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From the Editors

The work on this collection began in the fall of 2021 at the height of the coronavirus pandemic and ended in the spring of 2022 during the war in Ukraine, unleashed by Putin's Russia. The lively interaction among scholars, international collaboration, and work in libraries and archives were initially hampered and then became well-nigh impossible.

Thanks to the support of a Rector's Grant, a group of researchers from various countries came together under the aegis of the Program for Russian-Jewish Literature at Bar-Ilan University to sketch out the pathways for creating a historiography of Russian-Israeli literature. The work of our research group culminated with a collection of essays in English and Russian, and we are very pleased to introduce this English-language volume.[1] Our collection does not claim to offer a complete historical and chronological coverage of the subject: some authors, genres, periods, phenomena, and problems remain insufficiently addressed. There is also no conceptual unity in the collection. On the contrary, the contributors hold a variety of views on the phenomenon of Russian-Israeli literature. The authors of the essays collected in this volume belong to different generations and schools of literary criticism and cultural studies, and they base their views on a variety of theoretical, historiographical, ideological, and aesthetic premises. The collection nonetheless represents the first attempt at comprehending and characterizing the more than one-hundred-year history of Russian-Israeli literature as a unique, significant object of multifaceted and interdisciplinary scholarly research. In this we see our primary task since Russian-Israeli literature is, with few exceptions, little known not only to a broad circle of readers but even to specialists who are philologists and literary historians. It is for this reason that we wanted to demonstrate the unique, polyvalent essence that makes Russian-Israeli literature so interesting from a scholarly point of view and that distinguishes it within the context of Israeli literature and Jewish creativity in the Russian language.

Historically and aesthetically significant Russophone literature in the Land of Israel begins with the first waves of emigration from the Russian Empire at

1 For the Russian-language volume see: *Ocherki po istorii russko-izrail'skoi literatury*, edited by Roman Katsman and Maxim D. Shrayer (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2023).

the beginning of the twentieth century, enters a new stage after the founding of the State of Israel, and forms a large and complex literary community beginning in the 1970s and particularly after the Great Aliyah of Soviet Jews in the 1990s. Those one hundred years have witnessed many a change not only in the political climate but also in the literary environment where Russian-Israeli literature was created. The literary-historical realities that were the springboards for Russian-Israeli writers—against which they differentiated themselves—also changed more than once: Russian-Jewish literature in Imperial Russia, the Silver Age, the culture of the Russian emigration in Europe and the United States, Soviet literature, and the new post-Soviet culture. Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 must now be added to this; it will take some time to comprehend the resulting rupture and its consequences. From its first days, Russian-Israeli literature seemed to its authors and readers alike to be a hopeless endeavor, doomed to a quick extinction. But in spite of the gloomy prophesies, despaired wailing, and epitaphs, this literature is alive to this day and, moreover, does not cease to amaze with the variety of its forms, genres, styles, themes, and ideas.

The creation of a cohesive historiography of Russian-Israeli literature remains a task for the future. This collection presents works that examine the subject from a variety of points of view: historical surveys of individual historical periods (Vladimir Khazan, Aleksei Surin, Roman Katsman, Elena Promyshlianskaia), an analysis of the development of certain literary genres, forms, and movements (Maxim D. Shrayer, Elena Rimon, Zlata Zaretsky), and reflections on the role of key figures and phenomena (Luba Jurgenson, Marat Grinberg, the late Leonid Katsis, who passed away in October 2022). The large mosaic that emerges from the combination of these various pictures and perspectives presents Russian-Israeli literature as a living and complex literary process, one that is dynamic and in a sense chaotic. Many new tasks lie ahead of the students of Russian-Israeli literature. Today, when familiar theoretical and ideological attitudes are rapidly falling apart and new ones elicit in turn bemusement and hope, the tasks of researching Russian-Israeli literature become more and more fascinating and relevant. The experience of its emergence and development can serve not only as convincing and well documented evidence of the deep sociocultural processes of the past century but also as an emblematic example for other hyphenated, hybrid, global, transnational, and transcultural literatures.

