



JUDITH TYDOR
BAUMEL-SCHWARTZ

**IDENTITY, HEROISM
AND RELIGION
IN THE LIVES OF
CONTEMPORARY
JEWISH WOMEN**

PETER LANG

What makes us what we are? How does our gender affect our identity? Who are our heroes and heroines and how do they mould the decisions we make and the way we live our lives? In what ways does our connection – or lack thereof – to our birth religion shape our adult selves? These are just some of the questions which *Identity, Heroism and Religion in the Lives of Contemporary Jewish Women* addresses. In examining the lives and deaths of various Jewish women during the 20th and 21st centuries this study focuses on the dynamic by which they formed their identities at times of crisis, whether in pre-State Israel, during and after the Holocaust in liberated Europe, or throughout Israel's formative years. As refugees, survivors, new immigrants or veteran citizens of a country these women's lives are probed and analyzed in terms of their relationship to each other, to their surroundings, their past, their future, their ideologies, and their geographic and virtual communities, presenting us with a mosaic of contemporary Jewish women's lives.

Prof. Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz is the Director of the Schulmann School of Basic Jewish Studies, Director of the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism, and Professor of Jewish History at Bar-Ilan University. She is the author of numerous books and articles and specializes in Gender, Jewish religious life, the Holocaust, Memory, State of Israel, and Commemoration.

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*Dedicated to my wonderful in-laws,
Dr. Arthur and Bernice Schwartz,
for their 90th birthdays, with love.*

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Introduction

A woman of valor who shall find? Her price is far above that of rubies [...] grace is deceitful, beauty is vain, but a woman who feareth the Lord, she shall be praised, give her the fruit of her hands and let her works praise her in the gates.

These are the opening and closing words of “Eishet Chayil”, the poem found in the last chapter of Proverbs describing “A Woman of Valor” according to Jewish belief. Traditionally sung by Jewish husbands to their wives on Friday night, the poem succinctly summarizes the elements which the author of Proverbs believed should typify the “Woman of Valor”: capable, industrious, wise, kind, charitable, faithful, fearless, heroic and G-d-fearing. This was the guide that the virtuous Jewish woman was supposed to use as an example for her behavior; the template that should mold her female identity. This was the pattern from which she was to replicate her actions and beliefs, a straightforward design that combined daily examples of heroism in her never-ending household tasks, the pillars of her female identity at that time, with an unwavering religious belief, the pillar of her spiritual identity, as noted by the poem’s author.

The concepts behind and the connections between these various pillars is the starting point in our journey through the elements which compose the framework for this book: identity, heroism and religion. Our study opens with three chapters that focus on various aspects of Jewish women’s identity at several junctures in the twentieth century: as immigrants to pre-State Israel, as refugees to the English speaking world during the Nazi era, and as women survivors of the Holocaust. The next section delineates four aspects of female heroism, all pertaining to the Yishuv (pre-State Israel) and the State of Israel: in Israeli military memorials, as the archetypical “daughter of the nation”, as military casualties during the State’s first decade, and as heroines who entered the national pantheon. The final section is devoted to religion and depicts three aspects of the lives of Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox

Jewish women in the contemporary world: as Holocaust survivors attempting to rebuild their Orthodox way of life, as creators and participants of internet forums for Orthodox Jewish women, and as women using these forums to reinvent and transmit historical and religious traditions. Together these topics weave a story located between the aforementioned pillars which form the foundations of the structure in which that Jewish “woman of valor” is supposed to build her life, a story of a growing number of Jewish women during the 20th and early 21st centuries.

The chapters in this book were written as articles over a period of a decade and a half and mirror a number of professional transitions which I went through during those years. Some of the chapters are an outgrowth of my original focus on Holocaust studies and the early post-war years in Europe. An example is the chapter about the rescue of Jewish girls and teenage young women during the Holocaust, which was expanded from my graduate studies about rescuing and resettling Jewish refugee children from Central Europe to England and the USA during the Hitler era. Two additional chapters deal with the fate of women in the *She’erit Hapletah*, the surviving remnant of European Jewry after the Holocaust, and issues of identity. The first discusses various aspects of rebuilding the personal “self” after the war as seen through a general analysis of women’s identity in the *She’erit Hapletah* during the first post-war years. The second focuses on Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) women, analyzing the ultra-Orthodox women DPs who were Zionist pioneers, teachers and mothers. All three of these chapters are gendered outgrowths of my earlier studies on pre-war refugees and post-war displaced persons and simultaneously a harbinger of my later interest in contemporary Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jewish women’s activities in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Additional chapters stem from my transition from Holocaust studies to Israel studies. A number of chapters are located on the seam between the two disciplines: The first examines the impact of Diaspora culture on the lives of Fifth Aliyah heroines, young women who immigrated to pre-State Israel during the 1930s. One of these women was Hannah Szenes. Szenes was a young Jewish woman from Hungary

who immigrated to Palestine in 1939 and parachuted back to Europe during the Second World War as a British army officer who also planned to assist the Zionist cause and support the beleaguered Jews of Hungary. Having been caught and tried as a spy she was sentenced to death in Hungary for treason with her own mother, still in Budapest, unable to save her. In pre-State Israel and later in the new State she was propelled to the forefront of the national pantheon, becoming the heroine who embodied both the essence of filial devotion and the Zionist ethos. An additional chapter compares the funerals of this heroic icon, “daughter of her nation”, with another icon, the “father of his nation”, Theodor Herzl. Yet a third chapter analyzes the dynamic by which women in Israel became heroic icons, national heroines with places of honor in the State pantheon. Moving from the individual to the collective, two chapters deal with heroines in the State of Israel and their representation: the first with women who lost their lives while on active military service during Israel’s first decade, and the second with women’s representation in Israeli military memorials. A final chapter, which I originally wrote together with colleague Dov Schwartz, deals with women in the Religious Zionist movement.

The two final chapters in the book are an outgrowth of my most recent research transition, one that stemmed from what I once called “a surfeit of necrology”. After devoting the first fifteen years of my research career writing about the Holocaust and the next ten years to writing about female military casualties and their commemoration, I decided that it was time to embrace a topic that was overflowing with life while still being firmly anchored in the historical and the female: Orthodox Jewish women’s internet forums. Having spent years charting the historical creation of women’s communities and communication forms, I now found myself enthralled with charting the history of the newly emerging world of internet communities and cybercommunication. The chapters about these forums, their history and goals are the result of my ongoing fascination with this topic.

* * *

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Identity, heroism and religion have been the pillars of my family for as long as I can remember. It was my late father, Chaskel Tydor, a Holocaust survivor who built a new life into which I was born, who taught me what true heroism was. The stories of his adventures, which I have written about elsewhere, molded my identity in which religion was and still is a major part. It is therefore with gratitude to the Almighty that I have the privilege of thanking my wonderful family for their role in giving me the atmosphere that was conducive to writing this book.

As always my family has been supportive and encouraging throughout all stages of research and writing. To my beloved husband, Joshua Jay Schwartz who put the original idea of composing this book in my mind and did not rest until he saw it come to fruition, go my eternal love and thanks for believing in me and holding me in his heart, now and always. Special thanks and love go to my mother Shirley K. Tydor who encouraged me throughout the writing of the earliest articles upon which certain chapters in this book were based. To the true joys of my life, my daughters Rivka (Beki) and Rina, and my stepchildren and

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Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz
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Identity

Chapter 1

Bridges from Yesterday to Tomorrow – The Role of “Diaspora Culture” in the Stories of Fifth Aliyah Heroines

Introduction

A hora, roaring, tempestuous, blazes around me
With the mystery of rhythm, gladdening and forging,
It tugs at my body and heart.

The foot marches, the back quivers, the song is ignited, a searing chorus
Dance and song, a wordless prayer,
Hail to the future, hail to creation.

But then a figure flutters before my eyes
My arm has escaped my friends' embrace
My heart spurns the tempestuous singing,
Far and near it consumes me whole.

