

To the memory of my grandmother Judith Nordheimer

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface and Acknowledgments.....	vii
Introduction.....	xii
Chapter I. Eastern Galicia and Vienna: Hashomer, Tse'irei Tsiyon, and the Origins of Hashomer Hatzair.....	1
Chapter II. The "Sexual Problem" in the Youth Movement: From Denial, to Love, to Eros.....	43
Chapter III. Tragic Man: An Aesthetic of Anarchism.....	66
Chapter IV. Eros and Tragedy: Dionysos in the Galilee.....	80
Chapter V. Martin Buber and Gustav Landauer: <i>Gemeinschaft</i> and Subterranean Judaism.....	103
Chapter VI. Dancing, Working, and Public Confessions: The <i>Eda</i> Takes Its Form.....	136
Chapter VII. The <i>Eda</i> of Hashomer Hatzair as <i>Männerbund</i> : A Jewish Male Fantasy Comes Full Central European Circle.....	150
Chapter VIII. The Tragic Hero Metamorphoses into a Sensitive Man.....	169
Bibliography.....	194
Index.....	212

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In this book I claim that wishing to heal the injured masculinity of a generation of young Jews in central Europe is at the very heart of Zionism as a project for national regeneration. This dimension must be added to a well-researched catalogue list of reasons that address the question of why Zionism as a political, ideological, and practical movement rose *davka* in central Europe and what made it so appealing and so effective. Zionism should be understood in this perspective as the manly response to one of the most insulting dimensions of modern antisemitism: its venomous view of the Jewish body as ugly, abject, deformed, repulsive. Not only repulsive but also unmanly: the German fraternity charters at the University of Vienna, for example, explicitly forbade fencing with Jewish students because fencing is an honorable engagement, reserved exclusively for “real men.” This strand of the “golden age” of antisemitism in Europe (1870s–1945) was especially offensive to the young Jewish men of central Europe, more pointedly sensitive to this insult than Jews living in Western nations such as England or France, or those living in the Pale of Settlement.

By and large, the Zionist movement (not unlike a host of other modern movements, from the *maskilim* of the late eighteenth century to anti-Semites) accepted the corporeal claims against the Jews and was conditioned by them. It derided the Jews of the Diaspora as *Luftmeschen*. This is one of the reasons why it was supremely important in the first decades of Zionist activity to make the movement visibly muscular, athletic, tanned, and attractive. The negation of the Diaspora, at the core of the Zionist discourse of recognition and justification, was a negation of a particular Jewish powerlessness, a powerlessness that mentally conditions peoples and groups in exile, termed by Yuri Slezkine “service nomads.” This type of existence as an entrepreneurial minority, living without legitimate access to military power or claims to recognized territorial sovereignty, made the Jewish communities vulnerable, dependent on some form of protection. As was suggested by Daniel Boyarin, this condition of exile made its mark on Jewish masculinity. Living without territory, they became disembodied, imagined as sickly. It made them conciliatory, compromise-seeking, and averse to violence.

In the case of Hashomer Hatzair, the turn to Zionism was embedded in the most profound central European realm of discourse. I identified Eros and Tragedy as two core tropes in that German central European discourse that serves as the foundation upon which the “new man” of Hashomer Hatzair was imagined. These two tropes were borrowed to allow the rehabilitation of the Jewish young male, and then of the entire Jewish nation, including women, the elderly, and those still living in the Diaspora. Eros was adopted as a metaphor for the necessary yet invisible glue that cements and binds communities. Hashomer Hatzair wished to create small communities where Eros bound people together. In the first years in Palestine, these communities were imagined as exclusively male and the presence of male-male Eros in hyper-virile (and potentially homosexual) secretive male societies was explored as an important condition for the generation of authentic culture and even entire civilizations. Tragedy served as denoting the particularly heroic aspect of the new man-as-man of Hashomer Hatzair. This man sought to bravely fulfill his destiny and change history, whatever the consequences. These two tropes were not the only ones that served in fantasies of new manliness, a new society—national, socialist, or anarchist. In many ways, the “new man” of Hashomer Hatzair is peculiar to the movement. At the same time, it is no more than a self-consciously radical variation of the other Zionist core fantasies.