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We would like to thank everyone who in one way or another supported the establishment of the Program for Russian-Jewish Literature of Bar-Ilan University and the work of our research group on the history of Russian-Israeli

literature and on the development, preparation, and publication of this collection (in alphabetical order): Amnon Albek, Marina Aptekman, Miriam Faust, Olga Fiks, Agnieszka Lenart, Mirosława Machalska-Suchanek, Alex Moshkin, Revital Refael-Vivante, Ilia Rodov, Klavdia Smola, Dennis Sobolev, Roman Timenchik, Vered Tohar. A separate thanks go to the excellent team at Academic Studies Press, which has for a number of years been the central platform for the publication of research on Russian-Israeli literature. And finally, we would like to thank all those whose names should appear here above all other names—our heroes, the Russian-Israeli writers without whom neither literature itself nor this collection would ever exist.

October 2022
Roman Katsman (Givat Shmuel, Israel)
Maxim D. Shrayer (Chestnut Hill and South Chatham, Massachusetts, USA)

A Note on Transliteration and Spelling of Names

A modified version of the Library of Congress system for transliterating the Russian alphabet is used throughout the text of the essays included in this volume. Exceptions are Russian words and geographical and personal names that have gained a common spelling in English, such as Joseph Brodsky instead of "Iosif Brodskii," Osip Mandelstam instead of "Osip Mandel'shtam," Vladimir Jabotinsky instead of "Vladimir Zhabotinskii," St. Petersburg instead of "Sankt-Peterburg," and so forth. Bibliographical references, including authors' names and titles of Russian-language periodicals, in the footnotes and the bibliography are rendered in the standard Library of Congress system of transliterating the Russian alphabet, without diacritical marks.

Russian-Language Literature in Eretz Yisrael (Basic Outlines and Authors)[1]

Vladimir Khazan

If we are to reject the "centuries-old prototype"—that is, if we trace the origin of Russian letters in the Land of Israel not to Daniel the Immured, nor (greatly reducing the timescales) to the diaries of Antonin Kapustin (1817–1894), head of the Russian ecclesiastical mission to the Holy Land, nor (moving even closer to modern history, and taking the beginning of the twentieth century as our starting point) to the travel essays of Ivan Yuvachev (1860–1940), the future father of the OBERIU poet Daniil Kharms, about his pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulcher; if we set aside the massive, multivolume corpus of pilgrim literature,[2] as well as (turning to a very different thematic and emotional plane) that of Zionist literature, then the body of work comprising the Russian-language literature of the Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael (henceforth: EY) *sensu stricto* turns out to be rather modest in size. Naturally, we cannot speak of some single or uniform literary process: the phenomenon of Russian-language literature of EY has a complex and peculiar discursive shape, resembling a motley blanket in which the texts written by authors living in EY are connected to the works of visiting Russian writers, poets, and journalists, by virtue of their common territory, language, and subject matter. Although this corpus, taken as a whole, is hardly stunning, either quantitatively or artistically, it nonetheless merits careful study. This subject has often been written about, and here we seem to touch on the central scholarly "nerve" of the problem: the contrast between this numerically scant

1 The author would like to express his deep gratitude to his friends and colleagues, who have assisted him in working on this paper: Larisa Zhukhovitskaia (Moscow), Gil Weissblei and Zoia Kopel'man (Jerusalem), Irina Berdan (Tel Aviv), Evgenii Soshkin (Modi'in), and Alyona Yavorskaya (Odesa).

2 It also comprises literary-dramatic works, such as Vladimir Volkenstein's play *Kaliki perekhozhie* (Wandering beggars), which depicts Jerusalemite pilgrims.

and (on the whole) aesthetically unassuming literary corpus, on the one hand; and the much larger, broader, more extensive and polyvalent phenomenon that might be termed the "Palestinian text" (henceforth: PT), on the other.