Blue eyes
Such a bewildered glance
A sad silence and a stubborn mouth
The stillness grows in me
I remain standing
Alone, in a crowd of a hundred, her and I.¹

This poem, “Hora to an Exiled Girl,” was penned in late February 1943 by a twenty-one-year-old woman some three and a half years after she had immigrated to pre-state Israel. She was working as a steward on a kibbutz after a lengthy stint in the commune’s laundry room. In the diary that she kept at that time, she intermittently discussed three topics that preoccupied her: love of her new homeland

1 “Hora to an Exiled Girl” (tr. Elie Leshem), retrieved 18 July 2013 from <<http://www.timesofisrael.com/long-lost-hannah-szenes-poem-comes-to-light/>>.

and desire to contribute to it, concern for family members back in the Diaspora, and the sense of foreignness that still enveloped her among members of the kibbutz even after she had been in the country for three years. Several days later, she enlisted in an operation for which she would go down in history together with paragons such as Shimon Bar-Kokhba and Josef Trumpeldor. Her name was Hannah Szenes.

The author of “Hora to an Exiled Girl,” about a girl whose mother, in the Diaspora, appears before her as she dances the hora with her comrades in Palestine, was indeed the product of the Diaspora, from which she had obtained her formative upbringing and absorbed the cultural fundamentals that would accompany her for her entire short life. However, even though she spent more than 80 percent of her life on foreign soil, Szenes entered the national pantheon straightaway as a “Hebrew girl,” like several other women comrades who were far from being “sabras.”² This should come as no surprise in view of the regnant Zionist ethos in the Yishuv and the early statehood years, which mandated the repudiation or, at least, the de-emphasis of an immigrant’s years abroad – an approach that Moshe Shamir articulated succinctly and tellingly in the opening sentence of his work *With His Own Hands*: “Elik was born from the sea.”³

Obviously, neither Hannah Szenes nor her comrades had been born from the sea. They had reached the Yishuv as members of solid families that lived, or had lived, in some other country; they had been raised in a different culture that some immigrants considered superior to the local one. This sometimes caused trouble among young immigrants who had arrived with their families and had to cope with perpetual dissonance between their homes, which continued to operate at a European pace, and the Yishuv street, which marched to the cadence of the Zionist society that had come into being in the Middle

2 The term was invoked, for example, in eulogies recited when Szenes’ remains were brought to Israel in 1950 and in writings in the Hebrew press. See my article, “Founding Myths and Heroic Icons: Reflections on the Funerals of Theodor Herzl and Hannah Szenes,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 25:6 (2002), 679–695.

3 Moshe Shamir, *Be-mo yadav* (With his own hands), Merhaviva: Sifriat Hapoalim, 1951.

East.⁴ However, even those who had come without families had brought their past and their culture and, as they attempted to adopt a Yishuv identity, this culture – be it Central European or East European – continued to play in the background like a persistent whispering accompanist.⁵ Research shows that among young immigrants who failed to integrate in the Yishuv society, it dictated the pace of life for years.⁶ However, even among those who plunged into their new surroundings effectively, such as the three personalities at the nexus of this chapter, it played a weighty role if only as an antithesis, something against which they inveighed and tried to banish from memory. I do not intend to claim that the role of “Diaspora culture” in their lives thwarted their integration in the Yishuv. On the contrary: in some cases it may have inspired them to prodigious efforts to integrate despite the attendant hardships. Even in such instances, however, the Diaspora culture played a role – perhaps merely as an impetus – in the young immigrants’ integration. If so, I wish to argue that even when young immigrants worked their way into the Yishuv tapestry, the influence of “Diaspora culture” on their lives did not dissipate totally. Either by existing or by being forced not to, this culture continued to figure in the identity equation of those who had not been born in pre-state Israel.

For a whole generation of Diaspora-born young people who settled in Palestine in the 1930s, the question of the role of Diaspora culture in their identity was a complex issue that they disregarded for years. Particularly after the arrival of the *She’erit Hapleta*, this group was crowded

- 4 Yoav Gelber, *Moledet hadasha: aliyat yehudei mierkaz Europa ukletitam baaretz 1933–1948* (A new homeland – The immigration from Central Europe and its absorption in Eretz Israel 1933–1948), Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi and Leo Baeck Institute, 1990, 613.
- 5 Miriam Getter, “Haaliya miGermania bashanim 1933–1939, klita hevratit-kalkalit mul klita hevratit-tarbutit” (Immigration from Germany 1933–1939, social-economic absorption versus social-cultural absorption”), *Cathedra* 12 (1979), 125–147.
- 6 Guy Miron, *Misham’ lekan beguf rishon: yehudei Germaniya beErets Yisrael / Medinat Yisrael: Todaatom haatsmit mibaad lidfusei hazikaron haishi* (German Jews in Palestine/Israel – Self-Consciousness Viewed through Patterns of Autobiographical Memory), Ph.D. dissertation, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1998.

out of the collective memory and referenced only as *vatikim*, “veterans.” Only in Israel’s third and fourth decades, as the Zionist collective memory was “privatized,” was the challenge taken up as a young generation in search of its roots rediscovered the pre-Yishuv past of those born on foreign soil.⁷ It has been claimed that people spend their whole lives rewriting their autobiographies. If so, some of the rewriting occurs due to the rediscovery of elements from the autobiographer’s past that had shaped his or her identity but had been marginalized for various reasons as the first edition of the autobiography was written – elements that may have fit the zeitgeist but did not always articulate the full complexity of the plot.

Other contemporaries, however, never had the privilege of confronting their past because their lives were terminated prematurely, leaving an unclosed circle at the personal level and a missing link in the national narrative that could enrich the collective. The matter is all the more serious when the individuals involved became the objects of state or public memorialization and protruding tiles in the national mosaic, primarily through the mediation of a quintessentially Zionist but generally two-dimensional narrative. One reason for the two-dimensionality was the almost total disregard of the role of Diaspora culture – sometimes as a thesis that the immigrants wished to sustain in their lives and in other cases as an antithesis against which they wished to struggle in order to integrate into local life – among the components of these paragons’ identity that remained in effect in the Yishuv and Israel as well.

Below I shed light on the matter by recounting the biographies and the memorialization of three young women who reached the Yishuv in the Fifth Aliyah and perished in the 1940s, before or immediately after the proclamation of statehood. The three are Hannah Szenes, who immigrated to Palestine from Hungary and was executed in the aftermath of the parachutists operation in 1944; Bracha Fuld, who reached Palestine from Romania and died in the Palmach operation on “Wingate Night” (1946); and Mira (Miriam) Ben-Ari, who emigrated from Germany and fell in the defense of Kibbutz Nitzanim (1948). My choice of

7 Guy Miron, “German Jews in Palestine/Israel.”

these young women was prompted by a combination of factors. First, they were *immigrants*, young Fifth Aliyah immigrants in a society that gave primacy to the native-born. Second, they were *young women* in a society that championed a form of egalitarianism that was sometimes more declarative than operative. The patterns of gender socialization in those days were such that girls, more than boys, were associated with values of home and the internalization of the culture of home; girls were expected to become clones of their mothers in their future households. Third, they had come from *cultures that were not dominant in the Yishuv* at the time; dominance belonged to a culture that had been built in part from components of the East European Jewish culture. Finally, each of the protagonists fell in the decade following their immigration and became paragons in Zionist history, each described as a “Hebrew girl,” a “Hebrew woman,” or a “Hebrew heroine.” But were they?

Throughout the phases of my research, I was mindful of the inherent methodological hazards of dealing with this kind of micro-history, chiefly trivialization that reduces historical research to a set of anecdotes that lacks a broader conceptual base.⁸ One way to skirt this obstacle, as Carlo Ginzburg, a pioneer of the microhistory method, reminds us, is to transition frequently from micro-history to macro-history and back, in order to present each time the “text” within the “context” and then again the impact of the “context” on the “text.”⁹ I will try to do this by investigating the three personalities’ stories against the backdrop of the social, political, cultural, and military system that had taken shape in pre-state Israel during the Fifth Aliyah, World War II, and the years of struggle for statehood. Another problem associated with the microhistoricity of this study flows from the clash between the need to choose a cognitive research object that replicates itself, in order to make the choice of this persona meaning-

8 Cullom Davis, et al., *Oral History from Tape to Type*, Chicago: American Library Association, 1977; Raphael Samuel and Paul Richard Thompson, *The Myths We Live By*, London: Routledge, 1990.

