vogel. For this study, I will use the German version of her name as it was the one she used when signing her work.

Torres 2019, Lyubas 2020) the term self-translation is not used at any time. The studies mentioned above are centered on Vogel's aesthetic theories and her poetic innovations. Little has been said on her 'choice' of Yiddish and the self- translations of poems she made from German and Polish into Yiddish. This 'choice' of Yiddish is a focal point in my study, as Vogel's choice of language follows what has been discussed in Chapter Two. In Chapter Two it was explained that the 'choice' of a literary language is not always associated with the mother tongue. Other incentives for writers who choose to write in a second or third language may be 'historical forces' or 'private motivations' (Hokenson 2013). Choosing Yiddish versus other languages for the purposes of artistic creation of wider use (such as German, Polish) reinforces my thesis on that the choice of a language for many writers is very much related to historical factors, including time and place. Vogel's work being published in the *Inzikh* journal (her poems as well as essays) reinforces the connection, Vogel and the *Inzikh* poets shared, towards the Yiddish language and their poetic style.

This part of the Chapter examines what made Vogel decide to consciously self-translate into Yiddish and the consequences of that decision. By discussing Vogel's choice of self-translating into Yiddish, the aim is to also explore questions regarding the different types of marginality she encountered; linguistic marginality (Yiddish), "extraliterary" marginality (woman) and "intraliterary" marginality (avant-garde) (Kronfeld 1996). These different marginalities will be discussed further in this section of the Chapter to help us understand why Vogel's work was driven into oblivion for decades because her poetry was written in Yiddish by a woman with an avant-garde style. The questions that occur are multiple and intriguing: Did these multiple marginalities condemn Vogel's work to invisibility (Vogel being referred to as the "friend of" or in the "shadows of" Bruno Schulz)? Was she an advocate of this self-marginalization? Has her work been acknowledged in the world of Yiddish literature or in Polish literature? Have her self-translations into Yiddish been translated into universal languages? By whom, and why are they relevant? The work of Vogel is thus proposed as an example of self-translation from major to minor placing her as a cultural mediator between the Polish/German culture and the Yiddish culture.

Vogel's self-translations into Yiddish also represent and reflect upon contemporary "sites of translation", and, by doing so, challenge the notions of national and cultural identity.
A pertinent example comes in the form of the above quote, which is a fragment of Vogel's poem written and inscribed in Yiddish in a monument titled "The space of Synagogues",

inaugurated in 2016, in the city of Lviv, Ukraine. This monument is an attempt to inscribe Jewish history into the urban fabric and raise awareness of a common urban history and heritage among locals and visitors by presenting fragments of verses of various writers in Yiddish and its translations. "The languages create a circle of transmission, from the tongue in which the event took place (Yiddish) to the new language of the place where it happened (Ukrainian) to the languages of international memorialization (English, Hebrew)" (Simon 2019: 24). The monument captures the daily life of Lviv before the war, where several languages were spoken, and proclaims Yiddish a new space. Vogels' verses reinstate the value of Yiddish as a minor language in Europe and open up a dialogue with a language that was once there restoring it to the public presence. This "translating absence" (ibid: 23) addresses the question of what place minority languages have in Europe. It also reconstitutes Vogel's self-translation from German and Polish into Yiddish as an affirmation and a reclaiming of her Jewish identity and as a way of linguistic resistance.

Vogel's experimental poetry, all of it written in the 1930s, was, in the spirit of early twentieth-century art, radically avant-garde and attuned to all the modernist minimalisms. Fluent in several languages, Vogel's choice of Yiddish for her experimental compositions would position her as a cultural mediator between the Polish/German culture and the Yiddish culture. Vogel's self-translations into Yiddish, most probably instigated by the rise of antisemitism in Poland of the 1930s[80], reaffirms what Finkin states on how the "nebulous characteristic of language is a function of place (that is, where a work is written) and time (the language´s historical baggage)" (2010: 7). This turn to Yiddish and her contributions to the avant-garde poetic movements is what gave her an invisibility that is only now starting to be recognized by scholars and academics.

Vogel's poems, prose, essays, and translations into Yiddish appeared in various Polish and Yiddish magazines in Galizia[81] and in New York thus establishing her as a mediator between these two cultures in the process of translation. In one of her letters Vogel wrote to Leyeles in

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[80] In May 1936 the Congress of Culture Workers took place in Lviv, "referring to the slogans of the 1925 First International Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture, organized in Paris in response to the increasing Nazi threat. Its goal was to unite intellectuals in the name of defending culture and freedom" (Bojarov, Andrij, Polit, Paweł and Szymaniak, Karolina, 136). The Congress's proceedings were published on the pages of *Sygnaly* were Vogel published her works,

[81] Galizia was the denomination covering the area from contemporary western Ukraine (Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Ternopil) and from south-eastern Poland (Subcarpathian and Lesser Poland).

1939, Vogel explains how as an avant-garde poet writing in Yiddish, she saw herself as the ambassador of Jewish modernism in Poland[82]. Vogel was conscious of that role as Cordingley states as, "the self-translator is a particular kind of cross-cultural interlocutor" a mediator or intermediary[83] (2013: 3). In Vogel's cross-cultural mediation, her experimental poetry in Yiddish also played an important role in portraying women in modern society. Vogel became one of the major female poets to be published in the *Inzikh* journal in New York in the 1930s thus presenting the Polish avant-garde culture in Yiddish to the world. With pagan images in her poetry and lyrical play through rhymes and pictorial games of the Yiddish language, Vogel reiterates what the leaders of the *Inzikh* movement proclaimed in their 1920 manifesto: "Make Yiddish a language among the nations".

Vogel was born in 1900 in Bursztyn, Galizia, then part of the Austrian Empire (now Burshtyn, Ukraine), and was raised in a Polish-speaking home. Torres (2019: 42) informs us that her father taught her Hebrew,

> and she began publishing articles on art history in Swedish, Polish and Hebrew journals at the age of 18. She studied philosophy in Vienna, Polish literature in Krakow, and philosophy in Lwów (now Lviv), with Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz and Kazimierz Jerzy Skrzypna-Twardowski. After completing her dissertation in 1926 on the influence of Hegel's aesthetics on philosopher and art historian Jozef Kremer, she taught psychology at a Hebrew teachers' college.

Vogel learned Yiddish late in her adult years. Although she started writing poetry in German, Hebrew and Polish, she then decided to write in Yiddish despite Yiddish never being considered her mother tongue. Her learning of Yiddish was probably prompted and influenced by Rachel Auerbach[84]. She met Auerbach in 1928 at the Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv at a philosophy seminar given by Kazimierz Twardowski. Between 1929 and 1931, she co-published along with Auerbach the Yiddish Lviv literary journal *Tsushteyer: Dray khadoshim*

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[82] See Debora Vogel's correspondence with the poet and essayist Aaron Glanz-Leyeles (1889– 1966), letter of 23 May 1939 in Vogel, *Die Geometrie des Verzichts*, 563–5, here 564.

[83] For Jewish mediators see "On Nathan Birnbaum's Messianism and Translating the Jewish Other" (2015)

[84] Rachel Auerbach (1901-1976) was a writer, translator and publicist in Yiddish, Polish and Hebrew. She was a member and editor of the *'Tsushtayer'* literary circle and journal. Auerbach was also a key contributor along with Emanuel Ringelblum of the *Oneg Shabbat Archive*s in the Warsaw ghetto, and eventually the first director of the Department for the Collection of Witness Testimony at Yad Vashem.

shrift far literature, kunst un kultur ("Contribution: Quarterly of Literature, Art and Culture")[85], dedicated to issues in new Yiddish art and literature. This journal ran only for three issue and in its contents featured Vogel's art criticism. Because of her acquaintance with the painter Marc Chagall, for the first issue of September 1929 she wrote a study devoted to him titled "Themes and Forms in the Art of Marc Chagall" (*Teme un formen in der kunst fun Chagall*) which she ended in the second issue published in October 1930. In the essay on Chagall, Vogel "presented her own theory of modern art and tried to prove that by analyzing the form of a work of art she can obtain the same results as by analyzing its subject matter" (Sochańska, 2003: 14).

In the second issue of *Tsushteyer,* Vogel included drawings of herfriend Bruno Schulz. In the third issue published in April 1931, she published her poetic manifesto "'White words' in poetry" ('*Vayse verter' in der dikhtung*). According to her,

> 'white words' are static, and static is the quality she seems to put a lot of emphasis on in her poetry, prose and theoretical ideas. Static for Debora means expressionless and nameless; by being static, 'white words' embrace not only motionlessness and lack of change, but also repetitiveness of things(...) Obviously, the theory of 'white words' in poetry is derived from the theory of pure form in modern art; Debora claims that 'white words are as important for poetry as white color on a painter's palette. According to Debora the level that modern painting achieved in the age of cubism and constructivism, modern poetry has yet to achieve. Using 'white words in poetry was, she maintained, the right way to achieve it (Sochańska, 2003: 14-15).

The poets of *Tsushteyer* described themselves as pioneers and activists of the modern Yiddish cultural movement in Galizia and organized conventions under the slogan "Galizia, the land of Yiddish creativity" (Sochańska, 2003: 12). They tried "to transform the assimilated Lemberg into a center of Yiddish culture" (Misiak 2008). The *Tsushtayer* Literary Group (Bull 2018).

> wrote self-consciously secular, avant-garde stories and poems in a language associated with backwardness, at a moment in time when the Jewish heritage was being crushed under the pressures of assimilation, poverty, immigration, and competing nationalisms that had no place for Jews.

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[85] Together with Debora Vogel, Rachel Auerbach, Rachel Korn, Nochem Bomse, Israel Aschendorf, David Kenigsberg, Ber Horowitz, and Schmuel Jakob Imber, Ber Schnaper belonged to a Yiddish avant-garde group in Lviv that called itself the "*Tsushtayer*" group after its literary journal. This group advocated a program of aesthetic education that called for the use of experimental literature to liberate the mind. See Simon, Stratenwerth, and Hinrichs, eds., Lemberg, 200; Friedman-Cohen, *Yiddish Literature in Galicia*.

Despite this Yiddish activism, critics and reviewers of her work were ambivalent about Vogel's choice of Yiddish. Literary critics as Melech Ravitch[86] and Dov Sadan[87] in articles written about her, showed surprise in her choice of Yiddish due to her Maskil/Hebraist upbringing and her relationship with her Zionist family, since she was part of the Zionist movement *Ha-Shomer ha Za'ir* during her teen years. Although, Vogel's choice of Yiddish was seen with bewilderment, Ravitch does acknowledge her as being the hope for the Yiddish language in his statement "all these (referring to previous authors) are paths leading away from Yiddish, but with Dvoyre Foygl, all paths actually lead back towards Yiddish"[88] (1945, 189). In an article written in 1965 in *Tsukunft* by literary critic Shlomo Bickel, he also questioned Vogel's choice of Yiddish. For him, from the information given of her life, it only explains *how* she came to Yiddish, but it did not explain *why* she did it.

According to Misiak (2008: 6) Vogel's decision in favor of Yiddish could have been ideologically and aesthetically justified as

> it coincided with its conviction of the identity of the content with the form, but can also be explained with the blossoming of Yiddish avant-garde trends in the twenties. Yiddish literature emerged in the interwar period in a new Eastern European variant of the language that was not yet standardized at that time. The openness and flexibility of Yiddish, as well as the potential of everyday life contained therein, motivated young poets to search for new ways of expression. Warsaw and Vilna were among the most important centers of this Yiddish art revolt alongside New York.[89]

Vogel's interest and decision to turn to Yiddish as a literary language in her late 20's was highly supported by Auerbach, who assisted, edited, and sometimes translated Vogel's earliest Yiddish poetry. Vogel published her first poems in Yiddish in the *Folk un Land* a Yiddish weekly journal published in Lviv and *Nayem Morgn* a Yiddish daily published in Lviv. These poems "she herself wrote them in Polish and Rachel Auerbach translated them into Yiddish" (Sochańska, 2003: 10). Vogel also published in several Polish-language journals, including

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[86] Melech Ravitch (1893-1976) was a Yiddish poet and essayist. He wrote about Vogel in his book *Mayn leksikon:yidishe dikhter, dertseyler, dramaturgn in Poyln tsvishn di tsvey groyse velt-milkhomes* Montreal 1945,
[87] Dov Sadan (1902-1989) was a Hebrew literary critic and politician who wrote about Vogel in his article "Ner le-meshoreret" (Candle for the poetess) published in *Davar*, October 1953.
[88] "*Dos alts(...) zenen vegn vos firn avek fun yidish, nor bay Dvoyre Fogel hobn di ale vegn gefirt davke tsurik tsu yidish...Nu iz zi nisht keyn kisher-makherin, undzere sheyne mame-loshn?*" (*Mayn leksikon:yidishe dikhter, dertseyler, dramaturgn in Poyln tsvishn di tsvey groyse velt-milkhomes* (Montreal 1945, p189.)
[89] The English translation is mine.

Chwila (Moment), *Nasza opinia* (Our opinion), *Sygnały* (Signals) and *Wiadomości literackie* (Literary news) (Torres, 2019: 42).

Yiddish, being the language learned and not her mother tongue, allowed Vogel to acquire a sense of estrangement[90], or as Szymaniak (2017) calls it, a "homeless existence" (266), that would detach the Yiddish language from her personal "I" in using objectified and anonymous characters in her poems. Very few poems of Vogel appear in the first person. This absence of the "I" reflects not only the modern sense of outsider, as seen in the works of art of the 1920s, but this distancing from oneself in a different language is what distinguished her poetry from that of other Yiddish poets. Her poems, for instance, were a complete opposite portrait of women in modern society from the poems of the Polish Yiddish poet Kadya Molodowsky. "Where Molodowsky's language invoked Hebrew prayers and laws, Fogel's repetition of the German word *rekhtek* (rectangle) connects her poem to paintings, such as de Chirico's cityscapes" (Hellerstein, 2014: 145). The hyphenated titles in Vogel's *"Figurn-lider"* (Figure-poems) offer a contrast to the hyphenated title of Molodowsky's *"Froyen-lider"* (Women-poems). Molodowsky's poems (ibid: 147) examine the emotions and the subjective experience of women

> struggling against the rabbinic strictures fashioned by generations of men. In contrast, Fogel's poems describe the contorted physical appearances of women-in beauty parlors and in brothels-who attempt to please the gaze of men by imitating the mannequins through which modern society represents them.

This portrayal of the objectification of the characters in her poems was predominant in the avant-garde movements of the 1920s. As seen by Torres (2019), this usage "of domestic space, materiality, sex work and reproductive labor anticipated elements of postwar feminist aesthetics" (2019: 40). In another comparison between Molodowsky and Vogel, Hellerstein states that Molodowsky, acknowledging Yiddish as a Jewish language, contrasts with the absence of Jewishness in Vogel's poetry. Hellerstein observes that "the absence of cultural framework [...] gives Fogel's poems a modernist aura that belies the Jewish language in which they were written" (2014: 152). But if Vogel's use of the Jewish language belies it, according

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[90] This experience of distancing oneself from the mother tongue is explained by Agota Kristof in *L'analphabète* (The Illiterate) (2004) where she relates her choice of French versus her native Hungarian language in order to distance herself from the emotional implications that her native language entails.

to Hellerstein, why did she decide to choose Yiddish, which is considered as *the* language of the Jews, for her experimental poetry?

This 'choice' of her literary language was not by chance as it would situate her in the realm of the avant-garde Yiddish poetry. Consequently, Vogel's role in the *Inzikh* journal would be of great relevance. Her relationship with the *Inzikh* movement might have started by her correspondence with the editor Leyeles[91] in 1935. In one of her letters Vogel explains how as an avant-garde poet writing in Yiddish, she saw herself as the ambassador of Jewish modernism in Poland. In another letter from Vogel to Leyeles (Kaszuba-Dębska 2012), the editor of *Inzikh* at that time, she wrote how,

> people like you are necessary for Yiddish literature […] This feeling partly comes from the fact that I also have this talent in me, but it has not been able to find its full expression, [...] because of the miserable fortune it is to be a woman. The "metaphysical" role of a woman flows in a stream of daily trifles. And my professional work, which barely pays me anything—the same amount of money that I could earn by writing just two articles per month—completely absorbs me. But male competition does not allow a woman to improve her position. A few newspapers have written about the fact that men, even those who have nothing to say and are talentless scribblers, receive money for their writing, while women are rewarded merely with respect.

Vogel's poems, prose and essays appeared in the *Inzikh* journal in New York, in the years from 1936 to 1938. As an 'ambassador' for Yiddish modernism in Galizia, she also gave public lectures (on topics such as urbanism in modern Yiddish poetry) and published in the Polish literary press translations of Yiddish poets' work into Polish (for instance, Anna Margolin, Ber Shnaper, and Leyeles). As Misiak (2008) observes, Vogel "was particularly keen to present the ideas of the New York Introspectivists to the Galician audience.". Vogel's aesthetic ideas on poetry were very similar to the ideas of the Introspectivists, specifically in terms of the use of free-verse, inner rhythm and the freedom in the choice of subject. Like the *Inzikh* poets, she drew her inspiration from the Italian and Russian Futurists as well as German and Yiddish Expressionists and was familiar with texts by S. Freud and T.S. Eliot. As for the Introspectivists, for Vogel too, "the bridge to the Jewish world was language as a means of

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[91] In an article written in 1915, Leyeles lamented the absence of a female presence in Yiddish literature, and went to say how Vogel's Yiddish poem book *Tog-Figurn* (Day-Figures) was "the ultimate modern book (…) proving that Lviv is very close to New York." (Lyubas)

design, the materiality of which she became aware of thanks to her intensive preoccupation with modern painting" (2008).

Although Vogel did not get to emigrate to New York as many of the Jews in Europe did when they were fleeing because of the rise of antisemitism, she did experience several exiles in her lifetime. First fleeing to Vienna after World War I, where she would study philosophy, and then to Lviv where she worked as a teacher and where she started publishing most of her work. Although her exiles in Europe and her 'choice' of Yiddish might enter the realms of what was considered 'Diasporic Nationalism', it is in those *inner* exiles (Hellerstein 1995) that Vogel found her true poetic voice in Yiddish. Her aim was to fuse art and poetry in creating a new poetic style that turned her poems into visual experiences. The words in her poems were like the lines and colors in a painting. She was trying to construct/paint with words a different reality. She was a contributor to several Yiddish journals, but her collaborations in the *Inzikh* journal are what brought her recognition in a more international sphere.

Before introducing Vogel's role as a cultural ambassador, a brief description of her three books in Yiddish is necessary as these works were her introduction to the avant-garde Yiddish poetic world. By choosing Yiddish, she was also choosing "a language and culture that contributed to the history of the Polish and international avant-garde" (Bojarov, Andrij, Polit, Paweł and Szymaniak, Karolina, 2017: 17) by creating a new reality of the text in Yiddish.

Her first book of poems in Yiddish titled *Tog-figurn. Lider* (Day-Figures: Poems; 1930) appeared, with illustrations by her friend Henryk Streng. In this collection, Vogel uses free-meter to represent a variety of subjects related to the urban scene and its architectural shape and colors (e.g. white squares). In the poem "Day Figure" (*Tog figur*) for example, from which the book takes its name, Vogel evokes a tone using colors, shapes and time,

> A gray rectangle,
> A second. A third.
> Seven times the tin rectangle opens.
>
> Yellow sun, Red sun.
> On one side, on another:
> the day-rectangle has closed.
>
> Gray tin birds hover.
> Lumps of soft dough with two hands and two feet

roll in the gray clay of light.
    Four times a day.
    Yellow sun on one side of the rectangle, on the other.

    A first month of stiff tin flowers,
    a second, a third month
    of sticky tin flowers, hands and clothes.

    How many times it has opened
    how many times closed,
    the tin rectangle
    with the yellow sun-circle on both sides[92].

The images in the poems evoke a monotony which is a reflection of the monotony of modern cities. From a letter that Vogel wrote to her uncle, a rabbi in Stockholm[93], we know the first cycle of poems *Rekhteke* (Rectangles) (1924) had originally been composed in German. Vogel was looking for a publisher for these poems in Germany or Vienna and asked her uncle for help in the search. In her preface to *Tog figurn,* Vogel writes, "I understand my poems as the attempt at a new style and I see in this an analogy to modern painting. The simplification of the apparent diversity of occurrences, their reduction to simple, angular, repeating gestures – monotony and cool stasis are consciously connected to Analytic Cubism." (1930).

The book went largely unnoticed in Lviv. "However, Jewish poet, literary critic, and editor Ber Schnaper (1906–1936) used Vogel's book as the occasion for a fundamental discussion about the state of contemporary Yiddish literature in Poland" (Werner, 2019: 23). Ber Schnaper called it "a successful attempt at a new kind of poetry". As Werner observes "Vogel's attempt to implement the principles of modern painting in literature is what Ber Schnaper ultimately regarded as her particular achievement" (2019: 27). Vogel's references to modern painting in her poems are various, including writing "after Utrillo" (the French painter Maurice Utrillo 1883-1955) under her poem titled "Suburban Houses". Several of Vogel's poems are titled with the words "Still life" depicting an inanimate subject usually used in painting. Titles such as

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[92] "*a groer rekhtek./ a tsveyter. a driter./ zibn mol eftn zikh der blekh-rekhtek.// gele zun.royte zun./ fun eyn zayt, fun der tsveyter zayt:/ a tog-rekhteg hot zikh geshlosn.// groe feygl fun blekh shvimen./ kletser fun veykhn teyg mit tsvey hent un tsvey fis/ kayklen zikh in groen leym fun likht./ fir mol in tog./ gele zun fun eyn zayt rekhtek, fun der tsveyter.// an ershter khoydesh fun shtayf blekherne blumen,/ der tsveyter, der driter khoydesh/fun klebik-blekherne blumen, hent un kleyder.// vifil mol shoyn hot zikh geshlosn/ der blekherner rekhtek/ mit dem geln zunkreysl fun tsvey zaytn."* Translation into English by Lyubas (2020, 125).

[93] See the letter from Debora Vogel to Markus Ehrenpreis from 2 May 1924, in Vogel, *Die Geometrie des Verzichts* (2016) p 487.

"Still Life in Glass", "Still Life with Seagulls" and "Still Life in Cold". Other titles such as "Autumn Sketch" also evoke the world of painting as it's illustrated in the following example of the first verses of the poem,

> In the gray zinc plate of the world
> Gray strokes of squares
> are etched with a cold needle
> three four five house-boxes.[94]

Vogel's second book of poems in Yiddish *Manekinen. Lider* (Mannequins: Poems; 1934), advocates another literary experimentation and abstraction, and in her preface, Vogel states her allegiance to the principles of constructivism. Vogel combines a reflection on the dichotomy between body and machine, on life, monotony, color, melancholy and an ironic criticism of the world of consumerism and advertising. An example of such a reflection can be found in the following excerpt from her poem "Mannequins",

> The world is a porcelain merry-go-round
> with linen blue skies
> and with skies from elastic gold tin
> where glued stiff black gentlemen
> and elastic blue ladies
> have nothing else to do
> but smile with their blue-lacquered eyes
> and contoured carmine lips[95].

In this book Vogel once again uses geometric motifs and forms in order to convey a monotonous rhythm that assigned time to be experienced as cyclical. Werner remarks (2019: 25) how in Vogel's book

> Modern technology and industry were identified as originators of monotony. The focus of the book was the visual and acoustic impressions of a city traversed by trains and streetcars, the visual effects of advertising, and not least – as the title of the volume suggested – the perception of mannequins standing in the display windows of boutiques.

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[94] *"in der groer tsinkplate fun der welt/ shteyen ayngekritst mit kalter nodl/ groe shtrekh fun kvadratn:/ dray fir finf hayzer-shakhtlekh."* Translation into English by Lyubas (2020, 133).

[95] *"di velt iz a karusel fun portselay/ mit layvntene himlen bloe/ un mit himlen fun elastishn gold-blekh/ vu tsugeklebte shvartse hern shtayfe/ un elastishe damen bloe/ hobn mer gornisht vos tru tun/ nor shmeykhlen mit bloe lakir-oygn/ un getsirklte karmin-lipn."* Translation into English by Lyubas (2020, 184).

Her third and last book in Yiddish, *Akatsies blien. Montazhn* (The Acacias are Blooming: Montages; 1935) is a work of poetry and prose and this is the only book that was also published in Polish (*Akacje kwitną. Montaże*), which she translated herself a year later, in 1936. It is uncertain which version she wrote first. Although the Polish version was published a year later it is likely she wrote the Polish version first and then translated it into Yiddish. In these philosophical prose poems, Vogel continued to develop the montage concept. Various of these prose poems were published in the *Inzikh* journal from 1936 till 1938.

b.2 Debora Vogel's role as a cultural ambassador

One of the characteristics in Vogel's poetry is her relation to the city and her concern on how to address contemporary issues by employing modern techniques in language as the innovations used in painting. This evocation of contemporary issues, went from the economic, to the social with the use of linguistic means to construct abstract forms interested in new realism in art and the technique of photomontage. Most of her essays dealt with aesthetic theories and the conception of space but of all her essays and poetic work, it is in "Lwów's Jewish Quarter"[96] one of the only texts she writes that refers to a Jewish theme. This text could be interpreted as a counter text to a report about Warsaw's Jewish Quarter written by Wanda Melcer in *Czarny Lad* (Dark continent) (1936) where Melcer's representation of the Jewish culture is seen as foreign, savage and primitive. Vogel responds by writing a text that "transforms the term "(dark)continent" into a notion of critical discourse, to speak of constructions of space that emphasize otherness" (Szymaniak, 2017: 269) Vogel "not only points to the role of spatial plays in oppressive constructions of otherness, but also gives the oppressed voice, and empowers them to speak back" (ibid).

