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OTHER TONGUES: THE PLACE OF *LO 'AZIT* IN HEBREW CULTURE

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According to the dominant historiography of the Hebrew revival, the road to Hebrew prominence in Jewish Palestine was dotted with language battles, fought tooth and nail, and ultimately won.[1] Stories of institutional victory are taken to symbolise the victory of an ideology which extended

[1] The most famous of these were the so-called Language Wars of 1913–1914 at the Haifa Technikum, founded by the German *Hilfsverein* der *deutschen Juden*. When the Technikum's administration expressed its intention that German be a language of instruction at the new school, pro-Hebrew members of the Yishuv became agitated. Thanks to the Yishuv's advocacy, on February 22, 1914, the *Hilfsverein* capitulated and announced that Hebrew would be the sole language of instruction. For a basic description of the sequence of events in the language wars see Ben-Yosef, Y. *Language Wars* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Otzar ha-Moreh, 1984). Margalit Shilo argues that advocacy for Hebrew was not undertaken only by the principle pro-Hebrew members of the Technikum's administration: Ahad Ha-'Am, Shamaryahu Levin and Yehiel Chalnov, but rather was buoyed by huge popular sentiment; Shilo, M. "The Language War as a Popular Movement" [Hebrew], *Katedra* 74 (1994): 87–119. For a brief look at the German side of the negotiations see Rinott, M. "Capitulations: The Case of the German-Jewish *Hilfsverein* schools in Palestine, 1901–1914," in *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period*, ed. Kushner, D. (Jerusalem: Yad Yizhak Ben-Zvi Press, 1986), 294–301. The threat of German surfaced again during the period of the Fifth Aliyah, following the rise of the Nazis to power in 1933, when the Yishuv saw the arrival of approximately 250,000 Central European Jews. Some rejected the Zionist movement altogether and considered themselves in exile from Germany. See Gordon, A., "German Exiles in the Orient: The German-language Weekly Orient (Haifa, 1942–1943) between German Exile and Zionist Aliya," in *Placeless Topographies: Jewish Perspectives on the Literature of Exile*, ed. Greiner, B. (Tubingen: Niemeyer, 2003), 149–59. Viewing this linguistic deviance as a threat to the Hebrew culture of the Yishuv, Eastern European members of the Yishuv insisted that Hebrew be used in public spaces and that German language schools be barred. See Gelber, Y. *New Homeland: Immigration and Absorption of Central European Jews, 1933–1948* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Tzvi, Leo Baeck Institute, 1990), 225–6.

beyond language to a larger project of national refashioning.[2] Even many of the most recent Israeli works make few historiographic adjustments to a narrative about a unidirectional march towards Hebrew dominance.[3]

There is no doubt that the Hebrew revival represents one of the most compelling achievements of a modern nationalist movement. But if indeed the language battles symbolised a war that ended in victory, it remains unclear where the armistice lines were drawn. Just as the borders of the state of Israel have been contested and uncertain, so, too, the boundaries of the Hebrew language have remained insecure. The more Hebrew broadened to encompass a growing population and a growing set of concepts, the more Hebrew writers have fixated on the border regions, the areas of language and culture perennially open to invasion. While on a public level the leaders of the *Yishuv*, the Jewish community in Palestine,

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[2] Elyakim Rubenstein, in his 1976 survey of social institutions in the Yishuv, calls the outcome of the 1913–1914 language wars "a victory for national Hebrew education" that ended a period of foreign control over education and ushered in a Hebrew school system united around language; Rubenstein, E. "From Yishuv to State: Institutions and Parties" [Hebrew], in *The Jewish National Home: From the Balfour Declaration to Independence*, ed. Eliav, B. (Jerusalem: Keter, 1976), 214. See also Elboim-Dror, R. *Hebrew Education in Eretz Israel* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Tzvi, 1986); *Book of Education and Culture* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1951); Reshef, S., and Dror, Y. *Hebrew Education in the Days of the National Home, 1919–1948* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2002), 36–8.

[3] Reuven Sivan follows the straightforward narrative of the revival from the persistence of Hebrew usage in the Diaspora to heroic efforts by Ben Yehuda and Zionist school teachers beginning in the 1890s and stretching past the establishment of the state; Sivan, R. *When a Language is Renewed* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Israel Ministry of Defense, 1993). Shlomo Haramati challenges the notion that Ben-Yehuda should be thought of as the "father of the Hebrew language." Rather, he apotheosises the teachers of the Yishuv, explaining that they "were forced to fight for the image of the Hebrew schools on two fronts," both against proponents of the traditional religious school and against the "not few who were fighting on behalf of general foreign (*lo'azi*) education." Haramati, S. *Hebrew: From 'Speech of the Lips' to a National Language* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Yaron Golan, 1997), 145. See also Haramati, S. *Levites in the Temple of Hebrew: New Light on the Contribution of Eight Jewish Notables to the Revived Hebrew* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Yaron Golan, 1996). Rafael Nir, engaging in only slight modification of Haramati, resurrects Ben Yehuda on his pedestal, claiming that the man is rightly considered a major actor; Nir, R. "The Role of Yishuv Institutions in the Language Revival" [Hebrew], in *The History of the Jewish Yishuv in the Land of Israel since the First Aliyah: The Construction of a Hebrew Culture*, eds. Lissak, M., and Shavit, Z. (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1999), 107–22.

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were unambiguous in their rejection of foreign language, beneath the veneer of linguistic clarity there has existed an ongoing and highly ambivalent discourse around the role and relevance of foreign languages within Hebrew culture.