The young men of Hashomer Hatzair wished to reinvent themselves as “real men.” At the same time, paradoxically, the wish to create a hyper-virile “new man” contained alongside it a manifestation of a self-reflective, sensitive masculinity. Tragic man eventually proved to be a man conscious of his feelings and willing to express them in public, a practice shunned by other forms of machismo and virility. During the early years of Bitania Ilit, the wish for heroic masculinity melted seamlessly into a softer construction of manliness. Ironically, the male fantasies that fueled a drive to rehabilitate the Jew of the Diaspora into a heroic tragic man brought about alongside it a construction of a thoughtful, sensitive, caring manliness. So at this point it is important to make the following note: the title of this book is inspired by Klaus Theweleit’s classic interpretation of the German Freikorps units of World War I, who roamed Germany after the war and during the traumatized first years of the Weimar Republic. The young men and women of Hashomer Hatzair lived during the same period and in the same intellectual atmosphere of German central

Europe. Whereas understanding both groups in terms of male fantasies is fruitful, the Freikorps male fantasies reflect levels of aggression and brutality that are most alien to the world of fantasies that can be discerned from the sources of Hashomer Hatzair.

This book was very long in the making and I wish to express my gratitude to all those that made a contribution to what seems to be a solitary exercise of research and writing. I am grateful, first, to David Myers, my advisor, who always trusted me and my erratic path, and did not let me give up at times of crisis. His sincere interest in the dissertation as well as his attentive reading of every line of it not only inspired me to continue, but will also serve as a model for my own future as a teacher and scholar.

I had the great fortune of having Saul Friedländer as my teacher, first at Tel Aviv University, then at UCLA, and finally on my dissertation committee. Saul's advice, intuition, and his unique ability to know what I actually meant to write and where I was really going, at times far better than myself, have amazed me and helped me a great deal.

It was Carlo Ginzburg who first sensed that this particular topic was my passion and encouraged me to pursue it. His research seminars at UCLA were a turning point in how I do research in history ever since. Arnold Band read the manuscript with great care and saved me from many pitfalls. I have benefitted from his critique of my language and style and from his great experience as a teacher and scholar. Peter Hammond from the department of anthropology at UCLA served as an outside reader. His care and support, as well as his rich experience in observing people and the social interactions which shaped the world in which they lived, sensitized me to observe my own subject in greater detail.

I am grateful for the generous financial support I have received, first and foremost from the department of history at UCLA, and the Regents of the University of California. A dissertation research fellowship at the Max Planck Institute at Göttingen was made possible through a generous grant from the DAAD. I was also fortunate to have received grants from the Center for German and European Studies at Berkeley, the French government, the Monkarsh Fund, and the Franklin D. Murphy Funds at UCLA, as well as very generous support from the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute which facilitated the publication of this book.

Two post-doctoral grants made for four doctoral convalescent years: two of these years were at the Centre d'Études Juives at the

EHESS in Paris with thanks to Elie Barnavi and Michael Löwy for supporting me and to my dear friend Gil Mihaely for his companionship and friendship. I spent the two following years at the Franz Rosenzweig Minerva Research Center for German-Jewish Literature and Cultural History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem where I enjoyed Gabi Motzkin's trust in my work.

At the Central Archive of Hashomer Hatzair in Givat Haviva, I received the friendly support of Dalia Moran, Josepha Fecher, and Talma Nasi, who were always ready and willing to help me find the material I needed, and were protective or perhaps suspicious enough to keep certain files for future research. I thank them for their hospitality. At the Beit Alpha Archive, I received the kind assistance of the all-knowing archivist Meira Hacoen. Elimelech Levron, a veteran of Hashomer Hatzair, enthusiastically helped in deciphering handwritten documents in Polish.

