ARCHETYPES AND AVATARS: A CASE STUDY OF THE CULTURAL VARIABLES OF MODERN JUDAIC DISCOURSE THROUGH THE SELECTED LITERARY WORKS OF A. B. YEHOSHUA, CHAIM POTOK, AND CHOCHANA BOUKHOBZA

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by
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ABSTRACT

A defining characteristic of secular Jewish literatures since the Haskalah, or the movement toward “Jewish Enlightenment” that began around the end of the eighteenth century, is the reliance upon the archetypal aspects of the Judaic tradition, together with a propensity for intertextual pastiche and dialogue with the sacred texts. Indeed, from the revival of the Hebrew language at the end of the nineteenth century and all throughout the defining events of the last one hundred years, the trend of the textually sacrosanct appearing as a persistent motif in Judaic cultural production has only increased.

What the discipline of literary studies has neglected to analyze, however, are the comparative aspects of such a rapport, with respect to the interpretive differences in the composition of modern Jewish fiction across geo-political, linguistic, and gender-based paradigms. To that end, this project presents a case study of the cultural variables of modern Judaic discourse through an archetypal analysis of selections from secular Modern Hebrew, Anglo-American, and Francophone Maghrebian Jewish fiction, focusing on the literary works of three major Jewish writers, all of whom were born in the last century. These writers are: the Israeli author A. B. Yehoshua (1936–); the American author Chaim Potok (1929–2002); and the Tunisian-born, French-Israeli author Chochana Boukhobza (1959–). These particular authors are relevant for a study of Judaic cultural variables because the literary works of all three have been characterized by their tendency to use religion, myth, and metanarratives to probe crises of identity and interaction in the modern Jewish paradigm. Included in this study are the analyses of Yehoshua’s short stories “Hamefaked haaharon” (“The Last Commander”) (1962) and

The central methodology used in this study has been taken from the discipline of “archetypal” post-Jungian psychology, which defines archetypes as recurrent themes, motifs, or figures, historically transmitted as patterns or models, which seem to follow a specific ethnic blueprint. This approach implies that many different interpretations of a people’s sub-cultural disposition may be found in a single archetype, depending on the specific sub-group involved. For example, the archetypes present in the common intertextual Judaic narratives or motifs that function as the building blocks for Yehoshua’s, Potok’s, and Boukhobza’s fiction include the Binding of Isaac; the revelation to Moses at Mt. Sinai; and the enigma of the “Shekhinah,” the feminine presence of the Divine. And yet, each author engages in a specific, exegetical midrash of these long-held stories based on his or her particular sub-cultural worldview.

A careful examination of each writer’s response to the Judaic textual tradition demonstrates the ways in which the modern interpretation of foundational Judaic narratives is codetermined by several key environmental factors. These factors include: geo-political affiliation; degree of religious observance; attitudes regarding gender roles; and notions of ethnicity. Such factors create the conceptual frameworks through which Jewish writers from differing backgrounds reference, recast, re-envision, or subvert traditional and/or religious figures, themes, tropes, discourses, or narratives from the
intertextual reservoir of Judaic culture. The foundational texts in this reservoir are made up of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Talmud, the Kabbalah, and other celebrated, canonical works that are familiar to Jews the world over as symbolic points of reference. Jewish writers who choose to incorporate into their literary texts well-known elements from the continuum of Judaic textual history ultimately generate the meaning of this incorporation by way of the sub-cultural variables that define the nature of their respective, environmentally-based conceptual frameworks. In the same way that the differences in those frameworks illustrate the sub-cultural schisms that exist between modern Jewish sub-groups, such frameworks are also responsible for the varieties of aesthetic formulae chosen to depict those schisms in the literary text.

The core contribution of this project for the field of literary studies is that it is the first to examine the comparative aspects of the cultural variables in the concept of “Jewishness” as this concept appears in the context of Jewish literatures. It also breaks new ground in that it offers explanations as to why the idea of “Jewish literature” as literature produced by groups of dissimilar Jews must undergo the same scholarly reckoning in literary studies as the idea of “Jewish communities” has in sociological and anthropological surveys. This research, therefore, represents the first step toward a broader attempt at troubling the notion of “Jewish literatures” across geo-political, linguistic, and gender-based paradigms.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Preliminary Remarks: Background and Context

In the twentieth century, world Jewry experienced a transformation on the cultural, geo-political, and demographic levels. It was the era in which Jewish emancipation and national aspirations reached their zenith; and yet, it was also the age in which the Jewish people came close to total annihilation. In particular, two of the twentieth century’s most tumultuous, watershed events for the Jews—the Holocaust and the birth of the modern-day state of Israel—brought about changes that were far-reaching for Jewish communities all over the world. The ensuing repercussions from those changes continue to function as an impetus for some of the most profound and heated polemics in the history of the Jews. As with other cultural schisms, these polemics have found an apt medium of expression in literary texts. Of course, such texts do not exclude their historical predecessors. On the contrary: in many cases, they rely upon those very texts’ recurring archetypal narratives, figures, tropes, and discourses in order to create a symbolic dialogue with the collective unconscious.

In that vein, a defining characteristic of secular Jewish literatures since the Haskalah, or the movement toward “Jewish Enlightenment” that began around the end of the eighteenth century, is the reliance upon the archetypal aspects of the Judaic tradition, together with a propensity for intertextual pastiche and dialogue with the sacred texts. Ruth Kartun-Blum has aptly chosen to describe such a literary institution as “the
prophet’s tongue in our cheek” (1). Glenda Abramson echoes this description, asserting that, “Modern Jewish myths . . . are no longer expressed exclusively through sacred literature but in the cinema and theater, in modern literary texts, in historical memory and personal narrative, and through modernized archetypes” (vi).1 Indeed, from the revival of the Hebrew language at the end of the nineteenth century and all throughout the defining events of the last one hundred years, the trend of the textually sacrosanct appearing as a persistent motif in Judaic cultural production has only increased. From the standpoint of literary criticism, there is no shortage of material on the intertextual relationship between modern Jewish writing and the Bible: most notably, the research of Alter, Jacobson, Shaked, and Feldman has been exceptionally insightful in elucidating the rapport between the sacred and the profane in twentieth-century secular Jewish literatures.

What remains to be analyzed are the comparative aspects of such a rapport, since literary criticism has yet to provide an examination of the interpretive differences in the composition of modern Jewish fiction across geo-political, linguistic, and gender-based paradigms. To that end, this project presents a case study of the cultural variables of modern Judaic discourse through an archetypal analysis of selections from secular Anglo-American, Modern Hebrew, and Francophone Maghrebian Jewish fiction. In so doing, it focuses on the following questions: If one treats the literary text as a microcosm of the social circumstances in which it was written (and therefore as an intertextual product of a certain historical sensibility), how does the literary work differ from author to author, even if each of the authors purports an allegiance to the Jewish people? How much, if at

1 See also in this volume Yassif 1–14.
all, is a Jewish writer’s worldview dependent upon the particular geo-political/religious praxis in which he or she is raised? Moreover, how should these factors be considered in light of the variant ways in which Jewish writers from divergent backgrounds rely upon—and yet, ultimately re-envision, subvert, or recast—traditional and/or religious narratives, figures, themes, or discourses from the intertextual reservoir of Judaic culture?

In order to elucidate the above-stated relations between the cultural variables of Jewish sub-groups and modern Judaic literary discourse, I present in this study an archetypal analysis of the literary works of three major Jewish authors, all of whom were born in the twentieth century: the Israeli writer A. B. Yehoshua (1936–); the American writer Chaim Potok (1929–2002); and the Tunisian-born, French-Israeli writer Chochana Boukhobza (1959–). In addition to being award-winning novelists, all three authors have been lauded as public intellectuals who consistently attempt to problematize their modern-day Jewish conditions. For example, Yehoshua’s writing is characterized by the struggle against militarism in Israeli society; by the search for a national (rather than religious) basis for Israeli identity; and by the drive toward peace with his country’s Arab neighbors. Potok’s work relies heavily on a newfound sense of American identity, coupled with cautious spiritual optimism; a need to merge tradition with modernity; and the attempt to break away from religious fundamentalism. Boukhobza’s novels focus on the role of women in contemporary Judeo-Maghrebian culture, addressing such issues as the drive toward female agency in the shadow of the patriarchy and stringent traditionalism of North African Jewish communities, as well as the subsequent familial dissolutions and cultural assimilation encountered upon those communities’ immigration to countries with more “liberal” social structures (e.g., France and Israel). All of these
writers use common, intertextual Judaic narratives, myths, or motifs as the building blocks for their fiction, such as the Binding of Isaac (known in Christianity as the Sacrifice of Isaac), the revelation to Moses at Mt. Sinai, or the enigma of the Shekhinah (the composite of the feminine attributes of the Divine Presence). And yet, each author engages in a specific, exegetical “midrashic” (hermeneutic) interpretation of these long-held stories, which, I propose, may be directly attributed to his or her specific sub-cultural affiliation.

The significance of this project lies in its study of the heretofore-neglected links between cultural variables and Judaic literary inception, especially within the framework of current sociological and anthropological scholarship accorded to the pressing question of what precisely constitutes the definition of “Jewish.” The theoretical assumptions of this work rest on the established ethnographic deduction that the generalizing banner of “‘the Jewish people’ does not describe how Jewish identities and communities operate,” and that “the idea of unity [among Jews] is often mobilized to create a semblance of collective solidarity in response to historical persecution or in order to make Jews feel responsible for people with whom they may have very little in common” (Aviv and Shneer 20).

Taking that perspective into account, this study not only explores the varying degrees to which the “Jewishness” of the authors in question takes center stage in their literary works; it also sheds light on the particular category of Jewishness depicted, and then proposes an explanation as to why such categories are presented as divergent, and, at times, conflicting. In so doing, this study bases itself on sociological, anthropological, and historical research concerning disparities in Jewish identity, as well as on literary
scholarship regarding Jewish literary movements. The goal of this research, then, is to analyze, from an archetypal perspective, the ways in which the highly pluralistic dynamics of the ethnic groups that make up modern-day Jewry manifest themselves in literary texts.

A cross-cultural approach to the investigation into secular Jewish literatures provides, on the one hand, a counter-balance to the “value-oriented” (e.g., propagandistic) generation of Jewish literary critics, such as Baruch Kurzweil and Yosef Oren. Kurzweil, for instance, decries the “subversive” content of modern Jewish literature, lamenting the fact that it presupposes a break with the accepted ideological conventions of traditional Jewish values (Sifruṭeinu 15–16). On the other hand, my work shares theoretical affinities with the thesis of Dan Miron, according to which there is no such thing as “Jewish literature.” Rather, there are “independent Jewish literatures” and “Jewish-oriented literary developments, which evolved within the contexts of non-Jewish literatures” (“Modern Hebrew Literature” 95).

It may seem gratuitous at this point to underline the fact that Jewish communities the world over have always been influenced by the environments that surrounded them.

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2 For instance, see Schmueli, Caryn and Shneer, and Ben-Rafael, “The Space and Dilemmas of Contemporary Jewish Identities”; regarding Jewish literary movements, see Miron, “Modern Hebrew Literature,” and Wirth-Nesher.

3 Translation mine (all other translations from the Hebrew, French, and Arabic are my own, unless otherwise noted). The quote used by Kurzweil is listed as taken from the following work: Max Wiener, Jüdische Religion im Zeitalter der Emanzipation [Jewish Religion in the Era of the Emancipation] (Berlin: Philo Verlag, 1933), 5.

4 For a similar approach, see Shamir and Holtzman.
Indeed, many well-known Jews, such as Sigmund Freud, Franz Kafka, Karl Marx, Primo Levi, or even Bob Dylan, are frequently held up as examples of Jewish individuals who were influenced just as much by their local culture(s) as they were by any kind of common Jewish background. Nonetheless, such historical and ethnographic logic has not yet found an ample audience inside the domain of literary research. As I demonstrate in this case study, archetypal methodology (detailed below) is a particularly appropriate framework by which to undertake an innovative, radical rethinking of the differences in symbolic imagery across the linguistic, national, and gender-based lines in comparative Jewish literatures. From that perspective, I am in full accord with Miron’s widely-accepted supposition, germane to both ethnographic and literary studies, according to which “one of the inherent and most significant characteristics of Jewish history in modern times is that it produced no[1] one Jewish culture but many variants of possible Jewish cultures or sub-cultures” (95).

2. Approach and Methodology

Although this project shares many important theoretical affinities with current ethnographic scholarship on the “Jewish question,” this study is the first of its kind to undertake a comparative analysis of literary texts as an apt medium for expressing the cultural schisms facing modern Jewry. In doing so, it demonstrates how the symbolic imagery of such texts relies, to a great extent, upon the ethnic particularities of each author’s own Jewish sub-group, rather than upon an idealized, homogeneous Jewish identity. The methodology for this research stems largely from the discipline of
“archetypal” post-Jungian psychology, which analyzes literary texts from the standpoint of recurrent themes or motifs that seem to follow a specific cultural pattern. In particular, the conception of archetypes to which I adhere posits that common experience and shared ethnicity are strong enough, over time, to unite such images in a systematic fashion in the collective unconscious of any given culture. This approach implies that many different interpretations of a people’s cultural disposition may be found in a single archetype, depending on the particular subculture (and individual experience) within the culture itself. This methodology may therefore assist in clarifying the sources of the ever-increasing (and much-debated) cultural, religious, and political dissonance between various sectors of the diverse, and even conflicting ethnic groups that, due to various historical circumstances, have fallen under the title of “Jewish.”

Indeed, just as the discipline of sociology has demonstrated that modern-day Jews are made up of often dissimilar populations with their own specific loyalties, the idea of “Jewish literature” as literature produced by authors representing groups of dissimilar Jews must also undergo a similar scholarly reckoning. To elaborate: from a literary standpoint, the essential common element between “Jewish literatures” has usually been considered to be the reliance upon the Hebrew Scriptures as their main symbolic reference point. However, every Jewish sub-group has its own customs, traditions, and mores, some of them dating back hundreds or even thousands of years, which give their respective Judaic archetypes a distinct, ethnic particularity. (American Judaic archetypes will differ greatly from North African Judaic archetypes, as will Israeli Judaic archetypes from Eastern European Judaic archetypes, and so on and so forth.) A comparison of the geo-political, linguistic, and gender-based explanations as to why such differences occur
in literary texts also clarifies why these same texts express such different attitudes toward the polemical issues that face modern-day Jewry. This, in turn, helps to establish a new framework for the study of varying kinds of Jewish literary expression that have, until the present, been classified according to a logic which is neither methodical nor inclusive.

Academically speaking, this research makes a relevant contribution to existing scholarship on Anglo-American, Modern Hebrew, and Maghrebian Francophone Jewish literatures by incorporating a novel approach to the interpretation of the work of some of these genres’ major literary figures. In addition, the comparative element of this project, which helps to elucidate the links between cultural variables and national discourse, also stands to break new ground in the fields of archetypal literary analysis and reader-response theory.

The key rationale behind the primary methodology for this study is as follows: in an archetypal analysis of literary texts, the researcher will look for recurrent themes or motifs that seem to follow a specific cultural pattern. Thus, this line of reasoning follows a non-universalist conception of archetypes in using as its basis the discipline of “archetypal” post-Jungian psychology, as expounded in the innovative works of James Hillman, Paul Kugler, and Helen Efthimiadis-Keith. The school of archetypal psychology (as opposed to strictly Jungian, “analytical” psychology) is one in which Jung is recognized as the source, but not as the doctrine, with the predominant factor being what Hillman refers to as the relationship between “the poetic basis of mind” and the

5 Other scholars associated with archetypal psychology (or Jungian “analytical psychology,” as it is still mistakenly known in Europe) are those who possess a background in (or disposition towards) depth psychology, such as Evangelos Christou, Henri Corbin, and Gilbert Durand.
“metaphorical discourse of myths” (Myth of Analysis 11). Hillman distinguishes this field from Jungian analytical psychology in the sense that the former does not concern itself, as does the latter, with the sciences of psychology or medicine, but with literature, culture, and human imagination in general (Myth of Analysis 10). A further distinction between archetypal and analytical psychology is made by the post-Jungian analyst Michael Vannoy Adams, who points out that in the classical psychoanalytic approach, the image is always treated as something that it does not seem to be, whereas for Hillman, the image is “precisely what it appears to be—and nothing else” (Adams 105). Hence the motto of Hillman’s archetypal, or imaginal, psychology: “Stick to the image,” which Hillman (Dream and the Underworld 194) credits to Raphael Lopez-Pedraza.

This conception of archetypes to which I adhere in the present study categorically negates an evolutionary/instinctual or biological/phylogenetic basis for archetypal images as such, and therefore rejects the Jungian supposition according to which archetypes possess an inherently cross-cultural content for the entirety of humanity. This does not mean, however, that one must disregard Jung entirely with respect to literary archetypes. Although he opted mostly for universalism over particularism, Jung did occasionally

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6 Some strict Jungians are bothered by the term “archetypal,” because it actually is post-Jungian. See, for example, Odajnyk.

7 Although the vast majority of neurological archetypal research actually negates the thesis of the biological/phylogenetic basis of archetypes, the marginal field of “phyletics” (see Bastien and Hostager 22) seeks to prove that evolutionary development patterns, and their resulting “archetypes,” are responsible for sensory, rational, and social behavior. (A colleague summed up quite wittily the absurdity of the phylogenetic hypothesis with the following: “So, does someone who is half Jewish have half of that archetype?”)
allude to the importance of cultural variables. So did the later Freud, with his “sociology of the unconscious,” a theory (later expanded upon by Jung) that the father of psychoanalysis began to formulate toward the end of his life.⁸ According to Freud’s theory, the infant is taught moral values and learns to control instinctual wishes so that he or she is not chastised by parents or other agents of socialization.

Jung’s elaboration on this theory occurred within the context of his nearly unique pronouncement regarding the realm of cultural archetypes. Jung’s thoughts on cultural archetypes might be summed up by his comment that, “It is not Goethe who creates Faust, but Faust which creates Goethe. And what is Faust but a symbol? By this I do not mean an allegory that points to something all too familiar, but an expression that stands for something not clearly known and yet profoundly alive” (Modern Man 198). Essentially, what Jung means is that Faust himself is not an archetype. He is a manifestation of an archetypal “senex” figure (a transmitter of wisdom), presented under a certain cultural rubric, whose ethnic characteristics not only make him representative of the German people; the very fact that he represents them, through the prism of their textual practice, allows him to help perpetuate the specific, cultural pattern that created him (and his author) in the first place.⁹ Michael Vannoy Adams clarifies this point by explaining that the form that an archetype takes on is the mere “possibility of an image” (102). Adams goes on to differentiate between archetypes and archetypal images with the example that Herman Melville could not have written Moby-Dick if he had never had any experience with a whale. The whale is the form (image) of the archetype, which could

⁸ See Freud, Group Psychology 69–70.

⁹ For further explanation on how archetypal figures can vary among cultures, see Spivack.
also conceivably be an ogre, witch, etc. The archetype itself is the feeling of being “swallowed up” (102). In short, the image is not the actual archetype. Rather, it appears in order that the archetype might be manifested.

Following that line of thought, this research adopts a post-Jungian approach by positing that common experience, shared ethnicity, and intertextual predispositions—variables that are much easier to prove empirically than Freud’s or Jung’s dream-based “evidence”—are strong enough, over time, to unite such images in a systematic fashion in the collective unconscious of any given culture. In turn, these images will inevitably be (re)produced in that culture’s textual practice. This idea shares important parallels with Foucault’s theory of the “marginalization of the subject,” according to which a writer is not the sole emissary of any particular message; rather, it is the historical and intellectual context of that writer’s own milieu that provides the intellectual basis for his or her statements.10 Archetypal psychology approaches that context by “recogniz[ing] that psychic reality is inextricably involved with rhetoric” (Hillman, Archetypal Psychology 19). Thus, the archetypal critic’s task is “to show how the [text] is related to the rest of literature and to the culture in which it participates” (5), by demonstrating that such texts often rely upon, mimic, or seek to undo the commonly-held symbolic value of their historical predecessors.

Of course, every Judaic archetype still has particular local and personal elements, outside of historical Judaic textual practice, that determine how this history is to be viewed. This is the reason that many of the selections of modern Judaic literary discourse

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10 See, for instance, The Birth of the Clinic and The Order of Things.
present their own specific incarnations of metanarratives, foundational texts, or
primordial ideas, or their newer embodiments of familiar motifs (avatars),\textsuperscript{11} depending
upon the particular sub-cultural and individual context of the author involved. In that
respect, this analysis of Judaic literary archetypes seeks not only to illustrate “how both
mythical structures and patterns enable the author to communicate [his or her] vision of
reality” (Hillman, \textit{Archetypal Psychology} 19). Its goal is also to advocate the idea that
“literature is part of a social situation and [that] literary works must be approached
primarily as modes of collective beliefs and action” (Block 132). From that perspective, I
treat each literary text as a composite of personal, historical, and environmental elements;
and thus, when referring to what “Yehoshua,” “Potok,” or “Boukhobza” might imply in
regard to one of their literary texts, I am actually referencing what, in my estimation, is
expressed or inferred by the text written by that particular author, not exclusively what
the personal opinions of the author as an individual may be, unless I provide an
accompanying citation to that effect.

In order to explore in the best possible fashion the above-mentioned archetypal
differences, the close reading chapters in this study are organized by author. Before those
close readings, however, I give in Chapter 2 the necessary contextual background for
each writer’s literary enterprise, offering historical, religious, and gender-based
explanations as to why such sub-cultural variation occurs in the archetypal imagery of
their texts. Chapter 3 focuses on literary works by A. B. Yehoshua; Chapter 4, Chaim
Potok; and Chapter 5, Chochana Boukhobza. The Conclusion serves to concretize the

\textsuperscript{11} My use of the term “avatar” has nothing to do with 3-D films, virtual reality, or Hinduism; I use it in the
sense of a contemporary representation of a primordial concept.
theses demonstrated throughout this study, in addition to highlighting possibilities for further research and inquiry.

3. An Explanation of the Archetypal Approach

Given that the delineation and examination of “Judaic archetypes” as such has relatively few precedents in literary investigation, I have formulated in this study a theoretical framework for the characterization and interpretation of these specific archetypes by dividing my examination of archetypal imagery into a number of pertinent categories. For the sake of space, I have chosen the most common categories of archetypes: the senex, the shadow, and the anima (defined below). I have explicitly left out others, such as the hero archetype. Besides concerns of space, that omission reflects my agreement with Hillman that an “imaginal ego,” or an ego that recognizes its own image in the context of other, no less relevant images, is a far more effective way to analyze archetypal content than by denigrating other possible images at the expense of a dominant “hero” (Dream and Underworld 102). Following is a summary of this theoretical framework.

Generally speaking, archetypal psychology lists three main forms for “national,” or ethnically specific archetypes that appear in literary texts, all of which represent, in one fashion or another, certain perceived ideas of the psychic disposition of the nation at the time of their composition. These archetypes usually appear in personated form by materializing in the guise of characters (although they may also appear as motifs, discourses, or inanimate objects) that symbolize a larger concept that is central, whether
in a positive or negative fashion, to a culture’s view of itself. As Swanson notes, such archetypes appear as “unconscious psychological associations . . . related to typical patterns of human experience” (162).

The senex archetype, which takes its name from the Latin term meaning “old man,” is representative of the law-giving principles of order, transmitted wisdom, propriety, and behavioral norms. In its most positive incarnation, the senex can be methodical and conscientious; at the extreme (negative) end of the spectrum, it can be unyielding, dogmatic, or blindly traditionalist, expressing what Mario Jacoby calls “a specific cultural canon and its value hierarchy” (85). As the archetype that is frequently seen in the forms of the father or the elder, the senex is also closely associated with patriarchal structures, or with “a mythic image of . . . conservative patriarchal consciousness” (87). Not coincidentally, such consciousness has tended to be, historically speaking, tied up with the images surrounding a masculine deity or his subordinates, who are seen as working either on behalf of the god or in place of him. From that perspective, Hillman’s remark that the senex is frequently obsessed with “ethical purity” (Hillman, “On Senex Consciousness” 27) is particularly poignant with respect to its appearance in texts involving religious or discursive conventions. Whether religious or not, this archetype is habitually on the forefront of “the institutions of order into which we mold our society” (Hillman, “Negative Senex” 275).

The shadow shares many commonalities with the characteristics of the senex archetype, including its proximity to spheres of authority. As Jacoby reminds us, both of these archetypes possess “features of false security, inflexibility, self-righteousness [and] hypocrisy” (164). The major difference between the two is that the shadow often acts on
its penchant for power by way of openly destructive and/or malefic actions, whereas the senex’s action is largely confined to expressing an overly dogmatic or doctrinarian stance with respect to issues of clout or propriety.

The senex, therefore, is not “evil” per se (in certain instances, it can even be thoroughly benevolent), whereas the shadow may, in fact, commit deeds associated with an ultimate evil. And, while the senex sometimes articulates sentiments that prove to be lethal, the danger of the shadow is in its tendency to go past mere articulation: to “sneak up” unnoticed, as it were, on both the sacrificer and the sacrificed. The shadow is thus rarely ascertainable in and of itself, since it almost always “split[s] off from the conscious, responsible personality” (Jacoby 158). If, then, the senex figure exists in a text in order to issue symbolic warnings of what might be, given a certain set of circumstances, the shadow’s function is to embody, via its aggregate of actions or reactions, the dubious ethical quality of specific events. Similarly, a shadow that carries a national or an ideological narrative may be interpreted as providing a parallel set of inferences, albeit for the benefit of the community as a whole. From that collective perspective, we may consider that the acknowledgement of the existence of the shadow, through a thorough and critical exercise in self-introspection, constitutes, in Demaris S. Wehr’s estimation, “a moral imperative” (61). For Hillman, identifying the shadow also involves making the unconscious conscious, in that it entails the “recognition of what we have repressed, how we perform our repressions, how we rationalize and deceive ourselves, what sort of goals we have and what we have hurt, even maimed, in the name of those goals” (Meeting the Shadow 242).
The archetype of the anima, which means “breath,” “soul,” or, more figuratively, “generative force” in Latin (Lewis and Short 120–21), is most easily defined in the context of its relation to the senex and the shadow archetypes, where its most significant feature has to do with its personification of what the collective has repressed (Hillman, *Anima* 129). As such, Hillman posits that “consciousness of anima means first of all awareness of one’s [own] unconsciousness” (*Anima* 137). This puts the anima in the role of the unmasking of, or colliding with, the shadow; and of causing sufficient reflection as to provoke potential altercation with the logos principle (senex), in the event that the latter adopts an overly doctrinaire stance. In both of these cases, the anima’s function is to “see through” any stale or circumspect rhetoric which may lead (or may already have led) to a dissolute reaction, which is its task to expose.

What Hillman calls the “personification of interiority and subjectivity” (*Anima* 105) also frequently becomes the guide or negotiator for one or more characters with whom it has a close rapport, in order to make conscious the existence of a psychosis present elsewhere in the text. In the same way that senex or shadow archetypes may or may not appear in masculine form, the anima is not intrinsically “female”; and, by the same token, not all that is female has to do with the anima (Hillman, *Anima* 27). Nevertheless, in much psychological literature, the anima is referred to as “the feminine principle,” a tendency which may be considered as an intellectual remnant of analytical
psychology’s gender-based theories of psyche, according to which the anima is the feminine counterpart of the male psyche.\(^\text{12}\)

I should like to re-emphasize that while the terms “senex,” “shadow,” and “anima” are closely associated with analytical (Jungian) psychology, the approach I have taken here (i.e., of dividing my literary analyses into the aforementioned categories) does not presume any connection with Jung’s particular definition of that taxonomy. Consequently, while the terminology used throughout this study may evoke associations with Jung, I would like to remind the reader of the earlier explanation regarding the differences between Jung and Hillman: namely, that according to Hillman’s (archetypal) approach, which sees archetypes as historically transmitted patterns or models, the validity in using Jung’s taxonomy (but not his theory) is evidenced in the realization that every culture does indeed possess an inherited line of characters or themes that occupy such universal categories of experience. The giver of wisdom (senex), the dark, unconscious side (shadow), and the introspective partner (anima) are all examples of these universal categories. Each culture, however, has its own particular narratives in which these characters, themes, or motifs appear. Like Jung, Hillman considers these categories to be indicative of universal human experience, although he departs from Jung by proposing that the ways in which such categories manifest themselves is not at all universal.

Consequently, the use of Jungian terminology to denote organizing principles of emotional patterns—a constant during the last half-century in psychological explorations

\(^{12}\) Emma Jung offers a concise breakdown of her husband’s thoughts regarding the masculine (animus) and feminine (anima) components of the personality in *Animus and Anima.*
of the literary text—does not necessarily presume any affinity with Jung’s ideas concerning archetypes. In fact, Hillman and other critics who subscribe to the archetypal school of thought (including some of the authors previously mentioned in this study, such as Michael Vannoy Adams, Helen Efthimiadis-Keith, Paul Kugler, and Susan Rowland), and who therefore insist on stressing particularism over universality, still employ Jungian terminology, without using Jungian definitions of that terminology, as a set of theoretical guidelines. In the present study, I also look at the various ways in which that particularism manifests itself, by exploring how divergent Jewish authors rely upon, subvert, or recast, according to their particular sub-cultural groups, the foremost archetypes of the discursive Judaic textual tradition as they appear in the dominant discourse of the metatexts of inherited Judaic praxis. I provide several examples below.

A. B. Yehoshua’s archetypes are grounded in a distinctly Israeli reality. For instance, the senex archetype in the short story “Bethilat kaiyts 1970” (“Early in the Summer of 1970”) is a recasting of the figure of Abraham, the Biblical patriarch of the Jewish people. In Yehoshua’s story, Abraham is re-envisioned via the character of an elderly Bible teacher, who is portrayed as completely out of touch with the current political situation, and whose students reproach him for somehow attempting to justify, through scriptural reasoning, the continual shedding of blood. The reader will notice that such justification shares a strong associative link with the “seed and creed” ethos of the original Abraham, who (in Gen. 22) agrees to sacrifice his son for the perpetuation of a covenant. In Yehoshua’s counter-narrative, the universal category of the senex archetype functions as a vessel for the Abrahamic form, and exists simply because the Biblical narrative has become an indelible part of the Judaic cultural code, and therefore one of
the prisms through which Israeli reality is constructed. The fact that Yehoshua subverts the long-held connotations of the Biblical tale by metaphorically killing off the son and by denouncing the idea of sacrifice as a perpetual inevitability is indicative of his own sub-cultural affiliation. Specifically, Yehoshua’s irreverent subversion of characters from this foundational Judaic metanarrative may be explained by way of the following explanation: as a secular Israeli, Yehoshua regards the present instantiation of the Jewish people as a self-governing political entity inextricably linked to the nation-state of Israel, where civil, legal, and humanistic (as opposed to religious) concerns should outweigh outdated historical agendas.

In opposition to the senex figures in the fiction of Yehoshua, Chaim Potok almost always presents the archetype of the senex in a positive light, implying that the curmudgeonly unwillingness to budge from Ashkenazi (Eastern European) Judaic propriety is, in the larger scheme of things, ultimately benevolent and beneficial for the ensured continuity of the Jewish people. Potok’s recasting of traditional Judaic figures is also less subversive than Yehoshua’s, in that he does not display the blanket irreverence for such figures inherent in Yehoshua’s re-characterization of them.

For instance, in the short story, “The Trope Teacher,” Potok also re-envisions the commonly-held associations regarding the characters of Abraham and Isaac in the foundational Judaic story of the Binding of Isaac. In Potok’s modern version of the tale, it is the father, instead of the son, who is sacrificed. However, Potok’s motivation for the reversal of these roles is to actively encourage the “son” (the younger generation) to take responsibility for those whose consciousness is still tied to the Old World (the “father”). Elsewhere, in The Gift of Asher Lev, Potok’s protagonist performs a metaphoric re-
enactment of the offering up of Isaac for sacrifice in the precise fashion of the Biblical text, without deviating from the original covenantal significance. At the same time, this very protagonist, an orthodox Jew who also happens to paint nudes and crucifixions, agonizes over whether or not his choice is the moral one in that particular situation.

In examining both of these instances as a composite, it becomes clear how Potok both reforms and perpetuates the symbolic associations with the foundational narrative, thereby intimating that the long-revered meaning of the text in the Judaic tradition has a modern relevance, albeit one that is open to interpretation. Potok’s recast characters, then, do not seriously wish to turn away from religious Judaic themes; their actions simply serve to suggest, in a distinctly (Conservative) American Jewish manner, that balance, objective reasoning, and reconciliation between opposing worldviews is a pressing moral imperative in the modern Judaic paradigm.

In the literary work of Chochana Boukhobza, the anima is the dominant archetype through which Boukhobza carries out her recastings of traditional figures from Judaic lore. For instance, in the novel *Un été à Jérusalem* (“A Summer in Jerusalem”), the character of Mavrika, the alter-ego of a deranged young woman who prostitutes herself on the streets of Jerusalem, is said to be the incarnation of the *Shekhinah*, or the feminine counterpart of God, which has been referred to in Jewish lore as the “Sabbath Bride,” the messenger of God, or the mystical representation of all the Jews in the world. In the context of the novel (and of the present-day reality that it purports to represent), Boukhobza’s use of this archetype is nothing less than a mode of prophetic discourse, for by portraying the traditional feminine representation of the Divine Presence in the form of a prostitute, her subverted archetypal symbolism functions as an allegorical
acknowledgment that certain groups within the Jewish people have treated its women like “whores.” The point of such subversion, Boukhobza suggests, is to provoke the realization that acknowledgment of this shadow content is entirely necessary in order to proceed to a different, more just kind of Jewish continuity.

Boukhobza’s work is also distinctive in that her senex is a Palestinian Arab whose symbolic attributes she associates with the Biblical figure of Moses. This choice reflects her intimation that the reliance upon structures of authority transmitted solely by phylogeny perpetuates the oppressive patriarchal pyramid. To that end, the author also dissects the dogma inherent in both of the self-legitimizing discourses of Zionism and Judaic religious piety by way of a particular kind of female epistemology, in which she hints that the destructive qualities of both aforementioned discourses might be explicated through the lens of patriarchal oppression. She portrays this oppression as akin to the suppression of the Palestinian Arab populace on the basis of Israel’s Biblical right to the land, which she also highlights as antithetical to the Judeo-Arabic coexistence experienced in North Africa for over a millennium. In doing so, she applies a particularly Tunisian-Jewish sub-cultural sensibility to her subversion of traditional discursive configurations of Judaic religious symbolism, not to mention to certain facets of the Zionist agenda that are based upon them.

In all of these instances, the literary works of these authors encompass both production and reproduction, a process akin to Fredric Jameson’s idea according to which, “we apprehend [texts] through sedimented layers of previous interpretation” (The Political Unconscious 9). Indeed, all of the texts presented here require previously-acquired knowledge to grasp even their most basic significance. What sets this literature
apart as “archetypal” is that its reliance upon this previously-acquired knowledge, via the symbolic code of the inter- and metatext, is not merely mimetic; it is dynamic, subversive, and contextually dictated.

Thus, the archetypal reading of the texts chosen for this study has as its objective the discernment of the differences between the re-workings of recurring cultural patterns, inherited from the discursive nature of Judaic tradition, as they manifest themselves in modern Judaic textual production. This means, for example, that the senex in Jewish stories may have a certain tendency to be associated with Abrahamic imagery, since Abraham, as the archetypal father of the Jewish people, appears as the original senex in the overarching metanarrative of the Hebrew Scriptures, which have been passed down from generation to generation as the dominant form of discourse. By the same token, other avatars, or human manifestations and/or incarnations of the archetypes in the modern literary text, may oftentimes possess symbolic affinities with other well-known characters from Judaic lore. As I demonstrate further in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, my argument is that the manner in which each modern Jewish author chooses to recast these characters (whether in the form of the senex, shadow, or anima) depends on his or her own Jewish subculture. This kind of archetypal analysis does not reduce a literary text to mere propaganda by claiming that it only functions as a mouthpiece for the writer’s specific viewpoint; nor does it argue that the writer is completely unaware of the psychological content of the images that appear in his or her creation. Instead, it posits that archetypes “reflect the psychological exigencies within the nation from which they stem” (Efthimiadis-Keith, *Enemy is Within* 36; emphasis in the original).
Allow me to emphasize that the methodology chosen for this study should by no means be regarded as dogmatic or all-encompassing. As Haskell M. Block observes: “[Archetypal] methods may convince us that ‘the cow that jumped over the moon’ was a totem, but they cannot tell us how to distinguish poetry from fact” (136). Indeed, the intent in choosing this methodology is not to uphold the singular truth or flawlessness of any specific school or critical approach. I simply hope to demonstrate that archetypal psychology is a useful way of looking at the cultural variables in modern Judaic literary discourse. That said, throughout this study I occasionally use or reference other approaches, similar to the archetypal one, which allow me enough intellectual breathing room to undertake an honest and non-dogmatic explanation of the subject at hand. All of these approaches show how the most decisive and influential components of the Judaic imagery in the texts of Boukhobza, Potok, and Yehoshua stem from the elements of the Jewish sub-groups to which each of the authors belong. They also further concretize the view that the contradictory cultural variables of which modern-day Jewry is composed are in fact responsible for the lack of “Jewish congruity” in much of modern Judaic literary discourse.

For instance, the archetypal analysis of Judaic literary culture has much in common with symbolic anthropology’s approach to the notion of culture as “a historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols” (Geertz 89). Moreover, the thesis that culture “operate[s] in certain respects like texts” does not seem mutually exclusive with the present methodology (Boon 239), which uses Judaic literary archetypes to illustrate the differences in cultural variables among Jewish authors. In strictly Judaic terms, this idea of “cultural,” or “national archetypes” also finds support in
the argument that Mordecai Kaplan puts forth throughout his seminal work, *Judaism as a Civilization*, according to which Judaism is to be understood not as a religion, but as a series of evolving societies, ones in which certain Judaic customs that had their genesis in religious functions have become an integral part of the modern secular psyche without having retained their original signification. Following this line of thought, religion is only one component in the culture(s) of Judaism: e.g., Judaism is not a religion that has its own distinct culture, since the delineation of Judaism as a “religion,” as opposed to an ethical guide, only dates to the modern era. Moreover, the different groups that make up modern-day Jewry possess porous and ever-changing identities with respect to Judaism’s religious functions. Els Van Diggele puts it somewhat more lightly: “Judaism is a culture in which religion is only a part. This works out quite well because if you tell children today that Judaism is a religion, they want nothing to do with it” (121).

As Eliezer Ben-Rafael (*Jewish Identities*) points out, the idea that Jews (as well as their culture and religion) share fragmented, yet somehow existential associations with one another possesses a parallel with Wittgenstein’s theory of “family resemblance.” According to this theory, many ideas stem from the same common denominator, although such associations may not be readily apparent, due to the conflicting and divergent patterns, both great and small, within the “family” (Wittgenstein 65–72). 13 This theory might therefore explain why, for example, one of the most devout and influential of the twentieth century’s Zionist Jews, Martin Buber, was unable to give a precise definition of

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13 For more on Wittgenstein’s theory of “family resemblance” in its Judaic context, see Ben-Rafael, *Jewish Identities* 99–110.
what constituted a Jew, positing that the Jews simply resisted any classification. Even Freud himself, the Moses-bashing assimilationist, testified to Wittgenstein’s hypothesis, in stating that he could not help but feel connected to his Jewishness, due to “many dark emotional forces, all the more potent for being so hard to grasp in words, as well as the clear consciousness of an inner identity, the intimacy that comes from the same psychic structure” (Freud, “On Being” 23).

A final remark on the point of classification: the reader will note that, throughout this study, other scholars to whom I refer occasionally use the potentially ambiguous delineation of the Jews as a “nation.” The expression has its roots in the ancient tradition of referring to the Jews as ‘am yisrael, in which the original Hebrew term ‘am may signify either “nation” (in the ethnic sense), or, simply, “people.” Unless explicitly stated otherwise, the reader may deduce that the usage of this term with respect to the Jewish people does not refer to the commonly-held meaning of a nation as “a sociopolitical category, linked somehow to the actual or potential boundaries of state” (Wallerstein 77), unless it is used with respect to Israel or to the eventual fulfillment of the Zionist endeavor. Therefore, I state explicitly when I am referring to the country of Israel as a sociopolitical “nation.” This usage excludes the Jewish Diaspora, as the latter is not a part of the Israeli state apparatus. Concerning the use of this term by other critics whom I cite, “nation” should instead be understood in its traditional sense: that is, in reference to the associated lives of Jews the world over.

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14 A remark originally given in 1934 at the Lehrhaus in Frankfurt am Main, and reprinted in Buber, “Jew in the World” 167.
4. Archetypes: A Brief History

While offering a comprehensive overview of the history and evolution of the concept of archetypes is not possible, I outline in this sub-section several key points that will help to contextualize the notion of archetypes. In particular, I concentrate on the development and variations of archetypal theories that have affected literary studies, particularly in the Freudian, Jungian, and post-Jungian schools. Since actual examples of previous archetypal literary analyses are far too numerous (and easily accessible) to warrant detailed review here, I have left such studies to be referenced alongside the textual analysis presented in later chapters. The selected canonical material is listed herein only to elucidate the development of the concept.

The idea of an arche- (“origin”) typos (“form”) goes back at least as far as Plato (by whom Jung acknowledged being influenced), although Plato never used such a word himself.\textsuperscript{15} Plato spoke of an eidon (“idea”) as “collective in the sense that [it] embod[ies] the general characteristics of groups of individuals rather than the specific peculiarities of one” (Stevens 39; emphasis in the original). Later writers of the Platonic tradition (namely, Philo Judaeus, Dionysius the Areopagite, Irenaeus, and Hermes Trismegistus) did employ the term archetypos, although they meant by it vastly different things.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15} Regarding the Platonic influence, Jung describes archetypes as “active living dispositions, ideas in the Platonic sense, that preform and continually influence our thoughts and feelings and actions” (The Collected Works, p. 154). For a further explanation of typos as Plato uses it, see Plato, The Republic 1, 177, 183, 238; and Liddel and Scott, 1835.

\textsuperscript{16} See Williamson.
Two important, early modern precursors to Jung’s concept of “primordial images” are that of the German astronomer Johannes Kepler (1571–1630), who surmised that inner ideas lie “under the veil of potentiality” (qtd. in Stevens 46), and that of Immanuel Kant, who, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, notes that there are “inherent structures” that mediate between the psychic and physical worlds. In the modern period, important influences on Jung, more directly linked to the psychic make-up of archetypes, derive from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Friedrich Nietzsche, Adolf Bastian, Franz Boas, and James Frazer.

The most notable influence on Jung with respect to archetypes came from his mentor, Sigmund Freud. Freud referred to archetypes as unconscious “schemata” that sometimes override “the experience of the individual” (*Case of the Wolf-Man* 100). For both Jung and Freud, the “empirical evidence” of these schemata came from their patients’ dreams, and both men tended to downplay the cultural dispositions of the unconscious of their patients in general (which is why Jung’s archetypes were European-oriented instead of locally determined). Jung went on to disagree vehemently with Freud about the structure of the unconscious; and this, of course, constituted one of the major reasons for their break. As James P. Henry notes, “[Freud] regarded it [the unconscious] more or less as a mere rubbish basket for repressed material. Jung, on the other hand, saw it as an independent autonomously functioning entity” (51). The disparity between the

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17 Jung borrowed the term “primordial image" from Jacob Burckhardt (Jung, *Symbols of Transformation* 101). For more on Kepler, see Jung and Pauli.

18 See, respectively, Schaper 19; Lévy-Bruhl 21-38; Nietzsche 13; Bastian ix; Boas 104, 155, 228; Frazer 386.
two opposing ideas may be summed up with the following example, given by Jung himself: the Oedipus complex, Jung stated somewhat sarcastically, was the only archetype that Freud ever discovered; the problem lay in the fact Freud thought the Oedipus complex “was the archetype” (qtd. in McGuire 280; emphasis in the original).

As Michael Vannoy Adams correctly points out, both Freud and Jung believed in the phylogenetic basis of archetypes (101), as well as in organic aspects of the psyche in general. For this reason, Jung was convinced that heredity must play a factor in the formation of archetypes, and thus spoke initially of “functional dispositions,” “dominants,” or “nodal points” inside the psyche (“Part One” 102). Although Jung officially split from Freud in 1914 and continually attacked the latter’s preoccupation with individual neuroses, it was not until the first quasi-résumé of Jungian philosophy, entitled *Man and His Symbols*, that Jung offered his most lucid explanation of the concept of the archetype:

The term “archetype” is often misunderstood as meaning certain definite mythological images or motifs. But these are nothing more than conscious representations; it would be absurd to assume that such variable representations could be inherited. The archetype is a tendency to form such representations of a motif—representations that can vary a great deal in detail without losing their basic pattern. (67)

According to the explanation given above, archetypes are primordial elements contained in the collective unconscious of humankind, responsible for the manifestations of psychic uniformities, which have their own points of reference in existential, rather than environmental, frameworks. The archetype is a mere symptom of a larger human subconscious: that of the “spiritual legacy” of the human race. The aim of (Jungian)

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19 For Jung’s earliest use of the term “archetype,” see Jung, *Structure and Dynamics* 133.
analytical psychology is thus to interpret the archetypes of the collective unconscious in such a way that one undergoes the process of “individuation”: i.e., creating a symbiotic fusion between the spiritual legacy, on the one hand, and the Self, on the other.

Along those lines, Jung’s earliest, albeit awkward treatment of a literary text appears in his *Psychological Types, or The Psychology of Individuation* (1923), in which he devotes a chapter to the analysis of Carl Spitteler’s *Prometheus and Epimetheus* (1881). In this book, Jung describes how the conflict between “introverted” and “extroverted” literary characters (the first time that those particular terms were ever used) represents the crux of a literary text’s meaning. In essence, the most important component in analyzing a work of literature is to pay attention to how the author is able to reconcile the struggle between the “function-engrams,” or the neuro-mental imprints of archetypes, and the inevitable desire of the text’s characters (as willed by the author) to maintain a personal existence separate from historical determinism.

As far as the study of literature in a broader sense is concerned, it was not until “Psychology and Literature” that Jung developed a coherent system for his version of archetypal literary criticism. Essentially, Jung divides creative writing into two groups: the first, which he calls “psychological,” has to do with the conscious mind. The second, which he terms “visionary,” pertains to the collective unconscious. (For example, Jung insists that the first part of Goethe’s *Faust* is psychological, while the second part is visionary.) For Jung, it is clear that the second type of literature is better, as it is impossible to consider the individual (artist) without considering him or her to be the sum

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20 See *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche* 175–199.
result of the psychic life of the collective unconscious. Jung sums up this idea as follows: “The essence of a work of art is not to be found in the personal idiosyncrasies that creep into it—indeed, the more there are of them, the less it is a work of art—but in its rising above the personal and speaking from the mind and heart of the artist to the mind and heart of mankind” (The Structure 101). Thus, for Jung, it is the heritage of psychic disposition, rather than personal passions or neuroses (or, for our purposes, specific sub-cultural patterns), which gives a “true” work of art its lasting aesthetic affect.

It is crucial to note that Jung does not summarily rule out one’s personal background as the impetus for literary creation. He simply sees this type of narrow, “psychological” literature as inferior to a more communal, “visionary” literature. In this respect, he does not necessarily contradict Freud; he simply expresses the opinion that Freud is over-emphasizing the personal aspect of the psyche. Thus, the principal difference between Freud’s and Jung’s approaches to literature is centered on one specific position: on that of a text’s true “source material.” Although Freud is clearly interested in the biological-physiological and universal aspects of human conduct, his point of reference for the analysis of literary texts is rooted in the formative psychological stages of early childhood development. As such, concepts like “the sociology of the unconscious,” while seemingly akin to the thought of Jung, represent later, less significant stages in Freud’s work—stages in which the preponderance of his writing on literature had already been accomplished. Jung, on the other hand, devotes a great deal of his early work to the study of literature, but not necessarily because he feels especially compelled to present a systematic approach for analytical psychology’s application to literary texts. Rather, the essence of Jung’s philosophy—that mythology, folk tales, and
religion actually proceed from the archetypal layers of the collective unconscious—somehow becomes inevitably dependent upon literature as its broadest, most available source for demonstrating such theories.\(^{21}\)

The first critic to use Jung’s archetypal methodology for the analysis of literary studies was Maud Bodkin, in her *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry: Psychological Studies of Imagination*. In this book, Bodkin applies Jung’s universalist notion of archetypes to different kinds of poetic images, albeit ones that are too broad to be (culturally) archetypal, such as God, the Devil, Woman, the Mariner, etc. The same kind of universalist Jungian approach was later codified by a Canadian minister, Northrop Frye. Frye, who established the school of “archetypal criticism” (which, during the 1950s and 1960s, was sometimes erroneously labeled “myth criticism”) and brought the study of myth and archetypes to the forefront of literary scholarship, considered the archetype to be nothing more than an established image, derived from intertextual occurrences, and largely devoid of any kind of cultural specificity.

Although often labeled as Jungian due to his major work on the significance of myth and metaphor, *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye is not necessarily a Jungian; his brand of archetypal criticism is “a composite of the psychological approach of Jung, the anthropological approach of Frazer, and the literary approach of T.S. Eliot” (M. Friedman 451). Frye himself was incensed by the charges of Jungianism, claiming that he was influenced by Frazer, and even by Freud, but not by Jung. In fact, Jung is not even mentioned at all in *Fearful Symmetry*, Frye’s first book. According to Frye, he

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\(^{21}\) For more on Jungian literary interpretation, see the volumes of Frankland; Glover; and McGuire.
“deliberately avoided reading Jung until Fearful Symmetry was in print” (qtd. in Kuehn 101). When Frye does refer to Jung in his Anatomy of Criticism, ten years later, he appropriates the idea of archetypes without adopting Jung’s idea of the collective unconscious, the latter which he considers to be “an unnecessary hypothesis in literary criticism” (111–12). After the Anatomy of Criticism period, Frye avoids using the term “archetype” altogether.

The next major figure in archetypal criticism is Joseph Campbell, an American scholar of comparative religion and mythology. Although Campbell also tends toward universalism à la Frye (and is best known for his work on the “monomyth,” a story made up of shared characteristics from diverse cultures22), his approach is an important precursor to Hillman’s archetypal psychology. Campbell emphasizes both the cultural aspect of the psyche, which he calls the “nursery demons of [one’s] local culture,” and the surrounding society (The Hero 16). In a sense, then, Campbell goes against Frye’s universalism, in noting that “elementary ideas” (such as mothers, heroes, etc.) cannot be disassociated from their ethnic particularities (Masks of God 32). However, Campbell’s theses with respect to literature do not delve as deeply into local elements as Hillman’s archetypal psychology does.

Again, I would like to emphasize that my preference for the cultural dimensions of a distinctly poststructuralist archetypal psychology stems from the fact that the

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22 Campbell describes the monomyth (a term taken from James Joyce’s Finnegans Wake) as follows: “A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won; the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man” (Campbell, Hero 30).
universalist approach to archetypes almost inevitably brings into the equation the ethnocentric prejudices of the critic—such as Jung, Frye, and others have shown with their obviously Eurocentric predispositions. As Kimberly Davis notes, such universalist tendencies risk ignoring “important historical and cultural distinctions,” and can become “a colonizing method that removes all individuality” (7). For clarification, I am not denying that parallels do indeed exist between, for example, Isaac and Iphigenia, or between Jesus and Prometheus. In this study, however, I am not undertaking such comparisons. Instead, I concur with Aniss Pratt’s summation of the validity of the archetypal approach:

A dogmatic insistence upon preordained, invariable sets of archetypal patterns would distort literary analysis: one must not deduce categories down into a body of material but induce them from images, symbols, and narrative patterns observed in a significantly various selection of literary works. I conceive of archetypal criticism, thus, as inductive rather than deductive, Aristotelian in its concern with things as they are rather than Platonic in suggesting them as derivatives from absolute, universal concepts. (5; emphasis in the original)

As Pratt suggests, the appropriate disciplines to study the above-mentioned parallels are comparative mythology or myth criticism, not archetypal analysis. As I have already highlighted, the methodology chosen for this study is appropriate precisely because it looks at distinct cultural patterns in a set of inter-related Jewish cultures, and attempts to analyze them from common points of Judaic reference, from inside of the tradition itself.

5. Previous Scholarship: Archetypal Analyses of Jewish Literatures

I have just outlined the manner in which the methodology for this study coincides with current trends in archetypal criticism. What remains to be elaborated upon is the
potential relevance of such research for the fields of Anglo-American, Modern Hebrew, and Maghrebian Francophone Jewish literatures. Therefore, in order to avoid any vagueness in the application of this methodology, I detail in the following pages the previous scholarship related to my own approach, and then discuss how this study breaks new ground in the field of modern Judaic literary criticism.

This study is the first of its kind to utilize a fundamentally comparative approach for the study of modern Judaic texts. While analyses do exist that compare issues of common Jewish concern, such as the Holocaust, Zionism, or the Jewish Diaspora, they are largely one-sided, and, more often than not, highly Anglo-centric in their emphasis on literatures readily available in English translation. This project, therefore, breaks new ground in its examination of specifically Judaic archetypes in secular, modern texts written by Jewish writers.

For example, only several studies thus far have explored Biblical themes or archetypes in Jewish-American literature, and all of them take a universalistic approach

23 Examples include a study of comparative themes in Jewish-American literature (Omer-Sherman); Sephardic trends in Modern Hebrew literature (Ramras-Rauch; Peleg; Mishani); studies that dissect the issue of Jewish identity, focusing on the representations of Israel in America and vice versa (Kabakoff and Nash; Shohat; Siegel; Cohn and Silberstein; Furman; Sokoloff; Budick); images of Jews in multicultural literature (Gilman); a thesis that compares South American and European Jewish writing (Eli); a monograph on notions of Zionism in Europe (Plapp); and a dissertation on symbolic Judaic imagery in Jewish-American and Israeli literature (Zilberman). Critical inquiries on Maghrebian Francophone Jewish literature are few and far between. The work of Guy Dugas makes up the bulk of the research in this field, which otherwise consists of selected journal articles (Elbaz; Klein), one dissertation on exile in Maghrebian Jewish women’s writing (Lichtenstein), or annotated bibliographies.
to archetypes.\textsuperscript{24} Harold Fisch, for example, adopts a dogmatic stance, similar to the intertextual minimalism of Northrop Frye, in which he equates archetypal language to metalanguage, and thus diminishes the importance of archetypes in positing that, “There evidently are ‘archetypes’—patterns that recur in a vast number of texts” (\textit{A Remembered Future} 2). The methodological approach closest to my own is that undertaken by S. Lillian Kremer, who, in discussing transmogrified Yiddish archetypes in Bernard Malamud’s fiction, notes that Malamud’s characters “transmit something of the rich store of ethical Jewish wisdom and collective historic memory” (“Reflections” 125).

In Modern Hebrew literature, the main work on literary archetypes is Avraham Balaban’s monograph on the work of Amos Oz, which he undertakes from a strictly Jungian (universalist) approach. Similarly, Israel Cohen’s study on Hebrew literature in light of Jungian theory is hyper-Jungian in its analysis, and does not include the fiction of Yehoshua. There are several important articles (Feldman; Katz; Morahg, “Heres ‘atsmi”) and books (Balaban; Ben-Dov) that deal somewhat with the mythical and symbolic aspects of what is seen as A. B. Yehoshua’s major work, \textit{Mar Mani} (“Mr. Mani”), although they do not look directly at the concept of archetypes.\textsuperscript{25} As of yet, only three pieces of scholarship (Dan; Zilberman; Yitzkhaki) explore archetypal figures in

\textsuperscript{24} These analyses include those of Sheres, Kremer, Fisch, Reyer, Kremer, and Avery. To date, only three have dealt specifically with the work of Chaim Potok (Sutherland; Ahrens; and Barkess).

\textsuperscript{25} Outside the realm of fiction, Rina Litvin (“Laḥlom et hamitos–kadimah”) has criticized Yehoshua for the use of archetypes in his book of essays that deal with Zionism through historical psychoanalysis, \textit{Bizkhut hanormaliyut [From Right to Right]}. Namely, Litvin castigates Yehoshua for analyzing Judaic archetypes outside of their original contexts.
Yehoshua’s early, highly allegorical work, much of which provides fertile ground for archetypal analysis. As for Maghrebian Francophone Jewish literature, there is not yet a single article that focuses on Judaic archetypes.

In a related area, Jacobson and Kartun-Blum use similar intertextual, mythical-poetic, and midrashic (exegetical) approaches for their respective studies of Modern Hebrew poetry and prose, although they do not venture into a comparative Judaic arena; nor does either one of them deal with the work of Yehoshua. Furthermore, the aims of their studies are not related to explaining the reasons for which Modern Hebrew writers undertake such re-tellings. While Shaked does not deal directly with archetypes, he does come close to the approach used in this study by employing intertextual criticism to elucidate the links between liturgical and fictional Hebrew prose compositions. In an article on the presence of midrash and Biblical interpretation in Jewish-American literature, David J. Zucker alludes to archetypes (albeit in the strictly intertextual sense) while discussing Potok’s novel *Davita’s Harp*. In his reading of that novel, Zucker follows Susan Handelman’s definition of intertextuality, according to which, “Texts echo, interact, and interpenetrate” (47). While such a methodology, valid in and of itself, does share certain affinities with my own, it should be noted that such universalist approaches to archetypes (namely, ones which do not take into account the relation between shared cultural elements and recurring literary patterns) actually have nothing to do with archetypal criticism per se; they belong to strictly Jungian literary criticism, no more and no less. As such, I do not consider universalist approaches to be directly related precursors to the study of Judaic literary archetypes.
Concerning psychological approaches to Jewish literature, there has been a plethora of material written from a Freudian perspective; much less has been done from a Jungian point of view.\textsuperscript{26} Yael S. Feldman is a prolific, self-avowed Freudian literary critic, although one who, paradoxically, defines her utilization of “psycho-politics” to analyze Modern Jewish literature as “the discourse that attempts to interpret the dynamics of political processes and collective identity through the prism of personal and familial psychology” (“Most Exalted Symbol” 259). Although I do not categorically reject such an approach to the study of Judaic literary discourse, it is my view that a Freudian reading of the texts of Boukhobza, Potok, and Yehoshua would minimize the very sub-cultural dynamics and dissonances in collective identity that cry out for illustration. These dynamics, as well as my justification for using them, are further explored in Chapter 2.

6. Underlying Assumptions of the Conceptual Framework

After having presented an outline of the critical context, scholarly objectives, and previous research related to the current project, I provide below several clarifications concerning the justifications, both theoretical and methodological, for my approach to the authors and texts chosen for this study. I begin by explaining the logic of searching for

\textsuperscript{26} See, for example, Knapp 188–226. This disparity is probably due to the concerns of some critics of Jewish literature about Jung’s alleged anti-Semitism. While this is a fiercely-debated (and beaten-to-death) issue, it is not one which I find to be especially germane to my own research. In my estimation, the charge of Jung’s anti-Semitism is questionable, at best. For further clarification on this subject, the interested reader may see the studies of Noll; Pietikäinen; and Maidenbaum.
Judaic archetypes in literatures deemed as “Jewish.” Then, I demonstrate the rationale behind my perception of the ethnographic make-up of modern Jewish sub-groups. After this demonstration, I explain the decision to focus this study on the literary works of Chochana Boukhobza, Chaim Potok, and A. B. Yehoshua.