This paper will focus on Zionist discourses concerning one specific set of foreign languages: non–Jewish European languages, known collectively as *La'az* or *Lo'azit.* The term, used for languages such as Russian, German, French, and English, derives from the Hebrew verb לעז, "to speak indistinctly or unintelligibly." The word is used once in the Hebrew Bible, in Psalm 114, in the phrase "*'am lo'ez*": "foreign people," or "foreign tongue." The term *la'az* is used by medieval Jewish commentators as a catchall term for all European languages and, in some cases, their Jewish variants. A folk etymology takes *la'az* as an acronym standing for "*lashon 'am zar*" (the language of a foreign people). The use of the suffix "*-it*" to form the word *Lo'azit*, on the model of *Anglit* (English) or *Germanit* (German), is apparently a modern construction.

By negotiating language, Zionists negotiated ideologies, politics, and power: not only Jewish or Zionist, but all those that exerted influence on Jews within a linked and interconnected world. This linguistic system involved four sets of languages: *Lo'azit* (non–Jewish European languages), Hebrew, Judeo–Languages (principally Yiddish and Ladino), and Arabic. These four linguistic fields connoted loosely defined sets of geographic referents, cultural associations, and political ideologies, which can be generally grouped under the headings "Europe," "Zionism/Israel," "Jewish Diaspora," and "Middle East." A good deal of literature has noted that within the history of Zionism these fields were linked in a complex hierarchy. Gabi Piterberg and Gil Eyal have looked at the place of the Orient within the Zionist movement, and Amnon-Raz Krakotzin and Aziza Khazzoom have traced a hierarchy that linked Central European Jews, Eastern European Jews, and Oriental Jews and Arabs.[4] It is not surprising to find that cultural relationships were negotiated at all levels through discourse about language.

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[4] Piterberg, G. "Domestic Orientalism: The Representation of 'Oriental' Jews," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 23 (2) (1996): 125–45; Eyal, G. *The Disenchantment of the Orient* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, 2005); Raz-Krakotzkin, A. "The Zionist Return to the West and the Mizrahi Jewish Perspective," in *Orientalism and the Jews,* eds. Penslar, D. J., and Kalmar, I. D. (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2005), 162–81; Khazzoom, A. "The Great Chain of Orientalism: Jewish Identity, Stigma Management, and Ethnic Exclusion in Israel," *American Sociological Review* 68 (4) (2003): 481–510.

As languages of highest prestige and power, European languages have held an important place in this linguistic hierarchy. Markers of the allure and danger of the non–Jewish world and the enduring power of the West, economically, culturally, and politically, they are undeniably perceived as the most important non–Hebrew languages in Israel today. The growing influence of English on Hebrew is frequently scrutinised in the press. One concrete manifestation of this linguistic influence can be seen in a series of "*Lo'azit*-Hebrew" dictionaries, published since the pre–state period, which identify, define, and set apart the European linguistic contributions to Hebrew. Such reference volumes are necessary, Reuben Alcalay writes in the introduction to his 1967 dictionary, because "it is forbidden for a Hebrew dictionary to expand by including too many entries from foreign languages (*leshonot la'az*), lest it lose its Hebrew character." Foreign words are integral to Hebrew, he seems to indicate, but are to be kept separate from Hebrew even when they come into common usage so as to preserve a modicum of Hebrew purity. The goal of such a project is not only classificatory; it is also activist. Through this controlled juxtaposition of Hebrew and European languages, Alcalay suggests, the dictionary will bring "the beauty of Japheth into the tents of Shem" but will also create the possibility that "the Hebrew word that is provided alongside the foreign word will come to supplant the foreign word."[5]

For other dictionary editors, however, the influence of *Lo'azit* on Hebrew speaks to a more organic process of linguistic expansion and cultural normalisation. In the introduction to his 1955 *Dictionary of Foreign Words in Hebrew*, Dan Pines writes: "We are a people that has gathered together its scattered exiles and sects. Every sect brings along with it words, terms, and linguistic usages from its place of origin, its language, and its culture."[6] In the introduction to the 1972 expanded edition, his son Kapai Pines notes that influences on Hebrew come not only from Jewish immigrants but from pressures, some quite salutary, from the Western world:

> In the world of science and technology, medicine and business, new fields have been opened and new theories have been born. The various media—newspapers, films, radio, television and even literature, theatre and art—began to be more and more dependent on the problems of science and technology and their influence on the society, for good or ill. The primary

[5] Alcaly, R. "Introduction," in *Hebrew Lexicon of Foreign Words and Phrases* [Hebrew] (Ramat-Gan: Masada, 1967).
[6] Pines, D. "Introduction to First Edition [1955]," in *Dictionary of Foreign Words in Hebrew* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: 'Amihai, 1972).

> and secondary schools have broadened the scope of their curricula beyond recognition; the citizen encounters new products and new names on a daily basis, whose origin is foreign (*lo 'azi*). The various sciences and professions—social sciences as much as natural sciences and technology—frequently make use of international words from various languages, old and new.[7]

Foreign words, Pines sees, come into the Hebrew language because Hebrew culture is open to world culture. And it is open to this culture in precisely those areas in which the young state is most proud: academics, sciences, business, and technology.

The roots of this ambivalent relationship to *Lo 'azit*—attraction and gravitation on the one hand, and caution and concern on the other—stretch back centuries; these perspectives on language reflect a complex Jewish attraction to Europe that existed alongside a particularistic Jewish identity. *Lo 'azit* consistently coded to the places of highest culture, greatest prestige, and largest international influence and thus remained important to Jews who aspired to such attainments. It is no surprise, then, that Bernard Spolsky and Elana Shohamy have found that English holds high prestige for Hebrew speakers.[8] But prestige is a tricky matter, which derives from multiple sources. If *Lo 'azit* marked the appeal of the universal, Hebrew marked the particularistic and explicitly nationalist projects of the *Yishuv*, projects that entailed the rejection of Europe.