9 Carlo Ginzburg, “Microhistory: Two or Three Things that I Know About It,” *Critical Inquiry* 20:1 (1993), 10–35. Ginzburg cites microhistory as a technique flowing from a working method in the field of cinema that Siegfried Kracauer explored in his study of cinema history: Siegfried Kracauer, *From Hitler to Caligari: A Psychological History of the German Film*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971.

ful, and the wish to refrain from choosing a research object that would, in effect, dictate the outcomes of the research *ab initio*. I resolve this dilemma by concentrating on three personalities, each representing a different world of Fifth Aliyah immigrants. One of them, very young, arrived at the beginning of the period with her bourgeois extended family, “neo-Zionists” as Miriam Getter defines them¹⁰; the second, in early adolescence, arrived alone at the end of the period and joined her mother who had landed a short time before. Both mother and daughter, like no few Fifth Aliyah immigrants, joined the Yishuv as refugees who had no prior Zionist motive for taking this step. The third heroine, in late adolescence, arrived alone for Zionist pioneering reasons; her aim was to complete her studies in Palestine and live there to her dying day.

The history of a generation, states historian E.H. Carr, is sometimes taught via the story of an individual paragon.¹¹ The risk in doing this arises when the story is shaped not by historians but mainly by public elements that want it to reflect their favored ethos. The result is usually a simulacrum that omits any indicator that does not square with the dominant discourse. If one tends to study the history of a society through the medium of a paragon’s story, the resulting picture offers hardly any depth and complexity. Such is the case with my three protagonists, whose life and death stories were presented as symbols and examples to much of Israeli society for more than half a century. My intention in this chapter is to reinvest these people’s biographies with some of the depth that they had lost when the heroines turned from people into symbols. By so doing, I hope to take a small step toward restoring something of the complexity and the depth to the story of the generation as well.

10 Miriam Getter, “Immigration from Germany,” 130.

11 E.H. Carr, *What Is History?* 1961, revised edition ed. R. W. Davies, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986; Hebrew edition: *Mahu historiya?* Tel Aviv: Modan, 1986, 27–28.

Identity and migration

The focal issue in this chapter is identity and migration – to be more precise, the ways a girl's identity is formed, especially in adolescence, and the dynamic in which migration and its attendant cultural shifts reshapes it. Among the prominent social scientists who dealt with the question of formation of human identity, it was Erik Erikson (1902–1994) who claimed that person's main identity takes shape in adolescence. It is then that the individual shapes a self-identity and senses him/herself as a person distinct from all others while striving to adjust to surrounding society.¹² In Erikson's thinking, adolescent identity crises can be resolved favorably if the affected individuals wish to know their past and establish continuity with their past experiences. Therefore, an adolescent immigrant who experienced his or her past in a culture other than the one currently inhabited finds it hard to define him or herself, create a forward-facing orientation, develop a commitment to a set of values, religious beliefs, occupational goals, and worldview, and contend with his or her sexuality. These points are central in understanding the formation of the self-identity and cultural identity of the three young women on whom this discussion centers.¹³

Of what is the identity that the adolescent attempts to form composed? Leon and Rebeca Grinberg, psychoanalysts who investigated the phenomenon of migration, contend that the individual's identity crystallizes in perpetual friction among three factors: spatial integration, temporal integration, and social integration.¹⁴ Among migrants, this system sometimes encounters a state of confusion. When a migrant's spatial integration is disrupted, he or she tends to ask, "What am I doing here?" – a rhetorical question signifying the inability to integrate into the space that person occupies. A disruption in temporal integration confuses the migrant in matters of language and location; many mi-

12 Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society*. New York: Norton, 1950.

13 Erik Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: Norton, 1968.

14 Leon and Rebeca Grinberg, *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile*, New Haven and London: Yale, 1989, 130–132.

grants overcome it by integrating language or significant objects or values from their past lives into their new lives. What happens, however, when the migrant encounters a society such as that of the Yishuv, which mandated conformity in language, values, and cultural identity? Disruptions in social integration are triggered by the change in, if not the reversal of, roles in the migrant, who for the most part forfeits his or her defined place in society upon migration. The migrant can correct the resulting destabilization of life only by establishing new roles and integrating into the new society both practically and culturally. Below I investigate the dynamic behind the social integration of the three protagonists in this chapter.¹⁵

Another element in understanding the research topic is the nexus of gender and identity. The sociologist Nancy Chodorow discusses this matter at length, maintaining that the primary basis for identity formation is the bond with, and emulation of, one's mother. Furthermore, a daughter, unlike a son, continues to emulate her mother until adulthood.¹⁶ However, what about a daughter who forms her cultural identity far from her mother or while living in a culture other than her mother's culture even if both are in the same place? This issue also finds expression among the heroines of our discussion.

The final component in the identity issue is "ethnic identity." Most types of identity take shape amid a struggle of forces and are not homogeneous.¹⁷ Often, however, we lose sight of the significance of the struggle when it concerns the fashioning of a cultural identity in a person whose origin culture is close, but not identical, to the majority culture where he or she lives. So it was with the three young women discussed here: they came from an Ashkenazi culture, a European one, but not from the East European culture dominated the Yishuv just then.

15 Grinberg, 132–134.

16 Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978.

17 Stuart Hall, "Who Needs Identity?" Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity*, London: Sage Publications, 1996, 1–17; Floya Anthias, "New Hybridities, Old Concepts: The Limits of 'Culture,'" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24:4 (2001), 619–641.

Consequently, the point of departure for this discussion is linked to the simultaneous construction of multiple identities within the heroines: the formation of self-identity among adolescents, migrants' problems in determining identity, patterns of gender identity construction among girls, and the struggle surrounding the formation of ethno-cultural identity among minorities that strongly resemble, but are not identical to, the majority.

Between “native culture” and “Diaspora culture”

The immediate associative context of the term *gola* – diaspora – in the 1930s and 1940s was the concept of *shelila* (negating or repudiating) it, a centerpiece in the contemporary Zionist discourse.¹⁸ “Negation of the diaspora” was interpreted in many ways, all concurring about the need to frown on Diasporic patterns of Jewish life but disagreeing about how to deal with the phenomenon at the practical level.¹⁹

Given the Zionist movement's intention of creating a “new Jew,” its ideological agents, including the youth movements and the Yishuv education system, had to take a stand on “Diaspora culture” and where

18 Here I will not delve into the differences of approach between the terms *shelilat ha-gola* – Diaspora – and *shelilat ha-galut* – Exile. According to one of these approaches, the term *galut*, exile, denotes the initial shaping of a new collective religious-historical consciousness for the Jewish people. Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, “Galut Betoach Ribonut, Levikoret ‘shlilat haglut’ batarbut Hayisraelit” (“Exile within Sovereignty, On ‘Denial of Exile’ in Israeli Culture), *Teoria Uvikoret (Theory and Criticism)* (Autumn 1992): 28–55.

19 On Zionist “redemption” as the “negation of exile,” see Aviva Halamish, “Mediniyut haaliya bishnot hashloshim: bein ‘geula’ le’hatsala” (Immigration policy in the 1930s: between ‘redemption’ and ‘rescue’), *Zemanim* 58 (Spring 1997), 86–98; Eliezer Schweid, “Shte gishot le-rayaon ‘shelilat hagola’ baideologiya hatsiyonit” (Two approaches toward the idea of ‘negation of the Diaspora’ in Zionist ideology), *Tsiyonut* 9 (1984), 21–44; Tali Tadmor-Shimoni, “Gola utfutsa bitmunat heavar: tochnit halimudum ‘yeda’ ‘am” (Exile and Diaspora in retrospect: the Yeda ‘Am curriculum,” *Dor le-dor* 19 (2002), 195–213; Natan Rotenstreich, “Shelilat hagola az veata” (Negation of the Diaspora then and now”) *Gesher* 112 (1985), 7–13.

it should stand in the life of the entity that they wished to create. The trend-setter in this matter as it concerned the general education system in the 1930s and 1940s was Benzion Dinaburg (Dinur), who sought to distinguish between *shelilat ha-gola* and *shelilat ha-galut* (negating the exile), the former denoting negation of diasporism as a way of life and the latter suggesting negation of Diaspora Jews and their creative endeavors.²⁰ Educators in the Labor Movement school system also accepted this principle. In practice, however, the ideological complexification of education in the Labor system created a mechanism that “burned the bridges to the Jewish past” and repudiated Diaspora Jewry’s culture and ways of existence.²¹ The attitude of the third school system at the time, affiliated with the religious-Zionist Mizrachi movement, believed that a new Jew could be fashioned in Eretz Israel without the repudiation of Diaspora tradition and Jewish cultural endeavor. This system, however, had little influence on the prevailing attitude in the Yishuv toward Diaspora tradition and culture.²²

What was the nature of this “new Jew?” Historian Anita Shapira points out that for Zionist poet Shaul Tchernichowsky, he or she should be “a secular, impulsive, practical Jew, close to nature, and a nation-builder.” As time passed, the model took on additional characteristics including athletic aptitude, aspiration to justice, and revolutionism,

20 The distinction was tellingly expressed by Eliezer Rieger (1896–1954), Dinaburg’s aide in running a teachers college and subsequently Director General of the Israel Ministry of Education. Rieger wrote that one should not educate in hating the galut but instead should relate to the Diaspora “as a circumference of Eretz Israel” and, currently, to educate young people that “Eretz Israel is the home of our life.” Eliezer Rieger, *Hahinukh haivri be-Eretz Yisrael* (Hebrew education in Eretz Israel) – A, Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1940, 242. The general system was attended by more than 50 percent of elementary school pupils and nearly 90 percent of high-schoolers. Shimon Reshef and Yuval Dror, *Hahinukh haivri biymeit habayit haleumi 1919–1948* (Hebrew education in the years of the national homeland 1919–1948), Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1999, 48.