By writing about the Jewish quarter, Vogel sets herself as an ambassador of the Jewish representation in Lviv. What is surprising in the text is that what begins as an impersonal narrator turns by the end to a personal "I" when she makes reference to her grandfather and great-grandfather in the text. Vogel states how this is a "fragment from the life of one of the

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[96] Originally published in *Almanac and Lexicon of Polish Jewry* in 1937. The first version of the text was published in Swedish in 1935. Translation into English of this text by Benjamin Paloff in *Montages: Debora Vogel and the New Legend of the City* (2017) pp 277-289.

old Jewish families of Lwów, a fragment of fates and labours hidden from the wider world" (Vogel, 1937: 286). A fragment where Vogel is now entrusted to present to this wider world. It is in Vogel's poetic works, absent of Jewish themes, that the choice of Yiddish, just as the Introspectivists did, would come to represent that "hidden Jewishness".

The text starts with the sentence "There still exist a center and a periphery" the Jewish being always the peripheral. Szymaniak comments on the word "still" of this first sentence as "connoting a certain contempt or annoyance" (2017: 274). In writing about this so-called "periphery" Vogel embarks into two objectives, to present this Jewish hidden world to the wider world and to attempt a return to the Jewish life when most Jews in Poland had turned to assimilation or emancipation. It is as if she was "coming back home and negotiating the terms of return" (Szymaniak, 2017: 274). This return she terms as "drawn by a longing to return to the ghetto[97]"(Vogel 1937, 286), where the "actual souls of these (Jewish) houses" (287) will be spoken.

In the text Vogel overlays the image of Lwóws Teodor Square with the image of Berlin's Alexanderplatz or Paris's Montmartre. "I brace myself for a completely foreign city. Perhaps the illusion of foreignness helps decipher the meaning of these names" (287). This embrace of foreignness Vogel relates in a letter to Bruno Schulz as "Foreign cities must become a source of recreation for us" (268)[98]. The difference she found in Jewish art from the rest was a that it was shaped by a kind of homelessness, "the local becomes blurred or indefiniteness becomes localized to large spaces that become elements of operations of the travelling, diasporic thought" (Szymaniak, 2017: 272).

Vogel traveled extensively to various cities in Europe including Berlin and Paris[99] where she was greatly influenced by the Cubists (Braque, Leger, Picasso) and the Constructivists of that time. Although she never traveled to New York, she did state that New York was the city she

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[97] This return to the ghetto is a reference Glatstein also uses in his poem "Good night world" (*A gute nakht velt*) published in the *Inzikh* issue of 1938. In both cases, this return to the Jewish life is a response to the increase of anti-Semitism in Europe.

[98] Letter of Vogel to Schulz December 1938. Translation into English by Karolina Szymaniak in *Montages: Debora Vogel and the New Legend of the City*, (2017).

[99] Some of Vogel's poems make reference to these cities, such as in the title "City Grotesque Berlin", and a series of poems about Paris with titles such as "A Ballad of Parisian Squares", "A Ballad of Parisian Streets", "A Ballad about the Seine", "Shoddy Ballad Paris" and "Benches among the Champs-Ëlysées Boulevard" among others. All of these poems are from *Manekinen. Lider* (Mannequins: Poems; 1934).

felt more closely too and was "the essence of all cities" as she wrote in one of her letters. She would translate Yiddish poems of the *Inzikh* movement in Polish journals and her work which would be published in the *Inzikh* journal would reflect the avant-garde movements in Poland. As we read in Kaszuba-Dębska (2012), Vogel

> was involved in organizations such as The Jewish Folk University, The Society of Jewish Philosophy Students at Jan Kazimierz University, and the Polish Artists' Union, where she delivered lectures propagating a modernist view of Yiddish art and literature, and in which she took part in manifestations. She wrote poems and stories and translated literature from Yiddish into Polish and vice-versa.

Vogel served as an 'ambassador of modernism' from Yiddish to Polish and from Polish to Yiddish. Just as the Introspectivists, Vogel's literary and artistic influences came from European writers and, in particular, Polish and German artists with whom she worked closely. Vogel was hardly influenced by the Yiddish literary tradition, similarly to the Introspectivists. One of the influences she got for the theory of aesthetics of her poetic work came from Hegel[100] where the Hegelian dialect of life and science, she used in her poetic oeuvre in a dialect with life and the abstract art. Another German influence was the Austrian writer Rudolf Brunngraber (1901–1960), which she states in an article entitled "The dialectical novel" (*Romans djalektyki*, 1935) as a major model. Brunngraber's novel *Karl and the Twentieth Century* (*Karl und das zwanzigste Jahrhundert*, 1933) anticipated her concept of simultaneity and her theory of montage, where "the descriptions are presented as collages, the author mounts prefabricated pictures, she becomes, in the sense of Walter Benjamin[101], the producer of her technically influenced work" (Werner, 2019: 32).

The theory of montage as a literary style "revealed another dimension, one that was related to Vogel's situation as a Jewish writer" (Torres, 2019: 44). The sense of 'polyphony' and 'simultaneity' was a way of bringing together concepts of the Jewish and the Polish art in the same frame. In her article "The Literary Genre of Montage" (1937) Vogel begins: "Montage is more than a form-experiment. It is a necessary expression of a worldview." (ibid). This

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[100] Vogel had written a dissertation on Hegelian aesthetic in German (1926) and that was reflected and applied on her aesthetic theories in avant-garde poetry.

[101] For a comparison of Vogel's and Walter Benjamin's philosophical theories on art and the concept of the city as a source of components for constellations of montages, see Polit, Paweł "Reclaiming the Subject in Modern Art: The Movement of Concepts in the Aesthetics of Debora Vogel and their Relation to Avant-Garde Practice" in *Montages: Debora Vogel and the New Legend of the City.* Muzeum Sztuki, 2017. p 170.

expression of worldview, the bringing together of different situations and places through montage would allow her to confront current events of the day which carry within the "fiction of documentariness" (Polit, 2017: 171), thus positioning Vogel as cultural ambassador bringing Polish city life and its artistic representation into Yiddish poetry.

During her lifetime, her poetic work in Yiddish received little attention, "as she attempted to write the aesthetic program of the avant-garde into Yiddish literature, a project that found little favor among readers or critics" (Werberger, 2010). In Ravitch's critic mentioned before, in the first four lines he uses up to three times the word eccentric/strange (*modne*) to describe her poetry which gives us an idea of the reception of her work at that time (late 1930s and 1940s). Her work remained in the margins because of mainly three reasons: Vogel was writing from a peripheral city, Lviv, she was writing as a woman in the avant-garde, and she was writing in a minor language, Yiddish. In his review (Kossowska, 2016: 162) of Vogel's literary montage *The Acacias Are in Bloom,* Bruno Schulz

> emphasized her enthusiasm for the constructivist avant-garde which cherished utopian, universalistic ambition to create a new socio-political order: "In this book there is no individual hero - he wrote. There's just an anonymous crowd of dolls, barber's mannequins, passates in stiff bowlers, manicurists and waiters who are lost, entangled in the mechanism of the city, in walking the streets, faceless and disindividualize figures. This aspect of a human being reduced to the rank of a pawn, a mechanical figure, a bowlered knob, connects the author to the constructivist vision of the world which modern plastic art imposed on the viewer. Apparently, it is the last effect of urbanism, some kind of transportation of statistics, of the law of large numbers, of the modern atomic physics onto the life and biology of large population centers. (...) Around those mannequins who are lost in the desert of streets a solemn world of geometry, masses and weights arises.

Just as the Introspectivists poetry, Vogel's poetic work was not well received by the Yiddish critics. Her poetry was criticized for its "cerebral impersonality", "abstract framework", or was viewed as "too intellectual", "obscure". Her poetic style was called difficult and lacking in traditional Jewish and feminine thematic. Yet "Vogel herself regarded her project not as a deliberate experiment, but rather as "a necessity, achieved and paid for with life's experience."" (Chaver 2009). Despite this repudiation, Vogel used this experimental poetic aesthetic with the aim of establishing Yiddish as a language of serious contemporary literature (Bull 2018), a struggle which places her firmly in the realm of cultural mediation and ambassadorship.

Vogel has always been seen "as the friend of" or "writing in the shadow of"[102] the Polish writer Bruno Schulz (1892-1942). Vogel kept a correspondence and a friendship with Schulz in the 1930s. In their letters they exchanged mutual artistic interests and shared their writings. In the letters between 1930 and 1932, Schulz wrote the first versions of his stories *Cinnamon Shops* which Vogel encourage him to publish. She was his critic, his muse, and a desired future wife. Schulz had proposed matrimony to Vogel, but Vogel's family was against it. For Jerzy Ficowski, Bruno Schulz's biographer, the letters of Schulz and Vogel where "extraordinarily important and of unusual content" (2003: 149). Although most of the letters were destroyed during the war, Vogel has been acknowledged as being a writer that played a crucial part in Schulz's artistic writing. They shared aesthetic similarities due to their creative exchanges to the point critics and acquaintances warned them of the similarities in their works. Ficowski mentions in his biography of Schulz two works of Vogel, *Manekiny* (Mannequins) and *Akacje kwitna* (Acacias Bloom). Interesting enough he mentions the two titles in Polish when they were originally written in Yiddish. Ficowski makes no mention at all of her writing in Yiddish and her contribution to the artistic poetic movements in Poland and New York. Although Ficowki's work is centered on Schulz, his dismissing of Vogel's literary importance, "her literary output—inferior to that of Schulz—is not of primary importance" (2003: 68) leaves much to the imagination. It also raises the question of whether her work would have had a better reception had her experimental poetic work been written in Polish rather than Yiddish.

It is uncertain of what her poetic oeuvre could have achieved if she would have gone into exile as the *Inzikh* poets did. Other questions regarding her literary choices such as, would Vogel have chosen to continue writing in Yiddish or would she have chosen to go back to writing in Polish or German? will remain unanswered as Vogel, and her family, along with 15,000 people in the Lviv ghetto were murdered in August 1942, during a Nazi liquidation of the Jewish population. Despite her work's limited recognition in life, Vogel seemed to consistently believe in "the emancipatory power of the Avant-Garde" (Polit, 2017: 176), in the transformative capabilities of the Yiddish language and in the significant role women artists played in the realm of the avant-garde.

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[102] This concept comes from the title of Misiak's article: "Im Schatten von Bruno Schulz" (2008).

The ironies of life have made that her Yiddish work she self-translated from Polish and German into Yiddish, was to be translated back into Polish and German[103] bringing her work a full cycle. Vogel's commitment to Yiddish went beyond a targeted readership. Her commitment "raised questions of audience and her relationship to the European avant-garde. As she wondered in a letter to Schulz, "For whom does one write in Yiddish?" While her Polish-informed aesthetics distanced her stylistically from others in the Yiddish avant-garde, her language choice remained a radical decision in itself" (Torres, 2019: 43).

Vogel's verses, which opened this section, invites a dialogue with a literature and a language that was once there, in the Eastern European countries. The translation of these verses from Yiddish to universal languages, would make evident the disappearance of the Yiddish language, as I will discuss further in the next Chapter. These translations from Yiddish into universal languages would defy Vogel's choice of the Yiddish language. The fact that these poems were written in Yiddish reinforces how the choice of Yiddish for her literary language, explained in Chapter Two, framed her style and avant-garde explorations. It gave Vogel a possibility of expressing herself Jewishly without the need of the usage of Jewish themes.

As we have seen in this Chapter, translations and self-translation *into* Yiddish was a way of understanding and establishing how Yiddish was a modern language capable of adapting itself to any modern work. This acquisition of new modern techniques made untranslatability from Yiddish to universal languages a means to an end, by incorporating associative techniques such as fusion terms (Jacob Glatstein) bilingualism of Yiddish and English (A. Leyeles) or by creating a new aesthetic method of writing poetry in Yiddish (Debora Vogel). If writing in Yiddish was the laying ground for the utopian *Yiddishland*, translating universal literature *into* Yiddish was a way of building it up with bricks. For the *Inzikh* poets who viewed the Yiddish language as a home in exile, the language became the subject, the community, and their Jewish identity. So, if for them, "Jewishness was a language" (Harshav, 1990: 184) and Yiddish constituted their home, a utopian *Yiddishland* in the poem, can that home be translated without

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[103] A translation of Vogel's work into Polish was published in 2006 by Karolina Szymaniak and into German in 2016 by Ana Maja Misiak. Translations into English of Vogel's poems have been published online by Anastasiya Lyubas, Anna Elena Torres, Maia Bull, in these past couple of years. Vogel's Yiddish oeuvre is being acclaimed in the Yiddish academia and this can be seen by a forthcoming special issue of *In geveb* devoted to Debora Vogel/Dvoyre Fogel's work. A forthcoming book in English of her collected poems and essays translated and edited by Anastasiya Lyubas will be published in October 2020. Translations of Vogel's work have been undertaken largely by women. The concept "translating as a feminist" will be further explored in the next Chapter of this thesis.

them losing their Jewish identity? This paradox in wanting to be part of a universal literature but remaining in Yiddish by resisting translation will be discussed in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER IV—Linguistic resistance: The contradictions of translating Yiddish poetry[104]

> "The act of translation itself embodies the state of exile[105]"
>
> - Batnitzky

This Chapter will explore what translation from Yiddish into other languages might entail for the *Inzikh* poets, adding to the previous Chapter where translations or self-translations into Yiddish were made as a means of linguistic re-creation but also, as a means of linguistic ecology (Venuti 2005). Thus, the *Inzikh* poets' struggle towards defending the Yiddish language underwent a resistance to translation, as the *Inzikh* poets were afraid that non-Yiddish readers would not acknowledge the Yiddish language. On the other hand, the only possible type of recognition may be achieved through translation for minority languages such as Yiddish. It comes to a logical consequence that the question then focuses not only on *how* but on *what* to translate of Yiddish literature. Some of the Introspectivists' poetic work has been translated into English and included on several anthologies throughout the years. The controversy and the responsibility of these translations in *what* gets translated by the editors will be explored at the end of the Chapter in analyzing English anthologies of Yiddish poetry.

The Yiddish and Hebrew poet Bialik described translation as kissing a bride through her veil; Manseau understood translation as an art nearly mystical in its ability to blend times and cultures and Frost thought of translation in poetry as thinking of what gets lost in translation. In Yiddish literature one cannot think only of what gets lost and what is found, but the importance relies on what is *saved*. For the *Inzikh* poets, what needed to be *saved* was the

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[104] Part of this Chapter "Linguistic Resistance: The Contradictions of Translating Modern Yiddish Poetry" was admitted to the seminar "Translating Home I: Migration, Refuge, and Human Rights (organized by the ICLA Translation Committee)" for the ACLA 2020 conference in Chicago. The conference was cancelled due to the Covid-19 and in turn a virtual Workshop titled "Translating Home" organized by the ICLA Translation Committee took place on Friday June 19th and Saturday June 20th, 2020.

[105] This act of translation as exile is also further discussed by Shreiber: "Jewish poetry occupies a strained relation to the moment in which it is both conceived and received. That is, Jewish poetry is necessarily an exilic phenomenon. But Rosenzweig goes even further. Insisting that the exilic consciousness is the ideal condition of Jewish being and that Jewish poetry in translation embodies this sought-after condition, he suggests that texts in translation are theologically/conceptually superior to those written in the original" (2010, 36).

Yiddish language. In doing so they would use their refusal to translate their work into English[106] as an act of defiance, of linguistic resistance. An illustrative example of the consequences of the untranslated can be found in the 1920s when the editor of the Chicago journal *Poetry*, Harriet Moore, wrote to the editors of the *Inzikh* asking: "Unfortunately we cannot read your journal. We would like to know in what language it is printed. Is it Chinese?" This inquiry demonstrated the editor's interest in other poetry journals that were being published in America in the 1920s. Their lack of knowledge of the Yiddish language, however, did not allow them to understand a poetry that was also created in America at the same time as their journal. Furthermore, as a translator was never found, the *Inzikh* file apparently remains to this day in the *Poetry* archives.

This incident foregrounds the tragedy of many untranslated works which often remain in the darkness. At the same time, it poses a question: if the poems of the *Inzikh* journal had been translated from Yiddish into English, would Moore have recognized the Yiddish language which she had so sadly confused as Chinese? Translating minority languages, in this case, Yiddish, can help preserve the dual purpose of dissemination aspects of its culture, as well as serve as an agent of language extinction (Apter, 2011: 4). This reflection does not entail that works written in minority languages should not be translated. Instead, it opens a discussion, explored in this Chapter, regarding the consequences of translating works written in minority languages, and how some authors manifested an opposition to translation as a form of linguistic resistance through their writing techniques.

The answer to Moore's question was written in the section "Reflections" of the *Inzikh* journal in June 1923, probably by the editor in chief at that time, A. Leyeles[107]. He responded to Moore's question with another question: "How long will Yiddish literature be unknown among the Gentiles?" (*Inzikh* June 1923). He continues by stating how the editor of the *Poetry* journal,

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[106] The founders of the *Inzikh* movement when arriving in New York studied at American colleges, thus proving that these modernist poets had a sufficient level of English. Their understanding of English could have helped them introduce their poetry or their movement to the American reader, but their refusal to do so supports the theory of the untranslatability as an act of linguistic resistance.

[107] There was a brief and not very successful correspondence during those years between Moore and Leyeles as can be seen in the notes of *Poetry's* February 1924 written by Moore: "The exchange editor's curiosity was aroused by In Sich, a magazine of modern Yiddish verse. This information concerning its contents was acquired only through correspondence, in English, with the magazine's editor, A. Leyeles. In Gentilian ignorance we rashly offered to find a Jewish poet who would read the magazine and briefly evaluate it for readers of *Poetry*, and we were promptly honored with what seems to be a complete file. But we have not yet happened upon any one sufficiently versed in both Yiddish and poetry to have an appreciative comprehension of the magazine" (287).

established in Chicago where several Yiddish daily newspapers, besides journals, anthologies and books were printed in Yiddish, should be able to differentiate between the Chinese and the Yiddish alphabet. This confusion of languages (between Yiddish and Chinese) foregrounded the problem of accessing modernist poetry written in different languages in America. The reason for this problem, in the *Inzikh* case, was due to the lack of translations of the *Inzikh* poets' work into English. But Leyeles' response reflects another dilemma: the *Inzikh* poets wanted their American peers to acknowledge their avant-garde poetic work not in translation but in Yiddish. Translating Yiddish into English, however, was for the *Inzikh* a way to erase the poetry's and the language's 'otherness' as well as a way that worked against the preservation of Yiddish.

Before exploring further this dilemma experienced by the *Inzikh* poets of whether to translate or not to translate, a discussion on the ethics of translation is necessary in order to understand the implications of translating minority languages. Recent studies on the ethics of translation emphasize what the translation of minority languages might mean. One of the most pertinent arguments runs as follows: taking into consideration Levinas's concept of 'otherness' applied to translation, translation at times tends to reduce otherness to sameness. Minority languages, once translated, become part of the universal mainstream where their 'foreignness' is globalized. As a result, languages that define a cultural or national identity are doomed to be forgotten or become void of all difference in translation. It all depends of course on how the translation is made. But as Bermann warns "if linguistic otherness reminds us of all we cannot comprehend, including our "pre-ontological" ethical responsibility to those whom we do not, and cannot, ever fully know, translation (in the usual sense) can be seen only as a "comprehension," a taking of power, and a reduction of otherness" (2005: 90).

Eaglestone argues how Levinas's conception of ethics suggests the impossibility of translation (2005: 127). For Levinas "to be hospitable means to welcome the other, the stranger and in no small part, this involves recognizing the otherness of the stranger precisely as otherness, not as some version of one's own thought." (130). In this respect, translation may be performed in a way in which the other becomes the same, where one language of dominance, usually the target language, excludes the otherness, usually of the source language, and where the language of the other is not recognized. This willingness to be recognized in Yiddish was the reason Leyeles never sent any of their journals to Harriette Moore translated into English. This desire to be recognized in Yiddish is also what prompted Leyeles' dismissive response in his previously

mentioned essay, where the question of how long Yiddish will be unknown to the gentiles reveals their desire for their work to be recognized solely in Yiddish and not in its translation. In this context, according to Levinas (1981: 59) translation can be seen as

> the "metaphysics of comprehension": knowing the other is most often a comprehension, a "taking power." [...] I suggest that the possibility of translation—if it is understood as relying on a "whole vessel," the "language of god" or a "universal human experience"—is also one of these terms. To translate the neighbor is to turn him/her/it into a category of our own language and so to deny him/her/its otherness. It is only by approaching the neighbor, the other, as that which we cannot understand or comprehend, or translate, that we act ethically: "I posit myself deposed of my sovereignty. Paradoxically it is qua alienus—foreigner and other— that man is not alienated.

Levinas's view of translation is set within that complicated grey area where translation is impossible in that "we are each responsible for those we do not, cannot, and could not understand." (Eaglestone, 2005: 137). This view does not necessarily mean that we should not translate "but it does mean that we have ethical grounds to be even more suspicious of the idea of translation and the way in which it relates to communities" (137).

For centuries, the Yiddish language has been considered the language of the 'other'. A pertinent example comes from the Poland of the 1900s, the foreignness of the Jewish languages was considered "the great wall of China." The language of the 'other' was seen as impenetrable and translations from Yiddish into Polish were made not only as a step towards a mutual understanding between the two cultures but even more so as a way to "know one's enemy" (Krynicka, 2019: 124). In Scholem Ash's introduction to the Polish translation of Miasteczko [A shtetl] from the initial Yiddish (1904), the translator writes: "Yet born in Poland, it separates itself from the Polish society with an impenetrable wall of the foreign tongue, which we cannot speak and will never be able to" (2019: 125). The use of the first-person plural in the sentence "suggests that the author is constructing a sense of collective identity that excludes the Other" (125). This statement reflects some political beliefs in pre-WWI Poland, where translations served as a tool of "discovering the Other" for Polish nationalists in the new political atmosphere that discouraged intercultural harmonization. What is striking about this statement is not just that Yiddish is seen as inaccessible, but that "it is hard to imagine similar statements in any other language. After all, why should it be reprehensible that the literature of a foreign language can be accessed only through translation? No Polish critic would ever bemoan the fact that Hungarian is a language "we cannot speak and will never be able to" (2019: 126). A

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question that is left unanswered is: If we "cannot and will never be able to speak" Yiddish, who translated the book? As it is often done with minority languages, it is likely that the translator made the translation from the German version (ibid) using indirect translation.

Readers who had no knowledge of Yiddish went from viewing the language as a barrier, or the so-called "wall of China", to confusing it with the Chinese language. This inaccessibility of the Yiddish language constituted a tragedy. Casanova (2005) describes that writers of minority languages, knowing how their work would not be read in their original language due to the lack of people speaking that language, become aware of how the only possible realm of existence for their work may be reached through translation, thus making translation a necessity. Authors who write in minority languages are caught in a structural contradiction that forces them "to choose between translation into a literary language" which would give them a literary existence, or "retreat into a smaller language that condemns them to invisibility" (2005: 180). Baker, on the other hand, advocates for activism through translation as "translation out of the minority language is usually undertaken to raise awareness of the minority language and literature and allow its writers to reach a wider audience" (2014: 18). Translation out of the minority languages also serves as "one form of resistance to the majority language" as it "consists of [a] refusal to be translated into it" (2014: 18). Examples of resistance to translation, such as by writing bilingual texts and mixing the dominant language with the peripheral language, will be discussed further in this Chapter.

The contradiction at the root of translating Yiddish into universal languages was aggravated in view of not only the destruction of Yiddish-speaking towns in Europe after WWII and the creation of the state of Israel, where Hebrew would be established as the official language, but also due to the rapid linguistic assimilation of many Jews in exile. "After the Holocaust, Yiddish would gradually be converted from a language of translation to one in need of translation" (Boyden, 178). For the *Inzikh* poets, seeing how their work depended solely on Yiddish readers and with the language being in demise, translating their work into English seemed as the only possible realm of a literary "afterlife"[108] or, even more poignantly, literary survival. But translating their work would also betray their 'choice' of Yiddish. Being in exile

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[108] This concept has been attributed to Walter Benjamin from his essay, *Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers* (The Task of the Translator). This word has been said to be mistranslated as Caroline Disler points out in her article "Benjamin's "Afterlife": A Productive (?) Mistranslation. In Memoriam Daniel Simeoni". She suggests that a more fitted word from the German translation of *Überleben* would be "survive", as can be found in the usual French versions: *survie*.

had meant that "choosing" Yiddish and not another language as their poetic language was an act of resistance to assimilation as well as an act of fidelity to the language of their European ancestors. The *Inzikh* poets aimed to invigorate the Yiddish language, giving its poetry a broader scope, intending for it to subsist beyond the margins and enter the canons of World literature[109] while resisting translation. The Yiddish language, considered as the language of the diaspora par excellence, would move from existing in a national diasporic space to a poetic space. At the same time, writing in the so-called language of the "other" would create a linguistic isolation; "Writing as part of, but apart from America," (Shreiber ,2003: 151).

Regarding the aspect of translating from Yiddish into universal languages, several studies[110] dwell upon this complicated dilemma in the last two decades. According to Norich, translations constitute an urgent necessity. Norich's (2000: 156) answer to the question of "What will remain?" in Sutzkever's poem is translation, as

> translation seems to complete the work of obliteration carried out in Europe. It seems to call into question the viability of the still-living language. But I also think of it as a loving act of resistance, an act of defiance that preserves a culture whose transformations should not be met with silence.

Translations from Yiddish to universal languages would then serve as a form of testimony for what some had tried to destroy. They could foreground and highlight the disappearance of the Yiddish language, while at the same time "tell us about the history of Yiddish in America" (2013: 5). But foremost, as Norich states, paraphrasing Benjamin, a translation can ultimately "send us back to the original" (ibid: 7).

Norich advocates on that, although one can affirm that something is "lost in translation" what is gained "may be ultimately far more impressive" (1995: 208). The question, however, does not concern solely issues of fidelity to the text. Translations from Yiddish into other languages may imply the loss of the Yiddish language and with it its potential audience. After the Holocaust, translating Yiddish into other languages became even a bigger threat to the language

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[109] See Zaritt, Saul. "The World Awaits Your Yiddish Word": Jacob Glatstein and the Problem of World Literature" (2015).