I draw from contemporary sociolinguistic theory in my contention that language is a tool through which groups negotiate their cultural identity and relationship to outside or overlapping groups. Itamar Even-Zohar forwards the theory of the polysystem, a set of language conventions and cultural features that exist in a dynamic, hierarchical relation to one another. In this model, every hegemonic power is organised around a "centre" which retains cultural pre–eminence by adapting or co-opting elements from polysystems on its periphery. The survival or disappearance of cultural features from peripheral systems depends on the ability of these specific features to perform a function within the central system.[9] Even-Zohar's interests centre on the Hebrew–Yiddish polysystem.[10] Yet this

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[7] Pines, K. "Introduction to the Expanded Edition," in *Dictionary of Foreign Words in Hebrew* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: 'Amihai, 1972).

[8] Spolsky, B., and Shohamy, E. *The Languages of Israel: Policy, Ideology, and Practice* (Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters, 1999).

[9] Even-Zohar, I. "The Emergence of a Native Hebrew Culture in Palestine, 1882–1948," *Poetics Today* 11 (1) (1990): 180.

[10] Even-Zohar, I. "Aspects of the Hebrew–Yiddish Polysystem: A Case of a Multilingual Polysystem," *Poetics Today* 11 (1) (1990): 129.

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theory can be expanded to explain not only a dyadic system, with two major linguistic elements, but to understand a broader set of polysystems that includes adjacent *lo 'azi* polysystems.

The theory of diglossia helps illuminate how and why global hierarchies of power become manifest in local debates about language. Coined by Charles Ferguson in 1959, the term was originally used to refer to a stable relationship between two linguistic varieties in a given society, one of which was called "high" and the other of which was called "low." Ferguson distinguished diglossia, the existence of two languages in a society, from bilingualism, which referred to an individual's ability to speak two languages.[11] While in Ferguson's understanding, the two languages in a situation of diglossia needed to be related (as with standard and colloquial Arabic) later theorists have expanded the notion of diglossia to describe a broader range of linguistic situations. In his 1998 study, *Language Wars and Linguistic Politics,* Jean-Louis Calvet coins the term "overlapping diglossia," to describe a situation in which multiple sets of language hierarchies overlap, often because of the influence of a foreign, colonial cultural system. In the case of colonial Tanzania, for example, there was one relationship of diglossia between English, the colonial language, and Swahili, the national language. At the same time, however, there was diglossia between Swahili, which was the mother tongue of only a small subset of the population, and other native African languages.[12] In numerous other colonial and post-colonial situations we find that European languages occupied the highest place in a two-part or multi-part linguistic hierarchy that also included sets of local mother tongues.[13]

A situation of "overlapping diglossia," I contend, obtained in the *Yishuv* as well. Israel Bartal is correct to note that modern Jewish nationalism promoted the idea that "the nation possesses *one* language, fulfilling all functions" and tried to bring about "an *end* to diglossia."In truth, the diglossia of Diaspora was transformed but not wholly eliminated by the Zionist movement. Like in Tanzania, a hierarchical network of languages obtained in the *Yishuv*, and not wholly against the will of secular Zionists. Each of the four sets of languages I have mentioned

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[11] Ferguson, C. "Diglossia," *Word* 15 (2) (1959): 325-40.

[12] Calvet, J. L. *Language Wars and Linguistic Politics,* tr. Petheram, M. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 26-31.

[13] See Obeng, S. G. "An Analysis of the Linguistic Situation in Ghana," *African Languages and Culture* 10 (1) (1997): 63-81; Britto, F. *Diglossia: A Study of the Theory with Application to Tamil* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1986); *Aspects of Arabic Sociolinguistics*, eds. Jernudd, B. H., and Ibrahim, M. H. (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyer, 1986).

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coded to and helped negotiate different sources of power and influence in the Hebrew cultural system. For Bartal, the only defenders of diglossia were religious Jews, who saw traditional (Hebrew–Yiddish) diglossia as a defence against Enlightenment.[14] As we will see, however, there also existed a diglossia between *Lo 'azit* and Hebrew that was as much a product of Enlightenment values as a defence against it.

Lo 'azit, then, can be understood a subject of inquiry in its own right rather than, as nationalist literature would have it, merely a persistent, pesky irritant in the Hebrew cultural system. It is possible for us to make several significant observations. First, the *Yishuv's* attitude toward the meaning of linguistic normalisation was highly ambivalent. While a dominant current in the historiography suggests a linear and conscious move from the Babel of the Diaspora to the monolingualism of Zionism, a persistent counter–current also emerged—in the process of normalising, expanding, and disseminating Hebrew, a pristine literary and religious language became increasingly and irrevocably coloured by the language of Western modernity. This influence was seen alternately as positive and negative. On the one hand, some thought, Hebrew had been transformed from an ossified but holy tongue to a mongrel, inarticulate language. On the other hand, influences from foreign languages indicated that Hebrew (like the Jewish people) was undergoing a natural process of development for the first time.

Second, we see that Zionists were unsure to what extent the *Yishuv* and Israel should become a unique culture, set in opposition to the non–Jewish world, and to what extent it should welcome and adopt foreign cultural influences. Tension between isolationism and receptivity extended to a range of linked discussions about foreign influences of all kinds: foreign labour, foreign funding, foreign artistic influences, and, as I will discuss, foreign literature. Efforts to promote a unified Hebrew literary culture conflicted in practice with a set of symbolic and practical desires to introduce the power and prestige of foreign words, concepts, and literature into an ever expanding national collective.

Finally, a look at how the category of *Lo 'azit* places the historiography on the Hebrew–Yiddish debates in a larger context. Naomi Seidman's *A Marriage Made in Heaven* and Yael Chaver's *What Must be Forgotten: The Survival of Yiddish in Zionist Palestine* (2004), are highly textured

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[14] Bartal, I. "From Traditional Bilingualism to National Monoligualism," in *Hebrew in Ashkenaz*, ed. Glinert, L. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 146–8.

readings of the bilingualism of early Zionist cultural life.[15] Yet this focus on Yiddish can obscure other sources of linguistic influence. Chaver, for example, has claimed that the 1913 language wars became a convenient symbol of the Hebrew revival because German "was never a contender for cultural dominance."[16] While Yiddish was inarguably the most important early linguistic influence on Hebrew speech, Chaver may be too quick to dismiss a second long term pressure on Hebrew culture—pressure not from Judeo–languages, the "low," mother tongues in the diglossic situation of the early *Yishuv*, but from the "high" languages of the West. Though they were the native languages of only a few, they were linked to universal values, political power, and cultural influence, and symbolised one powerful pole in a debate between national particularism and worldly universalism. The irony of the German Language Wars, then, stems not from the fact that *Lo'azit* was marginal, but that the great public celebration that surrounded the exclusion of German concealed the lingering importance of it and other European languages.