The examination of Judaic literary archetypes presupposes that the literatures in question are composed, firstly, by Jewish authors who come from any one of the variant Jewish subcultures; and secondly, that these authors write from inside, on behalf of, or even against the Jewish tradition. To make a text more symbolically effective for the Jewish reader, these Jewish writers employ the associative clusters of long-held Judaic archetypes. I insist upon using the more neutral term “Judaic,” rather than “Jewish,” when referring to such archetypes for the following reasons: “Jewish” has traditionally meant individuals or groups that are part of world Jewry, whereas the modern “Judaic” refers to “Jewishness” in general (i.e., related to Jews and to Judaism in the broadest sense, without maintaining a necessarily religious component). To avoid confusion, I have followed the standard usage of “Jewish literatures” when referring to literature written by Jews that incorporates Judaic themes, as it is not yet customary to refer to such literature as “Judaic.”

With respect to the definition of Jewish literature, Hana Wirth-Nesher notes that defining Jewish literature as, “literature written by Jews” is problematic, in that it is “reductive” (3). Similarly, Jewish literature cannot be defined as literature that reflects the Jewish religious experience, especially considering that the vast majority of modern

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For more on the differences in terminology, see Frieden, “Introduction” 115.
Jewish literature has its roots in emancipation, assimilation, and secularism. Furthermore, such literature cannot assume a common linguistic basis, given that the quantity of literature written by Jews is composed in languages other than Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, Judeo-Arabic, or Judeo-Persian; that is to say, in languages that have no direct epistemological or hermeneutic basis in the Jewish experience. Moreover, the linguistic factor is even further complicated if we cite, for instance, the case of the Arab-Israeli Christian author Anton Shammas, who writes, in regards to his exquisite use of the Hebrew language for his creative writing: “What I’m trying to do—mulishly, it seems—is to un-Jew the Hebrew language, to make it more Israeli and less Jewish . . . As English is the language of those who speak it, so is Hebrew; and so the state should be the state of those who live in it, not of those who play with its destiny with a remote control in hand” (10). In sum, I consider the texts studied here to be Judaic in the sense that their major points of reference and symbolic structure have their genesis in the Jewish experience—in whatever diverse forms that experience may take.

The second issue to be addressed is that of ethnographic classification. When probing the issues of ethnic affiliations and sub-cultural identities in comparative Jewish literatures, it would be highly tempting to rely on Hannah Arendt’s acerbic observation that, “To be a Jew is to constitute a problem, for others and hence for oneself” (qtd. in McCarthy 733). All humor aside, any study purporting to represent a variety of literatures written by Jews must take into consideration the accepted categories of what constitutes a Jew in the first place. As outlined in this section, the ambiguities surrounding modern Jewish identity (and the cultural variables responsible for those very ambiguities) have been aptly studied in the sociological, anthropological, religious, and political literature.
My work contributes to that discussion by demonstrating how such cultural variables may also be elucidated in literary texts—particularly by an archetypal analysis of those texts, which looks at the differences in symbolic imagery along the lines of shared ethnicity, intertextual predispositions, and common experience.

Current ethnographic scholarship identifies three “syndromes” of Jewish existence: the “caste,” or ultra-orthodox syndrome; the ethno-cultural, or non-observant syndrome (including most Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist Jews); and the national, or Israeli syndrome (Ben-Rafael, *Jewish Identities* 37–52). Although I do not advocate an unbending adherence to these categories, they seem to me to indeed be representative of the kinds of Jews that exist in the modern world. As such, I have chosen authors who more or less fit into those categories, in order to convey, as much as possible, the wide assortment of cultures and experiences necessary for a comparative study of modern Jewish literatures. Therefore, I detail in Chapter 2 the ways in which my authors correspond to the ethnographic categories given above; I also provide a description of each author’s personal background, in order to elucidate the environmental factors that have contributed to each author’s worldview.

I realize that certain readers might invoke the overabundance of other Jewish writers who, for whatever reason, might be expected to be included in this study (and to also fit into the ethnographic categories mentioned above), instead of the ones on whose work I have chosen to write. My immediate response to such a comment would be, firstly, to emphasize that I am exploring a problem, not dealing in simple comparisons per se. Since archetypes are made up of recurring cultural and sub-cultural patterns, the choice of authors whose life experiences and intellectual capacities mirror the conflicting
sub-cultural affinities in modern Jewish constitutes nothing less than a methodological imperative. For instance, the authors analyzed in this study are worthy of comparison because they all have lived, at least for some time, in Israel (and therefore have first-hand knowledge of practical Zionism). All of them experienced Jewish religion at home, which endowed them with the knowledge of the principal, unifying aspect of Jewish symbolism (i.e., the Hebrew Scriptures). Most importantly, all of them possess a command of Hebrew and Aramaic—the principal languages of Jewish philosophy, liturgy, literature, and history—which allows them access to the discursive elements of shared ethnicity and intertextual predispositions.

On the subject of possible hesitation regarding the comparative prominence of the authors in question, I would respond by saying that as a literary critic, I am not responsible for reinforcing the existing canon. I am well aware, for instance, that it was the (Jewish Anglophone) writer Saul Bellow, and not Chaim Potok, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature (in 1976); that Amos Oz or David Grossman are considered by some in the Israeli literary establishment to be a better writer than A. B. Yehoshua; or that there are Francophone North African Jewish writers more well-known than Chochana Boukhboza (primarily because of the translations of their work into English), for example, Edmond Amran El Maleh, Albert Memmi, or Marcel Bénabou.

I have chosen the works of Boukhobza, Potok, and Yehoshua as appropriate to explore the cultural variables of modern Judaic discourse because they reveal to me a series of inter-related dialogues that question the fundamental problems of the state of the Jewish people. Furthermore, these dialogues—archetypal in nature—are established by
connections, not by coincidence. Indeed, this is the same reason that all three of the writers whose work I analyze here have already been characterized by their concerns with religion, myth, depth psychology, and identity crises in the modern Jewish paradigm. In fact, the writing of all three has been noted for its archetypal connections. Yehoshua’s claim that he has attempted in his fiction “to do psychoanalysis on a national level” (qtd. in Horn, *Facing the Fires* 16) may thus, in my view, be applied to each writer covered in this study.  

A further justification which I would like to bring the reader’s attention is a practical one. My choice of literary texts for this study was evidently limited to source materials written in the languages in which I am fluent: English, Hebrew, and French. Although I have reading ability in several other languages, the lack of fluency in those languages made it impossible to undertake a serious study of Jewish literatures written in them. Therefore, I have not deliberately ignored other Judaic texts (such as ones written in Russian, Amharic, Arabic, German, etc.) in my analysis of the cultural variables of modern Judaic discourse; it is simply that an analysis of such texts in their original languages—a necessary component of any scholarly endeavor related to them—was not possible.

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28 Yehoshua’s full comment is as follows: “What psychoanalysis tries to do is to go slowly, slowly, in circles to find certain moments in the life of a person in which there were unsolved conflicts, in order to understand some of the neurosis and some of the disturbances of the present. So my feeling was to do psychoanalysis on a national level, and to try to see why we are in such a confusion now by understanding some of the elements of the past” (qtd. in Horn, *Facing the Fires* 16).
On a related note, I posit that the study of Anglo-American, Modern Hebrew, and Maghrebian Francophone Jewish literatures is appropriate for the purpose of representing an international cross-section of Judaic literary discourse. This is due, first, to the fact that these are among the literary cultures in which the major part of Jewish literatures is written. Second, it is appropriate because these literary cultures come from the countries in which the majority of the world’s Jews currently reside: Israel, for instance, has 5,313,800 Jews (40.6% of the world Jewish population); the United States has 5,275,000 (40.3% of the world Jewish population); and France, which has 491,500 (3.8% of the world Jewish population), is also the country in which, at present, most Maghrebian-born Francophone Jewish writers live and publish (Sheskin and Dashefsky 138).

Finally, there are several other justifications for the present study, outside of the literary/linguistic aspects, that strike me as necessary to address. The first has to do with the following question: Can a single Jewish author, from any given Jewish subculture, be truly considered a legitimate representative of at least a part of his or her entire group? It seems to me that an answer in the affirmative goes without saying, since we study many other authors whose literary affiliations (such as “Asian literature,” “Victorian literature,” etc.) seem hazy at best. Nonetheless, I outline below the reasons for which the authors chosen for this study are appropriate representatives of their sub-cultural groups.

In principle, the bloody histories of traditionally threatened or marginalized ethnic groups (such as the Jews) make the link between the individual and the collective particularly poignant with respect to archetypal analysis, since such an approach focuses

29 These data are based in part on Jewish community surveys, and I therefore acknowledge their approximate value.
on the “interface of individual and collective identities” (Lifton 106). For example, modern-day America, with its commercial excess and rampant individualism, may not provide a fertile ground for archetypal analysis; but this is precisely because many of the people who inhabit modern-day America are likely to be detached from any inclusive or sub-cultural attachment outside of their (inherently pluralistic) umbrella civilization. This, of course, is a fairly recent phenomenon, primarily economic in nature, which has allowed the mass exodus of families from their traditional communities, the annulment of compulsory military service, and the choice to decline a religious or communal affiliation—all of which has enabled individuals to exclude themselves, both culturally and psychically, from the collective. We can talk about “Jewish collectivity” with respect to all three of the authors chosen for this study inasmuch as Potok was born and raised in a closed religious community; Yehoshua was raised in a nascent Israel that glorified the (Zionist) collective over the individual; and Boukhboza was also confined within the traditions of her Tunisian Jewish community, even after having left her country of birth for France. In all of these cases, the environments from which the three authors hail were ones in which individualism was frowned upon, and where one could not afford, financially or socially, to remain outside of the collective body. Furthermore, all three of these authors are known as public intellectuals, actively engaged in their respective societies, who, precisely because of the visionary and resonant nature of their literary works, wield considerable influence and respect among their sub-cultural readership.

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30 In cultural psychology, this adherence to the collective is referred to as “the self-system as a dynamic collective process” (Markus 13).
The second question that I address about these authors’ literary texts is the following: can literature, like other art forms, be seen as a valid, albeit limited expression of the collective disposition of any given culture or period? Once again, my answer to this query is a resounding “Yes.” As Terry Eagleton points out, the only reason that we consider the last sentence of Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* to be “literary” is because it is the last sentence in the book *A Farewell to Arms* (65). By that, Eagleton means that literature is a part of culture, and the specificities of any culture are frequently documented in the cultural production of literary works. Moreover, archetypal analyses of literary texts, which see the content of those texts as particular cultural patterns, regard such texts as viable, although not unimpeachable, reflections of lived experience.

The next line of reasoning to affirm literature’s representative ability is, quite simply, to point out that the vast majority of literary criticism in the past half-century has taken sociological/anthropological, psychological, or political approaches to the study of literary texts; my perspective is therefore far from revolutionary. The argument over literary interpretation has been amply debated, and I do not intend to go into the details here. Suffice it to say that literature, which De Man calls “a primary source of knowledge” (19), is one of the many ways in which human beings document the experience of being human. For that reason, at least, we should take it into consideration when analyzing the diverse facets of human existence.

The last potential criticism I would like to address is that I am not, in any way, shape, or form, reinforcing anti-Semitism by granting legitimacy to “stereotypes.” An archetype is not a stereotype. A stereotype is a kind of preconceived, standardizing repetition, whereas an archetype depends upon interpretation and uniqueness. Otherwise
known in cognitive psychology as “schemata,” stereotypes can be dangerous in their dictation (or limitation) of reality. Conversely, the benefit of archetypes lies in their changing nature, or in their potentiality; that is to say, in their avatars. Although both archetypes and stereotypes exist in various forms of cultural production (and are not always negative), neither one should be regarded as absolute. As James Hillman points out, the difference between an archetype and a stereotype is that archetypes have a metaphorical value, whereas stereotypes “strike (typos) us as solidly (stereo) fixed realities” (*Archetypal Psychology* 122). This project makes an important contribution to the metaphorical interpretation of varying Jewish realities, as depicted in literary texts, by elucidating the archetypal commonalities between the avatars that exist in them. From that perspective, the contribution of this study is also relevant for studies of other ethnic groups’ communal identities—both literary and otherwise—that “are constituted through, not despite, the passage of time” (Boon 239).³¹

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³¹ For critical predecessors of this idea outside of the Jewish context, see, for example, Sollors; Anderson; Balibar; and Mignolo.
Chapter 2: Historical Context and Sub-cultural Analysis

1. Delineations of Modern Jewry: Rationale and Classification

Now that I have presented a brief summary of my underlying assumptions and justifications relating to the cultural variables of modern Judaic discourse, I detail below a more fleshed-out explanation, incorporating selections of appropriate scholarship on the subject, as to why these assumptions are significant with respect to the formal classification of the authors (and their respective sub-groups) explored in this project.

The preliminary assumptions regarding Judaic classification for this study rest on several factors. The first assumption goes against the one-dimensional thesis evidenced (for example) in the following supposition of Yitzkhak Baer, according to which, “Jewish history, from its earliest beginnings to our own day, constitutes an organic unit” (1). I dissent from such generalizing rhetoric and base my theoretical assumptions on current research in anthropology, sociology, and ethnography, according to which modern Jewry is made up of different and discordant groups, each of which “is characterized by a close approximation to the Gentile environment” (Patai, Israel 26) in which its members reside. The second assumption, which I describe in more detail below, is that Jewish “religion,” in the sense of faith or belief, is not a static, defined component of Jewishness that can be pinpointed. Rather, it is only one component in a series of Jewish cultures that must be examined according to practice, in the context of respective historical and environmental schemata.

32 This disconnect may be attributed to what Alexander Barzel (Lehiyot yehudi 4) calls a fundamental difference in hashkafat 'olam (“worldview”).
The conception according to which the Jews constitute members of a “religion”—in the sense of an institutionalized set of beliefs regarding a specific supernatural power—is the basic component in the thesis of S. M. Dubnow, who posits that the Jews are imbued with a certain spirituality that makes them unique among the nations. According to Dubnow, since the destruction of the Second Temple by Titus in 70 CE, Jewish history should only be seen through the prism of Judaism [i.e., Jewish religion], pure and simple (628). The same premise is shared by Martin Buber, who writes that the severing of Jewish religion from Jewish society is an unnatural event that will lead to a disaster of the greatest proportions. On this point, Buber writes:

Israel is . . . the only people in the world which, from its earliest beginnings, has been both a nation and a religious community. In the historical hour in which its tribes grew together to form a people, it became the carrier of a revelation . . . Israel was and is a people and a religious community in one, and it is this unity which enabled it to survive in an exile no other nation had to suffer. . . . He who severs this bond severs the life of Israel. (“Hebrew Humanism” 459–60)

Buber’s idea of Jewish religion also characterizes the thesis of Hans Kohn, who (quite correctly) points out that the Biblical figure of Ruth was a Moabite (who, according to Biblical law, should not have been able to enter the house of Israel). Thus, according to Kohn, what should be inferred from this story is that, “The Jews became a nation not by blood but by an act of volition and of spiritual decision” (37). I am in full accord with Kohn’s assertion that “blood” (or in this context, ethnicity) was not the determining

33 See Deuteronomy 23:3: “An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever.” (All English translations from the Hebrew Scriptures will follow the translation of the Jewish Publication Society 1917 Edition.)
factor for the people Israel; however, I cannot accept the idea that a “spiritual decision” characterizes the collective of Biblical Israel, just as I cannot accept that “Jewish religion” is the defining factor in the history of that people over the last 3,000 years. This is especially true if we consider the utter pervasiveness of the secular Jewish character in the post-Enlightenment age.

The main reason that the explanation of “spirituality” or “religion” is erroneous for the characterization of Jewish identity is that even if we characterize Judaism as a religion with certain commonly-held beliefs, there are still many stages in its religious development with very different emphases. All of these stages of development project conflicting ideas about dietary laws, sin, marriage, theodicy, etc. Moreover, there is no central religious authority in Judaism, as there is (for example) in Catholicism. On a related note, the reason that Ben-Rafael (“The Space and Dilemmas” 345) advocates the sociological term “caste” to describe the ultra-orthodox (the only “religious” Jews of today, if one defines religion as an adherence to codified practices) is because the term “caste” (Dumont 21–22) connotes “a group that has an all-encompassing perception of itself and the organization of its life but concurrently sees itself as part of a larger system that invests its aspirations with ‘transcendent’ meaning” (“The Space and Dilemmas” 345). 34

In a similar vein, the assumption that Jewish “religion” is far too diverse to be considered at all uniform (and thus cannot be subject to a common classification) shares a

34 As Dumont (Homo Hierarchicus 21–22) points out, the term “caste” comes from casta, of Portuguese and Spanish origin, meaning “something not mixed.” The original etymology is from the Latin castus, or “chaste.”
methodological affinity with the archetypal approach to Judaic cultural variables in literature, because both methods show how each author is part of a complex hermeneutical process spanning a particular historical continuum. In such a continuum, each author interprets elements in Judaism differently based on his or her particular sub-cultural praxis and individuality. Such a perspective might be explained by what Lawrence Rosen calls “a process of negotiation” (7), in which cultural concepts are negotiable according to the terms in which they are conceived, rather than considered as simple, intellectually static ideas which maintain a fixed character across different historical and teleological continua.

Regarding the archetypal treatment of Jewish cultural praxis, I am indebted in this study to one of the foundational texts in new Jewish historiography: Ephraim Shmueli’s Shev’a tarbuyot yisrael (“Seven Jewish Cultures”) (1980). In this book, Shmueli proposes the idea that Jewish “unity” as such does not exist in either historical or ontological patterns; rather, it is a construct, a perceptual structure similar to Etienne Balibar’s idea of “fictive ethnicity” as necessary for providing social cohesion in the modern-day nation-state (96). In order to illustrate the differences among the above-mentioned patterns, Shmueli proposes that the span of Jewish existence be divided into seven historical phases, or systems, which he calls “tarbuyot” (3; “cultures”), “conceived as organized sets of meanings in the practical, as well as in the theoretical and soteriological (redeeming) realms of human endeavor” (3). He then categorizes the seven cultures in the history of the Jewish people as the following: Biblical culture; Talmudic
culture; poetic-philosophic culture; mystical culture (and its offshoot, Chasidism); rabbinic culture; the culture of the Emancipation; and the national-Israeli culture (12).  

When one considers in this fashion the history of Jewishness, it becomes clear that there is no one, culturally uniform Jewish identity, “religious” or otherwise, which might be highlighted in any way other than such reliance upon (certain) Hebrew Scriptures as symbolic and/or pragmatic points of reference. As far as the idea of a shared Jewish “ethnicity” goes, Shmueli points out that there is no historical basis for it (207). Firstly, this is because after the conquest of the twelve tribes, Jews frequently had mixed marriages, despite the stigma that such unions carried. Furthermore, those who fled Israel after the crumbling of Samaria (as well as those who returned after the Babylonian exile) took non-Jewish women as wives. Also, there was an unusual phase of conversions by other groups to Judaism (unusual because Judaism traditionally did not seek converts) which took place during the Second Temple period—an instance which further

35 A movement whose origins may be traced to the eighteenth century, Chasidism (from the Hebrew hasid [“pious one”]) is an (ultra-)orthodox current of Judaism in which the emphasis is placed on devotion to the Rebbe, or leading rabbi of the community (often chosen by dynastical concerns); on the study of Jewish mystical thought; and on the transmission of morality through parables and on spiritual camaraderie. Throughout this study, I use the traditional method of transliterating this term into English, whereby the Hebrew letter het (ח) in the first part of the word is rendered into English as “ch,” owing to this term’s frequent Yiddish usage (in which the guttural “ch” is frequently employed in transliteration). For an excellent introduction to Chasidic thought and history, see Jerome R. Mintz.

36 See Judges 3:6: “And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.”
delegitimizes the idea of any kind of ethnic continuity. After the Second Temple period, especially during the times in which Jews were under the yoke of hostile powers, the notion of a shared ethnicity became even more difficult to establish, owing to many occurrences of rapes, forced conversions, destructions of entire communities, etc. These factors are particularly relevant for a study of the differing archetypal images in different Jewish sub-cultures because, as Shmueli notes, “In each culture a certain set of experiences had a decisive impact upon the imagery and conduct which became unique to that particular culture. The central new experiences were articulated in an innovative terminology, new images, reinvigorated symbols” (5). In other words, looking at culture heuristically (i.e., by means of empirically-based observations not subject to predisposed rationalizations) in order to examine the differences between varying stages of Jewish historical and cultural development can help to shed light on the development, and ultimately the meaning, of differences in archetypal Judaic imagery as they appear in literary texts.

Shmueli, of course, was not the first researcher of Jewish history to put forth the idea that the Jews are not a group with unvarying ethnic or religious continuity. In modern scholarship, this idea can be traced back to I. M. Jost, who in 1832 saw the early Jews as a kind of tribal confederation—perhaps the closest approximation to the true sense of the term “chosen.” However, what is revolutionary in Shmueli’s work is that it shows the manner in which Judaism is more legalistic than theological. In other words, Judaism functions on a contractual basis, in the manner of a nomocratic (i.e., law-
driven) system. The theology is therefore less explicit, and more open to interpretation. This is why David Hartman refers to Judaism as an “interpretive tradition” (*A Heart of Many Rooms* 3). In an archetypal perspective, this is important because it enables us to see, in Shmueli’s words, “its [the Jewish people’s] archetypal collective experiences as spiritual symbols, which the commandments have endowed with institutionalized force for Israel’s preservation” (248).

An additional point I would like to make regarding the classification of Jewish groups is that there is no racial or biological basis for claiming any kind of common Jewish heritage, despite the longevity of this cliché. Part of the reason that Jews have been considered a race can be traced back to Paul of Tarsus, who, in taking away from Christians the obligation to follow Jewish law, inadvertently made the Jews into an ethnic group based on the “sign” of circumcision. Circumcision, however, should also be considered as part of the nomocratic system mentioned herein, albeit in a ritualistic format. As God says to his Chosen People: “This is My covenant, which ye shall keep, between Me and you and thy seed after thee: every male among you shall be circumcised” (Gen. 17.10–14).

Raphael Falk, a biologist by training, refutes the racial supposition quite clearly, maintaining that, “There is no biological way to say who is a Jew” (qtd. in Karpel 8). He continues with the explanation that, “It is really . . . tradition and customs, as well as persecution, which have . . . caused them [the Jews] to form gene pools that were

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37 *Nomos* is Greek for “law,” just like *Torah* in Hebrew.
somewhat isolated from their surroundings” (10).  This explains the frequency of the oft-cited “Jewish” diseases, such as Tay-Sachs, Gaucher, and Mucolipidosis Type IV among Jews of Eastern European Jewish extraction.) Concerning Jewish gene pools, we find that “interpretations of genetic data about the Jews stress two themes: (1) an intrinsic admixture of different non-Jewish populations with Jews, which resulted in great heterogeneity among Jewish groups, and (2) a common Middle Eastern origin” (Goodman 29). Also, studies done in Israel in 1948 show that “genetic distance’ among major Jewish groups of diverse geographical origins were often smaller than the distance between Jews and non-Jews of the same regions, with the exception of those of Jews from Yemen, India, and Ethiopia” (Corcos 130). Such instances only prove that the Jews of those particular sub-groups have a common gene pool; they do not prove that all the Jewish groups in the world are somehow phylogenetically related.  

That said, if we assume that the Jews are not a race, an ethnicity, or a religious group, then what are they? At the risk of sounding postmodern or being mistaken for a proponent of cultural relativism (neither of which is true), I am inclined to agree with the opinion of Jean-Paul Sartre, who states: “If they [the Jews] have a common bond . . . it is because they have in common the situation of a Jew, that is, they live in a community

38 In regards to persecution, it is interesting to note that the United States Supreme Court has labeled the Jews a “race,” in the hopes of trying to defend them from (racist) discrimination. In contrast, the Israeli government continues to insist upon matrilineal ties to determine Jewishness, because the idea of racial classification brings to mind the blood libel, the Nuremberg Laws, etc. For more, see Patai, The Myth of Jewish Race 44–45.

39 For more on Jewish gene pools, see Cochran.
which [because of varying degrees of historical separation] takes them for Jews” (67). Indeed, many prominent Jewish intellectuals have subscribed to Sartre’s idea, among them Albert Einstein, who, as Alan Dershowitz points out, agreed with Sartre, in crediting anti-Semitism with having been the key factor in preserving the Jewish “race” (4). Even Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern political Zionism, wrote in his diary on July 6, 1895: “[Max] Nordau [the co-founder of the World Zionist Organization] and I agreed that only anti-Semitism had made Jews of us” (qtd. in Dawidowicz 26).41

Before moving on to the environmental discussions of Boukhobza, Potok, and Yehoshua, I would like to signal that I am well aware that the concept of Jewish identity, as I explore it in this study, is an inherently modern one. As I have stated earlier, this is no coincidence. The slippery nature of Jewish identity in the post-Enlightenment era has endowed the modern individual with unprecedented freedom, and has thereby fractured the long-held notions of collectivity—hardly unimpeachable in and of themselves, because of the flexible nature of the conceptual frameworks in which they were formed—like no other time in history.

The framework for the continuum of modern Jewish history is also an example of a flexible concept, although efforts have been made to pinpoint several key events in this continuum. For instance, Ben Zion Dinur establishes the beginning of modern Jewish history at 1700, when Rabbi Judah the Pious led a mass immigration of one thousand Jews to the Holy Land. Dinur notes that this move was not just symbolic or Messianic, 

40 Dershowitz cites this quotation from Einstein 33.
41 For proof of how anti-Semitism has drawn much inspiration from the idea of Jewish “ethnicity,” see Netanyahu, Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain 3–27.
for “the ways in which [the immigration] was organized [were] signs of the twilight of the Middle Ages and the dawn of the modern era” (90). According to Heinrich Graetz, Modern Judaism coincides with 1750, the year in which Moses Mendelssohn began to publish the Hebrew journal Kehilat Musar—one of the first manifestations of the Haskalah (292). S. M. Dubnow (628) places the beginning of modern Jewish history at the French Revolution (1789). Other scholars (for example, Aviv and Shneer 16) see the Emancipation of the Jews by Napoleon in 1808 as the beginning of the “New Jew.” Another important date in the modern Jewish history (although one which is a bit late to be considered at the forefront of that period) was the propagation of the theories of Moses Hess (the man who converted both Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels to Communism), with his publication of Rome and Jerusalem in 1862, the first work that based the nationalist leanings of the Jew on secular criteria.

The decision to provide the above-cited estimations regarding possible time frames for the genesis of Judaic modernity has been made in order to emphasize the following: if Jewish identity has always been a construct, then the fragmentation of the modern world has only made this construct all the more pronounced. As Leon S. Yudkin observes, the post-Haskalah position of the Jew “was no longer a permanent datum within a rigidly patterned . . . culture. Henceforth, he was to be a Jew (to whatever extent) and something else too, whether national or international, unitarily cultural or cross cultural” (12). The result of such fragmentation is that in the modern world, “‘the Jewish people’ means not that all Jews are one but, rather, that all Jews share one thing

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42 For a summary of this post-Haskalah identity in literature, see Yudkin 11-26.
and one thing alone—they identify as Jews, whatever that may mean” (Aviv and Shneer 175).

2. A. B. Yehoshua: The Zenith of Secular Zionism

In literary criticism, much attention has been paid to the Sephardic dimension of A. B. Yehoshua’s fiction.\(^{43}\) I do not intend to repeat it here—at least, no more than is absolutely necessary for the topic at hand. Suffice it to say that I differ in opinion from those critics who approach Yehoshua’s work from an emphatically Sephardic standpoint for several reasons. The first reason is because Yehoshua was born in Israel before the founding of the state, and consequently did not suffer the economic hardships and/or institutionalized racism that other Sephardim who came in the 1950s and 1960s did. (He also mentioned to me [personal interview, 21 May 2007]\(^{44}\) that his Moroccan mother was embarrassed by the later waves of less-educated Moroccan immigrants who came to Israel during the early years of independence.) The second reason that I do not consider Yehoshua to be a “Sephardic” writer is because his upbringing did not take place in a

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\(^{43}\) See Yehoshua, “*Hifus ahar*”; and Ramras-Rauch, “A. B. Yehoshua and the Sephardic Experience.”

\(^{44}\) Unless otherwise noted, each quotation cited as a “personal interview” from A. B. Yehoshua will refer to the interview I conducted with him at his home in Haifa, Israel on 20 May 2007.
strictly Sephardic setting, but rather in a melting pot of Ashkenazi Jews from mostly Eastern European countries.

For this study, I am interested in Yehoshua’s writing inasmuch as it reflects a syndrome (i.e., the national one) which differs from the other two types of Jewish syndromes explored in this study: namely, the ultra-orthodox syndrome (Potok) and the ethno-cultural syndrome (Boukhobza). In other words, I am interested in Yehoshua’s writing insofar as it represents the Israeli, national, and Zionist facets of the modern Judaic paradigm. In that vein, I detail below a brief history of Zionism in its Israeli context, in order to provide a bit of background on the formation of A. B. Yehoshua’s sub-cultural perspective.

More than anything else, the history of Zionism should be considered as “hamehaah hanimretset beyoter shel hayehudim neger shilit halegitimiut lekiyumam” (Talmon 68; “the most decisive protest of the Jews against the negation of the legitimacy of their existence”). Almost as important to this assertion is the fact that political Zionism was originally a movement with which the Jewish religious “caste” seemed incompatible, despite the recent associations it has had with Jewish messianic fervor (and in particular, since 1967). In fact, political Zionism began as an almost exclusively secular movement, heavily influenced by the French revolutions of 1789 and 1848. As John Rose points out, Zionism may therefore be seen as “a potent mixture of ancient Judaism and modern nationalism” (7).

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45 For more on the rise of religious rhetoric in the Israeli public since 1967, see R. Friedman; Naor; and Segev.
The fact that Zionism was largely secular at its outset cannot be stressed enough, in particular with respect to the intellectual influence, and thus, the environmentally-formulated perspective, of many secular Zionist thinkers (among them, A. B. Yehoshua). For instance, when Ben-Gurion (a self-declared atheist) informed the British authorities that “the Bible is our Mandate” (107), he was referring to the Ancient Kingdom of Israel (i.e., the United Monarchy of David and Solomon), which ruled from approximately 1000-922 BCE.\(^{46}\) Ben-Gurion’s nationalism was unmistakably Biblical: he identified his role models as Joshua, King David, and the prophet Amos (Fisch, *The Zionist Revolution* 106), although he followed no Jewish religious practices (including refusing to cover his head at funerals). As a matter of fact, Ben-Gurion thought that religious belief in Israel would die out as more “enlightened” perceptions came into being among the Jewish populace (Comay 80).

Using Ben-Gurion’s references to the Biblical tradition as a springboard from which to discuss Judaism’s transition to modern nationalism helps to illustrate the manner in which the basis of the Zionist ethos may be seen as Biblical, although the normative tradition of Judaism (from which it draws its visionary inspiration) has lost many of its religious elements. Instead, it has transposed them into the values of socialism, of the modern-day nation-state, and of Jewish continuity, in order to fill the void where religious practice had been. Benedict Anderson sums up this transition as follows: “The significance of the emergence of Zionism and the birth of Israel is that the former marks

\[^{46}\text{More precisely, Ben-Gurion was referring to Genesis 17:8: “And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”}\]
the reimagining of an ancient religious community as a nation, down there among the other nations—while the latter charts an alchemic change from wandering devotee to local patriot” (149).

The importance of the above-mentioned terms “nation” and “patriot” in the context of political Zionism brings me to my next point: the significance of the notion of collective Jewish history in Israel, as opposed to in the Diaspora. Indeed, this point is of the utmost importance, particularly in relation to the dynamics of archetypal analysis. For instance, Israelis have the material culture of the ancient Jewish people all around them, which serves as a reminder of their current state of collectivity. They also have military service, the Hebrew language, and a state-run educational framework that emphasizes the historical and teleological mission of the “New Jews”—the very paradigm in which they physically, administratively, and ideologically exist. This position is almost antithetical to the environmental framework of American Jews, who (like other American religious groups) usually come into contact with the existential epicenter of their “ethnic belonging” in the form of a communal (usually local) place of worship, where the emphasis is on the promulgation of ritual, as opposed to actual worship per se. Thus, it may be said that the notion of the collective—which is reinforced in military, educational, and public frameworks—makes up the very core of Israeli society. Of course, this is becoming less and less true for the populace of Israel as a whole, owing to the emergence of a nouveau riche class, whose primary concerns are materialistic rather than ideological; increasing Americanization; draft-dodging; and the inevitable loss of traditional values—phenomena that are sweeping over the entire world. However, with respect to A. B. Yehoshua, it may be said quite clearly that his sub-cultural perspective
(the beginnings of which temporally precede the actual foundation of the state, and include all the value-driven years in which his upbringing took place) is saturated with the idea of a collective Israeli ethos.

The nature of this ethos comes out unmistakably clear in Yehoshua’s fiction, where such local elements influence the ways in which Judaic archetypes are used. The significance of the Israeli reality in Yehoshua’s fiction clearly overshadows any other kind of non-Israeli Jewish reality, and for this reason, I maintain that Yehoshua’s use of Judaic archetypes occurs in the symbolic context of the Israeli, or “national” Jewish syndrome. Furthermore, the fiction of Yehoshua has often been described as emphatically Israeli, symbolically speaking. For instance, Dan Miron calls Yehoshua’s work, “nisayon shel ‘itzuv hamtsav hayisraeli besmalim” (Im lo tehiyeh yerushalayim 56; “an attempt to describe the Israeli reality in symbols”). In that respect, A. B. Yehoshua’s work should be considered first and foremost as the product of an Israeli secularist concerned with an explicitly national (Zionist) reality. Yehoshua consistently uses his position as a public intellectual to stress that position, positing that maintaining Jewish communities in the Diaspora (as opposed to promoting the collective Israeli ethos) is a “neurotic solution” to the Jewish problem. Yehoshua, therefore, sees the nation-state of Israel, and not Jewish religion, as the only hope for Jewish continuity.

Yehoshua’s mother, a native of Morocco, visited Israel with her father for the first time during the 1930s. After the sudden death of the father, she decided to remain in Israel, while the rest of the family stayed behind in Morocco. Like the majority of Moroccan Jews at the time, she was religiously observant. Yehoshua’s father, who was completely secular, came from a Sephardic family who had been living in the Old City of
Jerusalem for four generations, although their ancestors were originally from Salonica. As a young boy, Yehoshua’s father was sent by his family to study with a local sheikh. This would leave an indelible impression on him: Yehoshua’s father went on to become a self-proclaimed Orientalist (before the negative, Saidian connotation of that term), and authored twelve books on Jewish-Arab coexistence and the history of the communities of the Old City of Jerusalem.

Avraham (A. B.) Yehoshua⁴⁷ was born in Jerusalem in 1936, and was raised (in accordance with his father’s wishes) in a secular, yet traditional, Jewish atmosphere. In public school, he received a conventional Jewish education, first becoming acquainted with material from the Bible and the Talmud, and later on, with the Kabbalah. Like most of the Jewish Israeli children of his generation, Yehoshua grew up in an environment that stressed the secular Zionist values of collective defense and communal responsibility. Consequently, he was very active in Zionist youth movements, such as the Israeli Scouts (where he befriended fellow author Amos Oz), and even elected to serve as a paratrooper during his service in the army.

⁴⁷ There is often confusion over the various ways in which Yehoshua signs his first name. His early books were credited to “A. B. Yehoshua,” in which the “B” (the Hebrew letter bet [ב]) stands for “Bulli” — a nonsensical nickname he picked up in primary school. He signed his name in this way because he thought that a name like Avraham [Abraham] sounded too “traditional.” As he got older, he began to like the name more, and now formally goes by “Avraham B. Yehoshua.” However, since he is still referred to for the most part by literary critics as A. B. Yehoshua (despite his later preference for the full name), I will continue with this usage.
Very early on in his intellectual development, Yehoshua related to his Jewish experience as a primarily national (Israeli) phenomenon, in which Jewish religion was not a necessary component in order to be a Zionist. In an interview, Yehoshua told me that he had been an “ateist muvhak” (personal interview, 20 May 2007; “complete atheist”) since the age of nineteen or twenty years old, since he cannot believe in the existence of Divine Providence. As mentioned, such attitudes were espoused by many of the Zionists of the era in which Yehoshua grew up. Moreover, his ideological perspective follows the supposition of Akiva Or with respect to the characteristics of Jewish (Zionist) movements in the twentieth century, according to which, “The quest for a generally accepted secular definition of Jewish ethnicity is the psychological source of Zionism” (50).

As an aspiring writer, Yehoshua was very smitten with the literary works of Franz Kafka, who (alongside Shmuel Yosef Agnon) was a great inspiration to him during those very malleable early stages of creative development. What most impressed Yehoshua about these two Jewish authors was that their narratives seemed to break the mold of ordinary reality, while at the same time incorporating elements of it that would work to the narrative’s advantage. Put differently, the effect was metarealistic. (Yehoshua now describes much of his own early work as metarealistic, in accordance with Hillel Barzel’s original delineation.48) Yehoshua’s first short story, which contained many elements similar to the style of Kafka’s and Agnon’s writing, appeared in 1958 in the review

48 See Barzel, Siporet yisraelit metarealistit.
Keshet; and his first book of short stories, Mot hakazen (“Death of the Old Man”), came out in 1962.

After completing his studies in literature and philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Yehoshua served as the General Secretary of the World Union of Jewish Students in Paris, between the years of 1963-67, where his wife was studying for her Ph.D. in clinical psychology. When he returned to Israel after the Six-Day War of 1967, he accepted a position teaching literature at the University of Haifa. Following the subsequent critical and popular success of his short stories, Yehoshua became one of Israel’s leading public intellectuals, frequently contributing articles to newspapers, and participating in debates over contentious national issues such as the fate of the Occupied Territories, the obligations of the Arab-Israeli minority, and relations with the Jewish Diaspora.

As a committed Zionist, Yehoshua also became involved in various left-wing political movements, such as the activist groups Peace Now and Yesh gvil (“There Is a Limit”). For Yehoshua, there is no other alternative for the Jews other than to embrace a national, Israeli reality. However, he believes that the recognition of Israel’s Arab minority is also a prerequisite to ensure the survival of Israel, for without it, the nation will cease to exist. Yehoshua stresses that one can remain a loyal proponent of Zionism and still be a leftist, for “Tsiyonut eiynah ideologiyah totalit elah kviy’at ‘emdah legabei ‘ikaron ha‘asui lehiyot mekubal ‘al ideologiyot shonot veefilu sotrot” (Bizkhut hanormaliyut 136; “Zionism is not a comprehensive ideology but a specific stand with regard to a principle, a position that is compatible with various and even contradictory ideologies”; Between Right and Right 142).
As an atheist, Yehoshua’s idea of Judaism, or Jewishness, focuses on “Judaism as a culture, as the experience of the people—like Norwegism [sic] for the Norwegian” (qtd. in Burg 4). His conviction that secular Zionism is the panacea for the Jewish problem (a commonly-held opinion in Israel) has caused the ire of many Jews in the Diaspora, who consider such comments to be an attack on their very identity, which, as we have seen in the section on Potok, is heavily influenced by the religious component. Unfortunately, many who are insulted by Yehoshua’s stance on the Jewish Diaspora are unable to contextualize his remarks within the framework of the work that he, and other Israeli intellectuals who share his views, have published only in Hebrew.

In tandem with his conviction that the Diaspora is an untenable solution for Jews the world over, Yehoshua believes that the absence of a common national framework, in an age of secularism, has created a situation in which world Jewry is held together only by an idea (i.e., “Jewish”), the definition of which is ambiguous at best. For instance, Yehoshua once told a reporter that, “Diaspora Judaism is masturbation . . . here [in Israel] it is the real thing” (qtd. in Zax 24). Thus, Yehoshua sees the insistence of Jews who choose to remain in the Diaspora as the genuine death-blow to Jewish continuity: “Israelism [sic] is total Judaism,” he states, maintaining that “Zionism is a kind of therapy for the cancer in the Jewish body” (qtd. in Burg 4).

What creates this “cancer,” according to Yehoshua? In his fiction, as well as in his political essays, Yehoshua enjoys invoking the thought of the historian Léon Poliakov in order to answer this question. Yehoshua explains that Poliakov, throughout his major work, *Histoire de l'antisémitisme* (“History of Anti-Semitism”), shows that the Jews may have something in their character which provokes anti-Semitism. Understanding what
this component is may lead to an explanation (not to be mistaken for a rationalization or a justification) of why the Jews have been subject to so many atrocities throughout the ages. Taking his cue from Poliakov, Yehoshua posits that the outstanding “provocation” of the outside world by the Jews is the lack of a fixed identity, which Yehoshua sees his form of “Jewishness” (i.e., secular, Israeli, and egalitarian) as the solution to. Yehoshua elaborates on this point in stating the following: “Cette idée d’un ‘destin commun’ auquel on s’accroche de toutes ses forces pour renforcer le sentiment identitaire . . . est donc le plus souvent une fiction, un vœu pieux et non une donnée réelle” (Israël, un examen moral 52 ; “This idea of a ‘common destiny’ to which we cling with all our might in order to reinforce the feeling of identity . . . is mostly fictitious, a sanctimonious vow and not an actual given”).

According to Yehoshua, the aforementioned “lack of a fixed identity” among Jews the world over is at the root of the “Jewish problem.” For the Jews of the Diaspora, then—the majority of whom are of European (Ashkenazi) descent (or even for those of Sephardic descent living in Europe)—the following query of Jacques Derrida regarding Jewish identity should be considered as relevant to the problem of Diaspora existence à la Yehoshua: “Are we Jews? Are we Greeks? We live the difference between the Jew and the Greek, which is perhaps the unity of what is called history. . . . We live in and of difference, that is, in hypocrisy” (153; italics in the original). Unlike Derrida, Yehoshua is clearly of the opinion that Zionism is the solution to such hypocrisy.49 And, according to

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49 See Wise for more on Derrida’s stance on the Jewish nationalist movement.
Yehoshua, this hypocrisy has inevitable, disastrous consequences, the most horrific example of which is the Holocaust.

As an atheist, Yehoshua finds confirmation in the Holocaust for his lack of belief in a god: “The Holocaust was the final and conclusive proof that there is not and never was a God in heaven. How can any theological belief that speaks of Divine Providence, of reward and punishment, of divine grace, be maintained after the slaughter of a million children in the concentration camps?” (qtd. in Burg 7). Conversely, as a staunch Zionist, Yehoshua believes that the Holocaust functions as the most comprehensive proof as to why the Jews need a state of their own: “If anyone had illusions about our ability to find our place in the world as a people scattered among the nations, the Holocaust provided the final proof of where this form of existence is likely to lead us” (qtd. in Burg 12).

Yehoshua’s fiction is also critical, albeit in subtle and in symbolic ways, of maintaining a Diasporic “form of existence” when the geo-political entity of Israel is already an established fact on the ground. His essays, of course, leave no room for doubt; and he considers himself responsible to express such views to the world Jewish public in general. This stems from a deep fear that the Jews will once again teeter on the precipice between survival and annihilation. On that point, he told me: “Ani ḥai meod et ha’ivaron hayehudi” (personal interview; “I live, to a great extent, the Jewish blindness”), and that, “Hayekholet likro et hamitsiut nakhon hi hadavar hakhi hashuv be’eynai” (personal interview; “The ability to read reality correctly is the most important thing, in my opinion”). Yehoshua would therefore like his literature and his public persona to assist in what he calls, “Hatikun shel hazehut hayehudit” (personal interview; “The correction of
the Jewish identity”), an identity in which “yesh mashehu be‘ayati” (personal interview; “something is problematic”).

Literary criticism has had much to say about the way in which Yehoshua uses traditional Jewish symbolism to portray the Israeli reality, while, at the same time, he subverts the supposed static nature of those traditional symbols. In doing so, he creates a world which is quintessentially Israeli, often disassociated from conventional Jewish rhetoric, and focused on the interiorization of human relations within the Israeli reality. Joseph Cohen, for example, notes that Yehoshua “interiorizes reality, undermining temporal and spatial linearity, and . . . has a gift for lyricism in his prose that lifts us out of the ordinary world and propels us into a subjective one where ‘real’ life goes on inside peoples’ heads rather than in their external environment” (45). Gilead Morahg, the foremost Yehoshua scholar to date, states that, “Yehoshua’s protagonists are often the victims of the combined force of their inner need for confirmation and (Israeli) society’s relentless demand for conformity” (“Outraged Humanism” 142). Bernard Horn, whose book of interviews with Yehoshua provides a solid sub-cultural background on the author, writes that Yehoshua’s fiction is characterized by “a reality that represents the nightmarish underside of the old Zionist dream of a land of bright sunshine, new forests, self-confidence, and hope” (Facing the Fires 47).

Such reactions to the contemporary veracity of Yehoshua’s work are not confined to the new guard of literary critics. Even the infamously right-wing literary critic Baruch Kurzweil, who lamented the loss of traditional values in post-1948 Israeli literature, had much praise for Yehoshua. Early on in Yehoshua’s career, Kurzweil said of the writer: “Sipurei A. B. Yehoshu‘a m’eorerim . . . eymah mamash, anu ḥashim bahem et dofek
hador vehatkufah” (Hipus hasifrut 307; “The stories of A. B. Yehoshua awaken a great terror; we sense in them the pulse of the generation and of the era”). Kurzweil also adds that Yehoshua’s writing, “metila ‘aleinu mevukhah rabah” (307; “casts upon us great embarrassment”), in that it propels to the forefront of Israeli letters some of the most sensitive and divisive issues facing the nation. In Yehoshua’s later narratives (such as Mul haya’arot (“Facing the Forests”) (1968), Hameahev (“The Lover”) (1977), and Hakala hameshahreret (“The Liberated Bride”) (2001), he complicates this perspective on Israeli society by undertaking a revolutionary step: being one of the first writers to introduce into Israeli literature full-fledged Israeli-Arab characters as protagonists, as opposed to mere background or oppositional figures in the narrative.

For the purposes of this study, I use those works of Yehoshua’s that provide fertile ground for archetypal analysis. These include the short stories “Hamefaked haaharon” (“The Last Commander”) (1962) and “Bethilat kaiyts 1970” (“Early in the Summer of 1970”) (1972). I will also look at one of his early novels: Gerushim meuharim (“A Late Divorce”) (1982). The reason I will be using these works, as opposed to the later ones, is that I find Yehoshua’s later writing to be too overtly political to be considered truly “symbolic” in the archetypal sense, inasmuch as its subtexts are not as sophisticated or as prevalent as those in his earlier works.50 The early writing, which Horn calls “symbolically charged and subtle realism,” appears to be the most honest with respect to Yehoshua’s representation of the modern Israeli paradigm (Facing the Fires

50 Hillel Barzel claims that at a certain stage in his writing, Yehoshua moves away from “samlanot alegorit lisamlanot psykhologit” (“allegorical symbolism to psychological symbolism”) (Barzel, Hazon vehizayon 308). Yehoshua (“Ani mud’a lekhakh”) also acknowledges the fact that his later writing is too political.
46). Furthermore, considering the magnitude of “symbolically charged” (archetypal) and “realistic” (environmental) elements in this early fiction, it also seems the best way to explore how the supposed commonality of Judaic archetypes—which, in Yehoshua’s case are subverted in a manner entirely characteristic of the national (Zionist) syndrome—are transformed into the avatars which exemplify the sub-cultural specificities of Yehoshua’s sub-group. Yehoshua tells Horn as much, in discussing the symbolic structure of the early stages of his writing, which “dealt with some of the question of the existence of human beings in Israel and some of the national problems, through stories in which the reality was quite thin and the narration itself was very, very much dominated by the symbolic structure” (qtd. in Horn, *Facing the Fires* 46).

As mentioned above, I argue that Yehoshua’s later work is not archetypal (at least, not enough for archetypal analysis) because he uses his literature too obviously as a political platform. Archetypal symbolism depends on subtlety. This does not mean, however, that there are no archetypes in Yehoshua’s later, more overly politicized fiction. My point is that in Yehoshua’s later fiction, which relies on a less symbolic structure for its ultimate meaning, the archetypes become less frequent, less apparent, and less important in their relations to the text as a whole.

Generally speaking, I mark the end of Yehoshua’s distinctly archetypal fiction at 1990, the year in which he published *Mar mani* (“Mr. Mani”), his most widely-discussed novel. From then on, I posit that his work takes an entirely different direction. Needless to say, I am not alone in this estimation. Dan Miron is also of the opinion that *Mr. Mani*, the plot structure of which reverses the Biblical tale of the Binding of Isaac, marks in some ways the end of what Yehoshua’s fiction had been up until then: “*Mar mani* hu . . .
bemuvan mesuyam gam sikum klal yetsirato shel A. B. Yehoshu’a o halakim nirHAVIM mimeno” (Noge’a badavar 24; “Mr. Mani is . . . in a certain sense, the summary of all of his work, or comprehensive parts of it”). Since I find that the political overtones of Mr. Mani make the book aesthetically inferior, and because most of its action takes place outside of the current Israeli reality, I have chosen not to include it in the present study.

3. Chaim Potok: A Core-to-Core Cultural Confrontation

In this section, I detail some major points of reference in the formation of the socio-historical context of American Jewry, especially with regard to the subjects of religious practice and reform. In doing so, I present the reader with a better understanding of the world that Chaim Potok engages in his writing, as well as the essentials of that author’s own sub-cultural perspective.

Concerning Jewry’s roots in the United States, it must be said, first and foremost, that in colonial America there were very few Jews; the large influx of Jewish immigrants came only toward the end of the nineteenth century. The majority of American Jewry before 1914 was made up of Sephardic Jews, who had arrived before the Ashkenazim either from the Iberian Peninsula or from North Africa.51 The first Ashkenazi Jews to

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51 A note on the terminology seems to be in order. The term “Sephardic” has come to mean Jews whose origins can be traced back to the Mediterranean countries (including North Africa), as well as those Jews with Arabic or Persian backgrounds; this is despite the fact that the literal translation of the word is simply “Spanish,” from the Hebrew sfarad (“Spain”). The term “Ashkenazi” (or Ashkenazic, depending upon the usage) refers to Jews originating in Central and Eastern Europe; literally, this means “German,” from the Medieval Hebrew ashkenaz (“Germany”).
arrive in the United States came around the middle of the nineteenth century and were predominantly from the area that makes up modern-day Germany. However, the largest group of Ashkenazi Jews came from Eastern Europe—from Russia, Poland, and the areas that made up the Austro-Hungarian Empire—between the years of 1880 and 1914. These waves of immigration had a profound effect on the Jewish demographic in the United States.  

For example, in 1880, there were 250,000 Jews living in the United States; they comprised .05 percent of the total population (Janowsky 239). By 1920, there were already 3,500,000 Jews living in the United States, which was almost 3.5 percent of the total population (Janowsky 239). The difference between the newer, Ashkenazi arrivals and the Sephardic Jews who had settled in the country earlier was that the Sephardic Jews, having found themselves to be a minuscule minority in their new country, were forced to assimilate very quickly. Therefore, their process of modernization was much more rapid than that of the Ashkenazi Jews, who for the most part were able (to a certain extent) to resist assimilation because they came in greater numbers, and because they lived in “ghettos” similar to the ones they knew in Europe. (Of course, this ghettoization was not limited exclusively to the Jews, since many European immigrants to the United States from the middle of the nineteenth century onward formed inclusive communities based on language and ethnicity.) Thus, the problem of the Eastern European Jews, according to Marshall Sklare, was “the adjustment of a traditional Jewish system whose practices were in harmony with a medieval ‘closed’ society, where Jews frequently

52 For more, see Dimont and Sachar.
occupied the status of a pariah people, to a new system characterized by a secularized social order—an ‘open’ society where Jews exercise the right of citizenship” (21).\(^{53}\) Moreover, as S. N. Eisenstadt points out, modernity made its way into Ashkenazi American-Jewish life from the outside, over time, as opposed to the rapid process of secularization and assimilation that characterized the integration of the Sephardic Jewish population in the States. As a result, the Ashkenazi Jews remained largely connected to their religious traditions (117). It would take a generation or two before they assimilated into American culture, as the Sephardim had. Concerning this gradual assimilation, Eisenstadt notes that the emerging Jewish-American distinctiveness was “rooted in a combination of Puritanism with Lockean political orientations and the basic orientations of the Enlightenment with nonconformist religious orientations” (122).

An interesting parallel to the emerging religious particularism of American Jewry is that community’s indistinct relationship with the state of Israel, which in effect started long before the official establishment of the Zionist state in 1948. For example, in 1887, Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, the pioneering rabbi of nineteenth century Reform Judaism (a distinctly American-style kind of Judaism, known for its liberalism and inclusiveness), called political Zionism, “a thoughtless utopia [and] a momentary inebriation of morbid minds (qtd. in G. Smith 14).\(^{54}\) Other prominent American Jews, such as United States Supreme Court Justice Louis Dembitz Brandeis, took a different position. Brandeis was

\(^{53}\) In 1881, the Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society (HEAS) was formed in order to help the waves of Eastern European Jews deal with the sudden upheaval in their social order. It was dissolved two years later, only to be reborn in the form of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) in 1902.

\(^{54}\) For more on the differences between Jewish religious denominations, see Raphael.
purported to have said: “To be good Americans, we must be better Jews, and to be better Jews, we must become Zionists” (qtd. in Auerbach 54). Although the quotations offered above are just two brief examples of the kinds of divergent thinking that characterizes Jewish opinion in the United States, such discordant rhetoric on what is perhaps the most singular event in the last 2,000 years of Jewish history demands further investigation. This is especially valid with respect to the environmental background of Chaim Potok, who was a religious Zionist, albeit one who chose to keep America as his homeland, despite the fact that he lived in Israel for a number of years (and on two separate occasions).

Out of all the illustrations that have been offered in order to explain why American Jews have such an ambiguous attitude towards the state of Israel, I am inclined to prefer the analogy of Dorothea Braginsky, who posits that American Jews are in love with the idea of Israel, but not with the Israeli reality itself. Braginsky convincingly compares the relationship between American Jews and Israel to that of a man and his mistress (rather than a man and his wife): “The mistress is given gifts, affection, and financial support. Yet as we know, regardless of the intensity of his passion . . . the man rarely leaves his wife for the mistress.” Only in the event of a “divorce,” Braginsky ventures (i.e., an event which would actually endanger Jewish existence in the United States) would American Jews move to Israel en masse (193).

What is the conclusion to be drawn from this analogy? Namely, that Jews in America are Americans, and that the predominant elements of their identity are tied to their immediate environmental concerns. In the same way, Jews in Tunisia are Tunisians,
and Jews in Israel are Israelis.\textsuperscript{55} As mentioned earlier, the sub-cultural affinities that characterize Jewish groups are, quite often (with the exception of ghetto existence), much stronger than their ethical or nomocratic ties to Judaism as a religious tradition. In that vein, the case of American Jewry is considered by Ephraim Shmueli to be the prime embodiment of his idea of the Jewish “Emancipation culture”: the culture (or historical system) of Jews who have, more or less, enjoyed civil rights in their host countries (167). This culture began, according to Shmueli, in the seventeenth century in Holland and in Italy, later progressing to Western Europe in the nineteenth century. Today, the United States is the center of this particular cultural system (167). This is the reason why, in regards to Israel, Shmueli posits that United States Jewish culture sees the return to Zion as being an entirely tangible (and current) possibility, although “it ceases to be a matter of local interest” (169).

This form of American-style, or Emancipation culture Jewishness is most evidenced in the branch of Conservative Judaism, in which Potok was an ordained rabbi. As a “theology” that Eric Erikson calls a “joint historical actuality,” and one in which “the alternative to an exclusive totalism is a wholeness of a more inclusive identity” (247), the Conservative movement’s origins may be traced to nineteenth century Germany. One of the most influential thinkers in this movement was Zacharias Frankel (1801–1875), who broke away from the Reform faction and created “positive-historical Judaism.” This was a movement which accepted new advancements in science and in

\textsuperscript{55} The supposition that American Jews behave more like “Americans” than like “Jews” has been amply researched. For instance, see Spiro; Snyder; and Kiell.
history, and yet did not do away with traditional Judaic practices as much as Reform Judaism did.\textsuperscript{56} Put another way:

\begin{quote}
[T]he nearest [Conservative] approach to an ideology is the phrase “historical Judaism,” a key idiom of its original founders. This would seem to mean two things. First, Judaism is a historical phenomenon, that is to say, it is possessed of a rich and valuable past. . . . It means that Jews ought to preserve their heritage and, so far as they can, as it was transmitted to them. “Historical Judaism” has another significance. Judaism, it implies, is a phenomenon \textit{in} history, a growing evolving organism . . . it must change in conformity with a changing world. (Steinberg 165; italics in the original)
\end{quote}

In general, then, the Conservative movement is a group for which the key words are “history” and “adaptability.” Its interpretation of Jewish tradition “takes into account the demands of contemporary America life” (Sklare 230), and thereby creates a fusion of progressive, American “Emancipation culture” Judaism on the one hand, and an adherence to, and reverence towards, the ritualistic aspects of the Jewish religious tradition on the other. The result is a religious praxis distinctively devoid of rigid, dogmatic elements. This Jewish subculture characterizes the environmental perspective of Chaim Potok, whose life and literary work I give a brief summary of below.

Herman Harold (Hebrew name: Chaim Tzvi) Potok was born into an ultra-orthodox community in New York City in 1929. His father was a Chasidic rabbi. Both of his parents, immigrants from Europe, came from a long line of Chasidic Jews in Poland. Potok was raised in the Bronx, where he attended parochial Jewish schools. For the most part, Potok was quite happy with his closed-in Jewish world, and did not think of leaving

\textsuperscript{56} Other important thinkers to contribute to this group were Achad Ha’am, Solomon Schechter, Mordechai Kaplan, and Louis Ginzberg. Their interest in Jewish history was really quite curious, seeing as the only real Jewish historiographer before the nineteenth century was Flavius Josephus (37–101 CE).
it until he read, as a teenager, Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited* (1945). The utter emotional force of that novel led him to question everything he had traditionally been taught about creative work in general: namely, that it was not to be trusted if was not somehow connected to a religious (Jewish) function. Later, Potok would clarify the strong suspicions surrounding fictional works (and conversely, of writers and artists in general) by explaining that, “Jews tend to mistrust the imagination because the imagination is mercurial” (Kauvar 303).

The astounding effect that Waugh’s narrative had on Potok not only made him want to create something similar of his own; it also spurred his interest in the outside world. He therefore decided to pursue a degree in English literature at Yeshiva University, and thereafter elected to attend the Jewish Theological Seminary. Potok stresses that he attended seminary not because he wanted to become a pulpit rabbi. Rather, he simply wanted a better understanding of the Jewish world from which he hailed, in order that he might be better disposed to write about it. Concerning this decision, he remarks: “I knew that I wanted to write fiction and I knew that my subject was going to be, in one way or another, Jews and Judaism and its interplay with the twentieth century” (Kremer, “Interview with Chaim Potok” 84).

After obtaining his *smicha* (“ordination”) and an M.A. in Hebrew literature from the seminary, Potok served as a chaplain (a requirement for rabbis ordained at the Conservative, civic-minded Jewish Theological Seminary) with a combat medical battalion in Korea from 1955-1957. The experience in Korea had a profound effect on the way in which he would view the world. Of his time there, he said: “It was for me, as an individual and a writer, the pivotal experience and remains the lynch pin in everything
that has occurred to me in my life. . . . I had been brought up to believe that Judaism made a fundamental difference in the world and I ended up in a world in which Judaism meant nothing (Kremer, “Interview with Chaim Potok” 90).