[110] For a discussion on translations from Yiddish see "Translation Forum" in *In Geveb* https://ingeveb.org/tags/Translation%20Forum. Academics and scholars such as Anita Norich, Madeleine Cohen, Zackary Sholem Berger, Sarah Ponichtera, and Saul Noam Zaritt reflect upon what it means to translate Yiddish in the Twenty-First Century.

itself. "Yiddish, in this context, can be understood as resistance, and translation as an act of collaboration in the destruction of a culture, a betrayal of the language in which it flourished and the millions who spoke it" (1995: 209). The dilemma of translating Yiddish triggered a debate and made many modern Yiddish poets question the translatability of their works. What concerned them regarding their translations was that what got lost in translation was not the content but the form, and above all, the form was Yiddish. What got lost was also their 'choice' of Yiddish and with it the Jewish identity that lay solely in the choice of that language. Yet at the same time, according to Norich (1995: 209),

> and in apparent contradiction to this view of translation as a kind of violation, the cultural valence of contemporary Yiddish suggests that translation, too, is an act of resistance to history [...] Faced with an indisputably declining population of Yiddish readers, we cannot ignore the likelihood that Yiddish texts may only continue to flourish in translation.

Translating Yiddish literature into universal languages makes this culture accessible to a universal reader, but between the interpretation and the negotiation of the translator, it is not the Yiddish culture, with its idioms and idiosyncrasies, but the language itself that gets lost in the way. Thus, the contradictions of translation lie not so much into questioning *what* and *how* to translate but on the consequences and perils translation entails for minority languages[111].

Works by Werner Sollors or Maeera Shreiber wager that American modernist literature can only be understood by recognizing its different ethnicities and by thinking through its margins. But these differences are only recognized in its translations. Zaritt (2015: 184) explains how

> translation suddenly allowed for the exposure of Yiddish literature to non-Jewish audiences. In an act of self-preservation, Yiddish writers in America felt that their writing needed to move beyond Yiddish itself; a text needed to be born in Yiddish and then become American, to move from Yiddish into the world.

But was it possible for these writers to be recognized by the world while writing in the Yiddish language? Although this knowledge of Yiddish literature in America would help "remap American literary history by thinking through its margins" (Shreiber, 2003: 152) at the same time, translating Yiddish literature, "especially in a world dominated by the languages of

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[111] See Cronin, Michael, "Altered States: Translation and Minority Languages" (1995).

powerful economies and big populations, condemns minority tongues to obsolescence" (Apter, 2011, 4). The *Inzikh* poets' experimental poetic style and their defense of the Yiddish language drove them towards a resistance in translation or, what studies have recently termed, towards the untranslatable.

a. The untranslatable

> "Think of it: *heym* and *home* the meaning
> the same of course exactly
> but the shift in vowel was the ocean
> in which I drowned."
> - Irena Klepfisz

Several studies in recent years (Cassin 2014, Apter 2011, among others) have accounted for the importance of exploring the untranslatable. A potential definition of the untranslatable may be that of a misunderstanding, where the language of the original is incorruptible and where the shift of a single vowel, as in the quote cited above, represented a loss that went further than its lexical meaning. According to Apter "there is a quality of militant semiotic intransigence attached to the Untranslatable, making it more than just a garden-variety keyword" (2013: 34). Such studies present a debate on the consequences and the approaches to translation in understanding "the Untranslatable, not as pure difference in opposition to the always translatable [...] but as a linguistic form of creative failure with homeopathic uses" (Apter, 2013: 20). Perhaps the most instructive example is Cassin's *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon* (2014). The project includes contributions by 150 contributors over a period of eleven years. What makes this project unique is "its attempt to rewrite the history of philosophy through the lens of the 'untranslatable', defined loosely as a term that is left untranslated as it is transferred from language to language [...] or that is typically subject to mistranslation and retranslation" (Apter, 2014: vii).

Cassin's *Dictionary* is a way of understanding and viewing Europe in a completely different way to our usual canonized, normalized academic view of translation and language communication. In understanding *all* its languages with each idiom and "how a term "is" in its

native tongue, and how it "is" or "is not" when relocated or translated in another language" (Apter, 2014: ix), the Dictionary seeks to promote connections between those languages of dominance and those "persecuted minorities" in the wake of "political and ecological catastrophes" while enhancing "attunement to linguistic difference" (Apter, 2014: x). The Dictionary maps a "cartography of linguistic diaspora" (ibid: xiii) and marks the "singularities of expression that contour a worldscape" (ibid: xv). In other words, it gives a worldview of the particularism in the diversity of world languages as it shows an interest in the differences. 'Untranslation' adds a new meaning, new layers to a language. It increases diversity and reinterpretation in the hope of understanding and recognizing "something about language's very essence" (Apter, 2013: 25).

Apter voices the concern that, although Translation Studies have always measured the semantic and stylistic fidelity of the original, when it comes to minority languages scholarly attention changes its focus from literary fidelity to linguistic extinction. Apter (2011: 4) continues by stating that

> Translation studies have always had to confront the problem of whether it best serves the ends of perpetuating cultural memory or advancing its effacement. A good translation, as Walter Benjamin famously argued, makes possible the afterlife of the original by jumping the line between the death of the source language and its futural transference to a target. This death/life aporia leads to split discourses in the field of translation studies: while translation is deemed essential to the dissemination and preservation of textual inheritance, it is also understood to be an agent of language extinction. For translation, especially in a world dominated by the languages of powerful economies and big populations, condemns minority tongues to obsolescence, even as it fosters access to the cultural heritage of "small" literatures, or guarantees a wider sphere of reception to selected, representative authors of minoritarian traditions.

Translation is, according to Apter, also a way of taking away the 'national space' and a potential avenue for political change. As seen in the previous Chapter, translation was also used to nationalize a language into translating or adapting literatures from around the world into that language. Translations *into* Yiddish were a way of creating that 'national space', whereas translating *from* Yiddish was a way of taking away that 'national space'. For the *Inzikh* poets, the untranslatable meant providing the Yiddish language with a place, where new created words rendered several interpretations. Translation would leave the Yiddish home homeless, betraying altogether the *Inzikhs*' linguistic choice.

Glatstein was one of the *Inzikh* poets who viewed untranslation as a way of defending the Yiddish language by highlighting the impossibilities of rendering meaning to another language. Using experimental language, interplay with dialects, and the creation of new words[112] with multiple meanings, also known as fusion terms, made his poems sometimes untranslatable. An example of the untranslatable using a play of Yiddish words, is Glatstein's poem "From grey till grey" (*fun gro biz gro*) published in the *Inzikh* issue of June 1923. In this poem Glatstein uses the effect of deconstructing the Yiddish word *zind* by taking the last consonant of the word in each new verse. Thus, in the next verse, the word *zind* becomes *zin*, to end up as *zi*. This effect of deconstruction with each word connoting a new meaning in each verse is impossible to translate,

> in harts fun finsternish-
> bloyz ikh un *zind*.
> bloyz ikh un *zin*.
> bloy ikh un *zi*[113].

Glatstein's work *Yiddishtaytshn* (1937) (translated as *Exegyddish* by Harshav and Harshav) is considered "one of the most brilliant achievements of Yiddish poetry, and for the most part untranslatable" (Harshav, 2007: 206). The work experiments with language, as it "tackles the linguistic medium itself and the manner in which the poet grappled with it, to its fullest fruition" (Novershtern, 2015: 219). The interplay of different Yiddish dialects makes the "impossibility of translation [its] central motif. The theme of translation is even embedded in the book's title, which includes a neologism that modifies an archaic name for the Yiddish language in order to demonstrate Yiddish's plurality and untranslatability" (Zaritt, 2015: 186). With this title, Glatstein seems to invite the reader to reconsider the task of translating from Yiddish, while at the same time situating Yiddish poetry next to modern poetry in the world. As it has been very aptly noted "in what ultimately is a quintessential modernist gesture, Glatstein commits himself to being a language artist above all" (ibid: 187).

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[112] Glatstein wrote a parody titled, "If Joyce wrote in Yiddish" (*Inzikh*, July 1928, pp 68-70) where he simulates Joyce's writing in Finnegan's Wake. In doing so Glatstein also adapted Joyce's associative technique of fusion terms in his later poems (Hadda, 1998, 57). "The fun-filled literary style that James Joyce pioneered in English perfectly suited Yiddish, a European language that had integrated at least as many linguistic strands as English and could take at least equal delight in showing off its wit" (Wisse, 1997: 137).

[113] "In the ardor of darkness-/ just me and sin. / just me and sense. / just me and she." (translation into English is mine)

The poet's resistance to translation demonstrates not only 'a quintessential modernist gesture' but also his perceived duty to the Yiddish language, a duty that fate had entrusted in view of the rapid decrease of Yiddish readers. The *zikh* in *Inzikh* (in oneself) became *undzer* (our). The Yiddish language that formed part of the poet's artistic creation became a demand and a responsibility to the community. As Zaritt explains "the speaker of the poem concludes that the labor of the Yiddish wordproletarian—his labor in the Marxist sense—is to ensure the possibility of linguistic expression as the collective body disintegrates" (2015: 189). The poet strove for a radical new Yiddish that would ensure its position in the future for the Yiddish reader. According to Zaritt (2015: 190),

> During the same period, Glatstein also attempted to extend this paradoxical approach to linguistic particularity into political rather than just poetic contexts. In other poems throughout *Yidishtaytshn* and in essays of the 1930s, Glatstein addressed the political present by examining its reflection in the status of Yiddish and Yiddish culture. This increasingly led Glatstein to consider the consequences of his avowed radical particularism within the urgent international and global contexts of his day. These reflections received their most extended expression in Glatstein's two novels, *Ven Yash iz gefor*n (1938) and *Ven Yash iz gekumen* (1940), pseudo-autobiographical accounts of Glatstein's 1934 trip to Eastern Europe[114].

A representative text of Glatstein regarding his position on translation was "The march to the goyim" (*Der marsh tsu di goyem)*, published in the *Inzikh* issue of July 1935. The article starts by narrating how Bergelson (1884-1952), a Yiddish writer from Russia, upon arriving in America, the first question he asks Glatstein is where he can find a translator in order to render his Yiddish work into English. Bergelson thought that he would gain recognition for his work among the American readers via the medium of translation. Bergelson was not the only writer Glatstein describes in his article. He also talks or rather attacks the Yiddish writer Sholem Asch, criticizing his work of limiting its Yiddish vocabulary in order to make his translations into English easier (Zaritt, 2015: 192). Glatstein described "this new trend as an epidemic" (ibid).

Overall, Glatstein was a fierce critic of not only any work that was not written in a Jewish language, in his case Yiddish, but also of the eagerness of writers to get translated into English as quickly as possible. Zaritt remarks on how "global languages presented a temptation for

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[114] *Ven Yash iz geforn* was first serialized in the *Inzikh* journal from October 1934 till December 1937. The two books were translated together into English as *The Glatstein Chronicles*, ed. Ruth Wisse (2010). For an extended discussion of the novels see Chapter V of this thesis.

writers quickly losing their audiences, but in Glatstein's estimation such acts of translation erased the particularity of Jewish experience" (2015: 193). Glatstein defended the particular in the universal, a concept that I will expand on further in the next Chapter, by "fetishizing the "original scent" of a language, its authenticity and its untranslatability." (ibid). The question lay then on how a Yiddish writer could become part of World literature without compromising by allowing their work to be translated. Translation after all for Glatstein (Zaritt, 2015: 196) meant

> the sacrifice of the only home he had ever known—the Yiddish language. That space could be given over to the world only through a messianic intervention that would still somehow preserve a good Yiddish word. Glatstein wanted to be part of a world canon, but he wanted to be accepted on his terms and literally in his own language. The "worlding" of his work depended on the status of Yiddish—Glatstein waited for a kind of translation that would reaffirm the "Yiddishness" of the work and not allow the vernacular, personal language to be erased.

Glatstein's writing in Yiddish was a kind of messianic waiting, a concept that will be further discussed in the following Chapter, in which the very untranslatability of a text determined its place in world literature. The Yiddish poet would hope for a Yiddish reader in the future to encounter their work in Yiddish, instead of the writer waiting for the world-translator to bring their Yiddish word to the world: "The world awaits your Yiddish word!" (*Di velt vart oyf dayn yidish vort!*) (*Inzikh* July 1935, 56) cries out the world-translator in Glatstein's article mentioned above.

Another important means by which the *Inzikh* poets resisted to translation was the use of bilingualism. An example of the usage of Yiddish-English bilingualism, which is unique among the Yiddish poet-exiles in the United States, can be found in the poem below by Minkov published in the *Inzikh* issue of January 1930,

<div dir="rtl">

איך, ווי אלעמאָל, גיי אוים אין bleeding errors ··

וועו מיט זיך באַצאָלן? וועו... דער שוידערלאָככסטער מאָעם?

איך קאָן נאָך אלץ ניט פֿון מיין האַרץ פֿאַריאָנן ס׳רואיק-ווייזע,

וועט דאָס שוין זיין דאָס איינגעשטילטע מאָעם?

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Another example of Yiddish-English bilingualism is Leyeles' poem "Hel". Feldman analyzes this poem in explaining how Leyeles uses the word 'Hel' as a bilingual witticism (*Hel* meaning

bright in Yiddish but throughout the poem it veers into the negative connotation of the English word "Hell"). This "bilingual semantics" urges Feldman to continue this act of resistance by not including any translation into English of the poem. As she states, "since all these characteristics simply defy translation, we bring just the original" (1985: 50).

The aspect of bilingualism has always been very common in Yiddish literature. Although the use of Hebrew and Yiddish bilingualism in a text was quite common, the poet's usage of this bilingualism with a "wide range of effects, from a heightening of tone to an undercurrent of irony" (Howe, Wisse, Shmeruk 1988: 49) posed a problem when it came to translating it into other languages. Once in exile, the new bilingualism would now adapt to include the interplay between Yiddish and English, the new adopted language. The new English words in the text would be written in the Hebrew letters "which represent their sounds as immigrant speakers of Yiddish would have heard them, rather than their standard English spelling–for example, *foyrnitsher* for 'furniture.'" (Rosenwald, 2008: 129). In order to convey this in translation, "these same English words are differentiated from other English words by being spelled as a phonetic transcription into English of [...] phonetic transcription into Yiddish. An example would be the word *vawkink* (walking)" (ibid).

The reception of these bilingual texts changes from the original to the translation. In the original, the English words convey a type of glossary of the new world for the Yiddish reader. This glossary includes concepts and aspects of the immigrant experience but also the desire to convey a sense of cosmopolitanism, a way of integrating languages of the new to the old Yiddish from Europe. An example can be found in Kadya Molodowsky's novel *A Jewish Refugee in New York* (first published in Yiddish in 1942; the English translation published in 2019). In this novel, "a foreignized English-transliterated into Yiddish-appears on nearly every page [...] thus [Molodowsky] presents her reader with challenges similar to the ones faced by her main character, who arrives in New York knowing no English and uncertain of her ability to learn it" (Norich, 2019: xvii). This aspect of the immigrant experience (the language of the street) lived by the main character and shared also by other nationalities migrating to the US, is difficult, not to say impossible, to convey in translation.

The English reader perceives these transliterated words as somehow alien but still a part of the English language. In the Yiddish text, the English words transliterated in Yiddish letters seems to weigh towards English as if welcoming this new language to the immigrants' mother tongue.

In some of Sholem Aleichem's Yiddish novels, the character's "adroit deployment of English words in Yiddish marks him as quick-witted, open-minded, curious" whereas in the English translation "relatively common English words marks him for the English reader as slow, ignorant, bumbling" (Rosenwald, 2008: 130). What is also transformed through translation is the character too, from a witty individual to an ignorant one, therefore the aspect of the character's speech and its mistranslation into English corrupts the text and turns the character into a caricature. What is lost in translation is the aspect of bilingualism of the character represented as the immigrant experience.[115] What might remain in the translation are "traces" of the original, one could even speak of "gaps", "silences", of what was lost within the text of the translation. The choice of using two languages in a text is purposely done by the author to convey, among other things, a historical and sociological situation. There is also a link to the political aspects of assimilation, of one language entering another, as a pertinent and significant aspect of this choice.

This use of bilingualism was an intentional choice of rendering historical nuances while engaging with the untranslatability, the *Inzikh* poets still feared that translations could erase the Yiddish language and lead to complete linguistic assimilation. On the other hand, some exiled Yiddish poets tried their hand at writing poems in English or found themselves in urgent need of having to translate their work into English. The latter was the case of Chava Rosenfarb, a Yiddish poet exiled in Canada after surviving the Lodz ghetto, for whom translations took a new meaning. They became a "need" and a form of "rescue", "a lifeline to the future" (2019: 184) for a language and a culture that was being destroyed. She recalls in her memoir how Yiddish was the language she felt more at home with, "it was a language that I knew like the map of my own heart" (ibid: 185). As we have seen in Chapter Two, the choice of language could also depend on the historical circumstances a writer was confronted with and Rosenfarb exemplifies that very well. First, surviving the Lodz ghetto, and then in exile, seeing the disappearance of the Yiddish language she decided to continue writing in Yiddish (instead of writing in English or French, as many of the exiled Jews of Montreal did). Rosenfarb's decision to write in Yiddish came "out of a sense of loyalty to the vanished world of my youth, out of a sense of obligation to a world that no longer existed" (2019: 185).

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[115] A reverse bilingualism can be found in the works of the poet and Yiddish activist Irene Klepfisz (1990), where Yiddish words are used in the English text as to reaffirm her immigrant status of her parents' generation, and her legacy of a lost world. Making Yiddish present in her work becomes a statement of survival, of the possibility of a multilingual America which Rosenwald (2008) advocates for.

The fate of Rosenfarb as a writer depended on the fate of the Yiddish language. Seeing the Yiddish readership disappear (due to the Holocaust and the linguistic assimilation of the survivors in exile), translating her work into English became an inevitable task. Yiddish newspapers started disappearing and Rosenfarb found herself with nowhere to publish her work. It is then that she realized how translation would come to represent her literary future while at the same time wanting "to memorialize our vanished past and our lost communities" (2019: 186). Without a translation of her work, she feared her future as a writer would be "doomed". Translating from Yiddish into English was something that also depended on the small number of Yiddish speakers left. The task of the translator for Rosenfarb becomes an "optimistic" endeavor and one she is most grateful for. The future generations are the ones responsible for *saving* the Yiddish literary works. Rosenfarb remarks (ibid: 189) how

> sometimes, as in the case of Yiddish, there is much more at stake: it is not merely that translation allows literary works to exist in languages in which they never existed before, but also that translators are engaged in snatching from the jaws of oblivion that which is in danger of disappearing. It is a most honorable calling; it is a preservation of the past in the present.

For Rosenfarb, as for the Yiddish modernist poets, writing in Yiddish meant that in order for their work to exist or to be read at all they would have to rely on translation. Being a Yiddish writer in exile meant living in an isolation that only translation could redeem. If writing is an isolated profession, writing in Yiddish according to Rosenfarb, had an additional dimension, as their readership had perished. This sense of isolation and the willingness to be saved by a translator (seen as the Messiah, the savior) can be best described in Cynthia Ozick's story "Envy; or, Yiddish in America" explored in the next section.

b. *Saved* in translation[116]

"We translate Yiddish with the fury of lost love."
- Cynthia Ozick

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[116] The word *saved* in this context refers to the texts that get saved from oblivion because of translation and not to the concept of saving the artistic appeal of the original text as discussed in Baranczak's article (1992).

The short story "Envy; or, Yiddish in America" published in Commentary in November 1969 by Cynthia Ozick narrates the tragic story of a Yiddish poet looking for a translator, while exposing the dilemma of the decline of Yiddish in America in the late twentieth century. The story is an example of resistance to being translated; at the same time, it is a story about the despair of a Yiddish poet not being translated, and thus left in the abyss of anonymity. It is also an example of how the decline of Yiddish speakers is not only the decline of Yiddish readers but also of those able to translate Yiddish. The story raises "questions about whether or not and how translation can save a language with a declining population of speakers" (Hellerstein, 2012: 25) and readers because of the Holocaust, Stalin's purges, the creation of the State of Israel and the exiles' linguistic and cultural assimilation in America (ibid).

Ozick herself is an example, along with many other authors of her generation (Samuel Bellow, Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth), who knew Yiddish but were part of a younger, assimilated generation in America, who wrote in English with a Yiddish essence in their texts. Hellerstein (2012: 25-26) explains how

> Ozick layers the English prose of "Envy" with Yiddish—inserting actual Yiddish phrases, sentences, and stanzas of poems; translating Yiddish idioms and sayings into an English that is often deliberately unidiomatic; and bending and reversing English syntax with Yiddishisms that transform English into Yinglish. By infusing her English prose with both actual Yiddish and features of Yiddish, Ozick draws the American reader unwittingly into the linguistic world from which her protagonist hopes he will be translated. In the process, Ozick makes her readers themselves into translators.

The Yiddish poet in Ozick's story is said to represent Glatstein, who, as seen earlier in this Chapter, was reluctant to translate Yiddish due to how translations into English could affect the survival of the Yiddish language. In fact, "the central paradox of the story is that translation both saves and negates Yiddish." (Hellerstein, 2012: 27). The story also reproaches on how I.B. Singer, the other recognizable character, is known because of his English translations. According to the narrator of the story, as a Yiddish writer *he* did not exist for the American audience. The central dilemma of the story, which represents the dilemma of the *Inzikh* poets as well, lies at the core of the contradiction in translating Yiddish poetry. Hellerstein (2012: 29) states how

the act of translation marks the great divide between Yiddish writers who survive in America and those who do not exist. A paradox holds in this formulation: at the same time that translation saves Yiddish writers from obscurity, it replaces Yiddish sentences with English sentences and thus erases the Yiddish language and its culture. If salvation of Yiddish writers' reputations obliviates Yiddish, then what good is it?

Known authors, such as John Hollander and Cynthia Ozick, began to translate Introspectivist poetry during the 1960s, bringing these works to a younger generation that was largely unable to access the Yiddish original. When it comes to minority languages, the essential question is not only what gets translated and how. Considerations of the global market, the reception and interpretation of the work, and agencies of multiple individuals involved (Bourdieu) are also important factors.

Bermann explains the 'need' for translations as an attempt to heighten awareness of the diverse linguistic and cultural literatures. Bermann also observes how translations should be re-thought in historical and temporal terms and suggests (2005: 6) that,

> that the translator's task is inevitably an ethical one. In attempts to translate, we become most aware of linguistic and cultural differences, of the historical "hauntings," and of experiential responsibilities that make our languages what they are and that directly affect our attitudes toward the world.

Linguistic differences, understood as the Chinese wall explored at the beginning of the Chapter, may find a way of building linguistic bridges through translation. But "how does the translator attend to the specificity of the language she translates?" (Spivak, 1993: 180). By considering the poet's historical past, according to Spivak. Understanding the Yiddish poets' historical past and their experience of immigration in the United States, makes their translations into English another step towards assimilation. Resisting translation from Yiddish into English would activate the Yiddish poet's contingency in striving to maintain its Jewish identity from getting lost. According to Spivak, "it is merely the easiest way of being "democratic" with minorities. In the act of wholesale translation into English there can be a betrayal of the democratic ideal into the law of the strongest" (1993: 182). Translators are expected then to be ethical agents, "to turn the *other* into something like the self in order to be ethical." (183). Spivak further suggests that the translator must build a relationship with the language being translated, become intimate with it, and by doing so understand as well "the history of the language, the history of the author's moment, and the history of the language-in-and-as-translation" (186).

For Howe, translation was a necessary rescue for Yiddish literature, as it signified a resurrection for some Yiddish writers. Translation of Yiddish works into English in the 1950s and 1960s "brought about a genuine revival of Yiddish literature." (1989: 452). These translations are now being re-translated, as some of the previous English versions of the Yiddish works were abridged versions, cutting out the cultural and linguistic conventions with no criticism or reference given to the poems itself. The translation molded and adapted to the target, anglophone, reader, made the English version as different as possible to the original. Considering these re-translations Norich explains how "although most of Yiddish literature has never been translated, a large number of works have been translated many times. [...] I ask what we can learn by comparing these translations, what they tell us about the history of Yiddish in America" (2013: 5). With every translation comes a new interpretation but ultimately what translation does is "send us back to the original, asking us not to adjudicate among variant translations or to enter into debates about the Yiddish author's intention, but rather to reread the original or to compare the translations in order to enter into the ongoing act of interpretation." (Norich, 2013: 7).

What the Yiddish poets feared was that what got lost was not the essence of the Yiddish culturally specific nuances but the language and with it the history and culture of the Jewish people (Norich, 2013: 9). To the haunting questions of "who and what, indeed, will remain of Eastern European Jewish culture? What will remain of Yiddish?" Norich answers "translations will remain." (ibid: 5). Norich expands by stating how American readers have become more familiarized with Yiddish texts because of translations than Yiddish readers ever were by reading the original Yiddish texts. To the same question of "what will last?" Novershtern responds that "what will last is that which can exist independently from the Yiddish" (1988: 358). According to Novershtern, this is the distinction between anthologies who still strive with bilingual editions, aimed primarily at Yiddish readers who use the translation to enhance their understanding of the original, and the unilingual editions with only the English translations aimed at a wider audience. Thus "anthologies are, by their very nature, intimately connected to the process of canonization, in which the intended audience plays a central, albeit unacknowledged role" (1988: 356). This in turn affects the quality and quantity of poems included, since the selection happens with a view to what works in the target language. "Poems that "work" best in the English language and "poems that "do not work" in English translation will have to go, despite all the other justifications for inclusion" (Novershtern, 1988: 358). Some editors of anthologies go as far as to name the poets they have excluded from their

selection for linguistic and cultural reasons, as is the *Inzikh* poet Leyeles in Whitman's anthology (1995). This phenomenon will be explored in the next section.

b.1 The anthology phenomena

> "I set out to convey a sense of contribution
> that Yiddish poetry can make to world literature"
> -   Leftwich

Canon formation is constantly changing in minority languages, as with every new translation new works that had been left to oblivion are discovered. It is thus that translation becomes the vehicle for the recognition of new authors or new works. The Yiddish archives have many works and authors that have not been translated yet and therefore remain unknown to the non-Yiddish reader to this day. To remedy that, anthologies of Yiddish poetry in English, starting in the 1920s, opened a possibility for Yiddish poets to be known outside Yiddish circles. Critics, such as Ravitch, stated the necessity for such anthologies "because it is only in the mirror of other languages that the real sense and meaning of Yiddish literature can become apparent to us; because Yiddish literature must not be turned in upon itself but must be regarded as an integral part of world literature" (Leftwich, 1939: lvii). Literary canons are a way to transmit a shared legacy but have also been subject to controversy. What authors/poems to pick and in what categories do they fall into? What are the "main forces within the system of literary production and consumption that have shaped, and continue to shape the canon"? (Golding, 1995: xvi), and what is the role of women poets and their (lack of) representation in such anthologies?