If we are to summarize the key insight that emerges from the study of PT, we can essentially reduce it to two seemingly contradictory theses. First, the literary works that can be assigned to the category of Russian-language literature in EY in the years preceding the establishment of the State of Israel are relatively few in number. The concept of the *literary process*—if we use this term to refer not to separate and occasional texts that manage to get into print, but to an established and organized movement of the literary-social consciousness, which is reflected and manifested in the individual artistic thought, and is then published and preserved for posterity—cannot be applied to this body of work. One aspect of this process that did exist—albeit in a weak and inchoate form, which did not go beyond private initiative—was what might be termed "author-reader" feedback: the relatively regulated social reception of literary works (book presentations, the public discussion of new titles, literary soirees, reader conferences, and so forth). However, there were no institutions of literary criticism, nor any reasonably regular periodicals dedicated to this subject.[3] Conversely, the second thesis states that we nonetheless have every reason to speak of PT as a real phenomenon, which needs to be thoroughly investigated and described.

The first thesis appears to be fairly self-evident, and, after the pioneering works of Roman Timenchik,[4] several important scholarly-bibliographical

3 This thesis was briefly formulated a quarter century ago, in an encyclopedic article on Russian literature in Israel: "In this period [that is, during the British Mandate], the country basically lacked a separate branch of Russ[ian] lit[erature], although there were indiv[idual] authors who used the Russ[ian] lang[uage] in their works." See Roman Timenchik, "Russkaia literatura v Izraile," in *Kratkaia evreiskaia entsiklopediia*, addendum 2, ed. Yitzkhak Oren (Nadel) and Naftali Prat (Jerusalem: Obshchestvo po issledovaniiu evreiskikh obshchin, 1995), 323.

4 See Timenchik, "Russkaia literatura v Izraile," 323–325; Roman Timenchik, "Samuil Kruglikov i ego kniga 'V Krasnykh tiskakh' (Iz istorii russkoi knigi v Izraile)," *Ierusalimskii bibliofil: Almanakh* 1 (1999): 51–52; Roman Timenchik, "Russkoe slovo o Zemle Izrailia," *Lekhaim* 4 (2006); Roman Timenchik, "Detal' dvoinogo naznacheniia," *Lekhaim* 5 (2006); Roman Timenchik, "Glaz i slovo," *Lekhaim* 8 (2006); Roman Timenchik, "Otvety na voprosy," *Ierusalimskii zhurnal* 26 (2008): 197–206; Roman Timenchik, "Tri pomety na poliakh novoi knigi," in *L. M. Turchinskii. Russkaia poeziia XX veka: Materialy dlia bibliografii* (Moscow: Truten', 2013); Roman Timenchik, "Piatye punkty liricheskikh geroev," *Ierusalimskii zhurnal* 52 (2015): 209–221; Roman Timenchik, *Angely—liudi—veshchi: v oreole stikhov i druzei* (Jerusalem: Gesharim; and Moscow: Mosty Kul'tury, 2016), 767–790; Roman Timenchik, "V nachale. Pechat' russkogo Zarubezh'ia ob Erets Israel'," in *Russophone Periodicals in Israel: A Bibliography*, ed. Polina Besprozvannaya, Andrei Rogachevskii, Roman Timenchik (Stanford, CA: Stanford Slavic Studies, 2016), 127–137.

editions,[5] the numerous introductory articles in Maxim D. Shrayer's anthology of Jewish-Russian literature[6] and in Roman Katsman's book *Neulovimaia real'nost': Sto let russko-izrail'skoi literatury (1920–2020)* (The elusive reality: a century of Russian-Israeli literature),[7] we can add little that is new (mostly information that has come to light thanks to the expansion of the personal-biographical and the general historical-literary contexts). By contrast, the second thesis, and the general conclusions arising from it, have yet to be substantiated. To this end, we need to study the evidence meticulously under the scholarly microscope, taking into account the various elements of which it consists. This, then, is the task of the present essay.