Following his discharge from the army, Potok taught at the University of Judaism for two years, and then went on to do a Ph.D. in philosophy (with a study on the thought of Solomon Maimon) at the University of Pennsylvania. He subsequently served as the editor of the Jewish Publication Society. In 1967, his first published novel, *The Chosen*, was a huge success, staying on the *New York Times* best-seller list for over six months. From that point on, Potok divided his time between editing, lecturing, and writing, going on to become one of the best-known Jewish-American writers and thinkers of the twentieth century. His interpretation of Judaism’s purpose in a post-Holocaust, post-Emancipation world was based on the supposition that there must be an honest and engaged reckoning with Jewish history, from a (modern) Western point of view, in order to provide a viable and appropriate pathway for future Jewish survival:

> We have about four thousand years of history to remember. And what you are really bidden to do as an intelligent Jew is to remember and incorporate that history into your essential being. . . . What Judaism wants Jews to do is to map the world with certain kinds of information. And that information consists of the value systems, the tensions, the successes and the failures, the dreams and the terrors of the Jewish past. (qtd. in Cusick 70)

An unfortunate consequence of Potok’s ambition to be an “intelligent Jew[ish]” writer (as well as of his decision to affiliate himself with the Conservative movement) is that the move away from the Chasidic paradigm in which he was raised effectively deracinated him from his family, who could not forgive him for having stepped outside the lines of (Eastern European) ultra-orthodox propriety. Outside of those lines, Potok encountered
what he calls the “umbrella civilization”: essentially, Western secular humanism. Potok defines the concept thus:

It is secular because it makes no fundamental appeal to the supernatural; it is committed to the notion that man will either make it alone or he will not make it at all. No gods, no God, no comforting Truths and Absolutes; only stumbling, fumbling man, provisional truths, and an indifferent cosmos in which man, though a trifling speck in the totality of things, commits himself to life and dreams and to pumping meaning into the universe. (“Culture Confrontation” 162)

Since the struggle between Western secular humanism (as defined above) and traditional (Ashkenazi) Judaism mirrors Potok’s own life experience, it is not surprising that the bulk of his fiction deals with this very subject. How, Potok asks, can a God-fearing, traditional Jew from the Eastern European sub-group remain sufficiently devout, Jewishly speaking, in his or her encounter with American modernity? Speaking autobiographically of his own traumatic experience as a Zwischenmensch (someone who finds himself stuck between two cultures), he provides an answer to this query in the form of an open question: “What happens when two ultimate commitments—one from your sub-culture, the other from the umbrella culture—meet in you and you love them both and they are antithetical one to the other?” (“Culture Confrontation” 166).

Potok’s answer to the above question, which appears either explicitly or implicitly in his fiction, is already inherent in the formula of Conservative Judaism, according to which tradition and adaptability are necessary to ensure Jewish continuity in an inherently pluralistic society. In the guise of his creative work, Potok never ceased to grapple with the problematic aspects of the Jewish religious tradition, as well as their

57 For more elaboration by Potok on this concept see Ribalow 5.

58 For further explanation of this term, see Walden, “Chaim Potok: A Zwischenmensch.”
potential consequences for successful integration into American life. Potok’s fiction has thus been characterized by S. Lillian Kremer as thematic of “the interplay of the Jewish tradition with the secular twentieth century,” and of Jews “who are at the very heart of their Judaism and at the same time [are] encountering elements that are at the very heart of the umbrella civilization” (“Interview with Chaim Potok” 85).

Although some readers were put off by Potok’s minimalistic style, his insight and erudition were duly lauded by critics. For example, Daphne Merkin writes of Potok: “Unlike more consequential Jewish writers whose heritage colors but does not dictate to their material, Potok writes both as a Jew and because he is a Jew” (74; italics in the original). Edward Abramson goes even further in his appraisal of Potok’s involvement in the Jewish-American literary enterprise: “He has extended the range of Jewish-American writing and using the depth of his knowledge of Judaism has made an important contribution to American literature” (142). Regarding his own literary classification, Potok himself found the label “Jewish-American writer” objectionable. Instead, he simply declares: “I am an American writer writing about a small and particular American world” (“The First Eighteen Years” 106).

Moving away from the issue of classification, Potok estimates that his work revolves around the theme of a “core-to-core culture confrontation” between the “umbrella [culture] and sub-culture” (“Culture Confrontation” 163). By “sub-culture,” Potok is referring specifically to the conflict between the insular ethnic affiliation of his childhood, which is ultra-orthodox, Eastern European-style Judaism, and its encounter with modern, secular America. As he notes:
The problems that troubled me [during the crisis of faith following his break with orthodoxy] have been resolved by the very disciplines—modern historiography and the scientific approach to the sacred texts of Judaism—which others regard as an open threat to religion. These disciplines are not an issue as far as I am concerned. They are the spectacles through which I study Jewish sources. They give the sources a form . . . which is impossible within a fundamentalist stance. (“The State of Jewish Belief” 127)

Indeed, many of Potok’s books, which deal with such conflicting responses of traditional Judaism to distinctly modern phenomena—including textual criticism of the Bible, assimilation, and the entrance of Jews into domains once forbidden to them (such as the military, the visual arts, etc.)—use these conflicts as their major points of departure. Regarding such confrontation, Potok comments that, “For the first time in history, Jews participate in a seminal and central way in the umbrella civilization in which they find themselves. It’s a very different scene today from whatever it was in the past, and that’s what I’m trying to explore, that kind of confrontation” (Kauvar 299). According to Hugh Nissenson, the repeated utilization of these conflicts in Potok’s fiction reflects “not a paucity of imagination, but rather an obsession that brings Potok back again and again, to these kinds of characters, this milieu” (“My Name is David Lurie” 36).

Out of the three authors I have chosen for this project, Potok is admittedly the most difficult, archetypally; but this is precisely because his fiction stands at the forefront of a number of conflicting—some might even say mutually exclusive—cultural and spiritual movements. He therefore represents, at the very least, the religious facet of modern Jewish existence. Moreover, because Potok’s early upbringing (even more than in the cases of Yehoshua and Boukhboza) was filled with Judaic symbolism, liturgy, and the adherence to a religious tradition, the influence of Judaic archetypes upon his work is perhaps the greatest out of all three writers. This is in spite of the fact that in his adult
life, he made a conscious decision to move away from the “caste” (ultra-orthodox) syndrome to something more environmentally inclusive: Conservative Judaism. However, it is important to stress that the reason Potok is so heavily influenced by Judaic archetypes is that his earliest environmental influences occurred in an ultra-orthodox setting, saturated with Chasidic religious praxis, where religious texts and Judaic symbolism “hard-wired” him in such a way that he would be unable to eliminate them from his imagination. It was only later, when he became curious about the (Christian) world around him, sometimes sneaking off to the New York public library to read Freud and the New Testament, that these elements would be fused into something more inclusive. For instance, Potok notes, with respect to his own fiction: “Those mythic tonalities [in the narratives]—myth here in the sense of stories taken up and passed from author to author in different versions—were not consciously wrought by me” (“First Eighteen Years” 101).

In Jewish-American literature, Potok’s contemporaries include Abraham Cahan, Henry Roth, Cynthia Ozick, and Saul Bellow. Other American authors who wrote in Yiddish about the Old World (such as I. B. Singer) cannot really be compared to Potok, as their concerns are primarily focused on Eastern European, Ashkenazi Jewry in its original setting, whereas Potok’s setting is the interaction of, or confrontation between, the Eastern European Jewish subculture with modern-day, secular America. Such interaction and confrontation serves as the focus of the literary works of Potok’s analyzed in this study: “The Trope Teacher” (2001); My Name Is Asher Lev (1972); and The Gift of Asher Lev (1990).
On a related note, it is my position that Potok should not be associated with writers such as Ludwig Lewisohn or Meyer Levin, two other writers known for having defended traditional Judaism in their fiction. (This is in opposition to the stance of a so-called “self-hating” Jewish writer such as Philip Roth, or that of the author Ben Hecht, who gives the impression in his work of wanting to distance himself from his Jewish background.) What is revolutionary about Chaim Potok is that he brought a fresh perspective to Jewish-American literature, inasmuch as he was a religious Jew who did not apologize for his beliefs, and yet was able to question the validity of traditional religious dogma (and to probe the recesses of his mixed identity) with an open mind and a critical eye. For this reason, Potok’s work should be classified as belonging to the literary guard of the first generation of Jews who came of age in America during the period preceding the Holocaust, including Cynthia Ozick, Bernard Malamud, Hugh Nissenson, and Saul Bellow.

4. Chochana Boukhobza: Remnant of a Lost Culture

I begin this section on Chochana Boukhobza by emphasizing that I approach her work as the product of a Jewish-Tunisian historical sensibility, since that is the sub-cultural milieu (with respect to values and praxis) in which she was raised, despite the fact that her formal education took place in France. For this reason, the majority of my sub-cultural analysis will focus on her Judeo-Maghrebian identity. However, I have elected nonetheless to provide in this section a bit of background on the current make-up of French Jewry (current because only that period is relevant for an inquiry into Boukhobza’s worldview). Again, I maintain that her work should not be considered
“French” any more than it should be considered “Israeli”; and this will be explained in
the course of the chapter. I trust that the historical context already provided for A. B.
Yehoshua’s sub-cultural perspective will be sufficient to explain the Israeli components
(if indeed there are any) in Boukhobza’s literary works.

The present-day Jewish community in France is largely religious, especially in
comparison to its counterparts in Israel and in the United States. Also, the concept of
“community” in a French Jewish context, particularly with regard to centers of religious
activity to which Jews belong (and see as personal signs of security), is often considered
to be one of the defining characteristics of French Jewry, as a sort of “post-war response
to the wartime experience of legalized exclusion under the Vichy regime” (Trigano 184).

Today, most of the Jewish population in France is made up of Sephardic Jews who
emigrated from postcolonial North Africa, or of the Jewish pieds noirs (literally, “black
feet”) of European descent who settled in North Africa during the French colonial period,
and later returned. The percentage of Ashkenazi Jews in France is currently quite low (a
result of the fact that many were exterminated by the Nazis and Vichy collaborators
during World War II), except in the largely Germanic area of Alsace-Lorraine.59

Taking into account such a religious, communal, and (mainly) Sephardic context,
we may see how the environmental surroundings of Chochana Boukhobza are quite
different from those of Chaim Potok or A. B. Yehoshua. This difference stems from the
fact that her familial background, as well as the France in which she grew up, are both
imbued with a primarily Sephardic, North African Judaism, which reflects another, more

59 For more, see Freddy Raphaël.
“Oriental” kind of (sub-)cultural praxis than that of Potok or of A. B. Yehoshua. I can therefore assert that, environmentally speaking, Boukhobza’s Jewish reality during her youth in France was far more North African than it was European (or Ashkenazi, for that matter). For the same reason, I do not consider Boukhobza to be a French Jew, but rather a transplanted Jewish Tunisian living in France. To that end, I detail below some background information on the history of Tunisian Jewry.

The disappearance of the Jewish community of Tunisia erased one of the oldest, most continuous Jewish communities in history. In fact, the story of the end of Tunisian Jewry is even more incredible than the mass exodus of Jews from other North African nations, which took place after the establishment of the state of Israel and the withdrawal from Africa of the European colonial powers. The end of colonialism and the rise of Zionism among Tunisian Jews, along with growing pan-Arab sentiments, brought about what Bernard Lewis calls the end of the Judeo-Islamic “symbiosis” (191) between Jews and Muslims, who had been there living side by side for over a millennium. The numbers speak for themselves: according to André Chouraqui, around 1950 there were approximately two million Jews living in Muslim countries; between 1956 and 1967, 235,000 Jews from North Africa moved to France (135).

Jews were purportedly present in the area of present-day Tunisia from the period following the destruction of Solomon’s Temple in 586 BCE (Chouraqui 8). As a result, the Tunisian Jewish community was made up primarily of “Touansa” (descendants of the

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60 For more on the differences between these streams of Judaism, see Deshen, “Hadatiut shel hamizraḥim” (“The Religiosity of the ‘Eastern’ Jews”).
Jews who had settled there before the arrival of the Arab invaders in 648 CE. There was also a small group of Italian Jews from Livorno, called “Grana,” whose ancestors had been expelled from Spain and Portugal in 1492; these Jews came to Tunisia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Because the latter were still Italian citizens, they did not have restrictions imposed on them like other Jews (such as the payment of the jizya, the tax for non-Muslims, or dhimmi, residing in Islamic lands). They were also considered by their fellow Tunisian Jews to be Eurocentric and elitist.

The French took Tunisia from the Ottomans in 1881, and controlled it until 1956. As was true in other parts of North Africa, Jews migrated en masse from rural areas to coastal cities between the years of 1830 and 1900. Zionism officially took root in Tunisia in 1910, with the foundation of the country’s first Zionist branch office, Aggudat tziyon (“Society of Zion”). However, the movement was more an expression of modernity than anything else, as it reflected the desires of the Jews (many of whom had been educated at the Alliance Israélite universelle (“International Jewish Alliance”)), and were therefore well-versed in French culture) who had not yet obtained French citizenship to hope for another method of entry into the developed world. (In 1923, Tunisian Jews were finally offered French citizenship; this was not a particularly surprising occurrence, as all the Jews in Algeria were made French citizens by the Cremieux edict of 1870.). Zionism in Tunisia only became “practical” in the organizational sense after World War II, when around three hundred Zionists left Tunisia illegally in 1947–48, helping to form the underground movement for other Tunisian Jews who would later attempt to immigrate to Israel. After Tunisia’s independence in 1956, many Jews were swept up by the religious (messianic) as well as practical (economic) idea of having a Jewish homeland. According
to tradition, some Tunisian rabbis would even accord a divorce, within the framework of a “sacred decision,” when a couple could not agree on whether or not to go to Israel.

As Judith Klein notes, the Jews have had the longest continual presence of any ethnic group in North Africa besides the Berbers (115). Despite this rich tradition, modern Judeo-Maghrebian literature has received little attention outside of France until recently, since (1) most of it has been written exclusively in French, and (2) the majority of canonical “Jewish literature” studied the world over has been overwhelmingly Ashkenazi. In fact, even in Israel, where non-European Jewish writers are just starting to garner critical acclaim, Judeo-Maghrebian writing in French remains an obscure genre. This lack of interest, while unfortunate, actually reinforces my point about sub-cultural categories: because there is such a great dissonance between the North African Jewish subculture and the European (or American) Jewish subcultures, many in the literary establishment see the North African Jewish experience as more “Arabic” than “Jewish.” Guy Dugas, who has compiled the most widely-read study of Judeo-Maghrebian literature, explains this sense of dichotomy by claiming that Judeo-Maghrebian writing reflects something, “au-delà de la judéité, la séfaradité” (“La littérature judéo-maghrébine” 85; “more than Jewishness, Sephardicness” [sic]). Indeed, there has traditionally been little attention paid to Jewish writing from the Maghreb. In fact, most of the writers of that particular subculture whom the larger Jewish populace would know of come from Medieval Jewish philosophy, including thinkers such as Saadia Gaon, Judah Halevi, and Moses Maimonides.61

61 See Fradkin103.
In the case of modern Jewish-Tunisian writers, their literary work consists of much more than simply illustrating the loss of Tunisia. In fact, it is important to note that for Chochana Boukhobza’s generation, Tunisian Jews are not only deracinated by the loss of their former homeland; they are also torn between France and Israel. I am thus in full accord with Laurel Plapp, who posits that “Diasporic Jewish writers since 1948 differ from other transnational or exilic peoples because of a need to respond to the existence of Israel” (232). However, I do not believe that Plapp’s delineation of Israel as “a Jewish national homeland that they [post-1948 Diasporic Jewish writers] have rejected” is completely accurate for Boukhobza’s case (232). I would not use the term “rejected” with respect to Boukhobza’s stance towards Israel. Instead, I would say that the Israeli reality is a major part of Boukhobza’s life experience, since all of her family is in Israel (and because she lived there during a formative period of her life). Furthermore, I disagree with Plapp’s assertion that Boukhobza’s work is “post-Zionist” (234), although I do concur with his characterization of her work as “postcolonial and post-Holocaust” (234). Certainly, her work is more critical of various aspects of Israeli society (such as Israel’s treatment of its Arab minority) than other Judeo-Maghrebian writers of her generation. Nevertheless, Boukhobza’s work does not negate, or delegitimize (as would a post-Zionist text) the significance of Israel for future Jewish continuity. In fact, her work might even be called obsessive in its preoccupation with Israel. This, as I explain in Chapter 5, is an inherently archetypal occurrence.

More than anything, I believe that Boukhobza’s work should be approached in the context of a deracinated Tunisian Jewish reality, which has come into contact (much like in the case of Chaim Potok’s) with other Jewish and non-Jewish sub-groups. That said,
what is interesting in studying the archetypes and avatars in Boukhobza’s texts is precisely the manner in which they illustrate the differences between the Tunisian Jewish reality and a French or Israeli (Zionist) one.

But just what is the difference between the above-mentioned realities? Why does the work of Chochana Boukhobza illustrate this demarcation? Primarily, because it portrays, from the inside, the North African Jewish experience, which has been overwhelmingly marginalized in modern Jewish (literary) discourse, owing to its association with the Arab “enemy.” As Ella Shohat notes:

The Sephardi cultural difference was especially disturbing to a secular Zionism whose claims for representing [the idea of] a single Jewish people were premised not only on common religious background but also on common nationality. The strong cultural and historical links that Sephardim shared with the Arab/Moslem world, stronger in many respects than those they shared with the Ashkenazim, threatened the conception of a homogenous nation akin to those on which European nationalist movements were based. (“Sephardim in Israel” 57)62

While this marginalization may initially seem more political in nature than literary, the cultural divide it created has all too often been accepted by Israeli and Diaspora Jews alike. In the context of Boukhobza’s works, I posit that by highlighting the aforementioned “cultural and historical links” (whether in giving a voice to Jews from Arab countries, or to Palestinian Arabs in general) she creates a space in which the “Judeo-Arabic symbiosis” as experienced in North Africa, before the rise of Zionism and pan-Arab nationalism, might thrive again. As far as the context of (Maghrebian) Judaic self-expression goes, this space has an equally important function. Again, as Shohat

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62 In 1997, former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak (then the head of the Labor party) issued a public apology to the Sephardim for the treatment they received during the nascent days of the state. For more details, see Weingrod.
observes: “The Zionist denial of the Arab-Muslim and Palestinian East . . . has as its corollary the denial of the Jewish ‘Mizrahim’ [sic] (the “Eastern Ones”), who, like the Palestinian, but by more subtle and less obviously brutal mechanisms, have also been stripped of the right of self-representation” (39, emphasis in the original). In that vein—and before moving on to a more in-depth look at Boukhobza’s life and work—I provide here a bit of background on world Jewry’s (and in particular, Zionism’s) response to the “discovery” of the Jews of North Africa (and to those from non-Western countries in general).

I have remarked earlier that modern political Zionism is primarily a European notion; there is therefore no need to further develop that line of thinking here. That said, I find it prudent to emphasize that the Jews from Arab countries (referred to in Israel either as “Eastern,” “Oriental,” or “Arab” Jews) were not initially on the agenda of the major leaders of the Yishuv (the organization of Jewish residents in Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel). It was not until the final stages of the Second World War, amid the realization that European Jewry was being systematically wiped out, that the Yishuv began to look towards Jews from Islamic countries to further populate the future Jewish state, and to thereby assist in the crucial war of demography. The Jews from these countries who subsequently arrived in Israel were often put against their will into makeshift ma’abarot (“transit camps”) and thrust into a vastly different (European) cultural milieu. These changes led to the breakdown of their communities, and also created profound divisions in the nascent Israeli society.⁶³ Many Israelis of Ashkenazi

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⁶³ See Chetrit, Hamaavak hamizraḥi.
background “utilized gross ethnic categories to classify the diversity of social
grounds from which they [the Arab Jews] came . . . opprobrious terms such as
‘primitive’ were attached to whole groups possessed of exotic customs, or who were
unfamiliar with items of Western technology” (Goldberg 1). Another important point to
mention with respect to the Arab Jews is that they were discouraged from preserving their
cultural heritage. And, unlike the Ashkenazi residents of Israel, who had founded the
country (and who also created a kind of transplanted European culture in the Levant),
they had no educational, social, or governmental systems that resembled those in their
native countries.

From the earliest days of Zionism, forgetting one’s home country was an integral
part of the nationalist discourse. One was expected to Hebraicize one’s name, to speak
only Hebrew, and to create an environment in which the “New Jew” could shed the yoke
of 2,000 years of Diasporic existence. (Needless to say, this was a misguided and
ultimately futile activity, since the political entity of Israel was created by European Jews
along the lines of a desired replication of an Enlightenment European society in the
Levant.) The idea of Mizug hagaluyot (“The Ingathering of the Exiles”) was very
common among European immigrants, who wanted to forget the societies that had
betrayed them. Not until recently have Israeli Jews been able to (publicly) wax nostalgic
about life in their former countries. Historically, this is a rather odd occurrence, perhaps
best exemplified by the sight of young Israeli Jews lining up outside the Polish embassy
in Tel-Aviv in order to obtain a European Union passport, in light of the citizenship their
grandparents held in their former places of residence in Europe.
Immigrants from Arab countries (with, perhaps, the recent exception of Morocco) do not have such a luxury. The majority of Sephardic Jews in the United States, France, and Israel have not been able to return to their former countries for fear of anti-Jewish sentiment. Only since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 has travel to North African countries (Libya excluded) become possible, albeit sometimes difficult, for former Jewish residents. To sum up: just as European Jews were expected to take on the identity of the “Israeli” (a concept created along the lines ethnically Eurocentric predispositions), the same was expected of North African Jews. This desire was expressed by Prime Minister of Israel David Ben-Gurion, who said of the Jews from Arab countries: “We do not want the Israelis to be Arabs. It is our duty to fight against the spirit of the Levant that ruins individuals and societies” (qtd. in Shohat, “Sephardim in Israel” 43).^64

Chochana Boukhobza was the sixth generation of her family to be born in Sfax, Tunisia, in 1959. The Tunisian Jewish community into which she was born has almost ceased to exist; in fact, only about 1,500 Jews remain in Tunisia, most of them on the island of Djerba. For Boukhobza, the abrupt conclusion of Tunisian-Jewish life remains a driving force in much of her literary work. And, although she writes on a large array of Jewish issues involving French, Israeli, and North African Jewry, Boukhobza has been

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^64 Tensions between these two groups go back many centuries. The most notable instance of this tension was the initial Ashkenazi reaction to the teachings of the greatest Sephardic rabbi, Maimonides (also known as Moses ben Maimon, or by the Hebrew acronym Rambam), who lived from 1135–1204 and who wrote in Arabic. The negative reaction to his work by non-Sephardic Jews was so strong that Ashkenazi Rabbi Jonah Gerondi (1200–63) went so far as to ask the Franciscans and the Dominicans to burn Maimonides’ books, on the grounds that he was a heretic.
primarily characterized as a Tunisian-Jewish author (Heller-Goldenberg; Abitbol; Nolden; Brami), despite the fact that she left that country as a small child. Writing of Chochana Boukhobza and her compatriot author Nine Moati, Lucette Heller-Goldberg notes that both of these women “illustrent par leurs œuvres l’odyssée des Juifs de Tunisie” (11; “illustrate in their works the odyssey of the Jews of Tunisia”). Archetypally speaking, Boukhobza’s belonging to this group endows her with the discursive elements of shared ethnicity and intertextual predispositions common to the Tunisian-Jewish subculture.

Boukhobza’s family immigrated to France when she was six years old, after there ceased to be a communal structure for the Jews in Tunisia. On their departure from Tunisia, Boukhoboza remarks: “J’ignorais alors que j’étais la dernière d’un monde qui allait s’engloutir dans l’oubli . . . la dernière génération qui aurait la chance d’étreindre ces juifs nés en terre d’Islam” (qtd. in Célestin and Dalmolin 295; “I wasn’t aware then that I was the last of a world that would be swallowed up into oblivion . . . the last to have the good fortune to embrace those Jews born in the land of Islam”). Her father, who was the first of the family to arrive in France, remained consistent in his view that Europe was only a temporary stop for the family on the way to Israel. Although they did not buy furniture for a long time because they were convinced that they would be “next year in Jerusalem,” as her father had said, they remained in France for longer than anyone expected.

65 For a sample of her best-known work on Judeo-Maghrebian identity, see Moati’s Les Belles de Tunis and L’orientale.
Growing up in Paris in three languages (Arabic, French, and Hebrew), Boukhobza lived a double existence as the child of new immigrants. On the one hand, she felt a great attachment to French culture; on the other hand, she was well aware that those affinities contradicted the Judeo-Maghrebian propriety of her family, to which she was still subject. Her grandfather, who was a rabbi and a shochet (“ritual slaughterer”), lived with the family in France, and transmitted to her his knowledge of the Bible and the Talmud.

As a teenager in Paris, Boukhobza belonged to the Mouvement sioniste socialiste (“Zionist Socialist Movement”), among whose activities consisted in scaling the Arc de Triomphe in order to unroll Israeli flags, as a protest to pressure Russia for its refusal to let its Jews immigrate to Israel. She describes her activities during those years thus: “J’ai manifesté avec les lycéens de mon âge, aimé et respiré le parfum de liberté qui s’exhalait des milieux gauchistes avant de partir vivre en Israël” (“Je me sentais”; “I protested with the high-schoolers of my age, I loved and breathed in the perfume of liberty that came out of leftist camps, before going to live in Israel”). At the age of seventeen, Boukhobza finally left alone for Israel, where she would cease to follow a religious lifestyle.

In Israel, Boukhobza studied at the Lycée français (“French high school”) in Jerusalem under the Tunisian scholar Claude Sitbon, then began her studies in mathematics at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Although she developed during that time a visceral attachment to Israel that continues to mark her to this day, after three years she returned to France, where she worked briefly as a journalist for Judaïque FM. The primary reason for her return to France was that she knew she wanted to be a writer:

Je ne savais pas alors que j’étais prise dans une langue comme dans une nasse, tatouée au plus profond de moi. J’ignorais encore que l’écriture était ma seule voie, ma thérapie, ma destinée. Et que je ne pouvais écrire qu’en français. Même
Jérusalem n’a pu défaire cet attachement. Comment vivre sur la Terre promise quand on continue de penser et rêver en français? ("Je me sentais")

[I didn’t know yet that I had been caught in a language like in a fishing net, tattooed in the deepest parts of me. I didn’t realize yet that writing was my only voice, my therapy, my destiny. And that I could only write in French. Even Jerusalem could not undo this attachment. How can you live in the Promised Land when you continue to think and dream in French?]

Although Boukhobza had not considered this problem before moving to Israel, the more she interacted with people in Hebrew, the more her command of French suffered. Boukhobza’s return to France coincided with her family’s long-awaited departure for Israel, after having lived “temporarily” for more than ten years in France.66

The majority of Boukhobza’s novels revolve around her characters’ “imprisonment” to history, in both the personal and collective senses of the term; this is a fact that makes her work particularly interesting for archetypal analysis. And, although not all of her works have an overtly Tunisian-Jewish theme, I would argue that all of them contain Tunisian-Jewish sensibilities, some of course more than others. For this study, I use her first novel, *Un été à Jérusalem* (“A Summer in Jerusalem”) (1986).

In addition to the issue of the divergence of Jewish cultures in the modern era that Boukhobza’s literary work brings up, it also tackles controversial subjects in the Tunisian-Jewish community, in particular those related to gender equality. This stance has led many critics to classify Boukhobza as a feminist. Joseph Brami, for instance, asks: “How do you come to terms with your feelings as a woman when you are rebelling

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66 Boukhobza was a *sans-papiers* (“illegal immigrant”) in France from 1980–87, after which she finally received French citizenship. For her personal testimony on this part of her life, see Boukhobza, “J’étais de France.”
against your family’s traditions, while at the same time remaining attached to them? [This is one] of the questions that give power and coherence to Boukhobza’s novels” (251). Simon P. Sibelman calls Boukhobza a writer who is, “[i]ntensely feminine and feminist, [whose] heroines strive against formidable obstacles and must tolerate frustrating angst in order to acquire agency and a sense of security.” Furthermore, Sibelman notes that Boukhobza’s heroines “cogently represent feminist aspirations in the face of traditional patriarchy” (“Chochana Boukhobza” 119). Abitbol puts in more succinctly, positing that “Boukhobza lance un appel en faveur de l’émancipation des femmes” (9; “Boukhobza makes a plea in favor of the emancipation of women”).

Although I do not classify Boukhobza as a “feminist” per se, I would certainly posit that one of the most poignant characteristics of her work is that it gives a voice to the female experience in North African Jewish communities. This is groundbreaking in comparison to most of the existing literature written by Tunisian Jews, since most of that canon is largely made up of “religious, scholastic, and moralistic writings of deceased and living [male] scholars of Tunisian origin” (Deshen, “Ethnic Boundaries” 278). Furthermore, by making the feminine experience a major part of her novels, Boukhobza defies the trend by which a “low degree of importance [is] given to specifically female experiences [and by which] womanhood per se is not important enough to be individualized or publicly celebrated in the traditional Tunisian-Jewish culture” (Schely-Newman 32). Indeed, the very fact that Boukhobza is the most well-known female Francophone Tunisian-Jewish author who writes, from a feminine perspective, about women’s emancipation against the backdrop of North African society and patriarchal
Judaism is more than enough reason for her work to be included in a case study of modern Judaic literary discourse.

By way of the archetypal approach (and through the relevant background information given above), we may discern that the major elements in Boukhobza’s work stem from the Tunisian-Jewish subculture in which she was raised, which itself shares many important affinities with the Islamic, North African culture in which it existed, almost hermetically sealed from other Jewish cultures, for nearly 1,500 years. For instance, the fundamental base of Jewish identity in her novels is dependent upon the three main components of identity in Muslim North Africa (the following are Arabic terms for Islamic concepts): asl (“ancestry”); nsb (“marital relations”); and bld (“location”) (Rosen 20). As far as women’s emancipation is concerned, these components are evidenced in the Judeo-Islamic view according to which female children are the father’s property until they are married, after which the husband becomes their main representative to the outside world.67 Moreover, the traditional Jewish tendency to keep women out of the public eye is reinforced by the Islamic environment of Tunisia (especially during the more conservative period of Boukhobza’s childhood), in which any violation of gender codes results in dishonor for the family.68

The aforementioned points are valid with respect to the symbolic imagery Boukhobza employs because the local aspects of her work have been highly influenced by her identity as a Tunisian-Jewish woman. Evidently, the pattern of identity formation among women in which institutionalized patriarchy appears as one of the dominant

67 See, for instance, Katzir; and Deshen, The Mellah Society.

68 For more on the marginalization of Tunisian-Jewish women, see Azmon.
factors in the perception of lived experience is not uncommon to other Jewish sub-
groups. However, it may be said that the more conservative atmosphere prevalent in an
Islamic country such as Tunisia (or, as noted above, in an immigrant household that still
practiced the conservative mores of the former country of residence) would make this
part of a Tunisian-Jewish woman’s identity much more pronounced, than, say, a
woman’s perception of herself as formed in the midst of a middle-class, non-practicing
Catholic Parisian atmosphere. Moreover, in terms of conventional Jewish symbolism,
the feminist approach to literary texts written by such women is important since women
in Judeo-Maghrebian societies have traditionally been unable to freely engage in self-
expression, and because “women’s own experiences were not recognized within the
broad framework of religious practice as defined by classical rabbinic literature”
(Heschel 270). Perhaps most important in this aspect of Boukhobza’s work is the
component of the individual writing on behalf of the collective, which functions as a
further illustration of the archetypal nature of the dialogue that such literature creates. As
De Montvert-Chaussy notes: “Chez Chochana, il y a dans l’acte d’écrire une intense
jubilation qui traduit cette victoire sur le silence des femmes” (13; “With Chochana, there
is in the act of writing an extreme joy which translates [into a] victory over the silence of
women”).

69 By this I do not mean that male dominance in Ashkenazi societies has somehow been less oppressive. There are, of course, enclaves in which such cultures still exist, but their codes of behavior are simply not the norm in most Western countries.
5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided detailed clarifications, both methodological and ethnographic, regarding the underlying assumptions of the conceptual framework in which this study has been undertaken. I have also provided environmental and historical data relevant to each author, in order to highlight the differing sub-cultural influences upon the archetypal specificities present in their literary works. In that regard, the descriptions of the sub-cultural affinities of each author given in this chapter should be considered as cultural capital that will be spent in their respective literary archetypes. In Chapters 3, 4, and 5, I discuss those specificities, by means of close readings, as they appear in the selected literary works of each author.

With regard to Chaim Potok, I have shown that his particular sub-cultural environment is characterized by the confrontation between the Eastern-European, Chasidic Jewish subculture (in which Potok spent his formative years) and the prism of the (Christian) “umbrella civilization” of modern-day America, through which he chose to study Jewish sources during his adult life. The reconciliation between these two seemingly antithetical styles of living only becomes possible, according to Potok, by a rejection of fundamentalist dogma, on one hand, and an embrace of “Emancipation culture” Judaism, on the other. The resulting amalgam is evidenced in the credo of Conservative Judaism, which functions as a kind of symbolic cohesion for the diverse array of Jewish lifestyles presented in Potok’s fiction.

In contrast to Potok’s emphasis on the re-definition of Jewish ritual and religious praxis, the sub-cultural perspective of A. B. Yehoshua is centered on the experience of Israel as a nation-state, on its function as a social panacea for the past injustices
committed against the Jewish people, and on the need to combat the nefarious and ethnocratically-minded forces—ever-present in the process of nation-building—that are liable to put an end to Zionism’s historic mission. In that regard, Yehoshua displays a deep distrust for religious authority and conventional Jewish rhetoric, which he equates with a hypocritical, concocted form of identity. His environmental perspective is therefore much more Israeli than Jewish, and this affects the way in which he relates to traditional Jewish sources in the guise of his creative work.

Finally, the sub-cultural lens through which Chochana Boukhobza views and writes about her Jewishness has been colored both by her subjection to the patriarchal configuration of the Tunisian-Jewish experience and by her exposure to North African cultural praxis. Despite the fact that she, like Potok, was able to extricate herself from such a constricting atmosphere as an adult, the determining factor in the definition of the evolution of her Jewishness was first and foremost the Tunisian dynamic at the root of that form of Jewishness. In her fiction, the relevance of that same Tunisian-Jewish historical sensibility is tested against the backdrop of exile, gender roles, and the reality of Israel as a political entity.
Chapter 3: A. B. Yehoshua: The Aesthetics of National Subversion

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I demonstrate the ways in which selected works from A. B. Yehoshua’s literary corpus link themselves archetypally with the recurring tropes, motifs, and “historically transmitted symbolic patterns” (Geertz 89) that span the development of Judaic literary production, both religious and otherwise. The particular sub-cultural elements in his textual practice are often taken verbatim from traditional Judaic sources, and revise such patterns into a kind of irreverent recasting of traditional images and themes along the lines of emphatically Israeli concerns. Due to limits of space, I have confined my analyses in this chapter to two of Yehoshua’s early short stories and one of his early novels: “Bethilat kaiyts 1970” (“Early in the Summer of 1970”); “Hamefaked haaharon” (“The Last Commander”); and Gerushim meuharim (“A Late Divorce”).

As outlined in Chapter 1, I have divided my analyses of Yehoshua’s recasting of traditional Judaic archetypes into the three main categories of “national,” or ethnically specific archetypes that appear in literary texts: the senex, the shadow, and the anima. These archetypes usually appear in personated form; that is, they materialize in the guise of characters (although they may also appear as motifs or inanimate objects) that symbolize, whether in a positive or negative fashion, larger ideas related to a culture’s

70 All references in this chapter to the stories “Early in the Summer of 1970” and “The Last Commander” will follow the most standard versions available in both English translation and the Hebrew original, which are found respectively in the following volumes: The Continuing Silence of a Poet: The Collected Stories of A. B. Yehoshua (1991) and Kol hasipurim [The Collected Stories] (1993).
fundamental view of itself. I give below a brief description of the most common characteristics associated with each archetype, while more nuanced delineations of each of these archetypes are given in tandem with the textual analyses of their incarnations throughout the chapter.

Yehoshua’s re-envisioning of the following archetypes makes up the crux of the analysis in this chapter: Abraham and Isaac, from the biblical story of the Binding of Isaac; several demiurgic or divine figures from the creation story in the book of Genesis; Mosaic figures from the book of Exodus; archetypal themes commonly associated with the festival of Passover; and various Talmudic, Kabbalistic, and Modern Hebrew sources commonly held to be sacrosanct in either Judaic and/or Zionist contexts. The ways in which these transmitted images and patterns inhabit the personae of the senex, shadow, and anima in their specific, traditional (and sub-cultural) manifestations help to elucidate what Joseph Cohen has called the two main “albatrosses” in Yehoshua’s work: Biblical heritage and (fanatical) Zionism (46). Each of the archetypal personae serves a function in the reader’s growing awareness of the dangers of such “albatrosses” (as Yehoshua sees them) through those archetypes’ interaction with the intertextual, realistic, and allegorical components of the narrative.

For instance, the senex in Yehoshua’s work engenders the (secular) Zionist ethos through its propensity for dogmatic rhetoric and inflexibility. Paradoxically, the intellectual confrontation it provokes also forms the building blocks by which a new consciousness, modeled on Yehoshua’s desired brand of Israeli identity, will come into focus. Thus, the insertion of Yehoshua’s recasting of Abraham into the senex category has to do with the fact that the particular function of senex consciousness (again,
according to Hillman, where the senex means authority, patriarchy, structure) in Israeli society, as depicted by Yehoshua, always seems to be connected to Biblical subtexts; and, since Abraham, the patriarch, is the senex figure par excellence for the Jewish people, it makes sense that the reenactment of the sacrifice of Isaac, via Abraham’s buffoonish incarnation, is interdependently related to a particular kind of senex consciousness in Israeli society. When the clues to this new consciousness occur within the text, it is in the form of the anima, who serves as link between the ego and the unconscious. This figure allows the exploration into, and the unmasking of, the shadow, as it is found in between the lines of national consciousness—namely, in messianic nationalism and its litany of religious precursors—and ultimately offers the opportunity, through this realization, to undergo a process of self-introspection.

2. The Senex Archetype

Much of the understanding of the sub-cultural specificities in Yehoshua’s early literary work is predicated upon the awareness of his reexamination and frequent subversion of conventional Judaic archetypes, including the ways in which contemporary avatars of traditional Judaic textual practice intermingle with those very archetypes within the context of the narrative of political Zionism. However, in the cultural (in this case, literary) production of that narrative, we can also pinpoint particular sub-cultural patterns, embodied by characters or themes in the texts. Such patterns represent the national (Zionist) syndrome. Additionally, the dissonance (historical, ethical, and political) that exists between fathers and sons in Yehoshua’s work relies heavily upon senex imagery to elucidate such discord. Since both the symbolically charged
(archetypal) and realistic (local) elements of Modern Hebrew culture (or any Judaic subculture) stem from the mythical structures and patterns of Jewish history, it seems fitting to begin the close reading of Yehoshua’s work with the archetype that perhaps most closely bridges past and present: the senex.

The archetype of the senex often recurs in Yehoshua’s work though the image of the father. Although he represents (in typical senex fashion) the “law” or standard principles of order, the father is portrayed as out of touch with reality at best, and quasi-delusional at worst. Of course, Yehoshua’s tendency to fill the vessel of the senex archetype with images of father figures does not mean that the senex archetype should always be interpreted as appearing solely in that guise. As Shaked notes, the importance of the father-son conflict in Yehoshua’s fiction rests primarily upon the ways in which the senex figures impose prescribed meanings upon actions committed by the state, while their incredulous sons often consider these meanings disjointed or illusory (“Not Only Early in the Summer” 154). Such senex imagery is found in the story, “Beth’ilat kaiyts 1970” (“Early in the Summer of 1970”).

“Early in the Summer of 1970” is the tale of an elderly Bible teacher, who, after having refused for many years the call to retire from his position at a public high school, must explain the death of his only son. The son, who had lived for an extended period of time in the United States, returns to Israel with his American wife and child, and is reported as having been killed during a stint of reserve duty on the Jordanian front during the War of Attrition (1967–70). When the father arrives at the army base to identify his son’s body, he realizes that a mistake has been made, and that the son is in fact alive. At the end of the story, the reader realizes that the entire account of the son’s death is simply
a fantasy of the deranged old man. The Bible teacher imagines himself playing the role of the bereaved father during a high school graduating class assembly, where he lectures to his students and their parents on the importance of sacrifice. Yehoshua suggests that the father feels compelled to undertake a public display of grief in order to save face vis-à-vis the students whom he feels he has duped with his emphasis on the Biblical pretexts of Israel’s founding, as well as with his seeming justifications (based on Biblical praxis) of the Israeli government’s present-day undertakings. The old man relates how, in a conversation with the headmaster several years earlier, when the teacher was “nis‘ar meod” (*Kol hasipurim* 252; “deeply agitated”; *Continuing Silence* 256), and with his hands “ro‘adot” (252; “trembling”; 256), the latter had tried to explain to his supervisor why he could not retire yet, “moser belashon megumgemet sheayni roeh keiytzad ukhal la‘azov otam ‘akhshav, rotzeh lomar, kaasher lamut anahnu sholhîm otam” (252; “telling him in halting phrases that I did not see how I could leave them now, that is to say, now that we were sending them to their death”; 256).

The old man tells this story in first-person, but the actual sequence of events is never quite clear, since the opening changes each time he starts over. Moreover, his insistence upon reiterating the more redundant details of the story again and again, much in the same way that he had mercilessly drilled his students in the arcane minutiae of the Hebrew Scriptures, is seen as the clearest key to his impending madness. The absurd rationalization of sacrifice that the father attempts to convey to the graduating class, who will soon be inducted into the army, has all the morality and dogma inherent in the religious texts which had occupied him pedagogically; only this time, while lecturing on the corruption of Israeli youth, “kemi she hifsik lehiyot av” (266; “as one who was a
father and is so no more”; 272), the father now negotiates the meaning of those Biblical concepts based on their application to the sub-cultural praxis of secular political Zionism. For, despite the fact that the overtly secular senex figure in “Early in the Summer of 1970” still has a link to the Bible, as part of the shared intertextual and discursive relation of the Israeli subgroup to the Judaic religious tradition, the way in which the teacher carries out his role betrays an almost “religious” duty. Indeed, this character’s entire existence seems based on obsessive devotion to (and unquestioning reliance upon) the commemoration of the Judaic textual tradition, or what the teacher refers to as “hateiruf sheani mashlit ‘aleihem beemts‘aut hatanakh” (270; “the tyranny I enforce by means of the Bible”; 277). More specifically, the father unconsciously equates his grief over the sacrifice of his son to the grief felt by the Biblical Abraham over the near-sacrifice of his son Isaac. As a father who had been similarly conditioned to accept the sacrifice of his son for an ideal, the teacher preaches in a semi-deranged fashion to the crowd about how he, like his Biblical counterpart, “hayiti mukhan lenefilato, vezeh hayah kohi bareg’a hanorah” (266; “was prepared for his [i.e., the son’s] death in a manner, and that was my strength in that fearful moment”; 272). Thus, the ostensibly “personal” grief felt by the mourning father is not only made collective, and used for pedagogical purposes, in the context (and for the benefit) of the modern Zionist enterprise. It is also justified by, and paralleled with, the archetypal grief expressed in one of the founding myths of the Judaic textual tradition, as attributed to the original father of the Jewish people, Abraham of Ur, as expressed in one of the founding myths of the Judaic textual tradition. The myth referred to is the ‘akedah, or the Binding of Isaac, an act that Abraham performs after being instructed by God in Genesis 22.1–19 to carry out the sacrifice of his son. Thus, in
“Early in the Summer of 1970,” the father is the senex figure who also serves as the incarnation, the recasting, or the modern-day avatar of Abraham.

This original story involves the directive issued by God to the progenitor of the Jewish people, Abraham, to sacrifice his own son as a burnt offering on Mount Moriah. In the Biblical tale, Abraham is ready to carry out God’s will, and prepares the sacrifice as instructed. However, as he is bringing the knife down, the body of Isaac is replaced with that of a ram. God is pleased with Abraham for having been willing to kill his only son, and indicates that he will reward him for his piety. Given below is the English translation of the Biblical text:

And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham, and said unto him: “Abraham”; and he said: “Here am I.” And Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he cleaved the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men: “Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship, and come back to you.” And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spoke unto Abraham his father, and said: “My father.” And he said: “Here am I, my son.” And he said: “Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?” And Abraham said: “God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son.” So they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said: “Abraham, Abraham.” And he said: “Here am I.” And he said: “Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him; for now I know that thou art a God-fearing man, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me.” And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Adonai-jireh; as it is said to this day: “In the mount where the LORD is seen.” And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: “By Myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine
only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast hearkened to My voice.” So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba. (Gen. 22.1–19)

While a full-fledged summary of the post-Biblical interpretations of this myth is impossible here (several variant explanations of this passage are dealt with in the reading on Potok in Chapter 4), suffice it to say that the story of the Binding of Isaac has been largely considered by Jewish commentators to be the prime example of Jewish devotion to God via a martyrdom based on adherence to, or sanctification of, traditional notions of Judaic theodicy. In that sense, Jews persecuted throughout the centuries have looked toward Abraham’s compliance to God’s decree as the example upon which to base their own decisions regarding the necessity of sacrifice, in light of challenges to their maintaining religious or ethnic doctrine. Especially relevant to Yehoshua’s transformation of this tale, in which the secular state assumes the role of the deity, is the notion of God “testing” (rendered as “prove[ing])” in the first line of the above translation) Abraham’s dutifulness in the wake of such a horrible request. Also significant for the modern recasting of the story is the idea that, in both cases, the result of the father’s willingness to sacrifice his only son presupposes the legitimacy of sacrifice for the continuation of a particular creed, despite the fact that in both cases a substitute is offered in place of the actual son.

71 I encourage the interested reader to consult Spiegel’s volume on the Binding of Isaac (by far the most comprehensive) for more background information and variant readings. Also recommended are the studies of Boehm, Chilton, and Delaney.
As stated, the senex imagery in “Early in the Summer of 1970” is very characteristic of the comical, often pathetic figures that inhabit much of Yehoshua’s early stories. Instead of functioning like conventional senex archetypes who may, on one hand, act as imposing, authoritarian types, or givers of wisdom on the other, Yehoshua’s senex is a dried-up curmudgeon, disconnected from the intricacies of current political and social realities, and more often than not at odds with the very generation for which he is supposed to function as an authority figure worthy of emulation. In Gila Ramras-Rauch’s terms, the father in Yehoshua’s work “represents the impotence of the old generation” (The Arab 132). In this case, the senex is part of the “founding fathers” generation who built the state and promulgated its values. Therefore, Yehosha’s portrayal of the senex archetype as reliant upon the interaction with its supposed successor need not be considered coincidental in the least. As Hillman notes, the best way to become aware of the nature of the senex is to look at the ways in which senex consciousness enters into conflict with the younger generation (“Senex Consciousness” 15).

In this particular story, the psychological tension between the senex figure, embodied by the elderly teacher, and the current Zionist reality, personified both by the returning son and the high school students, is perceivable early on in the text when the old man enters the classroom. Archetypally speaking—and especially in the context of the collective unconscious of “the people of the book”—the classroom may be considered the epicenter of the senex experience, in particular when the subject matter to be taught is the Bible. However, Yehoshua subverts the common associations of the conventional Judaic practice of honoring the “giver of wisdom” and promulgator of values in his natural environment by portraying the teacher as ridiculous, even somewhat demented. In
the opening scene, we learn that the old man has become so isolated in his outdated world, both symbolically and literally, that the lack of contact with the other teachers in the school, not to mention with the headmaster, has prevented him from receiving the news that a younger replacement has been hired to force him out; he only discovers the fact upon entering the classroom on the first day of the school year. The younger teacher’s reaction provides an indication of the extent of the old man’s lunacy, as the elderly teacher relates how the younger one “hashav sheda’ati nitrefah” (252; “thought I had gone out of my mind”; 257). This is an instance in which the senex’s unyielding code reveals a kind of pathological reliance upon structure and its perpetuation, evidenced by the old man’s actions. The elderly teacher says, “‘od hu mitbalbel, veani kvar ‘oleh ‘al hakatedrah, motsi et hatanakh hamerupat sheli” (253; “before he [the younger teacher] has time to recover I have mounted the platform, taken out my ragged Bible”; 257). It is telling that the term “merupat” (253; “ragged”; 257), used as a qualifier for the state of the copy of the old man’s Bible used for instruction purposes, also applies to the physical and mental state of the teacher, whose psychosis is directly informed by his obstinate reliance upon that text to substantiate the never-ending military conflict in modern-day Israel. In Yehoshua’s worldview, this psychosis is directly linked to a credo of the unending necessity of sacrifice.

This senex fixation is contrasted by the arrival of the elderly teacher’s son, who has returned to Israel after accepting a position as a professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The son has come back to Israel for mainly professional reasons, and expresses little support for the mainstream Zionist ethos. Upon his arrival from the United States via the Far East, the old man notes: “Bekoshi zihiti et bni. Megudal zakan,
kvar, rakh, bis’arotav kvar tlalei seiyvah, veeiyzeh sheket ḡadash veiti bitnu‘otav” (254; “I hardly recognized my son in him. Bearded, heavy, soft, my son’s hair was already sprinkled with grey, and, in his movements, some new, slow tranquility”; 258–59). The reciprocity of the father’s sentiment is manifested when the son wakes up from his post-arrival slumber: “Lereg‘ah keilu neḥrad, keilu lo zihah oti” (256; “He [the son] gave a brief start, as though for an instant not recognizing me”; 260).

In the first serious conversation between father and son, the son asks the old man if he is still teaching Bible. The response betrays a dangerous senex stringency: “Ken, kamuvan. Rak tanakh” (256; “Yes, of course. Only Bible”; 260). After having been asked to tell the father about his own field of study, the son “mitḥayekh lo, mistabekh, mitkasheh lehasbir, eiqno savur sheukhal lehavin oto” (258; “sits there and smiles, begins to talk, flounders, has difficulty explaining, doesn’t think I’d understand him”; 263). The misunderstanding between the two men is compounded by the fact that the son’s writings are in English, for “Afilu im yiten li likro, safek im atsliyah la’akov aḥarav, mah ‘od shehakol beanglit” (258; “Even if he [the son] should give me stuff to read he doubts I’d be able to follow, the more so as it is all in English”; 264). When the conversation turns to the political situation in Israel and the elderly teacher recounts how his students are being killed in the War of Attrition, the son is uninterested concerning what his father despairs as “hahistoriyah hamitporeret” (259; “history disintegrating”; 264). This remark coincides with the son’s baby boy babbling in English, and the American daughter-in-law (who, it is suggested, is not Jewish), “lo mevinah milah midivrai” (259; “does not understand a word I say”; 264) with respect to the Hebrew conversation. In a prelude to the notion of the son’s eventual sacrifice, the father remarks that his son reminds him of
his students (a clearly delusional parallel on the old man’s part, if understood from the perspective of solely physical characteristics, since the son has already been described as having aged considerably), because “pizur hada’at shebe’eiyinav mukar li, lo makshiv, kvar mashehu aher, zar, talush” (259; “the absent look in his eyes [is] familiar, unhearing, already elsewhere, alien, adrift”; 264).

The fact that the father somehow equates the physical appearance of his aging, professor son (who is now also a father) to that of his students is an obvious sign of the old man’s increasing inability to distinguish fantasy from reality. However, we might well conjecture that Yehoshua inserts the account of the supposed similarity between them as a way of emphasizing the role of shared attributes in the collective Israeli paradigm. After all, both his son (who had been away from the country for years) and his students are about to be called up for military service, to perform reserve duty and compulsory duty, respectively. There are at least two other indications that this manner of introducing the concept of collective responsibility is in fact a deliberate narrative technique on the part of Yehoshua to implement the mise en abyme, or the self-reflective directive, of the story. But as we will see later, this idea of collective responsibility should not be confused with ineffectual sacrifice.

First, when the headmaster of the school informs the teacher about the supposed death of his son, the headmaster insists on accompanying the old man back to his home. It had been stated earlier on in the story that there was no love lost between the elderly teacher and the headmaster, who had numerous confrontations regarding the former’s refusal to retire; and yet, the headmaster’s outpouring of grief at the death of the old man’s son goes far beyond that of a polite reaction of a sympathetic colleague. The
teacher notes that, “Be‘eiy nav dm‘aot, keilu lo haben shel elah shel shelo nafal” (257; “There are tears in his eyes, as though not my son but his had fallen”; 262), a remark which highlights the ritual of collective mourning, in tandem with the tendency, very characteristic of early Zionist practice, to rhetorically appropriate grief from the private sphere for nationalistic purposes. Second, this collective aspect is further highlighted during the sequence in the story in which the old man takes the bus to Jerusalem in order to begin the process of identifying his son’s body. During this time, the parallel between the narrative of “Early in the Summer of 1970” and its Biblical antecedent becomes more apparent, since Jerusalem is both the site at which the near-sacrifice of Isaac took place as well as the locale which Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi has appropriately referred to as the “Ground Zero” of the Hebrew imagination (220).

During the trip to the city of Jerusalem, the senex begins to speak for the first time in the second person, as if to the Israeli reader: “Atah motseh et ‘atsme‘ah baderekh

72 The interested reader will find a detailed account of the historical and political contexts of Israeli mourning rituals in “History, Collective Memory, and Countermemory,” Zerubavel 3–38.

73 The debate surrounding the exact location (i.e., whether it was actually in a “settled” Jerusalem or in the wilderness) of the purported near-sacrifice of Isaac at the site “ordained by God” (Moriah in Hebrew) is long and involved. I therefore confine myself to the following (brief) explanation: Despite the fact that the Hebrew Scriptures offer contradictory accounts (Genesis 14.18–20; 1 Chronicles 11.4; 1 Kings 5) as to the actual site of Moriah, which is not a single peak, but rather, an extended ridge commencing from the Kidron and Hinnom valleys, traditional Judaic lore places the locus of Abraham’s test at what is now the city of Jerusalem; as such, the importance of its association in Yehoshua’s story remains highly relevant (and taken as a given for the reader familiar with Judaic symbolism). For a critical discussion surrounding the linguistic and historical ambiguities of the biblical text, see Walvoord and Zuck 61–66.
liyervushalayim... i-efshar la'daat im ‘olim liyervushalayim o yordim eleiyah... ulefehat atah tso‘ek, o lefahat atah ḥoshev sheatah tso‘ek” (259; “You find yourself on the way to Jerusalem... there is no knowing anymore whether one goes up to Jerusalem or down... and suddenly you cry out, or think you do”; 265). The reference in the above citation to being unsure as to whether “‘olim... o yordim” (259; “one goes up [to Jerusalem] or down”; 265) to Jerusalem is a nod to the traditional use of the Hebrew verb *la’alot* [of which the aforementioned ‘olim is the third person plural form], which means “to ascend.” In the Hebrew Scriptures, one always “ascends” to Jerusalem (as opposed to simply “traveling” to the Holy City). This usage has carried over to the modern day, inasmuch as it is possible to discern the religious and/or nationalistic leanings of a traveler to Jerusalem by the way in which he or she delineates the symbolic act of the journey: whether it is *la’alot* (“ascending”) to Jerusalem, or *linso’a* (“traveling”) there. The fact that the senex figure in “Early in the Summer of 1970” takes this linguistic palimpsest one step further by suggesting that “ascent” to the Holy City is no longer self-evident, even going so far as to imply the contrary—that a pilgrimage to the capital city of Israel might be equated with the notion of “yordim” (259; “descending”; 265)—conveys the feeling of a representational rollercoaster ride upon which the perceptions of tradition and propriety held by the senex are constantly under threat of teetering off into the abyss. The elderly teacher’s physical reaction to this upset is therefore no surprise: he becomes ill on the bus, and requests that the bus driver pull over to the side of the road before continuing.

The old man’s confusion regarding the question of “ascent” to Jerusalem may be seen as a direct parallel with the language of Genesis 22.2, in which God instructs
Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, “veha’aleihu sham, le’olah” (‘to offer him there for a burnt-offering’) at a mountain in the Moriah range, which is located in the Old City of present-day Jerusalem. The term ‘olah (‘burnt offering’; literally, something that “goes up,” referring to the smoke wafting toward the heavens) possesses the same root as the verb used to indicate the ascent to Jerusalem in Yehoshua’s text: la’alot. Taking into account the old man’s expressed uncertainty (which he articulates in the second person, as if encouraging the Israeli reader to also undertake a similar line of questioning) regarding the status of the site which Jews have held sacred for nearly three thousand years, we may consider the linguistic parallel with the Biblical story as a kind of intertextual prelude to Yehoshua’s call to reflect, ultimately, on the notion of sacrifice for Zionism’s ‘ilah (“cause”), another term that shares the root of “to ascend”—and not least of all because Yehoshua’s ultimate subversion of the traditional Judaic myth of Abraham and Isaac rests upon the sub-cultural specificities of the national Israeli syndrome to which he belongs, and which therefore acts as a filter through which these two archetypes are presented in his fictitious, yet entirely possible, exposé of Israeli reality.

Compounding the shock of the journey to Jerusalem is the old man’s arrival to what he calls “hadirah shelo hikarti” (260; “the apartment I never knew”; 266), probably an abandoned Arab home, where he meets the Palestinian woman who works as a cleaning lady for his son’s family. He wants to tell her about the son’s death, but communication between them is impossible because of his poor Arabic and the woman’s inability to speak Hebrew. His attitude toward the woman, whom he describes as a “kof metsumak” (260; “withered monkey”; 266) who attempts to communicate to him “bitn’uot uvetsa’akot” (261; “gesturing and yelling”; 267), is rife with the ethnocentrism
and imperialism characteristic of the old guard in Israel, as he relates how “shehivinah
meyad sheani mishtayekh lekan, sheyesh li zkhut, ulai bitavei penai hekirah ‘ekvot shel
ahèrim” (260; “understands at once that I belong here, that I have rights, and perhaps
perceives traces of others in my features”; 266). Quite symbolically, the failure of the so-
called authority figure to communicate with the “Other” is only the first in a series of
uncomfortable encounters with the people from whom he is psychically estranged, first
and foremost from the younger generation. The next encounter takes place when his
daughter-in-law (who, like the Arab woman, is an outsider in his eyes) returns home, and
he “memalmel et besurat haboker be‘ivrit ka dumah, tanakhit, veani yode’a, lo tavin,
hamilim nitk’aot li ḥazerah” (263; “mumble[s] the morning’s tidings in an ancient,
Biblical Hebrew, and [I] know she will not understand, the words dart back at me”; 268);
the father characterizes this as “teiyruf hadorot” (262; “the confusion of generations”; 268).
Searching the house, he finds among the dead son’s notes “mashehu shelo
mamash” (263; “something genuinely his”; 268), a book manuscript written half in
Hebrew, half in English, entitled (the title is only given in the English version of the
story) “Prophecy and Politics” (269). This discovery of a concentrated version of his
son’s thoughts, which, as the title suggests, has to do with the place of religious history in
the affairs of the modern Israeli state (and which is assumed to be a study in the field of
sociology, a discipline the son had earlier declared his father to be incapable of
understanding) provides further evidence concerning the usurpation of the old guard by
the younger generation, not to mention foreshadowing the eventual downfall of the senex.
Curiously, the father had remarked upon his son’s return that the now-bearded man
resembled a “navi” (254; “prophet” 259); once again, we see how the father utilizes
Biblical imagery and terminology to communicate the obstinate reliance upon textual tradition for which the son expresses his scholarly disdain in the title of the aforementioned manuscript.