Jones explains how "one way the Yiddish literary world marked its territory was with anthologies. There were literary collections (*zamlbikher*) as early as 1898, often presented to readers as an introduction to an exciting new trend or group in modern literature." (2016). The *Inzikh* movement was one of those groups, publishing an anthology in 1920 in New York that provided an insight into this new Yiddish poetic trend. The anthology presented the work of nine poets, using the manifesto of their movement as an introduction. The *Inzikh* journal was

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also a way towards intervening in the workings of canon formation. According to Golding, small magazines at one time were able "to realign the center from their marginal positions by their efforts to gain attention for neglected work" (1995: 114). The editors of these small magazines could "act as significant catalysts for new developments in poetry" (ibid: 122), and propose certain readings as was Leyeles section "The Poem of the month" (*dos lid fun khoydesh*). In this section, Leyeles included works of poets who were not in the group, justifying the choice of them he as poems that were to his liking (*Inzikh,* July 1934). There is no translation of the *Inzikh* anthology into English yet, however, some of the poets of the anthology can be found in the Yiddish poetic landscape represented in various English anthologies which I will present further in this section.

The controversy on the principles of selection became a responsibility for the anthologist, who had to choose which works of Yiddish literature, a culture that was disappearing, would be selected and which would be left to oblivion. Wisse, relating her experience in making *The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse*, explains how "the rapid decline of Yiddish within our lifetime meant that the transmission of Yiddish culture depended increasingly on interpreters like us, who exerted far more than the usual influence on what would live and what would languish in obscurity" (1989: 3). Anthologies of Yiddish "hearkened back to a remembered collective past" (ibid: 17) and fulfill "the same function for the contemporary reader as Yiddish prose: to vivify a lost world" (Novershtern, 1988: 362). Overall, these anthologies "let the poems stand as an epitaph for a culture almost extinguished, and a hope that it may flow—as cultures have the ability to do—into something equally rich and strong and vital" (Betsky, 1980: xix).

Writing in the *New York Times* in 1988, Harold Bloom reviewed two English anthologies of Yiddish poetry, the *American Yiddish Poetry* and *The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse*. In Bloom's estimation, these two anthologies helped him consider the American Jewish poetry of his generation and inspired him "to make this a kind of double estimate, of both modes of Jewish poetry, Yiddish poetry and poetry by American Jews that is written in English but that emerges from the ethos of Jewish culture" (1988: 3). Overall, Bloom in his review asserts that poetry rather than prose fiction is the prime achievement of Yiddish literature in America.

Bloom[117] also notes how these anthologies' aim is to provide materials towards the continuity of Yiddish literature.

Continuing on the topic of attitudes towards translation, seen as either/both salvation and damnation, I will present the anthologies of Yiddish poetry translated into English from the interwar period to the present day in the following section. The aim is to analyze the role the *Inzikh* poets had and how they were presented, in order to understand the selection of Yiddish poets, poems and the difficulties and contradictions that the anthologists encountered. The editors of these anthologies all discuss the losses and gains of translation, which I will present with a brief explanation for each anthology. The poets omitted from the anthologies are absent due to the difficulties of translating their work or because, as Ruth Whitman stated, "didn't fit "my hand and my taste as a poet" (1995: 18). The selection and order of presentation of the poets also provides interesting information, as some anthologies prefer a chronological order, others choose a geographical order, some choose to group poets politically, or by gender and others present the poets randomly. The editors of these anthologies also have an intended reader in mind when choosing to publish the poems in a bilingual edition, trying to please the Yiddish reader as well as the English reader, or by presenting the translations by themselves for a more varied and broader audience worldwide. The following anthologies of Yiddish poetry translated into English are presented in chronological order of their publication.

Modern Yiddish Poetry: An Anthology, edited by Samuel J. Imber in 1927 is the first major collection of Yiddish poetry in English translation[118]. A bilingual edition (using transliteration instead of the Hebrew letters) presents 166 poems by 53 poets (presented in alphabetical order). The editor of the anthology, Imber, states in the introduction that the purpose of this anthology is "to offer to those uninformed or misinformed a glimpse of the modern poetical works of Yiddish literature, a literature hidden from them by the barriers of the Hebrew alphabet and by the slight strangeness of the misjudged language of the ghetto" (1927: xiii). Imber, after including a brief history of the Yiddish language, is prompt to urge the reader to acknowledge the ignorance towards the Yiddish language. With a certain disdain, he compares the Yiddish language to Cinderella, while highlighting that "the origin of the Yiddish language and the rise

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[117] Bloom's *Western Canon* is an example of the lack of sensitivity towards other cultures-literatures, by excluding peripheral and minor literatures.

[118] There was a previous collection called *Great Yiddish Poetry* of only 55 pages with a small modest selection of poets by its editor Issac Goldberg printed in 1923.

of a literature in it, is one of the greatest wonders in the history of the Jewish people" (ibid, xiv). A literature that according to Imber is "reaching the level attained by the other literatures of the modern word" and "is ripe enough to demand its rightful place among the acknowledged literatures of our times and to deserve the attention of any friend of art" (1927: xvi).

In retrospect, Imber accounts that the ignorance towards Yiddish is not due to the lack of translations into English, which he claims are numerous, but "due to the prevalent prejudice against Yiddish" (1927: xvii). This observation was also interpreted by Leyeles in the editorial mentioned at the beginning of this Chapter, in response to Hariet Moore's ignorance of the Yiddish language. In this editorial, Leyeles states how representations of Yiddish literature in non-Jewish magazines are false and silly, since "almost every article about Yiddish that appears in the local English press is an offense to every Yiddish writer" (*Inzikh*, July 1923).[119] Imber's aim in this anthology, therefore, is "to present Yiddish writing from a different angle. The Yiddish poet will here be shown not as a solitary traveler, but as a good comrade in the universal march of the world's art" (xviii). Imber insists that the Yiddish poetical voice is no different from any of the universal modern poetry written in other languages. Despite this anthology being published as early as 1927, it does acknowledge the *Inzikh* movement with both certain sarcasm and admiration. Imber (1927: xxviii-xxix) describes how

> a few members of that pretentious group [Introspectivist], after they had condescended to strip the glistening harness and wash the warpaint from their faces, revealed quite a reassuring countenance, and proved that they possessed, besides their excessive aggressiveness, also a considerable amount of true creative power.

In the introduction, Imber makes hardly any mention of his method of translation. He makes more emphasis on the transliteration of the Yiddish poems giving hence more credit to the original poems. Using only four lines, at the end of the introduction, Imber summarizes how his decision to give a verbal translation instead of a poetical is "due to the editor's desire to preserve the full meaning of the original text" (1927: xxxi).

The Golden Peacock, edited and translated by Joseph Leftwich in 1939 (second edition in 1944). Unlike other anthologies that will come later with introductions dedicated to the poetic trends in Yiddish history in Europe and America, Leftwich dedicates his introduction to the aspect of translation in the non-Yiddish world citing authors such as Goethe and Heine's

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[119] Translation into English by Harshav and Harshav (2007), p 797.

translation of Byron into German. Leftwich observes how the translator "by making accessible the work of other peoples and ages, by diffusing thought and suggesting new ways of thinking, influences the whole course of civilization" (1944: xxi). Leftwich attributes much of the glory of the Renaissance to the translations made of the writers of antiquity (ibid). For Leftwich, all that is necessary in translating poetry "is to have a poet translate it" (1944: xix) as the translator "has to produce not so much translations, as literature. "It all depends" he adds "like everything in literature, on the success of the translation" (1944: xix).

Because of this anthology's date of publication (1939), Leftwich does not situate Yiddish regarding its tragic end or remark on the demise of its readers (as later anthologies will) in the introduction. He does acknowledge, however, the "charge that is so often made against Yiddish" (1944: xxv). This charge against Yiddish, carried out by the *Maskilim* and Zionists, explained in Chapter One of this thesis, considered Yiddish not a language but a *jargon*. They considered Yiddish a dying language, despite them using it to repudiate Yiddish. To this, Singer had ironically responded how Yiddish had been dying for a thousand years and would continue to die for the next thousand years. Leftwich adds how "Yiddish has become more alive than it ever was before and has never had so many writers and readers as today [...] it is because of such a realistic approach [to Yiddish literature] by the present-day Yiddish writers that Yiddish literature continues" (1944: xli). This optimistic statement marked by the historical time (1939) and place (London) of the publication of this anthology would contrast dramatically with later anthologies, published in the US and after the elimination of the Jews and with it of Yiddish culture during WWII.

Still, Leftwich questions the reception of these poems for the English reader in a time when the aversion of the "other" and "separateness" were on the rise. He continues by asking if Yeats were not suited for the English ear, how would Yiddish speak to an English reader? Some poems, Leftwich believes, will not be understood as they have little or nothing to do with the English culture. Some, however, "may kindle the imagination of an English poet" (1944: liii), the aim being to reach the universal through the particular, for, as the saying goes, "what is one man's meat is another man's poison" (lvi). As in other anthologies, the difficulties in arranging the poets geographically is largely because of their immigrant condition. The Yiddish poets would belong to a country, but their work would be created in another country or several other countries. Still, Leftwich arranges the poets mostly by country "in rather an arbitrary fashion" (1944: xlv), while clearly including other criteria as well. The selection goes as follows: "The

Great Figures", "Soviet Poets", "Galicia", "America", "South America", "Poland", "Romania", "Palestine", "France", "England", "Women Poets", "The Older Poets" and "Folk Songs". Some of the selections are a result of Leftwich's personal preference, some are given to him by friends and some are given by Reisen from the Yiddish Scientific Institute in Vilna[120].

Onions and cucumbers and plums: 46 Yiddish poems, edited and translated by Sarah Zweig Betsky in 1958 (second edition in 1981). It is the only anthology who printed the Yiddish version (in Hebrew letters), the transliteration and the translation. This presentation, similar to Burnshaw's anthology *The Modern Hebrew Poem itself* (1960), is directed towards Yiddish readers as well as non-Yiddish readers. By adding the transliteration, the non-Yiddish reader may appreciate the rhyme of the original version which is sometimes lost in the translation. Therefore, the presentation of the material is also an act of resistance of some sort, educating the readers in many subtle ways about the texts of the anthology. In the introduction, Betsky compares the Yiddish poet to an orphan by using Sholem Aleichem's renowned character Mottel. Betsky calls the Yiddish poet a Mottel because just like him, the Yiddish poet "has been living for a long time in self-sufficient joy (and misery) and, like Mottel, must appear orphaned to a world which is unaware of his hidden history, cognizant only of his altered state" (1981: xiii). It is, according to Betsky, because of the translation of these poems that the Yiddish poet will be adopted by the world.

In describing the selection of the poems, Betsky states how the only similarity between the poets chosen is the Yiddish language. Despite poets being born, having lived and written their work in different countries, with different ideologies and literary influences, their poems were all "creations of a particular history" (1981: xiv). Translations of the poems are, according to Betsky, attempted copies of the original. Still, like other anthologists, if a poem is "too especially Yiddish, if its very rhythm and impact had to be footnoted, or even if its vocabulary were specialized and exotic, then it was not included. Such a criterion excluded some of the finest poems, which lost their savor in the process of translation" (Betsky, 1981: xvii). Other considerations for the selection of the poems was exclusion of older generations of Yiddish

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[120] The Yiddish Scientific Institute in Vilna was established in 1925 to foster documents and writings of the Jews in Eastern Europe and was raided by the Nazis during WWII. Practically all the material was destroyed except the ones smuggled out and sent to the YIVO institute in New York by a resistance group called "The Paper Brigade". One of the chief members of the Paper Brigade was the Yiddish poet Sutzkever, who collaborated regularly with the *Inzikh* journal. For more information on the Paper Brigade see Fishman, *The Book Smugglers: Partisans, Poets, and the Race to Save Jewish Treasures from the Nazis* (2017).

poets were excluded as well as those of a more renown fame (Bialik, Reisen, Peretz and Yehoash). Also excluded were those poets of social and political inclination (Rosenfeld, Bovshover, Edelstadt, etc.). From the selected forty-six poems written in the twentieth century, Betsky has chosen only six poems of Glatstein from the *Inzikh* movement.

The Anthology of Modern Yiddish Poetry, edited and translated by Ruth Whitman. The first edition of this anthology was printed in 1966 and it was the only bilingual edition in print at the time. Following that edition, a second edition came in 1979 praised by Issac Bashevis Singer not only for Whitman's "faithful" translations of Yiddish but also for her "beautiful" English in their adaptations and for the "excellent" choice of poets (Whitman, 1995: 15). Singer goes on to describe this anthology as a "wonderful textbook for those who want to study the Yiddish language and to enjoy what is good in Yiddish poetry" (ibid). A third and extended edition was printed in 1995, bringing the anthology "up to date by certain additions and omissions. To further flesh out the role played by women in the original *Anthology*, I have added poems by Celia Dropkin, Rachel Korn, Anna Margolin and Kadya Molodowsky" (ibid: 11). This bilingual edition is presented in no particular chronological or geographical order.

In the "Translator's note", prior to the introduction, Whitman comments on the challenges of translating Yiddish poetry, especially regarding rhyme. Whitman admits that she has taken many liberties "sometimes using half-rhymes, internal rhymes, and even alliteration as a substitute, and sometimes omitting the rhyme altogether" (1995: 17). In regard to the selection, she has chosen the poets and poems subjectively. She has disregarded those poems she found impossible to translate, as is the case with the poet Leyeles, who, although she acknowledges as an important figure in the history of Yiddish poetry, decides not to include in the anthology since she judges his poetry to be incompatible with her "own poetic capabilities" (ibid: 18). This statement of naming only Leyeles, one of the chief editors of the *Inzikh* journal, is exemplary of two aspects mentioned before in this Chapter, (1) the untranslatable aspect of the *Inzikh* poetic style and (2) as an effect, the invisibility of their work.

A Treasury of Yiddish Poetry, edited by Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg in 1969 (second edition in 1976). It includes an extensive introduction of sixty-six pages in which the editors span the history of the Yiddish language and its poetry in Europe and America. The groupings in the selection were made "by the nature of the material itself, and others improvised for the sake of convenience" (1976: 2) and for the sake of translation. Those poets who" defied

translation" or made "translation impossible" or had a "lengthy narrative and reflective form" were directly omitted from the selection of the anthology. Nevertheless, the editors confirm "most of the main figures of modern Yiddish poetry can be found in these pages" (ibid: 3). Fifty-eight poets are grouped in the following sections: "Pioneers", "Di Yunge and their Contemporaries", "Yiddish Poets in the Soviet Union", "Modern Yiddish Poetry in Europe", "Modern Yiddish Poetry in America" and "Yiddish Poets in Israel".

By the end of the introduction, the editors dedicate a section "On Translating Yiddish" where they present the difficulties of translating from Yiddish, a significant one being the impossibility of translating the *Yiddishkeit* to the 'alien reader'. "Translating from Yiddish is difficult because Yiddish literature, especially in its "classical" phase, carries a weight of historical associations and cultural assumptions that is likely to be missed or misunderstood by a reader not familiar with the Yiddish tradition" (1976: 61). For this reason, the editors have included at the end of the anthology a Glossary with Yiddish and Hebrew definitions. Another difficulty of translating from Yiddish is bilingualism, an aspect discussed earlier in this Chapter. The editors remark how Yiddish poets, when using Hebrew for example, emphasize part of their poetic experience in the bilingualism and "for the translators, the likelihood of being able to render such linguistic shadings is rather small" (63).

The introduction to the anthology is overshadowed by a somber overtone of a literature (Yiddish literature) that is virtually unknown to American readers. In this respect, the editors dedicate the anthology to the Yiddish writers killed by Hitler and Stalin, making this anthology even more necessary. Overall, the editors' approach to translation varies. The equivalent to Auden's views of Greek translations may be found, which claim that although the culture is difficult to translate one might still render the essence, the personal tone, the personal speech of the poet. There is also approaches resembling more Dudley Fitts's distinguished translations of Greek dramas, in which he demonstrated a more audacious predisposition of (re)creating "another poem" (1976: 64-65) in translation. A possible reason for these variations may be that the translations in this edition are made by various translators, whose names appear after each poem. Not all translators were familiar with the Yiddish language, as the editors point out at the end of their introduction, and of those who "lacked Yiddish wholly or in part, the editors supplied scrupulously literal English versions of the poems" (66). This last remark reflects the gradual decline of a language that led to a generation that understood no Yiddish as seen in the

previous Ozick's story mentioned in this Chapter. This is the first instance where the 'lack of knowledge' of the source language is observed.

American Yiddish Poetry, edited by Benjamin and Barbara Harshav in 1986 (second edition in 2007). It is a somewhat unusual anthology, compared to the other Yiddish anthologies, as rather than presenting a maximum number of poets with a minimal space the Harshavs have opted for the minimum number of poets giving them much space. In the anthology they have chosen seven Yiddish modernist poets who created their work in the US. Although it offers a more thorough insight into the work of each individual poet, which is something the other anthologies lack, the choice of only seven poets is controversial. It has been criticized more for the omissions but also for including only a single woman poet[121]. Regarding the title, the Harshavs make the reader aware that they are referring not simply to a geolinguistic fact but to a literary conception. That means that the Harshavs understand this poetry not as a product of America and not just as poetry written in America by Jewish immigrants but as truly American literature, as American as anything written in English in that period. "Americanness," for the Harshavs, implies an active identification with the American experience and its native poetic tradition.

This extraterritorial poetry, as Harshav labels it in the anthology's preface, is intended not just for Jewish readers or those who understand Yiddish but for the general culture "in spite of the language barrier" (2007: xix). Regarding translation, Harshav asks, "how do you convey the impact and poetic achievements of poetry to readers lacking a deep knowledge of the language in which it was written?" (xix). Unlike the editors and translators of the other anthologies, who were preoccupied that what got lost was the Jewish essence of the Yiddish culture, Harshav, in translating primarily Yiddish modernists and labeling them as "exquisite masters of their language", is aware that what gets lost are the intricacies and experimentation of the Yiddish language. The new canon of Yiddish poetry, Harshav believes, needed a reevaluation, a reevaluation that began "in the poetry and criticism of the Introspectivists" (xix).

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[121] In all the Yiddish poetry anthologies rendered into English, the role of women is practically absent. In some anthologies, women poets are even secluded to a section of "women poetry". As a counterpart, there are some anthologies of women's work in Yiddish: *Found Treasures: Stories by Yiddish Women Writers* (1994), *Arguing the Storm: Stories by Yiddish Women Writers* (2007), and *The Exile Book of Yiddish Women Writers* (2013). All these anthologies are of short stories. An anthology of women Yididsh poetry is yet to be published.

The anthology primarily presents the *Inzikh* poets, their manifesto, translated by Anita Norich, and some essays published in their journal. This edition, dedicated largely to the Introspectivists, came about as Harshav had already been the primary chief ideologue in presenting the *Inzikh* poets earlier in his essays and criticism. The in-depth approach includes seven major poets of Yiddish poetry in America with an extensive selection of each individual's work, or what Novershtern calls "the American Yiddish Hall of Fame" (1988: 360). This anthology placed *Inzikh* poetry within the framework of world modernism and "with this selection, the Harshavs were able to draw the shifting landscape of American Yiddish modernism that underwent such fundamental changes within a relatively short time-span" (Novershtern, 1988: 360). The introduction of the anthology finishes with a hopeful statement which sees not the end of Yiddish but a future for it. The Harshavs' statement reminds us of Norich's predicament, discussed earlier in this Chapter, about how translations can lead the reader towards the original, thus saving Yiddish for its posterity. Harshav (2007: xxii) states how

> If the translations and introduction lead some readers to appreciate what Yiddish poetry was, to take an interest in some of the poems, or even to read and enjoy the originals, our work will not be in vain. If some readers are increased by the translations and try their own hand at it, we will feel our mission fulfilled.

The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse, edited by Irwing Howe, Ruth R. Wisse, and Khone Shmeruk in 1987 (second edition in 1988). Several translations were taken from the previously mentioned anthology *A Treasury of Yiddish Poetry* edited also by Irving Howe. Unlike other anthologies, the editors used a team of translators and English-language poets, who worked along with the editors. Instead of looking for a historical continuity, if there is one, the editors "against a comprehensive anthology" (Wisse, 1989: 4) decided to start with Peretz's "Monish" written in 1888, which was considered by the editors as the first modern poem in Yiddish. The anthology therefore adopts an aesthetic approach rather than a historical one and aspires to present the "spirit of Yiddish poetry *in its time*" (ibid: 17). According to Wisse the hardest task they faced in the preparation of the anthology was selecting the poets, keeping in mind the difficult standards it presents when crossing from one culture to another (1989: 7). Struggles in presenting the poems came because translation changed the pathos and the rhetorical force of certain poets, whose poems would be read completely differently in Yiddish and in English. The translated poem would not likely "stand on its own merits in English", while others proved to be more "readily transferable to another language" (Wisse, 1989: 10).

Regarding translation for this anthology, Wisse explains the number of current approaches to translation and mentions how academics tend to favor Burnshaw's approach in *The Poem Itself* [122] (Wisse, 1989: 11). For Wisse though, this approach in translating poetry "seems to describe the succulent attributes of a steak instead of offering the poor man a bite. We preferred a taste of the real thing" (1989: 11-12). In order to accomplish this experience, the editors invited English-language poets to create the English versions of the Yiddish poems. Some were renowned American poets, such as Cynthia Ozick or John Hollander, whose translation of the latter of Harlpern's Yiddish poems Harold Bloom complimented as "his best work so far" (1972: 73). The approach of the editors of this anthology was then that of "adapting poetry to the culture of its readers" (Wisse, 1989: 28).

Unlike in previous anthologies, the editors of this anthology believed that taking a geographic approach to organizing the poets would be far from realistic, as poets such as Itsik Manger "belonged to his native Galicia [...] [but] spent most of the inter-war period in Poland, wrote some of his finest poems in France and England, and settled temporarily in New York" (Wisse, 1989: 24). Instead, the editors opted for a chronological order to present the 39 poets. On an interesting note, the anthology finishes with a poem by Sutzkever, a poet who was still writing in Yiddish when the anthology was published. Sutzkever's poem "What will remain? who will remain?" which we have previously discussed in this Chapter, seems to close the anthology with a question addressed to the reader. Considering that Sutzkever's all-powerful God will remain, and Norich's translation will remain, Wisse predicts a similar outcome to Norich's

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[122] What distinguishes the method of *The Poem itself* (1960) is that it is centered not in the translation but in criticism (Ezra Pound). The poems are rendered in their original language so the reader can experience the poems in their original language (Burnshaw 1995: ix): "we ask the reader to read the original along with our English approximation (usually set-in italics, with alternate meanings in parentheses and explanations in brackets)" (xiv). This method enables the reader "to see what the poem is saying and how" (xiv). This is the only possible way, Burnshaw understands, that a reader can experience a poem, by hearing the sounds of the original and reading at the same time its literal renditions and commentaries of the poem. "The aim is to help him [the reader] *into* the poem itself [...] and take the reader away from the foreign literature and into his own" (xii). A translation into English becomes then an English poem. Translating the words is also translating the associations of those words. "For every 'meaningful' word is a unique totality—unique in sound, denotation, connotation, and doubtless much more" (xiii). What matter is not only the importance of words but the order in which those words are arranged into a poem. That order is what marks the rhythm and distinguishes the importance of the word from other words depending on its location. "For a translator to evoke this response by different words and word order would of course be impossible [...] And yet, with all its limitations, verse translation has given us almost all we know of the poets of the rest of the world." (xiv). But another problem Burnshaw recalls is that not only translations seem impossible but the only works published are those that appeal to the translator and even after that initial selection, they actually get the chance to be published. "This fortuitousness should be enough to make us suspect that the picture has been skewed" (xiv). Instead of calling them translations Burnshaw calls them "experiences".

response on Sutzkever's questions when she explains that "the precipitous decline of Yiddish within a generation makes translation a key to the culture that was created in that language". Wisse also adds that "editors and translators do not at all determine what shall live and what shall die, merely what touches us today. Good poetry abides." (Wisse, 1989: 29).

In the fifty-page introduction, there is hardly any mention of the *Inzikh* poets. The introduction focuses mainly on the Yiddish poetic movement *Di Yunge.* The reason probably being that Wisse was working during that time on the book *A Little Love in Big Manhattan* (1988) based on the Yiddish poets of *Di Yunge.* The *Inzikh* poets' success is attributed to the post-Holocaust years. Those were the years that the Yiddish language faced a decrease in readership and writing. In fact, the whole introduction depicts a solemn sense of defeat and nostalgia for the Yiddish language. The editors by the end of the introduction lament that the anthology "is being completed at a moment when it seems all too clear that the phase of Jewish culture in which Yiddish flourished seems to be approaching its end. The number of Yiddish readers keeps declining. There are no replacements for the poets who leave us" (1988: 50).

A Century of Yiddish Poetry, edited and translated by Aaron Kramer in 1989. It compiles 370 poems by 133 Yiddish poets. As stated in the introduction, the editor's choice of poems for this anthology depended on the poet's biography and political allegiance rather than on their poems. Unlike the other anthologies, this anthology categorizes the poets in a somewhat erratic way. The first two parts Kramer categorizes historically, "The First Golden Age" and "The Second Golden Age". The next category is by location "The Soviet Poets" followed by a political category "Poets of the Left" to conclude the edition with the section "Poets of the Holocaust". Kramer remarks in his preface how this anthology is different from previous anthologies in at least five aspects: (1) in that he includes poems written prior to the twentieth century, (2) in that he includes minor poets no other anthology before had included and presents poems (as of the Introspectivists) that carry more social and political views, (3) in that he gives special attention to poets of the left and the Soviet poets, something Krammer acknowledges that previous anthologies have not done, (4) and (5) in that, considering the approach towards translations, Krammer (1989: 22)

> rather than misrepresent the predominant form of Yiddish poetry (traditional rhymed stanzas), thus catering to the current bias against rhyme and pattern with the convenient rationale that they are impossible to replicate well, I have insisted on matching the form

of a poem because form is an intrinsic part of what is being said, and it is the translator's duty to transmit the total experience offered by a poem.