First of all, we must establish the conceptual substrate of PT, sketching out its semantic boundaries, if only tentatively. In our opinion, the proper functioning of PT needs to satisfy at least three conditions. First, it must capture some reality specific to EY, in terms of content, theme, subject matter, and imagery. Second, the author must be physically present in this reality—either as a permanent resident or, at least, as a transient visitor (the union of the biographical and the artistic aspects). Finally, the work must be written in Russian, although this does not preclude the presence of Hebraisms—*au contraire*, the use of Hebrew terms is one of the stylistic markers of PT. See, for instance, the title of Iulii (Julius) Margolin's poem "Af-al-pi" (In spite of all), or the expression "Eize pele" ("What a miracle") in his poem "Dobavka" (The addition); a more extreme example can be seen in his poem "Proshchanie" (Parting), which incorporates a Hebrew quote from a poem by Bialik, written in Hebrew characters and rhyming with the preceding Russian lines:

Если к вам не вернусь я,
Товарищ песню споет:
"קרה הדבר ברוסיה—
היה איש—ואיננו עוד"

"If I fail to return, / My comrade will sing you a song: / This happened in Russia—/ There once was a man, but he is no more"

5 See Charles Berlin and Elizabeth Vernon, eds., *Catalog of Israeli Russian-Language Publications in the Harvard Library* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Polina Besprozvannaya, Andrei Rogachevskii, and Roman Timenchik, eds., *Russophone Periodicals in Israel: A Bibliography* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Slavic Studies, 2016).

6 Maxim D. Shrayer, ed., *An Anthology of Jewish-Russian Literature: Two Centuries of Dual Identity in Prose and Poetry, 1801–2001,* 2 vols. (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2007).

7 Roman Katsman, *Neulovimaia real'nost': sto let russko-izrail'skoi literatury (1920–2020)* (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2020).

We must not lose sight of the fact that, like any other complex and dynamic system, PT subsumes a class of "hybrid" phenomena. An example is the written works of Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky (1880–1940), whose deep connection to EY is obvious: he lived there for extended periods of time; as a political and military leader and one of the chief ideologues of Zionism, he fought for this land as the site of the future Jewish State; and—most importantly in the present context—he wrote both journalistic and literary pieces about it, such as his short story "Zhidenok" (The little Jewboy, 1923).

We should add another important comment about the very texture and semantic content of the concept of PT. Its function need not be limited to the mere "stock-taking" of the rather modest literary "inventory" of EY. Rather, it should also serve as a reflection of sorts of the Russian-language spiritual/cultural/intellectual life of the Jewish *yishuv* during the British Mandate, a life that was mostly restricted to the private and the semi-official spheres. Here are just a few illustrative examples, which could be multiplied at will.

In March–May 1936, the philosopher Lev Shestov (1866–1938) was in EY on a lecture tour.[8] In addition to lectures organized by the Histadrut (the Federation of Labor) in Jerusalem (given in German), Tel Aviv, and Haifa (given in Russian, with Hebrew translation), he delivered another lecture, on Leo Tolstoy, titled *Iasnaia Poliana and Astapovo* (in Russian, without a translation). The venue was the Tel Aviv residence of the philosopher's sister, Elizaveta Isaakovna Mandelberg (1873–1947), and there was an audience of several dozen individuals. After Shestov's departure, Evsei Davidovich Shor (on him, see below), a promoter and popularizer of his ideas, made an effort to create a Lev Shestov Society in EY, to be modeled after bodies such as the Kant Gesellschaft in Germany. There is virtually no doubt that, had such a society actually emerged, ninety percent of its members would have been Russian speakers. Unfortunately, this effort came to naught, as did many other similar plans, initiatives, and projects. However, the very attempt is interesting and remarkable, since it speaks to a desire to enrich and deepen the spiritual life of the Russophone colony in EY.