Matityahu Mintz from Tel Aviv University, the foremost expert in the study of Hashomer Hatzair, showed great enthusiasm for my project and read several versions of the manuscript. I have benefitted immensely from his expertise and will always cherish our long conversations on Jews in the modern world. David Sabeen at UCLA invigorated my intellectual curiosity and never turned me away when I needed advice. Peter Loewenberg made very useful comments on two chapters. Moshe Sluhovsky from the Hebrew University read several drafts of the manuscript with a peculiar mix of stimulating intellectual reading and compassionate support for a struggling writer. Benny Arbel from Tel Aviv University also read earlier drafts of the manuscript with great care and attention, and made critical comments that set me thinking about what it was I wanted to say. Igal Halfin invited me to present a chapter of this work in a colloquium he organized at Tel Aviv University and gave me valuable comments and friendly support. Derek Penslar encouraged me with friendly comments, which were greatly needed. Paul Mendes-Flohr read an earlier draft of this work and inspired me with his warm encouragement. At the Max Planck Institute, I had extremely fruitful discussions about my project with Hans Medick. I had the great opportunity to discuss my project and rethink its implications with Dan Diner at the Simon Dubnow Institute for Jewish History and Culture at Leipzig. David Biale was enthusiastic and critical at once and I am anxious to have him read the book in its final form.

This book would have never been completed without the intellectual camaraderie of Avner Ben Zaken, Zvi Ben Dor, Jeffrey Blutinger,

Sharon Gordon, Orna Kenan, Nitzan Lebovic, and Boaz Neumann. Thanks are also due to Aviva Halamish, Shula Keshet, Tali Tamir and Idit Zertal. Thanks to Zvi Razi who believed in me from the very start, and to Thomas von der Osten Sacken for a particularly seminal conversation on Jewish men and their manhood.

I also wish to thank the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute for generously supporting the publication of this book.

My closest friends Yotam Hotam, Ktzia Alon, Tami Limon, and Moshe Elhanaty heard too often about this book and made crucial interventions at various points. I would not have survived this long journey without them.

Finally, some words of gratitude to my family, who really did not deserve to endure my choice of an academic life. My parents Yoram and Ziva Nur as well as my brother Erez and my sister Neta have always trusted my choices and encouraged me as long as I was happy. My grandmother Jehudith Nordheimer insisted on discussing every detail of this work with me. Her willpower and determination in all matters will always guide me. My uncle Amos Nur at Stanford served as a model for me since I was thirteen, and I still hope to make him proud one day. Without my family—Asher Ari, Yanai and Gili—this whole endeavor would have been a waste of time. I thank them for their love and support.

"You know my method. It is founded upon the observation of trifles." —Sherlock Holmes to Dr. Watson, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Bascombe Valley Mystery*, 1891

INTRODUCTION

Between 1920 and 1922, hundreds of members of the Hashomer Hatzair youth movement left the defunct Habsburg empire and sailed to Palestine. On a remote hill, overlooking the Sea of Galilee, a group of twenty-one young men and four young women between the ages of 18 and 25, all members of the movement, established one of the communities that laid the foundation for Israel's kibbutz movement. The community was named Bitania Ilit.¹ This social experiment lasted only eight months, from August 1920 to April 1921, but it gave birth to a powerful myth among Jewish youth in Palestine and in Eastern and Western Europe. It marked a beginning: a small, idealistic, independent youth movement, founded in 1916, had evolved into a Jewish settlement movement imbued with a Zionist and a socialist missionary zeal.²

What was it that made Bitania Ilit such a myth? How did it become a codeword for a particular worldview and how has it gained its recruiting appeal? What made this settlement adventure, experienced by about twenty-four pioneering youths in the year 1920, on a barren hill overlooking the Sea of Galilee an inspiration for novels

¹ For an accurate yet somewhat outdated account of Bitania Ilit in English see Amos Elon, *The Israelis: Founders and Sons* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), 183–90. The community was named Bitania Ilit, but throughout the book will be referred to as Bitania.