21 Yuval Dror, *Ha-hinukh ha-hevrati-erkhi bezerem haovdim bikufat hamandat (1921–1948 – ma’avar lehinukh akhshavi)* (Hebrew social value education in the ‘Labor Stream’ during the British Mandate (1921–1948) – A Transition to Modern Education), *Dor le-Dor 1* (1994), 88.

22 Anat Helman, “Torah, avoda uvatei-kafe: dat ufarhesiya be-Tel Aviv hamandatorit” (Religion and the public sphere in mandatory Tel Aviv), *Cathedra* 105 (2003), 85–110.

and these were distributed across various extents of continuity or discontinuity vis-à-vis Jewish existence in diaspora.²³ Admittedly, the formative Jewish society in pre-state Israel was heterogeneous and its young generation was no exception.²⁴ Eventually, however, an ultimate “New Jew” persona did take shape: the mythological “sabrá,” typically rough-hewn and unmannered, zealously committed to the Hebrew language (diluted with Arabic expressions), a revolutionary and a pioneer, a physical hero, contemptuous of tradition and of the older generation, and emphasizing informal relations, companionship as a unifying social factor, and even the special clothing – shirt and shorts – that became emblematic of the youth movements and the pioneering endeavor.²⁵ One should add to this a complex attitude toward the Jewish Diaspora and its culture, sometimes marked by alienation, estrangement, and even preaching, especially among youngsters in the Labor Movement school system and alumni of youth movements associated with it. While negating the Diaspora, however, this complexity sometimes found room for concern about, if not a degree of empathy for, the distress of Diaspora Jews and immigrants to Palestine.²⁶ In the resulting situation, young Jews in the Yishuv strove to become not

23 Anita Shapira, “The Fashioning of the ‘New Jew’ in the Yishuv Society,” in Israel Gutman, ed., *Major Changes within the Jewish People in the Wake of the Holocaust*, Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1996, 427–441; Yoav Gelber, “The Shaping of the ‘New Jew’ in Eretz Israel,” *Major Changes*, 443–461; Mark Rosenstein, “Hayehudi hehadash: haideal shel mifal hahinukh hatsiyoni beEretz Yisrael ad kum hamedina” (The ‘New Jew’ the ideal of the Zionist education project in pre-state Israel), *Iyunim Bechinuch Yehudi (Studies in Jewish Education) C* (1988), 75–76; Mark Rosenstein, “Hayehudi hehadash – hazika lamasoret hayehudit bahinukh hatikhoni hatsiyoni hakelali beEretz Yisrael mireshito vead kum hamedina” (The ‘New Jew’ – his connection with Jewish tradition in general Zionist high school education in Palestine from its inception to statehood), Ph.D. dissertation, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1985.

24 Yoav Gelber, “The shaping of the New Jew...,” 437–438.

25 Oz Almog, *Hatsabar: Dyokan* (The sabra: A portrait), Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997.

26 Yuval Dror, “Sugiyot ishiyot uleumiyot bezechut ha-noar hayehudi hahiloni beEretz Yisrael bishnot haesrim vehasheloshim kefi shehen nishtakoft beitonteit hagymnasyot haiuvriyot haironiyot.” (Personal and national issues in the identity of secular Jewish Youth in 1920s and 1930s: pre-state Israel as reflected in newspapers of urban Hebrew high schools,” *Iyunim bi-t’equmat yisrael* 11 (2002), 259–305.

“new Jews,” who would still embody the fundamental of Jewishness as the term implies, but “sabras,” typically turning their backs on all characteristics – physical, spiritual, behavioral – that typified the Diaspora Jew.

Despite the many years that this “new Jew” of the Yishuv Jew spent in the education system, he or she was a product not only of a “school culture” but of several other formative agencies of socialization. Baruch Ben-Yehuda (1894–1990) expressed this aptly, writing in late 1937 (before he became principal of Herzliya Gymnasium) that the Yishuv youth – those “new Jews” – had been shaped in constant friction among four elements: home, school, youth movement, and the street.²⁷

The youth movements’ attitude toward the concepts of “Diaspora,” “Diaspora Jewry,” and “Diaspora culture” resembled the dominant ones in the education systems. Youth movements that had sectoral (“stream”) affiliations were radical in their disdain for Diaspora culture, but other movements also stressed the need to construct a “new Jew” who would be physically and psychologically fit to integrate into the new homeland and, afterwards, to defend it. The youth movements, followed by the Palmach, served as incubators of “sabra-ism,” the ideal that young immigrants were urged to adopt as the target of their aspirations.²⁸

Ostensibly, the school should have had more influence than the youth movement on the young population’s attitude toward the Diaspora because most Yishuv adolescents did not belong to organized youth movements.²⁹ However, schools found it hard to translate the educational ideal that they presented into daily reality; this gave the youth movements and the Yishuv’s other social agents (resistance movements, settlement movements, etc.) more decisive

27 Baruch Ben-Yehuda, “Levayat hanoar vehinukho” (On the problem of youth and their education), G. Hanoch, *Darkhei ha-no’ar: qovets le’inyanei hanoar batsiyonut* (Ways of youth: collection on youth affairs in Zionism, Jerusalem: Zionist Executive Youth Department, 1937, 169–194.

28 Yoav Gelber, “The Shaping of the New Jew,” 440–442.

29 In 1939, of 80,000 persons up to age 19 in the Yishuv, only 15,000 belonged to one of thirteen active youth movements in the country. Memorandum Ada Sereni and M. Goldstein, “Tafkidei merkaz hanoar haeretz-yisraeli ufeulotav” (Functions and activities of the Palestine youth center), Central Zionist Archives S53/170/λ, quoted in Gelber, “The Shaping of the New Jew,” 438.

weight.³⁰ Finally, the two additional factors that Ben-Yehuda cited – home and street – cannot be overlooked. I elaborate on both below.

Among Zionist intellectuals, Yishuv educators, and Zionist youth-movement counselors, the “Diaspora culture” issue was complex and problematic in the 1930s and became more so in the early 1940s as the Yishuv received reports about the annihilation of European Jewry. At this time, many educators and youth-movement leaders expressed contrition about the natives’ estrangement and alienation from the fate of their brethren in Europe, especially given the reportage on the ongoing extermination of the main human reserve on which the Zionist movement was relying: the millions of Jews in Eastern Europe.³¹ While