The old man’s following series of encounters takes place on Mount Scopus, the location of one of the campuses of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and also the symbolically charged vista that looks out on the panorama of the Old City. When he asks one of the clerks at the university the whereabouts of his son, he notes that they “ḥoshvim oti lemeshug’ah . . . timhoni shemevakesh tsumat lev” (264; “take me for mad . . . a crank wishing to draw attention to himself”; 270). Another key incident involving the teacher is when he stumbles upon a group of Jewish-American foreign exchange students, with whom dialogue is also impossible, since they do not speak Hebrew, and his meager English does not suffice for even basic communication. Although these students are Jews, they are depicted as just as foreign to the old man as are the Arab cleaning woman or the Gentile daughter-in-law. Here, too, he demonstrates contempt for them: “Ani akhen nitpal aleiyhem, mathil lehistovev bitokham, beiyn re gleiyhem, dorekh ‘al levanat basaram halo shazuf, hagaluti” (265; “I butt in, start walking among them, over them, step on their flabby diaspora limbs”; 271). The jeers of these students who, unlike the Israeli high school students, are able to freely ridicule him, reinforce the impotence of his authority, as they label him, in English, “you old man” (265; 271).

When the father finally gets into a taxi to go down to the Jordan valley, where the supposed death of his son took place, he sees along the way “karmei zeiytim, gdarot avanim, ‘edrei tson, nof yafefeh, mamlakhah atikah lelo shinui” (267; “olive groves, stone walls, flocks of sheep, the beauty of it, [an] ancient kingdom changeless for
thousands of years”; 273). The fact that the “giver of wisdom” at this point in the story still insists on equating the landscape of the Occupied Territories, captured from Jordan three years earlier in the Six-Day War, to any kingdom described in the Bible points to an unmistakably delusional worldview, based on a dogmatic vision of Biblical prophecy and on historical entitlement. It also recalls a comment by Avner Falk, according to whom “Modern Israel was a fantasy that became a reality [and] the price for living in that fantasy has been high” (*A Psychoanalytic History* 728). In essence, Falk’s assertion means that despite the cost, in human terms, of what Yehoshua has termed elsewhere as *ahızat moledet* [holding on to a homeland] (*Ahızat moledet* 19), the fantastical origins of modern political Zionism, although secular, possess the “religiously” dangerous tendency to cancel out the recognition of fantasy as such in the pursuit of territory or dominion.

The old man, of course, does not acknowledge that his comparison of a twentieth-century Judean landscape with that of the Biblical Israel smacks of pathos. And yet, since this is his first time in the territories, it seems as though the descent into “death,” as it were, much like the ambiguous “ascent” into Jerusalem, does render some kind of heightened state of consciousness in the old man, as he looks out on the hills of Moab. The thought that Biblical history is repeating itself is, for him, felt in a very visceral manner, as he explains, while looking out on the horizon: “Haarets hanoraah hazot lofetet et ‘orpi bikhvedut” (267; “Heavily does this fearful land seize me by the neck”; 273).

As Ramras-Rauch notes, taking “possession of the land by walking in it” (*The Arab* 133) is a symbolic action performed by many of Yehoshua’s early characters against the backdrop of Zionist settlement activity, especially since such an action is archetypally equated, in the Jewish psyche, with God’s promise to Abraham (Gen. 17.8),
according to which he and his seed would have “everlasting possession” of the land in which they were strangers. This idea would have seemed even more poignant to the Israeli reader in the aftermath of the 1967 war, during which the idea of *Erets yisrael hashlemah* (“the Greater [Land of] Israel”)—according to which the Biblical classifications of the Land of Israel as set out in Genesis 15.18–21, Numbers 34.1–15, and Ezekiel 47.13–20 should determine the present borders of the current Israeli state—was at its zenith, in light of the recently-acquired Israeli sovereignty over areas captured from Jordan.

The mention of Moab, which in Aramaic (*moav*) means “from the father,” and refers to the outcome of the incestuous relation between Lot and his eldest daughter (Gen. 19.37), is also an allusion to the supposed sacrifice of the old man’s son. The linguistic symbolism of the plateau of Moab’s name has to do both with its above-mentioned meaning, as well as with its current geographical position. Moab is located in present-day Jordan, a country which, before September 1970, was used by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as the launching ground for attacks against the Jewish state. However, “early in the summer” in the year of 1970 (before King Hussein of Jordan drove out the PLO from his territory in a bloody operation known as “Black September”), the PLO, and not the Egyptian forces with whom the limited war was fought, still used the Jordanian side of the border to launch attacks against Israel. While these attacks and the Israeli retaliations that they brought on were not part of the official War of Attrition, the Jordanian front was still a place in which many Israeli soldiers met their deaths. Thus, in addition to the symbolism that the name Moab (“from the father”) evokes—that is, inasmuch as the senex figure has bequeathed to his descendants a legacy of conflict
and bloodshed, now epitomized by the supposedly-dead son—it also sheds an intertextual light, from the perspective of the father, on the historical reasons for which the Israelis and Jordanians are in confrontation. More specifically, the reference is to two other warring peoples, the Israelites and the Moabites, who share a common ancestry through Terah, son of Nahor (Gen. 11.27). From the father’s viewpoint, then, the Bible may still be used as an informative, instructive tool to explain, or more importantly, to justify, the ongoing killing which has, he believes, now taken his son from him.

Upon arriving at his son’s base in the Jordan valley, the old man meets another figure who is portrayed as ridiculous and as out-of-touch as he is: a senex in the guise of the company’s army chaplain. The chaplain is depicted as awkwardly attempting to preserve a specific hierarchy and propriety through his practical (as opposed to textual, as in the case of the elderly teacher) reverence towards Biblical dogma. In one of the rare appearances by a rabbi in the oeuvre of Ye‌hoshua—rare because Ye‌hoshua’s main local association with senex figures, like that of most secular Israelis, is usually with those involved in either the top echelons of the political, military, or educational systems—this particular senex, who notes that, “mashehu ‘amok meod histabekh” (272; “something very deep has gone awry”; 278) with respect to the death of the son, also unconsciously articulates what is fundamentally wrong with a system that thrives on a strict adherence to behavioral norms and on the expunction of individualism.

What precisely had gone awry in order that the buffoonish chaplain should make such a statement? The chaplain has shown the old man the body of a fallen soldier who is not his son. However, since for all they know the son might actually be dead (and the insinuation is that, in any case, one dead body equals another in a culture where
collective sacrifice and mourning are the norm), the chaplain is unsure about whether or not to instruct the man to tear his garment (273; 279). In Judaism, the traditional ritual mourning act of *kriy’ah*, or “tearing,” may be traced back to Genesis 37.34, when Jacob performed the first tearing of his garment when he believed, erroneously, that his son Joseph was dead. Here, the symbolism of the father’s *kriy’ah* is twofold: first, it implies that all fathers of Israel are bereaved, since sacrificing the younger generation is portrayed as one of the patriarchal duties of Zionism. Second, it hints that obdurate reliance upon antiquated religious custom is incompatible with present-day reality, since the rabbi, who is supposed to be (by way of his vocation) an expert on the finer points of Jewish ritual, does not even know the correct way to advise the old man to mourn, let alone how to ascertain the reason for the mix-up regarding the as of yet unidentified body. The chaplain’s ineptitude is further evidenced when he abandons the confused old man at the base, driving like a maniac (a potentially suicidal act which in and of itself endangers life for the sake of preserving religious praxis) in order to return to Jerusalem before the onset of the Sabbath (273; 279).

While at the base, the father casually notes that he never served in the army—another indication that his Zionism, which is based on canonicity (as opposed to real-lived experience), has no connection with current geopolitics. His observations about the areas around him, similar to his early references to Moab, bear witness to this fact: for instance, instead of speaking about the enemy coming from Jordan, he comments on how he “mariah tzvaot kdumim” (273; “smell[s] ancient hosts about me”; 280). Later, while riding in a jeep to his son’s encampment, he tries to “limtzo simanim shel elohut metah,
rehokah, tanakhit, bigv‘aot hatsaḥiḥ ot sheleyad hakvish” (276; “look at once for signs of a dead, distant, Biblical deity among the arid hills flanking the road”; 283).

When he finally arrives at the encampment where his son has been stationed, someone shouts, “Haav hazaken higi‘a!” (276; “The old father’s arrived!”; 283), as if the emphasis upon his senex quality were a fact that already went without saying. The soldiers there are awed by his strange Hebrew, and look at him “keilu hayiti dmut kedushah” (276; “as though I were a sacred figure”; 283). He attributes their silence to the fact that his use of the language, which still has some “melitsut” (278; “rhetoric”; 285) left in it, must puzzle them. If we consider that rhetoric, properly defined, is persuasive speech (or, from a more pejorative perspective, meaningless or exaggerated language), it becomes apparent that even outside the classroom, this man’s obstinate and archaic way of looking at the world manifests itself even in his verbal expression. This is also an embodiment of the Judaic textual tradition, since the high register of the Modern Hebrew language the old man is referring to relies mainly upon Biblical vocabulary and syntax to distinguish it from its modern variant.74

Fascinated with the elderly teacher’s appearance, one soldier at the encampment comments that he used to have a teacher who had the same look in the eyes as the old man does, and inquires as to what kind of history he teaches (this is first time in the story that the old man is referred to as a teacher of history and not of the Bible). The exchange between the soldier and the senex is as follows: the soldier asks, “Eiyzo historiyah?” (278; “What history?”; 286), to which the old man responds, “Historiyah yehudit” (278; 287).

74 For a summary of the differences between Biblical and Modern Hebrew, as well as for an explanation of the linguistic registers in Israeli Hebrew, see Zuckermann.
“Jewish history”; 286). The old man then inquires: “Vehu hayah domeh li?” (278; “And he [the other teacher] looked like me?”; 286). The soldier responds, “Ken. Lamrot hahevdel” (278; “Yes. Despite the difference”; 286). “Eiyzeh hevdel?” (278; “What difference?”; 286) the old man wonders. The soldier explains that he means the difference “beiyn historiyah letanakh” (278; “between history and Bible”; 286). The old man, exasperated, asks, “Madu’a hevdel?” (278; “Why difference?”; 286). Here again, the father is not able to distinguish the physical, normative existence of Israel as a geopolitical reality; he insists upon seeing it through the eyes of a textual continuum.

In the final, fateful encounter between father and son (which we now know has only taken place, like the entire tale, in the mind of the senile senex), the father asks the son how he is faring on his reserve duty. The old man recounts their conversation: “‘Atah roeh be’atsmeḥah . . . hu loḥesh bemashehu yeush, bimarirut, keilu ani hu hamotsi et tzavei hakriyah, ‘ibud zman kazeh . . . ḥoser ta’am’” (281; “‘You can see for yourself. . . ’ he [the son] whispers with something of despair, with bitterness, as though it were I who issued call-up orders, ‘such a loss of time . . . so pointless . . . ’”; 289). The son’s insinuation, played out in the mind of the father, that the old man has actually had some part in issuing the call-up orders for an army in which he never served further concretizes the point that he is seen by the younger generation as the bearer of a stagnant, conservative consciousness. This accusation seems to spur the old man on, for, in the last version he tells of the story, he muses with bitter sarcasm:

[As though everything we taught them—the laws, the proverbs, the prophecies—as though it had all collapsed for them out there, in the dust, the scorching fire, the lonely nights, had all failed the test of some other reality. But what other reality? Lord of Hosts, Lord God—what other reality for heaven’s sake? Does anything really change? I mean, these imaginary signs of revolution (292).]

While the father sees revolution (i.e., political transformation) as imaginary, the son strives to move Israel out of the imaginal realm to which the senex father insists on clinging. The fissure between the two plays itself out in the old man’s final vision, in which he is lecturing to his students and their parents during yet another assembly. He states, with a quasi-religious, deterministic attitude: “Ki bemilim pshutot uvehirot—hahistoriyah eiynenah. . . . Kol hameḥkarim hanosafim—meyutarim” (278; “For to say it plainly and clearly—there is no history. . . . All further research is futile”; 266). The old man’s derogatory assertion that “history,” as the objective study of events and their consequences, does not exist, is in stark opposition to the beliefs of his son, who wishes to complete his work on “Prophecy and Politics,” the findings of which he will also (to quote another disgruntled revolutionary) “shout from the rooftops” to the young people of Israel, but without the qualifying cover of traditional Judaism upon which his father relies. Thus, the chasm of psychological tension between the two generations is never really bridged, even by the possible loss of the son, because by effectively killing the drive for intellectual reform and the rethinking of statehood as advocated by the son, the father ends up metaphorically sacrificing him anyway. The story ends with the old man imagining himself picking up “sifrei tanakh hamutalim ‘al haritspah” (284; “Bibles on the floor”; 293) of the high school (an intimation of Yehoshua’s ideas regarding the role of
religion in the state’s educational apparatus), and the teacher’s same illusory vision of the headmaster informing him of the death of his son (293).

The father/son relationship in “Early in the Summer of 1970” highlights one of the overarching themes of Yehoshua’s early work as a whole: that which Joseph Cohen refers to as “generational conflict” (46), usually played out between fathers and sons. I concur with Cohen that the negative portrayals of the instigators of these conflicts, especially as personified by the senex in “Early in the Summer of 1970,” also point to the danger of the “unconscious destructive urges” which he says are indicative of a “trench mentality” in Israel (46). In the paragraphs below, I build on archetypal psychology’s extrapolation on the frame of mind mentioned by Cohen in order to demonstrate the ways in which the modern Israeli paradigm is reflected through the representations of the archetypal, or symbolically charged, configurations in the above-mentioned story, which provides a fertile starting point to analyze the subversion of the Judaic tradition through Yehoshua’s secular lens of the Israeli subculture.

The cultural motif that Yehoshua subverts in “Early in the Summer of 1970” may be summed up as follows: that of the Biblical story, as recounted in Genesis 22, of the ‘akedah, or the Binding of Isaac. Of course, Yehoshua was not the first writer of his generation to invert Biblical archetypes (including those of Abraham and Isaac) for the purposes of political or aesthetic expression. As Alan Mintz notes, authors such as Amos Oz, Haim Gouri, and Yehuda Amichai all played with the myth of the Binding of Isaac before Yehoshua did, as part of their engagement in the battle over what Mintz calls the “loss of meaning and the baffled search for a way to overcome that loss” (Translating Israel 53). In other words, the “loss of meaning” that Mintz describes hearkens back to
the recognition that, for Israel’s besieged youth, the metanarratives of old can no longer be thought of as sufficient grounds for the justification of the sacrifices that they are expected to carry out. Avi Sagi, in his wide-ranging article on the use of the myth in Modern Hebrew letters, notes that the sacrificial motif in the story of Isaac “epitomiz[es] the Zionist revolution and the sacrifices it exacted, [and simultaneously] rejects both the myth and its implications” (44). In Sagi’s comprehensive outline of the various ways in which the myth functions as a pivotal kind of “DNA” for the symbolic structure of the stories of many of the giants of Modern Hebrew literature, he mentions such celebrated writers as Shmuel Yosef Agnon, Yehuda Amichai, Yariv Ben Aharon, Amir Gilboa, Haim Gouri, Uri Zvi Greenberg, Yitzhak Laor, Hanoch Levin, Aharon Megged, Moshe Shamir, Avraham Shlonsky, and S. Yizhar, to just name a few.75 However, Yehoshua’s well-known reappropriations of the story of Isaac (in addition to “Early in the Summer of 1970”), which have sparked countless debates and cinematic adaptations, seemed to have touched a nerve in a way that the other writers’ work did not. As Ramras-Rauch explains, this may be attributed to the fact that Yehoshua’s irreverently grotesque portrayals of Biblical figures and motifs surpassed the more subtle models provided by his literary peers. From that perspective, Yehoshua proved himself to be not only “adept at the art of

75 The literary works to which Sagi refers may be found in the following: Agnon 8–9; Amichai 21; Ben Aharon 116; Gilboa 560; Greenberg 145–47; Haim Gouri 565; Laor 70; Levin 33–56; Megged 80–145; Shamir 18–25; Shlonsky 136; and Yizhar 804. For an analysis of the trope of the Binding of Isaac in Modern Hebrew literature, see, for example (this list is by no means exhaustive): Yisrael Cohen 51–74; Coffin 293–308; Kartun-Blum (“The Aqedah as a Paradigm in Modern Hebrew Poetry” 185–202; Melman 53–72; and Shamir 332. Also, see Zanger for a description of the ‘akedah trope in Israeli cinema.
ironic inversion—inverting not only the basic myths and archetypes, and the expectations of the reader—but also the conventional values of Israeli society” (*The Arab* 145).

Indeed, a reexamination of “the conventional values of Israeli society” (Ramras-Rauch, *The Arab* 145) is the tacit premise lurking beneath the symbolic structure of “Early in the Summer of 1970,” evidenced in a large part by the special role played by the senex. As Coffin notes, Yehoshua uses the myth of the *‘akedah* partly because of its psychological significance concerning the “relationships between authority figures and their intended followers” (302). Because the father in the story insists upon perpetuating the belief that the sacrifice of his son has some ultimate meaning, he seeks not only to justify current geopolitics by way of the Biblical praxis of the ancient Kingdom of Israel; he also establishes, whether consciously or unconsciously, an archetypal connection between himself and the Biblical Abraham, the patriarch of the Jewish people. Although there is no divine commandment to sacrifice his son, the father sees himself as “guilty and bereft but somehow heroic, offering up his son on the altar of national existence” for a secular, albeit Biblically-inspired, Third Jewish Commonwealth (Mintz 53). Inasmuch as senex consciousness is patterned on patriarchal religiosity, modern individuals are sometimes not fully aware that any natural insistence upon order and authority mirrors almost precisely the religious elements of psychic life, now cached in secularism. And this secular commandment issued by the state, one according to which “the sons were sacrificed for the ultimate materialization of the values of the preceding generation” (Ramras-Rauch, *The Arab* 145), has been given without much attention to the opinions of the current generation. That generation, as symbolized by the son, does not want to be sacrificed. And, like his Biblical counterpart Isaac, the son is not a “believer” in the
commandment-issuing entity (Isaac was not aware of the divine imperative for his near-sacrifice), because his knowledge of actual lived experience differs from the father’s reliance upon the textual tradition—and these texts justify, to a large extent, the nationalistic imperative handed down by the Israeli government. Moreover, through his research, the son has become the conscientious and methodical opposite of the senex figure, standing for a different kind of behavioral norm based on observation and evaluation.

In essence, then, the son is a modern-day avatar of the Biblical Isaac. Although this son is ultimately not sacrificed for the state’s political agenda, the “sacrificed” Isaac in the story still exists (the dead soldier for whom the teacher’s son was mistaken); and so the killing continues. The mastery of Yehoshua’s inversion lies in the fact that, as Joseph Cohen remarks, he “both sacrifices and saves Isaac’s modern counterpart” (55), and in so doing, adds tragedy to what has traditionally been seen as a redemptive tale. In the view of Ramras-Rauch, Yehoshua’s recasting of the archetypes of Abraham and Isaac into an extended metaphor of secular sacrifice is even more catastrophic than in the original tale, because the sons are sent “to their death during a spiritual eclipse [i.e., during the largely unpopular War of Attrition, the heavy body count of which followed the euphoria over the victories of the Six-Day War of 1967] when all justification is lacking” (The Arab 146).

By looking at this story archetypally, we may see, in the words of Adam Katz, that the novella’s message has to do with “the deconstruction of sacrifice as a perpetual necessity” (par. 7). By playing with the places, characters, and themes of one particular passage from the Hebrew Scriptures, Genesis 22, Yehoshua transforms the story of the
Binding of Isaac into one in which the moral injustice is seen, and may therefore be acted upon. As Katz notes: “Isaac, in a scene presumably reiterated throughout Jewish history, can only secure his identity in the proximity of martyrdom,” whereas in Yehoshua’s version of the tale, the prospect of such martyrdom is “taken to be an insidious internalization of sacrificial logic” (par. 2). Furthermore, by actually allowing the slaughter to take place (since there is in fact a dead son to be mourned by someone), Yehoshua subverts the common association of that archetype with its original meaning. In doing so, he uses that very archetypal symbolism to create a new meaning, a meaning that will resound even more profoundly with his Jewish readers, precisely because of the historical, linguistic, and psychological weight of the symbolism of the Biblical subtext and the archetypal structure upon which it is based. The fact that neither the father’s nor the son’s names are given is also a way for the Israeli reader to strongly identify with the challenges that the characters must face, whether it is because of the intertextual association the reader is already unconsciously aware of between the characters in the story and the characters in Genesis 22, or because the reader has already had lived experience of similar senex consciousness making its impact felt upon the nascent Israeli society.

So what is the exact meaning of this recasting of Biblical archetypes for Yehoshua? Why did he choose to present his moral allegory in such a fashion? As an atheist, Yehoshua thinks that the story of the Binding of Isaac is inherently immoral. He points out (“Mr. Mani” 63) that in the Hebrew Bible, there are no other references to the story, which he sees as an indication of its obviously dubious moral quality. Yehoshua believes that Christianity’s version of the myth, which incorporated the corrective of a
man-god sacrificing himself for the entirety of humanity, is much more morally coherent than the Jewish version. His secular reading of the story is that Abraham simply staged the event along with his invention of monotheism: “Such a linkage, in which religion is connected to a specific familial religion, to ‘seed’ in the biological sense, [was] created by Abraham to repair his own break in the biological chain through his abandonment of his father’s house and family” (“From Myth to History” 210).

More importantly, Yehoshua thinks that the Binding of Isaac is one of the detrimental meta-narratives of the Jewish people, which must be re-evaluated in order for the state of Israel to blossom into a healthy society. By using the term “myth,” Yehohsua’s intent is to recall the Greek *muthos*, a traditional story or legend, often accepted as history, which may therefore explain the worldview of any given people. Yehoshua proposes that these “founding myths,” or “metastories” (“From Myth to History” 205), among which are the Exodus from Egypt and the Destruction of the Temple, form the basis of Jewish identity, in lieu of a proximate material culture to which Jews could refer throughout the ages. Just like the French have the Louvre, he says, the Jews have always had their narratives (qtd. in Horn 102). These narratives, for better or worse, have structured the ways in which Jews from assorted civilizations regarded their common roots. This is the reason that during Passover, every Jew is supposed to view himself as if he had actually left Egypt.

In the best-case scenario, Yehoshua considers Zionism as a rejection of the reliance upon the rhetoric of ritual: he regards it as “a return to history” which advocates “a consciousness that subjects itself to criticism and examination in the interest of extrication from a sense of fatefulness, and of a return to real historical activity that leads
to change and progress” (“From Myth to History” 205). In his view, making sure that Zionism promotes a consciousness tied to true chronological time, in the sense that historical activity, including its progress and its problems, might be looked at objectively (instead of by divinely- or textually-inspired decrees) will help to correct the Jews’ “outside-of-history” sort of identity. The lunacy of the senex in “Early in the Summer of 1970” functions as a symbolic warning of what may happen to Israeli society if irrationally-motivated nationalist concerns outweigh all others. And, although the state of Israel is the first self-governing Jewish entity in over 2,000 years, Yehoshua maintains that the danger of the Jews taking historical cues from their metastories is ever-present, since Jewish history is rife with instances of the myth of the Binding of Isaac exerting destructive influence. In his view, “Abraham’s descendants bring themselves to situations of conflict with their surroundings, in which they are threatened with extermination and destruction, with the knife waving overhead, and at the last minute they are rescued, or supposed to be rescued, by God’s voice” (“From Myth to History” 210). With respect to the influence of the Abraham/Isaac meta-narrative upon current Israeli life, Yehoshua cautions: “The knife game is prefigured in our history. It must be borne in mind that whoever brandishes the slaughtering knife—whether as intimidation or as a game—cannot always restrain it” (“Mr. Mani” 65).

3. The Shadow Archetype

I have just presented the manner in which the representation of the traditional structure of authority in Israel, as portrayed in the story “Early in the Summer of 1970,” is based on the Biblical archetype of Abraham (and follows the Biblical plot line of the
story of Abraham’s Binding of Isaac). This representation, which surfaces in Yehoshua’s text as the contemporary incarnation of a foundational narrative, appears in the proverbial form of the senex. While the senex in “Early in the Summer of 1970” is seen in its most deprecatory embodiment of the law-abiding principle (rather than in a more positive incarnation), the openly destructive actions about which we read in the text are committed by the state.

For his part, Yehoshua recognizes that the moral code propagated by the Israeli state, and, subsequently, unconsciously integrated into the public psyche as the superego, has already demonstrated its share of shadows, not in the least via its predilection for re-envisioning the conventional, celestial archetypes of the Judaic textual tradition in the form of secular human hierarchies, especially where military affairs are concerned. Moreover, just as such archetypes both reflect and structure human hierarchies, their modern re-envisioning involves a crisis of sorts, very similar to the schisms stemming from the Israeli Jews’ move away from a religious, Diasporic mentality to a secular, nationalistic one based on Enlightenment ideals and the modern-day nation-state. Not surprisingly, the shift from the pre-state value system left the nascent Israel with the absence of a clear-cut moral code—the purpose of which, for any society, is to attempt to “distribute light and shadow and to draw clear lines of demarcation between them” (Jacoby 164). In the case of the Jewish sub-group of the national Zionist syndrome, Yehoshua sees the provisionary moral code of the early days of the state, congruent with the emphasis on militarism and sacrifice, as a “false security” in which the secular, re-envisioned deities are transposed into high-ranking army officers (epitomized by fractious generals such as Moshe Dayan, Ariel Sharon, and their ilk), and which, in the
story analyzed below, are presented as archetypes of the shadow, in the form of intertextual avatars of supernatural beings from the Judaic tradition.

Yehoshua’s short story “Hamefa ked haaharon” (“The Last Commander”) follows a group of army reservists through a series of surreal encounters over the course of seven days in the desert, during their company’s annual call-up period for military exercises. The unnamed narrator of the tale, who recounts the entire incident in first-person plural, begins by stating that the members of his company had been heroes in the war (given the date of the story’s composition, this must be the 1948 War of Independence), since which time they have been asked only to carry out pencil-pushing duties during their yearly stints of compulsory reserve duty. This special treatment, he relates, is solely because they were victorious in the war:


[Had we lost, we would have been in a real mess now. We would have been accounting for murder, for robbery, committed by our dead comrades. Since we had won—we brought liberation, but they had to give us something to do, otherwise nobody would vacate the fast, murderous jeeps, full of machine guns and rounds of ammunition (Continuing Silence 237).]

This comment by the narrator is the first allusion to the collective shadow, which has been absorbed into the ethos of “geulah” (67; “liberation”; 237) in the official parlance of the state. The narrator, however, refers to the nefarious nature of the actual misdeeds committed by his comrades without propaganda or ostentation, even going so far as to emphasize his own take on events by repeating the substantive “retsah” (“murder”) via its adjectival form, “rashaniim” (67; “murderous”; 237). Furthermore, the narrator offers up
evidence as to the aftereffects of using euphemistic terms such as “geulah” (67; “liberation” 237) to conceal the existence of the shadow—whose fundamental character, as defined by Knapp, plays itself out in “destructive and vicious behavioral patterns” (A Jungian Approach 4)—in his description of two fragile, battle-scarred division commanders, Darzi and Himli. The narrator relates that the two of them now go about, “metaltelim et ivreiyhem, belo menuḥah” (68; “with their limbs moving restlessly”; 238), and immediately suggests that this is so because “Bamilḥamah shimshu keḥablanim, ufotsetsu kfarim shlemim al yoshveihem” (68; “In the war they had served as sappers, and they had blown up whole villages together with their inhabitants”; 238).

Before the men set off for their first-time field maneuvers as reservists, they learn that the deputy commander of the company is being replaced by an officer unknown to them named Yagnon, “barnash meḥudad veshalḥum, shenitmanah bareg’a haḥaron uvehشاشة mah” (67; “a swarthy, angular character, who was appointed at the last moment and with some trepidation”; 238). The reason for the unease regarding Yagnon’s appointment is somewhat of a mystery to the soldiers, since they aware that “bamilḥamah lahām kekatzin amits bekravot hadarom” (68; “in the war he had displayed bold leadership on the southern front”; 238). Nevertheless, they are puzzled by the lack of “simanei dargot” (68; “military stripes”; 238) on his uniform, a glaringly abnormal feature in the attire of a decorated officer. His physiognomy is equally as bizarre: he is described as having “af gadol ushavur mitnoses bifaneiyah hamekho’arot. ‘Al eiynav rokhavim mishkafayim merubei ‘adashot, uvemitsḥo tvu’ah tsaleket ‘amukah veařukah” (68; “a huge broken nose in an ugly face, with bifocals perched on his nose and a long scar deeply imprinted on his forehead”; 238). Finally, when Yagnon makes eye contact
with the group of men, the narrator notes how the officer “hirim et rosho beitiyut, lo bivhelah, kemi shesh’aotov ketsuvot netzah” (68; “lifted his head slowly, calmly, like one who had experienced an eternity of death”; 238).

Until the climax of the story, Yagnon’s sluggish and tranquil nature stands out as his most defining characteristic. Indeed, during the seven days that follow their departure for the desert, they wait at the encampment for Yagnon’s order to begin their maneuvers, but the order never comes. Instead, the only activity the men undertake is to eventually surrender to “tardemah trufat-ḥom” (70; “a heat-ravaged slumber”; 241), following the example of Yagnon, who insists, “Yesh tokhniyot” (70; “There are plans”; 241) before drifting off to sleep. There is, however, one young officer attached to the company who is particularly zealous in his desire to train (and vocal in his grievances about time wasted). He resorts to shooting his weapon into thin air, as a protest against the constant suspension of consciousness, before deciding to abandon the camp (71; 242). The narrator notes that they never see him again, intimating the end of the young man’s existence with the supposition, “Efshar to’eh ‘odeno beiyn hamakhteshim” (71; “Perhaps he is still lost among the craters”; 242). No one else at the camp attempts to revolt, even after having noticed during their few waking hours several seemingly supernatural occurrences, such as the scar on Yagnon’s forehead, that “ba‘arah keketem dam arokh” (70; “gleam[ed] like a long, bloody stain”; 240), or the appearance of “shalosh demuyot z’eirot, ‘atufot sheḥorim” (71; “three tiny figures, swathed in black”; 242) which the narrator casually surmises are the ghosts of defeated Egyptians. He simply states the obvious: “Shiv’ah yamim kvar analnu shevuim bamalkodet hazot, biyadei hameshakef
harezeh sheyi no roveh misheynah” (71; “For seven days we have been captives in this realm in the power of this skinny magician who can’t get enough sleep”; 243).

At the end of the reservists’ seventh day with Yagnon, a new, older officer arrives at the encampment, coming down to meet the startled troops from a still-hovering helicopter. The narrator describes him as follows: “Samuk, enoshi, kaved guf; sei’ar shehikhsif, ‘einayim kehul ot veavhiyot, yadayim sheyod‘ot tehilah” (72; “Flushed, human, heavy-framed, silver-haired [with] blue, paternal eyes, and hands that knew how to praise”; 243). The insignia that “hevhiku ‘al ktafaf” (72; “gleamed on his shoulders”; 243) are first markers to indicate to the soldiers that this “deus ex machina” is the antithesis of Yagnon, who did not sport any military stripes. As soon as the older commander inquires as to Yagnon’s whereabouts, whom he calls “sgani” (72; “my deputy”; 243), the men find themselves at the cusp of a second, more sinister recognition: something about this new officer is terribly wrong. As the narrator relates: “Histakalnu bo. Yad’anu—zeh oyeveinu” (72; “We gazed at him. We knew—that was our enemy”; 243).

From this moment of recognition, the reservists’ time at the camp becomes precisely the opposite of what it had been with Yagnon in command. The new commander wakes the troops up before dawn “zo‘ef veroden” (73; “with dictatorial anger”; 245), prior to making known the order of the day, which is simply referred to as “mizmor misefer hasfarim” (73; “a Biblical psalm”; 245) he is said to have composed. Although the particular contents of this order are not elaborated upon, we are told that the men are made to dig ditches until their hands “nitsasu beyavelot, kemetsor’aot” (73; “are blistered, as though leprous”; 245), and, if they want water, to successfully scale the
At night, the narrator tells about how the older officer gathered the men “bima’agalim vediber ‘al hamilḥamah. ‘Al hamilḥamah shehaytah, ‘al hamilḥamah she’od tavo. Klum yesh reg’a lelo milḥamah? Klum yesh menuḥah? ‘Amad vekarah lifaneinu misefer hamilḥamot, bekol tsalul, belo ḫen, kemashmiyah pekudot” (74; “in circles and talked about the war. About the war that was, about the war that will be. Is there ever a moment without a war? Is there ever rest? He stood before us and read from the book of wars, in a clear, flat voice, as though giving orders”; 246). While Yagnon is mostly absent from the activities initiated by the sadistic officer, the soldiers occasionally see him standing by the new commander’s side. More often than not, they only see the smoke from his cigarette drifting up from a rut in the desert floor, and they wonder why he does not protect them from the senior commander’s cruelty: “Yagnon . . . Nizkarim anu bayaḥid hashaku’ah beitardemah baḥaritz haʾazuv, ‘Lama ‘azav otanu?’” (76; “Yagnon . . . We remind ourselves of that one individual deep in sleep in the deserted furrow—why has he abandoned us?”; 248).

The company commander’s total time at the encampment lasts for seven days, during which the reservists are required to carry out his instructions without exception. After the Sabbath (which he makes the men observe), the officer announces that the men must now set out on a seven-day forced march through the Plain of John, upon the conclusion of which they will be allowed to end their period of reserve duty. Strangely, he insists that he will not be the one to lead them: “Ani rak leshavu’a yamim bati lekan . . . lo yoter” (77; “I only came here for seven days . . . no more”; 250). It is at this moment that Yagnon re-enters the picture, since he will presumably be the one to lead the march in his senior’s absence.
During preparations for the march, in a conversation between Yagnon and the company commander, Yagnon mentions that in the war he and his men hid out in the same furrow that runs through the reservists’ current encampment. The elder officer says, “Veleēhar miken paratstem vehikitem baoyevim” (78; “And after that you broke out and beat the enemy”; 251), to which Yagnon replies, “Lo, baraḥnu . . . nimlatnu derekh ‘aravat John [. . .] baderekh ratzshu et kulanu. Shiv‘ah yamim barḥah habriḥah” (78; “No, we fled . . . We escaped through the Plain of John [. . .] on the road they murdered us all. The retreat lasted seven days”; 251). It is at this point in the story that the men realize that Yagnon is an apparition, and that the “shalosh demuyot z’eirot, ‘atufot sheḥorim” (71; “three tiny figures, swathed in black”; 242) whom the soldiers had seen earlier on were in fact the ghosts of Yagnon and his dead comrades, not the Egyptian “oyevim” (71; “enemy”; 242), as initially surmised by the narrator. Any proof needed to that effect is provided by Yagnon’s changing physical appearance, namely, when his not-of-the-living condition becomes unambiguously clear via the scar on his brow, which at that point “damtah leḥor afel veshasu‘ah” (79; “looked like a dark, wide-open hole”; 252). The descriptions of deformity and gore surrounding the character of Yagnon increase in tandem with the realization of his shadow contents.

Concurrent with the realization that Yagnon is a phantom is the departure of the company commander, who leaves in the same way that he came: by helicopter. As the elder officer is preparing himself to be lifted into the sky, Yagnon offhandedly addresses him as “adoni” (79; “mister”; 252), utilizing a civilian term that indicates to the senior officer that any “real” military reserve duty has ended with the latter’s exit. The company commander tries to protest what he now knows to be the likely cancellation of the march
he had planned through the Plain of John, but the din of the helicopter drowns out the 
sounds of his outcry. The power he had exerted over the troops is here shown to be futile: 
“‘Atah lo yakholnu lisimḥateinu lehavin davar mitsa‘akato shel mefaked haplugah. Rainu 
rak et sfatar han’aot” (79; “Now to our joy we couldn’t understand a word of the 
shoutings [sic] of the company commander. We only saw his moving lips”; 253). The 
story ends with the troops throwing down the equipment intended for the march in order 
to return to the action of continuous sleep, under the direction of the now-lone 
commander, Yagnon.

The supernatural and metarealistic elements of “The Last Commander,” combined 
with esoteric allusions and the symbolic configuration of its narrative, do not provide 
fertile ground for an immediate understanding of the several different incarnations of the 
shadow archetype in its sub-cultural (Israeli) specificity as they exist in the story, 
especially since each one is directly informed by (and structured upon) Judaic sources 
that may very well prove to be arcane to the (non-initiated) reader. I have thus refrained 
from a full analysis in tandem with the initial summarizing of the story. Instead, I offer 
below a two-part examination of “The Last Commander.” In the first part, I elucidate the 
particular myths, themes, and intertextual references from the Judaic tradition as they 
relate to the context and plot of the story. In the second part, I propose a series of 
explanations regarding the significance of the aforementioned elements in the context of 
Yehoshua’s literary enterprise as a whole, inasmuch as the incorporation of those 
elements assists in his efforts to make the collective shadow of the Zionist syndrome 
conscious to the Israeli reader.
We have already seen in “Early of the Summer of 1970” that the birthplace of the Jewish people—the desert—functions as the erotic epicenter for the dénouement of that story’s narrative plot. In a similar vein, what Morahg calls “the pathology and symbolism of madness” works in “The Last Commander” in tandem with the “signifying function of the wilderness experience” of the troops’ time in the desert (“Facing” 316). I understand Morahg’s use of the term “pathology” as not only what is inferred from the Greek pathos—feeling, pain, suffering—but also the abnormalities that characterize the origins or nature of a particular illness. And, although I take issue with Morahg on his assertion that “Early in the Summer of 1970” represents the first time that Yehoshua links the concept of such pathology to the experience of the desert (“Facing” 316) (this is erroneous, since “The Last Commander” was written in 1962, and “Early in the Summer of 1970” came ten years later), I do concur that the desert, which, in classic archetypal terms, is emblematic of a spiritual wasteland, death, and lack of hope, serves as the most appropriate topos for the encounter with the collective Israeli shadow. The desert setting of “The Last Commander,” therefore, is already a recasting of sorts of a familiar motif from the intertextual reservoir of religious Judaic culture.

Perhaps the most important recasting in the aforementioned story has to do with the entity whose law the Israelites accepted in the desert: the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In Exodus 19, Moses accepts, on behalf of the people of Israel, the commandments given to him by God. According to the system of Gematria (“Kabbalistic numerology”), the location chosen for the giving of the covenant is not coincidental, since the numerical

76 Morahg’s comment regarding the “wilderness experience” is particularly insightful when taking into account that the Hebrew word for desert, midbar, can also mean “wilderness.”
value of the letters for *elohim* (the first name used for God in the Bible, in Gen. 1.1) and the wilderness-like quality of *hatev’a* (“nature”), where the Israelites find themselves after the exodus from Egypt, are the same: eighty-six.\(^{77}\) Indeed, according to Chasidic lore (itself a mystical offshoot of Kabbalah), the relationship between God and nature is nothing less than intrinsic, since God is the one who created the natural world out of chaos; and it is against the backdrop of the stark nature of the desert that God makes himself known to what will become known as the Jewish people.\(^{78}\) God’s role in the affair has caused him to be commonly referred to in Judaic liturgy as *noten hatorah* (“the giver of the Law”).

In “The Last Commander,” the reservists are also presented by the company commander with a law, albeit one which is less tangible or clear-cut in its directives. It is mentioned that the senior commander reads to the troops from the fictitious “sefer hamilḥamot” (74; “book of wars”; 250), a purposefully ambiguous heading meant to recall a seemingly similar Biblical title (The Book of Esther, The Book of Lamentations, etc.). Yosef Dan points out that the law given to the troops (and probably taken from the imaginary volume mentioned above) is, in fact, the code of honor belonging to the Israeli armed forces, commonly referred to in military phraseology as *torat haneshek* (332; “the law of arms”). Like the Israelites before them, the Israeli public is also somehow beholden to this law, since “Tsahal hu shenatan lahevrah zu et kiyumah bizkhut

\(^{77}\) The Hebrew letters אֱלֹהִים (read from right to left), which form the word “God,” are equal, respectively, to 1, 30, 5, 10, and 40, totaling 86; the letters in the word for “nature,” חָטָא, are respectively equal to 5, 9, 2, and 70, also totaling 86.

\(^{78}\) For more on the Hasidic perspective regarding the relationship between God and nature, see Lamm 1–21.
nitşhonotav, vehu shehigen ‘al kiyumah hafizi” (334; “The Israel Defense Forces is what permitted this society to exist by way of its victories, and it is what protected this society’s physical existence”). Not surprisingly, the giver of this law (the company commander) is seen, among other things, as a modern-day avatar of the original, desert-deity noten hatorah (“giver of the law”), not to mention, given his coveted rank and military prowess, a “war-god” (“Yahweh is a man of war,” Exod. 15.3). Furthermore, the text’s implicit correlation between the company commander and the Biblical divinity whom Moses encounters in the wilderness also draws on other sources from the Judaic textual tradition, aside from the Bible, to present the company commander as a secular, re-envisioned god—namely, from writings of the Jewish Gnostics, from the Talmud, and from pre-Israeli, Modern Hebrew literature. From a Judaic perspective, this textual convergence of Biblical, Gnostic, Talmudic, Kabbalistic and Modern Hebrew literary heritage gives Yehoshua’s story a rich historical sensibility. And yet, the distinctly Israeli concerns personified in “The Last Commander” are very archetypal, in that they are the fulfilled “possibilities of an image” (Adams 102), conceived the way they are according to the vision of reality articulated through Yehoshua’s particular subculture.

With respect to the parallel between the company commander and the desert deity whom Moses met on Mt. Sinai, there is an additional association worth mentioning: that of the Canaanite sky-god El (el in Hebrew can mean either the God of the Hebrew Scriptures, as well as any “generic” god). El was considered from very early on “as synonymous with the God of Moses” (Rabinowitz 8). Since the company commander arrives from the sky, and even takes pains to note that he will be leaving the same way (77; 250), it would not be an exaggeration to assume that the “mizmor mesefer hasfarim”
(73; “a Biblical psalm”; 245) referred to is Psalm 18, a meditation on the security offered from one’s enemies by God, especially since, in verse 11, God is said to come down to earth from the sky, much like the company commander from his helicopter: “And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, He did swoop down upon the wings of the wind” (Psalm 18.11).

At this juncture, it is important to clarify that the symbolic positioning of the company commander’s entrance and exit via a helicopter need not be seen as simply a “nod” to sky-god worship in early Hebrew religion, nor as a suggestion that the Israeli public has a tendency to deify their high-ranking military officers. Actually, both of these suppositions are highly likely, in light of the evidence presented. But that is not the point. The most important aspect of the shadow archetype in this story involves the contextual indications, which work alongside the intertextual ones, as to the artificial “sense of protection” present in the collective Israeli military ethos, as touted by (and embodied in) the cruel officer, who makes his entrance as a kind of divine figure, the precise nature of which may be multi-tiered or polysemous—in short, the exact opposite of static meaning.

In this particular case, the one who descends from the sky seems to be analogous to the “fallen angels” (see Isaiah 14.12) in the Judaic tradition, who, having thought themselves comparable to the most high, are often taken to be “symbolic incarnation[s] of evil” (Shaked, “H. N. Bialik” 97). Also included in this category are the pre-Isaiah nefilim, literally translated as “fallen ones,” which Genesis 6.4 describes as “the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown,” a description quite fitting for a “mighty” warrior like the company commander, who also happens to be among the founding fathers of a nation.

Moreover, the commander’s shadow quality shares the evil characteristics of the nefilim
spoken of in Genesis 6.5: “And the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

Another parallel to be highlighted regarding recurring archetypal motifs in “The Last Commander” has to do with the phantom Yagnon, the company commander’s deputy. Yagnon’s connection with his superior carries with it associations of the Creator-Demiurge relationship first present in many of the writings of the Jewish Gnostics.79 In these texts, the Creator-God (Yahweh) appoints himself a demiurge, or subordinate deity, the best known of which is the figure of Metatron, or the “lesser Yahweh,” as mentioned in the Pseudepigrapha (in Third Enoch), the Talmud (in Sanhedrin 38b and Avodah Zarah 3b), and the Zohar (in Shemot 2), otherwise referred to as the “Book of Splendor,” largely considered to be the most important work in the Kabbalah. However, it seems more likely that the character of Yagnon is based on the Gnostic demiurge Ialdabaoth (whose name in Phoenician, yilda baoth, means “child of chaos”), the demonic figure described in the Apocryphon of John, given that it is mentioned numerous times, to the point of redundancy (78; 250), that Yagnon and his comrades were killed during his retreat through the Plain of John—the same Plain of John through which the company commander instructs the troops to go on their forced march (78; 250).80 We may be quite certain that Yehoshua has recast Yagnon in the role of deputy and the company

79 See “The Ignorant Demiurge” Culianu 34–62.

80 For more background on the demiurge Ialdabaoth see Jonas 134–135; and for the etymology of Ialdabaoth’s name see Astour 197. For actual appearances by Ialdabaoth in the Berlin Codex and the Nag Hammadi Codex II texts, see King 25–81.
commander in the role of the Creator-God (and not the other way around) since, in the first place, Yagnon remains subordinate to the company commander; and secondly, since the latter arrives with his drills and maneuvers for the purpose of making order out of the “tohu vabohu” (72; “utter chaos”; 244) he finds on the ground. Indeed, as noted above, the parallels between the senior officer and the Creator-God, or the God of Moses, are evidenced at numerous places throughout the story. Perhaps the most blatant example of this assigning of archetypal functions is to be found in Yehoshua’s precise replication of the Biblical phrase “tohu vabohu” (Gen. 1.2). While for the Israeli reader the meaning of this expression in its original Hebrew would immediately be linked with the Biblical description of the earth’s state before God created light and darkness (as recounted in Gen. 1.3–4), the translation as “utter chaos” (244) does not convey the same series of associations for the English-speaking reader as more well-known English translations of the Biblical phrase might, such as “formless and empty” (in the New International Version), or “without form” (in the King James version). In any event, it is clear that the company commander, and not his deputy, has allowed those “on the earth” to exist by way of his part in “creating” the geo-political entity of Israel, and descends from the heavens in order to instigate a proper arrangement in his creation.

The last observation to be made concerning Yehoshua’s intertextual predispositions, as they are revealed in “The Last Commander,” is twofold, and will be centered on the narrator’s enigmatic statement to the recently-arrived company commander: “Anaḥnu metim” (72; “We are dead”; 244). As is made clear later on in the story, the only “dead” person among the reservists is their deputy commander, Yagnon, who was killed in the previous war alongside his comrades, during their retreat from the
Plain of John; the reservists are far from being actually outside the world of the living. The “death” spoken of by the narrator alludes to a non-literal, metaphoric death, which is explained below. For now, however, let us concentrate on the intertextual references from the Judaic tradition as the comment about them being dead (72; 244) applies to the reservists during their sojourn in the desert.

The significance of the narrator’s comment here is an allusion to the *metei hamidbar* (“the dead of the desert”) mentioned in the Talmud (Baba Bathra 117a; Sanhedrin 110b), in a story attributed to Rabbi bar Hannah. The rabbi recounts a dialogue between several sages on the topic of whether or not the “generation of the desert” (Num. 14) will have any part in the world to come, since God would not let them into the Land of Israel on account of their transgressions. As noted originally by Yeruham Fishel Lahover, the generation of the desert has a rather ambiguous relationship with authority. On one hand, they engage in idol-worship (i.e., the incident involving the golden calf, from Exod. 32.1–8), and for doing so, remain captives in the desert. On the other, they end up demonstrating an uncanny devotion and zeal for the same God who will wait for them to die before their offspring sees the Promised Land (Lahover 398–400). 81

The second intertextual allusion implicit in the narrator’s “Anaḥnu metim” (72; “We are dead”; 244) comment from “The Last Commander” is to the title of a canonical poem written in 1902 by Chaim Nachman Bialik, Israel’s national poet. The epic “Metei hamidbar” (“The Dead of the Desert”) re-imagines the Biblical generation of the desert as great heroes, ready for battle, who happen to be only sleeping (as opposed to being dead).

81 Shaked (“H. N. Bialik” 96) also builds on Lahover’s argument in his discussion of the mythic structure of Bialik’s “The Dead of the Desert.”
Freed from bondage in Egypt, they are still waiting to arrive at the Promised Land, their faces “’azim ushezufim” (Mivḥar shirei Bialik 156; “strong and sun-burnt”; Shirot Bialik 88), their foreheads “kashim . . . vaḥazakim ule’umat shamayim konanu” (156; “hard . . . and strong, directed toward Heaven”; 88). When “pet’a pitom yitna’er dor ‘izuz vegibor, dor gibor milḥamah” (156; “they suddenly rouse themselves, the stalwart men of war”; 88), their hands are ready for the shedding of blood. Bialik’s imagery of strapping, able-bodied “New Jews” waiting for the right moment to enter the Holy Land conjures up associations with the early Zionist movement in Palestine, which sought to propagate such vivid corporeal imagery among its adherents in order to contrast the nation-building Zionists with what they perceived as an anathema: their religious and long-persecuted Diaspora brethren. Indeed, part of the innovation in Bialik’s poem is that it presents the rebellion of the modern generation of the desert in terms of a revolt against religion (i.e., defying God’s original decree that they die in the wilderness)—symbolically, a tacit embrace of secularism and Enlightenment ideas—which, in turn, it is suggested, will allow the Jews to rise up against another oppressing power: those who prevent them from attaining political independence.

As one of the early specimens of Modern Hebrew epic, Bialik’s poem became part and parcel of the nascent Zionist enterprise, inasmuch as it functioned as Zionism’s version of littérature engagée (“committed literature”), otherwise known in Israel as sifrut meguyeset—literally, literature that has been “enlisted” on behalf of a cause. This cause, undertaken by the Jews in British-mandated Palestine, was the formation of a

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82 For commentary and the full text of this poem in both the original Hebrew and the English translation, see Luz and Bialik, respectively.
collective Zionist consciousness inextricably tied to the process of nation-building. Poems such as Bialik’s helped to harness what Shaked calls “the struggling archetypes of the collective [Jewish] unconscious” (“H. N. Bialik” 101) and recast them into secular, nationalistic versions of Judaism’s founding myths in order to “express a mythical vision of the Jewish people in our time: the eternal Jew facing his life-death experience in an age of national resurrections” (“H. N. Bialik” 116).

We have just seen how Yehoshua’s utilization of the archetypal themes of wilderness, death, punishment, sin, and revolt are linked intertextually to Biblical, Talmudic, and Modern Hebrew literary tropes involving the “generation of the desert”; the particulars of their contextual relationship are analyzed below. For the moment, let us summarize this last section by making the following point: like Bialik’s before him, Yehoshua’s literary enterprise involves the subversion of archetypes and motifs of Judaism’s historical textual predecessors, in order to make his presentation of the newer embodiment of familiar themes (as seen through the lens of the Israeli subculture) resound more profoundly with the Israeli reader. To his credit, Yehoshua also succeeds in going one step further, intertextually speaking: he subverts Bialik. In particular, he subverts Bialik’s endorsement of the Zionist renewal via a blind faith in Jewish military power (the first such centrally-organized power, it should be noted, since the Bar-Kokhba revolt [132–135 CD]), or via the belief that the secular nation-state will not create its own hierarchies of iniquity. This, more than anything, is what characterizes Yehoshua’s prophetic call to become aware of the malignant forces in Israeli society. In psychoanalytic terms, it is the soul-searching that Lorelei Cederstrom deems the necessity to face up to the shadow, “in all of its personal and cultural manifestations” (122).
The two aforementioned manifestations of the shadow, both personal and cultural (I prefer to use the word “collective” rather than “cultural,” in order not to confuse the latter with my use of the term “subculture”), are exhibited in “The Last Commander” as two distinct, albeit intertwined options. As I have mentioned in Chapter 2, I take issue with the absolutist conceptual partition, common in Western capitalist nations, between the realms of the private and the collective. Certainly, in the setting of the incipient Israel in the story in question, the emphasis on collective destiny and identity—especially through the “performance” of such identity through military service—must be taken as a given, inasmuch as the “culture” of the time (i.e., the shared and interrelated systems of living, based on common temporal values and social organization) glorified the ethos of collective responsibility over personal needs. And yet, the individual, private components of human life do not cease to be felt in geopolitical entities that place primary importance on the dynamics of the group, as was the case in the years after Israel’s founding. Rather, they continue to manifest themselves, oftentimes in tandem with the actions of the collective. This is true for both manifestations of the shadow in “The Last Commander,” as personified by each of the commanders in the story. More specifically: the company commander, who acts (ostensibly) on behalf of the common interest, embodies the collective shadow in a way that “displays abysmal, even willful destructiveness that would turn against cultural evolution” (Perera 230); the rather unambiguous manner in which he communicates this threat to the community is detailed below. Before doing that, however, I discuss the characteristics of the personal shadow as they appear in the imagery associated with the company commander’s deputy, Yagnon, who symbolizes a much less explicit danger than his superior does: a danger typified by inaction,
complacency, and an absence of concern for the community—a more “individualist” kind of shadow that works against the good of the collective.

From the very beginning of the story, the insinuation inherent in the descriptions surrounding Yagnon is that he is someone who cannot be trusted. Although we read that he was appointed to lead the reservists “behashash mah” (67; “with some trepidation”; 238), the exact reason for this trepidation remains unsaid. An indicator of his unsuitability for the assignment, however, may be found in one of the first impressions that the reader has of Yagnon, even before it becomes clear that the phantom commander intends to do nothing more than sleep through the mandatory period of reserve duty: his detachment from the normal code of army behavior. For instance, it is noted that, contrary to regulation, Yagnon does not have on his uniform the visible insignia of an officer (68; 238). This lack of adherence to collective regulation and hierarchy would not necessarily be a bad thing in and of itself, since Yehoshua’s texts abound with characters who go against the communal grain, albeit with a benevolent end in mind, such as the son in “Early in the Summer of 1970.” Instead, Yagnon’s general absence of regard for applying the necessary directives to his persona as an officer functions as kind of a foretaste for the absence of responsibility he will later on display for his men. He is thus presented as the inverse of the company commander: his sin is sloth, while the latter’s is wrath. The shadow contents of his sloth are not immediately apparent to the men, although the deformity of his physical appearance, which is often indicative of shadow elements (Early, “A Review” 30; Walker 29–50; Wharton 280), coupled with his lack of conformity to military law (finally instituted in a brutal fashion by his superior), are enough to at least make the reservists uneasy about the one who is supposed to lead them.
During the course of their first week in the desert, the danger of Yagnon’s inaction makes its presence felt most clearly in the framework of this inaction functioning as a contagion. For example, once the men finally resign themselves to the rule of Yagnon’s lethargy, they also remove the military stripes from their uniforms. “Simanei hadargot naflu” (70; “Rank had disappeared”; 241), notes the narrator, before they eventually remove even their clothing. In “stripping away,” as it were, their collective identity piece by piece, the reservists also cut themselves off from their shared responsibility and identity as socialized citizens of the state. This is in opposition to the frenzy of activity that typifies the seven days during which they are in the control of the company commander, who not only makes his rank visible; his military bars are described as having “hevhiku ‘al ktafaf” (72; “gleamed on his shoulders”; 243) upon his arrival. Also, the troops follow the lead of Yagnon despite their understanding that such deeds are wrong, and without any glee or enthusiasm: “Ḥaradah pirperah banu bereuteinu et kavanatu hageluyah, hapshutah” (70; “We were struck with terror when we realized his clear, simple purpose”; 241). It is in this regard that I depart from Ramas-Rauch’s view that the reservists’ time under Yagnon’s command is made up of “seven blissful days of the men’s total return to the primitive desire to be objects rather than men and soldiers” (The Arab 129). The men’s slide into inaction actually happens quite gradually, and not without initial protest; it is for this reason that the narrator describes them as “shevuim bimalkodet hazot, biyadei [Yagnon]” (71; “captives in this realm in the power of [Yagnon]”; 243).

Indeed, the seven days of inactivity are accurately denoted as “tohu vabohu” (72; “utter chaos”; 244) by the company commander upon his arrival. From a collective
perspective, it is “chaos” because it is a time in which nothing is accomplished. With respect to the linguistic parallel cited earlier between the “chaos” mentioned in the text and the act of God’s creation of the physical universe (as recounted in Gen. 1:2) this may be seen as a deliberate move on the part of Yehoshua to signify the following fact: something has gone awry with “God’s creation.” Chaos is not supposed to reign for seven days. In fact, the reigning of chaos for seven days symbolizes the de facto rejection of the proposition of order in the world, since it unravels the projection of purpose. The time when the men are cut off from the collective is thus inherently personal and individualistic, but not in a way that somehow brings about a new consciousness from which the collective might ultimately benefit. Rather, it is a move detrimental both to the reservists and to their society, since neither can survive in the presence of such torpor. Their indolence is both the result and reflection of Yagnon’s shadow contents.

One might also conjecture that the existence and spread of Yagnon’s very “personal” type of shadow consciousness, as it appears in the story, could very well be predicated on the fact that he is no longer among the living. That is to say: the penchant he displays for inactivity may be based upon the recognition of his own sacrifice to the state, which is followed by a kind of apathy—even for the well-being of his own men. In other words, he accepts that the company commander gives orders that endanger the lives of his men (such as denying them water), and yet offers up no objection. Moreover, his decision not to carry out the order of the forced march at the end of the story is not because of any perceived severity on his part regarding the command itself; it is simply because of the same apathy with which he regards the general nature of their endeavors. The danger of this apathy is finally realized by the reservists in an unuttered cry of
anguish, which possesses a linguistic parallel with the words of David in Psalm 22.2 ("My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me, and art far from my help at the words of my cry?"), and which further establishes the connection between Yagnon and his archetypal precursor of the “lesser Yahweh” referenced earlier: “Lamah ‘azav otanu?”’ (76; “Why has he abandoned us?”; 248).

Finally, it is worth noting that the irony of the soldiers’ vain hope that Yagnon will somehow protect them from the actions of the maniacal officer is further compounded by the fact that the Hebraic root of Yagnon’s name comes from the same root as the verb legonon (“to defend”). Indeed, any anticipation that Yagnon (who could not “defend” himself or his dead comrades in the war) is capable of “defending” his men at this point is seen as preposterous. What was considered by the reservists at the beginning to be peculiar or idiosyncratic behavior is now demonstrated to be perilous, not to mention incongruous.

Why did they not understand from the beginning the depth of the danger posed by Yagnon, as they did immediately upon seeing the company commander, whom they knew right away as “oyeveinu” (72; “our enemy”; 243)? First of all, the demonic imagery associated with Yagnon’s appearance, epitomized by the “ḥor afel veshasu’ah” (79; “wide-open hole”; 252) in the middle of his forehead, only becomes explicit toward the end of the tale. Secondly, let us not forget that the shadow is not initially acknowledged as such, especially when its appearance is not outwardly threatening to the conscious mind. In Jung’s words, the shadow may be “the dangerous aspect of the unrecognized dark half of the personality” (Two Essays 94), whereas Hillman describes the problem thus: “How do you find a lion that has swallowed you?” (Meeting the Shadow 4). Both of
these thinkers’ attempts to illustrate the problem of the shadow are based upon the awareness that shadow traits are often not instantly recognizable as such. In the case of the deputy commander, Yagnon—an archetypal reconfiguration of the Gnostic demiurge Ialdabaoth, appropriated by Yehoshua to represent the personal side of the shadow’s manifestation—his shadow contents are represented by the antithesis of the group dynamic: by sloth, apathy, and self-interest.