² Elkana Margalit, *ha-Shomer ha-Tsa'ir me-'adat ne'urim le-Marksizm mahapkhani 1913–1936, Hashomer Hatzair: From Youth Community to Revolutionary Marxism 1913–1936* (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1971), 79. According to one assessment, about five hundred members arrived in 1920; another assessment speaks of six hundred, but in 1922 it seems that the number dropped to two hundred. Indeed, many gave up and left Palestine already in those early years.

and plays? What made it so famous among Jewish youth, in Palestine and in the Diaspora, for decades?

The myth of Bitania was limited in its scope in comparison to the other myths of Zionism, yet it was no less powerful. The Yishuv adopted and promoted many other myths of heroism: the outpost of Tel Hai and its decorated former Russian military commander Joseph Trumpeldor (1880–1920) became in 1920 the symbol of martyrdom and armed defense of remote settlements in Eretz Israel, or Ha-Shomer (first active as Bar-Giorah), an association of Jewish watchmen (1907 through 1920) that aimed at winning the right to Jewish self-defense in an all-Jewish guard system in Ottoman Palestine.³ Other myths include Sarah Aharonson, the NILI underground network heroine who fought against the Ottoman rule of Palestine, and Deganyah, the first *kevu-zah*, then *kibbutz* (founded 1909), a symbol of arduous agricultural labor in a commune, based on the principle of self-realization through physical work in a rural settlement. This was the type of recruiting myth Zionism needed, which was subsequently adopted by the State of Israel for its recruiting purposes. Unlike these myths, Bitania was not a myth of sacrifice or heroism; it did not symbolize fighting for or defending a Jewish settlement. It was hardly even a settlement myth, as it was merely a temporary work camp, and it dissolved after only eight months. Bitania's story primarily touched the hearts of high school students in Palestine, later in Israel and anywhere in the Jewish world where Zionist youth movements were to be found, from Eastern Europe and North Africa to North and South America. Today, Bitania's story is remembered mostly by educated Israelis and those few who grew up in the framework of the Israeli labor movement and its various youth movements. This book searches for the sources that made this myth so vital.

Bitania's story inspired several novels. Nathan Bistritzky (1896–1980) published in 1926 his first novel, *Yamim VeLeylot (Days and Nights)*; Yehuda Ya'ari, himself member of Hashomer Hatzair, published his novel *Ka'or Yahel (As a Shining Light)* in 1937; and Yehoshua Sobol wrote the celebrated play *Leil HaEsrin (The Night of the Twentieth)*, performed at the Haifa Municipal Theater in 1976. Were these writers'

³ On the myth of Tel Hai see Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

imaginings, partly full of awe, partly voyeuristic, awakened by the nightly confessions held by the group? Or did these works only echo the *Kehiliatenu* collection, published in 1922, a year after the group dissolved? This remarkable collection, reprinted in 1964 by Kibbutz Beit Alpha, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of Hashomer Hatzair, and then again in a third edition in 1988, edited and updated by the labor movement scholar and political leader Muki Tsur, included monologues, short pieces of personal confessions, and a collective diary written by members of the group, as well as other members of Gedud Shomriya, a road construction group of approximately one hundred members of Hashomer Hatzair working on the Haifa-Jedda Road, northeast of Haifa. As for me, I stumbled upon the *Kehiliatenu* collection when I was a student in the early 1990s at Tel Aviv University's library. I immediately realized how remarkable and mesmerizing this text could be and pondered the questions: what made people hold ritualized public confessions and why was this kind of social interaction recorded and later published? In this early stage of my studies, I had not learned yet about the phenomenon of public confession among religious sects in the distant past, nor in communist parties in the early twentieth century. Bitania's practice of public confessions seemed mysterious to me. Using the *Kehiliatenu* collection of reverberating personal confessions, I tried to recreate the mental world of a small group of teenagers in the early 1920s, and to extract the essence of a new worldview that attempted to establish a new man and a new society. I rely heavily on *Kehiliatenu* in this book.⁴