Another example has to do with Lev Shestov's sister, Fanni Isaakovna Lovtskaia (Lowtskaya, 1873–1965). After moving from France to EY with her husband on the eve of World War II, she made a successful career in this land as a

8 For more on this prominent philosopher's visit to the Promised Land, see Vladimir Khazan and Vladimir Janzen, "The Marvelous Land of Palestine: Around Lev Shestov's Visit to Eretz Israel in 1936," in *Russian Philosophy in Exile and Eretz Israel*, part 2 (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2021), 160–402.

specialist in psychoanalysis.[9] However, in parallel to her professional life, which involved psychological education and the training of teachers from schools and kindergartens, Fanny Lowtskaya also led another life, which enabled her, and other members of the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia of the *yishuv*, to pursue their intellectual and spiritual interests. These interests touched on matters of philosophy, art, and literature, quite a few (and possibly most) of which were rooted in Russian culture. The satisfaction of these interests took place at collective gatherings that would be held at someone's apartment, drawing audiences of several dozen (as in the case of Shestov's lecture). These gatherings were more or less regular, but we lack even an approximate chronicle of such events, and this prevents us from fully reconstructing the day-to-day spiritual/cultural life of the Russian-speaking segment of the Jewish *yishuv* in those years.

Before turning to a description of PT and its major figures, we should point out another crucial fact related to its genesis and the dynamic forms of its existence. It is the constant presence of a multilingual background (primarily the Russian-Hebrew bilingualism), which meant that almost all the Russian-language authors living in EY during the British Mandate were potentially able (and occasionally required) to abandon this language in favor of Hebrew or Yiddish. We must not forget that the choice of language was often determined not by the author's personal feelings and linguistic preferences, but by the external pressure exercised by their new environment (the demand to renounce the languages of the diaspora and switch to Hebrew, the *lingua franca* of all Jews; the absence of Russian-language press venues, publishing firms, and so forth). These relatively clear-cut processes in the purely literary sphere should make us ponder the fascinating problem of the decay of the creative potential—the legacy of the traditions, schools, and other factors—that could have been developed by authors who began to write in Russia, but who, after moving to EY, were forced to conform to the general rules and norms that governed local literary life, and switch exclusively to Hebrew.

Alongside the diminished opportunities in EY, which reduced the need for self-expression in Russian, the authors of PT occasionally exhibited the opposite tendency—trying to transcend the local Hebrew space and enter the broader expanse of Russian letters (or, at least, keeping this option open). In an attempt to find an outlet for their creative energy, these authors would apply to the organs of the Russian émigré press in the countries of the European diaspora.

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9 See Eran J. Rolnik, *Freud in Zion: Psychoanalysis and the Making of Modern Jewish Identity* (London: Katnac Book Ltd., 2012), index.

Russian-Language Books Published in EY

We should keep in mind that the majority of authors who published works in Russian in EY were also fluent in Hebrew, and could easily have done without the extra bilingual status in their literary careers. Russian became a parallel (and sometimes the primary) medium in which they wrote for the following major reasons. For some, the use of Russian language was a temporary measure at an early stage of their life in the country, when they had not yet acquired a fixed literary (and, more broadly, artistic and creative) identity—that is, before they joined the body of Hebrew-language authors (as in the case of Zina Weinshall [Zinaida Veinshal], see below). Next, it could become a linguistic-cultural code that connected the author with Russia, their country of origin, where their development and personal growth had begun, where their literary debut had taken place (as in the case of Avraam Arest,[10] see below), or where they had acquired some experience as writers and/or journalists (as in the cases of Avraam Wissotzky,[11] Iulii Margolin, Iakov Weinshall [Veinshal], and others). For some, the goal might be to emphasize the peculiarly dual nature of the artistic (and especially the poetic) consciousness, demonstrating one's mastery of two modes of verbal creativity; a sort of "reflective instinct" of the imitation of Russian poetry (the case of Yehoshua Ankori; on him, see below). Finally, some writers felt that the representation of artistic ideas and images in the Russian language gave access to a broader readership and enabled them to transcend the boundaries of the purely "national" reception (the cases of Yehoshua Ankori, Avraam Vysotskii [Wissotzky], and others). For example, see the following poem by Lyova (Lev) Almi: "My Hebrew—the legacy of the prophets—/ Has a wealth of ominous and sad words, / but I would like these words to rush into your heart / In a Russian-language torrent!"[12] See also the following declaration

10 As he wrote in his poem *Mashber*: "And this is why I write in Russian, / To recall the former breadth." See Abram Arest, *Mashber* (Jerusalem: I. A. Weisz, 1927), 3.