I. *Lo'azit* as a Symbol of Normalisation

While Zionists took Hebrew dominance to be a sign of national normalisation, few could deny that words regarded as "foreign" were in fact the markers of the mundane and the modern within a formerly holy language. H. N. Bialik theorised in 1917 that there existed two types of Jews, "original Jews," who were tied to the spirit of the nation, and "translated Jews, who live their lives not in their own language, but in foreign languages"; "Anyone who looks out through translation," he continued, "cannot but be seeing through a blurred lens and does not experience either all the flavor in the language or all his hearts desires, for language alone is the voice of the heart and soul."[17] A major theme in early writings on Hebrew is the imperative to return to a state of linguistic and national uniformity from a place of confused, foreign speech.

The imputed tie between language unity and psychological coherence was particularly influential on educational planning. The Hebrew school system was premised on drawing a distinction from foreign educational

[15] Seidman, N. *A Marriage Made in Heaven: The Sexual Politics of Hebrew and Yiddish* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Chaver, Y. *What Must be Forgotten: The Survival of Yiddish in Zionist Palestine* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004).

[16] Chaver, *What Must be Forgotten*, 19.

[17] Nachman-Bialik, H. [1917] "On Nation and Language" [Hebrew], in *Devarim she-be-'al peh* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1935), 16.

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institutions, which had dominated Jewish instruction during the Ottoman period. The move to a Hebrew framework was grounded in the assumption that the languages of the Diaspora obscured a true link between modern Zionism and the supposedly glorious achievements of ancient, Hebrew-speaking, Israel. Zeev Jabotinsky, the spiritual father of the Revisionist movement, insisted that the school system be rooted in Hebrew, for it was "the language in which all the spiritual works of Israel were written."[18] The contention that Hebrew could and should be the language of Zionist higher education also drove the foundation of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1925. "The modern revival of Hebrew," Bialik said at the inauguration of the university, "is in the strictest sense a revival. It is not an artificial galvanising into life of something from which the breath of life had wholly departed, nor on the other hand is it a new creation, a fresh start without a natural basis in the past. It is simply a re-awakening of the language, an actualisation of potentialities which were always present, under the stimulus of changed conditions."[19]

Language revival, however, could not be limited to the reclamation of a sacred language; the very act of normalisation required a process of desacralisation. Just as the re-entry of Jews into world history required the renunciation of holy timelessness, the move into secular culture required that Zionists move Hebrew from the protected banks of religious practice into the stream of foreign linguistic influence. Despite fervent advocacy on behalf of a unique and unified Hebrew culture, therefore, the border regions of language could never be and were never walled off by concrete barriers. Rather, European languages were to be afforded a real, but delimited place within Hebrew language and literature.

In 1918, Jabotinsky remarked on the natural process by which classical Hebrew would become adapted to modern circumstances. In his historical essay, "On the Question of the Hebrew Accent," Jabotinsky noted a set of mistakes in pronunciation that needed to be corrected, in part through the institution of a Sephardic accent. However, he noted, "perhaps this isn't completely a scourge, because with the beginning of a natural transition our language will acquire similar forms, in accordance with the process that almost all the languages of the modern world have undergone,

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[18] Jabotinsky, V. "Hebrew Education" [1903], cited in Karmi, S. *One Nation and One Language: the Language in Interdisciplinary Perspective* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Israel Ministry of Defense, 1997), 32.

[19] *The Hebrew University, Jerusalem: Inauguration April 1, 1925* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1925), 17–8.

particularly those that came from Latin stock."[20] While phonological mistakes smacked too harshly of diasporic existence, the influence of foreign languages on grammatical and stylistic modifications could be accepted or even welcomed. Michael Stanislawski paints Jabotinsky as a true cosmopolitan, steeped in the literary traditions, art, and music of Russia.[21] It is no surprise that Jabotinsky would consider the European linguistic influence a positive indication of its speakers' entry into the flow of history, a history that had previously been reserved for Indo–Europeans peoples and tongues.

Yitzhak Epstein, one of the foremost advocates of "Hebrew in Hebrew" pedagogy formulated a more circumscribed place for foreign languages in his 1947 *Hegyone lashon*. By that time, the stakes of the language revival were particularly evident. With European Jewry destroyed in the Holocaust and the state of Israel on the brink of formation, the imperative of defining a purely Hebrew cultural realm seemed evident. Epstein, a scholar of educational psychology, remarked on the damage that he thought could result from the use of a hybrid language (*lashon kil'ayim*). Hybridity, we might recall, was not only anathema to the romantic nationalist conception of unique nationhood, it also contradicted a set of rules in the Torah against mixing different types of species. "In order to prevent pain of animals," Epstein wrote, "our Torah forbid us from plowing with an ox and a donkey together, since they are different in their constitution, their strength, and the speed of their movement—how much the more so must we be careful not to think in two languages at once, lest we spiritually plow in alternating directions and lest we subject upon our limbs two types of labors that interfere with one another." History had drawn Hebrew into the maelstrom of foreign influence. "Such a mixture," he warned, "has spread constantly and commonly in our language. In the guise of Hebrew words, varieties of foreign language (*La'az*) have frequently entered in the form of concepts and syntax. Therefore, we speak in several languages even when, to the ear, we are speaking pure Hebrew. This hybridity does not only do damage to the thoughts that are expressed, but also act for ill."[22]