- 30 Youth movements had more influence on older adolescents than high schools did because few members of the Yishuv continued their studies after graduating from primary school while some of those going out of work remained in youth movements. In 1932/33, there were only 1,654 high school students as versus 16,522 in primary school. In 1944/45, in contrast, 9,527 attended high school as opposed to 55,471 in primary school. Thus, while the ratio of high schoolers to primary-school pupils was 1:10 in both of the Mandate’s first two decades, it narrowed to 1:5 by the end of the Mandate era. Shimon Reshef and Yuval Dror, “Hebrew Education,” 53.
- 31 This was only the first indication of a turnabout in attitudes toward Diaspora Jewry and its culture, which would include several metamorphoses in education and literature in the two decades that followed. Yuval Dror, “‘Mishlilat Hagola Letipuach Ha’ todaa Hayehudit’ bimaarechet hachinuch hayisraelit mishnot haarbaim vead Hashishim” (From “Negating the Diaspora” to the “Fostering Jewish Consciousness” in the Israeli Educational System from the 1940s through the 1960s – Directions for Research in the Future,”) *Divre hacongress haolami hashenem asar lemadaei hayahadut* (Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Division E: Contemporary Jewish Society), Jerusalem, World Union of Jewish Studies, 1999, 225–236; Dan Laor, “Mehadrashale’ktavei hanoar haivri’: hearot lemusag ‘shelilat hagola’ (From sermonizing to ‘writing to Hebrew youth,’ remarks on the ‘negation of the Diaspora’ concept”), *Alpayim* 21 (2001), 171–186; Aliza Buchholtz (Barmor), “Achdut mul kera – benei haaretz vehagola” (Unity vs. schism – Yishuv vs. Diaspora”), *Dapim Leheker Tekufat Hashoah* 15 (1998), 261–278; Avihu Ronen, “Hakol haacher: beikvot maamara shel Aliza Buchholtz” (The other voice: in the wake of Aliza Buchholtz’ article), *Dapim Leheker Tekufat Hashoah* 15 (1998), 279–290; Dina Porat, “Sheelat hahatsala bitekufat hashoah al reka ‘shelilat ha-gola’ bayishuv haeretzisraeli” (“The question of rescue during the Holocaust in view of negation of the Diaspora in the Yishuv in Palestine”), *Hatziyonut* 23 (2001), 175–192; Yechiam Weitz, “Yishuv, gola, shoah: mitus umetsiyut” (“Yishuv, diaspora, holocaust: myth and reality”), *Yahadut Zemanenu* 6 (1990), 133–150.

gola was a generic term for everything Diasporic, those in the Yishuv commonly linked it with Eastern Europe and the “shtetl culture,” the cradle of modern Jewish nationalism in the nineteenth century.

Concurrently, however, another and slightly different “Diaspora culture” existed, the one created by the Jews of Central and Western Europe and transmitted to other countries such as Hungary. While also different from the Yishuv culture, it lacked some traditional elements that were more closely associated with the East European Jewish reality and served as a basis for elements of the Yishuv folk culture. While this culture, much like that of the Yishuv, denigrated the shtetl culture, equally it derided the new Hebrew culture as inferior and primitive. There were, of course, assimilationist Jews, *Maskilim* (“Enlightened Jews”), and upper-class Jews in Eastern Europe who also disdained the East European shtetl culture and the new Hebrew culture equally. In the 1930s, however, it was hard to find immigrants from Eastern Europe – let alone entire families – who entertained such views and nevertheless immigrated to pre-state Israel. Most East European immigrants at that time had strong Zionist affinities, penchants for tradition, or both.³² This was not the case among the immigrants from Germany, among whom one could find thousands of patriotic, assimilation-minded, and wealthy (or formerly wealthy) families that found refuge in pre-state Israel for lack of choice but continued to disdain, severely and equally, the traditional shtetl culture and the Zionist culture of the Yishuv.³³

The variation of “Diaspora culture” in which Mira Ben-Ari and Bracha Fuld were raised in Germany and Hannah Szenes in Hungary – that of middle-class Central European Jews – was a largely assimilationist Jewish culture, far from Jewish tradition *à la* Eastern Europe and from the Russian and Yiddish languages that had contributed much

32 Aviva Halamish, *Mediniyut Haaliyah Vehaklita Shel Hahistadrut Hatziyonit 1931–1937* (Immigration and Absorption Policy of the Zionist Organization 1931–1937), Ph.D. dissertation, Tel Aviv University, December 1995.

33 Yoav Gelber, *New Homeland*; Gideon Shahtal, “Haaliya hayehudit migermania leEretz Yisrael bashanim 1933–1939 umifgasha im hahevre hayisraelit minequdat mabatam shel haolim” (Jewish immigration from Germany to Palestine 1933–1939 and its encounter with Yishuv society from the immigrants’ standpoint), Ph.D. dissertation, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1995.

to modern Hebrew.³⁴ Composed largely of borrowings from general Enlightenment culture passed through Jewish filters, it had acquired a special complexion that sometimes overstated that of local Gentiles, such as German obedience and precision, plus expressions and foods specific to each individual country.

If the East European Jewish culture was scorned and ridiculed by a large proportion of Yishuv youth at the time, the assimilationist Jewish culture of many of the Central European immigrants, deficient in Jewish elements in the eyes of Yishuv youth, was altogether preposterous. Conversely, even if the East European immigrants suddenly felt themselves in a new country, most had at least a few footholds in the local culture due to their strong affinity for Jewish tradition or Zionism. Such was not the case among a large share of Central European immigrants and their like, who felt totally foreign in the new Hebrew culture and were unfamiliar with all key points that give one even the slightest sense of belonging to a place.

For members of the Yishuv, these matters were obvious and needed no public discussion. The educators' and counselors' contrition during World War II over the injustice wrought against Yishuv youth by their estrangement from the Jews' language had Yiddish, not German or Hungarian, as its object.³⁵ The urging to understand the Diaspora Jewish culture targeted the "shtetl culture" from which the Second and Third Aliyah pioneers had originated, not German precision or Hungarian paprikash. Furthermore, immigrants from Poland in the Fourth and Fifth Aliyah, largely an urban aggregate, retained some knowledge of the nuances of shtetl life, if only to mock or vilify them. Fifth Aliyah

34 Examples of this influence are folk expressions and familiar suffixes such as *nik* and *chik* (as in *kibbutznik* and *katanchik*). Itamar Even-Zohar, "Hatzemicha vehahitgabshut shel tarbut ivrit yelidit beeretz yisrael 1882–1948" (The emergence and crystallization of local and native Hebrew culture in Eretz-Israel, 1882–1948), *Cathedra* 16 (1980), 165–189, Itamar Even-Zohar, "Tahalichei maga vehitarvut behivatsrut hatarbut haivrit hahadasha" (Contact and intervention processes in the formation of the new Hebrew culture), Nurith Gertz (ed.), *Nekudot tatzpit: tarbut vehevera be-Erets Yisrael* (Points of view: culture and society in the land of Israel), Tel Aviv: The Open University of Israel, 1988, 129–140.

35 Aliza Buchholz (Barmor), "Unity vs. schism," 261–278.

immigrants from countries of Central European culture, in contrast, found themselves in a double trap. The Yishuv culture, which they deemed inferior, was much more alien to them – totally alien, in fact – than it was to immigrants from Central Europe. In the Yishuv's eyes, too, they were doubly foreign: not only “Diaspora oriented” but also from an unfamiliar Diaspora with a non-Jewish Jewish culture that made them outsiders even to outsiders. This was only one of the traps into which our three heroines fell.

The three heroines as three patterns of women immigrants to pre-State Israel in the context of the Fifth Aliyah

Mira Ben-Ari, Bracha Fuld, and Hannah Szenes were participants in the Fifth Aliyah, three of nearly 225,000 Jews who settled in pre-state Israel in 1932–1939, more than doubling the Yishuv's population.³⁶ At the beginning of the era, the Yishuv had a population of 192,000, 40 percent Palestine-born. At the end, it had 445,000, 75 percent Diaspora-born. The ethnic composition of the Yishuv also changed during this time. At the beginning of the era, 40 percent of the population had been born in Eastern Europe and only a negligible fraction had originated in Central Europe.³⁷ By the end, even though the per-

36 Historians dispute the chronological demarcation of the Fifth Aliyah. For the purposes of this study, I set the bounds at 1932 and 1939. For more on the dispute, see Aviva Halamish, “Immigration and Absorption Policy,” 29, and Nahum Gross, “Heara leinyan halukatan letkufot shel toledot haYishuv” (A note on the periodization to the history of the Yishuv during the mandatory period), *Cathedra* 18 (1981), 174–177; Shalom Reichman, “Periodizatzia Hityashvutit Betkufat Hayishuv Vehamedina Idiologia oh nesibot” (“Settlement Periodization during the Yishuv and State: Ideology or Circumstances,”) in Nurith Gertz (ed.), *Nekudot Tatzpit*, 47–54; Aviva Halamish, “Aliyah Selektivit Beraayon, Bimaaseh, Ubehistoriografia hatzionim” (“Selective Immigration in Zionist Ideology: Praxis and Historiography,”) in Anita Shapira, Jehuda Reinhartz, and Jay Harris (eds.), *Idan Hatziyonut (The Era of Political Zionism)*, Jerusalem: Mercat Shazar, 2000, 185–202.