Once workers in the Shomria camp, along with the members of Bitania, had come up with the idea for such a collection, they invited the author, playwright, and publicist Nathan Bistrizky, who had lectured at the camp on Hebrew, Jewish, and world literature, to edit the collection. Bistrizky was born in the Ukraine and immigrated with his wife to Palestine in 1920. In Palestine he worked as an itinerant lecturer in pioneer work camps, much like the author Yosef Haim Brenner. This was how he became acquainted with Gedud Shomria, Hashomer Hatzair's largest work camp. He was chosen to edit the collection after Hugo Bergmann, the German Jewish philosopher living in Palestine, declined the job, and said that "Freud and Blüher cannot serve as the

4

The most accessible edition is *Kehiliatenu*, ed. Muki Tsur (Jerusalem: 1988).

educators of the average worker.”⁵ Meir Yaari, whose idea it was to publish the collection, added that Bergmann, a member of the Hapoel Hatzair Socialist Party, felt that Hashomer Hatzair was too elitist and that it sought to destroy too much of the old world.⁶

The collection was meant to become a symbol of the movement’s activities in Palestine, particularly its ideal of community building. It functioned as a recruitment tool, inspiring several generations of idealistic and enthusiastic young Jews to settle in kibbutz communities in Palestine; but it also functioned as an internal means of communication between the participants. As workers from Shomria and Bitania drew up their essays or recited them to Bistritzky for redaction, they used the opportunity to express their opinions and feelings about their recent experiences. Often they commented on the demanding ideals imposed by the social utopia they were destined to take part in. A close reading of the collection often reveals a critical attitude toward the camp and its leaders. Again and again authors expressed an inability to conform to the group’s demands and ideals.

It was not the group’s Zionism, nor its socialism, that made the group become a symbol and a myth. Adventure stories of teenagers deciding to leave their parents’ homes in a quest for an unknown future can inflame any imagination. The background and composition of the members of Hashomer Hatzair who immigrated to Palestine in those years made the group even more visible. It is hard to imagine such an ambitious and talented group, natural-born leaders in various fields, intellectually, ideologically, and venture-wise bold, all committed to sharing their lives together. In addition to taking on this adventure, these young men and women tried to cope with their generation’s turbulences and crises. They expressed their aspirations with bold and acute awareness, using ideological and other, mostly central European, cultural conceptual tools to suggest radical solutions to their generation’s problems. They addressed these problems bravely, demandingly, and straight-forwardly, without cutting corners and without fearing the gate keepers of the bourgeoisie from which they came on the one hand, and without the rabbinical reproach on the other hand. Bitania slaughtered the holiest cows of its age, offering a new model for life, out of its sense

⁵ Letter by Meir Yaari 27 March 1921. Givat Haviva Archive, (3) 5.7–95.

⁶ Ibid.

of leadership. They had a special awareness of the concept of myth and its aesthetic dimension. They knew what a myth was and they knew its power, and understood why it could be such a constructing, recruiting force. They wanted to be myth. Their conception of myth was an aesthetic one, assuming the presence of viewers. Being visible, the myth had to be beautiful and attractive. Thus, the movement members, the communities they formed, and the places where they lived had to be beautiful and attractive too, models for decades to come. Jewish youth from Israel and the Diaspora, when exposed to this kind of myth, they thought, will aspire to resemble it, to join it, to take part, to make a sacrifice. They were right.

The group's intellectual climate was characterized by deep psychological experiences, a manifestation of the European crisis in which they grew up. A major part of this book is based on examining this experience of crisis. A sense of crisis may lead to pessimism and desperation, but it may also lead to new, optimistic, and fresh points of view on life. The experiences of those years gave birth to a specific, if eclectic, conception of a "new man" and a truly radical way of life. The case of Bitania included crisis and exhilaration at once. The extreme deep psychological states we will explore were not embedded in ideologies but preceded the adoption of such ideologies, which later became a hallmark of labor Zionism and of Hashomer Hatzair in particular. These experiential dimensions, deep psychic structures, reverberating Central European sensibilities and the ways of coping with them have reached far and wide in the first half of the twentieth century. They have touched generations of educated Jewish youth for decades. However, unlike historical accounts exploring religious, national, or ideological dimensions of Zionism—Socialism, Messianism, Utopia, National Regeneration, or the books written in the field of literary criticism analyzing modern Hebrew culture—this book will attempt to explore the experiences of the members of Bitania using the conceptual tools of cultural history, especially as they were articulated as part of the cultural turn in historical studies.⁷

Despite its exploration of ideas formed in the Bitania period and held by Hashomer Hatzair's worldview, as well as by larger Kibbutz

⁷ See Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, "Introduction," in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 1–32.