For such pronouncements, Epstein has been apotheosised by the historiography. Shlomo Haramati writes that Epstein "saw his mission in the 1920s as a one who guarded the purity of Hebrew and defended its

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[20] Jabotinsky, V. "On the Question of the Hebrew Accent" [Hebrew], in *Education: A Pedagogical Collection* [Hebrew], ed. Turov, N. (Jaffa: 1918), 54.
[21] Stanislawski, M. *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 203–29.
[22] Epstein, Y. *Hegyone lashon* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1947), 6–7.

original style against the expected onslaught of foreign language (*la 'az*)."[23] Yet Epstein understood that Jews might need to speak different languages in different settings. In this case, he advised, they should confine each language to its own space and not transition quickly from one language to another. The articulation of separate linguistic spheres was not merely a capitulation, it was a recognition that Jews needed to, and indeed should operate in several cultural spheres even as they honed a unique Hebrew culture.[24]

The distinction between impurity and innovation was necessarily a fine one. Shlomo Morag suggests that a principle reason for the ambivalence over foreign language was that the very act of Hebrew revival required a reckoning with all aspects of the world, Jewish and non–Jewish. One of the most important goals of the Hebrew revival, he writes, was to find semiotic substitutes, a need which "stemmed from the very essence of the return to Zion, from the exaltation of the value of the destination land, and the assumption that the new world was preferable to the old world."[25] Linguistic work was one of the most concrete and urgent tasks in this process. This task fell principally to the Hebrew Language Academy (and its predecessor, the Hebrew Language Committee). If to name something was to bring it into being, then to find a Hebrew word for a foreign concept was to give it a Hebrew cultural existence. The Hebrew Language Committee, founded by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda in 1889, strove to do this work of preservation. Ze'ev Ben-Hayim writes that the Committee had two goals: to continue the process of Hebrew creation that had been ongoing since the days of the Second Temple, and to preserve the literary Hebrew language in order "that it not be marred and not be forgotten."[26]

Creation, however, was often at odds with preservation. The historiography of the academy lauds the valiant efforts to find Hebrew words for all modern circumstances but has also identified the ways in which foreign words came to be part of Hebrew. In his 1996 essay on the

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[23] Haramati, S. "Yitzhak Epstein: A Man of the Language" [Hebrew], *Leshonenu la-'am* 33 (8–9) (1982): 22.

[24] Epstein, *Hegyone lashon*, 6. A similar sentiment is expressed by Shlomo Morag, who argued for a separation between Hebrew and "slang." See Morag, S. "On Language Errors and Ways of Rooting Them Out" [Hebrew], in *'Iyunim be-'Ivrit le-dorotehah*, eds. Bar-Asher, M., et al. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2003), 201–2.

[25] Morag, S. [1990] "The New Hebrew in its Crystallization: Language from the Point of View of Society" [Hebrew], in *'Iyunim be-'Ivrit le-dorotehah*, eds. Bar-Asher, M., et al. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2003), 335.

[26] Ben-Hayyim, Z. *The Struggle for a Language* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Hebrew Language Academy, 1992), 123.

formation of new words, Uzi Ornan notes that Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and early Hebrew Language Committee tried to avoid foreign borrowings. Ornan argues that this insistence on Hebrew purism reflects the influence of the German *maskilim*, who regarded post–biblical Hebrew negatively and who may have also been influenced by a trend in German to create new coinages from within the language. The Second Aliyah (wave of immigration), however, was influenced by Russian conventions of using Latinate and other West European words as part of a transnational lexicon. Thus, words like "civilisation," "autonomy," and "progress," were adapted in their Russian form.[27] When language served national purposes, Hebrew was the only option, but when it conveyed "universal ideas," universal languages were employed.

II. *Lo'azit* as Part of a Discourse about Foreignness

As we have seen, proponents of Hebrew had two goals: to preserve the essentially Jewish quality of Hebrew and to expand the language to include a range of semiotic concepts that had previously been thought and expressed only in other languages. This tension between nativist and expansionist impulses, if we can use a different metaphor, is part and parcel of a larger discourse of foreignness that pervaded the *Yishuv*. While Hebrew culture could be defined only in opposition to established European models, it could, paradoxically, only be built on the basis of and under the influence of these models.

The most well researched discourse on foreign influences related to the economic activities of the *Yishuv*, specifically, the extent to which foreign labour should be allowed in the farms and factories of the *Yishuv*. Members of the First Aliyah, many of whose settlements were funded by the Baron Rothschild, frequently employed cheaper Arab labourers. This apparent valuation of economic efficiency over national cultivation irked members of the Second Aliyah, who called for policy of "Hebrew Labour." "Hebrew" labour unions, agricultural cooperatives, and cities tended increasingly towards separation between Jewish and Arab areas. *'Avodah 'Ivrit*, Hebrew labour, existed in contradistinction to *'avodah*

[27] Ornan, U. "Ways of Coining New Words" [Hebrew], in *Ha-lashon ha-'Ivrit be-hitpathutah uve-hithadshutah: hartza'ot le-regel melot me'ah shanah le-yisud Ya'ad ha-lashon ha-'Ivrit* (Jerusalem: ha-Akademyah ha-le'umit ha-Yisre'elit le-mada'im, 1996), 79.

zarah, foreign labour, a phrase which denoted idol worship and sacrilege in the Jewish tradition.[28]

While "*'avodah zarah*" in the economic setting was mainly Arab labour, in the realm of high culture *zarut* (foreignness) was perceived to derive from Western sources.[29] Debates over foreign versus native culture, scholars have shown, pervaded the world of arts and letters. In a piece on the creation of Hebrew culture, Zohar Shavit argues that in the 1930s and 1940s the institutional structures of the *Yishuv* strove to create an "*Eretzisraeli*" repertoire in opposition to Diaspora Jewish culture. The continued influx of European immigrants led to struggles between the founders who wanted to continue the cultural work that they had undertaken in Europe, and those founders who had grown up in Palestine.