As seen with editors and translators of previous anthologies, Krammer's selection is based on the "pieces that touched me and were congenial to my translating skills" (1989: 22).

Sing, Stranger: A century of American Yiddish Poetry. A Historical Anthology, edited and translated by Benjamin and Barbara Harshav in 2006, presents the work of 27 poets. The title "Sing stranger" is taken from a poem by Ruven Ludvig and it comes to represent both the Yiddish poets' involvement in and alienation from America as immigrants. It also comes to represent, as the editors write in their introduction, the tragedy of Yiddish poetry in America, a poetry "that saw itself as a spiritual nation without a territory" (2006: xxix). Harshav expands on this concept by stating how "this book is designed to sink a shaft to a lost continent: an intensely American poetry written in the Yiddish language" (ibid: xxix). Harshav also reaffirms Yiddish poetry being "clearly a form of American culture" (ibid: xxix). Just as the editors of *The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse* (1987), Harshav also writes of the tragedy of Yiddish poetry in America and the tragedy of the poets' dying tongue (2006: xxx). Harshav concludes by stating his shared belief in the defeat of the Yiddish language: it "is safe to say that the heyday of Yiddish as a living culture and a high literature with a social Yiddish-speaking base is gone" (2006: xxx).

Just as their previous anthology *American Yiddish Poetry* (1986), the Harshavs also prioritize offering more space for the representation of the work of each poet versus including a larger number of poets. In this respect, the reader can appreciate "the poet's personality, his or her poetic world, and its growth and change" (2006: xxxi). Their aim in this anthology is to present the full scope of Yiddish American verse in English translations of poets that came from Europe and became poets in America immersed in the American literary culture. Those poets who emigrated to the United States in their later years but were formed as poets in their country of origin were omitted from this anthology as they "cannot be considered part of American Yiddish poetry" (ibid: xxxi).

Since the Yiddish version is not included, the Harshavs felt that the translation of the poems should be as close to the original as possible "although focusing on the poem's own intentions,

we have adopted a reader-friendly approach and made the text as transparent to a contemporary American reader as possible" (2006: xxxii). Thus, a glossary of Jewish terms was added. The anthology is divided thematically in sections titled: "Prelude", "Proletarian Poets", "The Lyrical Turn", "Symbolism and Expressionism", "Introspectivism", "On the Left", "Narrative Poetry", "Women Poets" (only three poets are included in this section), "Songs by Yiddish Poets". The *Inzikh* poets are presented in a section of their own "Introspectivism", with poems which Harshav believed that "strove to produce works of literature of high poetic and aesthetic standards, as idealized in the best of world literature" (2006: xxx). This aspiration of the *Inzikh* poets in wanting to be part of world literature while writing in Yiddish will be explored in the following Chapter.

With Everything We've Got: A Personal Anthology of Yiddish Poetry, edited and translated by Richard J. Fein, published in 2009. Fein has also edited and translated two other anthologies of Yiddish poets (Glatstein and Sutzkever) into English, exactly two poets from the *Inzikh* movement. Fein's anthology of Yiddish poetry distinguishes itself from the previous anthologies discussed, as Fein, a poet himself, has included amongst his Yiddish translations his own poems written in English or what he calls "alternative forms of Yiddish poems" (2009: ii). His English poems intertwine with the Yiddish poems in the form of a dialogue. This dialogue arises because of his translations of the Yiddish poems, as Fein explains, "translation is lust—a way of possessing the Yiddish poem—of being more intimate with its letters and words, and then discovering in the process the seeding of one's own English" (2009: i).

This anthology would come to represent what Leyeles believed a Yiddish poem should be, as it has been explored in Chapter Two of this thesis. A poem should be ductile and serve as a means of dialogue. Although Leyeles would have encouraged the dialogue to be in Yiddish, Fein establishes it in English despite considering himself "a Yiddish poet who, as it happens, writes in English" (2009: ii). Nevertheless, Fein's poems with titles such as "Yeats into Yiddish", "A Yiddish poet thinks of his readers", "Reading Yiddish", "Yiddish" and "Yankev Glatshteyn visits me in the Coffee shop" evoke a dialogue with the world of Yiddish culture. The last poem is the one that presents a more direct dialogue, in this case, with the *Inzikh* poet Glatstein, whose work Fein translated in an earlier edition in 1987. In the poem Fein narrates a face-to-face encounter with Glatstein in a Coffee shop, after Glatstein had passed away. Their conversation is about poetry and about Glatstein sharing with Fein conversations he has had with Marianne Moore, W. B. Yeats and Peretz (2009: 116) in the afterlife,

But that's not what I want to talk about.
It's all good and well you translate me.
You need it more than I do.
I'm in Yiddish for all time.

In these verses Fein presents us with what has been discussed previously in this Chapter, the paradox of translating Yiddish poetry into other languages. In this fictitious conversation, Glatstein seems to grant permission to Fein to translate his work with "it's all good and well". The Yiddish poet, however, does want to clearly state that "I'm in Yiddish for all time". The fact that Fein (the translator) seems to need Glatstein's (the poet's) approval for translating his work is significant in understanding Glatstein's well-known views against translating Yiddish poetry into English, as discussed in this Chapter.

In the following section, I have chosen two other anthologies that although not entirely of Yiddish poets they do include a Yiddish section. I will elaborate on the reason for choosing these anthologies within the description of each anthology.

Voices Within the Arc: The Modern Jewish Poets, edited by Howard Schwartz and Anthony Rudolf in 1980. The title of the anthology was taken from a line of one of Paul Celan's poems. The anthology presents poets of different languages in the following order: Comprised of three primary languages, Hebrew, Yiddish, English (structured by country) and the last section comprised of "Other languages" including Amharic, Arabic, Czech, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Judeo-Romanesque, Judezmo, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Serbo-Croat, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish. The anthology presents a total of twenty-three languages and a total of four hundred modern Jewish poets from more than forty nations (1980: xxxiii). The aim of the editors is to gather Jewish poets of the turn of the century from around the world as they believe "a common tradition was being shared and also being created" at the same historical time (ibid: xxxii). They remark the need for such an anthology in English, as young American poets are in recent years becoming more interested in poets that are "far beyond the small circle of established American poets" (xxxi). The editors also comment on the fact that each of the Jewish poets presented in the anthology "stood out as an individual voice in the world of modern poetry. They were among the very seminal poets who played an increasingly influential role in the ever-broadening horizon of world poetry" (xxxi).

The Yiddish section comes with an introduction by Ruth R. Wisse. Wisse starts and concludes with a speculation of what "might have been the achievement of Yiddish poetry had the Jews enjoyed anything resembling a normal existence in Europe" (1988: 236), and asks "what might have been the weight and future of Yiddish poetry had modern Jewish history been less calamitous" (ibid: 242). By opening with this rhetorical question Wisse raises the different factors, discussed in this thesis, that have threatened the Yiddish language and with them the course of its poetry. Namely, these different factors being the destruction of Yiddish-speaking towns in Europe after WWII, the creation of the state of Israel, where Hebrew would be established as the official language, and the rapid linguistic assimilation of many Jews in exile. In the introduction, Wisse explores the history of Yiddish literature from its origins in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and how this literature, created in varied geographical places, adapted throughout the years to its new surroundings.

Regarding translation, the editors have employed several translators and comment (1988: xxxvii) that

> while a substantial loss inevitably occurs whenever a poem is translated from its original language, we believe that this considerable body of translations affirms the profound service translation performs in making available literatures that would otherwise be completely lost to those unfamiliar with the original languages.

This anthology is aimed at readers of modern poetry and believes in poetry itself being a universal language. It also emphasizes on the *heritage*, the Jewish heritage that these poets were influenced by, they carried and came to represent. The editors make a distinction between the poets writing in Jewish languages (Hebrew, Yiddish and Judezmo) and other poets writing in non-Jewish languages. The distinction is that poets writing in Jewish languages tend to engage with more secular themes, away from their Jewish heritage, as the language per se comes to represent that Jewish heritage. While the poets using non-Jewish languages, or languages of the diaspora as the editors call them, believe that the choice of a Jewish theme will come to represent that tie with their Jewish tradition. The poets choosing a Jewish language seemed to not "need to constantly reaffirm their Jewish ties, and in such cases, it became obvious that language (and, of course, quality) be the determinant rather than the theme" (1988: xxxvi). This insight is what comes to represent the *Inzikh* poets' aim in poetry and what I have explored in this thesis: namely, how the chosen language comes to represent the poet's identity

rather than the themes presented, a characteristic found more so in poets who are in exile. Thus, the choice of language is what determines the heritage of the poet.

The final anthology is *Poems from the Edge of Extinction: An Anthology of Poetry in Endangered Languages*, edited by Chris McCabe and published in 2019, the Year of Endangered Languages. The anthology presents 50 poems, presented in their original language next to an English version, advocating for language activism by presenting poems of endangered languages from around the world. With a world growing more concerned with saving the planet, McCabe believes that the topic of endangered languages is overlooked and asks the reader "what can poetry do against the decline of a language?" (2019: 2). The poems in the anthology are organized in sections geographically, Yiddish being under the tag of Europe. The Yiddish poem is of Sutzkever, translated by Heather Valencia. Also presented alongside the poem are a brief explanation of the life of the poet, a commentary on the poem and a brief history of the Yiddish language. From all the anthologies mentioned in this section, this is the first to mention Yiddish as an endangered language according to UNESCO's list.

Translating poetry from minority/endangered languages faces a contradiction, as we have seen in this Chapter. On one hand, translations can be responsible for the extinction of a language, as writer and translator Gwyneth Lewis claims when she holds translation responsible for the death of Welsh: "Looking back, I blame translation," (McCabe, 2019: 251). On the other hand, translation can serve as a bridge between two cultures by allowing the act of "communicating with the creators of the work" (McCabe, 2019: 5). The image of the bridge and its relation to the Messiah will be further discussed in the following Chapter along with language activism as practiced by the *Inzikh* movement. McCabe attributes this language activism to those poets "going beyond what their everyday language can do, and by doing so, inventing the new constructions which can then be available for use in that language" (2019: 3). This contribution made by the *Inzikh* poets to the Yiddish language as well as their activism, realized by writing their poetry in Yiddish, proved to be acts-against-language extinction, and will be discussed in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER V—Towards a Transnational Jewish Literature: From literary Messianism to Political Action

> "The utopian and the messianic are figures of syntax"
>
> - George Steiner

Following the contradictions of translation and the preservation of the Yiddish language in the realm of poetry explored in the previous Chapters, this Chapter will analyze the aspirations of the *Inzikh* poets in turning their poetry from the local Jewish space to a transnational arena. In order to do so I will explore their intentions of aiming for a universal reader while battling with their conceptions of Jewish survival. As it has been shown in previous Chapters, it was precisely the Introspectivists' concerns with universal themes that they believed would position their literature in the field of World literature. However, due to the historical factors of assimilation, exile and the rise of antisemitism in Europe that would threaten their Jewish destiny, the *Inzikh* poets started considering Jewish themes instead and going back to the "ghetto" to convey a message of hope and action towards the defense of the Yiddish language. Their choice of Yiddish was transformed from aesthetic determination to political urgency when they realized how the future of Yiddish would only be possible in the utopian *Yiddishland* of the poetic text, because of the demise of many of its readers after World War Two. The Yiddish poets, aware of how "when a language dies, a possible world dies with it" (Steiner, 1998: xiv) restored the poem as a redemptive act—the poem being understood as the only possible home for the Yiddish language in exile–in their attempt to pursue an impossible *return*[123] to that home.

In order to explore this conception of the political in the *Inzikh* poet's choice of one language versus other languages it is important to understand the position of the messianic theory in Jewish thought. The messianic idea has been in Jewish thought for centuries and what was interpreted at the beginning as belonging only to religious communities, gradually became a

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[123] According to Finkin, the notion of return has two forms, "a) a religious form, where homecoming is in effect deferred until the divinely sanctioned Messianic moment; and b) a political form, in which homecoming is conditioned on any number of real-world factors" (2017: 17). The notion of no return is understood by Finkin as the "Exile-Home" model. This model will be explored in this Chapter.

thought beyond theology. Philosophers and scholars (see Benjamin (1940), Scholem (1971), Agamben (2000)) have been using the concept of messianism to understand and define their conception of time, history and the literary story. The Messiah has also been a topic of plays, poems and stories in authors such as Ozick or I.B. Singer. Singer also mentioned it in his renowned speech upon receiving the Nobel Prize in 1978. Singer explained that one of the reasons he still wrote his stories in Yiddish, even though it was considered a dead language, was because if the Messiah were to come and all the dead corpses resurrected, the first thing they would ask would be, "is there any new Yiddish book to read?" Although this statement was intended in a humorous note, its truth of giving voice, in this case, through something to read in Yiddish, to all those who perished during World War Two became a reality for many writers who struggled after the virtual elimination of the Jews in Europe between their commitment to their art and their commitment to their Jewish heritage[124]. The Introspectivists were also heirs of this messianic tradition by interpreting its concept in poetic plays of false Messiahs to poems on the Hasidic Rabbi Bratslav.

In the *Inzikh* issue of March 1937, Leyeles wrote an essay titled "Topic: Yiddish literature and the World", where he reflects on the fate of Yiddish in the English world. For Leyeles "Yiddish is a world-language in its scope, and yet even Bulgarian and Catalan looks more courageously, with more dignity straight into the eyes of the external world" (Leyeles, 1937: 93)[125]. It is a scandal for Leyeles, that some of the best Yiddish literature has been created in America in the last thirty years (1900-1930) and "still-what do our neighbors know about us?" (ibid). This complete ignorance of Yiddish literature by the American reader explored in the previous Chapters, Leyeles considers an anomaly. As he bitterly remarks "so many years in America, such a fine literature created here, and we remain strangers to our neighbors as if we had lived in Siam or had written in some Eskimo dialect" (Leyeles, 1937: 96)[126]. By the end of the essay, Leyeles foresees that a change will come and not through the "back door"[127], meantime, he cautions, "we must wait with dignity" (ibid). This waiting is not understood as passive but implies an active waiting, as it is understood in the messianic conception of time.

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[124] For an understanding of the different ways of heritage and its relation to identity see Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (2006).

[125] Translation into English by Harshav and Harshav (2007), p 800.

[126] Ibid, p 801.

[127] This reference of "door", which is also related to "gate" is a common reference of the Messiah in Jewish thought and will be explored further in this Chapter. Walter Benjamin writes (1940) how the Messiah will come through *la porte étroite* (which refers to the symbol of door while using a literary reference, *La porte étroite* (1909), also a title of an André Gide's novel).

Leyeles presents us this conception of time and action and his preoccupation with Jewish survival in a hostile environment in his messianic poem-drama *Shloyme Moylkhe* (1926). In it Leyeles reflects his concern for Jewish destiny by presenting a medieval historical figure (Molkho, 1500-1532) seen through Leyeles' inner thoughts. Leyeles wants to present this historical figure because "of his mixture of messianic vision and daring arrogance, his stance as a redeemer in dark times of Jewish history, a leader who carries the masses with him in a utopian vision, only to pay for it with his own isolation an inevitable destruction" (Harshav, 2007: 48).

For the Introspectivists, "internal redemption" or self-redemption[128] in a poem would constitute a revolution in the world of poetry, where the poem would express the authentic image of the poet with its own individual rhythm and where consequently form and content would represent the same. This ultimate redemption would define a new sense of style in the *Inzikh* poem that sought new forms through a poetic re-creation. This is illustrated in their manifesto (Harshav, 2007: 776) when they stated how

> art is ultimately redemption, even if it is an illusory redemption or a redemption through illusion. And no redemption is possible in any other way but through oneself, through an internal personal concentration. Only a truly individual poem can be a means of self-redemption.

During the events of WWII, this poetic re-creation of the *self* was defined by a *return* to the Jewish tradition, which re-established their Jewish past in their current times, just as the Messiah is expected to re-establish the law as it was before the fall. According to Harshav, an *Inzikh* poem, "presented a kaleidoscope of broken pieces from the historical world, as perceived in the psyche of a sophisticated urban individual and as expressed in a unique rhythmical "fugue" (2007: 34). This concept of poetry can be related to the Jewish Kabbalistic concept of *Tikkun Olam* where the "Jews bear responsibility not only for their own moral, spiritual, and material welfare, but for the moral, spiritual and material welfare of society at large" (Shatz *et al*. 1997, 1). What was for the Introspectivists at first a redemption of the individual in the poem, became later a responsibility to society at large, the Jewish society particularly. It was

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[128] In the very last note of *Minima Moralia*, Adorno suggests that the only responsible philosophical answer to despair is "to contemplate all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption." (Adorno, 1993 [1951], p. 333).

also connected with their sense of responsibility towards the Yiddish language. If the Jewish past was to be re-established, it should ultimately be, now more than ever, in the Yiddish language. This self-redemption was written in Yiddish, and Yiddish, soon to become a lost language, would be the means to redeem the Jewish society.

This understanding of the future in the past comes from a poetic/political ability to establish a link that illuminates both terms. What is understood as the past, is no longer seen as the old, the expired, the former but the new, the *now*, the hope of that "messianic age that is yet to come" (Glazova and North, 2014: 96). In epimessianic theory, a term used by Glazova and North (2014) to profess the studies that come after traditional messianism, this *return* to their heritage is brought forth as a reaction to the poets' exilic condition and to a historical crisis that escalates with the upcoming events of WWII. The escalating events of WWII and the impossibility of return as exiles, will mark a before and after in the poetic trajectory of the *Inzikh* journal. The milestone of this radical turn of events was Glatstein's poem "Good night world" (*"A Gute Nacht Welt"*)[129], published in the *Inzikh* issue of 1938, where he narrates a *return*. The word *return*, as seen in the translations of this poem in the previous Chapter, is found in only one of the eight translations into English: "There weeps in me the joy of return" (*s'veynt ikh mir di freyd fun kumen*) (trans. Berger 2004, Norich, 2013: 128). In the other translations of the poem, translators have used words such as "coming back" and "homecoming". Two very interesting word choices, since, after 1938, the Jews were conscious that there was an impossibility of "coming back" (where to?) and homecoming (to what— spiritual, physical or linguistic home?).

For Glatstein, however, this *return* is not a mere nostalgic vision of the past, but a new possibility towards the future: the possibility of a new way of telling one's own history. Poetry will be the means that realizes that purpose and where the Yiddish language will represent history as the epic song did in the days of the past. The *return* of Glatstein is imbued of a messianic anticipation and remembrance, in which "messianic hopes open time as the horizon within which all other events, including returns, become possible" (Glazova and North, 2014:

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[129] "As far as the poet was concerned, this text marked his debut as a prominent public persona, a role he could not have been further away from in his earliest poetic days. From there on, the poetry of the *Inzikh*ists started paralleling the same path American Yiddish poetry in general was taking, turning to the immediate reactions to the Holocaust and adopting the style of public elegiac poems whose meanings were intended to be shared by a broad audience. During the Holocaust years and in their aftermath, the complexity of the modernist poem suddenly became perceived as a cultural luxury, which now, in light of the horrific events in Europe, seemed to be void of all value or relevance." (Novershtern, 2015: 219-220)

2). The underlying message of that *return* was seen by the Introspectivists as a *return* that could only be described in the Yiddish language. A language that once belonged to the *shtetls* of Eastern Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries but was now in- built in the big metropolitan cities of the 20th century with its modern twists and turns. The aim was to integrate a continuum, a poetry that would represent the continuity of the Yiddish language in a new land as the impossibility of a physical return became evident. When in 1918 the poet Leyeles published the poem "Yehuda Halevi", he anticipated that impossibility of a *return* to his own homeland. Before the disappearance of the Yiddish-speaking villages in Europe, after World War Two, the poet had no alternative but to fight for the defense of the Yiddish language within the scope of poetry. There was no longer the possibility of a state where one could speak Yiddish; the only state where this utopian country could reside would be in the realm of poetry. The Yiddish language would end up being the hallmark of identity that would place this poetry within the framework of universal literature. What will be known as *Yiddishland* (a term that will be defined and explained further in this Chapter) transitioned from being a possible physical space to a cultural space. It established, as Steiner stated, "our homeland, the text" (1996).

Before analyzing what this *return* to their Jewish heritage and the creation of a home in the text represented for the *Inzikh* poets, an explanation of their objectives towards a transnational literature is necessary. The *Inzikh* poets viewed their efforts at maintaining and passing on the Yiddish culture to future generations not as a gift for a reduced Yiddish audience but for a universal reader who somehow happened to read Yiddish, as utopian as that might seem. The *Inzikh* was a movement that "was firmly in line with this attempt to create new forms of Jewish cultural expression that also participated in an international movement" (Zaritt, 2015: 185). Ultimately, the *Inzikh* writers "participation in a modernist radical particularism could allow for Yiddish literature to remain faithful to a threatened language and culture while also gesturing toward a larger, universal goal" (ibid). Transnationalism, for the Introspectivists as immigrants, meant a way to integrate into American culture without losing their Jewish identity.

a. Attaining the universal through the particular[130]

> "For even universals, which lie outside the realm of particularity, are illuminated and colored by the particular"
>
> -   Schleiermacher

The Introspectivists struggled between tradition and modernity as they strove to maintain their Jewish identity in the modern world. How could a Jewish author attract universal readers without losing their Jewish particularity? Nakhman of Bratslav thought of a new way of expression for a spiritual revolution; he would transform the way stories have been told. Just as the Introspectivists broke with the Jewish tradition in order to enter a universal literary world, so did Bratslav by innovating his messianic stories. It was a way of adapting a non-Jewish story into Yiddish that responded to its historical time and place, as well as a way of introducing one's own literary work in the universal canon of literature while using the Yiddish language. As Cassin remarks "The universality of concepts is absorbed by the singularity of languages" (Cassin, 2014: xix).

Sippurei Ma'asiyot written in 1816 by Bratslav, contains 13 stories in Yiddish all narrating tales of princesses, beggars, and giants. These tales were much closer to the stories of the Grimm brothers than to the homilies of his fellow Hasidic rabbis. This "non-Jewish themed literature" was considered Jewish due to the fact it was written in Yiddish. As such, there is a direct line of influence from Bratslav's work to the poetry of Glatstein in a series of poems he dedicates to Bratslav. In these poems Glatstein emphasizes on the concept of *return*- explored in his poem "Good night world" (*A gute nakht, velt*). Furthermore, Hadda remarks that "by adopting a traditional mask- that of Nakhman, the colorful and enigmatic Bratslaver *rebbe*- he [Glatstein] was able to retreat into the past, thereby achieving a healing distance from the haunting presence of the Holocaust while at the same time speaking as one for whom responsibility to the Jewish community was of consummate significance" (1980,73).

To this extent, Bartslav was a forerunner of the Introspectivists, as the writer was more preoccupied with using universal themes and modernizing their style than of becoming a writer of the margins because of their choice of a minor language. This universal Yiddish literature

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[130] This title refers to Joyce's quote: "For myself, I always write about Dublin, because if I can get to the heart of Dublin, I can get to the heart of all the cities of the world. In the particular is contained the universal"

aimed at crossing borders and nations, as Bratslav's stories did. They were being read by modernists Yiddish writers and poets influencing their work from Russia (Der Nister) to Israel (Pinjas Sade) to New York (Glatstein). If this literature of the particular could cross borders with universal themes, in what national category would these works fall into? Would these works be categorized by the language, that is, under Yiddish literature? or by the literature from the country where the author was from, even if they were not written in the language of the country?

Assigning specific national categories to authors has proven a problematic endeavor for critics and scholars of the literary world. According to Ramazani (2009), putting a national tag to an author is not always a clear process. Poets like T.S. Eliot have been labeled as American or British as they have been born in a country and then lived in another. So, what national tag can be given to an author who has gone into exile? Where the Jewish immigrants in the United States of the beginning of the twentieth century considered "Polish", "Russian" or "American"? Was the tag "Jewish" singled out as a national identity in itself? In what category would the *Inzikh* poets fall into? "Jewish" because they wrote in Yiddish or "American" because their American-themed poems talked of the streets of New York? According to Sollors, "American multilingual literature is not only a literature of immigration and assimilation. Many works, [...] reveal how multilingual American literature is part of a transnational world - though authors who complicate the fit of authorship, citizenship and language have been marginalized by the pervasive national organization of literature" (2000: 7-8).

Harshav resolves the dilemma of nationalities by titling his anthology of modern Yiddish poetry as *American Yiddish Poetry* (2007) in which the national tag "American" puts an emphasis on an American nationality even when the language of the poems is not English, as it would be expected of an American, but Yiddish. This conundrum is what best suited the *Inzikh* poets, as their universal aspirations were of being American with Yiddish as their language, thus straddling this dichotomy without feeling obliged to select a side or a national label. This will be the case until the events of WWII. This change of perspective will be explained later in this Chapter.

This sense of the Introspectivists of feeling comfortable with being American in Yiddish, came of being heirs of the Bundist movement, a secular Jewish socialist movement founded in 1897. Bundism, inspired by activism, implemented the philosophy of the *doykayt* (hereness) of

Yiddish in Europe in opposition to the Zionist movement which implemented the Hebrew language as the official language of the Jews. Bundists believed that the Jews in Europe should speak Yiddish along with the languages of the countries they lived (Germany, Russia, Poland) creating a multilingual environment which seemed the natural way contrary to the nation-state's monolingual paradigm. Speaking Yiddish in Europe was as natural as speaking German or Polish, as Yiddish was and is a European language. This sense of feeling at home in Yiddish along with the languages of the country of residence was transported to the United States with the arrival of more than two million Yiddish-speaking Jewish immigrants by the turn of the twentieth century. The *Inzikh* poets adapted this Bundist conception to their poetry, where Yiddish poetry was part of the American culture as it was created and transformed there. Not only their poetic styles and the themes of their poems were adapted to the American modernisms, but the Yiddish language also went through its transformations adapting new English words.