Movement circles, even reflecting on the whole Israeli society, culture, and institutions, this book is not a history of ideas. It examines ideas as part of everyday practices, as a sometimes-accidental and inconsistent manifestation of desires, moods, and social vision. It tries to decipher ideas expressed in whole worldviews and ideologies by way of local and immediate contexts, stemming from social interpersonal concrete relationships. Without these contexts and relationships, we are left with a history of free-floating ideas, an outdated research tradition. I examine ideas expressed during the Bitania years in terms of mental thought processes and habits that shape people and influence the way they act or feel within the reference group to which they belong. Leaving behind intellectual and social history, we turn toward the promise of cultural history. Historical writing in the wake of the “cultural turn” is nourished by skepticism as to the capacity to explain why certain historical events and processes have occurred. This approach generally refrains from providing historical explanations, preferring to engage in interpreting historical representations and the manner in which they teach us something important, profound, and sometimes surprising about the culture in which they are embedded. The actors who operate in this culture, who are its more or less eloquent agents, may well be oblivious to this importance. Cultural history, by contrast, is prepared to confine itself to interpreting specific products of culture or their representations, as it seeks to create a “thick description” of this culture, according to one particularly influential approach.⁸

This book thus deals with cultural history and seeks to provide a compelling alternative to social or intellectual history. It is rooted in a number of commitments. My basic purpose was to describe the experiences of those who recorded them and to interpret them correctly. The core of the scholarly practice that I chose rests in paying the primary sources the utmost attention and enabling them to speak for themselves while reconstructing the immediate but also the wider contexts in which they were produced. This approach is influenced by the Italian microhistory school, which gained prominence in Western

⁸

The concept of “thick description” is a contribution of the anthropology of Clifford Geertz to the field of knowledge that addresses the interpretation of symbols in culture. See the extremely influential Clifford Geertz, “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

historiography during the 1970s and 1980s.⁹ Microhistory painstakingly and intensively examines the unusual statements and beliefs of an individual, a family, or a small community within the framework of dramatic events, including those that end abruptly. This approach emerged at the time from an urge to conduct ethnographic observation of the human past as something that undergoes fleeting and crisis-ridden change rather than being grounded in long-term (*longue durée*) processes.¹⁰ This approach seeks out unusual texts (such as the *Kehiliatenu* collection) which, by virtue of being singular or strange, tend to point in various ways to the “normal” of their time. Examination of the disparity between extreme, strange, or exceptional utterances and those considered reasonable, normal, and perhaps even banal in a certain period is in itself of scholarly value.¹¹ Comparison between the conventional and the unconventional facilitates interpretive analysis of the document that extends beyond a mere biographical statement about an individual or group. One may likewise regard the expressions contained in the *Kehiliatenu* collection as being of singular value in understanding pioneering Zionism, the Third Aliya (immigration wave to Palestine), the Jewish high-school youngsters of East and Central Europe during the 1920s, as well as general East Central European culture and its crises. Microhistory proved itself fertile for observing the early modern period in particular, which is relatively lacking in primary sources, rather than the twentieth century. A study of small, local, and muted utterances could lead one to view this study as being arcane, of limited value to a very small number of readers interested in the *Kehiliatenu* collection and Bitania Ilit as esoteric, detached phenomena that contribute little to a broader understanding of the period. I hope the readers of this book will recognize its value to a study and understanding that goes beyond Bitania Ilit itself.

⁹ Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 38–41.

¹⁰ Edward Muir, “Introduction: Observing Trifles,” in Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero, *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

¹¹ In this context, Carlo Ginzburg’s exemplary work towers above all others. See Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992 [1979]).