37 About 3,000 in number. Doron Niderland, *Yehudei Germaniya – mehagrim o pelitim? Iyyun bidefusei hagira bein shetei milhamot haolam* (The German Jews – emigrants or refugees? Emigration patterns between the two world wars), Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1996, 26.

cent from Eastern Europe had hardly changed, the arrival of nearly 70,000 “yekkes” (German Jews) in the intervening years raised the share of the Yishuv population born in Central Europe to 16 percent.³⁸ In many respects, however, despite their contribution to the country’s economic, social, and cultural development, Central European immigrants remained foreign implants vis-à-vis the social and political systems. Even though many doctors, lawyers, engineers, musicians, and academicians belonged to this group, the dominant culture – the culture manifested in Zionist institutions from the Histadrut to the youth movements – was, as stated, a Yishuvic derivative of East European culture. Only from 1939 onward was the autonomous Yishuv culture pushed from the womb after the eruption of the world war physically separated the Yishuv from Europe.³⁹

Mira Ben-Ari (*née* Gleischap), Bracha Fuld, and Hannah Szenes typify three different groups of young people who immigrated to pre-state Israel during the Fifth Aliyah. Like most of these immigrants, all three entered the country legally. Ben-Ari emigrated with her family from Germany in 1933, when the era began; Fuld and Szenes, in contrast, came alone – the former from Germany and the latter from Hungary – toward the end, in the summer of 1939. Fuld joined her mother, whose immigration had preceded hers by several months. Szenes was joined later by her brother Giora, one year older than her. Even though Fuld and Ben-Ari began their Yishuv lives in Tel Aviv and Szenes enrolled in an agricultural school, all three may be viewed as representatives of a middle class that wished to give its offspring twelve years of schooling if not more. This set them apart from the Tel Aviv “street children,” the steadily growing population of young people – some of them immigrants from Europe during the 1930s and 1940s – who

38 Source of data: Yoav Gelber, *New Homeland*, 60–61.

39 Yoav Gelber, *New Homeland*, 60–61, 476–477, David Gurevich and Aron Gertz (eds. and comps.), *Statistical Handbook of Jewish Palestine 1947*, Jerusalem: The Jewish Agency for Palestine, 1947 (hereinafter: Gurevich and Gertz); Ruth Zariz, *Briha betereem shoa, hagira miGermaniya 1938–1941* (Escape before the Holocaust, Migration of German Jews 1938–1941), Tel Aviv: Ghetto Fighters’ House, 1990.

dropped out of school very young and roved the streets in search of odd jobs.⁴⁰

The essence of the three women's biographies sets each of them in a different Zionist rubric. Mira Gleischap (Ben-Ari) was born in Germany in 1926 to an affluent Jewish family that, in 1933, joined the ranks of the "neo-Zionists," German Jews who had had no prior affinity for the Zionist movement.⁴¹ Shortly afterwards, her extended family (parents, uncles, and grandfather) immigrated as "capitalists" and settled in Tel Aviv. This city, with its 50,000-strong population, was the second most populous in the Yishuv at that time and would triple its population by the end of the decade.⁴² Like many professionally skilled immigrants who had to switch occupations, her father, a doctor of law, opened a tobacconist's shop on Ben-Yehuda Street. In the Yishuv of the 1930s, it was all in a day's work for bank clerks to metamorphose into makers of concrete blocks, lawyers into carpenters, etc.⁴³

Unlike her father, who learned Hebrew on the job, her mother, a homemaker, did not feel comfortable with the language. Her grandfather, too, never learned Hebrew; Ben-Ari spoke with them in German to her dying day. Despite their years in the country and their in-law relations with an elite Yishuv family, the Sharets, the Gleischaps con-

40 David Reifen, "Yaldei-rehov beTel Aviv bashanim 1935 ad 1944" (Street children in Tel Aviv, 1935–1944), *Society and Welfare: Social Work Quarterly* 6, (1984:1), 36–43.

41 Miriam Getter, "Haaliyah Migermania", 125–144; Aviva Halamish, "Aliyat baalei hon leErets Yisrael bein shetei milhamot haolam" (Immigration of Jewish 'capitalists' to Palestine between the two world wars), Devora Hachohen, ed., *Kibbutz galuyot: Aliyah leEretz Yisrael – mitos umetsiyut* (Ingathering of exiles: Jewish immigration to the land of Israel – Myth and Reality), Jerusalem: Mercas Zalman Shazar and Am Oved, 1998, 193–232.

42 Gurevich and Gertz, 48. An especially large share of Tel Aviv's new inhabitants in the first years of the Fifth Aliya originated in Germany. Jehuda Reinharz, "Pelitim yehudim miGermaniya beEretz Yisrael: hashanim harishonot (1932–1939)" (Jewish refugees from Germany in Palestine: The first years (1932–1939)," Benjamin Pinkus and Ilan Troen (eds.), *Solidariyut yehudit leumit baet bahadasha* (National Jewish solidarity in the modern period), Beersheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 1988, 179.

43 Yoav Gelber, *New Homeland*, 223, 260.

tinued to maintain a typically Germanic household. They never swapped the heavy furniture that they had shipped from Germany for something more suitable for the Middle East climate; they continued to use German as the household vernacular; and timed-to-the-minute mealtime schedules and absolute obedience of parents were among the main factors that shaped Ben-Ari in her youth.⁴⁴ The two last-mentioned characteristics, absolute precision in time and obedience, were among the German cultural fundamentals that German Jews had adopted from their pre-immigration Jewish culture. Both were also highly problematic for many young German Jews who had immigrated with their families and wished to integrate into Yishuv life, as I show below.

Like many immigrants from Germany, Ben-Ari was an only daughter. Conspicuous for her character and beauty, she initially enrolled at Ben-Yehuda Gymnasium (subsequently Shalva), a private school established and run by a Dr. Loewensohn, himself an immigrant from Germany.⁴⁵ In the 1930s, the school, which taught grades 1–12, became a preferred place of study for German immigrants who were taking their first steps in the country because it was not Loewensohn's practice to leave them back a grade as other schools did. Unlike most of her classmates, Ben-Ari did not join a youth movement; instead, she was one of the so-called "city kids." Her hobbies included sports, fencing in particular. "She belonged to what we called back then 'the movement to improve the sea,' meaning young people who met on the beach every day and didn't do 'useful things,'" her friend Shulamit Kaplan recalled. "But Mira was mature, strong of character, with nice shoes and long corkscrew curls, and she blew past everyone."⁴⁶

But not for long. During her high-school studies in the early 1940s, Mira was influenced by one of her teachers, Israel Scheib, subsequently Eldad, and became active in the Jewish Freedom Fighters (Lehi) resist-

44 Author's telephone interview with Esther Yones, 10 December 2002.

45 Yoav Gelber, *New Homeland*, 293.

46 Author's telephone interview with Shulamit Kaplan, 15 November 2002. On the special role of the Tel Aviv beach in city kids' lives in those times, see Maoz Azaryahu, "'Hateva heenik lanu et hayam' – Mitve le-historiya tarbutit shel hof Tel Aviv 1918–1948" (Nature gave us the sea – Cultural historical outline of the Tel-Aviv seafront 1918–1948), *Ofakim Begiografia (Horizons in Geography)* 51 (2001), 95–112.

ance organization. Her parents, dissatisfied with this development, sent her from Tel Aviv to Yavniel after she got entangled in some affair. From Yavniel she reached nearby Kibbutz Shorashim, a collective affiliated with the Hanoar Hazioni movement. There, at age seventeen, she reencountered several classmates who had joined the Habonim Brigade, which had merged with Hanoar Hazioni.⁴⁷ It was the closing of a circle: the girl who had preferred fencing lessons and going to the beach instead of a youth movement found herself in the midst of the pioneering endeavor. There she also met her future husband, Elyakim Ben-Ari, who had emigrated from Poland in 1936. When the kibbutz fell apart in 1944, the two of them moved to Kibbutz Nitzanim and got married; it was there that their son Danny was born. Mira Ben-Ari served as the kibbutz landscaping officer.⁴⁸ When the War of Independence broke out, her son was extricated from Nitzanim in “Operation Baby.” His mother, however, a perennial at shooting practice, stayed behind to serve as a military signal operator.⁴⁹ In May 1948, after Egyptian forces attacked Nitzanim and reinforcements could not be sent to the location, the defenders decided to surrender. Together with their commander, Abraham Schwartzstein of Givati Brigade 53, Ben-Ari headed toward the Egyptians waving a white flag (actually a white undergarment). An Egyptian colonel opened fire, wounding the commander and killing Ben-Ari, who had fired back, on the spot. The remaining defenders of Nitzanim were taken captive by the Egyptians, and upon their return they struggled for years to rehabilitate the image of the kibbutz whose members had been accused, in one of Abba Kovner’s combat reports to the soldiers of the Givati Brigade, of cowardice if not of treason.⁵⁰

47 The Habonim Brigade was an outgrowth of the “Old Scouts,” one of the large scouting tribes in Tel Aviv. Its founder and driving spirit was the director of the Tel Aviv municipal education department, Dr. Shaul Levine. Author’s telephone interview with Shulamit Kaplan, 15 November 2002.