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[28] On the history of labor ideology and Jewish-Arab contacts in the workforce see Shafir, G. *Land, Labor and the Origians of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict 1882–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Lockman, Z. *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); and Bernstein, D. *Constructing Boundaries: Jewish and Arab Workers in Mandatory Palestine* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000). Ran Aaronsohn has argued that the distinction between exploitation and exclusivity was part of a larger negotiation about the particular form of colonisation that the Zionist movement would undertake; Aaronsohn, R. "Settling Eretz-Israel: A Colonial Enterprise?" in *Zionism: A Contemporary Controversy-Research Trends and Ideological Approaches* [Hebrew], eds. Ginossar, P., and Bareli, A. (Be'er Sheva: Ben Gurion University of the Negev Press, 1996), 342–3.

[29] One element of the Western world was the Jewish Diaspora, whose funds helped build the Yishuv but whose influence was not always welcome. Jewish leaders both in Palestine and elsewhere theorised about whether Zionism should carve out its own path or be instead the leader of, and an integral part of, the larger Jewish world; whether or not the Yishuv was linked to the religious identity of the Diaspora; and to what extent the Yishuv should welcome monetary aid and ideological guidance from outside Jewish communities. The issue came to a head in the case of the Herzliya Gymnasium, whose faculty asserted their distance from the Diaspora particularly forcefully. Shmaryahu Levin, a leading figure in the Keren Ha-Yesod, stated that "the students' parents will never accept overseers from the lands of exile, whose only advantage is that at the moment they content themselves with seeing only the shadows of things from a distance." In this case, and countless others, Arieh Saposnik argues, "though the issue appeared to be a more general cultural conflict between traditionalists and more radical secularists, the substance of the cultural content in question was, from the outset, linked directly to the gap between the Diaspora and the center of the national revival in Palestine." Saposnik, A. "'...Will Issue Forth from Zion?': The Emergence of a Jewish National Culture in Palestine and the Dynamics of Yishuv-Diaspora Relations," *Jewish Social Studies* 10 (1) (2003): 164.

At Bezalel, the art school in Jerusalem, a debate arose about the proper appearance of Hebrew drawing vis-à-vis European models. In music, tensions flared between those who wanted to cultivate a Hebrew musical tradition and those who wanted to perform classical European pieces.[30] Finally, Hebrew writers discussed the place of translated foreign literature within the Hebrew publishing world.

The salient point in these debates is not, it should be clear, that some advocates of Hebrew spurned Western culture. The disagreements also show that Zionists in Palestine also expressed their attraction to, interest in, or dependency on foreigners. Indeed, "the explosion of native Palestinian cultural activity was made possible in no small measure by increased Diaspora Zionist involvement in the economic, political, social, and cultural life of the *Yishuv*."[31]

Language was only one of multiple realms of cultural contact but it was an object of inordinate interest. In the booming business of literary translation into Hebrew from German, Russian, French, or English, cultural questions were articulated in particularly stark terms. According to Zohar and Yaacov Shavit's survey, between 1908 and 1928, 247 translated books were published, compared with 493 original Hebrew books. After 1928, the number of translated books in the *Yishuv* exceeded the number of original books, in part because of the major translation enterprise being promoted by the Shtibl press in Warsaw.[32] Translation from European languages was a site of negotiation between Hebrew and non–Hebrew language. In his 1977 article, "The Place of Translated Literature in the Polysystem of Literature," Even-Zohar argues that translated texts provide insight into a vital process of cultural selection, wherein a culture determines which elements of a foreign or adjacent culture are worthy of attention or imitation.[33] Far from a fluid process, this integration is fraught with conflict. William Cutter argues that translation projects were "a source of considerable anxiety among writers and intellectuals during the Second and Third Aliyot, with different shades of anxiety at different

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[30] Shavit, Z. "The Development of the Center," in *Toldot ha-yishuv ha-Yehudi be-Eretz Yiśrael me-az ha-'aliyah ha-rishonah*, eds. Lissak, M., and Shavit, Z. (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1998), 88.

[31] Saposnik, "Will Issue Forth from Zion," 157.

[32] Shavit, Z., and Shavit, Y. "Le-male' et ha-'aretz sefarim," *Ha-Sifrut* 25 (1977): 51.

[33] Even-Zohar, I. "Ma'amadah shel ha-sifrut ha-meturgemet be-tokh ha-rav-ma'arekhet shel ha-sifrut," *Ha-Sifrut* 25 (1977): 40.

times."[34] The study of translation, he shows presents "the opportunity to study how culture develops and how a specific culture grows through its alliances and its battles with cultures foreign to it."[35]

While Bialik had warned of the perils of spiritual translation from the Hebrew original into European languages, the practical process of translation happened in reverse. Jewish cultural creations in the Diaspora were overwhelmingly composed in foreign languages and needed to be translated to Hebrew. The paradox of this situation was not lost on the principle figures involved in these translation projects. In the 1900s and 1910s, all agreed that Hebrew was stricken with linguistic poverty in comparison to the full–bodied European languages. The poet and translator Jacob Fichmann remarked that "the most recent period, the period of building up our literature has led everyone to undertake a spiritual reckoning. Upon seeing the foreign baggage that has entered our culture from the universal spiritual treasuries, we are forced to assess our life's work and it is impossible that we not experience mental weakness."[36] Asher Barash, who translated Harriet Beecher Stowe, Daniel Defoe, Oswald Spengler and Friedrich Schiller into Hebrew, reflected that "[t]he winds that are coming in through all the open windows may weaken the holy spirit of our culture, but it is good that it is being done." Hebrew literature, he thought, couldn't remain such a small body of work. It needed to grow through the selective and systematic importation and inclusion of foreign material, mainly from German, Russian, English, and French.[37]

Na'ama Sheffi has provided a series of case studies about German literature that illustrate the dynamics of cultural transference. Germany was a particularly active locus of Jewish cultural activity. Between 1880 and 1910, the number of foreign Jews in Germany grew from 17,000 to more than 79,000, 88% of whom had come from the East.[38] These Eastern European Jews, many of whom shared a love of Hebrew literature, became the principle translators of German books into Hebrew. The German language, however, carried a complex set of associations. On the one

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[34] Cutter, W. "Translation and the Project of Culture: On Transferring Western Literature into Hebrew: 1893-1930," in *Bits of Honey Bits of Honey: Essays for Samson H. Levey*, eds. Chyet, S., and Ellenson, D. H. (Atlanta: Scholars' Press, 1993), 211.