The methodological inspiration afforded by Italian microhistory is augmented by a further source that likewise derives from the historiography of early modern Europe and originates in Holland, and itself emerged from a favorable and welcoming response to microhistory. This approach focuses on texts in which the authors write about themselves. Adherents of this approach seek to expand the concept of autobiography, which is a rather constricted genre, to include all historical sources that manifest writing about oneself. This scholarly trend calls such texts “egodocuments,” namely documents that create selfhood, identity, and subjectivity.¹² This has given rise to an ever-growing repository of sources available to cultural historical research. Those who wrote themselves into texts are accorded a prosopographic flash¹³ that illuminates that which they said or wrote and the way in which they constructed their selfhood.¹⁴ This book thus addresses a number of forgotten writers, particularly those who contributed to the *Kehiliatenu* collection. It attempts to trace the various ways in which they wrote of themselves and their selfhood, and how they correspond with others and with the ideas that emerge around them.

It is within these scholarly contexts that I observed the inner world of the people of Bitania, their yearnings, their anxieties and fantasies, during a fleeting but stormy episode born of a broad historical crisis. I began by asking how individual members of a small group experience anxieties, desires, and longing, and how the people in the group were carried away into creating fantasies that centered

¹² Arianne Baggerman, Rudolf Dekker, and Michael Mascuch, “Introduction,” in *Controlling Time and Shaping the Self: Developments in Autobiographical Writing since the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

¹³ Prosopography—“the writing of faces”—is a biographical approach to the study of history, which was originally used in the study of Greece and Rome. It engages in the collection of sources that facilitate the reconstruction of historical figures in order to illuminate their role within larger groups that drive historical change. See Lawrence Stone, “Prosopography,” *Daedalus* 100.1 (1971): 46–71.

¹⁴ In this research context I raise the question, sparked by perusal of the *Kehiliatenu* collection, of whether collective writing of the self is feasible. See Ofer Nordheimer Nur, “Can There Be a Collective Egodocument? The Case of the Hashomer Hatzair Kehilyatenu Collection in Palestine, 1922,” in *Controlling Time and Shaping the Self: Developments in Autobiographical Writing since the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 215–27.

on themselves.¹⁵ The interpretative analysis of their numerous utterances demands the employment of conceptual tools from a variety of areas. This multiplicity of conceptual tools is what turns this study into a multidisciplinary one. The scholar in this case is merely a *bricoleur*, someone who is only partially qualified to address a wide variety of topics and is not confined to a single area of expertise. The *bricoleur* carries a bag full of many different tools with which to observe and analyze the variety of utterances encountered.¹⁶ In the next stage of his work, the *bricoleur* will be in a position to examine more coherent products of culture, such as worldviews, ideologies, or utopian visions, as having emerged from and been nourished by the haphazard collection of the utterances from which they grew.

At a very early stage of the research, I chose the concept of fantasy as a key to understanding the group. I use it in the broadest sense and do not seek to criticize those who entertain their fantasies. This is not an ironic use of the concept of the kind that declares “and then see what happened next,” and certainly has no intention of judging the illusionary aspect of the fantasy, which is ostensibly detached from the real world. Fantasies are constructed here primarily as aesthetic products of expression, namely as forms that mediate between the “I” and society, which distort reality, at whose focal point stand the creators of the fantasy themselves. Whether they were aware of this or not, the fantasy mediates between desires and the reality of its creators’ life.¹⁷ It is an indication of mental processes that dynamically generate not only

¹⁵ A further book that takes such a materialist step is that of Boaz Neumann, *Land and Desire in Early Zionism* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2011). Neumann quite literally examines the pioneers’ desire. Another book that, in several ways, as is evident from the title, is kin to this book and my use of the term fantasy, is Paul Breines, *Tough Jews: Political Fantasies and the Moral Dilemma of American Jewry* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

¹⁶ And he resembles Isaiah Berlin’s fox, who knows about many things and differs from the hedgehog, who knows only one thing. See Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy’s View of History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1953).