11 Avraam Wissotzky (on him, see below) even took a certain pride in the fact that, despite living in EY, he continued to write in Russian until the end of his days. In a letter to Avraham Liessin, editor of the Yiddish-language New York magazine *Di Zukunft* (dated September 15, 1926), he exclaimed: "Among the Jews, I am a Russian writer!" See Vladimir Khazan, Roman Katsman, and Larisa Zhukhovitskaia, "'. . . Ia byl by schastliv naiti svoe malen'koe mestechko v russkoi literature . . .': Pis'ma Avraama Vysotskogo Maksimu Gor'komu," *Literaturnyi fakt* 1 (2020): 137.

12 Leva Almi, *S russkim narodom razgovor na ty* [A conversation on familiar terms with the Russian people] (Jerusalem: Ba-Derekh, 1968), 4. It is no accident that the first of Almi's poetry collections was fully bilingual: the Russian-language poems were paired with their Hebrew counterparts. His second book, a collection of Hebrew poems, includes one Russian text: his long Russian poem *S russkim narodom razgovor na ty.*

of love for the Russian language in Lyova (Lev) Schneerson's poem "I Love" (1959): "I love the polyphonic Russian speech, / The rich Russian speech [. . .] / I love to read Russian books / And the works of Russian poets; / And drown my soul in the bottomless depths / Of the sea of heartfelt testaments."[13] In reality, all these (and possibly some other) motives became mingled, creating the tangled psychological web of authorial linguistic choices and preferences.[14]

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In 1927, the Tel Aviv printing house Ha-Poel ha-Tsair published a drama (described as "sketch in seven scenes") titled *V krasnykh tiskakh* (In the red vice). Its author was Samuil Markovich Kruglikov, on whom we have scant biographical data.[15] It tells of a Jewish agrarian colony near Odesa, whose members prepare to labor as pioneers in the land of their forefathers. However, the Zionist aspirations of these youths come into conflict with the Soviet regime: the leader of the He-Chalutz group, Vladimir Zilber, is sentenced to five years' imprisonment at the Solovetsky Monastery (in the final scene, his body is interred), while the others are sent to Mandatory Palestine. The play follows a literary template that was common at the time: most of the plotline unfolds in Russia (in Kruglikov's case, this is the setting of six out of the seven scenes), while the final episodes take place in EY (a similar structure can be seen in Wissotzky's drama *Krov' Makkaveev* (The blood of the Maccabees, 1925), whose first three acts take place in Russia, while the finale is set in EY).

The year when Kruglikov's play was published, 1927, also saw the publication, in Jerusalem, of Arest's long poem *Mashber*, which came out as a separate booklet and bore two terse subtitles: *From the Cycle "Maternaia Palestina"* (The Obscene Palestine) and *V dni khoser avoda* (In days of *choser avoda*).[16] It was written with outrageously provocative rudeness, recalling the spiritual longings of Sergei Yesenin's *Moskva kabatskaia* (Tavern Moscow, 1924). The

13 Dept. of Manuscripts and Rare Books of the National Library of Israel (Jerusalem, Israel). L. Shneerson Coll. ARC. 4* 1504 05 82, vol. 2, p. 8.

14 For the sake of balance and objectivity, we should note the existence of the opposite process: poems written in Russian during the early period of life in EY remained unpublished, inevitably losing their social relevance; later, they were translated into Hebrew by the authors and published, thereby becoming facts of Hebrew literature. Such was the case of poem cycle *Migdaliada* (unspecified author was Zakharia Kliuchevich), on the Joseph Trumpeldor labor battalion. Unpublished at the time of its composition (1921), it finally came out translated into Hebrew by Lyova Almi as a separate book almost sixty years later. See *Migdaliada: Zikhronot* (*Migdaliada: Memories*), trans. by Lyova Almi (Jerusalem: n.p., 1980).