The unnamed company commander in “The Last Commander” embodies the flip side to Yagnon’s manifestation of the shadow, by demonstrating the second of what Yehoshua sees as two of Israeli society’s most pathological inclinations: intentional isolationism from the collective, or the dogmatic adherence to it. In his archetypal recasting from Hebraic Creator-God to official representative of the collective (both structurally and symbolically), the company commander typifies what Perera characterizes as “absolute evil”: a “part of some incomprehensible malevolence and power before which, like Job, we can only cover our mouths when we see it in nature and glimmering darkly in ourselves” (230). Indeed, the wrath exhibited by the senior commander is devoid of any of the subtleties present in the depiction of Yagnon’s personal shadow. Moreover, it is recognized immediately by the men under the former’s control—perhaps because they have already seen it “glimmering darkly” in themselves, particularly during the last war, in which the narrator describes their actions, also filled with shadow contents, as “retsah” (67; “murder”; 237).

For the sake of clarity, I should emphasize that the reservists’ instant recognition of the company commander as “oyeyeinu” (72; “our enemy”; 243)—i.e., of his shadow contents—does not mean that the act of immediately acknowledging the embodiment of
the collective shadow happens in a similar fashion in the extra-literary sense. That is to say, let us reconfirm the comprehension of the shadow as that which has extricated itself from the conscious psyche by offering the following illustration: Israeli society at large (or, Israel at the time during which the story was written) does not instantaneously associate the notion of evil with the hierarchical relationship between victimized subordinates and psychotic military commanders. Nor does it presume that such a relationship, if it does in fact exist, is a direct reflection of some kind of collective ill. What it does mean is that the Israeli reader is encouraged to engage in an exercise of self-introspection regarding the ways in which individuals are granted power within the context of their involvement with the military apparatus, as well as regarding the collective responses to that involvement, via their engagement in such hypothetical situations in Yehoshua’s text.

Yehoshua’s choice to base the character of the sadistic officer on the archetype of the Hebraic Creator-God (in tandem with insinuations that the wicked officer resembles various “fallen angels” mentioned in the Judaic sources) recalls his subversion of the myth of the Binding of Isaac in “Early in the Summer of 1970,” inasmuch as both stories involve motifs, imagery, or language taken from the Judaic textual tradition. Both stories also use this tradition, which Yehoshua assumes is familiar to the reader, in a modern, secular, and ultimately inverted framework. Here, however, the difference between the fundamentalist, non-compromising attitude espoused by the company commander (which might be seen, in a more removed context (i.e., from the limited perspective of not actually being familiar with such lived experiences), as the negative side of senex consciousness simply meshed with shadow possibilities, or the tendency to invoke
Biblical praxis to justify current events, is the following: the shadow, unlike the senex, has already committed acts of outright indecency and cruelty. Furthermore, it has no remorse about doing so. The commander not only openly advocates such sacrifice through his reading aloud from the “sefer hamilhamot” (74; “book of wars”; 250); with his insistence that the men perform painful and senseless military maneuvers, he does not “latet seder [...] mah shehevi haytah aiymah” (78; “impose order . . . what he brought was terror”; 252). The narrator’s rhetorical questions concerning the efficacy of the commander’s methods—“Lamah? Klum ḥaserim anu po davar?” (78; “What for? Is there anything we need here?”; 252)—are meant to beget, ultimately, the questioning of what happens to the adherents of such impropriety. Does the entire collective in a country where military service is compulsory become shell-shocked murderers of women and children, like Darzi and Himli, who “balaiylot, shuv veshuv, ḥolmim ‘al hamilhamah” (71; “at night, again and again, dream about the war”; 243)? Or is their fate to simply fall in battle, like Yagnon?

Perhaps the most central attribute of the collective shadow contents as displayed by the company commander has to do with his absolute refusal to engage in any form of self-introspection in regard to military matters. In addition to his forced indoctrination of the soldiers, we see in his inquiry to Yagnon (concerning the battles in which the latter took part during the war) a glaring lack of critical depth: “Hu lo shaal. Hu kav’a ‘udot” (78; “He wasn’t asking. He was stating facts”; 251). The company commander’s failure to entertain the possibility that Yagnon and his men did not end their battle by defeating the enemy, let alone to consider that they might have made a choice to flee the battlefield, betrays an inflexible and unrealistic mindset inherently dangerous for those who shape
the collective ethos. The commander’s exit from the story is also symbolic of such inability to participate in real communication, since the helicopter which has come to fetch him drowns out the sound of his voice, as if the noise of one war machine were taking the place of another. And the helicopter, unlike a celestial chariot, does not ferry its deity back toward the heavens; it returns him to civilization, where he must take part in a world where active confrontation cannot be the desired norm.

Just as Yagnon’s apathetic behavior functions as a contagion for the troops under his command, the company commander’s penchant for wrath and malice are presented by Yehoshua as a second, no less contagious option for Israel to pursue. At the story’s conclusion, the reservists end up going back to being a “maḥaneh radum umeshutak” (80; “a sleepy, paralyzed camp”; 253) by default, it seems, since the other option of a forced march through the Plain of John would have pushed them, by way of exhaustion or exposure, toward the same fate that Yagnon met there: death. Neither option is tenable in the long term. Their metaphoric “death in sleep” therefore leaves them torn between two of the worst possible predilections in nascent Israel: death or inaction, the significance of which I explain below. More than that, the reservists’ dilemma brings up a questioned unanswered by the text, not to mention an historic question for Israeli society as a whole: who will be the last commander?

My answer to that question is simple: the intended (Israeli) reader of the story. When the latter reads “The Last Commander,” he or she will have internalized, whether consciously or not, the specific, sub-cultural (Israeli) incarnations of each (traditional) Judaic archetype. This internalization is based on two factors: first, on a familiarity with the Judaic textual tradition; and second, on having real-lived experience in the reality of
the Zionist paradigm. Both of these components are necessary for the understanding of Yehoshua’s literary version of Israeli Judaic archetypes. They are also necessary for becoming more psychically self-aware of the shadow, both in the individual and collective senses. Accordingly, the Israeli reader who has thought critically about the shadow’s existence will be able, in Yehoshua’s mind, “to counteract illusory, blind faith in ‘progress’” (Jacoby 158), in the context of Zionist nation-building. At the very least, the reader will be in a better position to consider how to deal with the shadow in the future, and will therefore be able to play his or her part in “commanding” in which direction the state of Israel will go. Thus, the location where the story ends, the desert, is what Horn calls “a turn toward self-definition of the nature of Jewish identity” (Facing the Fires 149), because it is also the place where the Jewish people received their first set of directives.

Given the number of grotesque and fantastic elements present in the configuration of “The Last Commander,” it may seem a fairly straightforward exercise in literary analysis (some of which has already been done here) to assess in which direction Yehoshua does not want the state of Israel to go. And yet, Yehoshua’s preoccupation with the shadow side of Israeli life having taken on an ideological narrative involves much more, psychologically speaking, than establishing a link between his personal vision of pathological phenomena and the literary tradition of depicting evil tropes in the form of supernatural beings. In the paragraphs below, I offer a final, albeit brief, summary and explanation of Yehoshua’s use of the archetypal figures in the story in question (especially concerning the shadow), as well as several suppositions regarding the ways in which their usage fits into the author’s particular worldview. In doing so, I
treat Yehoshua’s story (which, as mentioned, is narrated in the very “collective” first-person plural) as what is referred to by Jung as a “big dream” (Two Essays 179)—a symbolic warning, made up of images from the collective unconscious, that is given to the community by one of its esteemed members.

“The Last Commander” questions the notion that a secular society of once-persecuted individuals can rid itself completely of the propensity to deify, to engage in hero worship, or to create oppressive hierarchies. Yehoshua carries out this questioning by subverting one of the foundations of the Zionist ethos, according to which the citizen’s army of the Israel Defense Forces is the key redemptive force for Israeli society; in particular, he exposes the levels at which senior commanders are allowed to function with almost divine impunity. In the text, the company commander is represented as the crux of social order, in his re-envisioned form of the Creator-God of the Hebrew Scriptures; he also controls life and death according to his version of “the law” in an inegalitarian, wrathful, and fire-and-brimstone manner reminiscent of the God of Moses. His deputy, the phantom commander Yagnon, is an avatar of the Gnostic demiurge Ialdabaoth, whose behavior is antithetical to that of his superior: he “undoes” the creation of the social order (much as the original Ialdabaoth does in the Gnostic writings, with his proclamation of an alternate version of the Genesis story) by leading the reservists into a metaphoric death via sleep. His tendency to succumb to exhaustion is representative of the younger, war-ravaged Israeli public’s desire to cut itself off from current political reality—an option equally as dangerous as running full-speed into the arms of militarism. But which direction will they choose? The locus where this question remains unanswered, textually, is the desert, a frequent meeting ground between the individual and the shadow. The
trope of the desert also functions as a link in the archetypal chain of religious Judaic lore, since, in Yehoshua’s estimation, “ha’am ḥozer kol hazman umevakesh limtzo et eizor hahefker hazeh leorekh kol toldotav, bimeuḥad kaasher hu mevakesh eizo teshuvah o hithadshut ruhanit” (Bizkhut hanormaliyut 32; “throughout its history the nation always searches for this no-man’s land, especially when it seeks an answer or spiritual renewal”; Between Right and Right 28).

What we may infer from Yehoshua’s sub-cultural depictions of the shadow archetype (both personal and collective) is that Zionist society, while a worthy enterprise in the context of healthy Jewish self-determination, is rife with instances of citizens who have internalized shadow contents. Both the company commander and Yagnon are examples of this: the former, whose mania has been caused by his ego splitting off from a legitimate endeavor (i.e., protecting the country) embodies a Zionism epitomized by brute force, which Yehoshua portrays as just as dangerous as any war. On the other hand, the lack of responsibility represented by Yagnon is also presented as a great harm to Israeli society, since individuals who must function in the context of a shared endeavor cannot afford to disengage to such an extent. And, since army service in Israel is the collective rite of passage where the personal and group dynamics come together, the setting of the story provides the perfect space where the casting of the shadow in a military context may be seen, in Efthimiadis-Keith’s terms, as a “warning that the internal enemy is far more dangerous to the covenant community’s identity than the external one” (“The Dream” 167). The aforementioned reference to the danger of the “internal enemy” is also reminiscent of Yehoshua’s allegorical warning to the Israeli populace in “Early in the Summer of 1970,” inasmuch as his suspicion of empty rhetoric and the internalization of
the justifications of sacrifice are concerned. Here, however, his presentation of shadow figures offers to the Israeli reader the chance to undergo what Ramras-Rauch notes is a *heshbon nefesh*: a “spiritual self-assessment” with respect to the acts committed in Israel’s short history as a sovereign nation (“Re-Emergence” 134).

4. The Anima Archetype

In the discussions of the last two stories, we have seen the ways in which the environmental elements from the reality of Yehoshua’s Israeli subculture form the thematic backdrop for his subversion of traditional Judaic figures, motifs, and narratives. Via the interplay between these realistic and symbolic points of reference, Yehoshua also manages to communicate his particular vision of the roles played by senex and shadow phenomena in modern-day Israel. However, both in “Early in the Summer of 1970” and “The Last Commander,” the ultimate understanding of such roles only takes place outside of the boundaries of each text, since this understanding is either facilitated by intertextual pastiche, or inferred by the reader over the course of the unfolding of the plot.

In other words, neither text provides an opposing archetype within the structure of the narrative to counter the prescribed or standard principles of order (senex) or the openly destructive or malefic actions (shadow) as embodied by the avatars of figures from the Judaic textual tradition. The only character to come close to doing so is the son in “Early in the Summer of 1970,” although the precise details of his “prophecy” for the future of Israel, which we are led to believe are in stark contrast to the worldview espoused by his father, are only hinted at through the title of his work in progress (“Prophecy and Politics”) and by the eventual realization that he has been recast in the
role of the Biblical Isaac. This is in addition to the fact that he barely speaks, appears only twice in the entirety of the narrative, and maintains a perspective which is almost completely unexplained in the text itself, since the tale is told from the standpoint of the father alone. That said, the importance of his presence in the story cannot be minimized, for it is he who allows the re-envisioning of the Binding of Isaac to take place. Despite this act, he never truly makes himself known to us as a character of full status. Cognitively speaking, his perceived recognition of the father’s pathology plays itself out for the reader much like the reservists’ perceived recognition of the dangers posed by Yagnon and the company commander: their recognition begins, functions as a catalyst for the recognition of the reader, and then disappears.

Much of Yehoshua’s early fiction issues the same genre of entreaty to the reader, in that it predicates the ultimate resolution of the conflict within the text upon the reader’s ability to discern what has really happened up until that point. Given his fondness for highly politicized thematic content, it appears unlikely that the seemingly unresolved plot sequences in these early stories are nothing more than a by-product of Yehoshua’s then-predilection for uncanny or metarealistic narrative structures. Nor, however, does it seem likely that the sole purpose of such elusive textual subsidence is an unvarying drive toward reader-response, although the role of the reader in many of his stories, such as the two examined here, is of paramount importance. (Needless to say, this study is not the place to look at the frequency of narrative resolution in his entire oeuvre.)

Whatever the case may be, I would posit that not until Yehoshua’s first attempts at novelistic composition does a “reflective partner . . . who provides the moment of reflection in the midst of what is naturally given” (Hillman, *Anima* 23) appear as a central
This “personification of interiority and subjectivity” (Hillman, *Anima* 105), the anima, finally makes its entrance in the first two of Yehoshua’s novels: *Hameahev* (“The Lover”) (1977), and *Gerushim meuḥarim* (“A Late Divorce”) (1982), both of which are written in the style of narrative shifts, and from the varying perspectives of each of the major personalities involved. In these two novels, the archetype of the anima (in each case personified by a female character) takes on “the role of guide, or mediator” (Jung, *Man and His Symbols* 183) for one or more characters with whom it has a close rapport, in order to make conscious the existence of a psychosis present elsewhere in the text. Due to considerations of space, I will confine my analysis of the anima archetype here to its role in only one of the two above-mentioned novels: *A Late Divorce*. (A note: this choice is merely reflective of the fairly straight-forward plot of that novel; it does not imply that a similar examination of the anima in another of Yehoshua’s early novels would be less valid.)

As mentioned, the anima’s function is to “see through” any stale or circumspect rhetoric that may lead (or may already have led) to a dissolute reaction, which is its task to expose. (This triangular relationship, incidentally, forms the crux of the novel I examine in this section.) From that perspective, life in the social order of Zionism provides fertile ground for the work of the anima, since, in the words of Jacqueline Rose, Zionism is “a movement that . . . always knew it was propelling itself into an imaginary and perhaps unrealizable space” (16). The anima, in the sub-cultural context of Yehoshua’s work, is therefore present in order to bring this oft-forgotten reminder of Zionism’s fantastic dimensions to the surface, in tandem with other characteristic anima preoccupations, such as historicity, teleology, and cultural inheritance (Hillman, *Anima*
19). Correspondingly, Judaic thought assumes as feminine what Joel Covitz calls “the quality of receptive intelligence” (62), otherwise known as the principle of *binah* (“understanding”) — the second *sefira* (“enumeration”) on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life after *keter* (“crown”), which is meant to symbolize the intelligence of God.

While I do not intend to enter into clichés by proposing that all (or even most) of the female characters in Yehoshua’s literary works somehow possess a greater self-reflective ability or understanding of their own unconscious contents than their male counterparts do, I do find the following highly probable: in the context of the setting of Zionist nation-building in Yehoshua’s stories, manifestations of patriarchy (senex) and hierarchy (shadow) are, for obvious reasons, associated more with masculine situations than with feminine ones. As Albert Gelpi notes with respect to the collective nature of gender roles in developing societies: “The pioneer’s struggle against the wilderness can be seen . . . to enact the subjugation of the feminine principle, whose dark mysteries are essential to the realization of personal and social identify but, for that reason, threaten masculine prerogatives in a patriarchal ordering of individual and social life” (107). In other words, in the same way that anima consciousness is often repressed in its efforts to guide, to reflect on, or to mediate against the backdrop of the aforementioned “patriarchal ordering” (Gelpi 107) of collective movements, anima symbolism may also make its presence known in any occurrence relating to the “blockage of the processes [i.e., introspection, self-awareness] of psychic life” (Jacoby 87).

*A Late Divorce* chronicles the return to Israel of Yehuda Kaminka, a Russian-born Israeli who has been residing for years in the United States. Yehuda has come back to Israel for a short stay in order to obtain a divorce from his institutionalized wife, Naomi,
who had tried to murder him years earlier in their home by stabbing him with a kitchen
knife. Yehuda is in need of the divorce (which, in Israel, can only be granted through the
religious authorities) because his American girlfriend, Connie, is about to give birth to
their son. The novel’s sequence of events is played out over the course of nine days,
ending on the first day of Passover. The actions of each individual day are related, in
Faulkner-esque interior monologues, from the perspective of one particular member of,
or personage associated with, the Kaminka family.\textsuperscript{83} Naomi’s narration of events makes
up the chapter, “Leil haseder” (“The First Day of the Seder”), the major part of which
takes place in a mental institution (to which she has been confined since her attempted
murder of Yehuda) during the \textit{seder} (“ceremonial dinner”) held on the first night of the
Jewish festival of Passover.

Like the vast majority of Yehoshua’s other works of literature, \textit{A Late Divorce}
presents a family at the pinnacle of individual and group psychosis. The patriarch,
Yehuda, is described as a spineless, passive old man who has fled his adoptive homeland
as a result of an inability to face reality. His three children—Yael, Asa, and Tsvi—each
demonstrate the problematic psychic and genetic inheritance bequeathed to them by their
parents. Yael is trapped in a marriage to Kedmi, a crude, dishonest lawyer, and has a
young son whose combination of obesity and hypertension causes him to have a heart
attack at the tender age of seven. Asa is a lecturer in Russian history with a penchant for
self-inflicted wounds, and has recently been wed to a young woman who is unwilling to
consummate their marriage. Tsvi is a manipulative, degenerate homosexual who

\textsuperscript{83} See Ashkenasy’s “Yehoshua’s ‘Sound and Fury’” for an analysis of Faulkner’s narrative influence in \textit{A Late Divorce}. 
encourages the institutionalized Naomi to force Yehuda to give up the entirety of their Tel-Aviv apartment (in which Tsvi is currently living) as a precondition for signing the divorce papers. Oddly enough, Naomi gives the impression of being the sanest character in the entire novel, in spite of what are portrayed as her periodic schizophrenic episodes—and herein lies the irony of the tale. The character whom Yehoshua uses (Naomi) as the vehicle by which the pathology of the progenitor of the dysfunctional clan (Yehuda) is eventually exposed is the only character to have been officially censored by the Israeli state, whose “clan” (its citizens) are also ill. Her punishment for attempting to murder her husband (the symbolic significance of which is explained below) is to have her agency repressed—a classic instance of what has already been cited as the “patriarchal ordering” (Gelpi 107), keeping the contents of the collective unconscious under wraps via the subjection of the anima.

If the collective Israeli unconscious in this novel is presented as something that has been hidden away with Naomi in the mental hospital, then collective Jewish memory (in its most ritualistic sense) is presented, paradoxically, as the medium through which the understanding of precisely what it is that Naomi has internalized makes itself known. To put it another way: history and convention dictate to these modern, ostensibly secular Israelis in the novel the settings in which introspection may occur. This happens by way of a twin remembrance of particular events: first, through the irreverent, often bawdy depiction of the characters’ group commemoration of the religious holiday of Passover, which celebrates the Jews’ liberation from slavery in Egypt; and second, through the realization that the coming of Passover marks the anniversary of the same time, years
earlier, that Naomi had tried to kill Yehuda (in another, more sardonic representation of the attempt of provoking introspection).

Naomi’s interior monologue, which is the penultimate in the novel (Yehuda’s monologue, which constitutes the climax of the novel, is the last), takes place after the formal divorce proceedings with Yehuda have already been finalized, the day before he is scheduled to go back to the United States. It is in this section that the reader is at last able to gain an understanding of the woman who has been presented all throughout the novel as a frenzied, knife-wielding lunatic, since she finally offers here a first-person perspective on the goings-on of the previous week, from the viewpoint of the most-discussed character in the novel (who has heretofore remained silent).

The initial impression she gives is somewhat ambiguous: during Tsvi’s visit to the mental hospital, Naomi is keenly aware of Tsvi’s over-the-top flattery toward her, and of the self-serving motives for which he has come to see her. She also reveals, in a frenetic tirade, the existence of her alter-ego, a figure whom Naomi initially describes only as “She.” This She represents the shadow side of Israeli life, through her associations with religion and militarism. The reader becomes aware of She during Naomi’s recollection of the seder, years ago, during which she had tried to kill Yehuda. Naomi asks herself: “Haim hayiti ito baleil haseder az o rak hi yashvah sham e’rah umitlahevet?” (Gerushim meuharim 264; “Was I really with him that seder or only with her, so alert and enjoying herself?”; A Late Divorce 271). At this precise moment of recollection, She appears to Naomi again:

Veani noset ‘eiynai el heharim baor harakh shel hashamesh hanifredet vesham bamerḥak nekudah za‘ah, pitom kafati, hi noddedet bim’il-ruḥaḥ tsvai, yadeiyah bekhiseiyah, kalah, i efshar lada’at im hi mitkarevet o mitralḥeket, ufitom keiev
hatsalekat motzetz oti, haratson lehiṭḥaber aleiyah shuv kmo el tarmil kaved, hasimḥah shel hatosefet hapirīṭ beiyin tnufat hasakin uvarak haor . . . (264).

[And I lifted my eyes to the mountains and saw in the soft light of the setting sun a distant dot that made me freeze. It was She, on the trail in an army windbreaker, her hands in her pockets, traveling light. I couldn’t tell if she was moving toward me or away. And then suddenly I felt the odd throbbing, the urge to have her be part of me again like a heavy backpack, the joy of her wild otherness between knife thrust and light flesh . . . (271).]

The exact nature of She is not known to the reader until later on in the monologue, when this mysterious entity is finally explained beyond her pronominal representation. At this point in the text, She appears off and on during Tsvi’s visit, and in the course of the Passover ceremony. She also is present in the text by way of Naomi’s memories of the recent divorce proceedings, and of the seder during which she almost killed Yehuda.

Naomi’s recollection of her husband’s near-death begins with the episode that set off the ill-fated confrontation: Naomi’s arrest for shoplifting. Naomi recalls how, after being brought home by the police, she attempted to explain to Yehuda what had happened: “Uvkhen yesh kan ahšḥav tosefet, nifrāṭs hagvul, yesh etsli ishah shlemah, shtei nashim leḥah, aval al tefahed atah tukhal itah, lekh im zeh, al titnaged eleiyah . . . baah mehamidbar” (279; “There’s someone else here now. It’s hard to draw the line but there’s another in me, perhaps a whole extra person. You have two wives now. But don’t be afraid. You can cope with her. Just go along with her, don’t panic and try to fight her . . . she comes from the desert”; 290). Yehuda, who was scandalized by Naomi’s insistence that she remained powerless in the face of such destructive urges, accuses her of faking her recently-discovered kleptomania. Naomi admits to stabbing Yehuda after his outburst. However, she maintains that she did not want to kill him; all that she wanted, as she says in direct address (as though talking to Yehuda), was “leḥatsot . . . leshaḥrer”
(281; “to cut you loose . . . to free you”; 292). She intimates that if Yehuda had not resisted, he would have been freed “lelo keiev, besimḥah, uvasakin lo hayah tsorekh afilu lehabit” (281; “painlessly, joyously. We could have done without the knife”; 292), a comment that foreshadows the eventual subversion of the myth of the Binding of Isaac carried out later on in the story.

Toward the end of Naomi’s monologue (which briefly becomes a dialogue, if we consider her alter-ego to be a separate character), Naomi begins hallucinating about an argument with She, who threatens Naomi by referring to an impending accident involving the immediate family of Naomi’s daughter, Yael. No longer present are the patience and compliance that set apart Naomi’s earlier interaction with her double:

Ason yikreh lahem
Hi bekhol makom
Aḥshav sheket
Ki yesh li maḥshevah at kvar yoda‘at. Elohimah.
Lo . . . lo zeh . . .
Tipshut noraah (284).

[— They’ll have a terrible accident.
— She everywhere.
— Shut up.
— Because you know what I’ve been thinking. Godina. Queen of the Universe.
— No. Anything but that.
— Godina. It’s so simple. So perfect.
— It’s insane (296).]

The above transformation of the indistinctly pronominal “She” into “Elohimah” (a feminine variation on one of the Hebrew words for God, elohim), which the translator has rendered into English as “Godina,” is just as significant for the reader’s understanding of
the symbolic function of the anima (see below) as is Naomi’s equating the notion of insanity with the description of this very Godina. Indeed, the notion of insanity has been on everyone’s lips throughout the entirety of the novel, albeit in the context of describing Naomi’s institutionalization and her lapse into schizophrenic states. Here, however, Naomi is no longer forgiving or accepting of the “insane” effect that her double has on her, as she was during Godina’s initial appearance, around the time of Yehuda’s near-death. To clear up any doubt about what Naomi thinks of the apparent deification of her alter-ego into a feminized version of the Hebrew God, she yells, “Metorefet harei eyn Elohimah” (285; “You’re crazy. There is no Godina”; 284). Nonetheless, Naomi does finally concede, after swearing to kill off her second self, that Godina is probably right in supposing that, “hakol bifnim” (285; “it’s all inside you”; 284). Naomi’s hallucination ends with her entreaty to the persona within her screaming, “Maspik. Lo shoma’at klum. Mevatelet et hakol. Tahzeri lamidbar. Muti!” (285; “That’s enough. I’m not listening. I’m through with you. Go back to the desert. Die!”; 297).

In the above-cited lines between Naomi and Godina, Yehoshua once again invokes the archetypal beginnings of the Jewish people by bringing into play the symbolic “wilderness function” of the trope of the desert, which also serves as the dwelling ground for a kind of primeval consciousness. What is different in this case is that, unlike in “Early in the Summer of 1970” or in “The Last Commander,” the topos of the wilderness represents the lieu where the pathos came into being (as opposed to where it ultimately manifests itself)—hence Naomi’s call for Godina to return from whence she came. Morahg correctly notes that Naomi’s command to Godina to return to the desert signifies Naomi’s accurate identification of her double as “a primitive accretion that has
emerged from the primal wilderness of her origins, broken through, and [who] now must be contended with” (“Facing” 324). The “origins” of the “accretion” in the wilderness that Morahg refers to are none other than the original Biblical sites associated with the giving of the Law in the desert (“Facing” 324)—and of the making of a nation based on territorial promise and covenantal obedience. These last two notions, while religious in nature, made up the textual, historical, and symbolic foundation of the secular framework of political Zionism’s imperative for the establishment of a Jewish state on the site of the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah. And this is the key to understanding Naomi’s “insanity,” as well as her anima function: Naomi’s recognition of Godina as the product of a psychic build-up of “the natural realities of the land, and the unnatural imperatives of an atavistic faith” (“Facing” 324), hailing from the site where the Jewish religion was created, make her the mediatrix between the cultural inheritance of a religious system that political Zionism rejected (and yet is imbued in its very fiber) and the communal, allegedly secular, civilian life in modern-day Israel. The appearance of She as the cataleptic danger brewing below the surface of Naomi’s consciousness (which everyone else in the book understands to be an individualized mental illness) is therefore indicative of the shadow contents of the family, and indeed of the society, as a whole.

In other words, Naomi’s role as the “reflective partner” in the text (as conceived by the atheistic Yehoshua) is to expose the shadow contents of the inherent contradictions in the political entity of Israel as manifested by her alter-ego, She. That is to say: Naomi’s anima position must be to act as a hermeneutic mystagogue for the other characters in the text (not to mention for the Israeli reader), using her “acute sensitivity, larger than life vision, and near demonic mental powers” (Aschkenasy, “Women” 127) in order to
elucidate the mixed messages (e.g., how literally to interpret history or tradition) that stem, on the one hand, from the religious Jewish legacy, and on the other, from the dangers of Zionist nationalism (whether religious or not), which may legitimize dubious moral undertakings through that very legacy. As Aschkenasy demonstrates, the symbolic result of Naomi’s function, textually speaking, is in the formation of her alter ego, the effect of which “estrang[e]s the woman from her environment but make[s] her the truthful mirror of our existential fears and social maladies” (“Women” 127). It is therefore beside the point if Naomi is in fact insane or not. A more interesting question, first articulated by Joseph Cohen (which I interpret rhetorically), is whether there is any difference between the visitors to Naomi’s personal environment (the mental hospital) and those who dwell there permanently (60).

Again, the author’s choice to have Naomi embody this function does not necessarily depend upon her status as a female. However, the fact that Naomi is a woman does make it more symbolically poignant for Yehoshua to use her as a “vessel” in which to place the text’s anima consciousness, if for no other reason than the following: since Naomi has already been portrayed throughout the novel as being intrinsically tied to the land, the pathological split that occurs within her (i.e., between the archaic Judaic heritage and its modern, secular-citizen incarnation) represents the literal and realistic possibilities of the feminine principal acting as an agent of introspection within the confines of a patriarchal structure. It is therefore logical that Naomi is not fully able to realize her function; and this has nothing to do with any form of purposeful misogyny on Yehoshua’s part. The compromised position from which Naomi spells out her criticisms of the existing structure is common to all who dissent from the norm in such a situation.
The fact that she “exists referentially” (Fuchs, “Sleepy Wife” 78), as a reflective (and unfortunate) environmental detail, does not change her role as the facilitator of psychic consciousness for the other characters in the text. And, precisely because Naomi is archetypally associated with the land of Israel, this somehow endows her with more legitimacy to challenge the Zionist ethos, and to therefore bring to the surface whatever might be brewing in the collective unconscious, as an individual who has embodied, through her experience and in her physical being, the land of Israel.

How is Naomi represented as part of the land? The most obvious way that Yehoshua ties Naomi to Israel in more of an intrinsic manner than he does the other main character (that of her husband, Yehuda) is by making Naomi the one who is native-born. In doing so, Yehoshua “gynomorphize[s] the land,” following in the footsteps of Zola, Lorca, Faulkner, and (as Fuchs points out), the compositors of the Hebrew Bible (Israeli Mythogenies 23). (Fuchs also notes that in Modern Hebrew, all of the words for denoting the realm of the nation, such as erets [“country”], adamah [“land”], medinah [“state”], or moledet [“motherland”] are feminine [23].) It may be said, then, that Yehoshua’s tendency to insinuate, linguistically or otherwise, that there is an innate connection between the land and the novel’s main female character is hardly revolutionary. As Aschkenasy observes, Yehoshua’s fictional world, like those of a great many of his literary predecessors, contains “female characters [whose] personal predicaments [are] symbolical representations of the problems that plague the society and the culture at large” (“Sound and Fury” 102).

Conversely, the Russian-born Yehuda, whom we know has never quite felt at home in Israel, only becomes part of the state as an act of volition; he does not have
“roots” in the country as does Naomi. Unlike her, Yehuda is described over and over in
the text as being an outsider. For example, he does not appreciate the crass and overly
forward manner in which Israelis tend to their (or anyone else’s) business; he is said to
have gone to great lengths to teach his wife Russian, so as to be able to converse with her
in his native tongue; and we know from his frequent musings that he has, for the most
part, looked at the political situation in Israel from a detached, defeatist perspective, even
before his voluntary exile to North America. In contrast, his perception of his own ties to
Israel continually vacillates, albeit unconsciously, between the images of his wife and the
country itself. The Israeli reader is more aware of this than the English-speaking one,
since the pronoun hi in Hebrew can mean either “she” or “it.” In the following outburst,
for instance, Yehoshua presents a purposefully ambiguous, pronominal target for
Yehuda’s rage at giving up the entirety of his apartment in Tel-Aviv, his only remaining
physical possession in Israel: “Bas of hi silkah oti mipo, hi hitsliḥah likr’o oti mipo, hi
ma’anishah oti ‘al shelo hishtag’ati gam ani, shelo hiskamti laredet latehom itah, hi
ḥoshevet shebiglal shepa’am ḥashavnu otan maḥshavot ani ḥayav beneemanut ‘ad eiyn
kets” (251; “So she’s finally driven me away. At last she’s managed to uproot me. I’m
being punished by her for not being crazy, too, for not having gone over the brink with
her. She thinks that because we once thought the same way I owe her eternal fealty”; 259).

As a personification of the modern land of Israel—that is, Israel post-1967—
Naomi’s character must also personify Israel’s contradictions. As mentioned in Chapter
2, not until the messianic fervor of post-1967 Israel did a significant number of political
Zionist thinkers begin to reassess their founding fathers’ overwhelming view of regarding
Jewish religious practice as a necessary relic for the process of nation-building, rather than a laudable mechanism with which to solidify the appeal of nationalism. Yehoshua addresses this post-1967 predicament in an essay in *Bizkhut hanormaliyut* ("Between Right and Right"):


[There is a permanent tension between the national and religious systems, stemming from the constant contradiction between their goals. Here is a normal system functioning in accord with the basic needs of national existence within a specified territory, and here is a spiritual system setting spiritual goals for the people and trying to make existence subject to religious-spiritual demands. These are two different codes (46).]

As seen above, the most dangerous contradiction (according to Yehoshua) in current Israeli discourse is the logical incompatibility between religion and nationalism, especially when one is used to legitimize the other. (The literal translation of the original collection’s title, *Bizkhut hanormaliyut* ("In Defense of Normalcy"), comes closer than the non-literal English title of *Between Right and Right* in its expression of Yehoshua’s idea of how “normal” national codes should look like in the Zionist context.) This incompatibility is represented in *A Late Divorce* by way of the confused interaction between Naomi and her alter-ego, each of which symbolizes the directions in which the inhabitants of Israel are being pulled: either toward conscious recognition of their reality, or toward out-of-control, denial-based delirium. Naomi’s mental state may therefore be seen as the microcosm of the danger of having such mutually exclusive codes exist side by side; it also functions as a warning to those around her of the potentially disastrous
consequences of not confronting their national problems in a head-on, lucid fashion. In Yehoshua’s opinion, the first of the two systems, the national one, is basically a healthy system, provided it does not succumb to fundamentalist leanings—which, in Israel’s case, often stem from the second system, of which Yehoshua is wary as a part of the official political discourse. Therefore, religion as a governing code is, in Yehoshua’s worldview, a “shadow” in the most profound sense of the term. Given this previously-expressed prejudice, it is no surprise that Naomi’s first target, in her role as the instigator of anima consciousness in *A Late Divorce*, is the place of religion in modern-day Israel.

The first scene in which Naomi makes known her feelings regarding religion takes place during the divorce proceedings, when one of the rabbis present remarks that divorce is an offense in the eyes of God (270; 279). Naomi reels at the mention of the divine: “Lo mukhanah lishmo’a yoter . . . afilu lo et hamilah . . . lo et hamilah hareiykah . . . bevakashah, adoni, bishvili Elohim pahot miefes” (271; “I don’t want to hear another word about it. Not another meaningless word. Please understand that God means less than nothing to me”; 279). Similarly, during the Passover seder held at the mental hospital, the religious elements of the ceremony are presented as farcical: the rabbis leading the service include two buffoonish, overzealous new immigrants to Israel, a Russian and an American, neither of whom is able to speak proper formal Hebrew. When Naomi makes a scene, the attending physician, Dr. Ne’eman, urges her to stay calm: “Harei zeh rak tekes, ‘od me’at gam ani lo maamin bezeh, aval lo kedaiy gam demorilizatsiyah” (278; “It’s only a ceremony, you know. Just a bit more. I don’t believe in it either, but why demoralize people?”; 289). It is at this point that Naomi identifies the manifestation of She as corresponding directly with religion, when Naomi bursts out,
incredulously: “Eiykh lo hivḥanti zot hi! Hi hithapsah lerav!” (283; “How didn’t I notice before that it’s her. It’s her disguised as a rabbi!”; 294).

Yehoshua also presents Naomi’s emphatic and much-vocalized distaste for religion (which, through her anima function, makes itself known to the other characters in the story) as the antithesis of the naive, somewhat unassuming view of religion’s role in the state system as held by her husband, Yehuda. For instance, at the beginning of Yehuda’s interior monologue, while describing how he has returned to the mental hospital in order to take back the rights to half of his apartment (earlier bequeathed in full to Naomi as part of the divorce agreement), he encounters a resident of the asylum who asks him repeatedly whether the institution is religious. Yehuda’s answer betrays a fundamental lack of understanding regarding the position of religion within the Israeli state: “Lo . . . eiyn kol sibah . . . zeh halo shel hamemshalah, shel misrad habriyut” (332; “No. There’s no reason to think . . . it’s a government hospital, after all, it’s run by the department of health”; 350). Earlier, during a chance encounter with a group of Sabbath worshipers in his grandson’s school (another symbolic intrusion of religion into the affairs of the state), Yehuda had noted that the worshipers did not dress in traditional religious garb (297; 312). His underestimation of the growing religious fundamentalism in post-1967 Israel is also evidenced in a prior comment to his daughter-in-law, in which he mentions that in the United States, he had started attending synagogue because of an ethnographic interest. The glaring dissimilarity between these two forms of observance—namely, that religious Jewish custom in America does not govern national policy, as has come to be the case in Israel—is lost on Yehuda, who notes nonchalantly that the Gentile choir of the synagogue that he attends in America is excellent (104; 102).
The fundamentalist nationalism alluded to above is the other form of shadow that Naomi’s character seeks to bring out into the light. To that end, there are several important references to underscore regarding the thorny facets of introducing religion into the rhetoric of the state. The first occurs when Yehuda and his grandson Gaddi are walking through the latter’s school on the same Sabbath, before having stumbled upon the group of religious worshippers. Looking at the decorations on the school walls, Yehuda notices that something has changed, for there are now “sismaot ufsukim, mapot shel erets-yisrael belo simunei gvulot. Moledet ‘adayin mit’akeshet lihiyot moledet” (298; “slogans and verses from the Bible, maps of a post-1967 Israel. A homeland still struggling to be a homeland”; 310). The irony in Yehuda’s observation of this new, messianic nationalism is that its consequences have already been predicted by his son Asa, the lecturer in Russian history. The son informs his father that a catastrophe is coming; when the father asks him which one, he says, “Hamakah shetavo . . . hamakah hahekhraḥit” (319; “The coming one . . . the one that can’t be helped”; 335). At this point, the reader realizes that the catastrophe in question possesses a parallel with Asa’s earlier attempts at formulating a theory about historical chaos (133; 145), using the example of Rhodesia.

We should note here that the rundown given by Asa (below) of the Rhodesian form of nationalism reflects what Yehoshua believes to be the Israeli analog, practiced by some schools of political Zionism, concerning the introduction of religious discourse into the realm of political policy. Asa sums up the “sacred” Rhodesian state philosophy by insisting that the white colonialists symbolically turned agricultural lands into holy ground (133; 145). The references here to obstinacy, farming innovations, and the
sacralization of territory for political means all point to Yehoshua’s oft-expressed opinion that Israel, like Rhodesia, may very well turn into an imperialist and thoroughly racist state if religion and nationalism continue to walk the same path.

The allusions to colonialism and to the racist platforms of the former British protectorate of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) also serve to foreshadow, in tandem with Naomi’s current physical location at the mental hospital (itself a former colonial British army base) near Acre (a predominantly Arab town) another problematic consequence of religiously-inspired Zionist nationalism: the place of the non-Jewish citizen (in this case, the Arab) in Israeli life. As before, Naomi’s anima function is what brings this issue to the forefront of consciousness, despite the fact that this is accomplished, once again, only referentially in regards to her tangible involvement in the matter.

Near the novel’s end, when Yehuda returns to the asylum to take back his rights to the Tel-Aviv apartment, he is overcome by the desire to put on one of his wife’s dresses, which he finds lying on the bed in her room. After sneaking outside with the dress on, he encounters Musa, another patient at the asylum, standing with a pitchfork in hand. Yehuda describes him as “haish hamegudal vehashaket hazeh” (336; “the giant mute colossus of a man”; 354) whom he has heard the other patients call by the name of “Musah aval hu yehudi, zeh batuah” (336; “Musa I think that must be it but I’m sure that he’s a Jew”; 354). When Musa realizes that it is not Naomi, but Yehuda in the dress, he flies into what the latter calls a “kaas kadmon” (336; “Neanderthal rage”; 354), following which Yehuda asks Musa, “Nu, mah itḥah? Gam oṭḥah ikhzavti?” (336; “Well, what’s on your mind? Have I disappointed you too?”; 354). Yehuda receives no response, other than a growl (336; 354). Before Musa delivers the blow to Yehuda that will eventually
kill him, Yehuda muses, “Ha’ikar lo lefaḥed lo laga‘at bahem kmo klavim, hapahad me‘orer ḥeimah” (336; “The main thing’s not to panic not to touch them they’re like dogs fear only makes it worse”; 354).

The peculiar ending of *A Late Divorce* has been the subject of many an interpretation, since the cross-dressing scene which leads to Yehuda’s death seems to come out of nowhere. Indeed, in Horn’s treatment of the novel, he accurately points out that many of Yehoshua’s readers see Yehuda’s conduct at the end as “insufficiently motivated, hence enigmatic” (*Facing the Fires* 60). I disagree with Morahg’s take on the symbolic meaning of the brief transvestitism at the book’s end, according to which a kind of “diaspora inclination” counterpart to Naomi’s She (which Morahg bases on a questionable assumption that many of the instances in the last monologue of the Hebrew pronoun *hu*, which can mean either “he” or “it” depending on the context, refer to a separate entity, “He”) finally gives way to Yehuda’s desire to become one with Naomi through his adoption of her feminine image (“From Madness” 55; “A. B. Yehoshua” 132). This supposition seems implausible to me, since there is no mention of a masculine counterpart to Naomi’s “She” anywhere else in the novel. Furthermore, because Yehuda remains unconscious of the allegorical function of his wife’s madness until the bitter end, the suggestion that his cross-dressing is predicated upon a desire to “merge” with her, while simultaneously fleeing from that which she represents, seems to me to be far too incongruous a textual contradiction for Yehoshua to execute. (In any case, in this instance it is the reader, and not the character, who is supposed to become aware of the extraliterary significance of the anima consciousness in the text.) I also think that Aschkenasy’s supposition of the struggle of Yehuda’s cerebral vs. natural “duality”
misses the mark regarding the representative significance of this last scene, since nowhere else in the book’s many narratives (neither in Yehuda’s own monologue, nor in the descriptions of him in the other characters’ monologues) does such a duality appear (“Women” 127). Instead, I propose that the importance of this section has to do more with Naomi’s anima function in the novel than with any direct action committed by Yehuda himself. Specifically, I argue that Naomi’s presence in this last scene, while admittedly referential, acts as the catalyst for internalizing another consequence of one of the many precarious discourses of fundamentalist Zionism: the denial of the existence of the Arab minority in Israel.

Just as the shadow contents of messianic nationalism are manifested in Naomi’s alter-ego, the killing of Yehuda (whose name in Hebrew shares the same root with the word yehudi, “Jew”) by a mute Arab reflects the problematic inclination of Israelis to ignore, whether out of religious ideology or simple ethnocentrism, the discriminatory nature of Israel’s nationalist policies against its Arab citizens. Yehuda unconsciously articulates such discrimination by referring to Musa in sub-human terms, first as a “kadmon” (336; “Neanderthal”; 354), and eventually as being akin to “klavim” (336; “dogs”; 354). In spite of Yehuda’s earlier insistence that Musa is a Jew, he only recognizes that he is an Arab at the moment before he is killed. This delayed recognition of an integral part of the Israeli landscape, which was previously not mentioned at all in the book, is therefore accomplished only when the knife (or in this case, the pitchfork) is already “hovering overhead.” As an allegorical punishment for his delayed reaction, Yehuda meets his maker. Naomi, on the other hand, will presumably continue to exist alongside Musa, who is also the marginalized victim of a society who cannot hear his
voice. Locked away in the mental hospital, both of their voices (that is, their portents) have no chance of reaching the larger public. They will thus have an alliance based on common denominators of circumstance and locale, rather than on racial or tribal lines—an instance of anima consciousness inadvertently leading toward the non-ideology of so-called “Sephardic Zionism,” which has long been closely associated with Yehoshua’s worldview.⁸⁴

Although Yehoshua’s inversion of traditional Judaic symbolism in this story is less precise and systematic (as mentioned before, in concordance with the changing iconic nature of his later fiction) than in the other two stories analyzed in this chapter, it still stands out as one of *A Late Divorce*’s dominant thematic highlights. In particular, it is essential to recall that the frequent recasting of intertextual and meta-narrative devices carried out by Yehoshua in this novel coincides with Naomi’s role as the instigator of self-referential behavior, or of the internalization of contents previously unarticulated in the conscious state. There are four main recastings worth mentioning, although, in my view, the last is the most crucial, both in its archetypal and allegorical configuration. It is also the one to which I devote the most attention. These four recastings are: the repeated usage of high-register, explicitly Biblical phrases, interwoven in the text in a symbolically incongruous fashion with what would usually be referred to as “mundane” or “habitual” language; the transformation of the masculine God from the Hebrew Scriptures into a psychotic, feminine double; ridiculing the relevance of the “metastory”

⁸⁴ For a history of “Sephardic Zionism,” see Bezalel; for Yehoshua’s (extra-) literary connections to this movement, see Band; and see Yehoshua, “Closure” 395, 398.
of Passover; and the overturning of the commonly associated symbolic content of the myth of the Binding of Isaac.

An example of how Yehoshua subverts the symbolic associations carried by the use of Biblical language can be seen in the first direct appearance in the text of She, when Naomi remarks, “V’eni noset ‘eynai el heharim” (264; “And I lifted my eyes to the mountains”; 271). In the original Hebrew, the beginning sequence of this sentence contains a phrasing which closely resembles the language of Psalm 121.1, “Esah ‘eynai el heharim—meayin yavo ‘ezri?” (“I will lift up my eyes unto the mountains; from whence shall my help come?”). Aside from the first verb, which Yehoshua places in the present, rather than in an aspectually preterite (or durative) construction, Naomi’s silent rumination is a precise quotation from Psalm 121, including the absence of the usual direct object marker, “et.” This is an immediate indication to a Modern Hebrew speaker that the register being used is Biblical, even if the exact citation is not clearly recognized. The significance of this quotation from the Hebrew Bible is not solely literal, however, since the Shirei hama’alot (“Songs of Ascents”) in Psalms 120–134, to which the Psalm in question belongs, were sung by Jewish pilgrims on one of the three annual “ascents” to Jerusalem, as mandated in Deuteronomy 16.16. One of these pilgrimages is during Passover (as described in Exod. 12.23), which is also the time during which the action takes place in the story. However, what Naomi and her family (not to mention the reader) are “commanded to remember” during the Passover holiday in the novel is not the end of bondage in Egypt (as mandated in Exod. 13.13, Deut. 16.12, or Lev. 23.5), or the beginning of the Jewish nation in the desert; it is the commemoration of Yehuda’s near
murder by She, who makes her entry after Naomi’s language suddenly shift to the Biblical register.

The sarcasm in Naomi’s sudden usage of this Biblical lingo has a dual connotation. The first is related to the fact that Naomi does not complete the act of looking to God for help (since she has stated repeatedly her disdain for religion), as is found in the continuation of Psalm 121.1. The second sarcastic connotation stems from the realization that the divine figure who comes to her, in spite of her lack of entreaty, does not offer help—only grief. Moreover, this divine figure does not mirror the redemptive, protective, or worthy-of-worship masculine deity referred to in the Psalms; rather, the primitive force of “Elohima” (feminine solely because she represents the shadow side of Naomi’s representational ties to the land) only knows to sow destruction in her wake. This is why the primary descriptions of She, “bime’il-ruah tsvai” (264; “in an army windbreaker”; 271), or when she “hithapsah lerav” (283; “[was] disguised as a rabbi”; 294), epitomize, in the estimation of Yehoshua, the worst possible settings for the manifestations of shadow conduct in Israel: the religious establishment and the army. Naomi’s anima function is to expose the national psychoses surrounding these shadow contents.

As mentioned, the most important recasting in A Late Divorce has to do with Yehoshua’s use of the myth of the Binding of Isaac. Much as in “Early in the Summer of 1970,” Yehoshua provides in this novel several textual clues as to how his subversion of this metastory points to a larger allegorical meaning on the national level. Again, by using a familiar story that both shapes and informs Israelis’ perceptions of collective events, Yehoshua’s subversion of the theme of the Binding of Isaac carries with it, as
Alan Mintz remarks, an “obligation to objectively look at phenomena in national consciousness critically” (*Translating Israel* 179).

The main hint given by Yehoshua as to the intertextual basis of the would-be murder in *A Late Divorce* is quite simple: the image of the knife. The term used for Naomi’s attempted murder weapon throughout the book is the commonplace word *sakin* (“knife”), as opposed to the rare term (even in Biblical Hebrew, where its use is infrequent) *maakhelet* (“slaughtering knife,” or the object that literally “eats away”), the name given to the implement taken up by Abraham in Genesis 22.10. Also, the language employed by Naomi from Psalm 121.1 closely resembles that of the description of Abraham in Genesis 22.4, before he is instructed to sacrifice his son, when “veyisah et ‘eynav” (“he lifted up his eyes”) to the place shown to him by God. Another indication that Naomi’s near-killing of Yehuda mirrors the myth of the Binding of Isaac is Naomi’s insistence that she did not want to kill Yehuda; rather, she only wanted, as she tells him, “leḥatsot . . . leshaḥrer” (281; “to cut you loose . . . to free you”; 292), in an apparent reference to early midrashic versions of the story of Isaac, in which Abraham is instructed by God to “leshaḥrer” (“free”) Isaac from his bonds after Abraham’s will has been successfully tested.\(^{85}\) Naomi’s next comment, which represents the first time in the text that anyone establishes a direct, archetypal connection between the near-murder and the weapon used, is another clear signal of Naomi’s act of violence being tied to the earlier metastory: “Hayitah neḥtzeḥ lelo keiev, besimḥah, uvasakin lo hayah tzorekh afilu leḥabit” (281; “painlessly, joyously. We could have done without the knife”; 292).

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\(^{85}\) For more on these stories, see Van Bekkum 92.
Naomi’s desire to “un-bind” Yehuda has to do with what she sees as his inability to face reality, which is portrayed by Yehoshua as just as delinquent as Naomi’s pre-institutionalized vice of kleptomania. As mentioned earlier, Yehuda is described as someone who is always running away, who is hysterical, and whose constant tendency to turn to others for help in moments of crisis (such as his going to wake up his son Tsvi immediately after being stabbed by Naomi) is presented, pathologically speaking, as equally destructive as Naomi’s violence, because he does not take notice of his need for help until the knife is “hovering overhead.” The peak of Yehuda’s pathos finds its expression in his flight to America, which entails not only the abandonment of his personal responsibility (i.e., the abandonment of his Israeli children through his impregnation of an American woman), but also in the desertion of his adoptive homeland. This desertion is a symbolically-charged act, inasmuch as his comments regarding religion and post-1967 Israeli nationalism go against the collective paradigm. The fact that he has never fully understood the significance of this act is beside the point. Naomi’s allusions to these problematic traits of Yehuda’s (280–81; 291–92) function as the ostensible justification for her attacking him, inasmuch as she says that he “disappointed” her (271; 282) with his character flaws.

An alternate version of the sacrificial knife appears in the form of the pitchfork brandished by Musa, which eventually ends up taking Yehuda’s life. The parallel between Naomi and Musa, it must be noted, is not just evidenced in the pointed weapons they both use in their assaults upon Yehuda; it also appears in Yehuda’s unuttered query to the approaching Arab, “Gam othah hekhzavti?” (336; “Have I disappointed you, too?”; 354), which refers back to Naomi’s expressed motive for her desire to free him from his
bonds of pathos. The fact that an Arab (on whom Yehuda has already unconsciously placed the shadow projections of brutality and obstinacy) is the one actually to follow through on what was simply intended as a *warning* issued by Naomi (since Naomi did not want Godina to kill Yehuda [271; 282]) reflects the full extent to which the “ason” (284; “terrible accident”; 296) alluded to by Godina may happen to the entirety of the “family” of Israel, if certain unpleasant truths are not looked at critically and brought out into the open. This extended family is a reference to the collective entity of the state of Israel, its founding ethos and its future, and not just to the individual lives of the Kaminka clan.

In sum, the presence of the anima in *A Late Divorce* works as a “mediatrix of the unknown” for the other characters in the novel, in that it warns, in true archetypal fashion, of “an imminent takeover by the shadow” (Jung, *Two Essays* 167). In this case, the shadow appears in the text as the delusional alter-ego named She. The anima appears in the persona of Naomi, who facilitates the understanding of the shadow through her prophetic uncovering of it, in seemingly individual terms which are then to be extrapolated to the collective. Naomi’s encouragement to reexamine Zionist norms and values in her capacity as a reflective partner is not diminished in the least by the less-than-conscious aspects of her psyche, precisely because shadow contents are, by definition, those that remain unacknowledged in a waking state. In fact, her altered state may be seen, symbolically, as the unconscious foreground in which the reflection of the entire country’s unconscious (as implied by Yehoshua) becomes known. The fact that Naomi revisits this altered state in a recurring, archetypal manner, often using culturally
inherited points of reference to link the thematic portions of the novel, only serves to highlight the collective function of her agency as a mediatrix of the unknown.

4. Conclusion

I have demonstrated in this chapter how A. B. Yehoshua’s literary work is inextricably linked to the intertextual reservoir of Judaic culture by way of its dependence upon the stories, themes, motifs, and characters from the Judaic textual tradition. I have also shown the ways in which Yehoshua subverts these narrative patterns along the lines of emphatically Israeli concerns. The most common archetypal recasting in the stories explored herein is of the traditional Judaic myth of the Binding of Isaac. (Note: Yehoshua also subverts this metastory in other literary works, such as in “Facing the Forests,” “Three Days and a Child,” *The Lover, Mr. Mani*, etc.; its subversion in these works will be examined in a longer version of this study.)

In “Early in the Summer of 1970,” the elderly father’s urge to be part of the community of the bereaved causes him (in his own hallucination) to carry out the near-sacrifice of his only son for a national ideal, just like his Biblical counterpart. However, Yehoshua’s flippant portrayal of the old man as a “crank,” whose motivation for the sacrifice is presented as questionable, inverts the

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86 Various analyses of Yehoshua’s fiction, such as those of Wachtel; Fuchs “The Sleepy Wife”; Ramras-Rauch *The Arab in Israeli Literature*; Horn *Facing the Fires*, “The Shoah, the Akedah, and the Conversations”; and Katz have all identified the theme of the Binding of Isaac as a recurring allegorical tool in Yehoshua’s work. This study, however, is the first to examine the archetypal use of this theme in its sub-cultural Israeli context; it is also the first to discuss the presence of the story of the Binding of Isaac in *A Late Divorce*. 
common association held by Israeli Jews regarding the story of the Binding of Isaac. Similarly, in *A Late Divorce*, Yehoshua presents the Abrahamic sacrifier-figure as an institutionalized woman, possessed by the feminized version of the primitive desert essence of the God of the Hebrew Scriptures, whose motivation for the act lies in her desire to expose the dangers inherent in the precarious mix of nationalism and religion—precisely the same combination for which the original Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son. In both of these stories, the avatar of the Isaac-based character does not sit idly by while the knife is coming down on him; rather, each seeks his own way out of the situation via an assortment of methods, which demonstrate the varied behavioral predilections of Israelis seeking refuge from the “necessity of sacrifice.”

In “The Last Commander,” Yehoshua also subverts the commonly-held associations regarding the act of creation, the giving of the Law in the desert, and the fate of the “generation of the desert,” employing a number of symbolically-inverted characters and tropes from Biblical, Talmudic, Kabbalistic, and Modern Hebrew sources. His main preoccupation in this story is the insinuation of an unconscious, intertextual relation between the divine hierarchies in religious Judaic thought and the Zionist practice of deifying military leaders beyond the point of no return. The two options offered by each of the commanders—either the adherence to totalitarian authority or succumbing to the chaos brought on by psychic fatigue—are both presented as ludicrous, and so it is up to the reader to decide, perhaps by way of a middle ground, who the “last commander” in Israeli society will be. The Biblical and/or religious Judaic discourse employed in Yehoshua’s Israeli narratives, which contain subverted, distorted, and
undermined Judaic archetypes, simultaneously provides a totemically-charged connection with the Judaic textual tradition and evidence of a radical departure from it.

Whether or not one agrees with Yehoshua’s political views (or even has reservations about the aesthetic quality of his work), it is a fact that many in the academy view A. B. Yehoshua as a legitimate representative of secular Israeli opinion, and therefore view his work as a self-referential microcosm of Israeli culture. Some, like Alan Mintz (“Tradition and Renewal” 74), also view him as a link in the long-established tradition of the writer in the Jewish community acting as, in the words of Ezekiel, a tsofeh leveiyt yisrael—a “watchman unto the House of Israel” (Ezek. 3.17). From the extra-literary sources that I have quoted in this chapter, it is also clear, as Mintz has remarked, that Yehoshua himself sees his own function as a writer as akin to being a leader of the community (“Tradition and Renewal” 74). If that is the case, then Yehoshua is like all the prophets in the Bible—a prophet of pathology—who warns of potential disaster should his people choose to ignore the shadows in their midst.
Chapter 4: Chaim Potok: Fusing Tradition with Modernity

1. The Senex Archetype

Chaim Potok’s senex figures can be divided into two categories. Of these two, the rabbinical category is both the most frequent and the most well-known among critics and scholars. Potok situates many of his most prominent characters in this category, such as Reb Saunders from The Chosen (1967) or Rav Kalman from The Promise (1969). From a symbolic standpoint, Potok’s drawing on such an image (or on the images of similar figures of spiritual leaders and/or teachers of Jewish law) for the vessel in which his particular subculture’s senex consciousness will ultimately manifest itself seems entirely appropriate. Indeed, given that the image of the rabbi is the quintessential representative of Ashkenazi Judaic propriety, there is hardly another functional choice with respect to the roles of authority and the “giving of wisdom” in Eastern European Jewry. As David Shasha notes: “Ashkenazi Judaism was predicated upon the absolute authority of the rabbi . . . and gave to the rabbi a quasi-sacred role that provided him with a great deal of power which could be wielded in any manner that he saw fit” (47). In other words, the rabbi is almost always put into the role of the most visible bearer of senex consciousness in the “caste,” or ultra-orthodox (Ashkenazi) syndrome of Judaism into which Chaim Potok was born (and with which most of his fiction deals). Therefore, Potok’s literary depiction of the aforementioned subculture, in which the senex emerges as a figure of

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87 For further commentary on the historical context regarding the emergence of the rabbi as absolute authority in Chasidic circles see also Katz 205, 209, and 212, and Scholem, Major Trends 325–50.
utmost prominence, may be considered to be in conformity with his own sub-cultural environment.