48 Author telephone interview with Elyakim Ben-Ari, 14 November 2002.

49 Author’s telephone interview with Nehama Bejureh of Kibbutz Nitzanim, 3 November 2002.

50 Dalia Karpel, “Bat 22 uvat 23” (22-year-old girl, 23-year-old girl), *Ha’ir*, 1 June 1990, 17.

Mira Ben-Ari represents the quintessential young woman immigrant of the Fifth Aliyah. Those who had reached the Yishuv at a very early age and at the start of the Fifth Aliyah quickly blended into the linguistic and social landscape of the Yishuv and felt like full-fledged sabras. Even so, however, Diaspora culture figured importantly in the lives of some members of this group, although differently than in the lives of the other two personalities discussed here, Bracha Fuld and Hannah Szenes, who emigrated later on and were older when they did so. Here the Diaspora culture accompanied the young immigrants' lives at home and introduced a constant element of foreignness even though they themselves, as very young immigrants, had already immersed themselves in into the Yishuv culture. As time passed and Yishuv norms made steady inroads in the immigrants' households, fewer and fewer clashes took place between home and away among young immigrants from Eastern Europe who had arrived with their families. Things were different among those who originated in Germany: in their homes, German life patterns continued to set the tone for much time. Furthermore, the norm of obedience, typical of German upbringing, made it much harder for these young people than for their counterparts of East European origin to ask their parents for the slightest flexibility that might ease the tension between home and the rest of the habitus.⁵¹ As a young woman immigrant who had come at the beginning of the Fifth Aliyah, Mira Ben-Ari eventually managed to find a way to maneuver successfully between the demands of home and those of the Yishuv environment. Given the culture practiced in her parents' home, however, and despite her successful immersion in Yishuv society, she continued to live in constant tension between the Diaspora culture at home and the life she had managed to build for herself at school and among friends.

Barbara Nanette Fuld, "Barbel" or "Babs" in the family parlance, was born in Berlin in 1926, the second daughter of an affluent assimilationist Jewish family.⁵² The first years of the Third Reich had little effect on her family, but after her father was fired from his job in 1937, her parents decided to send their first-born daughter, Hannelore,

51 Yoav Gelber, *New Homeland*, 222–316.

52 Sari Gal, *Bracha Fuld*, Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Hapoalim, 1999.

to Bracha's uncle in the United States to build a new life. It took about a year to implement the plan and Hannelore made the trip in the company of her mother, Lotte, who intended to return to Germany after putting her daughter's affairs in order. As she stopped over in London, the Kristallnacht pogrom took place and the shock of it drove Bracha's father to suicide. Bracha, eleven and a half years old, was sent to London and joined her mother, and the two of them planned to emigrate to Palestine with all possible celerity. The reason was simple: Lotte's mother lived there and could help the widow and her orphaned daughter. Back in 1934, Bracha's grandmother had moved to the Yishuv after having lost her husband and established a household with a family friend from Berlin, Professor Georg Zondek, who, with his brother, had become senior members of the country's medical service.⁵³ Lotte Fuld did manage to obtain an immigration visa and, making the move by the spring of 1939, found work as a salesperson in a chocolate shop in Tel Aviv. Her daughter, however, had to stay in a home for refugee children from Germany until that summer; only then could she emigrate, unescorted.⁵⁴ Unlike the Gleischaps – "neo-Zionists" who had arrived at the beginning of the Fifth Aliyah – Lotte and Barbara Fuld were in fact refugees, having come for no Zionist motives whatsoever.⁵⁵

In September 1939, Fuld began her studies at Ben-Yehuda Gymnasium, where she took her first steps in the country, Hebraized her name, and met Mira Ben-Ari, who was a class ahead of her. Dissatisfied with the strict discipline at the "Teutonic" school, she transferred to the neighboring Balfour Gymnasium about a year later. Fuld mastered Hebrew quickly but continued to speak German with her mother, her grandmother, and the Zondeks. Like many of her age who had arrived from Germany with their families, Fuld lived a double life.

53 About this family, see Hermann Zondek, *Auf festem Fusse. Erinnerungen eines jüdischen Klinikers*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1973.

54 Concerning the refugee children in Britain, see Judith Tydor Baumel, "The Jewish Refugee Children in Great Britain 1938–1945," M. A. Thesis, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 1981.

55 As defined by Miriam Getter, "Immigration from Germany," 125–147; Niderland, *German Jews*.

Away from home, she spoke Hebrew and attempted to immerse herself in the evolving Yishuv culture and resemble the admired sabras, while at home she continued to speak German and honored the rigid behavioral code that typified the German upbringing. "All we aspired to was to blend in as fast as possible, so that they should not notice that we're new, our accents," Shulamit Kaplan, Fuld's and Ben-Ari's friend who had also immigrated at that time, recalled.

Even though we hadn't known any sabras at first, there was a sabra type that we tried to resemble: tough, knows what he wants, unmannered, doesn't say please and thank you, doesn't show emotions ... [and pursues] the national cause of building the country without compromises.⁵⁶

After the Italian bombardment of Tel Aviv on September 11, 1940, Lotte and Bracha moved in with Bracha's grandmother and Dr. Zondek, whose household embodied a total mismatch with the pace of Yishuv life. Bracha was allowed to go on school field trips because they were considered part of the education system, but her mother created obstacles when it came to youth-movement activities and outings to labor camps. It was especially difficult for Bracha to come late to Saturday afternoon meetings of the Habonim Brigade because the mealtime schedule left no room for flexibility; for this reason she was nearly expelled from the movement. The rigid regime at home even caused difficulties among friends who themselves were immigrants. Her friend Rahel Nir recalled:

We stood in line on HaAliyah Street where there was a British notary. We had to get ID cards because we were in the Hagana and we were going on a bike trip and knew we'd be inspected at Rosh Pina. We stood in line for two, three hours, me, Shulamit, and Bracha. At three minutes before 1:00, she took the bicycle and announced that she had to go [home] to eat. We had another fifteen minutes to wait and we told her, 'Wait, it's just another fifteen minutes,' but she answered, 'Out of the question,' claiming that they wouldn't understand at home and would make problems for her. She went home to eat, came back, and stood in line three hours all over again.⁵⁷

56 Author's telephone interview with Shulamit Kaplan, 15 November 2002.

57 Author's telephone interview with Rahel Nir, 14 November 2002.

Fuld finished high school in 1944 and weighed the idea of going to America to study medicine. Ultimately, she enlisted in the Palmach over her mother's and grandmother's objections. This was another step in her attempt to distance herself from the foreignness of her "yekke" home and fit into Yishuv society, a step that ultimately cost her dearly. "Joining the Palmach was the pinnacle of her integration," her friend Ada Ronen, who also enlisted at this time, recalled. "Her family took it very badly but all of us had been mobilized for the Zionist idea."⁵⁸ Fuld set out for maneuvers at Kiriya Anavim, where she fell in love with a local man who a short time later was captured by the British while commanding an armed squad and sentenced to many years in prison. While waiting for her beloved to be released, Fuld took additional training and was annexed to a Palmach contingent that would guard *ma'apilim* (clandestine immigrants) as they debarked from the *Orde Wingate* to the Tel Aviv coast on March 26, 1946. The ship was intercepted in open water by two British destroyers, but due to a mishap the guard contingent was not advised about the cancellation of the operation and continued to wait at the site. A British soldier discovered the squad, an exchange of gunfire ensued, and Fuld, nineteen years of age, was shot and began to bleed. British soldiers took her to Rokach Hospital, but three hours later she died of her injuries. Her Palmach comrades were not allowed to participate in her funeral lest British intelligence identify them; thus, she was interred in the presence of no one but her close family, three Jewish police, a rabbi, and a cantor. As they left the cemetery, the participants saw hundreds of Tel Aviv high-school students who had heard about Fuld's death and had come to pay last respects even though they had not known her. It is hard to know whether any of them realized that she had emigrated from Germany only five years earlier.⁵⁹ Seven months after her death, the Mossad leAliyah Bet commemorated Fuld, the first girl in the Palmach to perish in the Yishuv uprising movement, by naming a clandestine-immigrant vessel for her. Nathan Alterman eulogized her in

58 Author's telephone interview with Ada Ronen, 26 November 2002.

59 Walter Laqueur, *Generation Exodus: The Fate of Young Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany*, Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 2001, 107.