15 See the article about him, and the play itself, in Timenchik, *Samuil Kruglikov*, 51–52.

16 *Choser avoda* (Hebrew)—"joblessness."

poem ruthlessly lampoons the ideal image of EY that was a central pillar of the conceptual and stylistic discourse of Zionism:

Не стране, загаженной пейсами
И пестрящей красным тарбушем,
Я хотел расслезиться бы песнями
И надрываться плачевным тушем,
Не ты ли меня подпаивала,
Опьяняя ручьями вина,
Не ты ли, Страна Израилева—
Матерная страна!

> It is not to a country befouled by *peyos* / And speckled with red tarbushes / That I would like to sing my tearful songs / And cry out my lungs. / Weren't you the one who watered me, / Making me drunk on rivers of wine, / You, the Land of Israel—/ My Obscene Land![17]

Abram (Abrasha) Arest was born in Moscow in 1906. He finished a Soviet school and attended the Faculty of Social Science of Moscow University. In 1924, he immigrated to EY, and moved to Jerusalem in 1927. He lived out his life in this city, dying in 1967. As a natural "mover and shaker," he immediately became one of the leaders of the youth movement in EY. In 1939–1947, he served in the Security Department of the Jewish Agency (Sokhnut) in Jerusalem, and later transferred to its Propaganda Department. In the latter capacity, he became one of the most prominent figures in the leadership of the Hagana (a Jewish paramilitary organization) in Jerusalem and of its clandestine radio station. After

17 Arest, *Mashber*, 3–4. This is a Russian-language pun that plays on the slippery semantic boundary between the adjectives *maternyi* (obscene) and *materinskii* (maternal), with an obvious bias in favor of the former interpretation. Something similar, albeit with the opposite authorial intent, can be seen in the *Sonnet* by the Parisian émigré poet Aleksandr Ginger ("I do not stretch out my begging hand . . ."), which was written in 1921 and published in 1922: "Oh fragrant one! Upon my knees, / I have returned a pauper to the *materny* bosom." This sonnet was rejected by Sergey Makovsky, editor of the Parisian Rifma publishing house, when Ginger wished to include it in his collection of 1956 *News*, see Aleksandr Ginger, *Stikhotvoritel'noe oderzhanie: Stikhi, proza, stat'i, pis'ma: V dvukh tomakh* [Poetic obsession: Poems, prose, articles, letters: in two volumes], compilation, introduction, and notes by Vladimir Khazan (Moscow: Vodolei, 2013), vol. 2, 209–215; Sofiia Pregel, *Razgovor s pamiat'iu: Poeziia, proza, ocherki i stat'i: v dvukh tomakh*, compilation, introduction, and notes by Vladimir Khazan (Moscow: Vodolei, 2017), vol. 2, 498–500.

the establishment of the State of Israel, he worked at the Kol Zion le-Gola radio station, which broadcast into the countries of the Jewish diaspora (his own broadcasts were addressed to Soviet Jewry). He was a member of the Jerusalem City Council, and in 1960–1965 he headed the Culture Department of the Jerusalem Municipality.[18]

As in the case of Arest, Lyova (Yehuda) Almi (*né* Shiputinovsky, 1899–1994), who moved from Soviet Russia to EY in 1921, also had to deal with a severe economic crisis. This crisis was equally painful on the mundane and the poetic levels. Almi's mental anguish is reflected in his Hebrew-language poetry collection *Ba-sha'ar* (literally, "at the gates"; here used metaphorically in the sense of "on the eve"), which came out in the same year as *Mashber*, 1927.[19] It is very important to note the simultaneous publication of poems written in two different languages, Russian and Hebrew, which not only draw on a common reality, but offer a similar ideological and emotional interpretation of that reality. Most remarkable of all is the fact that the linguistic roles of the two poets were fully "interchangeable": Arest could easily have composed his poems in Hebrew, and Almi could have done likewise in Russian (incidentally, we should note that Almi did eventually publish Russian-language verse: as stated above, his poem *S russkim narodom razgovor na ty* came out in a bilingual edition in 1968).