That is not to say, however, that embodiments of the law-abiding principle in Potok’s works go wholly unchallenged. Although Potok had a genuine reverence for certain aspects of Chasidic tradition, his entire adult life (as a rabbi, scholar, and writer of fiction) was predicated upon his espousal of the movement of Conservative (American) Judaism, which seeks to bridge an authoritarian form of Jewish orthodoxy and the inherent heterodoxies of twentieth-century American life. From that perspective, the conflicts over tradition that many of Potok’s rabbinical senex characters are involved in almost always resolve themselves by presenting that form of the senex archetype in a positive light. The reader will note that this starkly contrasts the extent to which such characters are ridiculed in Yehoshua’s literary works, inasmuch as in Potok’s fiction, the senex characters are much more “functional,” in the psychological sense of the term. Indeed, their propriety is depicted as necessary, even laudatory in some cases, despite their initial inclinations toward reticence. Therefore, on one hand, the tendency in Potok’s fiction to look for the best in the older generation intimates that the reader should not be entirely critical of the initial curmudgeonly unwillingness to budge from Chasidic, Eastern European propriety. On the other, it suggests that without the characters’ rich store of Jewish ethics, wisdom, and collective historical memory, Judaism will lose its moral basis.

Conversely, Potok’s textual praxis implies that without the necessary readiness to adapt to the more liberal intellectual and practical codes of modern life, Judaism is liable to disappear. This brings us to the second category of the senex in Potok’s fiction: that of
the “new Jew,” which is quite similar to the imagery used for the paradigm of the “New Hebrew” that the early Zionist settlers in Palestine sought to construct.\(^{88}\) This category is nothing less than the modern corollary of the rabbinical senex, belonging to the facet of Jewish existence experienced primarily in the United States. Unlike figures from the rabbinical category, this kind of new Jew (not necessarily unreligious) does not subscribe to the shtetl (“small Jewish village”) mentality, or to the hope for divine intervention. These individuals embrace modernity, and are often depicted as fighting back, both literally and metaphorically, against the elements that seek to harm Jews or the Jewish tradition. The “new Jew” senex variation also frequently spearheads the decision not to cave in to the traditionalist elements of the rabbinical senex category, who fight tooth and nail to eliminate certain characters’ promulgation of “overly-modern” principles, such as the realm of the secular aesthetic, or of scientific textual criticism of the Bible, to just name a few. All of these “new Jew” senex characters derive their basic inspiration from religious Jewish culture and history. Even though they are saturated with ethnic heritage, their intercultural amalgamation into American life is seen as necessary in order to ensure the continuity of their specific Jewish sub-group. Such “ironies of cultural interaction” involving both types of senex figures are also, discursively speaking, destined to provoke receptive processes in the mind of the reader, based on both reason and empathy (Potok, “The First Eighteen Years” 105).

Of course, American individualism also plays a role in Potok’s depiction of integrated religious praxis. Potok notes how the autobiographical aspect of his own

\(^{88}\) For the interested reader, Almog’s *Zionism and History* offers a particularly lucid presentation of this phenomenon in the context of Israeli nation-building efforts.
journey toward individual interpretation (i.e., observing the collective activity from a
distanced, critical perspective) influences how the characters in his fiction relate to
religious praxis. He writes: “The criterion of selectivity is my own inner being, my own
awareness of the fundamental principles underlying Jewish law, but the selection is
always made—and this is a vital point—from a base of knowledge and not out of
ignorance or for reasons of personal convenience” (“The State of Jewish Belief” 125). In
that sense, the work of Chaim Potok is significantly different from the other two writers
whose work is analyzed in this study, in that Potok’s characters represent, to a large
extent, two different cultures simultaneously: the Eastern European Chasidic Jewish
culture, as well as the twentieth-century American one. As such, the protagonists of
Potok’s novels, whose attitudes towards Jewish culture are fundamentally tested by the
(usually) first-generation American experience, often adopt what Marius Buning has
called an “affirmative” and “decidedly American” stance (par. 36). The characters
display a kind of integrated optimism that Potok himself points out “is inherent in the
Jewish idea of philosophical idealism” (“The State of Jewish Belief” 126).

Like Yehoshua’s, Potok’s use of (and his reliance upon) traditional Judaic
archetypes is also influenced by the particulars of his sub-cultural and geo-political
background. Specifically, Potok’s subversion, inversion, and/or recasting of archetypal
characters or motifs from the intertextual reservoir of Judaic culture are carried out in
tandem with the above-mentioned tendency towards integration of the past and present.
We see this frequently via the simultaneous actions of both respecting and questioning
the efficacy of senex propriety. As we have seen in Yehoshua’s “Early in the Summer of
1970,” the significance of the senex figure often comes into play in light of the prescribed
meanings imposed by that figure upon the younger generation. This is also the case with respect to the senex in the first of Potok’s stories to be analyzed: the novella “The Trope Teacher,” which appears in his last collection of published work, *Old Men at Midnight* (2001).

The main senex figure in “The Trope Teacher” is Isaac Zapisiki, an observant Ashkenazi Jew who makes his living in the United States by teaching “trope”—the punctuation marks for musical motifs and tones used in the chanting of Biblical Hebrew. We are told that Zapisiki was gravely wounded in World War I, expelled from his university in Vienna on account of his being Jewish, and yet feels himself to be very much a part of “civilized” Europe. He leaves behind the America in which he does not belong, in order to return to Vienna on the eve of the Second World War. Benjamin Walter, the narrator of the story (as well as Zapisiki’s student and the tale’s protagonist), describes him thus: “A small, bumbling, stooped man who wore his hat low over his eyes . . . looking to all intents and purposes like a turtle in the act of withdrawing into its shell. He had a habit of shaking his head in a sort of nervous twitch . . . as if trying to disentangle himself from some web in which he had been caught” (208). Zapisiki frequently falls asleep, a state symbolic of his inaction. Even when awake, “He seemed then a helpless rag doll of a man. Wrinkled dark pants and jacket; stained white shirt, disheveled white beard; pale pockmarked features; the bad [prosthetic] leg lying on top of the good one as if it needed more than the floor for support” (218–19).

While no longer a Chasidic Jew, Zapisiki’s not-so-distant roots belong in the most fundamental way to the Chasidic tradition. Potok stresses this fact by portraying Zapisiki’s physical appearance as corresponding to that of the rabbis who teach in
Benjamin Walter’s school. For instance, Zapiski wears the same dark clothes all of the
time, just as the rabbis do; Benjamin calls this “a somber garb [which] accorded well with
their [i.e., the rabbis’ and Zapiski’s] sober calling: the handing on of an ancient tradition.”
Benjamin then poses a rhetorical question: “Why, then, the dark clothes?” (208). The
tacit answer to this query is that, by way of Zapiski’s profession, his character possesses
the same figurative significance as the images of similar figures of spiritual leaders
and/or teachers of Jewish law, whose task is to promulgate the carrying-over of tradition.
As Benjamin recounts: Zapiski “taught me the music of the book written by the Creator
God” (218). Furthermore, the representational links in this text between the senex as
teacher and the senex as a “father figure” are clear: Zapiski saved Benjamin’s father’s life
in World War I when he gave him his own gas mask during an attack and was late
finding another (235). Benjamin’s father is also presented as Zapiski’s best friend. This
relationship of shared lived experience is thus tantamount to considering each man
analogous to the other, and therefore equates Zapiski’s didactic interaction vis-à-vis his
comrade-in-arm’s son with the same kind of interaction Zapiski might have had with his
own child. The old man, however, is childless; and this fact perhaps makes the
relationship between the teacher and student even more noteworthy, symbolically
speaking. While not an actual father, the old man is in fact a patriarch of tradition, in the
sense that the transmission of religious Judaic convention is the offspring that he begets.
In other words, teaching is his way of “inseminating” the younger generation with a
specific historical consciousness.

To be sure, Isaac Zapiski is obsessed with history, and his departure for Europe
influences the young Benjamin to begin to study the past as well. At this point,
Benjamin’s father tells him that Zapiski plans to return to Europe on the eve of World War II to find “the history he left behind”—in the father’s view, a suicidal act. The young Benjamin can not understand why Zapiski feels such a connection to Europe. Zapiski explains: “Where I was raised, history was the heart and marrow of a person. I am returning to the inside of myself that the war forced me to leave behind” (234). This comment serves to encourage the young man, who had blithely remarked, “I don’t like war and I don’t like history,” to go on to become a professor of history, persuaded in part from the senex wisdom bequeathed to him by his trope teacher, Isaac Zapiski.

In fact, the legacy of the “trope” that Zapiski bequeaths to Benjamin is not only one of the music and grammar of the Torah; it is also the figurative trope of the recurring image of the persecuted Jew. Benjamin sees Mr. Zapiski in this trope incessantly, as the former begins to learn about the Jews persecuted throughout the ages. Not surprisingly, the first step in this process is an archetypal one, undertaken through the initiation rite of Benjamin’s bar mitzvah, during which he must memorize the section of the Torah that “deals with the war waged by Amalek against the fleeing Israelite slaves” (232). The portion referenced here is Exodus 17, in which Joshua leads the freed Israelite slaves to defeat the Amalekites at Refidim, with the help of Moses, who raises his hands heavenward and channels the strength of the Lord against Israel’s enemy:

So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses’ hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. (Exod. 17.10–13)
Benjamin notes that one day, after having practiced this segment, “Mr. Zapiski came over to me . . . and thanked me for the way I had read the section on the war against the Amalekites. He looked pale, shaky. His eyes were moist. He seemed shabbier than ever” (232). At this point in the text, the reader becomes aware of the transfiguration of Amalek into the modern-day avatar of the Nazi terror spreading across Europe. This transformation, as it is understood by Zapiski, may be attributed to the following Biblical injunction:

> Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way as ye came forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, all that were enfeebled in thy rear, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God. Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget. (Deut. 25.17–19)

As evidenced by Zapiski’s reaction, this contemporary recasting of the archetypal enemy of the Jews has much significance, since, throughout history, the associations between particularly nefarious enemies of the Jews and the Biblical Amalek have been part of a long-standing tradition.⁸⁹ In the scene described above, Benjamin unconsciously carries on this tradition of substitution and transformation under the watchful eye of his teacher.

When Benjamin visits the trope teacher after hearing the news of his upcoming departure, the reader is finally made aware of the archetypal mold of Zapiski’s character. This happens when the old man asks Benjamin, after hearing his incredulous inquiry

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⁸⁹ In the Hebrew Scriptures, the Amalekites are often associated with the Moabites and the Midianites (see Genesis 14.7 and Judges 3.13, respectively). The Amalekites also feature prominently in Numbers 14.45 and 24.7, and in Samuel 15.8–9 and 15.33. For an extra-Biblical summary of perceptions regarding Amalek, see Bergman 119–36.
regarding Zapiski’s intention to leave, “Why is it important for you to be sure that I am returning to Europe? What do you care what happens to Isaac Zapiski?” (233). Upon learning for the first time the given name of the senex, Isaac, we are again confronted with a modern-day re-envisioning of the Biblical myth of the Binding of Isaac. Isaac Zapiski, like his archetypal namesake, is about to be put onto the sacrificial altar for a seemingly illogical (or at least, highly questionable) cause: the (re)claiming of history. Zapiski’s self-destructive action to become physically one again with the world he left behind is presented as just as disconcerting as the Biblical Abraham’s intention to sacrifice his own son, who was to be killed so that Abraham’s other descendants would “become one” with God, in the form of a Chosen People. However, in Potok’s particular recasting of this Judaic metastory, there is no divine hand that intervenes to stop the slaughter—which, in this case, is the slaughter of the father. Such an inversion suggests the sacrifice of an entire generation of a specific subculture (namely, Eastern European Jewry).

For that reason, Isaac Zapiski is not only the representative of Eastern European Judaic propriety; he also symbolizes the possible disappearance of the entire subculture about to be sacrificed. For instance, despite the fact that the news coming in from Europe is vague, Benjamin begins to have Holocaust premonitions. When he hears a train traveling overhead on a trestle, he thinks he hears “over the rhythmic click and clatter of its wheels a high-pitched wail like that of a child crying. But there was no one else in the street” (231). Also, when Benjamin reads books about anti-Semitism, or sees in the news a “balding Jew forced to walk the streets of a Nazi city, wearing a sign that said Ich bin Jude [I am a Jew],” the boy notes that each man “looked a little like Mr. Zapiski” (238).
Moreover, the senex figure of Isaac Zapiski, unlike the Biblical Isaac, is not about to be sacrificed for a so-called noble cause on behalf of his descendents. Indeed, given the sweeping loss of European Jewry during the Holocaust, the idea that Zapiski’s offspring would be “multipl[ied] . . . as the stars of heaven” (Gen. 22.17), or that “in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 22.18), seems patently absurd. In Potok’s retelling of the story, Isaac has no children, although his students of trope are seen as his metaphoric “offspring”; and God’s blessing of the Jewish people, as originally promised to Abraham after the would-be sacrifice of Isaac, is portrayed as sorely missing. This absence, however, inserts an important element of modernity into the tragedy of Zapiski’s actions, since his intention is to validate his position not vis-à-vis a religious figure or cult, but rather in the context of the nation-state. This tragedy is augmented by the retrospective realization that Zapiski’s acceptance into the American “creed” would have been possible, at least in theory. In Europe at the time, the idea is incredible, hence the tragedy. The crucial point here is that it is not God, but Mr. Zapiski (who, Benjamin notes, “became a sort of talisman to me—a creature of magic and enchantment” [239]) who functions as the psychopomp, or the “guide of the soul” for Benjamin, who is about to embark on his formative journey into manhood.

In the novella, the absence of divine intervention in the slaughter of European Jewry also underscores Potok’s implicit championing of the values of Conservative Judaism. These values, which are made up of reverence for religious tradition combined with Enlightenment-based ideas regarding the promotion of a civil and moral conscience, are interdependently akin to a particularly American way of seeing the world, not least of all because of their mandated separation between religious devotion and participation in
the environmental social structure. For example, later on in the story, when Benjamin reaches the legal age, he decides to join the American army in order to fight the Nazis in Europe. During the Ardennes offensive, “Mr. Zapiski suddenly appeared beside me. Dark suit and hat and tie. Not an image in my head but actually there” (256). Thus, the senex remains the giver of wisdom for Benjamin, or a “talisman,” as he had referred to him earlier. During the offensive, Benjamin imagines himself chanting Torah with Zapiski, as the latter tells him where to duck, dig, and hide, in order to remain alive. Before encountering concentration camp survivors, Benjamin meets on the road a number of men who are fleeing the Nazis. He is approached by someone who physically resembles Zapiski, “a grotesque figure of a man; the stench that rose from him! . . . We were ordered to move on. Whoever those apparitions had been, they were not our problem” (259).

Later on, when Benjamin’s troops reach a concentration camp toward the end of the war and encounter the sacrifice of European Jewry face to face, Benjamin sees his teacher, “Isaac” Zapiski, everywhere, sacrificed to the God that the soon-to-be assimilated Benjamin would later give up on. In referring to the panorama of carnage around him, Benjamin says: “And there I found Mr. Zapiski. He lay half covered with earth . . . in a trench in the mass cemetery . . . and among the murmuring phantoms we found in the barracks who gaped at us when we entered.” One of the “phantoms” asks Benjamin, “Why [Warum] did you take so long to get here?” (261). This man’s reference to the moral dangers of inaction, epitomized by Benjamin’s parents in their opposition to his enlistment, is made more poignant by the Yiddish “Warum?” that the survivor croaks at him, echoing Zapiski’s frequently-posed single word question (261). Later, as
Benjamin walks around the camp, his stream-of-consciousness narrative suggests that America’s decision to enter the war at a late stage, and thereby miss the opportunity to save the majority of Europe’s Jews, was a part of an ethically unsound series of decisions: “Everywhere I went I saw Mr. Zapiski, dead and dead and dead in the vile exhausted earth” (264).

As the “new Jew” senex in the story, Benjamin does not simply yield in the face of such needless sacrifice; instead, he undertakes a particularly American form of vigilante justice, in place of reliance upon traditionally passive theodicy, in order to create some semblance of judicial balance in light of such sacrifice. His call to arms, then, is not only a reaction to the killing. It is also follows the natural progression of the action taken when the senex archetype, which in this case symbolizes all of the Old World Chasidic propriety, is presented as having been rendered impotent.

After finding “Mr. Zapiski” at the camp, Benjamin and his troops stumble upon several drunk German guards. Benjamin speaks to them in Yiddish, after which one of the Germans asks, “What kind of German do you speak?” Benjamin, presumably understanding their German, responds, “New York German,” to which the German replies, “You are not speaking German!” The guard suddenly realizes that the American soldier standing before him is a Jew, and reaches for his empty holster. Benjamin shouts at him, in Yiddish, “Go fuck yourself, you piece of shit . . . is that good enough German for you? I am one of those you were killing!” (262). Against explicit orders, Benjamin kills the guard, and then asks the remaining Nazis, “Was that good German?” (263).

I return to the resolution of the Benjamin Walter/Isaac Zapiski narrative later on in this chapter. For now, allow us to sum up the principles that underline the particularly
American way in which Chaim Potok subverts the myth of the Binding of Isaac in “The
Trope Teacher.” Potok’s subversion stresses three main components: the preponderance
of moral action; the rejection of blind reliance on traditional Judaic theodicy; and the
realization that Judaism must come to be integrated into the modern world if it is to
survive. Furthermore, by putting the figure of the senex in the position of the sacrificed,
Potok suggests that the son has a responsibility to save the father, who often engages in
self-destructive behavior in order to remain part of a historical consciousness. Benjamin
Walter’s actions also imply that self-preservation is a quasi-spiritual duty to be adopted if
Judaism is to survive in the modern world.

In addition to the recasting of the Biblical Isaac in the form of the trope teacher,
Potok also literally inverts the fate of the contemporary personality upon which the figure
of Benjamin Walter is based: the German-Jewish philosopher Walter Benjamin (1892–
1940), who took his own life in order not to be apprehended by the Nazis.\(^{90}\) Just as all of
the Jews killed in the Holocaust may be seen, through the fictional Benjamin’s eyes, as
stand-ins for Isaac (Zapiski), so may the fictional Benjamin Walter be seen as a re-
envisioned avatar of the real-life Walter Benjamin. Moreover, by allowing Walter
Benjamin’s fictional counterpart to subvert the former’s tragic fate in his refusal of the
logic of sacrifice, Potok provides the reader with a clear set of guidelines for a newer,
more sustainable model of Jewish living for the future. I discuss this model further, in the
context of its subversion of Genesis 22, in the section in this chapter on anima
consciousness.

\(^{90}\) For the details on Walter Benjamin’s life and death, see Lester 74–77.
The next analysis of Potok’s re-envisioning of Judaic myth, as it concerns the archetype of the senex, focuses on his third novel, *My Name Is Asher Lev* (1972). In this work, Potok addresses the same kind of cultural confrontation he had explored earlier in *The Chosen* and in *The Promise*—namely, the struggle of first-generation Ashkenazi American Jews to negotiate between the often inflexible Chasidic propriety of their father figures and their newly-found American (intellectual) freedom. Just as Reuven Malter and Danny Saunders (the main characters from the above-mentioned novels) are torn between alternate versions of what it means to be Jewish, the hero of the novel *My Name Is Asher Lev*, the child prodigy Asher Lev, is torn between two divergent worldviews that seem to possess little common ground between them. As an adult, Asher is ultimately able to provide a bridge between these two worldviews by way of the symbolic significance of his art, but not without causing much pain and suffering to those around him—a process indicative of the “labor pains” of a new consciousness coming into being.

From an early age, Asher Lev, the child of devout followers of the fundamentalist Ladover sect of Chasidism (a fictional group most likely modeled on the Lubavitcher movement), displays an artistic genius that his immigrant parents are reluctant to indulge. This is because there is no tradition of visual art in pre-modern (or in most modern currents of ultra-orthodox) Judaism, following the Second Commandment’s prohibition against idolatry: “Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth” (Exod. 20.2; Deut. 5.7). Asher’s father inadvertently references this prohibition (elaborated upon in Lev. 19.4, Deut. 32.17, and Isa. 44.20) via his admonishment to the boy: “Painting is for goyim [Gentiles], Asher. Jews don’t draw and
paint” (171). As Potok explains elsewhere, painting is a pagan tradition: “The rabbis [of the Talmudic period] associated pagan immorality with idolatry. They looked upon the pagans as being completely incapable of exerting any sort of self-control of their base, animal desires. The lack of self-control then became . . . one of the basic characteristics of paganism” (Ethics 9–10).

Asher’s parents worry that their son’s aesthetic preoccupations may come from the Sitra achra, or the “Other Side,” a demonic realm from which the Kabbalists believed all evil inclinations stem.91 (The significance of this nebulous sphere is discussed further in this chapter’s section on the shadow.) Their fears are realized when Asher is finally driven out of his community because he has exhibited paintings with crucifixion scenes incorporating himself and his parents. Although the novel ends with no dialogue between Asher and his parents regarding these paintings (this will come later on, in the sequel to the novel, The Gift of Asher Lev [1990]), the symbolic superstructure of Potok’s text evidences itself early on. The key comes in the form of a brief exchange between Asher and his mother (whom Asher will use for the centerpiece of the crucifixion paintings), when she sees her son’s initial sketches of Jesus: “Do you know how much Jewish blood has been spilled because of him, Asher?” (172). Asher’s response to her comment underscores the “irony of cultural interaction” (Potok, “The First Eighteen Years” 105)

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91 See Drob, Symbols of the Kabbalah 329–362; Dubov 85-92; and Scholem, On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead 56–87, for the origins and significance of this idea.
that forms the basic symbolic marrow of the text: “But I needed the expression, Mama. I couldn’t find that expression anywhere else” (*The Gift of Asher Lev* 172).\(^{92}\)

The problem of Asher Lev lies in the fact that the Judaic tradition does not possess an aesthetic mold into which he can pour out his representation of complete suffering. He chooses as a mold what Jung calls “the central image of the Western psyche” (*Aion* 97) in spite of the shared ethnicity that Asher has with ultra-orthodox, Eastern European-style Jewry, the influence of which grows weaker as the cultural affinities with his particular boyhood environment (which in this case is Christian America) increase. By choosing the ultimate motif of anguish in Western (Christian) art, the crucifixion provides the means by which, paradoxically, Asher is able to express, like Christ, his own pain of being pulled between two worlds.

In the end, Asher remains a Jew, somehow able to reconcile his tradition with modernity. He realizes that, although Mosaic monotheism does indeed prohibit the making of “graven images,” this is only for purposes of *avodah zarah*, or “foreign worship” of other gods. Asher performs no such worship. As Potok correctly points out (qtd. in Abramson 4), a Jew can paint as many crucifixion scenes as he wants, as long as he does not worship them. That is to say: one does not violate *halachah* (“Jewish law”) by painting crucifixions, “as long as you don’t paint them for purposes of worship” (qtd. 92).

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\(^{92}\)Needless to say, Potok’s Asher Lev is not the first Jewish artist to incorporate crucifixion scenes into modern painting or sculpture. For instance, the real-life Jewish artists whose work is found in the attic of Asher’s recently-deceased uncle in the second *Asher Lev* book are known to have used crucifixion imagery in their work, such as Marc Chagall, Reuven Rubin, Chaim Soutine, Raphael Soyer, and Theo Tobiasse (*The Gift of Asher Lev* 53).
in Ribalow 11–12). Potok’s above-cited affirmation is therefore the key to understanding
the perceived transgression of Asher Lev: no matter what he paints, Lev is not an
idolater. He does not apply “religious energy . . . to a secular [in this case, non-Judaic]
object” (Edinger 68) in order to engage in any kind of sacred adulation.

Semiotically speaking, Asher’s actions are indicative of an accepted cultural code
transmutating from dominant into what Barthes calls “scandalous,” owing to the “atopic,”
or hypersensitive reaction that it induces (23). This happens because the new atopic code
subverts not only Jewish, but also modern Christian presuppositions, by destroying the
accepted semiotic correlations between Christ and the cross. This transmutation of
dominant cultural codes is also at the base of Potok’s idea of core-to-core cultural
confrontation, in which the preconceived notions of the (Eastern European) Jewish
subculture of Asher Lev collide with those of his umbrella civilization. Thus, Potok’s
insinuation in My Name Is Asher Lev is that iconicity is not universal, but contextual.
This presupposes a break from tradition that actively promotes the drive toward expanded
consciousness.

In other words, the use of the cross as the dominant symbolic motif in My Name
Is Asher Lev is an extreme case of inter-cultural integration. The cross, of course, may be
seen as the Christian archetype par excellence; but it is also, to many in the Western
mindset, an archetype of absolute suffering. Asher’s parents, who still live in fear of anti-
Semitic attacks, see their son’s choice to exhibit “The Brooklyn Crucifixion” paintings as
a slap in the face to the memories of all the Jews persecuted for two millennia by the
Church as the killers of Christ. As Potok puts it: “The crucifixion to him [Asher] was
clearly stripped of all its Christological Salvationist content and was a vessel. To his
parents it’s what the crucifixion is to most Jews” (qtd. in Forbes 16–17). Indeed, like most Jews who have little contact with the Christian world, Asher’s parents see the cross as a sign—the holder of a recognized meaning (in this case, associated with persecution) in relation to their own perceived strata of significance—whereas for Asher, the cross is a malleable archetypal symbol, ambiguous, given to divergent meanings, and only partially representative of Christianity. Regarding that distinction, we may find Dan Sperber’s explanation of the differences between symbols and signs to be of use here: “A sign is a token of meaning that stands for a known entity . . . A sign communicates abstract, objective meaning whereas a symbol conveys living, subjective meaning” (109). The erroneous tendency of Asher’s parents, who are representatives of Chasidic propriety, to insist that the symbol of the cross is a sign for something concrete is a deprecatory effect of what Sperber calls the “reductive fallacy” in symbolic thinking (110). In this case, it means that Asher’s parents make light of the complex contextual relationship that the archetype of the cross holds in the Western artistic tradition. Of course, one cannot blame them, as Asher reasons, while thinking about his father coming to his first show: “He would hear the word ‘crucifixion.’ He would see the crucifix looming monstrously before his eyes. He would see rivers of Jewish blood” (352).

Asher chooses to incorporate the most well-known Western archetype into his paintings not because he seriously wishes to isolate himself from Judaic themes; he simply acknowledges the fact that in his own tradition, such an aesthetic mold does not exist. This acknowledgment stems from the fact that although Asher Lev has shared ethnicity with Eastern European orthodox Jewry, he has also had increasing cultural and inter-semiotic affinities with the outside world, which, in the case of his particular
environment, is Christian America. While this tension between the “caste” sub-group and Christian America provides the backdrop for Asher Lev’s archetypal venture, the plot may also be seen, from an environmental perspective, as shedding light on Potok’s own status as someone stuck in between two cultures—and also as a Conservative rabbi who believed that fusing the best of the old with the most promising of the new was the only way to guarantee Jewish survival.

My analysis of Potok’s subversion of traditional Judaic archetypes in both of the Asher Lev novels focuses on the ways in which both accepted and “scandalous” symbolic values influence the psychic development of Asher Lev as a character. Needless to say, Asher does not arrive at any conclusion on his own; there are several “givers of wisdom” surrounding him, each of whom attempts to affect the eventual outcome of Asher’s use of his artistic gift, by pushing him in a different direction. None of them actually succeeds completely, for Asher will remain, until the end of the second novel, tormented by the conflicting forces in his life; and herein lies the irony of his name, which in Hebrew means, “happy of heart.” There is, therefore, something of the great American theme of compromise in Asher’s pain; but there is also a betrayal, in the eyes of his community, of several basic tenets of religious Judaic praxis, the most significant of which has to do with his subversion of the principle outlined in the Second Commandment: the prohibition of idolatry. Thus, Potok’s particular rebellion against the Second Commandment in My Name Is Asher Lev concerns not a precise inversion of Biblical characters or motifs, but rather the subversion of a Biblical thematic that has formed a central part of Judaic religious discourse since the inception of Mosaic law.
The senex character who has the most influence on the young Asher of the first novel is the fictional painter and sculptor Jacob Kahn. According to Potok, the character of Jacob was modeled in part on the cubist sculptor Jacques Lipchitz (1891–1973) (“The First Eighteen Years” 105). Part of Picasso’s early circle, Jacob came to America as a refugee from Europe during World War II. He agrees to take Asher as an apprentice at the request of the Rebbe (“rabbi”) of Asher’s community. Unlike Asher’s parents, the Rebbe realizes that Asher’s gift cannot be stifled, and so he prefers that Asher develop his craft under the tutelage of a Jew—albeit one who no longer observes the commandments—and who regards his devotion to art as his only religious observance.

Although Jacob still has great affinity for certain Jewish traditions, we learn from the text that the Holocaust erased any belief that he held in God. In that sense, the aura around Jacob is implicitly connected to his Biblical namesake, for he, too is one who has wrestled with the idea of the divine, as did the Jacob of the Bible, before being renamed Yisrael (Israel) (Gen. 32.25–31), meaning “he who struggles with God.” Since Jews throughout the ages have been referred to as bnei yisrael (“the sons of Israel”; or, more figuratively, the “House of Israel”), Potok’s decision to give the non-observant, atheist/bohemian senex character the name of “Jacob” suggests that the struggles embodied by this man are liable to engender a new kind of “House of Israel.” This new paradigm will be one in which the questioning of traditional mores and the willingness to learn from other traditions will provide a counter to the insular, Eastern European Jewish existence of old, typified by the adherence to mulish rabbinical propriety. From that perspective, it is quite fitting that Asher comes to be instructed by Jacob when the former is thirteen years old—the age at which Jewish males traditionally undertake the coming-
of-age ceremony of the bar mitzvah (in Aramaic, *bar mitzvah*, “son of the commandment,” might also be figuratively translated as, “the one to whom the commandments apply”). Therefore, by paralleling Asher’s religious instruction at the yeshiva with an edifying entrance into the secular world of Western culture and art, Jacob Kahn provides a counter to rabbinical senex propriety with his aesthetic didacticism, through which Asher Lev will live out his formative experiences. Jacob Kahn therefore belongs to the “new Jew” category of senex figures that appear in Potok’s literary works.

Asher’s time alongside Jacob represents the first occasion in his life that he is able to discuss his gift with anyone, let alone to have his artistic drive confirmed as meaningful. By fulfilling this function for the young boy, Jacob also inadvertently takes on the role of a father figure for Asher, whose relationship with his obdurate birth father is stormy, at best. The father-son connection between these two artists is further alluded to by the apprentice’s name, for Asher in the Bible was one of the sons of Jacob (Gen. 30.12).

From the moment in the novel that Asher makes the acquaintance of Jacob Kahn, the reader becomes aware of just how saturated with modernity the latter character is. The first set of images that relay this depiction are primarily physical in nature: for instance, as opposed to the hunched-over, sickly, or persecuted types of men whom Asher knows from his Ladover community (Asher’s father, for instance, has a permanent limp a result of a childhood bout of polio), Jacob’s senex is presented as a towering figure who imposes by his girth as much as by his revolutionary intellect. Upon shaking his hand, Asher immediately notes the difference mentioned above, and makes a statement that also indicates Jacob’s impending influence upon the boy: “He had a powerful grip. I felt
my hand swallowed by his” (193). Later, during their first practical lesson together (a semi-erotic encounter in which the act of painting, ritualistically, functions as a replacement for the highly-fetishized movement around the scroll of the Torah in the synagogue), Asher juxtaposes the classic senex imagery surrounding his newfound mentor with descriptions of Jacob’s “new Jew” physicality. Asher notes that Jacob is “broad-shouldered, white-haired . . . [and] with the sleeves of his shirt rolled up, I could see the muscles of his arms; they were powerful arms, and they looked sculpted from stone” (206).

Asher’s move toward apostasy, in the eyes of his parents and the Chasidic community, is not the simple product of the boy’s artistic drive; nor is it the inevitable conclusion of the confrontation with his conservative parents and community. In fact, the foundational experiences for Asher, with regard to both his aesthetic and intellectual information, come into being solely from the influence of Jacob Kahn. Jacob’s initial rhetorical question to Asher, posed during their first meeting, testifies to this fact: “You are entering the world of the goyim, Asher Lev. Do you know that?” (195). The subsequent testing of Asher’s Chasidic mores increases in tandem with the lad’s talents, up until the point where the young artist, having surpassed his now-covetous master, moves boldly and publicly into the world of the forbidden. The text, however, leads us to believe that Asher’s apotheosis as a painter would not have been possible, had it not been for the tutelage of Jacob Kahn.

Indeed, one may trace an organic progression of Asher’s metamorphosis by way of the “wisdom” instilled in him by his teacher. At the outset, Jacob provokes Asher’s simplistic boyhood notions that Judaism is the only subject worthy of devotion, by
referring to painting as “a tradition . . . a religion” into which the apprentice must also be formally initiated (213). Asher’s parents cannot understand why such a tradition, instituted in the West first by the Greeks and then by the Christian world, should occupy their son as much (or more) as the study of Torah does. Asher will later integrate the two. For now, he explains that he has become part of another tradition: painting.

Realizing that the boy will not be able to fully realize his potential as an artist if he is held back by feelings of guilt, Jacob encourages him to question the loyalty he still feels to the Jewish world. The mentor asks his apprentice: “Do you feel you are responsible to anyone? To anything?” “To my people,” Asher answers. “What people?” Jacob insists. After thinking for a moment, Asher replies: “To Jews” (217). Jacob’s next comment represents a subversion of standard Judaic discourse, in which he asks Asher rhetorically, “To Jews . . . Why do you think you are responsible to Jews?” This comment by Jacob Kahn is part of the formal undoing of Asher’s Chasidic propriety, which will culminate in the shedding of his peyot (“sidelocks”) and the de facto excommunication from his Brooklyn community. The dissident nature of Jacob’s comment lies in the fact that he has put into question a celebrated Talmudic axiom from Shavuot 39a, according to which “kol yisrael ‘aravin zeh bezech” (“All Jews are responsible for one another”) and replaced it with the implied assertion that an artist is ultimately only responsible to himself. This comment foreshadows what Asher Lev will do with his Brooklyn Crucifixion paintings, both practically and metaphorically, and concretizes what Asher had earlier read in Robert Henri’s book The Art Spirit, which is quoted at length in My Name is Asher Lev: “Every great artist is a man who has freed himself from his family, his nation, his race. Every man who has shown the world the way to beauty, to true
culture, has been a rebel, a ‘universal’ without patriotism, without home, who has found his people everywhere” (203). Like the rebel American painter Robert Henri, leader of the Ashcan School of the American realist movement, Asher does indeed become a great artist, and the “true culture” alluded to above will become, in Asher’s eventual, distinctly American form of (Conservative) Jewish thought, the credo by which Potok suggests the Jews of the twentieth century must live their lives.

The talk of individuals who break off from their own nations to move toward universality also brings into play the suffering indicative of what happens when one’s ego is not coherent within itself. In that vein, the philosophy espoused by Henri and Kahn is also mirrored in the life of Christ, another universalist Jew, who, in his rebellion, moved toward, and represents, the integrated and individuated ego *par excellence* in the Western mindset. This is one of the reasons, symbolically speaking, that Jacob Kahn encourages Asher Lev to study the art form of the crucifixion: for he knows that Asher Lev will also be sacrificed for his “gift” to the world. Let us recall Jacob’s exact words to the prodigy: “I am not telling you to paint crucifixions. I am telling you that you must understand what a crucifixion is in art if you want to be a great artist. The crucifixion must be available to you as a form” (228). While it is true that Jacob’s decision to force Asher to paint nudes (and thereby to disregard the explicit instructions of the Rebbe) coincides with his instruction regarding the crucifixion motif in Western (Christian) art, the symbolic value of this action is that Asher Lev, while contemplating the crucifixion, also becomes aware of a part of himself. And, let us not forget that Jacob Kahn’s initials are the Yiddish forms of the initials of Christ (Krist) (Jacobs 178): J.K. In a way, then, Jacob’s encouraging Asher to draw crucifixions (when every such sketch mirrors, in a
sense, the crucifixion of his mentor, who is also his surrogate parent) prepares him, ultimately, to depict the suffering of his parents in the classic aesthetic mold of the Western tradition.

More importantly, the point implicit in all of Asher’s activity with Jacob Kahn is not only to show that Jews can, and should, participate in purely aesthetic undertakings (which may also be spiritual, if one regards art as part of the mystery of the sublime). It is also to show how blind adherence to prescribed meaning (such as in the Second Commandment’s prohibition of idolatry) inevitably decontextualizes content from its original sources. The fact that Jews had to wait until the turn of the twentieth century to actively and publicly participate in the world of visual arts is, according to Asher, a testament to this unfortunate fact. Moreover, it is possible only because of the integration of Judaic culture into the larger umbrella civilization, which, during the course of the transition into modernity, is also in the process of debunking its own stale myths. Thus, Asher is led by the instruction of Jacob Kahn toward a perspective that will change, for him, and for many of his admirers, a notion that is old as Judaism itself. This perspective, however, does not cancel out Asher’s Judaism; instead, it reforms it with a particularly American brand of cross-cultural adaptation, set in motion by the wisdom of the senex figure of Jacob Kahn.

As noted above, this distinctively American adaptation of Asher Lev’s Judaism, which mirrors the development of the Jewish Conservative movement, carries with it many symbolic ties to the Christian tradition. These ties are evidenced not only in the subject manner of the painting, but also via the moment and place of its composition. Asher creates the crucifixion paintings around the time of Passover (327), the last Jewish
festival purportedly celebrated by Jesus before his crucifixion (the first day of which is said to have coincided with the Last Supper). Moreover, the location in which Asher paints the crucifixions also foreshadows another instance of Potok’s subversion of the myth of the Binding of Isaac, albeit different from the one undertaken in “The Trope Teacher.” Specifically, the construction of Asher’s crucifixion art foreshadows the theme of sacrifice as the main symbolic action in the sequel to that novel, The Gift of Asher Lev, inasmuch as Christian typology regards Isaac as the figurative precursor to Jesus. In the second novel, Paris functions as the locale where Asher Lev and his French-Jewish wife conceive their son, Avrumel, who will be offered up for sacrifice as a modern-day avatar of the Biblical Isaac. The more mature Asher is also transformed into a recasting of Abraham, although the senex figures who have continued to be a force in his life still play an important role in their transmission of wisdom and codes of conduct. As is the case with most of Potok’s literary works, the end result is one of American-inspired balance and integration.

The reader will recall that at the end of the first Asher Lev novel, the protagonist, now a young man, follows in the footsteps of Abraham by leaving his father’s house for a

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93 While it is a commonly-held belief in the Christian tradition that Jesus did celebrate the Passover before his crucifixion, the New Testament passages report the event in a somewhat contradictory manner. According to John 13.1, the Last Supper occurred before the beginning of the feast of Passover, while Mathew 26.17, Mark 14.12, and Luke 22.7 give the date of the Last Supper as coinciding with the first day of Passover. I take the significance of this textual ambiguity to be minimal with respect to Potok’s usage of the Passover symbolism, since by employing the most widely-held belief regarding the date of the Last Supper, the symbolic association is concretized in the mind of the reader in spite of the differing accounts.
foreign land. Asher’s archetypal quest thus mirrors that of his people’s progenitor, Abraham, as recounted in Genesis 12.1, when God says to Abraham: “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto the land that I will show thee.” (Note the parallel with Robert Henri’s comment about a great artist needing to “free himself from his family, his nation, his race” [203].) In this case, it is not from Haran to Canaan that Asher must journey; rather, it is from Brooklyn to Paris, which is, symbolically speaking, an equally daunting type of journey, and one that follows two of the three directives issued by God to Abraham (then named Abram): (1) the permanent exit from one’s native country; and (2) cutting oneself off from one’s immediate family and community. Here, the senex figure who issues the directive is the Rebbe, who tells Asher to go to the Ladover yeshiva in Paris, because “You have crossed a boundary. I cannot help you. You are alone now” (367). However, the Rebbe does not intimate in any way that Asher must leave his “kindred” (i.e., the Jewish people). In the decisive last scene, where the Rebbe takes on the father-like role of the senex, he echoes a comment by Asher’s real father, who had earlier remarked, after having seen Asher’s nude paintings, “Do not forget your people, Asher. That is all I ask of you. That is all that is left me to ask of you” (234). Here, the Rebbe’s last sentence to Asher, “I give you my blessings” (367), indicates that what is needed is simply a temporary change in surroundings. As it turns out, this change will last up until the death of Asher’s beloved uncle Yitzchok, an event that forces Asher to return to Brooklyn, and to his past. In any case, the rabbi’s senex function here mirrors the senex influence of Jacob Kahn on the younger Asher, in the sense that the sculptor also encouraged his protégé to “cross over” to another kind of existence.
Jacob, who is portrayed only marginally in the second book as a jealous and somewhat loathsome character, has only really served as a giver of wisdom for Asher during the first part of his spiritual journey. Unlike the Rebbe, he encourages Asher to actually take his leave from his “kindred” (the Jewish people), since he believes that true art cannot exist alongside any other doctrine. For this reason, he instructs Asher to figuratively “smash his father’s idols” (as recounted in the Talmudic tale from Genesis Rabbah 38.13) by subverting the religious preconceptions of his parents regarding idolatry. In the second novel, Asher manages to both subvert and (ultimately) remain bound to his parents’ conceptions regarding the necessity for, and understanding of, sacrifice. This is accomplished through a triangular relationship that mirrors the God-Abraham-Isaac connection in Genesis 22, and which also brings up variant readings of the myth along the way, further evoking Potok’s desire for balanced and nuanced interpretations of Judaic religious heritage. As this interpretation is forged through the wisdom of the elders, the senex stands out once again as the driving force in the amalgamated Judaic propriety that Potok’s protagonist exemplifies.

The senex figure of the Rebbe in the second Asher Lev book is portrayed in several ways as the modern-day avatar of the God of the Hebrew Scriptures. For instance, the interaction between Asher Lev and the Rebbe closely resembles the interaction between Moses and the Giver of the Law, as recounted in Exodus 33.20–23, when Moses cannot see the face of God: “And He said: ‘Thou canst not see My face, for man shall not see Me and live . . . And I will take away My hand, and thou shalt see My back; but My face shall not be seen’” (Exod. 33.20, 23). Potok describes the physical appearance of the Rebbe in a similar fashion. For instance, when Asher sees the Rebbe behind his desk, he
remarks that “No face could be that white. It had to be a trick of the chandelier” (174). At
other times, the Rebbe “seemed more a presence than a man” (191) and “seemed garbed
in light” (284). Also, Asher notes that the Rebbe consistently has “a tallis [prayer shawl]
covering his head so that his face could not be seen. He would come in with his head
covered and go out with his head covered; only an edge of his beard would be visible”
(74). While in this passage the appearance of the Rebbe is symbolically associated with
the image of God on Mt. Sinai, the rest of the references to the Rebbe as a God-figure are
in concordance with his relationship as God the father, and particularly, in his role as a
father figure to Asher Lev, who is put into the role of Abraham. As the Rebbe says to the
painter, “I have looked upon you as a son” (244). At the novel’s conclusion, when Asher
Lev follows the action of his Biblical counterpart and offers up his son for sacrifice, the
sound of the Rebbe blowing the *shofar* (“ram’s horn”) at the start of the Jewish New Year
indicates that the Rebbe has a non-human otherness about him that connects him
explicitly with the divine, since “it seemed that no human was sounding that ram’s horn
but some messenger from the Master of the Universe, someone bringing a clear musical
note from the heavens” (353).94

In addition to the Biblical allusions in the novel, the subversion of the myth of the
Binding of Isaac coincides with one of the book’s sub-plots: the question of who will

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94 *The shofar* is traditionally blown during the High Holy Days of the Jewish New Year. It may also be
employed to herald the coming of significant events, although this usage depends upon the discretion of the
religious authority handling it.
succeed the Rebbe in Asher’s parents’ Ladover community.\textsuperscript{95} Since the Rebbe has no children, it is expected that his right-hand man, Asher’s father Aryeh, will succeed him. But Aryeh’s advanced age precludes him from being considered a possible successor. By the same token, the scandalous nature of Asher Lev’s artistic credo makes him too controversial to ever take over his father’s position of leadership, even if the divided community were to endorse such an outlandish proposal. However, the rabbi hints at several intervals throughout the book (60, 120, 353) that the number three will be significant to the question of his passing; he also takes a keen interest in Asher Lev’s son, Avrumel, which in Hebrew means, “God is the exalted father.” Both of these instances point to the eventual sacrifice of Avrumel (Isaac) by Asher (Abraham), via the decree, albeit implicit, of the Rebbe (God), who has asked that Asher “sacrifice” his son by allowing him to be groomed to eventually succeed the Rebbe.

The number three refers, firstly, to the generations of Levs in possible succession to the spiritual leader of the Ladovers. It also serves as an intertextual link to the legend of the Binding of Isaac, since it took Abraham and Isaac three days to reach the land of Moriah (Gen. 22.4).\textsuperscript{96} The choice of the name for Asher’s son is also evidence to the fact

\textsuperscript{95} Since the fictional Ladover movement shares many real-life parallels with the Lubavitcher Chasidic community, it seems quite likely that Potok based this sub-plot on the question of who would succeed Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902–1994), the childless, charismatic spiritual leader of the Lubavitcher Chasids.

\textsuperscript{96} The interested reader should see Yehoshua’s short story, “Three Days and a Child” (The Continuing Silence of a Poet 35–93) for another instance in which the number three is used repeatedly to evoke associations with the Binding of Isaac, as recounted in Genesis 22.
that the Chasidic propriety in which Asher was raised, and the overarching belief in Judaic theodicy upon which that propriety is predicated, had not totally fallen by the wayside after Asher’s choice to follow a different path in life. Rather, his decision has been countered by another influence. This influence will provide a much-needed balance on the seesaw of integrated Jewish-American life, rather than functioning as a dead weight that will lead to isolation and a lack of objective reasoning.

The more evident clues to the recasting of the story of Abraham and Isaac, however, appear from the moment when Asher Lev is asked to speak in his daughter’s class about his art. Already nervous that his children are studying in the place in which he felt suffocated (Asher and his wife have decided to stay on in America temporarily, while the issues surrounding his uncle’s will are resolved), Asher decides to explain to the children why he chose the crucifixion as the motif for his infamous paintings. During the question and answer session, a girl in the class remarks the following: “My father says you could have used something else, something more Jewish, like the binding of Isaac” (138), to which Asher responds, “The binding of Isaac? Is that really a theme of suffering?” (138). Asher then draws on the board the figures of Abraham and Isaac, and suddenly realizes that he has drawn his own face in place of Abraham’s, and Avrumel’s in place of Isaac’s. His daughter, Rocheleh, later asks her father, “Why did you put yourself and Avrumel into the drawing of the binding of Isaac?” to which Asher replies, “I don’t know. It was a surprise to me.” He then notes that he can draw things without knowing exactly why, because “then the drawing tells me what I’m trying to say” (141).

We learn later in the novel, from a comment by a Ladover driver who is a fan of Asher’s work, that Asher had done a painting called “Sacrifice of Isaac” (note that here,
Lev uses the conventional Christian appellation, instead of the Judaic “Binding of Isaac” (301). Asher casually mentions that he had wanted to call the piece, “Inheritance” (301), a nod by Potok to Israeli poet Haim Gouri’s famous elegy about the Binding of Isaac, “Yerushah” (1960), which can be translated either as “heritage” or “inheritance” in Hebrew. Gouri’s poem is another classic example of the ways in which modern Jewish writers re-envision sacredly-held myths. In it, Isaac’s offspring “noladim / umaakhelet belibam” (The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse 565; “are born / and the slaughtering knife is in their hearts”). Asher’s fictional painting follows the same tragic interpretation, in which Isaac is depicted as actually having been slaughtered. Asher recounts how, many years earlier, during his father’s first visit to Lev’s apartment in Europe, Aryeh saw the painting and exclaimed, “What have you done? He did not kill him.” Asher replies, “There is a midrash that states he did.” The father’s reaction is one of incredulity: “But it is only a midrash. This is what you will show the world? Abraham slaughtering Isaac?” (333). Concerning the question of why he painted it that way, Asher simply explains, with the same ambiguity that characterizes his drawings on the chalkboard of Asher/Abraham and Avrumel/Isaac, that sometimes he doesn’t know what he is drawing. However, his comment, “It’s how I feel about it” betrays his belief that the sacrifice is an action wrought with ambiguity, as opposed to one to be celebrated (333).

Asher’s decision to align his painting symbolically with several contrarian interpretations of the myth of the Binding of Isaac is worthy of further investigation for several reasons. First, Asher’s decision to entitle the painting “Sacrifice of Isaac” intimates that an act of killing did in fact take place. His comment according to which he has somehow based his depiction of events on a midrash of this alternate version of the
Abraham and Isaac story (an act that simultaneously upsets the conventional attitude concerning the legend, and yet offers a variant justification from traditional Judaic praxis) provides a logical reason for the use of this title.\(^9\) However, in choosing a traditional Christian title for his composition, Asher is also forming an associative tie with the typology of Christological salvation motifs. Namely, the understanding of the willingness of a father to sacrifice his son is deemed as necessary for understanding the logic of the later sacrifice by God of his only son (“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son” \textit{[New American Standard Bible, John 3.16]}). On the one hand, then, Asher’s use of the Christological motif may be seen as a continuation of his early desire to use the theme of sacrifice as a vessel to convey suffering, as seen in the “Brooklyn Crucifixion” paintings. On the other, it serves to foreshadow a far more important action: Asher’s willingness to sacrifice his only son on behalf of the Ladover community.

The latter action is filled with indistinctness, and yet signals the fact that Asher Lev has absorbed the wisdom of two separate codes. The first is the spiritual and nomocratic heritage of Judaism; and the second is the code of Western art and culture, which has Christianity and the Greeks as its basis. By fusing the two, Asher creates what his wife Devorah calls, while looking at the Isaac drawings, “a new syntax . . . a new iconography” (326). This new interpretation of images and content is a thinly-veiled

\(^9\) The midrash that Asher refers to may be found in the following: Shibboleh haleket, 9a–b; Taanit 16a; Zevachim 62a–b; Genesis Rabbah 56.4–8; and Pesiktah Rabati 39. For secondary material on this alternate version of the myth of the Binding of Isaac, see Davies and Chilton; Ginzberg, vol. 1 281f and vol. 5 251; Goodenough, vol. 4 183–84; Schoeps 389; and Spiegel 3–4, 28–37.
reference to Conservative Judaism, a path of balance that Asher has come to as a fully-integrated “new Jew” senex.

The peak of Asher Lev’s individuation (and the individuation of modern Jewish thought, Potok wishes to insinuate) takes place with both the rabbinical senex and the “new Jew” senex in attendance. Before the festival of *Simchat Torah* (literally, “Rejoicing with the Torah”), which marks the end of the annual cycle of Torah readings, as well as the beginning of a new cycle, the Rebbe leads a dance in which he stands in front of Asher and Avrumel, in the precise order of the recast figures from the Biblical tale. At that point, Asher suddenly reaches up and gives Avrumel to his father, which is synonymous to offering him up to the Rebbe. After he gives up his child, he backs out of the synagogue in a daze. When he is on the street a hand grabs his hand; it is the hand of Jacob Kahn, who has been dead for some time (364). Thus, the novel ends with Asher remaining an artist in all the ways that Jacob Kahn had taught him, and yet still feeling responsibility to his community.

The “gift” referred to in the title of *The Gift of Asher Lev* is thus both Asher’s art and his son. As a young man, Asher had tried to flee the world of his parents under the tutelage of Jacob Kahn, but rejected Kahn’s advocacy of an outright abandonment of tradition. The fact that Asher feels compelled by reason of free will to give up his progeny points to his continuing identification with religious Judaism. Therefore, Potok’s comment that “Asher Lev remains an observant Jew” (“On Being Proud of Uniqueness”), is true only because Asher is able to fuse the wisdom of Jacob Kahn, who knowingly instructs the lad in areas that the Rebbe had explicitly asked him not to enter, with that of the Rebbe, whose Old World type of Judaic propriety can only continue to exist in a
vacuum. Both of these men serve quasi-paternal roles for Asher, made more apparent by the fact that Asher’s father is largely absent while traveling in Europe on business for the Rebbe. On the point of paternal influence, I disagree with the supposition of Sanford Sternlicht (80), who proposes that Asher is torn between his father and Picasso, the latter an artistic influence on the Jewish artist since being instructed by Jacob Kahn to study Picasso’s *Guernica* (1937). I argue that by benefiting from both of these examples, Asher is able to function as a bearer of wisdom for those around him, promoting tolerance and understanding of the umbrella civilization without endorsing the wholesale abandonment of Judaism.

2. The Shadow Archetype

The focus of this section of the chapter is to demonstrate the ways in which Potok subverts and recasts the archetypal motif of the *Sitra achra*, considered to be intrinsically meshed with shadow contents in the Judaic tradition, into an affirmative theme for creative endeavors and psychic renewal in Jewish-American life. I remind the reader that the *Sitra achra* has already been referred to in the senex section of this chapter as the “Other Side,” a demonic sphere from which, according to the Zohar (1.19b; 3.19a; 1.47b–148a; 1.178–178b; 3.19a) stem all of the evil inclinations of humankind. This realm is antithetical to the *Sitra kedushah*, or “the realm of holiness,” which is the sphere that mirrors the inner will of God. Due to considerations of space, I have confined this part of the study on the shadow to the two literary works of Potok’s in which it figures most prominently, and which have already been dealt with herein: *My Name Is Asher Lev* and *The Gift of Asher Lev*. 
The process of elucidating the archetypal configuration of the shadow in these works is twofold. The first step consists of illustrating the preconceived notions of the Ladover community about the realm of evil, especially their associating that evil and Asher’s artistic drive. This process is intrinsically tied up with Asher’s later efforts to make the shadow conscious. As Sanford Drob notes, “The recognition that the source of creativity and even goodness is in what is dark and unknown, and the consequent need to pass through and assimilate the shadow (Sitra achra in Kabbalah) [is what is needed] in order to regenerate the self and world” (“The Mystical Symbol” 25). In other words, Asher must expose the sources behind his creative drive in order to engender a new kind of consciousness. The second step involves examining the ways in which Potok transforms the discursive conventions associated with the Sitra achra via Asher’s aggregate of symbolic actions, in which “he [Asher] develops his own interpretation of the myth as he develops his art and identity” (Sutherland 51), effectively debunking those conventions into an exposition of the real dangers facing Jewish life. The painter does this by disclosing the stifling and potentially destructive nature of the rhetoric espoused by two characters who, in their Chasidic propriety, are thought to be the exact opposites of shadow symbolism: the “mythic ancestor” who comes to him in his dreams (a composite of Asher’s real-life great-great grandfather and the most dangerous traits exhibited by the Rebbe); and Asher’s overly-pious cousin Yonkel. As is the case with the majority of Potok’s characters who operate within a structure that, according to Buning, is at the same time “affirmative” and “decidedly American” (par. 36), Asher is ultimately able to reconcile the shadow contents of his community and tradition, but only after having made them conscious. The result is a series of intimations regarding the stifling
enforcement of the logos principle that embody Potok’s particular sub-cultural credo of (American) Conservative Jewish praxis. Potok then addresses these intimations to the Jewish-American community as a whole.

The first introduction the reader receives regarding the Sitra achra comes at the beginning of the first Asher Lev book, when Asher’s father relates to the boy how a carousing Russian nobleman for whom Asher’s great-great grandfather used to work had once, in a drunken rampage, burned down an entire village along with its inhabitants. The father’s explanation for the event is summed up in the following: “The people of the sitra achra behave this way. They are evil and from the Other Side. Jews do not behave this way” (4). Similarly, Asher’s father later explains the reasoning behind Stalin’s purges of Russian Jews by saying that, “Stalin is from the sitra achra” (38). It is not until Asher develops his proclivity for drawing that he learns of the associations between the “evil” of the sitra achra and the supposed violation of the Second Commandment, which Asher is not doing his part to uphold. He notes that in the yeshiva, “We studied about the sitra achra, the Other Side, the realm of darkness and evil given life by God not out of his true desire but in the manner of one who reluctantly throws something over his shoulder to an enemy, thereby making it possible for God to punish the wicked who help the sitra achra and reward the righteous who subjugate it” (188). As Asher matures along with his work, some of which includes sketching nude models, his flippant attitude regarding the Ladover tendency to immediately attribute the unknown to the Other Side becomes more and more scandalous to his family. When he tries to explain that one can still be a Jew and thrive in the realm of the secular aesthetic, they respond with a charge emblematic of fundamentalist Chasidic logic: that is, “‘art for art’s sake’ is an insult to true (God’s)
creation [since] moral quests are the only pursuits that glorify him” (Yassif 157–58). As a result, Asher’s insistence that the realm of the aesthetic can also be a subject worthy of devotion becomes an increasingly contentious point with his family. As we have seen, this current of intellectual reasoning, which leads Asher to complete his crucifixion paintings despite the pain he knows they will cause, is what ultimately forces him to separate himself from his community.

The first experience that the young Asher has personally with the Other Side comes in the form of dreams about the man whom he calls his “mythic ancestor.” At the beginning of the first book, Asher recounts that the ancestor “began to appear quite frequently in my dreams: a man of mythic dimensions, tall, dark-bearded, powerful of mind and body . . . it was no joy waking up after a dream about that man. He left a taste of thunder in my mouth” (4). As Asher’s penchant for drawing increases along with his maturity, the mythic ancestor’s proportions and perceived threats also augment. For instance, Asher notes that the man in the dream “was huge. He towered over me. His dark beard cast huge swaying shadows across the rug.” The mythic ancestor echoes the disapproval of Asher’s father regarding pursuits of art: “‘Wasting time, wasting time,’ he thundered. ‘Playing, drawing, wasting time’” (36). Asher does not know what to make of these dreams, since what little he has absorbed of Chasidic doctrine regarding dreams (transmitted via his parents) is that one should be rather suspicious of messages obtained from the Other Side. This is because, as Joel Covitz points out, “Judaism distinguishes between God telling you in a dream what to do, and the demonic telling you to do something bad: the ‘yetzer hatov,’ or good inclination, which inclines us in the direction of the righteous life, and the ‘yetzer harah’, or evil inclination, which motives us toward
The reason that such messages in dreams are to be treated with caution is that it is difficult to tell which inclination is making itself known. Taking these Chasidic suspicions regarding his visions of the night into account, Asher does not initially tell his parents about the dreams.

While Asher is not cognizant of the precise implications of these dreams that he has a child, he does intuitively understand that he is being reproached “for any deviation through his art from accepted, traditional Jewish norms” (E. Abramson 68). Moreover, because of the “mythic” proportions and configuration of his dream companion, Asher senses that it is not simply his father, his great-great grandfather, nor the other elders in his immediate environment who are making the journey from the nether-regions of his dreams in order to admonish him. Indeed, he senses that the rebukes of the dream are part of a teleological continuum of Chasidic propriety, in which the mythic ancestor “provide[s] an authority and wisdom that is beyond the experience of the dream, ‘helping’ to keep him helplessly dependent” (Hillman, “On Senex Consciousness” 35) on the code of his forefathers. The idea that he is relentlessly pursued, even during his non-waking hours, by this representative of unbending convention is terrifying for the young artist. This is especially true since, at first, he cannot pinpoint these dreams’ significance. Not until Asher begins to mature does he realize that, in the words of Neumann, “This archetypal shadow-figure has a specific meaning . . . as his antagonist in the process of development towards consciousness” (Depth Psychology 138).