HaTur haShevii’ (The seventh column, *Davar*, October 25, 1946) and afterwards in the book *‘Ir haYona*, concluding as follows:

Just so, no more, no less,
Time will protect her, never to fade
With the innocent pure features drawn from the abode of youth
and the onset of a woman’s grace.

As though a divine hand, gripping a stylus
aimed the searchlight and the descent
to engrave on the board of time and town
the likeness of the Hebrew girl.⁶⁰

Bracha Fuld typified the second group of young Fifth Aliyah immigrants: those who arrived late in the period, usually in early adolescence, together with family members. Given the turmoil of that era, some of these families were no longer intact; one encounters various combinations – mother and daughter, father and son, siblings without parents, etc. Unlike the first group, which had reached the Yishuv at an earlier age and at the dawn of the Nazi era, some young members of the second group – particularly those who had arrived after Kristallnacht – had already endured grim ordeals in Europe. Their more advanced age acted against them at times, not only in blocking out dire memories of Europe but also in their integration. By and large, they strove to adjust quickly but did not always succeed. Unlike the members of the first group, for whom “Diaspora culture” was something that parents attempted to force-feed – creating a flashpoint for dispute and rebellion – these young people were of two minds about the place of this culture in their lives. Their parents continued to cultivate this culture and demand that those in their households live by it. Conversely, the young themselves had four more years’ exposure to it in Europe than members of the first group, under distressed conditions that encouraged them to internalize any unifying cultural signifier. Consequently, their attitude toward the Diaspora culture was much more complex than that of the first group; I elaborate on this below.

60 Natan Alterman, *‘Ir haYona* (City of the Dove) Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1957.

The Palmach password on Wingate Night, as the night of Bracha Fuld's demise was called, was "Szenes-Sereni" – the names of two Yishuv parachutists who had perished in Europe during World War II. This leads me to the representative of the third group of young women immigrants of the Fifth Aliyah, Hannah Szenes. Hannah (Anna, nicknamed Anikó by her family) was born in Budapest in 1921, a year after her brother Giora, to a well-to-do assimilation-inclined family. Her father, Béla Szenes, who died when she was a girl, had been a well-known Hungarian writer. In Hannah's close encounters with anti-semitism in her high-school years prompted her to reach out to her Jewish roots and join a Zionist youth movement. In late summer 1939, after completing her studies, she emigrated to pre-state Israel unescorted, renamed herself Hannah, and enrolled in Hannah Meisel's agricultural school at Nahalal – thus becoming one of 1,100 Fifth Aliyah immigrants from Hungary.⁶¹ Szenes had begun to learn Hebrew back in Hungary but continued to keep her diary in Hungarian for many months after her immigration. Only in her second year in the country did she feel comfortable enough with the new language to write poetry in it. She spoke Hebrew and Hungarian with relatives in the Yishuv. Although fluent in Hebrew by this time, she retained a slight Hungarian accent to her last day.

After finishing the course at Nahalal in summer 1941, Szenes decided to join a kibbutz. Initially she considered Ma'agan, a young kibbutz on the shore of Lake Kinneret whose founders originated in Hungary, but ultimately she refused the offer to join because there she would forever remain "Bela Szenes' daughter."⁶² Instead of taking the familiar path, she chose to join Kibbutz Sdot Yam in Caesarea, where nobody had come from Hungary, and worked in the laundry facility and the kitchen. Increasingly she missed her mother and brother, experienced a rough adjustment to the kibbutz, and often chose to sit alone with a book and not join the comrades in the dining shack even though

61 Gurevich and Gertz, 100.

62 To gauge Szenes' identity struggles, consult her correspondence with a friend from Hungary, Joseph Weiss, who attended the Hebrew University of Jerusalem at the time. Muki Tsur, *Maflig Halom (Love letters to Hannah Szenes)*, Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1996.

her agricultural training has supposedly prepared her for collective life. Although attempting to internalize the pioneering ethos, Szenes was drawn to the intellectual world in which she had been raised instead of manual labor. In January 1943, she told her diary,

I'm living in a world of my own construction, one totally detached from the outside world. I live here like a drop of oil in water. I'm in the water, sometimes floating and rising and sometimes sinking, but I always remain a world unto myself, not blending into any other drop.⁶³

In 1943, unable to find herself in Sdot Yam, Szenes joined the Palmach and volunteered for a special operation under British Army auspices – subsequently called the Parachutists' Operation, in which several dozen young people, nearly all Europe-born, were dropped into Europe. Their goal was twofold: a British mission, to operate as signal officers and help to extricate pilots who had landed enemy territory, and a Jewish mission: to help Jewish communities and revitalize the Zionist youth movement in Europe. On the eve of her departure from Palestine, her brother arrived from Europe and the two of them spent a magical day on the Tel Aviv seashore.

In March 1944, a group of parachutists including Szenes landed in Yugoslavia, and in June she crossed the border into occupied Hungary. Within a few hours she was captured by Hungarian police and sent to prison, where she was tortured in an attempt to discover her radio code. Soon afterward, two Yishuv parachutists who had crossed into Hungary several days earlier were delivered to the prison. Attempting to break her morale, the Hungarians set up an encounter between her and her mother, Katherine, who had not known that her daughter was in Hungary. Szenes was all the more astonished because she had been assured back in Palestine that before the parachutists' parents would be removed from Europe before the mission began. As Szenes refused to succumb to her captors' demand, her mother was interned with her, in the same prison, for three months. Although several dozen meters apart, they were not allowed to meet and could communicate only faintly and surreptitiously.

63 Hannah Szenes, *Yomanim, shirim, eduyot (Diaries, poems, testimonies)*, Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1994, 125. Entry 8 January 1943.

After being released in September 1944, Katherine Szenes launched a desperate and futile attempt to arrange legal aid for her daughter. Hannah's trial began in November, and as it proceeded she addressed her Hungarian judges, warning them that the war would end soon and they would then have to account for their actions. She was sentenced to death and despite the court's decision not to implement the sentence, the chief officer in the affair, construing her remarks as a personal offense, elected to carry it out personally. Early on the morning of November 7, 1944, he entered her cell and offered her two options: apply for clemency or die before a firing squad. Szenes refused the first option, wrote a few brief letters to her mother and her comrades, and was shot to death in the snowy prison yard, refusing to cover her eyes. She was twenty-three. Her remains were buried by unknown persons in the "martyrs' section" of the Budapest Jewish cemetery.

Katherine Szenes escaped from a death march that set out from Budapest in November 1944 and hid out in the city until Red Army forces liberated it. In early 1945, she immigrated to pre-state Israel and joined her son, Giora, who was staying at Kibbutz Ma'agan; afterwards, she moved to Haifa, where she spent the rest of her life. Hannah Szenes, like Bracha Fuld, was privileged to have a clandestine immigrants' vessel named for her, and her movement, Hakibbutz Hameuhad, published a collection of her poems and diary.⁶⁴ A group of immigrants from Hungary named their kibbutz for her – Yad Hannah – and in March 1950 her remains were brought to Israel and reinterred in the parachutists' plot on Mt. Herzl.⁶⁵

Hannah Szenes is typical of a third group of young women immigrants of the Fifth Aliyah, those who in mid-adolescence left countries that were Western in culture, usually alone and in greater part at the end of the Fifth Aliyah period. The members of this group, most of whom were "neo-Zionists," usually adopted the Zionist ethos and at-

64 The book has been reprinted fifteen times thus far, most recently in 1994.

65 For more on Szenes, see Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz, *Perfect Heroes: The World War II Parachutists from Palestine and the Making of Collective Israeli Memory*, University of Wisconsin Press, 2010, and Judith Tydor Baumel, "The Heroism of Hannah Szenes: An Exercise in Creating Collective National Memory in the State of Israel," *Journal of Contemporary History* 31 (1996), 521–546.