[35] Cutter, "Translation and the Project of Culture," 215.

[36] Cited in Shavit, and Shavit, "Le-male' et ha-'aretz sefarim," 46.

[37] Barash cited in Shavit, and Shavit, "Le-male' et ha-'aretz sefarim," 46.

[38] Sheffi, N. *German in Hebrew: Translations from German in the Hebrew Yishuv* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Yitzhak Ben-Tzvi, 1998), 22.

hand, Sheffi argues, Jews had "unlimited admiration" for German culture, which some thought could be a model for Hebrew literature. On the other hand, with the *Hilfsverein* controversy about German language study in Palestine, German seemed a particular threat to Hebrew culture.[39] The anxiety about German grew exponentially, as might be expected, in the wake of the Nazi rise to power. Immediately after 1933, one of the *Yishuv*'s primary concerns was their potential loss of connection with German culture, which many continued to esteem.[40] Yet this admiration soon shifted. After 1933, Sheffi argues, "German culture was put through a political filter"; some German items were welcomed into the *Yishuv* only if and precisely because the Nazis had banned them. Jewish or anti–Nazi authorship became the main criterion for translation; any works with seeming ties to the Nazis were excluded. "The function of the German culture-in-exile had changed from the old role of spiritual mentor to a guideline for Jewish survival and a medium of protest."[41] Germany at once represented the absolute and literal destruction of Jewish community by the Diaspora and the setting in which Jewish culture had flourished. Publishing houses found themselves struggling with two opposite impulses: to create a subsistence economy in language, so to speak, using only homegrown words the same way they would eat only homegrown fruit, or, on the other hand, to open themselves to imports of (often morally ambiguous) linguistic and cultural goods. The line between involvement and interference was never absolute, and was continually contested.

III. *Lo'azit* as the "High" Language in a Situation of Overlapping Diglossia

Hebrew revivers drew motivation from a perceived and constructed division between Hebrew culture, the culture of Jewish modernity, and Yiddish, the purported culture of Jewish atavism. In the rubric of Zionism, Yiddish coded to femininity, powerlessness, and Diaspora degeneracy. The founding document of *Safah Berurah*, the Hebrew Language Organisation established by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda in 1889, stated that its

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[39] Sheffi, N. "The Hebrew Absorption of German Literature in the Yishuv," *Israel Affairs* 5 (4) (1999): 162.
[40] Sheffi, N. "Rejecting the Other's Culture: Hebrew and German in Israel 1933-1965," *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch fuer Deutsche Geschichte* 27 (1998): 307.
[41] Ibid., 311.

goal was to "root out inarticulate languages from among the Jews of Palestine, the Ashkenazi Jargon [Yiddish] and the Sephardic Jargon [Ladino], etc., which divide the hearts of those who speak that and make them as thought they were members of other nations, and cause a terrible schism of opinions, manners, and customs, to the extent that the Sephardi will call only another Sephardi a 'Jew' and the Ashkenazi will only call and Ashkenazi a 'Jew,' as is known."[42] In his 1910 essay "Language War," Ahad Ha-'Am presented his defence of Hebrew as the sole language of the Jewish people. "For a language to be a national language," he wrote, in a clear attack on Yiddish "it is not enough for it to be a mother tongue; it also needs to contain the spiritual treasures of a nation from generation to generation."[43] In the hierarchy of Jewish languages, he thought, Yiddish lacked a spiritual dimension.

In truth, Yiddish was threatening not because it was the language of an anti–modern Jewish world, but because it, like Hebrew, had come to represent a form of particularly Jewish modern secular nationalism. Benjamin Harshav writes that in the period beginning in 1882, three sets of linked "modern Jewish revolutions" took shape. Jews in Europe wrote works of modern literature in Yiddish, Hebrew, and in European language.[44] A form of this Yiddish–primary multilingualism marked a certain variety of Eastern European modernity. The debate between Hebrew and Yiddish, in truth, was an internal debate about which Jewish language should serve as the particularist nationalist language of the Jewish people.

Yet the internal Jewish diglossia of Yiddish and Hebrew, however important, complex, and contested, was not the only diglossia navigated by the *Yishuv*. Throughout the history of Israel, and especially after Yiddish was incapacitated by the Holocaust, another pressing linguistic question troubled Zionists: what would be the relationship of Hebrew, the chosen and victorious particularist language, to European languages, the undisputed universal languages? While scholarship in modern Jewish history has formulated the tension between Jewish particularism and universalism in the Diaspora, works on the Hebrew revival largely collapse this dichotomy, when they accept at face value Zionists' claim that Modern Hebrew was the finally unified linguistic marker of Jewish particularism and universalism. In fact, however, the tension between

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[42] Cited in Nir, "The Role of Yishuv Institutions," 38.

[43] Ahad Ha-'Am, "The Language Quarrel" [Hebrew], in *'Al parashat derakhim* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1953), 116–23.

[44] Harshav, B. *Language in Time of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 26–8.

Hebrew and *Lo'azit* persisted in the *Yishuv* and in the State of Israel as Zionists, like other Jews continued to debate the meaning of Jewish modernity.