98 Much of Covitz’s conceptions regarding the “good” and “evil” inclinations are based on the work of the Italian Kabbalist Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (1707–1746) as expounded in his classic work Derekh hashem [The Way of God], available in English through the translation of Kaplan.
The “specific meaning” of this figure becomes apparent as Asher begins to individuate. The first instance of this meaning manifesting itself occurs when Asher dreams of the dream figure coming to him “huge, mountainous, dressed in his dark caftan and fur-trimmed cap” (98). However, when he finally tells his mother about the dream, he simply says that he “dream[t] of the Rebbe last night” (99). When Asher finally makes this important step in identifying the real-life incarnation of his mythic ancestor, he begins to take steps to combat his influence. For instance, one day at the yeshiva, Asher draws the face of the Rebbe on a chumash (a codex form of the Torah), effectively committing a double desecration: first, by violating the physical sanctity of the holy book through a profane inscription upon it; and second, by subverting the Second Commandment’s prohibition against idolatry. A boy in the class who sees what Asher is doing “looked as if he were witnessing the sudden appearance of a representative of the Other Side” (123).

Asher, however, is under the impression that the “representative of the Other Side” is the image of the mythic ancestor/Rebbe, not himself. Asher first notes that the Rebbe’s face in the picture that he draws looks “vaguely menacing” (123). Then, his fear increasing, he begins to believe that “the Rebbe looked evil; the Rebbe looked threatening; the Rebbe looking out at me from the chumash seemed about to hurt me” (124). Later, he confesses to a friend, “I made the Rebbe look like a being from the Other Side” (125).

Part of Asher Lev’s transformation is in his ability to integrate the shadow components of Chasidic propriety into a balanced spiritual methodology in which the (Conservative) modern Jew is able to draw on that propriety without being held prisoner
to it. This is why the character of the Rebbe, while only occasionally appearing as the avatar of the mythic ancestor, is presented in the form of the shadow; ultimately, however, he belongs to the senex category over the course of the entire Asher Lev saga (i.e., both in the first and second books), since his role as the giver of wisdom represents one side (the other represented by Jacob Kahn) of the intellectual and spiritual development of the books’ main protagonist. By the same token, the most important implication of the “mythic ancestor” is that he appears in dreams; and, as Anthony Stevens reminds us, the appearance of a shadow figure in dreams indicates a profound ambivalence (215).

Just as Asher subverts the commonly-held notions regarding the Sitra achra and the Second Commandment by advocating the visual arts, and by his indirect claim that the real “demonic” elements in Jewish life are those that seek to imprison the individual in a blind adherence based on the principle of the Fifth Commandment, Kvod haav (“honoring the father”), his transformation into an integrated personage lies in his insistence that obedience to the Fifth Commandment (“Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” [Exod. 20.12]), should not be automatic. Just as drawing the face (a forbidden act) of one paternal figure, the Rebbe, is what frees him from seeing the Rebbe as a shadow figure, the act of finally painting his mythic ancestor (324), who is another paternal figure, liberates him from the fear that this character had provoked in him. The last time in My Name Is Asher Lev that Asher dreams of the ancestor, no longer does the old man have a “dark-bearded face trembling with rage” (128); instead, he is “old, bent with grief, his hand trembling on the cane that supported his wasted frame. His beard was white and
wild and his eyes were ash gray in the dark hollow sockets of his head” (343). He addresses Asher as “my precious Asher,” asking him, “Will you and I walk together now through the centuries?” (343). Clearly, the shadow of the imprisonment of filial piety has been integrated and set free, for Asher issues a categorical “No,” even as he gives the old man a coin. The ancestor does not reappear in Asher’s adult life until the end of the second book, at the point where he gives up Avrumel to the Rebbe, when he suddenly feels “the voice of the mythic ancestor I had not heard in years suddenly loud in my ears, uttering sounds that were not words” (364).

The second manifestation of the shadow occurs at the beginning of The Gift of Asher Lev, when we learn that Asher has visited his family in New York only once since leaving home nearly twenty years beforehand. Part of the reason he does not return is that during that sole visit, he received a menacing phone call from a man calling himself “The Angel of Death,” who promised that the heretic Lev would not live to see the morrow (5). Now, years later, when Asher is compelled to attend the funeral of his uncle Yitzchok, he receives a phone call at his parents’ home from the same person:

“Asher Lev, the artist?” There was an eerie quality to the voice, a hollowness, as if it were coming to me over a long tube from a great distance away. “You made the crucifixion paintings?” “Who is this?” “I will tell you who this is. Listen to me, Asher Lev . . . I am the Angel of Death . . . by morning you will no longer be among the living . . . By morning I will have taken back your corrupted soul. So perish the enemies of the Lord.” (19)

Throughout the course of the text, the reader becomes aware that the mysterious caller is the son of Asher’s beloved uncle Yitzchok: the vile, fanatic cousin Yonkel, who blames Asher for encouraging his late father to acquire his own collection of very valuable modern art (much of which consists of crucifixion art made by secular Jews), now willed
to Asher, much to the chagrin of Yizchok’s mourning family. Asher tries to convince his aunt and cousins that art can also be a sanctification of the name of God, to which Yonkel responds: “I don’t need to ask questions about art. I say that it’s an outright desecration of the name of God. It’s idol worship, that’s what it is! . . . A spirit must have entered my father when he decided to buy such things” (62). Yonkel’s hysterical rhetoric regarding the role of the Sitra achra in his father’s appreciation for the realm of the aesthetic, which Yonkel considers to be inextricably linked to the violation of the Second Commandment, smacks of the same perceptions of Asher’s father Aryeh in the first Asher Lev book, when Aryeh thinks to himself, during Asher’s exhibit, “Had the moment of conception [of Asher] somehow been invaded by a corrupting spirit from the Other Side?” (72). The lesson from the parallel between these two comments is that we are able to discern, in a linear progression, the manner in which the characteristics of intransigence and self-righteousness, which are part of the negative spectrum of senex propriety, are also liable to slide toward the precipice of the destructive actions of the shadow.

In the second book, part of the beauty of Asher’s individuation is that he learns to somehow reconcile himself with his father’s literalist opinions regarding Jewish law, even to the extent that he agrees to leave Avrumel in his father’s care while the child is prepared to succeed the Rebbe in the Ladover dynasty. Conversely, Aryeh does his best to engage his son in conversations about his work, his personal life, etc., without necessarily changing his views on the disagreements between them. Yonkel, on the other hand, only becomes more and more menacing of a figure, his hostility toward Asher Lev representative of the fundamentalism of Chasidic orthodoxy as a whole. This communal attribute of Yonkel’s threat is evidenced not only in the sense that his traditionalist views
are representative of much of the Ladover population, which insists on an insular, Eastern European orthodox lifestyle in the midst of secular America. The communal attribute also manifests itself in Yonkel’s penchant for evoking the sources of religious Judaic praxis (via his limited interpretation of it) when condemning his artist cousin.

This tendency to quote from the sources has already been seen in Yonkel’s comment, “So perish the enemies of the Lord” (19), which he has taken from Psalm 37.20 (“For the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs—they shall pass away in smoke, they shall pass away”). He also calls Asher Lev by the Hebrew term ‘okher yisrael, which translates as “a trouble of Israel” (167), the same name that King Ahab used to reproach the prophet Elijah in 1 Kings 18.17–18: “And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him: ‘Is it thou, thou trouble of Israel?’ And he answered: ‘I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed the Baalim.’” The significance of Yonkel’s use of this particular term is one of great irony, since the contextual situation of the Biblical passage has to do with Elijah the prophet accusing King Ahab of idolatry. In Potok’s text, it is Yonkel, like Ahab, who accuses Asher Lev of “troubling” the people. Yonkel, however, is the one depicted as the real transgressor, on account of his predatory nature and uncompromising attitude, which Potok suggests is the real defamation of the divine name. Also, the name Ahab in Hebrew, which is Ahav (“brother of the father”) refers to Yonkel’s link to the brother of Aryeh Lev, the late Yitzchok Lev. Asher, as the counterpart of Elijah, is endowed with a prophetic function regarding the messages he feels compelled to transmit to a Jewish-American audience who does not necessarily want to hear them.
In a similar vein, Potok’s disdain for certain members of this audience is reflected in his decision to give the antagonist of the story the name of “Yonkel,” which is the Yiddish diminutive of Jacob. The reader will recall that the Jacob of the Bible was the son of Isaac, just like Jacob (Yonkel) is the son of Isaac (Yitzchok in Yiddish) in the Asher Lev novels. However, calling someone a “Yankel” in Yiddish (pronounced the same, albeit usually spelled with an “a” for the first vowel) is tantamount to using the term “asshole” in its non-literal connotation in English.

More important, however, than Yonkel’s verbatim citations from Biblical sources, or the highly symbolic intertextual significance(s) of his name, are his frequent accusations against Asher, according to which the artist is a product of the Other Side: “You are from the Sitra achra . . . You are an evil man! An abomination! . . . Stand back from this Satan! Stand back!” (167). Yonkel’s insistence upon equating Asher with the Other Side only serves to solidify the symbolic backdrop upon which Asher, in his prophetic function, ultimately subverts the idea that art as a non-religious aesthetic has anything to do with the Sitra achra. Instead, Asher intimates that, in fact, the accuser embodies the real danger facing the Jewish people, noting that the person whose voice is like “a ghostly sibilance from the Other Side” (4–5) and who calls himself “The Angel of Death” is actually the one who should be thought of as “a messenger from the Other Side” (19). The fact that Asher uses the same terminology to denote Yonkel as Yonkel does when referring to Asher, even before being aware that Yonkel is the culprit in the threats against him, mirrors a process of awakening, and of turning the preconceived notions of the shadow (as they are perceived in the Chasidic realm) on their head. Despite the fact that Asher does not go public with his equating of Yonkel with the Other Side, at
the end of the novel, no longer afraid of his cousin’s threats, Asher reacts to the last call from “The Angel of Death” by drawing his interpretation of Yonkel as the Angel of Death and then sending it to him via the post (365). It should be noted that Asher does not actually believe Yonkel to be a being from the Other Side; he simply uses this terminology in order to have a point of reference, and perhaps to convey to the reader the irony in his choice of appellation for this “troubler” of modern-day Jewry.

Asher Lev’s archetypal recasting of the Sitra achra from a realm in which evil inclinations and desires abound into a reservoir for creativity and psychic renewal is not simply a transformation of the signified by a subversion of the signifier. Rather, it is a fundamentally modern action that moves away from a religious, Diasporic mentality to a mode of thinking based on Enlightenment ideals and the American desire for integration. Asher’s insertion of Yonkel into the realm that he has effectively debunked says more about Yonkel’s symbolic shadow significance than it does about Asher’s perceived notions of otherworldly realms. That is to say: putting Yonkel in the place of what has long been considered to be the root of all evil in Chasidism presupposes that the inability to engage in self-introspection by way of the aesthetic may cause Judaism to disappear. The blind adherence to “false security” in light of all that is threatening from the umbrella civilization is characteristic of the shadow working “against cultural evolution” (Perera 230). This idea of cultural evolution being a positive phenomenon is also bound up in Potok’s sub-cultural (Conservative Jewish) praxis: in particular, by the American desire for equality with diversity in the framework of civic life, in which fusing the best of (in this case) Judaic particularism with the best of the umbrella civilization represents a move away from superstition and insularity toward the adoption of a new ethic.
On a more symbolic level, Asher’s supposition that the ego does not necessarily have to be repressed for the sake of the collective effectively unravels the logocentric dogma of Judaic orthodoxy, which, as Franz Rosenzweig points out, has contributed to the Jews’ identity as a people outside of the limits of historical temporality, one in which the meta-story gives way to a meta-history removed from real life. The result of such an identity, with respect to the shadow, is that observance of the meta-code causes a psychic rift, one in which the religious observer regards himself as being aligned “with the powers of light, but leaves the powers of darkness (the shadow side) in projected form and then experiences and combats them in the shape of ‘the evil out there’” (Neumann, *Depth Psychology* 139). Asher’s idea that the *Sitra achra* is “merely dark because [it is] unacknowledged” (Elkins 247) subverts the commonly-held associations with this archetypal configuration of evil in Judaic lore, and proposes recasting it into a realm for much-needed forays into the unconscious, the recognition of which should be helpful to those who see the promulgation of dogma for its own sake as a desecration of the divine name.

The fact that the mythic ancestor, Jacob Kahn, the Rebbe, and the *Sitra achra* (in the form of Jacob Kahn reaching out from the Other Side) all appear at the end of the Asher Lev saga points to a process of reconciliation of, and integration between, senex and shadow figures. In a typically American fashion, Asher is able to fuse these essentials of his Judaic existence (save for his cousin Yonkel, whom he has also been liberated from through his drawing and recognition of) into a new formula for the future. However, even Yonkel receives such wisdom by way of a message from the Other Side: the reading of

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99 For a full exposition of this idea, see Rosenzweig 279–81.
his late father’s (Asher’s uncle Yitzchok’s) will. His instruction from the Sitra achra comes both from the fact that the topic addressed in this last testament is profane art; and also because Yonkel only receives this message when his father is no longer among the living. The attorney of the late uncle reads the following quote from the will:

“I have lived with the hope that perhaps there are not two realms, the sacred world of God and the profane world of Gentile art, but that great art can also be for the sake of heaven. It is my wish, my nephew, that as you deal with these works of art you will always bear in mind the Master of the Universe. May these works also be transformed into ‘the work of my hands, to glorify Me.’” (164)

The last part of Yitzchok’s final declaration to Asher Lev, which echoes the words of Isaiah 60.21 (“Thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever; the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, wherein I glory”) also points to a transformative renewal of sorts, since the intertextual significance of the passage from Isaiah is that it occurs upon the return of the Jews from the exile in Babylon, just as Yitzchok’s testament is read upon Asher’s return from his self-imposed exile in France. However, more than simply quoting from Biblical praxis, the uncle also reaches into the discursive reservoir of modern Judaic thought, alluding to the theory of another exiled and excommunicated modern Jew: Baruch (Benedict de) Spinoza (1632–1677). According to Spinoza’s pantheistic philosophy of “single substance,” God is everywhere, including in all inanimate things, as Yitzchok suggests in his hope that there are not “two realms” (164). If this is indeed the case, then idolatry, by definition, cannot exist. Neither can the Sitra achra. Therefore, by simultaneously evoking traditional Biblical praxis in tandem with the thought of one of the first Jewish thinkers to be considered as

100 For a detailed exposition of Spinoza’s pantheistic doctrine, see McKeon 69–75.
“modern,” the uncle places the emphasis again, even from the so-called “Other Side,” on the importance of fusion, balance, and integrative interpretations.

3. The Anima Archetype

This discussion of the configuration of the anima archetype focuses upon the interaction between the characters of Ilana Davita Chandal and Benjamin Walter, both central figures from the short story, “The Trope Teacher,” which has already been analyzed in this chapter in the section on the senex archetype. As was the case in the previous examination of the anima function in Yehoshua’s A Late Divorce, the role of the anima in Potok’s “The Trope Teacher” is primarily to personify what the collective has repressed (Hillman, Anima 129); to make conscious the existence of a psychosis present elsewhere in the text; and to provoke reflection in the psyche of other characters. In this particular story, the anima is not recast by Potok as a modern-day avatar of a particular figure from Judaic lore. Rather, it is a composite of thematic, intertextual, and religious tropes that work in conjunction with the other instantiations of Biblical motifs and/or characters in the text to bring forth the recognition of suppressed contents, and to negotiate between various realms of consciousness.

Ilana Davita Chandal, or “I.D. Chandal,” as she is known by her pen name, appears as an anima figure in all three of the stories published in the collection Old Men at Midnight, including in “The Trope Teacher.” She is also the same character from Potok’s novel Davita’s Harp (1985), who, in that book, shares her first-person coming-

101 See Smith’s study on Spinoza as the forerunner of modern and secular Jewish thought; and for a view on Spinoza’s reading of the Bible as it relates to his views on civil society, see Elazar 37–50.
of-age story as the daughter of communist activist parents (an American, non-Jewish father and a formerly observant, European-born Jewish mother) in New York City of the 1930s. After her father’s death, she becomes interested in Jewish religion, subsequently scandalizing the local Jewish community by scholastically outperforming the boys in her Jewish day school. In “The Trope Teacher,” she appears as a grown woman, recently divorced, and is described (via expository dialogue) as an esteemed writer of somewhat peculiar short stories. Before Benjamin Walter remembers the story of Isaac Zapiski, it is his new neighbor, I.D. Chandal, who encourages him to dig into the recesses of his memory, starting from his boyhood up until his long-forgotten actions in World War II, in order to fill in the gaps of the beginning stages in his autobiographical memoir, which (before meeting Ilana) only covers his life after the war.

The interaction between Benjamin and his neighbor is portrayed at the beginning as one rife with physical attraction. He first describes her as “a good-looking woman” who “keeps herself neat” (204). The reader is told that Benjamin has not been intimate with his wife for some time, since she is ill with AIDS; some years earlier she had received tainted blood during a transfusion, and now is nearly at death’s door. However, the initial temptation to explain Benjamin’s awkward contact with Ilana as part of a burgeoning sexual frustration is quickly dismissed when he looks out his window and sees her in the act of writing. He notes that she “seems like a different person when she writes. Puts on weight somehow” (205). Later, when Benjamin returns from an evening of conversation at her home, he sees her from the window again, “writing intently and looking preposterously bloated, the yellow light falling cruelly upon her pudgy features and gray hair.” Since Benjamin did not find her obese at their earlier face-to-face
meeting, he wonders if the sudden plumpness might be, “A trick of the light? Fatigue? The medication affecting my vision?” (242). Benjamin soon learns that whenever Ilana is in the act of writing, she has the appearance of “an odd-looking creature” (243), and wonders if the sudden weight gain could be “some kind of biological anomaly? An alteration in her body chemistry? Absurd! More likely a poorly manufactured windowpane” (243–44).

Since Potok never explains to us the reason for Ilana’s sudden portliness, and no other piece of information in the text points to any logical explanation for her frequent corporeal transformations, I would like to posit that the rationale behind this thematic vignette in “The Trope Teacher” is rooted in Ilana’s symbolic function as the link between memory and the unconscious, specifically in her role as a vessel “overflowing” with historical memory. The initial physical attraction that Benjamin feels toward Ilana may, in fact, be attributed to this realization on his part. Indeed, although she is not a historian of renown like he is, the historical memory of the Jewish people, around which her bizarre stories are crafted, forms the crux of her character’s persona in all three of the narratives in Old Men at Midnight. For example, in “The War Doctor,” she succeeds in convincing a Jewish survivor of Stalin’s purges to recount his ordeal; in the same story, it is also mentioned that she is working on a study involving the writing of the Russian Jewish dissident author Isaac Babel (1894–1940). In “The Ark Builder,” Ilana attempts to help rid a Holocaust survivor of the nightmares that plague his sleep by encouraging him to talk about the carnage that haunts his unconscious mind.

With respect to Ilana’s interaction with Benjamin Walter, she not only renders him aware of the collective importance of remembering the story of Isaac Zapiski; she
also encourages the now-atheist Benjamin not to lose his faith—not in the God of the Hebrew Scriptures, nor in the belief that divinely-inspired benevolence can exist in the face of suffering. In particular, she stresses these points through her constant references to the myth of the Binding of Isaac, which she interprets from the perspective of what Potok calls Judaism’s “philosophical idealism”: namely, that “in the world it may seem that life is without meaning, and perhaps it is, but it is the task of mankind to give meaning to it” (“The State of Jewish Belief” 126). Moreover, her mention of the Biblical tale of Abraham and Isaac is the first in a series of allusions to, and recastings of, the recurring tropes of the figures (discussed in this chapter in the section on the senex archetype) who occupy the symbolic center of the intertextual stage of “The Trope Teacher.” Ilana is therefore the instigator of the entire series of symbolic courses of action to be undertaken in the story.

For instance, Ilana’s earliest mention of the myth concerns the ram referred to in Genesis 22.13: “And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son.” At this first mention of the ram, which she calls attention to seemingly out of nowhere, Potok presents her sudden allusion as ideologically and symbolically charged, underpinning the unfolding of the rest of the story. “I believe that there is always a ram in the bush” (172), she says to Benjamin, in an abrupt change of mood and subject. In this tense moment, Benjamin only guesses that Ilana is referring to her previous, only tangentially-connected conversation with him, approximately one page earlier, in which she recalls how she wrote a paper on his foundational historical study on the final German offensive in World War II, entitled Why
So Late. If Benjamin’s cynical attitude toward humanity’s response to the ultimate evil of the Holocaust were not made clear enough by the rhetorical title of his scholarly explanation, his sardonic response to Ilana betrays clearly his lack of faith either in God or in humankind: “A ram in the bush, you say . . . How very nice to think so” (172).

As made clear from the aforementioned dialogue that launches the Biblical trope, “The Trope Teacher” should be read from the perspective of an ideological tug-of-war between skepticism and affirmation. In Buning’s words, the novella is “a philosophical inquiry into the origin of evil and the nature of suffering” (4), an inquiry that Potok parallels with the struggle of American Jewry to come to terms with the theodical aspect of Jewish religion in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Benjamin’s pull towards Ilana, which shifts from physical to psychic, may therefore be understood as his initial, unconscious reaction to the importance of her symbolic function. In fact, it is telling that Benjamin’s physical attraction to Ilana begins to move toward a more precognitive level as the symbolism surrounding her function becomes more and more apparent.

For instance, after having been chastised by Ilana the night before for not trying hard enough to remember, Benjamin sees her in the rear-view mirror while pulling his car out of the driveway. Startled, he describes the look on her face as one of “fury so palpable he thought he heard her shouting. Angry at whom? At what? A very strange woman. Standing there at the edge of the woods with a trowel in her hand, and apparently screaming. Perhaps calling for the ram?” (243).

The almost tangible anger of Benjamin’s guide to the realm of the unconscious, as described above, recalls, on the one hand, the wrath of a Hebrew prophet; on the other, the mention of a “trowel” is significant inasmuch as this implement is the tool most
closely associated with archeological excavations, in which the archeologist must scrape away at layer upon layer in order to arrive at the primary level of sought-after material. Ilana is also involved in an excavation of sorts, but the layers at which she must scrape away are psychic layers of loss, both of memory and of faith. As she progresses in her excavation, so does the sequence of events in the story.

The resolution of the action in “The Trope Teacher,” which has as its main component the retrieval of memories buried in the unconscious, is played out on two parallel strata. The first, as mentioned, is the locus of the anima figure, personified by I.D. Chandal and her incessant drive to preserve memory. Since Benjamin Walter is a Jew who has psychically repressed his roots, it seems fitting that the adult incarnation of the character of Ilana Davita from Davita’s Harp should appear as a writer whose pen name, I.D., points back to the pre-ego form of the unconscious that Freud called “das Es”: the id. Although Freud referred to the id primarily as possessing “inherited contents” in a biological fashion, this allusion to a forgotten ethnic or racial make-up is not a stretch, especially since Freud surmised that the id is “the dark, inaccessible part of our personality” (New Introductory Lectures 78).

While one may debate the appropriateness (or veracity) of Potok’s referencing Freud’s psychic apparatus in order to signify repressed unconscious contents, we must recall that Potok has demonstrated repeatedly his fondness for evoking Freud in his fiction, particularly in The Chosen and The Promise, where he pits Freud’s modern, scientific view of the human being against the theologically-based standpoint espoused by religious Jewry. Here, as well, the allusion to Freud is made for the purpose of moving toward a resolution of the conflict in the text via an aggregate of actions both from the
umbrella society (modern-day America) and from the intertextual repository of Judaic culture. Ilana guides Benjamin in this process of recovering what he has repressed, periodically wielding the trowel as the symbol of her role, until he finally remembers the story’s modern recasting of Isaac: “The trope teacher! Why have I suddenly recalled the trope teacher?” (182).

The second stratum in the retrieval of Benjamin’s memories involves an exegetical conversation regarding the myth of the Binding of Isaac with a colleague from the university named Robert Helman, who is a survivor of Theresienstadt. This conversion is interconnected with the first stratum of the uncovering of memory, as carried out by I.D. Chandal, through her references to the Binding of Isaac (and, therefore, to the sacrifice of Isaac Zapiski). It also takes place in the story in tandem with Benjamin’s eventual outpouring of memories from the time of his participation in the liberation of the camps. This second stratum in the process may therefore also be considered as having been set in action by I.D. Chandal, since it is she who provokes the torrent of initial memory with which Benjamin will associate Helman’s interpretation of the Abraham and Isaac story, and since it is she who ultimately guides Benjamin toward his full individuation as a Jew in the modern world.

Before the above-mentioned exegetical conversation, we learn that Robert Helman, whose historiographic theories according to which “randomness,” “chance,” and “chaos” (189–91) form the building blocks of historical events, disagrees with Benjamin’s attempts to see history through the prism of connections. In the vein of that disagreement, Helman tells Benjamin a story about a boy to whom he taught trope in Theresienstadt. Helman explains: “He [the boy] wanted to learn the section about the
Binding of Isaac so he could read it to his family on his bar mitzvah.” Helman notes that the boy was learning well, and that he had a lovely chanting voice. Then, Helman recounts, one day the boy “broke into tears . . . I asked him why he was crying, and he said he remembered a story his uncle Jakob had once told him about the ram . . . the animal sacrificed in place of Isaac.” At this point in their conversation, Potok writes: “Benjamin Walter had the distinct sensation that someone had placed heavy hands upon his shoulders and was propelling him in every direction.” Helman continues:

“The uncle told him that everyone in the Garden was watching Abraham binding Isaac to the killing place on Earth, it was as if the future depended on the events of the next moment—surely all Creation would be transformed with the death of Isaac and the end of the Jewish people—and suddenly the ram pleaded to take Isaac’s place. But the ram was beloved by the angels, who refused to let it go, and the ram cried out, “The future must be saved!” and in a single leap it bounded from the Garden and vaulted off a bridge of stars and hurtled through space to the mountaintop near Abraham, and called to him in a human voice not to slaughter his son. The angels flew after the ram to bring it back, but the ram deliberately entangled its horns in a thicket and they couldn’t release it and it called again to Abraham, who unbound Isaac and managed to free the horns and sacrificed the ram in his stead” (250).

Benjamin does not immediately understand the meaning of the story from Helman’s perspective, since he struggles to comprehend the many differences between the version related to the boy via his uncle Jakob and the Biblical account. These differences are: the mysterious allusion to the “end of the Jewish people”; the angels who try to release the ram’s horn from the thicket; and the ram who speaks to Abraham in a human voice, instead of God, as takes place in the original lines from Genesis 22.11–12:

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said: “Abraham, Abraham.” And he said: ‘Here am I.’ And he said: “Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him; for now I know that thou art a God-fearing man, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me.”
Puzzled by these differences, Benjamin asks Helman to clarify:

“The boy was crying for the ram?”
“And because he thought that he was the ram.”
“He?”
“He, we, all of us were the ram.”
“Where did he get such an idea?”
“He was a very clever boy.”
“If all of you were the ram, who was Isaac?”
“I asked him that.”
“And he said?”
“The civilized people of the world.”
“He said that?”
“I told you, he was a very clever boy.”
“And who was Abraham?”
“I asked him that, too.”
“And?”
“For a long time he wouldn’t answer. When I asked him again, he said, ‘Maybe the ones who are holding the knife.’” (250–51; italics in the original)

Benjamin does not press Helman for an explanation of this reworking of the myth of the Binding of Isaac, for he will not fully understand its significance until his last, fateful meeting with Ilana. He simply asks Helman what happened to the boy, and is told that he had his bar mitzvah, read beautifully, and four days later, “he was shipped to Auschwitz, where they killed him right away.” Robert Helman casually sums up the moral of this incident by calling it “the sacrifice of the ram” (251).

After the conversation between the two colleagues, and after numerous entreaties from Ilana, Benjamin is finally able to remember the critical details of the story of Isaac Zapiski, which he pours out to Ilana in a state of great agitation. Once he remembers, however, he wants to forget again. When asked by Ilana how he feels about his old trope teacher, he tells her: “Mr. Zapiski? An antique, a disgrace. He should never have gone back to Europe” (267). Ilana is not satisfied with his answer, and so questions him again on the implication of “rams.” Whereas he is dismissive, she persists: “A ram always
comes as an astonishment. Do you know what a ram is, Benjamin? A ‘random act of menschlichkeit’” (268). Here, Ilana uses the Yiddish word mensch, which comes from the same term in German, meaning “man” or “human being.” In Yiddish, however, the connotation of mensch is one of a person of moral uprightness or of a high ethical standard. The term menschlichkeit, when translated literally, signifies the components that make one a mensch. Therefore, a more liberal translation of the Yiddish terminology in Ilana’s definition of a ram as “a random act of menschlichkeit” might be, “a random act of righteousness toward one’s fellow human beings.” Benjamin’s response to her exposé on the meaning of the ram is to say to her, matter-of-factly, “You know about rams,” to which she replies, “My stories are about what the world is like when there are no rams” (268). This last sentence of Ilana’s summarizes her anima function for Benjamin as the negotiator between the everyday psyche and the repressed contents of the unconscious. It also points to the symbolic entirety of the act of her writing (or of her encouraging others to write) in Old Men at Midnight as an exercise in normative Jewish ethics for the modern era, not to mention as an ontological and hermeneutic inquiry into the nature of theodicy.

We have seen that Ilana’s explanation to Benjamin with respect to the nature of the ram contradicts the interpretation suggested by Helman. Let us now clarify the differences between them, starting with an examination of the three deviations from the Biblical source in Robert Helman’s story. The first, according to which the angels think that the “end of the Jewish people” will come about because of the sacrifice of Isaac, implies that Abraham the father is not under a God-given commandment to sacrifice his son, since in the Bible, the inverse is true: God commands Abraham to sacrifice Isaac in
order that he prove his devotion as a true follower. In Helman’s story, God is absent from the whole tale, signifying the clash between long-held Judaic views on theodicy and the associations with the concept of sacrifice in the modern era. Second, the angels who try to release the ram’s horns from the thicket in Helman’s relating of the story do not appear in the Biblical text at all (save the one angel who tells Abraham to drop the knife), and their reluctance to accept the ram’s desire for self-sacrifice testifies to their opposition of maintaining a “scapegoat” mentality. Third, it is the ram who speaks to Abraham in a human voice, and not the angel of God, as takes place in the original lines from Genesis 22.11–12. This intimates that the person performing the act has no divine basis upon which to justify this action, making the sacrifice patently absurd. Moreover, Helman uses the traditional Christian designation of “sacrifice” (instead of the more neutral, theodically-grounded Judaic appellation of “binding”) as the primary attribute for this incident, consequently erasing any of the commonly-held moral or allegorical associations in Jewish doctrine from the bar mitzvah boy’s version of the myth.

Thus, Helman wishes to imply that the ram (i.e., the Jewish people, especially those who perished in the Holocaust) considers it logical to be sacrificed (i.e., agrees to continue being the scapegoat) for the civilized people of the world (Isaac), who are at risk of being eliminated by the ones holding the “knife” (Abraham) over them, since they have somehow become accustomed to being put in the position of sacrifice for an entity that wants to maintain allegiance to a certain creed or following. However, since the directive for the sacrifice from God is missing, as is the expected reprieve by God from the slaughter at the last moment, then there is no ultimate meaning for the ram’s action. It is a loss devoid of purpose; an insignificant, tragic act that presupposes neither
justification nor redemption. Moreover, the chilling equation between Abraham and the Nazis suggests that the belief in a dogmatic, overarching narrative is at best illusory, and at worst, destructive.

Ilana, however, proposes a bridge between the blind faith of Zapiski, who went back to Europe and walked straight into the jaws of the beast, and Helman, whose championing of randomness can only espouse despair. Her usage of the ram as an acronym for “a random act of menschlichkeit” (268) is meant to persuade Benjamin, and hence the reader, that there is a moral component in the course of human history, in stark opposition to Helman’s nonaligned theory of “randomness” as the predominant underpinning of historical occurrence. Her insistence upon this fact provides Benjamin with a key “connection,” about which he had theorized in history in general, which will now allow him to connect the dots between his own private life, the life of the collective, and the quest for meaning via a fixed moral standard. From this perspective, Ilana allows Benjamin to extricate himself from the psychically-numbing position of being “propell[ed] in every direction” (250). She also makes him realize that his decision to enlist in the war of his own free will was itself an act of menschlichkeit, since it involved assisting in the liberation of millions of human beings from a murderous regime.

What, therefore, is Ilana’s message to Benjamin Walter concerning the modern world in which, according to Rabbi Zev Leff, “morals are intrinsically fluid, and [are] subject to change” (qtd. in Freedman par. 11)? It is the recognition that, at least in its conceptual basis, the establishment of (and belief in) a sacred covenant points to the

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102 From a lecture on Amalek given by Rabbi Zev Leff, presented at Aish HaTorah yeshiva in Jerusalem, Israel, 2001.
promulgation of, and necessity for, a fixed moral standard. This standard, we should recall, was a historical anomaly at the time of the earliest Hebraic religion, since the ethnic groups who surrounded the descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in their formative period as a people had not yet come into contact with the idea of a singular, nomocratic code, such as the one purported to be inherent in ethical monotheism. Elaborating on the meaning of this singularity, Rabbi Tzaddok Hakohen points to two opposite ends of the spectrum of moral reflection existent among the peoples surrounding the Israelites around the time of the inception of Mosaic law: “Amalek is a scoffer who believes in nothing, and Jethro [Moses’ father-in-law, a Midianite convert] is naïve, believing everything” (qtd. in Freeman par. 9).

Put another way, the message that Ilana transmits to Benjamin in “The Trope Teacher” is that neither atheism nor blind devotion are options for the ensured continuation of the Jewish people. As Potok affirms in the introduction to Joseph P. Czarniecki’s Last Traces: The Lost Art of Auschwitz, a central role the modern Jew must take in the wake of the Nazi Holocaust is to “continue to exist . . . as witnesses to this darkest of human events and to the tenacity of the human spirit” (xv). It is therefore the challenge of modern Jewry to confront the atrocities of history, in order to be a true “light unto the nations” (Isaiah 60.2–3).

After Benjamin returns home from his final meeting with Ilana, during which he commits himself to preserving the memory of the trope teacher, he observes Ilana from the window of his study, now in a state of frenetic writing. He notes that she appears to be “swollen” again, with “rotund features and thick lips and double chin, buttocks and thighs that spilled over the edge of her chair.” Suddenly, despite the physical distance
between their houses, Benjamin hears her say “Warum?” (“Why”) (271), echoing Zapiski’s frequent Yiddish question word, and the same word that the Holocaust survivor in Germany had croaked at him (261), as he demanded to know what took the Americans so long to become involved in stopping the Nazi genocide. At this point in the story, Potok writes that the astonished Benjamin “threw open the window and saw a shadowy figure limping along the driveway toward the woods at the back of the house . . . Then he heard the whispered word ‘warum’ and the trope chant began from the woods.” Finally, at the conclusion of “The Trope Teacher,” Benjamin realizes that the “warum” and the trope chant that he had heard supposedly from Ilana, and then from the woods, actually “had risen from him” (273).

This episode marks Benjamin’s final stage of individuation, in which he fully integrates into the role of the “new Jew” senex—a role that he had shied away from after the physical and psychic traumas of the war and the loss of faith that followed his witnessing first-hand the horrors of the Holocaust. Since the period of his search for Zapiski among the ruins of European Jewry, Benjamin had married a Gentile woman, forgotten about learning trope, and consequently, became out of touch with the Jewish tradition. To be sure, what happens to him in the end is not the simple morphing of his character into that of Zapiski’s. And yet, Benjamin’s psychic make-up at the end of the story is indeed presented as the amalgamation of two key components in Potok’s Conservative branch of Judaism: first, a rich knowledge of, and respect for, the orthodox inheritance of Eastern European Jewish tradition; and second, the realization that the modern, thinking individual cannot rely solely on pietistic or dogmatic religious philosophy in order to find meaning in the world. As Ilana Davita Chandal illustrates
through her interpretation of the story of Abraham and Isaac, action on behalf of one’s fellow human beings is a necessary component of understanding the conundrum of theodicy, although it does not assume the absence of a critical perspective that one might take toward the promulgation of religious praxis.

In other words, Ilana demonstrates that faith must coexist with the search for meaning, and that both of these principles are dependant upon acts of righteousness toward one’s fellow human beings (“random acts of menschlichkeit”). This does not imply that meaningful solutions must be found solely in Judaism, although a balanced, investigative inquiry into the Biblical texts may very well be a legitimate place (for a Jew) to begin. Not surprisingly, Ilana’s role as the guide toward the Jewish tradition’s store of ethical wisdom mirrors the same direction taken by Potok in his non-fiction writings on the future of Judaism: namely, that faith must coexist with an unwavering search for meaning. For instance, in the section entitled “Inside Modern Paganism” in *Wanderings: Chaim Potok’s History of the Jews* (1978), Potok writes:

> Everything seems to be in fragments: Judaism, Christendom, socialism, the secular dream of Hume that man can manage on his own—it is in pieces around us. We are in an interregnum between worlds, groping about, peering into the future and seeing only our own image vaguely reflected in the dark glass. For many Jews there is a sense of constant struggle with frightening echoes of the past, a wariness that is the reflex of a battered people, a defensiveness after millennia of anti-Semitism, and a fear that once more we might lose hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of our people as we compete in the open marketplace of ideas during this confrontation with secularism. The Jew sees all his contemporary history refracted through the ocean of blood that is the Holocaust. But there is also a sense of renewal, a forced sharpening of our self-identity, a feeling that we are approaching some distant fertile plain, though we cannot clearly make out the paths leading to it. (523–24)

Out of all the paths suggested for the aforementioned renewal of the Jewish people in “The Trope Teacher,” the most essential is the preservation of collective memory, a feat
that Ilana helps the history professor to internalize by making him conscious of the fact that “the obstacle [to remembering] was not a paucity of memory but a surfeit. Memory, once begun, swelling to a detonation, a blazing eruption” (254).

The above-cited allusions to “surfeit” and “swelling” (254) also bring to light the second Biblical motif concerning I.D. Chandal and her anima function, which manifests itself in the instances in which she appears suddenly obese. Since these instances occur when she is in the act of writing—presented by Potok as a duty akin to divine worship, since it entails the preservation of the memory of the Jewish people—it may be said that she becomes “fat,” or righteous, when performing a duty on behalf of the Jewish people. In this case, the duty is the preservation of collective memory. Her efforts toward this goal within the framework of her anima function (including her guidance of Benjamin, which is also presented as a mitzvah, or a righteous deed performed out of a religious sense of duty) recall the following Biblical maxims: “The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be abundantly gratified” (Proverbs 13.4); “The beneficent soul shall be made rich” (Proverbs 11.25); and, “He that is of a greedy spirit stirreth up strife; but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be abundantly gratified” (Proverbs 28.25). All of these passages contain the future passive voice construction of the Hebrew verb ledashen (respectively translated above as “abundantly gratified,” “made rich,” and “abundantly gratified), which can mean, “to fertilize,” “to make rich or full-bodied,” or, more figuratively, “to make fat.” Therefore, the obesity that envelops Ilana during the periods of her writing is intended by Potok to function as an intertextual allusion to the aforementioned Biblical citations, in which the
qualities of faith, munificence, and conscientiousness are paired with the putting on of weight.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how Chaim Potok’s fiction subverts, recasts, and reinterprets several key characters, tropes, and myths from the intertextual reservoir of Judaic culture, along the lines of emphatically American concerns. In particular, Potok’s advocacy of the tenets of Conservative Judaism, in which the best of modern secular culture and scholarship are to be integrated with a non-literalist view toward traditional religious principles, emerges as the major didactic component of the literary works examined herein.

The archetype of the senex in these works by Chaim Potok falls into two major categories: the rabbinical and the “new Jew” senex. By creating a fusion between the wisdoms inherent in each category, Potok keeps the discursive Judaic textual tradition alive, albeit combining it with a perspective that embraces the modern world. In other words, the “new Jew” senex consciousness is part and parcel of a process of social renewal, which, Mario Jacoby reminds us, “stands for the possibility of a differentiated orientation to the world by means of categories and norms” (87). The individuation of both main protagonists discussed here, Benjamin Walter and Asher Lev, mirrors this fusion, and makes them both manifestations of senex consciousness: Lev, in his role as a public artist and intellectual; and Benjamin, in his role as a writer and university teacher. Both serve as teachers/interpreters of history, in semi-prophetic positions.
The demarcation between the senex and the shadow archetypes in the literary works of Chaim Potok is less straight-forward than in the works of A. B. Yehoshua or Chochana Boukhobza (as seen in the following chapter), mainly because Potok’s Jews stand at the forefront of a number of conflicting—some might even say mutually exclusive—sub-cultural and spiritual movements. In the same way that Potok’s characters struggle to move Jewish-American life away from the “caste” (ultra-orthodox) syndrome to something more inclusive of the umbrella civilization (namely, Conservative Judaism), their earliest environmental stimuli are saturated with Chasidic religious praxis, where religious texts and Judaic symbolism “hard-wire” them in such a way that they are never able to cut themselves off totally from that world. In the case of Asher Lev, his response to shadow contents is not, as we have seen in the stories of Yehoshua, an all-out abandonment of traditional principles; rather, it is promoting the idea that fusing those principles with the best of objective, modern thought is the most appropriate way to ensure the continuation of Judaism in the modern (American) world.

The archetype of the anima in Potok’s “The Trope Teacher,” in the guise of I.D. Chandal, has as its primary objective the retrieval of what the collective has repressed (Hillman, *Anima* 129), which in this case means everything connected to Benjamin Walter’s memories of his teacher Isaac Zapiiski. The pathological inclinations made conscious by the anima are foregrounded in Benjamin’s inability to either salvage or process these memories. In this particular story, the anima is not recast by Potok as a modern-day avatar of a particular figure from Judaic lore; rather, it is a composite of thematic, intertextual, and religious tropes that work in conjunction with the other
instantiations of Biblical motifs and/or characters in the text to bring forth the recognition of suppressed contents, and to negotiate between the conscious and unconscious realms.
Chapter 5: Chochana Boukhobza: Toward an Engenderment of the Sacred

1. The Senex Archetype

The senex archetype in the work of Chochana Boukhobza’s that I analyze in this chapter, Un été à Jérusalem (“A Summer in Jerusalem”), is markedly dissimilar from the senex figures explored in the chapters on the fiction of A. B. Yehoshua and Chaim Potok. Unlike the literary work of her two counterparts, Boukhobza’s work is characterized by an almost complete disconnect between the embodiments of the law-abiding principle in her particular (Tunisian-Jewish) subculture and the actual relevance of this consciousness, from the perspective of systematic functionality, to the external reality lived in by Boukhobza’s protagonists. Consequently, there is no room for compromise with the logos principle in the context of Boukhobza’s narratives of revolt. The novel analyzed in this chapter is the first in a series of such narratives that focus on the efforts of her female characters to escape the confines of an authoritative patriarchal structure.

Un été à Jérusalem is the semi-autobiographical story of an unnamed female narrator who left Tunisia as a child and then immigrated to Israel via France. The members of the narrator’s family had struggled financially and socially in France before being persuaded by their daughter to immigrate to Israel for Zionist ideals, and so they are, at the beginning of the book, residents of Jerusalem; their daughter is on a brief visit to Israel in the summer of 1983 in order to see them. The narrator relates that after having come to study in Israel as a teenager, she had lived in the country for three years before her parents made the move from France to join her. However, between the period that she
had convinced them to make their metaphoric ‘aliyah (“ascent”) to Israel and the time of their arrival, she became disillusioned about life in the Zionist state and saw the idea of “the Promised Land as a deception” (Eli 12). Fatigued by the constant threat of war and the establishment’s discrimination against non-Ashkenazi Jews and local Palestinians, the narrator describes herself during that period as “déjà perdue pour Israël, l’Israël antique qui s’obstine à reconstituer l’univers biblique” (43; “already devoid of hope with regard to Israel, the ancient Israel that persists in reconstructing the universe of the Bible”). Several years have passed between her departure from Israel and the summer in which she makes the reluctant visit to her now-Jerusalemite family. The summer of 1983 is historically significant in that it is approximately one year after the beginning of the First Lebanon War, which has plunged Israel into a state of emergency.

The backdrop of the war is also critical for the plot development of the novel as a whole, as both of the narrator’s brothers, in addition to two of her close male acquaintances, see action on the Lebanese front. While only one of these men dies, the narrator’s careful observation of the unfolding events of the conflict parallels the trajectory of her revolt and her descent into madness. In fact, the coverage of the war occurs in strategic tandem with the chronological sequence of incidents in the book. These incidents include the quotidian episodes of her rebellion against the patriarchal confines of her parents’ home; her falling in love with a fellow North African Jew; and the final uncovering of her second personality, which manifests itself in the form of “the whore of Jerusalem.”

The beginning of the novel contains a key scene regarding the initial appearance of the senex archetype. As she is being ferried from the airport in Lod (formerly the
Palestinian village of Lydda) to her parents’ residence in Jerusalem, the narrator has a heated exchange with a taxi driver concerning loyalty to Israel. The derogatory tone in which the protagonist speaks to the driver, a man roughly the age of her father who openly chastises her for living outside of the country, reveals her contemptuous mistrust of those who espouse an unwavering commitment to the Zionist cause, and who are therefore in no position to be “givers of wisdom.”

For instance, when the driver of the shared taxi asks her, “Tu ne te plaisais pas ici? La guerre te fait peur, peut-être?” (12; “You didn’t like it here? Maybe the war scares you?”), she answers, “Peut-être” (12; “Maybe”), essentially admitting to the driver that the constant state of confrontation, which terrorizes her, is one of the principal reasons that she has decided to live abroad. The driver’s subsequent arguments to her go wholly unengaged, as if she had taken it for granted from the outset that the man’s utterances were devoid of any insight; and her non-responses to his rationales betray this disdain on her part. When he shouts at her from the front seat, “Eh bien moi, la guerre, lorsqu’il y va de notre vie, je suis pour! Je n’ai aucun scrup! ” (12; “For me, when it comes to war and our lives are at stake, I’m all for it! I don’t have any qualms about it!”), her reaction is, again, a refusal to engage: “J’allume une cigarette en souriant” (12; “Smiling, I light up a cigarette”). When they arrive in Jerusalem and the taxi driver exits the scene, the narratological account of the story switches from dialogue to a subvocalizing interior monologue, in which the young woman presents the first clue to her own hierarchy of reverence.

The narrator relates that the first thing to catch her eye as they pull up to her parents’ home is the face of the Palestinian Arab landscaper: “Ce qui me frappe en
descendant du taxi . . . c’est la présence du jardiner arabe, qui, les yeux fixés au ciel, le visage contraint, éclabousse d’un jet mal dirigé un arbuste chétif. Rien n’a donc changé depuis mon départ? Les arbres sont toujours chétifs” (12; “What strikes me as I come down from the taxi . . . is the presence of the Arab gardener, who, with his eyes gazing toward the sky, his face restrained, sprays a stunted shrub with a poorly-directed burst of water. So nothing has changed since I left? The trees are still stunted”). This description of the unnamed Palestinian employed by the narrator’s parents will return throughout the novel as an illustration of the indigenous residents’ “natural” connection to the land (which neither the native Israelis nor the Tunisian immigrants possess), epitomized by their physical proximity to the soil. Furthermore, as Eli notes, the word “arbres” (“trees”) is an anagram of the word “arabes” (“Arabs”)—a rearrangement of letters that also points to the Arab Palestinian’s enduring presence in the land (83). Thus, the text implies that the Arab gardener, who is forced to make a living by taking part in a misleading aesthetic facade commissioned by the Jewish residents of Israel, is in fact (as will soon become apparent) the genuine carrier of wisdom in the grand equation. He knows the land the most intimately by virtue of his “roots.” And yet, this position of strength is represented as furtive since, for all practical purposes, both the “Arabe” (12; “Arab”) and the “arbre” (12; “tree”) are depicted as “chétif” (12; “stunted”) because of the harshness of the surrounding environment.

Joseph Brami calls Boukhobza’s illustration of the Arab populace here “a kind of pro-Palestinianism, so to speak, expressed not so much in terms of a real political analysis of the situation, but as a deep sympathy for the Arab population of Jerusalem” (252). While it is likely that much of the narrator’s malaise at witnessing the suppression
of the Palestinian people stems from the fact that she hails from a country where, as she says, “durant des siècles, le juif a vécu en paix avec le musulman” (192; “for centuries, the Jew lived in peace with the Muslim”), I would go beyond qualifying the narrator’s sentiments for the local Arabs as mere commiseration. Rather, I maintain that the images of Palestinian Arabs in Un été à Jérusalem function as the inconspicuous harbingers of a heightened perception—a certain precognitive form of insight—that will profoundly influence the actions of the narrator. For the moment, this insight takes on the form of a symbolic warning of things to come, but will later appear as a more unequivocal instantiation in the form of the anima, characterized as the mediatrix between repressed collective contents and existent collective psychoses.

The mention of an underdeveloped “arbuste” (12; “shrub,” “bush”), which, it is suggested, the Arab has been watering without a clearly successful result, also conjures up for the Francophone reader an image of the “arbuste ardent,” which is one way of translating into French the Hebrew construction hasneh habo’er (“the burning bush”—the flaming shrub from which God speaks to Moses in Exodus 3.2–4. The narrator first catches sight of the Arab gardener as he is face to face with the same kind of plant, which is also “burning” from the heat of the desert sun, as he attempts in vain to water it; while performing this chore, the Arab’s eyes are “fixés au ciel” (12; “focused on the sky”). In a later scene with the same gardener, the area in which he is working is referred to as “cette fournaise” (168; “this furnace”), again making reference to the burning bush. The parallels in this description of the protagonist’s initial encounter with the gardener hint at an intertextual affiliation between the Palestinian and the archetypal figure of Moses,
when the Giver of the Law first appears to him in Exodus 3 and commands him to journey back into the land of Egypt:

Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the farthest end of the wilderness, and came to the mountain of God, unto Horeb. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said: “I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.” And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said: “Moses, Moses.” And he said: “Here am I.” (Exod. 3.1–4)

The narrator’s reaction to beholding the Arab gardener in front of her parents’ home is telling, since the evident effect it has upon her indicates more than a passing observation. In fact, in addition to her intimation that the Arab represents a true illustration of belonging to the land, the intertextual associations that Boukhobza creates between the proximity of the Arab to the soil, his connection to the heavens, and the above-cited Biblical scene recall the larger senex persona of Moses in general, who is considered in Judaism to be the most important prophet of the Hebrew Scriptures, in part because (in Exodus 19) Moses accepts God’s commandments on behalf of all of the people of Israel. In traditional Judaic thought, Moses is also regarded as the author of the Pentateuch, and thereby referred to in Hebrew as Moshe rabeinu (“Moses our teacher”), since it is he who acts as the transmitter of the Law, he who creates a textual repository for the history of the Jewish people, and he who instructs generation after generation in the nomocratic code of Mosaic monotheism by way of the Five Books of Moses. He does not, however, live to set foot in the Promised Land (Deut. 34.5), much like the metaphoric tribulation of the Palestinian, who, it is suggested, will most likely not live to see a flourishing society for him and his children.
While the Palestinian gardener is not reconfigured throughout the entire course of the novel solely as the precise avatar of Moses, his imagery in this initial scene does indeed hearken back to the Biblical tropes surrounding the revered transmitter of the law. Moreover, the character of the Arab gardener, whose look is described as “contraint” (12; “restrained”) in the midst of the chaos of Israel in 1983, conveys an impression of dignity and stateliness throughout the totality of his appearances in the text. His demeanor contrasts the other potential (male) senex figures in the story, who are presented as utterly unable to even convey any semblance of astuteness, since they, like the political entity of Israel, are shown to be completely out of control in their drive to impose their will by force.

The narrator’s parents do not share her perspective on the Arab gardener as a wise figure. By the same token, neither do they note the connection between their hired laborer toiling in the sun and the first prized decoration that the narrator describes as she enters the house: a series of engravings that have been set up with great care, “protégées par des plaques de verre” (14; “protected by plates of glass”), representing “des scènes de Moïse traversant la mer Rouge” (14; “scenes of Moses crossing the Red Sea”). The narrator alludes to the now-defunct Judeo-Islamic interdependence in the Tunisia of her childhood by calling these ornaments “vestiges d’une Tunisie perdue” (14; “relics of a lost Tunisia”). In doing so, she is indirectly referencing the scene that she has just witnessed outside of the house: a scene also involving a representation of Moses, albeit one where the transmission of wisdom, and not the act of deliverance, stands out as the crucial component.
In contrast to the sharp and systemic ridicule of the majority of the male Jewish figures in Boukhobza’s text, the Palestinian residents of Jerusalem are portrayed almost exclusively as possessing the same kind of dignified insight as the Arab gardener. While the gardener is the major avatar in the text for the transformations and/or incarnations of familiar Judaic imagery and motifs, his senex role (and contents) are, to a large extent, common to the other figures of Palestinians who inhabit the novel. Thus, the placement of the senex function into the vessel of the characters that have no visible “agency” vis-à-vis their Jewish counterparts reflects, on the one hand, the impotence of the other failed (potential) senex figures in the text, who supposedly have returned in triumph and glory to a Third Jewish Commonwealth. Moreover, it concretizes the notion that in electing to subjugate the Arab inhabitants of Israel to the status of second-class citizens, the Zionist leadership has refused to internalize the lessons learned from the example of Judeo-Arab coexistence in North Africa, which yielded over a thousand years of inter-communal enrichment. Granted, one may point out the fact that Boukhobza engages in a hyperromanticized depiction of Judeo-Arab coexistence, since full equality was never the case in predominantly-Muslim North Africa, where Jews held the dhimmi (“covenant of protection”) status as non-Muslim ahl al-kitab (“People of the Book”). Nevertheless, her well-founded assertions that relations between Muslims and Jews in North Africa fared far better than relations between Jews and Christians in Europe, or between Jews and Arabs in Israel, are difficult to argue with.

103 For more on the status of dhimmi, see Lewis 44, 47, 106, 170.
Despite the fact that the Palestinian Arabs in Boukhobza’s novel have little direct interaction with the quotidian goings-on of the book’s Jewish characters, the consciousness attributed to these Arabs, in classic senex fashion, is often presented as linked to tangible manifestations of structure, which are vital to the “foundation” of the Zionist enterprise. For instance, at one point in the novel, the protagonist’s cousin, Myriam, surmises that the country would cease to exist if it were not for the local Arab population, because, she reasons, they are the ones who provide Israel with its general work force (201). The protagonist also mentions this inconvenient detail as she is waiting at a bus stop with two Arab laborers, who, in their reserved stateliness, signal to the narrator that “ils ne sont pas des chiens de la route, mais les rois déchus d’un pays où je serai toujours une passante” (102; “they are not dogs of the street, but the deposed kings of a country in which I will always be a casual onlooker”). Similarly, when the narrator sees a group of Bedouin picking up scattered refuse in Beersheba (46), her casual revealing of the fact that it is the town council that employs them hints at the Jewish inhabitants’ dependence upon the local Arab populace. In Plapp’s estimation, this remark constitutes a critique of “Israel’s destruction of the land and its indigenous native peoples” (168). While concurring with Plapp’s statement, I go one step further by proposing that the continuous depictions of physical dependence upon the Arab community throughout the novel amount to a veiled subversion of one of the most celebrated Zionist slogans: “Anu banu artsah livnot ulehibanot bah” (“We came to the Land to build and be built in it”), a motto that has its origins in the nationalist rhetoric
immediately following the massacre of Jews in Kishinev, Bessarbia, in 1903. After all, if the story’s Jewish residents of Israel are portrayed as unable, or unwilling, to maintain a physical connection with the land on the same level as the local Arab population, the insinuation is that their capacity to dominate the territory in question is, in the long run, uncertain.

This same lack of an innate connection with the land also carries over into the protagonist’s depictions of the “abnormal” conceptual picture, held by Jews from the Diaspora, regarding the daily reality of modern Israel. For example, in one scene, the narrator describes several disgruntled Tunisian immigrants to Israel, who now consider Jerusalem to be “une caprice qui coûte cher” (32; “a troublesome illusion”), as individuals doomed to remain “des transfuges, maniant maladroitement la langue, tétant la Bible comme dernier recours” (32; “defectors who are inept at managing the language, and who suck away at the Bible as their last recourse”). In another scene, the narrator witnesses a group of foreign Jewish tourists, who, much like her parents, still see Israel’s task as one whose purpose is to “reconstituer l’univers biblique” (“43; “reconstruct the universe of the Bible”). As the visitors are gaping in wide-eyed glee at a Jewish Israeli soldier performing a security check in the Old City of Jerusalem, the narrator smugly remarks: “Ce soldat qui marche, qui les frôle, qui dans un instant disparaîtra, ne représente qu’un ornement, un symptôme d’exotisme . . . D’ailleurs, rien ici n’est juif, hormis peut-être la tristesse oppressante de la ville” (195; “This soldier who brushes up against them as he walks, who, in a moment will vanish, only represents an

104 For more on the Kishinev pogroms and the uses of this phrase in the context of Jewish nation-building efforts, see Zakim 2–11.
embellishment, a sign of exoticism . . . Besides, nothing here is Jewish, except maybe the oppressive gloom of the city”). With those words, the protagonist effectively demonstrates her blanket refusal to be influenced by any potential Jewish claims to the land, whether Zionist or otherwise. Her statement also indirectly references the tourists’ inability to link the actions of the soldier with the suppression of the Palestinian populace, a confrontation that bestows upon the city, in this particular instance, an aura of misery.

And yet, at other times in Boukhobza’s text, the imagery surrounding Jerusalem is markedly upbeat. In such instances, the Zionist elements are notably censored. I therefore only partly concur with Plapp’s explanation that “the ancient and Holy City has a unique allure [for the narrator] as it evokes memories of the lost North Africa” (243). Rather, I posit that the Old City of Jerusalem, with its dominant Muslim presence and distinctly Arab characteristics, functions as one of the symbolically-charged loci of what might be termed a so-called “natural” relationship between the territory and its inhabitants.

The narrator undoubtedly savors her interaction with the Old City’s Muslim residents; and this, to some extent, does indeed recall the past communal life between Arabs and Jews in North Africa. An example of this interaction is evidenced when the protagonist goes with her mother to an Arab coiffeur in the Old City. “Mansour nous accueille avec enthousiasme” (103; “Mansour greets us excitedly”), she recounts. “Il s’adresse en arabe à ma mère, réjoui par certains de ses termes dont la prononciation a varié entre l’Afrique du Nord et le Moyen-Orient” (103; “He addresses my mother in Arabic, amused by her articulation of certain terms that are pronounced differently in North Africa than in the Middle East”). Here, we see that the animosity between the
Jewish residents and their Palestinian neighbors is noticeably absent, perhaps because the Jewish male characters (whom the protagonist has already rejected as potential senex figures) do not appear on the scene.

However, beyond creating a comparison with the bygone days of Tunisia, the Old City also serves as a meeting point between the narrator and two other potential senex figures: two other “Arab Jews,” Roger and Henry, former North Africans like herself, who feel a profound alliance with Israel’s Arab minority. These two men, who hail respectively from Algeria and Morocco, are represented as glimmers of hope in the drive to create a more egalitarian society in the Israeli state, and their “Oriental” leanings endear them both to the narrator and to the local Palestinian community. (Worthy of mention here is the fact that Roger’s and Henry’s countries of origin, Algeria and Morocco, are the two other geographic areas that, together with Tunisia, make up the tripartite region of the Maghreb, where the majority of pre-1948 North African Jewry was situated.)