¹⁷ Moreover, the book written by the German scholar of culture Klaus Theweleit influenced my choice of the concept of fantasy to serve as a point of departure for the interpretation and deciphering of the political and other products of culture. See Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies Vol. I: Women, Floods, Bodies, History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987 [1977]). About the male aspect of these fantasies see below.

self-perceptions and perceptions of the body or the social body, or images, but also more complex ideas that incorporate new approaches for a truer life. Fantasies are nowadays viewed within the concept of “imagination”: political imagination, historical imagination, scientific imagination, social imagination,¹⁸ and eventually, a summa of the use of the broad term of imagination encapsulated in the celebrated and oft quoted “imagined communities”¹⁹ have become codes for cultural creation initially born out of fantasies.²⁰ The concept of fantasy is particularly apposite to the world of the people of Hashomer Hatzair during those crisis-ridden years, and as we shall see, the texts are full of fantasies as ways of coping with painful, overwhelming reality, or as an auto-therapeutic mental process. In this respect too, the people of Bitania and of Hashomer Hatzair were no different from other early Zionist pioneers, as indicated by, for example, Boaz Neumann’s “Land and Desire.” Slavoj Žižek recently suggested that “fantasy provides the co-ordinates of our desire” and “constructs the frame enabling us to desire something.” This is particularly useful for the way I view the male fantasies of the young men of Hashomer Hatzair.²¹ After all, Zionism was created by dreamers and the land was packed with visionaries of all stripes. The fantasies examined in this book were so powerful that they served as a mental platform for the establishment of a compelling worldview that prevailed through the 1970s and even beyond.

The book is built upon three tiers:

1. One should decipher and understand the experience of the members of Bitania Ilit and of Hashomer Hatzair’s first kibbutz and the new person and new society they sought to create in light of *Central European cultural sensibilities and their broad context*. The writing of such a history takes part in the

¹⁸ The Greek philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis coined the formative concept of *L’imaginaire Social*.

¹⁹ The concept coined by the anthropologist Benedict Anderson, which has become a key concept.

²⁰ Among the first to make use of this concept, which expands the products of human imagination to the maximum, was the historian Amos Funkenstein. See Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

²¹ Quoted in Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, Routledge (New York and London), 1992, 6.

project of modifying our view of the Zionist past as a purely internal Jewish development.²² It also provides an entirely new perspective as to the intellectual roots of at least one part of the Zionist Labor Movement and connects it to the profound effect of the post-World War I German Conservative Revolution. In the case of Hashomer Hatzair this approach is particularly apposite, since these broad cultural and historical roots were so profound that to neglect this context would lead to a fundamental distortion. At the center of this context stands the turn of the century German cultural world and the manner in which it confronted its own crises.

2. The new person and the new society which the movement's members imagined in this period and which they bequeathed to future generations incorporated a primarily male motivation. In other words, *the new worldview and way of life were formulated by young men in order to resolve problems and crises of young men*. The worldview that crystallized within the movement's institutions and publications should be understood primarily as originating in and expressing the dreams of men, of the kind that grapple first and foremost with the problems, the anomalies, the pains, and the crises of young men, and to a lesser extent with those of other age groups or of women, and which by no means seek realistic solutions applicable to the Jewish people as a whole. Only a gender-based analysis, which approaches the worldview of Hashomer Hatzair in those years as having been formulated out of the expression of the distress and yearnings of young men, can correctly decipher its latent elements and likewise reveal the experiences of the young women in the group.
3. *In the midst of the Central European context and in response to the shockwaves of a clearly discernible German crisis of culture, two core, dialectic concepts find expression within the movement's intellectual frame. These are Eros and tragedy*. These concepts suc-

22

This scholarly and narrative step should likewise be taken with regard to further chapters in the annals of the Zionist chapter of Jewish history. Note, for example, a persuasive voice that advocates such a step: David Ohana, [Hebrew] *Neither Canaanites nor Crusaders: The Origins of Israeli Mythology* (Jerusalem: Keter, 2008), 20.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Приобрести книгу можно

в интернет-магазине

«Электронный универс»

e-Univers.ru