Here is some biographical information on Almi. After immigrating to Eretz Israel, he initially joined the Chavurat ha-Emek labor battalion and worked in road construction in the Jezreel Valley area, but by 1927 there was no more work for him, and he became permanently unemployed.[20] He then decided to try his luck in Europe, and left EY in 1929, apparently still clinging to the possibility of returning to the USSR. However, after several years of wandering, having failed to find a place for himself in Europe, Almi was back in EY in 1933. On June 5, 1934, he wrote a letter to Maxim Gorky in Moscow, attaching several of his Russian-language poems. Almi asked the venerable author, whom he regarded as the paragon of proletarian humanism, to pass judgment on these texts. Apparently, he received no reply from Moscow: at the time Gorky was dealing with a severe depression caused by the death of his son Maxim, who had passed away several weeks earlier.

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18 For more on him, see Avraam Arest, *Be-tokh ami, be-tokh iri: Reshimot, zikhronot, maamarim* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz ha-Meuchad, 1970).

19 Lyova Almi, *Ba-sha'ar: Makhzor shirim* [At the gate: A cycle of songs] (Tel Aviv: Strud, 1927).

20 According to some data, in the second half of 1927, at the peak of the unemployment period, a full third of the new Jewish arrivals in EY lost their jobs, see Dan Giladi, *Ha-Ishuv be-tkufat ha-aliyah ha-reviit (1924–1929): bkhina kalkalit ve-politit* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1973), 18.

Almi, who was fired up with communist ideas of building a new society, was placed on the proscription list and deported from the country by the Mandate authorities, who feared the prospect of a Red revolutionary conflagration that would put the Jews and the Arabs on the same side of the barricades. In 1937, Almi disembarked from the deportation ship in Marseille. He lived through World War II in France, first as a conscript in the French Army, and then—after the dissolution of that army, the occupation of the country by the Germans, and a flight into the southern unoccupied zone with his family (by that point, he had a wife named Sarah, a fellow radical leftist deportee from EY, and two sons)—as a member of the Resistance. In 1950, Almi, who had not renounced his communist convictions, moved to Poland, as part of a wave of eastward repatriation (in all likelihood, his move was facilitated by the French authorities). He lived in Wrocław until 1957, working as a furrier. That year, he made his third aliyah to EY, where he stayed until the end of his long and eventful life. 1982 saw the publication of a volume of his Hebrew poetry, featuring a preface by the major Israeli critic and politician Dov Sadan;[21] the collection ends with the abovementioned long poem *S russkim narodom razgovor na ty.*[22] Almi also worked as a translator from Russian into Hebrew; one of his works in this area is a collection of journalistic articles by Ilya Ehrenburg, which came out in 1935.[23]

Unlike Arest and Almi, on whom we possess reasonably detailed and extensive biographical data, Yehoshua Ankori (1880–1962), the author of the nearly 300 pages-long volume *Pesni i poemy* (Songs and poems, 1930)[24] and the poetry collection *Napadenie* (The assault, 1930),[25] is, unfortunately, almost an absolute mystery. The former book was the subject of a brief favorable review in the Parisian *Poslednie Novosti*, the major liberal press outlet of the Russian diaspora in the interwar period. We have been unable to identify the reviewer, who used the initial S.[26] and referred to Ankori's largely feeble verses as "true poetry." In all likelihood, the review had been commissioned by the poet himself, who

21 Lyova Almi, *Shirim ve-poemot* [Songs and poems] (Rehovot: L. Almi, 1982).

22 Ibid., 198–212.

23 Ilya Erenburg, *Yesh Moskva be-olam: Reshimot* [There is Moscow in the world: Notebooks] (Tel Aviv: n.p., 1935).

24 Iekhoshua Ankori, *Pesni i poemy*, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: n.p., 1930). Its title page bears the subscript "volume 1"—but, as far as we know, the second volume remained unpublished.

25 Iekhoshua Ankori, *Napadenie* (Tel Aviv: n.p., 1930). The poems in this collection reflect the impressions of the bloody events of August 1929, when a wave of anti-Jewish pogroms swept over Palestine (with violence erupting in Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed, and elsewhere).

26 See S., "[review of Ankori's book of the poems 'Pesni i poemy'] Tom pervyi," *Poslednie Novosti* [Paris] no. 3585, January 15, 1931, 3.