Ramazani proposes "various ways of vivifying circuits of poetic connection and dialogue across political and geographic borders and even hemispheres, of examining cross-cultural and cross-national exchanges, influences, and confluences in poetry" (2009: xi). Although he employs as an example the contemporary poetry in English, Yiddish was for the Introspectivists the new English. The Introspectivists' poetry full of Whitmanian and Joycean influences, would cross the ethnic borders of Jewishness to become part of the American culture. Their poetic exchanges with poets as Sutzkever, writing and publishing in *Inzikh* from Israel and publishing essays himself of and about *Inzikh* poets in his journal *Di Goldene Keyt* (The golden chain) (1949-1995), became material manifestations of this metaphorical crossing of geographic borders through Yiddish. As seen in the previous Chapter, Debora Vogel also served as a cultural ambassador of the Polish art movements in her Yiddish poetic works. For these contemporary Yiddish poets, Yiddish was a language that crossed borders and incorporated a variety of cultures, nationalities and even words from different languages. In this "cross-cultural bricolage" or "hybrid experience" or "modernist cross-culturalism" as Ramazani calls it (2009: xii), poetic analysis in particular, "attentive to figure, rhythm, allusion, stanza, line, image, genre, and other such resources, can foster an aesthetically attuned transnational literary criticism" (ibid: xi).

Attaining the universal through the particular, in this case the particularity of the Yiddish language, was not always something possible, however. As we have seen in the previous

Chapters, Yiddish poetry in the *Inzikh* journal did not make its way to a universal reader due to a lack of translations. Another barrier, besides language, was the propaganda that emerged in the United States after World War Two against foreign languages and non-English literatures. Despite this linguistic xenophobia, as Sollors (2008) calls it, publications did exist that became notorious and "received national recognition" (2008: 87). Yiddish-language cases are writers such as Sholem Asch, who wrote both in Yiddish and English, and Isaac Bashevis Singer, who wrote in Yiddish but his translations to English are what gave him world recognition. Although Sollors claims that Yiddish literature was in a way being considered as American literature when he states that "American literature was also written in Yiddish (as was the letter that became Mary Antin's from Plotzk to Boston)" (87) there is hardly any mention of Yiddish literature per se in his book. Sollors comments on the flux of immigrants as a consequence of the rise of fascism and WWII, as well as the influx of "a lively German-language exile and culture to the United States in the 1930s and 1940s" (88). Although many of the German authors mentioned were Jewish, such as, Theodor Adorno, Arnold Shönberg, and Lion Feuchtwanger among others, Sollors seems to have overlooked the Yiddish speaking population. The only Yiddish authors he mentions are authors who were well assimilated to the English-speaking culture, as the aforementioned writer Sholem Asch (widely criticized by his peers for his English translations) and Isaac Bashevis Singer, about whom Yiddish critics believed he won the Nobel Prize because of his "second" originals in English and not for the quality of his Yiddish versions.

Sollors also mentions Leon Kobrin, *Di sprakh fun elt* 1910 (translated by Max Rosenfeld as "A Common language") (2008: 89) and Henry Roth *Call it sleep,* (144). In the latter, the author uses Yiddish as *good* English, the language he speaks with his mother, and English as the "broken" English, the language he speaks with his father. It is of no surprise to see how in *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature* (2000)*,* an anthology of many diverse languages edited by Sollors along with Shell, the only Yiddish text that appears is Abraham Cahan's (1910) *History of the United States.* Cahan, as we have seen in Chapter one, was known not only for being the editor of the Yiddish journal *Forverts* but was seen for many Yiddish writers (such as Leyeles in his essay "My Literary Memories" 1969) as an advocate of English assimilation. Cahan taught English to Jewish immigrants and wrote one of his most popular novels, *The Rise of David Levinsky,* in English. It is ironic how Sollors campaigns for a multilingual America and yet chooses a work in which the author writes of how Jews feel at

home in the American language, as opposed to choosing a story or a poem that could come to represent the core of Yiddish literature.

Perhaps not many anthologies have managed to introduce Yiddish authors, yet this is the first anthology to present a bilingual text which is meant to represent that element of multi-ethnicity of a text written in Yiddish but found within an anthology of American Literature. What is particularly interesting about Sollors' introduction in this anthology (2000) is his understanding of how American literature incorporated within it various different languages. It is from this perspective that he maintains the original language in the anthology, pointing out how translations cannot serve as substitutes of the originals. Sollors does, however, offer the opportunity to readers to read the texts in both languages. The reading of the texts in this multilingual anthology (2000), according to Sollors, should be done taking the historical context in view, as a way of understanding the United States as a multilingual country, as "understanding of what exactly "American literature" is" (2000, 10). This anthology seems to be the beginning of a project to recover left-behind texts and claims to the reader of this anthology to be active in searching and contributing new texts of other languages to continue this project in a future work.

Sollors also wrote the introduction (1997) to Mary Antin's *The Promised Land* (1912). This is an autobiography that narrates the process of Americanization of a Jewish immigrant from Russia. It is also an account of transference, not only physically from one country to the other but also linguistically, from Yiddish to English. Learning and writing her autobiography in English became Antin's successful example of assimilation. The book became an example of *how* she "became American" without losing her grasp on her past. Antin navigates between two worlds and two languages, leaving certain Yiddish words in the text, striving for a "common language". Those Yiddish words come with a glossary that makes Antin a sort of mediator and a translator of cultures as she speaks to the reader of a foreign language that is now gone, lost for her. With this new linguistic transformation in the new world, Antin just had to imagine "an English-speaking Gentile reader and develop a new voice of linguistic and cultural mediation" (Sollors, 1997: xvii). The reader became Antin's "American friend", and because of this approach in English versus Yiddish, her novel became "a big popular success" in the United States (ibid: xxix) as the true example of an immigrant's experience towards Americanization.

Similar to Antin's autobiography, another writer who bore witness to a particular historical event was Molodowsky's novel in which she narrates her experience of exile. Unlike Antin's novel, which was written in English and became a huge success, Molodowsky's novel written in Yiddish was unknown to the American reader until 2019, when a translation made by Anita Norich directed some attention its way. In the novel translated and titled in English as *A Jewish Refugee in New York*, Molodowsky narrates the difficulties of immigration and American assimilation.

As seen in the previous Chapters, the 'choice' of language could define the fate of an author strictly linked to audience and popularity. The choice of English for Jewish immigrants would provide a readership and the kind of fame that most Yiddish writers never attained. The recognition of Yiddish writers would come sometimes decades later, often not before academics searching in the archives would find and translate a certain work. As seen in the previous Chapter, translations are what defined and updated the canon of Yiddish literature. This phenomenon of authors left in anonymity until a translation is made, led to the belief that there were no women novelists, as there were only translations of their poetry and short stories. Not until recently have novels written by women been discovered. With reference to Molodowsky's novel, Norich (2019: viii) explains how

> the novel was serialized daily (except Saturday, when the newspaper did not print) until August 11, 1941, and appeared as a book in 1942 under the imprimatur *Papirene Brik* (paper bridge), which Molodowsky and her husband Simcha Lev, a printer, used when they published some of her works. (The paper bridge is a reference to poems in Molodowsky's ouvre and to a legend about messianic days when Jews will cross into the Promised Land on a paper bridge made of Toraj and learning).

Molodowsky, as many other Yiddish writers in New York after WWII, became committed to safeguarding the Jewish past, the legacy, what might have remained after the destruction. At the same time, she prepared "a future for Yiddish and for those who might be saved" (Norich 2019, viii). Molodowsky became an advocate for the defense of the Yiddish language and believed that by erasing the Yiddish language the state of Israel was erasing "hundreds of years of *yerushe* (inheritance or legacy)" (Norich, 2019: xi). According to Norich, ironically Molodowsky's fame grew because of her translation into Hebrew. When writing in Yiddish there were hopes of a future reader. Overall, according to Norich "the book is an invocation of the power of memory alongside a call to action" (ibid: xv). This action of a messianic time of

the future in the past is also found in the allusion of the *paper bridge* present in Molodowsky's Yiddish poetry. This hope or call for action expected of the reader resembles Benjamin's thesis, "to read what was never written, [...] The reader in question is the true historian" where the true responsibility lies not only on the poet's choice of Yiddish but also in the reader's responsibility in reading Yiddish.

a.1 From engendering to endangered audiences

> "To have great poets there must be great audiences, too."
>
> - Walt Whitman

"Does Yiddish Literature have—a reader?" With this question the *Inzikh* editorial raised a new debate on the Yiddish reader in their June 1920 issue. In the same editorial, they continued by stating that

> we admit that this species is a great mystery for us. Often it seems that there is no reader and that whoever reads a Yiddish literary work is himself a kind of literary *Marrano*[131][...] Yiddish poetry already has writers. What is lacking, however, is the reader, and this is especially true for Yiddish poetry.[132]

The *Inzikh* poets acknowledged their lack of readers in several of their editorial pieces. If avant-garde poetry had always assumed a scarceness of readers, this assumption was even more valid for avant-garde poetry in Yiddish. At the same time, the *Inzikh* poets' reflections on the lack of Yiddish readers of avant-garde poetry was ironically aimed at Yiddish readers.

As seen in the previous Chapters, the *Inzikh* poets' American style and themes made their poetry closer to the American reader, but the problem was that the American reader could not read Yiddish. In Chapter Four we have already seen an example of the impossibility of attracting American readers because of the poetry written in Yiddish. This example is narrated

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[131] Marrano is a term used to designate the Jews in Spain during the Inquisition who converted to Christianism but continued with their Jewish customs at home. For more information on the relation of the concept of Marrano and the *Inzikh* poets see Garrett, Leah. "The Self as Marrano in Jacob Glatstein's Autobiographical Novels" *Prooftexts, Volume 18, Number 3,* (1998).

[132] Translation into English by Harshav and Harshav (2007), p 791.

by Harriet Moore, editor of *Poetry* in Chicago, who was not able to read *Inzikh* poets' journal and inquired if the journal was written in Chinese. This incident reveals how the lack of translations and the ignorance of the Yiddish language did not allow American readers or any non-Yiddish speaking reader to bear witness to the innovations taking place in Yiddish poetry. In either of the cases, the *Inzikh* poets' reflections on the reader of their Yiddish poetry journal and out of a more practical manner, was directed to the Yiddish reader.

Leyeles reflects on how a Yiddish reader in America is nonexistent as he states how "we have long ago despaired of the possibility of having what is called a reader's circle for the new Yiddish poetry. In any case, not here in America. Perhaps such an animal does exist in Poland. Perhaps also in Russia. In America—nonexistent" (January 1923)[133]. These references to the existence of a potential reader in Europe but not in America were made because of the *Inzikh* poets' relation to the modernist Yiddish groups in Europe, where Yiddish was still the common language of the Jews before the war. Whereas in America, due to linguistic assimilation, the Yiddish-speaking Jews started to use English. The *Inzikh* poets, with their translations of world literature into Yiddish and their New York-themed poems, were addressing their journal to a culturally sophisticated, multilingual, and idealized reader.

Even though the press provided the primary forum for most Yiddish poets to reach their audience, the *Inzikh* journal, considered a "little magazine", had very few readers as most of the little magazines with a reduced target audience did. "The little magazine depends on the presence of an avant-garde audience, and that the Yiddish writers could not find" (Howe, 1989: 442). This contrasts with the number of readers other Yiddish writers, such as Sholem Aleichem, did have. The *Inizkh* poets did not want to become "servants of the folk". Their irritability and resentment can be seen in some of their editorials throughout the years. An example can be found in an editorial written by Glatstein in April 1929, in which he apologizes-sarcastically- for not having published the March 1929 issue, "the writer notes sourly that readers have not shown much distress so far, to the point that he has not received a single letter regarding the missing issue, and wonders if anyone has even noticed." (Ponichtera, 2012: 78). Ponichtera (78-9) goes on to state that

> the Introspectivists, with their commitment to Yiddish, found themselves on the outside
> of American intellectual circles as well, and, with no receptive audience for their

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[133] ibid, p 793.

cosmopolitan thought, they turned inward to the audience that they did have, an audience dedicated to the preservation, rather than the evolution, of European Yiddish culture.

This lack of a receptive audience contrasts with the 'choice' of Yiddish that writers made during the nineteenth century in Europe, which was more for reasons of convenience regarding the audience and in order to serve principally the female readership[134]. Niger in his article "Yiddish Literature and the Female Reader" (1913) remarks "that the connections between Yiddish and women must be sought in the question of audience" (Seidman, 1997: 15). As seen in Chapter Three, this consciousness of the female reader started with translations of sacred texts into Yiddish, the most famous one being *Tsene Rene* first published in 1618. It was done so that women and men who did not have the means to study could comprehend religious texts without the need of knowing Hebrew. Isaac Meir Dik frequently directed his works to a "female reader" and his choice of Yiddish was merely to "engage a female audience as it instructed it" (Seidman 1997, 20). Choosing Yiddish then was a way to have more customers/readers. Regarding this, Niger (Niger 1913, 100, Seidman, 15) observed that

> Yiddish literature may well be unique among the literatures of the world in its having, until very recently, addressed itself to a female rather than male audience… Jewish women were not only the readers and consumers of Yiddish books, they were also often the ones who encouraged the writers to write in Yiddish- to write, in fact, especially for them.

In short, women were the means of reaching a wider readership. The Introspectivists were no strangers to the existence of female readers and how, as a consequence, journals published more often and in greater amounts poems written by women. Glatstein, made his first debut in New York in the world of poetry by using a female pseudonym by the name of Clara Bloom before launching his career as a co-founder of the *Inzikh* journal, "the idea being that a woman's American-sounding name would make his poems more marketable" (Novershtern, 1986: 131). And Anna Margolin who published her poems in the *Inzikh* journal was first thought of to be a man among the intellectual reunions in the Literary cafes.

These poets in exile found themselves confronting with different difficulties than the authors in Europe, for whom the choice of Yiddish was an obvious when there was a question of how

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[134] See Roskies, David G. "Yiddish Popular Literature and the female Reader" (1977). Also, Parush, Iris "Readers in Cameo: Women Readers in Jewish Society of Nineteenth-Century Eastern Europe" (1994).

to reach the masses. Once in exile, the *Inzikh* poets in New York would experience a conflict, as they wanted to appeal to a universal reader in Yiddish while reinforcing the fight for a language. As Levy and Schachter (2015: 98) state,

> writing in a Jewish language, particularly until the mid–twentieth century, was directed at a Jewish audience; yet this audience was spread out across multiple national and imperial centers, and the readers' location and commitment to a Jewish language could not always be guaranteed.

Cultural critic Irving Howe recounts a comment Glatstein made to him once with a sardonic smile "What does it mean to be a poet of an abandoned culture? It means that I have to be aware of Auden, but Auden need never heard of me" (1989: 452). This lament of being anonymous perfectly exemplifies how Yiddish literature remained insignificant and unknown to modernist English writers. Norich comments on these lines that "far from being self-effacing, (Glatstein) implies that Auden *should* have heard of him." (2007: 22).

The sense of lack of readers in Yiddish poetry was reinforced by the feeling of immigrant life. Howe (1989: 441) explains how

> yet a coherent Yiddish avant-garde could never really settle into place; there were several beginnings, but each time one started to flourish it would come up against the severe limits of immigrant life. The readers who might have been the natural audience of a Yiddish avant-garde-sons and daughters of immigrants, now going to college and becoming sophisticated, more or less, about world literature- would soon turn their backs on Yiddish entirely. The potential readers of Glatstein became the actual readers of Eliot.

Yiddish literature, as was common of minor literatures, went from a time where the artists served the needs of the audience to the time an artist centered to his/her innermost expression without caring of the audiences' preferences, something common of the age of romanticism. During the nineteenth century, the choice of Yiddish had been justified "by the needs of a Yiddish-speaking collective" (Seidman, 1997: 14) but if that collective, now in exile, was non-existent, for whom were these Yiddish poets writing? Moreover, if their ambitions were for Yiddish to survive as the language of their heritage, could that goal be accomplished without a reader? America was revealed to the Jewish reader as a false messianic utopia where Yiddish authors would go through a spiritual death, a total de-Judaization for the sake of recognition

(Bechtel: 81). The Introspectivists would work towards that aim by taking Yiddish readers towards the avant-garde, while wishing that "perhaps the reader of modern Yiddish literature will come later. Hope can never harm" (*Inzikh* January 1923, 793-4).

b. A Linguistic Revolution

"Linguistic identity is largely a political matter"

- Joshua Fishman

The expectations of a future reader that would restore the Yiddish language would have to come after a messianic/cultural revolution. The Introspectivists where heirs of a cultural revolution that had started in Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century, led by a generation of Jewish activists. Just as the Yiddish language was at the core of the *Inzikh's* poetic program, it was also in Ber Borokhov's agenda, who after writing his text "The Tasks of Yiddish Philology" in 1913 in *Der pinkes*[135], "crowned him [self] as its chief ideologue" (Trachtenberg, 2007: 342). Both the *Inzikh* poets and Borokhov understood that language was the fundamental means to state their present historic situation but also the tool for a linguistic revolution. Ber Borokhov was one of the activist leaders, who learned Yiddish at the age of 26, as he found in it the language that would represent the Jewish proletariat. After the publication of his 1913 text, he became a Yiddish activist, who believed that "nations were primarily defined by their languages" (ibid). According to Trachtenberg (2007: 342), Borokhov

> modeled after late nineteenth-century European movements of linguistic nationalism, "The Tasks" was the first articulation of Yiddish scholarship – which had been developing by fits and starts for nearly a decade – as a discrete field of scientific research. It brought Yiddish scholarship to a new level of sophistication, established several of its ideological pillars, and linked Yiddish scholarship to the material needs of the Jewish people.

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[135] *Der pinkes: yorbukh far der geshikhte fun der yidisher literatur un shprakh, far folklore, kritik un bibliografye* (The Record: Yearbook for the History of Yiddish Literature and Language, for Folklore, Criticism and Bibliography), was to be an annual magazine of Yiddish scholarship under the editorial post of the renowned Yiddish critic Shmuel Niger. This was the only volume to appear. "Central to *Der pinkes* was Borochov's essay, a call for philological examinations into Yiddish on behalf of Jewish national renewal" (Trachtenberg, 2007: 344)

Borokhov learned Yiddish at a later age to communicate his message to a Jewish audience he wanted to address. Soon he understood that Yiddish was not only the medium but the means. The Yiddish language would become the subject, the tool with which the Jewish people would need to define their national identity: "Borochov argued that the "objective" discipline of philology – with its authority to establish a uniform orthographic standard, word corpus, and grammar – would be among the most powerful, necessary, and essential tools for realizing the national aspirations of the Jewish people" (Trachtenberg, 2007: 344-45)[136].

The Introspectivists, just as Borokhov, promoted Yiddish as a Jewish language; language was a central subject of their poetical movement, as Glatstein states in his poem which introduces this thesis, "On My Two-Hundredth Birthday" (*Tsu mayn tsveyhundertyorikn geburtstog*), "We sit on soft cushions and talk / About eternity, death, and grammar" (*"Mir zitsn oyf veykhe kishns un redn/ fun eybikeyt, toyt un gramatik"*)[137]. Language is then placed in their discussions on the same level as the essential existential dilemmas of death and eternity. Glatstein understands that language is one of the key aspects of human existence, not just as a tool for communication but as an indispensable aspect to be explored. This way of seeing language, as an important topic of their conversations, became more relevant after Glatstein's trip to Europe in 1934 when he witnessed the rise of antisemitism and the disappearance of the Jewish population. These events made him aware of the dangers of an imminent disappearance of the Yiddish language and, consequently, his commitment to the language became more tenacious and revolutionary. As Wisse states, "Leyeles and Glatstein identified modern Yiddish culture with political progressiveness, and modern poetry with revolutionary change" (1997: 138).

Although the concept of nationalism was not part of their agendas, since they believed that poetry would come to represent world literature, they did realize, however, that the Yiddish language represented their Jewish identity. The language that would come to represent a state,

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[136] This fight for Yiddish as being representative of the Jewish people would have to come by means of the cultural world. In order to do so, Borokhov uses as an example, *Els Jocs Florals* (floral games), a poetic contest held in Catalunya during the 1880's, in what has been termed as *"La Renaixença"* (The Renaissance of the Catalan language) that would strengthen the usage of the language and encourage its usage via the cultural domain, poetry. Writing and reading poetry in Catalan would help flourish its language and Borokhov defended that the same could be done for the Yiddish language.

[137] Translation into English by Harshav and Harshav (2007), p 223.

and therefore the national identity of the Jewish people, became a language in exile, a language in the realm of poetry. Nationalism could then be interpreted as linguistic nationalism, or as Borokhov had fought for, cultural nationalism. It was in this manner that linguistic identity became then a political matter.

b.1. "What remains? The language remains"

As explained in Chapter One, Cassin's (2016) reading of Arendt presents us with what reinforces the hypothesis of this thesis that exile transforms the relation to one's own mother tongue. In her Chapter on Arendt, Cassin exposes this relation of language and exile by using Arendt's experience of exile in the United States and her relation to her mother tongue. This relation explains how exile makes a linguistic attachment that "is the mother tongue, not the land of her fathers, that constitutes her homeland" (Cassin, 2016: 42) because "language was the only thing that could not be taken away from them, the only part of their home they still mastered" (cited Anders 1966, Cassin 2016: 46).

Hannah Arendt, the German American political thinker of Jewish ancestry, traveled back to Germany after World War Two in 1965. In her interview in *Zur Person* by Günter Gaus, when asked what remained for her of Germany, she answered: "The language remains" (Arendt. 1994: 12). This answer refers to her situation as an exile and she concludes that, when looking back to her *Heimat*, all that remains is the language. In her case, the German language, which, as she recounts, was her mother tongue in which she chose to write her work versus other languages (such as English, French). She goes on to state further when she migrated to America, she started writing some of her work in English, however, she explained that "the German language[138] is the essential thing that has remained and that I have always consciously preserved" (ibid: 13).

Günter Gaus' question "What remains?" to Hannah Arendt resembles that in Sutzkever's poem "Who will remain? What will remain?" (*Ver vet blaybn? Vos vet blaybn*?) written in Yiddish in 1974. Avrom Sutzkever, a poet who survived the Vilna Ghetto and emigrated to Israel in

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[138] See Volovici, Marc *German as a Jewish Problem: The Language Politics of Jewish Nationalism* (2020)

1947, was a prolific collaborator of the *Inzikh* Journal. His answer to these questions, found in the last verse of the poem, is somehow different to Arendt's answer, as he ends up stating that God will remain, and finishes the poem with the rhetorical question to the reader, "is that enough for you?" (*Iz dir nit genug?*)[139]. This rhetorical question seems to hold the reader accountable for the disappearance of the Jewish culture and with it the Yiddish language. If God is that all that remains, Sutzkever seems to imply, one understands that the Jewish people, the villages where Jews once lived, and the Yiddish language they once spoke has been lost. Sutzkever charges the reader with the responsibility to preserve the Yiddish language. As if to ask: "What will remain of Yiddish?" (Norich, 2013: 5).

Suztkever was not only an active collaborator of the *Inzikh* Journal for many years but was also a devoted advocate of the Yiddish language. His hypothetical answer that "the Yiddish language remains", could also have been the perfect motto of the *Inzikh* movement. As we have seen in the previous two Chapters, for some of the poets writing in the *Inzikh* movement, Yiddish was clearly not their mother tongue, the most apparent example being Debora Vogel, who learned Yiddish in her late twenties.

Arendt, in the interview mentioned above, expressed that she wanted not to be thought of as a philosopher but as a political theorist, as she observed that there is a difference between a "man as a thinking being and man as an acting being" (1994: 2). The concept of action is what would turn the Introspectivists' poetical activism into a political one. For exiled Jews living in New York in the turn of the twentieth century, multilingualism was no longer the only threatening issue. The Czernowitz conference on Yiddish language held in 1908 still resonated but what was required now, in light of the new historical events, was a new update. What was required was an update of the new poetic Yiddish vindication, but also action to preserve the Yiddish language and with it the Jewish culture and its history. The events of World War Two that triggered the disappearance of the Yiddish language made the *Inzikh* poets change their agendas. It was thus that the *Inzikh* journal became more political and more actively engaged with the preservation of the Yiddish language in the late 1930s until its dissolution in 1940. As Harshav (Pinsker, 2015) shows in his studies and introductions to his translations,

> this search for linguistic precision is at the heart of the *Inzikh* Yiddish poetic project, and it had special significance in a time of political upheaval. This search is performed

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[139] Translation by Harshav and Harshav, 2007.

in this particular poem by listing four different verbs with a similar, but not identical, meaning: from searching, longing, and dreaming, to bearing—the "pregnancy" and the painful "birth" of the most accurate word. Only after all of this hard poetic work is done does it indeed become possible to create "bridges that radiate" outward "in all directions".

This particular poem that Shachar Pinsker (2015) talks about is "*Februar 15*" ("February 15") written by Leyeles in 1937,

> Don't look for bridges to people.
> Wait with the world for the word
> That would be like the dying of a saint
> After a full and cheated life.
> Dream up the word
> That would stop the slaughter of weary, wicked hordes.
> Look for the word
> That would fog the eyes of strong men.
> Bear in your body the word
> That would speak like the silence of an elder
> When he looks at the sun above and at a funeral below
> With the same seeing gaze.
> From your heart, bridges radiate in all directions.[140]

The poet in this poem has the task, with his *word* of bringing a spiritual and moral awakening, "that would be like the dying of a tzaddik" (*vos zol zayn vi dos shtarbn fun a tsadik*). Leyeles refers in the third verse to the *Tzaddik* ("righteous one"), translated here for a gentile audience as "a saint", where he parallels this figure with the reader who must wait, as if waiting for the Messiah. The poem changes its request from the reader by the third time the poet refers to the *word:* at that stage, the reader must no longer wait, but deliver, "*Troy oys*". This reference of action expected of the reader was discussed previously in section a1 of this Chapter, where the reader must deliver that Yiddish word of the poet giving voice to the voiceless. The concept of *bridges* in the last verse is also a metaphor for the *paper bridges* previously discussed in this Chapter, where the Messiah is said to cross when he comes.