Hebrew and *Lo'azit*, for centuries, had been twin markers of Jewish entry into secular culture. The ideologues of the eighteenth–century German haskalah held that the source and marker of Jewish cultural atrophy was a reliance on Yiddish. In his response to the 1781 Edict of Toleration issued by Emperor Joseph II of Austria, *Words of Peace and Truth*, Naftali Herz Wessely lamented that Jews "had become estranged from the Gentiles and their languages." Thus, he said, "we did not learn to read their books, and, it goes without saying, we did not learn to speak their language accurately."[45] The turn from Yiddish to Hebrew and German was an explicitly anti–religious and anti–clerical move. As Shmuel Feiner writes of the *Maskil* David Friedlander's opinion: "In contrast to the idea of pure language, Hebrew or German, which was the only medium through which cogent, comprehensible concepts could be taught to schoolchildren, the poor, imprecise rabbinical language was standing in the way of their understanding of the scriptures."[46] A similar dual acceptance of Hebrew and *Lo'azit*—and rejection of Yiddish—was present in the early stages of the Eastern European Haskalah. In his 1828 *Te'udah be-Yisra'el*, Yitzhak Beer Levinsohn called upon Russian Jews in book his to discard Yiddish in favour of Hebrew and the language of the society in which they lived.[47] He showed that the most illustrious rabbis in Jewish history were versed in several foreign languages as well as worldly skills. From the beginning of Jewish modernity, then, Jewish communities articulated two different realms of modern secular culture: one was particularistic; its literary life to be conducted in a particularly Jewish language. The other was universal and its literary life was to be conducted in the surrounding language.

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[45] Wessely. N. H. [1782], "Words of Peace and Truth," in *The Jew in the Modern World,* eds. Mendes-Flohr, P., and Reinharz, J. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 72.

[46] Feiner, S. *The Jewish Enlightenment,* tr. Naor, C. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 273. Steven Lowenstein has shown that the construct of linguistic difference between German and Yiddish was part of a broad cultural attempt to formalise distinctions between Jewishness and German–ness, religiosity and secularism, traditionalism and worldliness. See Lowenstein, S. "The Complicated Language Situation of German Jewry: 1760–1914," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 36 (2002–2003): 3–29.

[47] Levinsohn, I. B. [1828], *Te'udah be-Yisra'el* (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center, 1977), 36.

Rejection of assimilationism was the *sine qua non* of Zionism. Yet Zionists never shed the perennial Jewish desire for integration in international culture and politics. At three sites of influence and integration we find a discourse about Western influence on Zionism and Israel. First, Israeli openness to the Western news media has provoked concerns about Hebrew style. In his *Hegyone lashon,* for example, Epstein warned of a series of common journalistic mistakes that come from foreign influence.[48] Joshua Blau, in his comparative study of the creation of Modern Hebrew and the creation of Modern Standard Arabic, points out that both Hebrew and Arabic were traditional religious languages that, in the process of adaptation to modern usage, were heavily influenced by European languages. Articles from Russian, German, French, and English newspapers, when translated into Hebrew (or Arabic) would preserve certain vocabulary and syntactic features from the source languages, which often to critiques from purists that the language was being corrupted. "Journalistic phraseology penetrates even higher literary language, since authors, reading newspapers, are influenced by their style."[49]

Second, *Lo 'azit* has been essential to academic and scientific communities. Anita Shapira has pointed out that unlike in Europe the Jewish nationalist project was not orchestrated by the university, but rather by the socialist labour movement.[50] Instead, the University remained connected to and heavily influenced by more prestigious European institutions. This scholarly hierarchy led to specific linguistic outcomes. As Nina Kheimets and Alek Epstein explain, prior to World War II, German was the lingua franca of the academic community; following the war English rose in its place. Precisely because members of the *Yishuv* and Israel were so successful in joining international bodies, new technical terms entered the Hebrew language at a rapid rate and threatened the efforts of the Hebrew Language Academy to replace them with Hebrew terms.[51] While Hebrew had come to represent the agricultural work of the

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[48] Epstein, *Hegyone lashon,* 242–76.

[49] Blau, J. *The Renaissance of Modern Hebrew and Modern Standard Arabic: Parallels and Differences in the Revival of Two Semitic Languages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 61.

[50] Shapira, A. "The Zionist Labor Movement and the Hebrew University," *Judaism* 45 (2) (1996): 183–98.

[51] Kheimets, N. G., and Epstein, A. D. "Languages of Science in the Era of Nation-State Formation: The Israeli Universities and Their (Non)-Participation in the Revival of Hebrew," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 26 (1) (2005): 12–36.

Yishuv, European languages continued to mark the intelligencia, high culture, and institutional prestige.

Third, foreign language knowledge has been a way of negotiating international politics. In all its international negotiations, the Zionist movement benefited from the multilingualism of its leaders: Weizmann's negotiations with the British brought about the Balfour Declaration, Judah Magnes worked in America on behalf of the Hebrew University, and Chaim Arlosoroff negotiated with the Third Reich to orchestrate the transfer of German Jewish finances to Palestine. Zionists had more ongoing political connections as well. Jews regularly occupied positions in the British Mandatory government and used English to communicate with British authorities. The existence of a Jewish polity in the midst of the Arab Middle East required and continues to require the support of foreign governments.

Gil'ad Zuckerman has recast modern Israeli speech as a linguistic mixture so distinct from Hebrew that it deserves to be called "Israeli" rather than "Hebrew."[52] The nomenclature reflects more than the fact that Israeli speech stems from multiple linguistic sources. Rather, Zuckerman's impulse to separate "Israeli" from "Hebrew" also reflects the fact that the term "Hebrew," so deeply coded to cultural specificity and Jewish exceptionalism, doesn't fully capture the cultural identity of a people as influenced by foreign ideas, movements, and politics as by homegrown ideology. The attraction to cosmopolitanism, influence, power, and prestige, the classic diasporic impulse, was an integral part of the Zionist movement itself.

[52] Zuckermann, G. *Israeli is a Beautiful Language: So What Language Do You Speak?* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 2008).