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[140] *"Zukh nisht keyn brik tsu mentshn./Vart mit der velt oyf dem vort./Vos zol zayn vi dos shtarbn fun a tsadik/ Nokh a ful un opgenart lebn./ Benk oys dos vort,/ Vos zol opshteln di retsikhe fun mide beyze makhnes./ Zukh dos vort,/ Vos zol fartsien mit a nepl di oygn fun shtarke layt./ Trog oys dos vort,/ Vos zol redn vi dos shvaygn fun a grayz/ Ven er kukt oyf der zun oybn un oyf a levaye untn/ Mit dem zelbn zeendikn blik./ Fun dayn harts shtraln zikh brikn in ale zaytn"*. Translation into English by Harshav and Harshav, 2007, p 147.

The Yiddish language was to be a "cultural heritage" for future generations, and in order to do so, the poet and hence the reader, had the responsibility of building "bridges in all directions". The destructions of European Jewry during World War Two interrupted the trajectory of many Yiddish poets writing in America from 1939 onward. "Writing poetry that spoke for the Jewish people after the Holocaust, [...] enhanced and informed the collective intention with their previous lessons in modernism" (Hellerstein, 1996: 257). Contradictions now aroused between politics and art, between the responsibility towards the collective or the poet's individual expression. The theories of the Introspectivists "reflected the social and political world; an individual poetic language that allowed for the expression of "modern man"" (ibid: 260).

b.2 Yiddish, a political urgency

> "What's burning so late at night?
> What's burning, you can bet,
> Is the emptiness in New York
> Without a Yiddish poet!"
> - Sutzkever

The Introspectivists' concerns for the future of the Yiddish language were addressed in their poetic journal to such an extent that according to Howe "the future of Yiddish became an obsessive theme" (1989: 452). Forced by the historical circumstances, these Yiddish poets now returned to the question of their Jewish identity. Two approaches can be considered that were adopted by the *Inzikh* poets in response firstly, to the decline in Yiddish readers and secondly, to the destruction of the Yiddish culture that took place in Europe in the eve of WWII. The first response was the concept of *return*, found in Glatstein's poem "Good night world", and in his novels *Ven yash iz geforen* and *Ven Yash iz gekumen* (When Yash Set Out and When Yash Arrived)[141]. The other response was conceiving the Yiddish text as *Home* as seen in Leyeles' poetic diary *Fabius Lind.* These responses, which I will explore in the following sections, were an ultimate reply to the emptiness, as Sutzkever recalls in the verses cited above, or disappearance of the Yiddish poet in the streets of New York.

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[141] These two novels were translated into English by Maier Deshell and Norbert Guterman in 2010 and titled as *The Glatstein Chronicles.*

The *Inzikh* poets went from wanting to be widely read to becoming isolated in the text. What was once "the" main language of the Jews in diaspora, was transformed to a language in the margins, once the Jews were in exile. The Yiddish language struggled not only to enter the universal literary field but, most urgently, struggled to become the official language of a state, any state. The response of Yiddish poets in exile to the historical events of the holocaust and the creation of the state of Israel was through the means of poetry. Yiddish poetry would now turn to Jewish themes and proclaimed that writing Yiddish was now more important than ever. Many discussions and reprimands were recorded in the *Inzikh* journal editorials regarding the state of Israel and its oblivious attitude towards Yiddish. As poets and vocal Yiddish activists the Introspectivists repudiated how Yiddish was not being considered the official language of the new Jewish state.

Harshav (1990) establishes the *Inzikh* group as the representatives of the modern Yiddish language, yet in his last Chapter, titled suggestively "The End of a Language", he implies by the title itself a future of Yiddish that the *Inzikh* poets refused to accept. In this Chapter Harshav presents several of Glatstein's poems (such as, "1919", "We of the Singing Swords", "A few lines") from his early poems to his post-holocaust poems and their relation to Jewishness. Harshav states how, although in Glatstein's early poetry there is no denial of a sort of Jewishness, it is somewhat irrelevant to the themes of the poems. That relation with Jewishness is represented in a reflection of the European world experienced in the chaos of the noisy metropolis of New York (1990: 189). Overall, the true Jewishness is illustrated in the use of the Yiddish language, as Harshav explains how "the direct, coarse, juicy, rich, spoken language, with its diminutives, allusions, stylistic clashes, and ironic twists, is as Jewish as Yiddish lyrical poetry ever was before, even though thematically it is a cosmopolitan poem, smelling of New York" (ibid: 189-190).

Harshav points out how after the holocaust there is a shift in Glatstein's poems. The sense of anti-nostalgic for the old world now becomes a presence, a *return*, where a new pain arises "the pain of losing hold of the words themselves" (1990: 192). Poets in New York (such as, Leyvik, Leyeles, Glatstein) "stood before the abyss of the end, losing first their readership, then their source, their people in Europe, and finally the very language they had made into such a fine instrument" (ibid). It is in Glatstein's post-holocaust poems that we perceive a sense of hope as he re-creates a lost world. Whereas in the early years of the *Inzikh* journal, poetic re-creation

was a renovation and experimentation of the Yiddish language, now that poetic *re-creation* became a *re-turn* to the old Jewish heritage.

To best explain the transition in Glatstein's poetry, while at the same time representing Yiddish poetry in America, Harshav discusses an interesting rhyme found in several of Glatstein's poems: ERTER-VERTER ("places-words"). This rhyme of ERTER-VERTER can be found in Glatstein's poem "We, the worldproletariat" (*"Mir, di vortproletaryer"*) (1937): "Night. in the darkest places sparkle traces." (*nakht. in di tunklste ERTER finklen VERTER.)[142]* Harshav's translation of VERTER rhymes traces with places from the perspective of acoustics. The translators have tried to reproduce the acoustic effects to rhyme not just the erter-verter combinations but also with the kl and kt sounds by using alliteration. In this rhyme, the words (VERTER) contain the places (ERTER). This rhyme is persistent in Glatsteins' poems, "it becomes the focus of a central theme" (Harshav, 1990: 191). After the holocaust, a more political realism enters Glatstein's work, where he places his experience in relation to space, a pan-historical space, a space that embodies experience and meaning (Harshav, 1990: 191). The experience of the rhyme is inverted in Glatstein's poem "We, of the Singing Swords" (*"Zingendike sharfn"*), while in his earlier poems places carried words, "now the words are the carriers of a lost world. When they lose their meaning, we lose our world" (ibid: 191), as in,

> All the existing words,
> The expressed,
> The understood,
> Lie in their dumbfounded clarity.
> Their sucked-dry meanings dozing off.
> It is our world.
> Soon it will lower the curtain[143].

In these poems Glatstein is preparing "the way for Yiddish poetry to continue after World War II" (Hellerstein 1996, 257). The poem's title "We, the wordproletariat" fuses two words (word and proletariat) and with this fusion the poet seems to want to represent two worlds (a linguistic world and a political world). The title opens the debate about "whether Yiddish poets should be responsible primarily to the political and national concerns of the Jewish people or to the highly individualistic demands of their art" (Hellerstein, 1996: 269-270). Hellerstein (1996: 273) adds how

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[142] Translation into English by Harshav and Harshav 2007, 275.
[143] ibid, 336.

the resolution offered by this poem is not a choice between the two opposites, but rather an acceptance of their coexistence within the same poet. Acknowledging this cohabitation of contradiction, that the poet's language is at once involved with and removed from the outside world, Glatstein prepared the way for his poems of engagement and lament that he wrote as a witness to the destruction that came all too soon.

The Introspectivists engaged further with this contradiction in their journal in the mid-1930s, in response to the rise of fascism in Europe, when it became increasingly difficult for Jewish immigrants to return to their countries of origin. These difficulties, in turn, stirred up a political debate and opened a new creative output in their journal. The Introspectivists' concerns with worldly issues did not only change their editorial line but also the themes of their poems. One example can be found in their interest with the Spanish Civil War[144]. In the 1920s, the *Inzikh* journal had primarily published avant-garde poetry, poetic theory, and literary criticism, but in the 1930s, its focus began to shift from Walt Whitman to more international affairs, such as the Spanish Civil War. The *Inzikh* poets constructed cosmopolitan imaginaries on the margins by writing in Yiddish about the Spanish Civil War in New York, with poems like the "Spanish Ballad" ("*Shpanishe balade"*) by Leyeles. In this poem the poet relates to the arduous journey on foot of a Spanish boy who is forced to flee from Spain due to the rise of fascism. There was also the poem "*Shtile Shpanie"* (Silent Spain) by Jacob Glatstein, in which bombs silence the children and with them the whole of Spain.

The *Inzikh* were dissident poets who found themselves mirrored in the Spanish 'front' fleeing from their Jewish traditions via a poetic language that reflected the complexities, associations and perceptions of the modern man. By talking about Spain and worldly issues in their poetical experimentations, the *Inzikh* poets asserted that the Yiddish language was part of their own cultural heritage as well as being part of the World heritage. The declaration in their manifesto that "the world exists, and we are part of it" became the statement of socially conscious poets, aware that they were living in significant times.

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[144] On Yiddish poetry and the Spanish Civil War see Glaser, Amelia M. "In the Shadows of the Inquisition: The Spanish Civil War in Yiddish Poetry" *Comintern Aesthetics* (2020).

c. Glatstein's "negotiated return"

In 1934 Glatstein returned to Lublin to visit his dying mother. He narrated this return in a fictional autobiography, entitled *Ven yash iz geforn* (When Yash Set Out), serialized in the *Inzikh* journal between November 1934 and December 1937. The fictional autobiography was published in book form in 1938. The introduction (which does not appear in the published edition) was published in the *Inzikh* October 1934. *Ven yash iz gekumen* (When Yash Arrived) was serialized in 1939 in the Zionist weekly *Der yidisher kempfer*. It brought Glatstein popularity after the novel was awarded the Louis Lamed prize for Yiddish literature in 1940. The unfinished third part titled *Ven yash iz tsurikgekumen* was published in *Di Goldene Keyt* in 1958. These novels of modernist fragmentation, which fuse different genres, are prime examples of an autobiographical quest of return and an analysis of the experience of the universal condition of exile. "Together, the books documented the fate of world Jewry through the eyes of a Yiddish writer traveling from America through Western Europe to visit his family in Eastern Europe […] Taken together, these two books can be seen as a meditation on the very question of the status of Yiddish and its culture in the world." (Zaritt, 2015: 190-1)

The novels are a mixture of novella, autobiography and travelogue[145] and represent a new politized conception of the beliefs of the *Inzikh* movement. The Introspectivists "sought to create a "consciously modernists poetics" attuned to how modern "man" internalizes the political/historical moment" (Garrett ,1998: 207). The narrator of *When Yash Set Out (Ven yash iz geforn)*, relates to this experience and describes the transition he went under as a writer, and that the *Inzikh* journal experienced as well, from the poetical to the political when he explains (Glatstein, 2010: 17) how

> there was a time, years back, when for me introspection meant philosophizing about the meaning of existence, a private pleasure, like the cud chewing of a self-absorbed and sated cow in a sunny meadow. But these past few years my mind is mired in the bloodstained world of politics. "I think, therefore I am" is no longer enough. Am what?

Glatstein's return is narrated from the point of view of an outsider as his works never give voice to his Jewish heritage or portray the images of the old world. Yet this literary voyage captures the quintessential essence of the Jewish people, the essence of homelessness and "a

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[145] For a more thorough conception of travel in Jewish literature see Garrett, Leah, *Journeys beyond the Pale: Yiddish Travel Writing in the Modern World* (2003).

feeling of helplessness, of immigrant anxiety" (Glatstein, 2010: 136). According to Garrett, "the return home is not a return to a place, but to being placed as the Other" (1998: 208). Throughout the course of the novels, "the modernist ethos, as exemplified by a polyphonic narrative[146], meets up with the challenge of Jewish history" (Ibid). All in all, the novels "exemplify an immigrant's new awareness of his inextricable tie to a homeland that constructed him as the Other" (Garrett, 1998: 208). Glatstein's narrator of the novel encounters several passengers in the boat that inquire about his identity as a Jew. He identifies himself as a Polish Jew to what some passengers in respond, "with that great Gentile compliment, "You don't look like it""(2010: 30).

A reunion of Glatstein and his mother is never narrated in the two books. These narrations exhibit a "negotiated" notion of return and a redefinition of the concept *home*. They are books of traveling, narrating a going and a coming but there is no staying or arriving. The narration takes place in nationless settings. "Where is a Jew headed? [...] Really! Where... where... where?" (Glatstein, 2010: 138) asks the narrator of *When Yash Set Out (Ven yash iz geforn)*. The first novel takes place in a ship where "each character is a microcosm of selfhood and nationhood" (Garrett, 1998: 213). The second novel takes place in a sanatorium,[147] similar to the ship "in that it is an uprooted community" (ibid: 215). An essential aspect is the missing motif of arrival, or returning "home", characterized by the absence of the mother. The mother becomes omnipresent; a symbol of anticipation in the first novel and one of loss in the second novel. The mother is also seen as a symbol of the utopian idea of *return* to the motherland or to the origins of Glatstein's mother tongue, Yiddish, as will be later reflected in his poem "I Shall Remember" (*"kh'tu dermonen"*) (1946),

> My dear mother, my wise mouth,
> My own mother-tongue, which rose
> For me so tenderly
> In Lublin's whispered twilights.[148]

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[146] Garrett makes a comparison of Glastein's polyphonic style as a journalist in the novels to Bakhtin's argument for tying Dostoevsky's work as a journalist to his use of a polyphonic style (1998, 221).

[147] For a comparison of Glatstein's novel *Ven Yash iz gekumen* with Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain,* also set in a sanatorium, see Garett "The Self as Marrano in Jacob Glatstein's Autobiographical Novels" *Prooftexts*1998 and Schwarz *Imagining Lives: Autobiographical Fiction of Yiddish Writers* (2005).

[148] *"mayn tayere mame, mayn klug moyl, / mayn eygn mame-loshn, vos iz azoy/ tsertlech oyfgegangen far mir/ in lubliner gesheptshete farnachtn."* Translated into English by Harshav and Harshav (2007, p 383)

An example of mother's absence that best illustrates this point is Aaron Zetlin's poem "Warsaw in 1912" published in 1941. Zeitlin emigrated to New York in 1939 and was a contributor of the *Inzikh* journal. Although this particular poem was written after the dissemination of the *Inzikh* journal, it expresses in a very direct way the absence that Glatstein explores in his Yash novels, which came to represent the absence of *home* altogether. A particular point to be noted here is the question in the last verse.

> (...) I can tell you
> from here, from New York
> that nothing has remained.
> We would all have written
> a letter over the ocean,
> a letter to mother
> but-
> where is mother?[149]

This sense of absence is what also came to represent what it meant to be a Jewish American for Glatstein. This feeling of being American, however, is an illusion. The return to his homeland also becomes an allusion, reminiscent of the political climate of the interwar period, as it reflects the Jewish state of a de-territorialized people and the conflict of being a universal Jew in an anti-Semitic world. Glatstein overall "tells the story of his life embedded in the broader context of a community and a culture lost to the forces of assimilation, emigration, war and the Holocaust" (Schwarz, 2005: 6). Garett expands upon this aspect as she states how "antisemitism has curtailed his [Glatstein's] realm for action" (1998: 213-4), where this action would have to be executed by no other than the poet, or in Glatstein's conception of it, the word proletariat. In other words, expressed by the narrator of Glatstein's novel, "now "revolution" took an aesthetic tinge" (2010: 69).

In the Yash novels, Glatstein encounters the Jewish collective fate and reclaims his origin as a Polish Jew from Lublin. The narrator of these novels recalls how "these were the last of a generation [...] the familiar Poland will have died" (2010: 137) and it is therefore that " (I) began to conjure up scenes from my past, to reassure myself that I wasn't rootless" (ibid: 149). This action he also replicates later by titling a collection of poems *A yid fun lublin* (1966, A Jew from Lublin). This experience would "develop a more explicitly Jewish literary credo"

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[149] "*Ikh ken dir zogn/ fun danen, fun nuy york, / as s'iz gornisht mer geblibn./ Ale voltn mir geschribn/ a brivele iber yamen,/ a brivele der mamen/ ober-/ vu iz di mame?*" Translation into English by Schwarz (2005, 127).

(Schwarz, 2005: 99), which would later "enable him to respond to the Holocaust as a self-consciously Jewish artist" (ibid). Thus, the author who writes an autobiographical work is conscious of his own mortality but the *Yiddish* author who writes an autobiographical work is conscious of collective mortality. The narrator of *When Yash Set Out (Ven yash iz geforn)* in an encounter with a passenger, explains about the language the passenger will be writing to him in "a greeting from the English language, since you'll be speaking Polish over there with your family" (2010: 145), to which the narrator (Glatstein) responds ""No, Yiddish" I set the facts straight" (ibid).

Despite Glatstein's efforts of wanting to bring Yiddish poetry into the mainstream of modern literature, in wanting a "republic of Yiddish" (2010: 142), he became best known for his post-holocaust poems in books such as, *Gedenklider* ("Memorial Poems", 1943), *Shtralndike yidn* ("Shining Jews", 1946), *Dent tatns shotn* ("My Father's Shadow", 1953), *Erdene reyd* ("Earthly Speech", 1956), and *Di freydfun yidishn vort* ("The Joy of the Yiddish Word", 1961). Glatstein's poetry after the holocaust became a means of rescuing the past, a mystical call for *return*.

d. Imagining a *Yiddishland*[150]

> "Imagining a home is as political an act as imagining a nation."
>
> —Rosemary Marangoly George

Marangoly George redefines the concept of home in relation to understanding of belonging and as a way of establishing difference. Home is often understood as something stable, a fixed place. When in exile, however, the notion of and relation to home changes as politics of location come into play. The very pertinent question here is 'what is home'? According to George "homes are manifest on geographical, psychological and material levels [...] [as] a place that is

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[150] Part of this section was published as a Chapter in *Ex-Patria: Pensamiento utópico en las literaturas del exilio y la diáspora* (2018) titled "On the impossibility of a return to the creation of a utopian Yiddishland in the text: an approach to the poetry of Yehuda Halevi via Aaron Glanz-Leyeles" (De la imposibilidad de un retorno a la creación de una   utópica Yiddishland en el texto: una aproximación a la poesía de Yehuda Halevi a través de Aaron Glanz-Leyeles).

flexible, that manifests itself in various forms and yet every reinvention seems to follow the basic pattern of inclusion/exclusion". As mentioned in the citation above, imagining a home can also be a display of hegemonic power (1999: 6). It follows then that choosing to write in a minority language establishes a political act of resisting the languages established in the new place of residence. Significantly, old and new places of residence, what we may term a home, as George points out, "is not a neutral place. It is community" (ibid: 9).

For Yiddish poets this sense of community centered primarily in the political linguistic arena. A Yiddishist activist, Zhitlovsky, appointed Yiddish to be the culture of *galut* (exile) and fought against assimilation that would ensue by equating Yiddish to world literature. Another Yiddish activist, Rivkin, who "spun brilliant theories about the function of Yiddish literature as a kind of surrogate for nation striving but unable to come into being" (Howe, 1989: 509), believed that art and religion constituted for the same, and thus art, seen via religion would stand as a quasi-territory in the air. Rivkin advocated the idea that Yiddish literature could serve as a spiritual territory for the Jewish people in the Diaspora. Messianism and spiritualism were two of Rivkin's main concerns. In "The "Quasi-territorialism" of Yiddish Literature" (1938) Rikvin delineated the difficulties of cultivating and maintaining a national literature without a territory. This quasi-territorialism, he recalls, was something that originated in the US and should now take global dimensions. He relates territorialism to Yiddishism, something he thanks Zhitlovsky for, as they both advocated that Jews should have a literature and that that literature should be written in Yiddish. Safeguarding the Yiddish culture and its literature without a territory became the responsibility of the Yiddish writer.

The Introspectivists were a community of avant-garde Yiddish poets who were creating a truly international literature. From exile, they defined a new literary space where language became the center of its intentions. The Yiddish language was thought to be a cultural space and the impossibility of return made poetry a cultural space for a utopian Yiddishland in the text. One of the most prominent examples of this concept is Leyeles' poetic dietary *Fabius Lind*. This dietary is a "series of thirty poems each of which carried a date instead of a title. Glatstein points out that this order is designed to illustrate how the passage of time leaves its indelible stamp on the poet's personality" (Novershtern, 1986: 133).

Leyeles served for many years as the president of the international Yiddish P.E.N. Club. He emigrated from Wloclawek (Poland) to London in 1905, where he studied at London

University. In 1909 he arrived in New York, studied at Columbia University, and actively participated in the Socialist-Territorialist Party. This party, also known as 'Jewish Territorialist Organization' which was institutionalized in 1905, had as its main objective to find an alternative territory to that in Israel preferred by the Zionist movement, for the creation of a Jewish homeland. The organization adopted what became known as Jewish territorialism, also referred to as Jewish Statism. The first published book of Leyeles was political and was written in German: *Der Territorialismus ist die einzige Lösung der Judenfrage* ("Territorialism is the only solution for the Jewish question", Zurich 1913). That Leyeles had an interest in territorialism, was something characteristic of the Yiddishists at the beginning of the twentieth century, as Miron remarks how "in the 1920s and even more so in the 1930s, territorialism won the hearts of many Yiddishists including [...], Yiddish modernist leaders" (2010: 184). In Leyeles' situation as an exile, when territorialism seemed a far from possible option, all that one could achieve was an imaginary and utopian[151] state called Yiddishland: "He dreams throughout his days and nights of a non-existent utopian land [...]" notes Sol Liptzin referring to Leyeles (1970: 44).

The name Yiddishland has been used on different occasions to refer to different concepts. The most traditional one is found in the book titled *Yiddishland* by Henri Minczeles and Gerard Silvains, where the term refers to the Jewish settlements around Russia. It is the area that was established between the countries of the East of Europe also known as Galizia. It is eventually called "the land where Yiddish was spoken" (1999: 7-8). The only time in history when a possible Yiddishland was created was in a territory at the eastern end of the Soviet Union called Birobidzhan[152], which in 1928 was designated as the Jewish homeland and in 1934 as *Yidishe Avtonomne Gegnt* (Autonomous Jewish region). Leyeles wrote a poem called "Birobidzhan" but instead of praising this initiative, as the proletarian poetry did, he reproaches this messianic dream of false optimism. This piece of land was nothing more than a distant and empty space,

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[151] See Spariosu, M., *Modernism and Exile: Liminality and the Utopian Imagination.* (2015).

[152] In Birobidzhan, Yiddish was established as the official language of the territory. Birobidzhan did not become the center of Soviet Jewish life for two reasons; First, life was hard, and Birobidzhan was too far from the cities and areas where most Jews lived. Second, the Soviet Union did not seriously invest in Birobidzhan as a Jewish national project. The Great Purges of 1936-1939, which destroyed the direction of Birobidzhan and many of its cultural institutions, marked the dramatic turn of the Soviet state against the project. After WWII, Birobidzhan experienced a brief demographic and cultural resurgence, but anti-Semitic and anti-cosmopolitan campaigns between 1948 and 1952 destroyed all the remnants of the Soviet Jewish national project. Although barely 2% of the Jewish population lives there today, Yiddish is still taught in schools and universities with the hope that new generations will give the Yiddish language a place in the future.

an unreal place created with the intention to be used as a propaganda campaign at the hands of Stalin.

Another interpretation of *Yiddishland* is found in Kuznitz, who states that the term is nothing more than an institution, based on education and learning of the Yiddish language, with its capital in Vilnius. This city was considered the Jerusalem of the North due to a long tradition of erudition and promotion of the Yiddish language and culture. It was said that "Vilna is not just a city, it is a concept" (2014: 112). That is why in 1925 it was decided to establish the YIVO institute, an acronym for *Yidisher visnshaftlekher institut* (Jewish Scientific Institute) in Vilnius and not in Berlin (the place where the idea was born). After WWII, the institute was moved to New York and today it is known as the "Institute for Jewish Research". The founders of YIVO believed that through the Yiddish language, Judaism was to be represented via the collection of documents and archives of modern Jewish life (Kuznitz, 2014: 3). In the year that YIVO was founded, 11 million people spoke Yiddish (three-quarters of the Jewish population). Yiddish villages began to see their language as the emblem of a national trademark. In short, the founding of the institution was an effort at building up the Yiddish language considered by many as a "jargon" to a modern language at the level of any European language (ibid: 4).

For Bachman, the concept of *Yiddishland* is largely a metaphor, like the concept of the "third space". *Yiddishland* for Bachman physically existed in the space of the New York cafés of the Lower East Side, but nowadays it has disappeared, literary texts being the only space where it still exists. *Yiddishland* then becomes known as a cultural space where the Yiddish language represents a way to resist assimilation and to maintain its identity: "Literature was 'everything'. It was a substitute for religion and for statehood, it was a state in itself, *'Yiddishland'*" (Harshav, 1986: 22). This utopian ideal of wanting to be part of a larger collective while keeping Yiddish as a language, was preceded by the utopian yearnings of the possibility of a territory where Yiddish could be spoken. According to Leyeles, Yiddish poetry represented that territory, a radical skepticism directed at the utopian-messianic heart. The North American poet and translator of Yiddish poetry Adrienne Rich established that poetry was a means enabling us to keep history alive; Leyeles states that poetry is a means to keep Yiddish alive, and with it, the culture and history of an entire people.

The legend of the Sephardic poet Yehuda Halevi,[153] in which the story of how Halevi stayed at the gates unable to enter Jerusalem is narrated, inspired modern Jewish writers, Leyeles among them. The image of *toyer* (door) is a symbol within Jewish literature that comes from Biblical times. In the ancient interpretations, the door image came to represent the entrance to the divine kingdom, the transition between a profane and divine space. In the architecture of the Sephardic synagogues the image of the door symbolizes the entrance to a sacred place. During the Renaissance in Italy doors began to form part of the decoration of the frontispieces of the books welcoming the reader to a world of learning. In modern literature, several authors (such as Kafka) have used this image as a symbol to understand the condition of a man without a world.

Beyond a literary representation of the doors, that impossibility of a return became a reality in the face of the inability of thousands of Jews to return to their own homes after the destruction of the majority of Jews in Europe. Despite the creation of the state of Israel most writers in the Yiddish language knew that in Israel the Yiddish language would have no place. For this reason, a *return* is demanded, as we see reflected in the last verse of the poem *"A gute nakht, welt"* by Glatstein, written in 1938. This return, physically impossible, is the only feasible way forward towards the creation of a poetic utopian space called *Yiddishland*, that "unique land, sacred land". The poet Yehuda Halevi was for Leyeles a representation of a dreamed past, of an ideal that sought to be a reality. According to Wisse (1996: 140),

> writers who had once insisted that the connection between Judaism and Yiddish had grown arbitrary, secularized along with its speakers, came to recognize the innate connection between language and the people whose language it is. As one sign of this recognition, American Yiddish writers began to reach back for historical subjects and characters.

Fabius Lind, Leyeles' alter ego, written in the year 1937 in the form of a poetic diary, is considered one of the most important works of modernist Yiddish poetry. Written as an introspective epic, both the Yiddish poet and the Sephardic poet use the poetic genre to draw

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[153] The poem "Yehuda Halevi" by Leyeles, was published in 1918 in his poetry collection *Labirint* (Labyrinth). While most of the poems deal with a universal and not specifically Jewish themes, his last poem "Yehuda Halevi" is the only exception. This poem tells the story of the yearning of a Sephardic troubadour for his ideally projected Zion and his death at the gates of Jerusalem when he was about to realize his dream. It narrates, in short, the impossibility of a return. In the 12th century, the Hebrew-Spanish poet Yehuda Halevi established a personal and poetic model for the concept of return based not only on the pilgrimage but also on the settlement to the Holy Land (Ezrahi, 27). The possibility of a return to the Holy Land would be truncated, as Leyeles tells us in the seventh section of the poem, when a Bedouin murders Halevi.

them closer to their past. Halevi, in his poetic work, recalls his native Spain[154] in his songs as he sails the seas; Leyeles recalls his native Poland while walking the streets of New York. Ultimately, what unites them both is that "the poet-Jew resembles his diaspora ancestor in having only words as weapons, but he is different in being already part of the gentile world" (Wisse, 1996: 141). Fabius represents an ordinary man within modernity caught in the labyrinth of his own inhibitions. Although he is somehow considered a poet, he is not anywhere near a prophet, as Leyeles does consider Halevi, but rather someone normal and ordinary. Fabius represents the Yiddish poet in his modernity, who with his gaze turned back to his ancestors, is nothing more than a *Weltlose* (man without a world)[155] wandering the streets of New York seeking his salvation. His only home, as Leyeles relates in the poem *Tsu dir-tsu mir,* is his beloved Yiddish poetry.

What Leyeles anticipated in 1918 with his poem "Yehuda Halevi" is what his work *Fabius Lind* came to represent twenty years later: the impossibility of a return and poetry as a cultural space of a utopian *Yiddishland*. His poem also projects the continuum of the Jewish heritage. The "Songs of Zion" by the Spanish Jewish poet Yehuda Halevi, were a precedent and served as a school for the exiled poets in the Jewish literary tradition. The *Inzikh* poets embraced that legacy, bringing their poetry to its fullest expression in the Yiddish language in New York in the interwar period. They redefined the poetics of exile creating a new twist: songs will no longer be written to the promised land, but that promised land is now the Yiddish language that through poetry finds its only means of existence.

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[154] The allusions of Spain as a reference of exile can be found not only in Leyeles' poem about Yehuda Halevi but also in the Yiddish poet Rajzel Zychlinsky, a poet who also contributed to the *Inzikh* journal and was even granted first prize of a poetic contest summoned by the *Inzikh* journal for her poem *"der novi un der regn"* ("The prophet and the rain") published in the issue of October 1937. Zychlinsky wrote about the expulsion of the Jews in 1492 in her poem *"Vegn vos hot gezungen der letster yidisher dikhter af shpanisher erd?"* ("About what did the last Jewish poet on Spanish soil sing?") written in 1939. In the English translation, titled as "Ibn Dagan of Andalusia", Zychlinsky writes how, "All the Jews were driven out of Castille and Aragon. /About what did he sing then, /Ibn Dagan? /Here history is silent" (*"Men hot fartribn di yidn/ fun Kastilye un Aragon;/ vegn vos hot demolt gezungen/ Ibn Danan?/ do schwaygt di geshichte"* -Translation into English by Barnet Zumoff, Aaron Kramer and Marek Kanter, (1997), pp 54-55).

[155] This concept used by Enzo Traverso comes to refer to citizens who have lost their nationality, who are stateless, outcasts. "These *Weltbürger* (citizens of the world) are actually *Weltlose*" men without a world ", confined to a condition of" lack of world "or" harassment "as emphasized by Hannah Arendt" (2004, 12).

CONCLUSIONS

Over the course of this study, I have sought to accomplish a number of interrelated objectives: (1) to trace the evolution of modern Yiddish poetry, using the *Inzikh* movement as a representative, in order to explore how exile can modify the relationship between a poet and their mother tongue, (2) to demonstrate how poetry can become a political tool for the preservation of minority languages and (3) to show how the efforts of the *Inzikh* poetic movement led not only to innovations in Yiddish poetic modernism but foremost to the fight for the survival of the Yiddish language.

The study of the *Inzikh* movement and the way these Yiddish poets strove to bring Yiddish to the world, explored in the thesis, contributes to the field of world literary studies where the 'choice' of a language considered peripheral, that is minor compared to the more dominant, regains a greater significance in a world undergoing globalization. According to Damrosch, the field of world literary studies is giving "little reference to source language and giving little attention to the cultural politics of translations and assimilation" (2014: 9). Concerning the cultural politics of translations and assimilation, this work has explored how the *Inzikh* poets sought different strategies related to translation as a way of defense for the Yiddish language. In doing so, they would translate world literature into Yiddish or object to translations of their work into English as an act of linguistic resistance. The act of defying translation, also termed as the untranslatable, furthers the discussion explored by Cassin (2014) and Apter (2011, 2013) and contributes to the field of Translation Studies by relating this concept, the untranslatable, to minority languages. Overall, with this work, I have contributed to advocating for the practice of poetry as an alternative act of linguistic activism. Linguistic activism has often been tied to the work linguistics have produced in the form of grammar books and dictionaries, but the work the poets have done to reinforce and renew a language has often been overlooked. This work also expands and highlights the work of avant-garde Yiddish poets who are commonly overlooked and even not translated into other languages such as English –as seen in Chapter Four –because of the difficulties entailed in translating their work.

Due to this lack of translations, some of the difficulties I have encountered when researching for this study have been the lack of material that focuses specifically on the *Inzikh* movement. There are very few studies that focus only on the *Inzikh* movement (Zutra 2010, Harshav, 2007). For this work, as explained in Chapter One, the main material of study that I have used

throughout the whole thesis has been the *Inzikh* journal which I had access to in the format of microfilm in the YIVO institute of New York and at Harvard University. Due to the bad quality of some of the microfilm examined, not all essays and poems were able to be read. From the work of a journal that ran through intermittently over a period of twenty years which was examined, I have chosen the essays and poems that best served as examples for my study. Other material examined, with reference to the *Inzikh* movement and to Yiddish, was consulted in the Harvard University's library and in the YIVO Institute (such as articles in magazines, theses, and books), since most of the material is not available online or cannot be found in European libraries.

This study has sought to demonstrate how the 'choice' of Yiddish for the *Inzikh* poets was transformed from an aesthetic determination to a political urgency when they realized how the future of Yiddish would only be possible in the poetic text once in exile. Language 'choice' itself was often an implicit form of ideological affiliation, but in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Jewish writers' 'choice' of language was a tool for either national or cultural expression. Throughout its history, there were many factors that contributed towards the disappearance of the Yiddish language: the pogroms in Europe, the destruction of the Jews and its culture in the hands of the Nazis, and the creation of the state of Israel that established Hebrew as the official language were three of the most significant reasons, as it has been discussed. Furthermore, the Yiddish speakers and many exiled authors, became assimilated and adapted to new ways by switching from Yiddish to English, leaving the Yiddish language as nothing more than an old relic. The *Inzikh* poets strove to defy that not only by their 'choice' of the Yiddish language, as an act of resistance and fight for the survival of the Yiddish language, explored in Chapter One, but by opposing the fact that Yiddish was an old relic. Chapters Two, Three and Four demonstrate how the *Inzikh* poets modernized not only their poetic style but also sought to modernize the Yiddish language itself. Poetry, Leyeles believed, should be understood as a dialogue, as an interaction between the writer and the reader. This way, the ongoing dialogue would help prolong the survival of the Yiddish language for years to come, grasping at the same time its change of geography, from the Shtetl to the streets of New York.

It was in this manner that the Introspectivists managed to turn political activism into poetical activism. Above all, their aim was the preservation of their homeland language, the Yiddish language. The focus on the Yiddish language had always been central to the Introspectivists

and their credo had always been representing it in its most modern artistic forms. Many articles in their journal gave rise to questions around the Yiddish language, whether it was the problems of Yiddish in America or in Israel or Yiddish literature in the world. By the late 1930s, near end of their poetic achievements, their concerns with the Yiddish language went from being a poetic linguistic choice to a political determination. In Chapter Two it was explained that the 'choice' of a literary language is not always associated with the mother tongue. it was discussed how other incentives for writers who choose to write in a second or third language may be 'historical forces' or 'private motivations' (Hokenson 2013).

As we have seen in Chapter Three, translations and self-translation into Yiddish was a way of understanding and establishing Yiddish as a modern language capable of adapting to any modern work. This acquisition of new modern techniques made untranslatability from Yiddish to universal languages a means to an end, by incorporating associative techniques such as fusion terms (Glatstein), bilingualism of Yiddish and English (Leyeles) or by creating a new aesthetic method of writing poetry in Yiddish (Debora Vogel). The case of Debora Vogel, a Yiddish poet who contributed to the *Inzikh* journal in the 1930s and who self-translated her work from German and Polish into Yiddish in her mid-twenties, is explored at the end of the Chapter Three. Little has been said on her 'choice' of Yiddish and the self- translations of her German and Polish poetic work into Yiddish. Vogel's 'choice' of Yiddish follows what has been discussed in Chapter Two. Choosing Yiddish versus other languages of wider use (such as German, Polish) for the purposes of artistic creation reinforces my thesis on that the choice of a language for many writers is very much related to historical factors, including time and place. Vogel's work published in the *Inzikh* journal (her poems as well as essays) demonstrates the connection, Vogel and the *Inzikh* poets shared, towards the Yiddish language and their poetic style.

If writing in Yiddish was the laying ground for the fight of the survival of the Yiddish language, translating universal literature into Yiddish was a way of reinforcing it. For the *Inzikh* poets who viewed the Yiddish language as a home in exile, the language became the subject, the community, and their Jewish identity. The question that inevitably arises is: if for the *Inzikh* poets "Jewishness was a language" (Harshav, 1990: 184) and Yiddish constituted their home, a utopian *Yiddishland* in the poem, can that home be translated without them losing their Jewish identity?

The paradox in wanting to be part of a universal literature but remaining in Yiddish and resisting translation was explored in Chapter Four. Translating poetry from minority/endangered languages confronts a contradiction. On the one hand, translations can be responsible for the extinction of a language, as writer and translator Gwyneth Lewis claims when she holds translation responsible for the death of Welsh: "Looking back, I blame translation," (McCabe, 2019: 251). On the other hand, translation can serve as a bridge between two cultures by allowing the act of "communicating with the creators of the work" (McCabe, 2019: 5). Translations of Yiddish poetry into English furthered a cultural exchange of two poetic cultures (Jewish and American) that co-existed at the same time and place. The controversy on this translation became then a choice of what would be translated from Yiddish poetry. The principles of selection became a responsibility for the anthologists, who had to choose which works of Yiddish literature, a culture that was disappearing, would be selected and which would be left to oblivion. A discussion on the anthologies of Yiddish poetry translated into English was explored at the end of the Chapter Four.

The contribution, made by the *Inzikh* poets to the Yiddish language, as well as their activism proved to be acts-against-language extinction, a topic explored in Chapter Five. This conception of the political in the *Inzikh* movement is explored via the messianic theory in Jewish thought. The impossibility of a return became a reality in the face of the inability of thousands of Jews to return to their own homes after the destruction of the majority of Jews in Europe in the hands of the Nazis. Despite the creation of the state of Israel, most writers in the Yiddish language knew that the Yiddish language would have no place in Israel. For this reason, a return was demanded, as we have seen reflected in some of the work by Glatstein. This poetic return, physically impossible, was the only feasible way forward towards the creation of a poetic utopian space in the text called *Yiddishland*. The thesis explored a poetic and linguistic journey that went from the experience of exile and its relation to one's poetic language, to having one's own language as home.

In exploring this journey, some of the topics discussed merit further research. The interest of the *Inzikh* poets for Spain for example and the Spanish Civil War represented in Leyeles' poem *"Shpanishe Balade"* ("Spanish ballad). A poem that narrates the story of a young Spanish boy forced into exile after the rise of fascism in the 1930's in Spain. Leyeles identifies his own exile with the exile of the Spanish boy. There were many Yiddish poets that used Spain as a reference of exile. This aspect merits further investigation as well as translations of Yiddish poetry into

Spanish. As discussed in Chapter One, in the process of reading the *Inzikh* poetry for the thesis, I translated the poems from Yiddish into Spanish to get a closer reading of them. Translating the poems helped me dialogue with their poetry and understand better their style and rhythm but at the same time became aware of how Spanish translations of Yiddish poetry is a field yet to be explored.

On the topic of further research, it should be added that translation has often been considered a bridge, creating a dialogue between two cultures, in this case Yiddish and American. In the thesis the influence American modernist poets had on the *Inzikh* movement was discussed. A question yet to be explored is if the American modernist poets were influenced by the Yiddish poets. In further exploring this question one could appreciate the two-way cultural exchange and analyze the perception and insight an American reader might have had in reading the *Inzikh* poets. This comparative study could also help us understand how Yiddish poetry, written in America, was also part of American literary history. Scholars, such as Sollors (2000, 2008), have argued convincingly that our understanding of American literature is incomplete without those works written in America, often by American citizens, in languages other than English. This was not taken into consideration by Jewish translators and critics in the 1960s and 70s who focused more on what was lost then of what was gained when talking about the Yiddish language.

Wisse writes that for Yiddish poets today "art confirms not only the world they inhabit, but the world they have lost" (Wisse, 1988: 242). Ozyck also paints a dark and foreboding future in seeing Yiddish closer to an end than to a continuity, in her story "Envy; or, Yiddish in America" (1966), in which Ozyck states how Yiddish "was lost, murdered. The language—a museum. Of what other language can it be said that it died a sudden and definite death, in a given decade, on a given piece of soil? Yiddish, a littleness, a tiny light— oh little holy light! —dead, vanished. Perished. Sent into darkness" (42). In reference to the *Inzikh* poets, Howe maintains that "Glatstein and his friends tried to bring Yiddish poetry into the mainstream of modern literature" (1972: 76). The emphasis is given on the word 'tried' as, according to Howe, they did not quite succeed. Howe states that, "in the history of Yiddish literature the *Inzikh* group marks a major turning point, one at which Yiddish poetry almost—*almost*—joins the mainstream of Western poetry in the twentieth century" (1989: 440). The stress on the word 'almost', written twice and the second time in italics, enhances what Howe saw as the tragedy of this Yiddish poetic movement.

This tragedy was reflected in the Yiddish poetry anthologies translated into English, explored in Chapter Four. In most of the anthologies, the achievement of the Introspectivists is hardly addressed at all. As Novershtern observes "worse yet is the fate of Glatstein and Leyeles. Only a token of Glatstein's modernism is represented here, while his later poetry on the Holocaust and the fate of the Jews assumes a central position" (1988: 362). Glatstein's later fame came in recognition of his poems about the Holocaust and not for his achievement of creating a new Yiddish poetic style. Leyeles, who had co-founded a new poetic trend in the Yiddish literary world, is included with very few poems in the anthologies. Harshav, who theorized and translated the *Inzikh* poets' work in the hopes of an anglophone reader recognizing the modernity in Yiddish poetry, entitles the last Chapter of the Meaning of Yiddish (1990) as: "The End of a Language". But can Yiddish be declared a dead language?

Isaac Bashevis Singer in his Nobel Prize acceptance (1978) among other places, asserted that "there are some who call Yiddish a dead language but so was Hebrew called for 2,000 years… Yiddish has not yet said its last word" (Singer 172). According to Wirth-Nesher, the Post-Holocaust years redrew the map of Jewish languages, "whereas Jewish-American immigrant writers chronicled the shift from old language to new, the children of immigrants translated and reinvented Jewish literature to accommodate it to American culture" (1988: 216). An example is Saul Bellow's translation of I.B. Singer's story "Gimpel the Fool" in 1953 whose success catapulted Singer to fame. The story became such a hit that Singer never relied on Bellow again for translating his work, when he realized that the audience valued the English version by Bellow much more than the original Yiddish story. Thereafter, Singer decided to work solely with women translators. Other renowned translators such as Cynthia Ozyck, John Hollander and Adrienne Rich brought Yiddish poetry to the anglophone reader in the 1960s and 70s. Yiddish was transformed from a written language to a translated language and years later to an academic language.

So, what is Yiddish today? For Stavans and Lambert it is "first and foremost [...] a language, a Jewish one" (2020: xvii), and it is also

> a central question for Yiddish speakers in America, as for most immigrants, was precisely a question about language. Each one had to answer for herself how much she should depend upon and defend the language of her childhood and tradition, and how

much she should embrace a new language—English—with its strange possibilities (ibid, xxi).

And where is Yiddish Today? The future of Yiddish is a topic discussed by scholars in the last decades (Katz 2004, Shandler 2006, Lambert 2020). Katz (2004) advocates for "The Future of Yiddish", a title he uses for his last Chapter of the book. It is significant to point out the use of the adjective 'unfinished' in Katz's title of the book (*Words on Fire: The Unfinished Story of Yiddish*), as it suggests a continuity of the language that the Yiddish critics and translators formerly mentioned did not see. The continuity of Yiddish is, according to Katz, mainly due to the Hasidic[156] communities existing today around the world. It is a community that has privileged the usage of Yiddish over the language of the new country even in exile. Communities in Jerusalem or Brooklyn have continued speaking Yiddish to each new generation. The daily usage of the Yiddish language is such that during the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020, sanitary measures given by the New York State Department of Health were also issued in Yiddish. It is interesting to mention that in Katz's pivotal study on the history and continuity of Yiddish (2004), the *Inzikh* movement is not mentioned at all.

Following Katz's argument, Hornsby (2015) states how speakers are also an important factor in revitalizing minority languages. In regard to this, Yiddish has seen a revitalization by postvernacularization, where language is seen more as a flexible continuum (Shandler 2006). An example can be found in a book titled *Say it in Yiddish* (Dover publications, NY 1958), a book that is part of a series of guides that teach the most practical phrases of a language when traveling to the country in question. The Yiddish guide in particular differentiates with the guides written in the other languages, as and taking into account the year in which it was published (1958), it is worth asking, where would someone go ("for travel usage" the book tells us) to need expressions like פּליפּלאַץ ("airport") or גאָלף ("golf"). All these expressions could even evoke a humoristic tone if we think of them applied in the literary world of the *shtetl* where one imagines Tevye (charismatic character in Sholom Aleichem's work) playing golf, or Benjamin III (a main character in Mendele's Yiddish version of *Don Quixote*) needing an airplane for his travels. This unique travel guide is written by renowned Yiddish linguist and scholar Uriel Weinreich. He offers us a poetic journey in which it is hard to imagine where one

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[156] It is important to point out, that the Hasidic communities "do not generally focus on 'language per se' but rather on the imperative, as they see it, of maintaining their true Judaism as a veritable civilization that includes strict religious adherence to the inherited norms as well as attire, language, and compact neighborhoods rooted in continuity with pre-Holocaust East European Jewish life" (Katz 2019, 554).

could travel to with this guide, considering there is no country in the world where Yiddish is the national language. However, there is something remarkable about it: it equates the Yiddish language to the same functional level as other languages of more common use such as English, French or Italian.

In the last decades, works about learning Yiddish have gone from *Say it in Yiddish* to *In eynem* (2020) 'the first fully illustrated, multimedia Yiddish textbook that uses the communicative approach to language learning'. According to Katz "much of the current 'language movement' is focused on 'Yiddish products' in English [...] without seriously attempting to produce new speakers, let alone writers" (2019, 554). While Katz foresees the future of the Yiddish language in Hasidic communities and scholars, this study has sought to demonstrate that poetry was also a tool used to revitalize the Yiddish language.

The *Inzikh* poets could then be considered forebears of the Yiddishists of the twenty-first century. Translations into Yiddish are still being made nowadays just as the *Inzikh* poets did in their journal, despite the fact that its purpose has changed significantly. Although translations into Yiddish reduced significantly after the Holocaust, translations in the twenty-first century, or as Shandler calls them "postvernacular translations" (2006: 7) have gained attention. These translations into Yiddish are mainly children's stories, such as Saint-Exupèry's *The Little Prince* or Dr. Seuss's *The Cat in the Hat*. The most recent hit being the Yiddish version of *Harry Potter*. Many contemporary Yiddishists have shown discomfort about these translations, seeing them as having only object value rather than practical value. With these new translations Shandler questions whom[157] are they are intended for and "what might be their value as literary efforts or as cultural artifacts" (ibid: 6). These translations, Shandler considers, are done more as a symbolic act and demonstrate the "viability and vivacity of Yiddish" (ibid: 7). They also function to counteract the misconception of Yiddish being a dead language.

At the same time, these postvernacular translations, Shandler implies, evoke a Yiddish-speaking childhood making us understand the naturalness of the Yiddish language. An example can be found in Will Eisner's *A Contract with God* (1978) translated into Yiddish as *An opmakh mit Got* in 1984 by Bobby Zylberman. In the forward of the Yiddish edition Eisner understands

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[157] The only 'native' Yiddish speakers today are the Hasidic communities and the children in these communities are not allowed to read secular books. Therefore, if these translations of children's stories into Yiddish are not aimed at the Hasidic community, the question that occurs is whom are they aimed at.

Yiddish as the "language of its true origin". At the same time, "this Yiddish rendering both is and isn't a translation" (Shandler, 2006: 10). In a way, it transports the reader back, not only in time and place but also in language (ibid: 11). In Will Eisner third edition *A Contract with God*, Eisner recalls how his work has been translated into Yiddish, "a language in which I can think but cannot read or write" (iii). In postvernacular translations "the use of Yiddish, no longer a language of daily life, is highly self-conscious, especially as a tenacious signifier of Jewishness" (Shandler, 2006: 11). Shandler (ibid) continues by stating how,

> As exercises in negotiating cultural frontiers, postvernacular translations situate the act of translation itself as central. The translator's hand is not meant to go undetected in these works; on the contrary, it is meant to be the focus of attention. For herein one observes a transformative act in which Yiddish is not lost in translation, but found, and the foundational role that translation plays in creating Yiddish culture is renewed and, inevitably, remade.

Yiddish nowadays is also no stranger to the latest technologies, as one can find online magazines and newspapers in Yiddish and about Yiddish on the internet, as well as online dictionaries and grammar books. One can find articles in Yiddish in Wikipedia or use Google translator to translate from Yiddish to any other language or vice versa. Several apps to learn the Yiddish language are also available and platforms such as Netflix have showcased series in Yiddish (such as Unorthodox and Shtisel) bringing the Yiddish language back in the spotlight in the twenty-first century. Such endeavors prolong the efforts and drive that the *Inzikh* poets strove for: their aim was for the Yiddish language to last, and for future readers to be able to read Yiddish literature in its original language (now thanks to the internet).

The thesis aimed at presenting why the *Inzikh* poets chose Yiddish for their poetic movement once in exile, subsequently demonstrating how minority languages can strive to subsist in a constantly changing world with growing national claims. Linguistic activism is often overlooked in favor of other kinds of activism. While Yiddishists and linguists (such as Chaim Zhitlovsky, Max Weinreich) were building schools for the study of Yiddish, and writing grammar books and dictionaries in Yiddish, the Introspectivists sought to achieve that prevalence of the language through their poetry. In the thesis, poetry has been placed at the forefront of linguistic activism.

For this reason, I would like to end with a poem by Leyeles titled "That's it" *("Azoy iz es")* written, as stated at the end of the poem, in 1946, on the day of the Nuremberg verdict,

[...]
All around, dust-covered plains will stretch
And the winds of forgetting
Will blow in the wide-open windows.
Only down, deep down,
And in the hearts of the few,
Still glows the fire of the number -
The heritage and testament of a nation.

Until -
A last one to remember,
To lie on the earth and fast,
A Just man will rise
And break bread, and he will be the first
To offer new praise
And sing the song of a new life[158].

This poem comes to represent some of the key aspects of the dissertation. After all, for the *Inzikh* poets, their poetic work written in Yiddish would end up being "the heritage and testament of a (Jewish) nation (people)". The "Just man" (poet) would offer a "song" (poem) of a new life. The poet would "sing the song"; And that song, *the* song, would be written in Yiddish. A "new life" written in exile where the "dust-covered plains" and the "winds of forgetting" would be redeemed and narrated by the poet. The *Inzikh* poets, aware of how "when a language dies, a possible world dies with it" (Steiner, 1998: xiv) restored the poem as a redemptive act—the poem being understood as the only possible home for the Yiddish language in exile.

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[158] *"Arum veln zikh tsien farshotene pleynen/ un di vint fun fargesung./ veln blozn in tsepralte fenster./ bloyz untn, tif untn,/ un in di hertser fun di veynike,/ vet glien dos fayer fun der tifer-/ di yerushe un tsavoe fun a folk.// biz-/ a letster tsu gedenken./ tsu lign oyf der erd un fastn a fastung,/ vet oyfshteyn a gerekhter,/ un brekhn broyt, un vern/ an ershter tsu gebn a nayes loyb/ un zingen dos gezang fun a naye lebn."* English translation by Harshav and Harshav (2007) p 171.

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