Of course, the component that the narrator finds most attractive about these men is their ties to the Arab world, from the perspective of both ancestral lineage and cultural sensitivity. For instance, during an exchange with Roger in Jerusalem, when they are both surrounded by Arabs, the narrator illustrates this attraction as she pauses from her delight in the conversation to suddenly recall her French-Jewish lover, Bernard, whom she has left behind in Paris. Even though Bernard is Jewish, the idea that he, as an Ashkenazi, could potentially be in Roger’s place (i.e., feel comfortable in a Jerusalem teeming with

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105 See Chouraqui 136–38.
Arabs) is seen as in diametrical opposition to the natural state of things. “Bernard à Jérusalem?” (28; “Bernard in Jerusalem?”), the narrator only half-muses to herself. Later on, she admits to her brother that Bernard’s lack of understanding about her Tunisian identity has led to a situation in which she cannot truly say that she loves him, “car il n’a pas voulu ou pas su m’interroger sur mon passé” (122; “because he did not want, or did not know how to ask me about my past”). She then references her longing for a true sense of connection by invoking the same term already used to describe the garden bush watered by the Arab: “ardent” (“burning”). “Une part de moi, la plus ardente, est restée ici, à l’arrière” (122; “A part of me, the most ardent part, has stayed behind here”), she says.

Roger, who introduces the narrator to Henry, also provides a kind of ideological role model for her, in the sense that he has made her aware of the particulars of Israel’s shortcomings with respect to the Palestinian issue. During the period in which she had first come to Israel as a teenager, she relates, Roger had dispelled some of her naïve notions about Zionism by being “l’un des premiers à deviner la crise” (74; “one of the first to foresee the crisis”), the “crisis” presumably being the election of the right-wing Likud government led by Menachem Begin in 1977. This is the same government that would, during the summer before the narrator’s visit, send Israeli troops into Lebanon. She notes that she and Roger initially argued about “le sionisme et la condition des Arabes en territoires occupés” (75; “Zionism and the condition of the Arabs in the Occupied Territories”), subjects that were “pas au goût du jour” (75; “not in vogue at the time”). Roger has formed these opinions from his many years of reserve duty in the Israeli military, which “l’avait rendu sauvage. Il trainait avec lui une amertume féroce
 contre Israël” (74 ; “had made him savage. He carried with him a violent resentment toward Israel”).

Despite Roger’s convictions that many of Israel’s political decisions are immoral, he insists that he has nowhere to go besides Israel, first of all because he would not feel at home in “Occidental” Europe; and second, because he cannot go back to Morocco on account of the threat of anti-Jewish racism. Moreover, Roger has no illusions about Israel simply relying on the goodwill of its neighbors in order to bring about a situation of mutual recognition. For this reason, he continues to serve in the military reserves, including throughout the First Lebanon War, during which he receives occasional furloughs. On one of these furloughs, the narrator asks him why he still agrees to be called up to reserve duty, even though he “n’es[t] pas d’accord avec cette guerre” (78; “doesn’t agree with this war”). In a classic instance of affirmative, balanced senex rhetoric, Roger says to her: “Et alors? Fuir n’a jamais rien résolu. C’est d’ici que je dois me battre si je veux changer les choses” (78 ; “So what? Running away never solved anything. It’s from here that I’ll have to fight if I want to change things”).

The other senex figure in the text, Henry, becomes the protagonist’s lover over the course of her summer visit. At their initial meeting, she admits that she feels drawn to him because “tu es de ma race” (175; “you and I belong to the same race”). When they make love for the first time, this connection is evidenced by the noises they hear outside of his apartment in the Arab quarter of the city, where “tous les chants des mosquées déferlent dans la chambre. La voix d’une femme palestinienne s’élève, enrouée, dominant le gémissement du luth et le charivari des tambourines” (172 ; “all of the chanted prayers
from the mosques rush into the room. The voice of a Palestinian woman rises with a throaty harshness, dominating the wail of the lute and the clamor of the tambourines”).

Henry, now a citizen of France, has been sent to Israel by the French governmental research organization, Le Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (“The National Center for Scientific Research”), to interview both Arab and Jewish political figures about their stances on the war in Lebanon. Officially, this is the reason for his visit. However, Henry reveals to the narrator that he is truly intrigued by the assignment because it allows him to piece back together the Judeo-Islamic roots of his identity, from which he had been isolated since leaving Algeria as a child. In Israel, he tells her, “Je marche à reculons. Je piste des sons, des odeurs, des gestes familiaires. Je tente de remonter l’échelle d’une tradition. Faire du nouveau l’ancien quand l’ancien est nouveau” (175; “I’m going backwards. I’m on the trail of sounds, smells, familiar gestures. I’m trying to go back up the ladder of a tradition. To create anew the ancient when the ancient is new”).

The “ancient tradition” spoken of by Henry is obviously the legacy of Judeo-Arabic coexistence in the Maghreb, of which he now feels he has a chance to gain a better understanding in Israel. The protagonist explains his desire to explore the possibilities of coexistence in the following manner: “Dès son arrivée en Israël, le Juif en lui avait cherché l’Arabe. Il s’était introduit dans quelques cercles palestiniens, étudiait la langue, déchiffrait le Coran” (175 ; “Since his arrival in Israel, the Jew in him had sought out the Arab. He became involved with several Palestinian circles, studied the language, deciphered the Qur’an”). In that regard, Henry also represents senex consciousness tied to a certain kind of traditional Judeo-Arabic propriety, albeit one of equilibrium and
compromise. As he confides to the narrator with regard to his split Judeo-Arabic identity: “Je ne veux pas prendre parti . . . devant les paysages de ce pays, je regrette parfois qu’il soient habités” (176; “I don’t want to take sides . . . when I look at the vista of this country, I sometimes feel sorry that it’s inhabited”). Henry’s desire to rediscover his Judeo-Arabic roots notwithstanding, religion plays no part in his senex configuration; indeed, he describes himself as “un parfait athée” (145; “a complete atheist”).

Although Henry’s death at the end of the novel prevents him from truly fulfilling his senex function, Boukhobza depicts his character as maintaining an associative tie with the Arab senex in the novel, who, it has been noted, is most readily identified with the figure of the gardener. Henry’s desire to intermingle with the Arab population represents an affirmative approach, as does his decision to not take sides politically, not to mention the function of his research, which serves as a medium for Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. Similarly, the Arab gardener is also shown to be apolitical. Moreover, through a conversation with Henry in which he anticipates the narrator’s eventual descent into madness, the gardener proves to be prophetic in his understanding of the human interactions in the story. Although the reader is not privy to the actual words spoken between the two men, the Arab is said to be emotional while he explains something to Henry, pointing to “le ciel, les arbres, et les Juifs qui passent” (168; “the sky, the trees, and the Jews who pass by”). Immediately afterward, the Arab notices the narrator, and confides to Henry, in Arabic, “Adé Maboula” (168; “She’s crazy”).

Before going off to see Henry at another point in the novel, and just after having what she calls “presque un cauchemar” (154; “almost a nightmare”) about jeeps that drive straight onto land mines, the narrator looks out at the Palestinian working in the
garden. (It is unclear if she awakens or not from this vision, as it may be either a projection of reality gained from news snippets, or simply a composite of predictive tidings.) After describing the bloody scene, the narrator makes the following remark:

Dehors, le jardinier arabe plante de jeunes oliviers dans une allée. Et ses mains agiles étalent correctement les racines dans le trou creusé à la profondeur exacte. Quelques cailloux tassent la terre et maintiennent droit le plan. L’espoir existe dans cet acharnement à refuser le néant (154).

[Outside, the Arab gardener is planting young olive saplings along a walkway. And his supple hands accurately spread out the roots in each hollowed-out hole at precisely the right depth. A few pebbles pack down the earth and keep the plane level. There is hope in this furious energy to reject the void.]

The emphasis on “hope” in this arbitrary description of the gardener, symbolically tied to the act of his planting olive trees (long associated with the making of peace), creates the impression that the Arab’s state of mind is symptomatic of more judicious undertakings than the waging of war. It also serves to contrast the misleading aesthetic facade he reluctantly participated in earlier, as he sprayed the stunted brush around the narrator’s parents’ home with “un jet mal dirigé” (12; “a poorly-directed burst of water”). Again, his connection to the land appears here as a stable given in a sea of chaotic ambiguity. Later on in the book, when the narrator describes how Menachem Begin is forced to resign from office following the investigation of the Kahan Commission into the massacres of Palestinian refugees at Sabra and Shatila, she watches the Palestinian working from the vantage point of her window.\(^\text{106}\) She reflects: “Un changement de

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106 The killings at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps took place on September 16-18, 1982; the resignation of Menachem Begin occurred in August of 1983, after the Kahan Commission found his government indirectly responsible for the murders committed by the Israeli-backed Lebanese Jemayel Phalangist troops. For historical background information, see Schiff and Ya‘ari.
gouvernement ne signifie rien pour lui. Qu’a-t-il à faire des histoires des Juifs? ” (234; “A change in the government means nothing to him. What does he have to do with the problems of the Jews?”).

The last indication of the Palestinian gardener’s senex function comes on the cusp of a comment about the protagonist’s father, whose character is analyzed in the section of this chapter on the shadow archetype. Boukhobza presents the narrator’s father as the absolute representational inverse of the senex image as described above. Reactionary in his political views and doctrinaire in regards to religious observance, the father is rarely capable of direct communication with the narrator; instead, he reads aloud from the Bible in her presence as his way of conveying information. She explains that “il lui faut se référer à la mémoire, au passé, agiter la houlette des ancêtres, pour me parler” (94; “he needs to refer to memory, to the past, to conjure up an entire cast of ancestors in order to speak to me”). The narrator also intimates that such dogmatic reliance upon tradition influences her father’s inflexible political views, which she finds to be inextricably linked to the abuse that she was compelled to withstand as a young girl in the patriarchal confines of his household. She recounts that her emancipation from the rigidity of this conduct came about concurrently with her political awareness as a burgeoning adult, since “Il m’avait dupée des années durant avec ses versions édulcorées de la famille, du judaïsme et d’Israël” (97; “For years he misled me with his half-baked explanations about family, Judaism, and Israel”). Expressing disdain for her father’s tendency to quote the Bible “en toute circonstance” (97; “in every situation”), the narrator silently implores him: “Laisse le Cantique de côté, père!” (97; “Leave the Song of Songs alone, father!”).
Immediately after this pronouncement, Boukhobza again directs us to the Arab gardener outside the window.

The protagonist’s aforementioned reference to the Song of Songs is significant in that it brings to the fore the intertextual motif that will ultimately characterize the Palestinian gardener’s senex function as it relates to the shadow and the anima archetypes in *Un été à Jérusalem*. Here, as in the earlier Mosaic allusions, the value hierarchy embodied by the senex involves the referencing of traditional texts of a religious and/or discursive nature. The interpretation of these texts is tied to the anima’s eventual unmasking of the shadow, whose circumspect take on Biblical rhetoric is portrayed as having caused a degenerate result. Specifically, the mention of the Song of Songs, which is considered the most important Biblical text for the Kabbalah, is an explicit reference to the Arab’s meticulous cultivation of the garden outside of the narrator’s parents’ home.  

This allusion also foregrounds the reliance upon Kabbalistic imagery used in tandem with the manifestations of the anima archetype later on in the text. The segment of the Song of Songs alluded to by the narrator is the following:

> Thy lips, O my bride, drop honey—honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon. A garden shut up is my sister, my bride; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy shoots are a park of pomegranates, with precious fruits; henna with spikenard plants, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices. Thou art a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and flowing streams from Lebanon. Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south;

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107 For a general explanation of this passage, see Brody 86–91, and for commentary on the general significance of the Song of Songs in Kabbalistic literature, see Green.

108 Boukhobza’s familiarity with Kabbalah, and its recurring appearance in her novels, has been discussed at length in Plapp 173, and in Cairns, “Hyphenated Identity” 69.
blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his precious fruits. (Song of Songs 4.11–16)

The most important aspect of the narrator’s allusion to the above-cited verses from the Song of Songs has to do with the twelfth verse of the chapter, “A garden shut up is my sister, my bride; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.” According to the Kabbalistic work of the Zohar, which figures prominently later on the novel, the gan na’ul (“garden shut up”) referred to is “the Assembly of Israel” (Zohar II 4a, par. 39), and is often thought to be symbolically linked to the Shekhinah (literally, “the dwelling,” otherwise known as the composite of the feminine attributes of the Divine Presence). In Kabbalah, the Shekhinah is closely identified with the tenth sefirah, or sphere, of malkhut (“kingdom”) in the Tree of Life, and is therefore associated with the earth and physicality. According to the Zohar, the “beloved” mentioned in the last verse of the Biblical citation is the principle of yesod (“foundation”), the ninth sefirah, thought of as the sum of the masculine attributes of God. The yesod joins the heavenly spheres to the physical world.

The reader has already seen the devotion with which the Arab gardener tends to his task, in spite of the seeming futility with which he is faced. Furthermore, we have noted that the Arab’s role as the senex figure is centered on his quiet insistence upon maintaining his belonging to the land. In a nod to the Mosaic transmitter of the nomocratic code of Judaism, who accepted the commandments given to him by God on

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109 A coherent explanation on the concept of the “Tree of Life” in the Kabbalah may be found in Drob, Kabbalah and Postmodernism 158–79.

110 For more on the origins and symbolism of the Shekhinah, see Gottlieb, Hurwitz, Kuspit, and, especially, Patai 96–135.
behalf of all of the people of Israel, the Arab continues his toil. He does so with the realization that, despite his “link to the heavens,” he will most likely not live to see his hopes come to fruition (i.e., to see the Promised Land)—hence his inherently apolitical stance. More than this, however, the Palestinian gardener represents the flip side of the Zionist rhetoric espoused by the other failed senex figures in the text. His correct estimation of the narrator as “maboula” (168; “crazy”) is offered up to Henry immediately after his gesturing to “le ciel, les arbres, et les Juifs qui passent” (168; “the sky, the trees, and the Jews who pass by”)—all components of the constraints of political Zionism that cause the narrator to be a *gan na’ul* (“garden shut up”). This is true both in her personification of the “Assembly of Israel” (as the one who has “milk and honey” in her mouth, and who, like Israel in the present predicament, carries the “smell of Lebanon” on her person) and in the “locked,” or “shut up” (*na’ul*) state of her metaphoric confinement within the structures of patriarchy wrought by her father. The very use of the Zohar to project this imagery is, in and of itself, a kind of revolt against such patriarchic conventions, since the Zohar is one of the only books in Judaism, aside from the Hebrew Scriptures and the Talmud, to have canonical appeal. Moreover, the Zohar was initially included in a list of censored books only to be read by married men the age of forty or above, and certainly not to be read by any woman.\(^{111}\)

From an allegorical perspective, the connection between the gardener and the narrator in the associative context of the use of the Song of Songs may be elucidated by

\(^{111}\) See Scholem, *Zohar* xii-ix.
referring to an interpretation of the key verse given by Ronit Meroz. Meroz points out the following:

There is [with respect to the allegory of the “garden shut up” in the Zohar II 11a, par. 176] a cultivation and enhancement of one element alone, the Shekhinah, and this enhancement is not understood in terms of ascension or copulation, but in terms uncharacteristic of the Kabbalah—the nurturing of the garden. It seems that the metaphor of the Shekhinah or Assembly of Israel as a garden is linked to its description as a very special garden . . . in which the souls of the righteous reside. (44)

In that vein, the Arab continuously plants the allegorical “Tree of Life” in the form of olive saplings, which in turn nurture the hopes espoused by the narrator for harmony in the region. The Arab is seen as righteous in his wisdom, as opposed to the father, who simply cites the Biblical text verbatim. However, just as the Mosaic figure discerns the mishkan (“temporary dwelling place of God”) and cannot enter because of the cloud of God that shakhan (“was present”) upon it (Exod. 40.34–35; both words in Hebrew share the same root with Shekhinah), the Arab can only point to the presence of the Shekhinah, who, like the modern-day Assembly of Israel, happens to be portrayed as delusional. 112

The senex in the text, who regards the narrator as a highly compromised “divine presence” that he both “nurture s” and indirectly inculcates with his insight, attempts to cultivate the ideal that she longs for, both personally and collectively. This inculcation is seen though two main intertextual prisms: first, through the references to the associative ties that the senex shares with the transmitter of the Law; and second, through the

112 The entire Biblical citation from Exodus 40.34–35 reads as follows: “Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.”
allusions to specific symbolic components of the Song of Songs, in particular by way of the figurative lexicon of its Kabbalistic doppelganger.

In her portrayal of senex figures, Boukhobza does not leave open the possibility, as Potok does, for the transmission of sometimes contested wisdom from the older generation as an essential component of her specific ethno-cultural “syndrome” of Judaic existence. Nor does she follow the derogatory fashion of Yehoshua, portraying the senex figure as a kind of “crank,” whose impuissance in the world of his descendents becomes a poignant reminder of his unwelcome and extant influence in the realm of lived experience. Rather, as Laurel Plapp points out, because Boukhobza does not belong to the literary generation of Maghrebian Jewish authors such as Edmond Amran El Maleh (1917–) or Albert Memmi (1920–), for whom the personal loss of North African Jewish culture was a central part of their oeuvre, the presence of the Tunisian-Jewish tradition in her texts does not “indicate an attempt to bring [this tradition] into the present” through the narrative devices of nostalgia or reminiscence (170). Instead, Boukhobza depicts representative figures usually associated with senex consciousness (fathers, elders, rabbis, etc.) as being inextricably linked with shadow contents. In other words, these figures cross the lines from dogmatic posturing to openly destructive acts, whether as an intransigent consequence of their having been uprooted from their indigenous culture, or from the subsequent emasculation experienced in their postcolonial exiles because of changing behavioral expectations and norms. The malevolent ethical quality of these acts, often expressed via a penchant for physical and psychic violence, is manifested in Boukhobza’s texts by their devastating effects upon both the familial and societal
frameworks in which the female protagonists find themselves. These effects are analyzed in this chapter in the section on the shadow archetype.

Additionally, a second reason to explain the differing representations of the senex in Boukhobza’s work compared to that of Potok or Yehoshua is that Boukhobza’s senex is not a clear-cut recasting of one single Biblical archetype, such as we have seen, for example, in the modern-day re-envisioning of the über-senex figure of Abraham presented in the allegorical contexts of the altered Binding of Isaac metanarratives. Instead, Boukhobza creates a radical composite of recurring thematic, intertextual, and sub-culturally-specific tropes that work in conjunction with the other instantiations of Biblical and Kabbalistic motifs and/or characters in the text. The result provokes an intellectual confrontation between the “particular cultural canon” (Jacoby 85) espoused by (Ashkenazi) Israeli Zionism and the symbolic Weltanschauung of those other outsiders who, like the transplanted (and marginalized) Tunisian Jews, bear the burden of the delusion that the modern state of Israel is a fixed avatar of Promised Land: the country’s Palestinian Arabs. The image of the Palestinian in Un été à Jérusalem is therefore put into the role of the senex. Through indirectly-transmitted wisdom rather than via raucous dogma, this senex proposes that the “normalcy” of Israel as a viable, pan-Jewish homeland is a fantasy. The price of this fantasy, Boukhobza suggests, is the invariable shedding of blood, which is justified by the Zionist regime on the basis of Israel’s Biblical right to the land.

Boukhobza chooses to tie the image of the Arab to the function of the senex, thereby setting the stage to introduce the anima figure in the novel, which works to undo the expected archetypal associations between Biblical praxis and modern-day Israel by
delving into the post-Biblical repository of Kabbalistic textuality. This is accomplished in order to lament the lack of a Judeo-Islamic “symbiosis” (B. Lewis 191) between Israelis and Palestinians, the possibility of which the book’s narrator knows about from her childhood in Tunisia. To be sure, the protagonist of *Un été à Jérusalem* does not express simple nostalgia for the bygone days of Tunisia; she does, however, make use of her acquaintance with an alternate system of viewing the “other” as proof of the fundamentally deceptive, and even temporal, nature of the Israeli state. Furthermore, by replacing any likely Jewish representative of the senex principle with the image of the Palestinian Arab, the narrator intimates that the reliance upon structures of authority transmitted solely by phylogeny (a fundamental tenet of Judaic religious practice) is bound to unravel in the context of the foreign, and ultimately illusory, environment of contemporary Israel. Granted, there are two “Arab Jewish” characters (Roger and Henry) that come close to fulfilling the role of the senex in the novel, but both only represent the potentiality of taking on the role in its entirety, since one of them becomes actively involved in the confrontation with Israel’s Arab neighbors, and then inadvertently causes the premature death of the other. Despite the fact that their (dis)appearance in the book is characterized by rupture, however, these characters do maintain strong associative ties with the Arab senex in the novel, and therefore may be considered as parallel tropes of the same thematic vignette.

2. The Shadow Archetype

Generally speaking, the manifestations of the shadow archetype in the storyline of Boukhobza’s *Un été à Jérusalem* are linked to two parallel trajectories of the subversion
of dominant Judaic discourses. The first of these overarching discourses is religious piety. Boukhobza portrays religious piety as having provided the conceptual foundation for the unwavering trust in the second discourse, (Zionist) Israeli nationalism. The author dissects the dogma inherent in both of these self-legitimizing philosophies by way of a particular kind of female epistemology, which, as Nina Lichtenstein observes, represents “the preoccupations and textual obsessions of women who experienced childhood in Tunisia” (11). Specifically, the way that Boukhobza presents the destructive qualities of both of these discourses is through the lens of patriarchal oppression—a materialization of the shadow from which the main character will ultimately attempt to escape. In true archetypal fashion, those foundational tropes and mythic tales central to the dissemination of Judaic discourse are destabilized, and then exposed in Boukhobza’s text as detrimental by the very rhetorical devices upon which they rest. Moreover, the frequent textual associations between these archetypes and the proximity of Boukhobza’s own subculture to the Palestinian characters in the text create an especially irreverent series of allegories relating to histories of oppression, both patriarchal and political.

Boukhobza’s deconstruction of traditional religious piety begins in the novel at the point where the narrator and her mother go to Beersheba to visit Rachel, the mother of the narrator’s father. About to die, Rachel is described by the narrator as iniquity incarnate, since she was the one who educated her son’s children to adhere to authoritarian standards of pietistic observance and to the gender-related norms of expression and corporeal propriety. The narrator relates that the dying grandmother “nous écrasa sous le joug de la religion” (58; “crushed us under the yoke of religion”) during her childhood, and even encouraged the narrator’s father to beat her and her brothers
When the reader is informed that the grandmother “représentait la tradition” (58; “represented tradition”), there is little evidence to suggest otherwise.

The textual explanation for the grandmother’s execution of this obedience-oriented responsibility, usually carried out in Tunisian custom by the males of the family, is that the father was busy securing the livelihood of the recently-exiled family, while Rachel’s husband, the narrator’s deceased grandfather, is described as a “rabbin ivre” (60; “drunken rabbi”) who was unable to function in either France or in Israel. It is perhaps because of the grandfather’s inability to fulfill the conventional masculine role, however, that the narrator has fond memories of him. Despite this affection that the narrator feels for her kindly grandfather, she reflects soberly on the lack of influence he yielded, while looking at a worn picture of him in traditional Tunisian dress: “Il est d’un autre siècle, d’un autre exil, il ne m’offre aucune protection” (16; “He is from another century, from another exile, and he offers me no protection”).

Several intertextual clues in the text suggest an archetypal explanation of the grandmother’s role, and the most obvious clue is her name. Just as the biblical Rachel represents one of the founding maternal archetypes in the Jewish tradition (as wife of the patriarch Jacob and the mother of Joseph in Genesis 29–31), the Rachel in Un été à Jérusalem is identified with the matriarchal ancestry of the narrator’s extended clan. More importantly, the grandmother is described as “toujours là, dominant le présent” (58; “still there, dominating the present”) with respect to the narrator’s perceptions of the religious atmosphere in modern-day Israel. This depiction is by no means an isolated incident, since throughout Jewish history the idea of Zion has often been personified in the form of the Biblical character of Rachel. For example, this anthropomorphistic
symbolism occurs in Jeremiah 31:14, when the figure of Rachel weeps over the fate of her exiled children: “Thus saith the LORD: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children; she refuseth to be comforted for her children, because they are not.” Also, in the midrash Lamentations Rabbah, God is said to be sympathetic to Rachel’s plea for him to have mercy on the exiled people of Israel, after having ignored the appeals of all of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), as well as the appeal of Moses. Finally, according to the midrash, God is moved by Rachel’s supplications; he promises, for her sake, to eventually redeem his Chosen People.

In Boukhobza’s text, therefore, Grandmother Rachel is intertextually related to previous personifications of the Land of Israel by her Biblical namesake. This imagery also hearkens back to the significance of matriarchal phylogeny in Judaism in general, and in the narrator’s family in particular, since the grandmother was the one who enforced by terror the principle of religious submission at home. For this reason, the narrator explains, “quand quelqu’un déclare: ‘tu es son trait,’ je me mets à trembler” (58; “when someone declares: “You look like her,” I begin to shudder”), a comment that signals the narrator’s fear of being forever trapped inside the confines of affected devoutness and circumscribed thought.

Grandmother Rachel also plays a part in the re-envisioning of another foundational Judaic myth in the novel: the myth of the Binding of Isaac. We have already seen this Judaic metanarrative recast in a quintessentially Israeli fashion by Yehoshua (in “Early in the Summer of 1970” and A Late Divorce), as well as in a very American

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113 See Stern 24–34 for background on this midrash.
manner by Potok (in “The Trope Teacher” and The Gift of Asher Lev). In Boukhobza’s text, the first indication of Rachel’s symbolic association with the ‘akedah comes into play when we learn that Beersheba is the location of the dying grandmother’s home. This setting for the grandmother’s residence is significant because Beersheba is also the place where, in Genesis 22.19, Abraham goes to live immediately after the near-sacrifice of his only son. According to the text: “So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba.” The fact that after the death of her husband the grandmother has come to live here with her daughter, Aliza, signals that she, too, has been involved in a symbolic act of violence perpetrated under a divinely-inspired (or, at least, religiously-oriented) directive. The protagonist of the story provides the missing signifier for the reenactment of the foundational myth by asking her unconscious former captor, “Pourquoi avais-tu placé sur le linceul de Saba, le jour de son enterrement, cet énorme couteau?” (69; “Why did you put upon grandfather’s shroud, the day of his burial, that enormous knife?”).  

Obviously, the narrator does not expect an answer to this query, since her grandmother is physically unable to respond, and it is doubtful that the old woman is even cognizant enough to be aware of her presence. What’s more, the rhetorical nature of the narrator’s question has already been evidenced by a comment immediately preceding the reference to the ‘akedah, in which she links the persistence of the patriarchal logic of sacrifice, promulgated in this case by the grandmother, to the incessant spilling of blood by the current generation of the people of Israel: “S’il pouvait pleuvoir dans ce pays aride

114 Throughout the story, the narrator refers to her grandparents by the Aramaic (and colloquial Israeli Hebrew) terms of Saba [grandfather] and Safta [grandmother].
comme il pleure dans mon cœur, la terre se dilaterait, et ces hommes piégés par leurs légendes auraient peut-être moins envie de mordre, de frapper, de tuer” (69; “If it could rain in this parched country like it rains in my heart, the earth would open up, and these men ensnared by their legends would maybe not feel so much like biting, striking or killing”).

In other words, the narrator intimates, much as we have seen in the work of Yehoshua, that those who remain trapped in sacrificial logic are destined to bequeath the proverbial maakhelet (“slaughtering knife”), as wielded by Abraham in Genesis 22.6 and 22.10, to their descendents. Furthermore, by equating acts of physical violence committed in the home to manifestations of such violence on a national level, the narrator establishes a firm link between patriarchal and political oppression. The unconscious nature of both participants in this retelling of the Binding of Isaac metanarrative—the grandmother, since she is on death’s door, and the grandfather, since he has already gone through it—only serves to compound the realization that the shadow contents of such oppression are often hidden under a veil of obdurate posturing.

Aside from the connotation that Grandmother Rachel’s residence in Beersheba is linked to the aftermath of the Abrahamic episode, the trip that the narrator undertakes from Jerusalem to Beersheba is noteworthy for another reason. Namely, the significance of this journey is that the story’s protagonist traverses, almost from end to end, the dimensions of the Biblical Kingdom of Judah (approximately 930–586 BCE), in which the prophet Jeremiah was instructed by God to give explanation to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah, who had broken the Deuteronomic covenant, of the impending
disaster to be brought upon them.¹¹⁵ The Book of Jeremiah has already been cited in this section of the chapter as associated with the anthropomorphic attributes of Zion as the Biblical figure of Rachel; and, Rachel also prominently figures in the above-cited midrash on the Book of Lamentations, the latter also attributed to Jeremiah. Since the intertextual allusions to Jeremiah’s predictions regarding the fate of the people of Israel play an essential part in the later prophetic messages of Un été à Jérusalem (analyzed in this chapter in the section on the anima archetype), we may consider these initial mentions of Jeremiah and the territory symbolically associated with him as prefiguring Boukhobza’s eventual recastings of his prophecies.

The demise of Grandmother Rachel, which occurs only after the narrator has returned to Jerusalem, marks a point of transition in the transformation of the granddaughter’s consciousness. Once only openly resistant to the constrictions of religion while in exile, or in a passive-aggressive fashion while at her parents’ home, the narrator now openly ridicules religious piety, especially in the context of petitioning God to intervene in the war raging in Lebanon. Upon her grandmother’s death, she says: “Safta n’arrêtera plus la guerre en priant l’Eternel pour implorer la paix. Qui donc lui avait enseigné à clamer, ‘Adonai, Adonai’ avec cette foi si profonde!” (129; “Grandmother will no longer stop the war by beseeching the Lord for peace through prayer. Who taught her to shout, “Adonai, Adonai,” with such profound faith, anyway!”). The implicit answer to this question, which has been posed merely for persuasive purposes, is that

¹¹⁵ For historical details on the Kingdom of Judah, see, for example, Miller and Hayes; for an idea of the precise area of this kingdom, see Curtis and May 103–08. See Blank, Jeremiah, for a concise exposé on the Biblical prophet.
adherence to religious praxis is simply transmitted from generation to generation as part of a cultural canon. Given that the narrator has succeeded in breaking away from this praxis—at least in the conceptual realm—she is able to acknowledge the archetypal effect it has upon her, as she muses to herself: “‘Adonaï, Adonaï.’ Un cri très beau que je ne comprends plus. Je suis seulement sensible à la musique qu’il réveille dans ma tête” (310; “Adonai, Adonai. A beautiful lamentation that I no longer understand. I’m only attuned to the music that it awakens in my head”).

The first open confrontation regarding the narrator’s lack of adherence to the family’s particular sense of religious propriety occurs during the ritual of the mandatory weeklong period of mourning known as shiv’ah (meaning “seven” in Hebrew, for seven days). The shiv’ah takes place in the wake of the grandmother’s death at her parents’ residence in Jerusalem. By refusing to participate in the ritual, the narrator insults her elderly Tunisian relatives who have assembled in the home, and incenses them with the the scandalously heavy layers of cosmetics that she applies whenever she leaves the house. In an internal monologue, she explains her revolt thus: “Il n’y a pas de salut dans la religion” (155; “There is no salvation in religion”). She then expresses the inner turmoil she feels: “Je me sens pleine à craquer d’un passé qui refuse de se déverser, d’un présent lié à la guerre” (155; “I feel as though I might crack under the weight of a past that resists letting go, and of a present bound to war”). This reference to her “cracking,” which comes in tandem with her open abandonment of religious observance, also links her revolt as an oppressed entity to that of the Palestinians, who, through the representative figure of the gardener, symbolically join her in this audacious act: “Derrière moi, perfide, je claque la porte sur un ‘Chalom’ tonitruant, dévale l’escalier,
adresse un signe à l’ouvrier arabe abasourdi qui laisse choir l’olivier” (155; “I treacherously slam the door behind me with a thundering “Shalom,” slide down the staircase, and wave to the dumfounded Arab laborer who drops the olive sapling”).

The narrator’s appellation of her aforementioned action as “perfide” (155; “treacherous”) says just as much about her realization that she is symbolically cutting her ties to Judaism as it does about the perception that her family now holds of her. Her mother, for instance, tells her, “Sur Israël, mais tu es folle!” (163; “I swear to God, you’re crazy!”), to which the narrator responds, “C’est le pays qui est malade . . . limé, râpé, usé jusqu’à la corde . . . Un pays en guenilles avec des imbéciles au pouvoir!” (163–64; “It’s the country that’s insane . . . worn down, worn out, worn thin . . . A country in rags with buffoons running it!”). She then says, to her mother’s horror: “Dieu a dit dans la Bible: faites la guerre, hein? Et si des gosses meurent, c’est le Mektoub, n’est pas? Oh, j’ai besoin d’autre chose . . . Je vous déteste tous, tu m’entends?” (164; “God said in the Bible: wage war, is that it? And if some kids die, then it’s just fate, right? Well, I want something else . . . I hate all of you, do you hear me?”).

In this conversation, the linguistic content of both women’s exclamations betrays their diametrically opposed viewpoints concerning the Tunisian Jewish subculture’s inherited hierarchy of values. For example, when the mother uses the expression, “Sur Israël” (163; literally, “upon Israel”), which I have translated liberally into English as, “I swear to God,” she is utilizing the expression to convey an aura of holiness, since the idea of the Land of Israel is sacrosanct if one believes that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did indeed choose the territory in question for his Chosen People, also referred to as “Israel.” For the story’s protagonist, however, the symbolic associations that she
carries with regard to the term “Israel” are the strongest, contextually speaking, in their relation to the current political situation of Israel as a postcolonial nation-state. In addition, the narrator’s characterization of the country itself as a frayed garment, “limé, râpé, usé jusqu’à la corde” (163; “worn down, worn out, worn thin”), and “en guenilles” (163; “in rags”) connotes the tattered ritual fringes, or tsitsit, as mandated in Numbers 15.38 and Deuteronomy 22.12, of the tallit (“prayer shawl”) traditionally worn by Jewish males for religious functions. It also conjures up images of clothing tattered from the mourning rite of kriy’ah, or “tearing,” first performed by Jacob in Genesis 37.34. With this dual intertextual reference, the narrator suggests that the mourning ceremony being held so sanctimoniously for the dead grandmother should instead be held for the nation itself, which is “wrapped up” in a dilapidated and outmoded modus vivendi that is slowly bringing about its own destruction.

Furthermore, the narrator’s categorical dismissal of the North African Islamic notion of divine providence, or mektoub, which in Arabic is the past participle of the verb kataba (literally, “it has been written”), is essentially both a negation of the worth of religious conviction, as well as a blunt repudiation of inherited Tunisian-Jewish mores. After all, the popular North African Arabic axiom regarding mektoub, “‘Alá kaff al-qadar namshī wa lā nadrī ‘an al-maktūb” (“On the palm tree of fate we saunter, unaware of what is written”) contains in it the irrefutable elements of defeatism and surrender to outside forces, since an individual’s free will in the world, according to the proverb, is inconsequential. The narrator’s sardonic remark is also a denotive attack on the Judaic religious component signified by the Arabic maxim: namely, the Judaic belief that God inscribes certain worthy individuals in the figurative “Book of Life,” while others are
blotted out (Isaiah 4:3; Ezekiel 9:3-4). This is an earlier Mesopotamian idea (McKenzie, “Mythological Allusions”; Paul, “Heavenly Tablets”) that has several Qur’anic counterparts.\footnote{In Islamic belief, God performs an act of \textit{kataba} (“recording, writing down”) what the future holds for each individual. For example, see in the Qur’an the \textit{Surat at-Tawbah} (“The Chapter on Repentance”) and \textit{Surat ar-Ra’ad} (“The Chapter on Thunder”).}

Finally, with her comment, “Dieu a dit dans la Bible: faites la guerre, hein?” (164; “God said in the Bible: wage war, is that it?”), the protagonist returns to the point that she had raised in the one-sided conversation with the then-comatose grandmother, when she put forth the notion that the physical violence that she has witnessed in Israel is consistently justified by religious praxis. This statement is also a kind of rehashing of an earlier comment made her younger brother, Danny, who said to her in jest, before returning to his unit in the Chouf mountains of Lebanon: “Croissez et multipliez et envoyez vos garçons à la guerre, commande la Bible! (124; “Be fruitful, and multiply, and send your sons to war, the Bible commands!”). Here, both siblings take individual liberties with their decontextualized attribution to the Hebrew Scriptures of a particular commandment to “wage war,” although clearly, their insinuation is that extra-Biblical decrees for carnage display at least a referential tie to Biblical directives, even when a “benevolent” act, such as the act of Creation, is involved. Thus, Danny’s subverted citation of a part of Genesis 1.28, “And God blessed them; and God said unto them: ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it’” contains the same kind of incredulity in relation to religiosity as does the overarching viewpoint held by the
narrator, which Eli interprets as her conviction “that it is absurd to defend the land for religious beliefs” (76). At the end of the conversation between the narrator and her mother, the reader is left with no way of knowing whether the older woman silently agrees with her daughter’s damning portrait of religious life, since she simply breaks down, sobbing. She somehow manages to say: “J’ai raté ma vie avec toi, avec ton père” (164; “I’ve ruined my life with you, with your father”). While this statement may not be directly related to her daughter’s previous denunciation of the customs and mores of her elders, it does indicate that, at least in the narrator’s mind, the correlation between the shadow contents of religious oppression and those of political oppression begins first and foremost in the realm of the home.

Indeed, the decrial of the form of subjugation that Demaris S. Wehr has labeled “internalized oppression” (18) occupies a central role in the narrative of Un été à Jérusalem, particularly with respect to the ways in which the repression of women is justified by an androcentric (male-oriented) society, as well as by the specific textual praxis upon which that society bases itself. To put it another way, if “society and the individual psyche are in dialectical relationship with one another” (Wher 18) in civilization in general, then the relationships between individuals in mainly “homogeneous” cultures where there is a clear nomocratic code (Judaism), or an unambiguous national charter based on such a code (Zionism), then it is no exaggeration to consider the home life of the individual as the microcosm of the social order at large. Granted, what goes on in the domestic sphere does not usually attract as much attention as what happens in the political sphere, but as far as the shadow is concerned, this is
precisely the point. The shadow, after all, is “the archetypal carrier of the nation’s hidden, shameful side” (Jung, Two Essays 160), and acknowledgement of the shadow is more often than not caught up in the uncovering of taboos.

Androcentric and nomocratic codes aside, the sub-cultural mores of the narrator’s family regarding the status of women are also closely akin to the North African, Judeo-Islamic conception of what Yedida K. Stillman calls a “Halakhic/Sharia legal outlook, which included not only ritual, civil and moral matters, but also sartorial matters” (14). Indeed, it is a well-known fact that Judaism and Islam (unlike Christianity) regard the Hebrew/Arabic textual praxis of their codes as “language itself held to be sacred” (N. Stillman 41); they also “share similar concepts of corporal modesty” and “similar notions about women as beings in the social order (Y. Stillman 14). This may explain, at least in part, why Jewish-Muslim relations in North Africa lasted much longer, and fared far better, than did Jewish-Christian relations in Europe.\(^{117}\) That is not to say, however, that institutionalized patriarchy does not appear as one of the dominant factors in the perception of lived experience in other Jewish sub-groups. Rather, the point is that the more religiously conservative atmosphere prevalent in an Islamic country such as Tunisia creates a situation in which the issue of patriarchy is much more pronounced than in the

\(^{117}\) For an example of Judaic vestimentary codes regarding women, see, for instance, Deuteronomy 22.5, or the Mishnah (Shabbat 6.6 and Ketubot 7.6); for these codes in Islam, see Surat al-ahzab, “The Chapter on the Allies” 59.
perceptions regarding the status of women held, say, by mainstream Ashkenazi Jews in Israel.\textsuperscript{118}

In that regard, if the young woman who narrates *Un été à Jérusalem* is supposed to be in her early twenties (in 1983), and is said to have only experienced gender equality during the second time that she lived in France (i.e., as an adult, without her family), the specific sub-cultural propriety to which her immediate family belongs can be classified as a (deracinated) Tunisian-Jewish value hierarchy, rather than to a European or an Israeli one. Of course, one might argue, and quite correctly at that, that women were never treated as equal beings in any kind of Jewish subculture, whether North African or not, given that women were equated with slaves throughout much of Jewish history (Ben-Sasson 616). Moreover, many canonical texts encourage violence toward women, sometimes with God (for example, in the Prophetic texts) ordering it.\textsuperscript{119} By the same token, the claim that Mosaic monotheism somehow utilized the devious undercurrents of political Zionism in the twentieth century to initiate a more repugnant subjugation of women is patently ridiculous.

Be that as it may, the story of *Un été à Jérusalem* is told from the perspective of a female narrator who had already witnessed acts of physical violence (corporal

\textsuperscript{118} The introduction of emancipatory European ideals concerning equality between the sexes occurred in Tunisia at a relatively late date on the Western scale of modernity. For instance, the Code of Personal Status was instituted in Tunisia in 1956; see Charrad 215–35 for an overview of the implementation of this practice.

\textsuperscript{119} For instance, see Jeremiah 13, as well as Genesis 19 and 34, 2 Samuel 13, and Judges 11–19. See also O’Conner, “The Feminist Movement” 13.
punishment, beatings, etc.) upon her own person before ever seeing them played out politically in Israel, and her insinuation according to which the pressures created by the political apparatus of the Israeli state exacerbates existing psychoses seems entirely plausible. These accusations are, in any event, not new. In fact, much has already been written about the destructive effects of certain aspects of renewed Jewish sovereignty upon the Israeli psyche, such as the demonization of the Arab “other,” which is a result of the first real Jewish hegemony in over two thousand years; the tendency to deify the leaders of the military establishment; and the penchant to clamor for military solutions as a response to the gross inaction that led to the loss of six million Jews during the Nazi Holocaust.¹²⁰ All of these pressures are compounded tenfold when one takes into consideration the plight of Jewish immigrants from North Africa, who found that the more Western-oriented Israeli culture turned their system of values on its head. This happened in no small part from the social emasculation of the father as the financial head of the household, and by compromising his stature as the sole authority for making decisions about his children’s life choices, which now rested on options that would open them up to a world of secularism and gender-inclusive alternatives inconceivable just a generation earlier.¹²¹ It is for this reason that the commonly-held figures of authority in Boukhobza’s text cannot be put into the position of the senex, since they have crossed the line from dogmatic posturing to openly destructive acts, in part as a consequence of

¹²⁰ Yehoshua’s *Hakir vehahar* [The Wall and the Mountain] offers a concise summary of these arguments, in addition to providing several new perspectives.

having been uprooted from their indigenous culture and then thrust into an ontological framework that is completely new to them.

For instance, from the opening scene of the novel, the narrator is presented to the reader as all too aware of how different the experiences of her life have been in comparison to those of her mother, whose generation had no chance of breaking out of the patriarchal structure. Upon hearing the emotion in her mother’s voice over the telephone when she arrives at the airport in Lod, the younger woman notes: “Il me semble que ma vie tient tout entière dans ce cri de ma mère, neuf et déjà si ancien” (10; “It seems as if the entirety of my life exists in this cry of my mother’s, new and yet so ancient”). The reference here to an “ancient” pain is a nod to the influence of religious tradition upon the perpetuation of the mother’s subservient role, which Boukhobza illustrates as part of what Lucille Cairns calls the novel’s “damning portrait of female oppression within traditional Jewish filialional patterns” (“Hyphenated Identity” 67). The narrator suggests that inherited Judaic propriety is indeed responsible for creating a situation in which the mother, only middle-aged, has the look of a senile caged animal, with “des yeux troubles, fuyants, animés d’un éclat de folie” (13; “restless eyes that dart away, sparkling with the glow of madness”). Consequently, the narrator ultimately sees her mother as “une femme abuseée” (182; “an abused woman”), who is “captive, retenue” (92; “captive, held down”) by the same structure that the narrator feels fortunate to have been able to flee from.

Be this as it may, the narrator also sees in her mother a kind of presentiment of things to come, partly because of the primary relationship that exists between them, and partly because of the quasi-lunacy of the mother, which the narrator recognizes as a
“personal evocation of the archetype” of the collective shadow (Neumann, “The Significance of the Genetic Aspect” 128). For this reason, the daughter encourages the mother to get rid of the wig that she has begun wearing in Israel, casually expressing her doubts that the Bible actually commands Jewish women to do such a thing (15). When the narrator finally asks her, “C’est ton mari qui t’a demandé de le faire?” (16; “Is your husband the one who asked you to do this?”), her mother simply responds, “Mon mari, c’est d’abord ton père” (16; “My husband is, first and foremost, your father”). Later on in the text, after having spent some time living again under her father’s roof, the daughter tells her mother: “Partout où il vit, moi j’étouffe. Je me sens prisonnière dans mes mots, dans mes gestes, comme si chacun possédait un sens double” (45; “Wherever he is, I suffocate. I feel like a prisoner in my words and in my gestures, as if every one of them contained a double meaning”).

The narrator’s next series of questions to her mother indicates anew the connection she sees between Biblical directives, which the father approaches with the utmost solemnity, and his propensity toward violence and subjugation. Noting that the father had once been a firm supporter of Menachem Begin, the same man who gave the order for the invasion of Lebanon with “cette emphase biblique qui lui avait conquis les cœurs” (98; “that Biblical emphasis with which he had won over so many hearts”), the narrator asks if her father “estime toujours que nous avons eu raison de faire le Liban” (18; “still thinks that we were right to start the war in Lebanon”). The mother does not answer, but the narrator notes that “elle étude Sabra et Chatila” (18; “she avoids mentioning Sabra and Shatila”).
During the period of mourning for Grandmother Rachel, the older members of the extended family who come to stay at the narrator’s father’s residence in Jerusalem are also depicted as members of an outmoded civilization who have crossed the barrier from senex authoritarianism to shadow conduct. Among these relatives are “Bébert le Sourd” (117; “deaf Bébert”) and “Jason l’Aveugle” (117; “blind Jason”), whose physical handicaps parallel their metaphoric ones in the context of their functionality in Israeli society. These elders of the clan, “renommés en Tunisie, mais séniles en Israël” (117–18; “renowned in Tunisia, but senile in Israel”), flatulate incessantly and “racontent des anecdotes bibliques” (118; “recount Biblical stories”), the simplicity of which irritates the protagonist and her two brothers.

More serious than these annoyances, however, is their insistence that the narrator “n’est pas habillée comme une femme juive, une femme de notre pays” (134; “isn’t dressed like a Jewish woman, a woman from our country”)—a comment that reveals their lack of awareness of the modern society into which they have been absorbed. Moreover, their suggestion to the narrator’s father, “Brisé-la avant qu’elle ne te dévore!” (134; “Smash her before she eats you alive!”), actually precedes the single incident in the book where he does in fact strike her (178), and therefore endows these “vieux mécontents” (118; “discontented geezers”) with a symbolic power that more than makes up for their physical handicaps. After the father heeds their advice regarding the corporeal enforcement of Tunisian-Jewish mores, their rhetoric becomes noticeably more conciliatory in tone, and they suggest that the father marry off his daughter to a dock worker or to a noncommissioned military officer. In either case, they reason, the physical
force of such a man would enable him to “calmer la chair de ta fille” (193; “calm the flesh of your daughter”), ostensibly through physical violence.

I concur with Thomas Nolden’s assessment of the familial dynamics outlined above, according to which the most insight gained into the first-person narrative in the novel stems from the psychic friction produced “between the estranged members of the multiply displaced family” (198). These encounters are insightful for the simple reason that they provide information for the reader about similar challenges with which the narrator was forced to deal as she grew up surrounded by these very relatives. As she puts it, the period of mourning reminds her of her own evolution as a woman, of how “à petites doses d’angoisse, d’insultes, j’avais vécu ma jeunesse” (177; “I lived my youth with small doses of fear and insults”) until she left home. As a young female adult, she knows that she will never live up to the expectations of her father and her older male relatives; the only reason she has returned, as a “juive éduquée dans la tradition, martelée par la religion” (35; “Jewish girl educated in tradition, hammered down by religion”), is to see her mother and brothers.

In essence, then, the protagonist has undertaken a wholesale abandonment of both dominant discourses of the Judaic ethos within which she was raised: those of religious piety and Zionist nationalism, both of which she was indoctrinated with even before the family’s move to Israel. Now, the luxury of pondering these issues from afar comes to a halt within the confines of her father’s Jerusalem home, where she sees the results of these discourses first-hand. “J’ai cessé tout engagement pour défendre ce pays” (23; “I’ve stopped having any kind of commitment to defending this country”), she explains in regards to Israel’s invasion of Lebanon, and then states, “Je suis seulement intriguée par
l’éclat de violence qui flamboie dans les yeux des gens, cette même déraison qui habite le regard de ma mere” (23; “I’m simply intrigued by the bursts of violence that rage in the eyes of the people here, the same madness that I see in the eyes of my mother”).

Such psychosis is also attributed to other Jewish entities in the text, albeit inanimate ones: the Jewish sections of the city of Jerusalem, where the narrator remarks that, “les murs dessinent les yeux injustes de mon père” (134; “the walls outline the iniquitous eyes of my father”). These same walls contain condemnatory messages that announce: “Couvre-toi, impudique!” (137; “Cover yourself, immodest woman!”), put up by orthodox Jews who are “haineux” (137; “full of hate”). The narrator comes to the conclusion that for the Jewish sections of the city, as well as for her father, she remains “une intruse” (137; “an intruder”). However, when she steps out of this Jewish reality into the Palestinian one, the feeling is the polar opposite. For instance, when her Algerian lover, Henry, is away on an assignment in the field, she goes down to the Arab quarter of the Old City in order to regain a sense of being close to him. Again, the narrator makes an association between the bygone days of the Judeo-Islamic symbiosis in North Africa with the contentment she experiences in the presence of the tolerant and deferential Henry. “Dans les jardins de la mosquée, je me sentais proche de lui” (183; “In the gardens of the mosque, I felt close to him”), she explains, also alluding to the symbolic proximity coded into the plot between Henry and the Arab gardener, as previously discussed in relation to its intertextual rapport with the Song of Songs 4.11–16.

An additional Arab locale in the city of Jerusalem functions as the symbolic locus for another subversion of the recurring trope of the Binding of Isaac in Boukhobza’s story: the neighborhood of Talbiyah (from the Arabic: talbiyeh), which is located outside
of the Old City. This district, which came to be known in Hebrew as the Komemiyut (“independence,” “sovereignty”) neighborhood after 1948, was built in the 1920s on land acquired from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, and has continued to be called by its original Arabic name (coined by the quarter’s first Arab inhabitants), in spite of the predominantly Jewish population currently living there.\textsuperscript{122}

In this neighborhood setting, the reader becomes aware of the reasons for which Mavrika, a deranged Jerusalem prostitute mentioned by the narrator several times in the beginning of the text, had ultimately succumbed to madness. (The character of Mavrika is analyzed more fully in the section in this chapter on the anima archetype.) In one particularly poignant scene, the narrator mentions an incident in which she saw Mavrika recall the details of what transpired at Talbiyah, and describes the episode thus: “Talbiyah. Elle prononçait le nom de l’asile en fermant à demi les paupières comme si des clous lui entraient dans le corps” (151; “Talbiyah. She would pronounce the name of the asylum with her eyes half-closed, as if nails were entering her body”). The reference here to “clous” (“nails”) brings to mind another instance of the typology related to the archetypal figure of Isaac: the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, whose sacrifice also involved an ascent with wood (Gen. 22.5/ John 19.17), the offering up of an “only begotten son” (Gen. 22.2, 12/ John 3.16), and both Isaac and Jesus calling out to their fathers (Gen. 22.7/ Mark 15:34; Matt. 27.46), among other similarities.\textsuperscript{123} The mention of Mavrika’s frequenting of a pub owned by the Greek Abou Christou (150–152) is a further indication that the Christian typology alluded to here hearkens back to Boukhobza’s recasting of the

\textsuperscript{122} See Ya’akov Yehoshu’a’s excellent history of this neighborhood for further detail.

\textsuperscript{123} For more on this typology, see, for instance, Huizenga 63–82, and Goppelt 136–40.
story of Isaac, since the Arabic *abu* ("father of") and the Greek *khristou* ("of Christ") together make out the patronymic name, "Father of Christ." If the Arabic term is translated more liberally, the name could also mean, "He who possesses the qualities of Christ."

The "asylum" referred to above is a fictional mental hospital supposedly located in the Talbiyah neighborhood, where the only man whom Mavrika ever loved had been taken after his descent into lunacy. The narrator relates what transpired between Mavrika and her infirm lover before his forced detention:

Lorsqu’il avait commencé à manifester les premiers signes de la démence, elle avait tu son malheur à ses voisins. Si elle devait sortir, elle l’attachait à une chaise, bâillonnait sa bouche pour étouffer ses cris. Mais un jour, les infirmiers sont entrés pour trainer Isaac dans l’asile de Talbia (150).

[When he began to show the first signs of madness, she kept his misfortune hidden from the neighbors. If she had to go out, she would bind him to a chair, and tie a gag around his mouth to smother his screams. But one day, the paramedics came in to take Isaac away to the asylum of Talbiyah.]

The intertextual associations in the scene described above convey the following reading: "Isaac," the lover, is "bound" by Mavrika, until one day he disappears from the picture. Mavrika subsequently goes mad as well, becomes a prostitute, and "se donnait aux hommes en pensant au fou" (151; "would give herself to men while thinking about her insane lover"). Although the scene involving the explanation of Isaac’s mental downslide is relatively short, spanning only two pages (150–52), it provides the necessary background details in order to explain Mavrika’s ensuing behavior.

But why has such a tragedy befallen Isaac? When Mavrika goes to visit him, he doesn’t remember who she is, having blotted out all of his previous memories. She forgives his forgetting of her, because she understands that his inability to remember
stems from the aftermath of a great psychic wound. She clarifies: “Il a vécu des heures atroces. Il n’a pas supporté le sang versé, les copains disparus . . . la violence. Il a seulement oublié qu’il m’abandonnait à l’arrière, démolie” (151; “He had lived through horrible moments. He couldn’t stand all the blood spilled, the friends who were no more . . . the violence. He simply forgot that he was abandoning me there in his wake, completely destroyed”).

Given the above explanation, the shadow contents of this brief episode are fairly transparent: Isaac, an avatar of the Biblical figure of the same name from Genesis 22, is “sacrificed” by the patriarchal figure of the Israeli state apparatus, which follows the directive issued by the “divine” discourse of Zionism, itself an ideal grounded in Biblical praxis. Mavrika’s “binding” of him reflects her reenactment of the originary Biblical scene, but it also takes the story one step further, much in the fashion of Yehoshua’s “Early in the Summer of 1970.” Isaac is presented as having been sacrificed to a higher authority, since his insanity/loss of memory function as a metaphoric amnesia-cum-death, for which no “ram” (i.e., substitute victim, as we have seen in the work of Potok) has been provided. Furthermore, the collective nature of the activity in which he was involved while being put in the position of the archetypal Isaac implies that any one of the sons of Israel might suffer the same fate. This group-oriented revisioning of the archetypal sacrifice in Judaic lore also sheds light on Mavrika’s choice of appellation for Isaac: “le fou” (151; “the crazy one”), which is nearly a homophone of the word foule (“crowd”), mentioned frequently in the text with respect to religious gatherings. This communal aspect of Isaac’s victimization, and subsequent confinement in the sanatorium of the Talbiyah neighborhood by way of a religious edict, also recalls the Muslim
“crowds” who chant the *Talbiyeh* prayer during the *hajj* (“pilgrimage to Mecca”) in order to purify themselves of material pursuits.

At the end of this section of the book, the reader is informed that Mavrika eventually became, in Isaac’s absence, “une femme hêbêtée” (184; “a numb woman”), incapable of sexual gratification, despite her activities as a prostitute. Obsessed by the symbolic nature of Isaac’s decline, she also reenacted his sacrifice, and illustrated her own inheritance of the dangerous trope, in that “elle acceptait parfois les cordes qui ficelaient son corps aux armatures des lits” (132; “she would sometimes accept the ropes that tied her to bedframes”) during the course of serving her clients. The narrator then explains that after she exhibited behavior so unbalanced that her clients stopped asking for her services, Mavrika simply disappeared. The narrator calls her “le témoin ou le prophète” (184; “a witness or a prophet”), and, in fact, she is both. Both titles accurately reflect her propinquity to the catastrophic results of blind devotion to two dominant discourses that have, according to Boukhobza’s portrayal, moved unequivocally into the realm of the malevolent.

3. The Anima Archetype

The archetype of the anima in Boukhobza’s *Un été à Jérusalem* appears in several different recastings of familiar characters and tropes from the intertextual store of Judaic religious culture. As the archetype that is most concerned with the unmasking of the shadow, the anima in Boukhobza’s novel is involved in destabilizing the manifestations of shadow explored in the previous section. The anima does this by providing a sort of psychic “compensation” (Hillman, *Anima* 23) for the persona of the text’s protagonist,
whose collisions with the shadow ultimately lead her to reveal, through her actions, what
the collective has repressed—what Hillman calls a “consciousness of our fundamental
unconsciousness” (*Anima* 25). From this perspective, the anima becomes the guide or
negotiator for the narrator of the story, as its subversive re-envisioning of foundational
Judaic figures makes conscious the existence of psychoses present in those individuals
with whom the narrator has a close rapport, in addition to exposing the sources in the
collective unconsciousness from which those neurotic tendencies stem.

The first clearly subverted instantiation of a celebrated Judaic figure in anima
form occurs in the last part of the novel, when Roger comes to the narrator’s parents’
home to inform her of the death of Henry. Henry, he explains, had accompanied Roger’s
unit on a sortie to the Lebanese front, in order to witness what was actually taking place
in the field. Roger tells the narrator that Henry had been “imprudent” (252; “reckless”) by
taking off his helmet in order to pour water from a canteen onto his head, after which a
bullet from the Lebanese side of the border hit him in the right eye and instantly killed
him.

Roger, although visibly shaken, dismisses the cause of the tragedy in the
following manner: “Mektoub! C’était son heure” (253; “Fate! It was his time to go”). The
narrator responds: “Ta gueule! C’est de ta faute. Tu l’as tué. Toi et pas l’Arabe d’en face!
Toi! Toi! (253 ; “Shut your mouth! It’s your fault. You killed him. You and not the Arab
on the other side. You! You!”). Paradoxically, the significant symbolic component in this
exchange between Roger and the narrator is that both individuals’ means of ascribing
responsibility stem from two opposing ends of inherited North African mores, since
Roger’s attribution of “Mektoub” as the primary rationale for Henry’s fatal accident is
construed by the narrator as just another instance of a quasi-religious surrender to outside forces, which she considers to be linked to the perils of religious piety. Moreover, Roger’s response demonstrates again his failure to satisfactorily realize his potential role as a senex in the story, given that the fatalistic nature of his response has already been pinpointed by the narrator as a target of her indignation. For her part, her comment expresses a return to her earlier lament about the loss of the Judeo-Islamic coexistence she knew in North Africa, as well as pointing to the culpability of Zionist ideology in the protracted cycle of needless violence in the region. It also exhibits the true location of her cultural allegiance as one firmly grounded in the Arab world.

After Roger leaves her parents’ home, the narrator decides that she will sneak up on him later that night while he sleeps and strangle him to death, thereby taking her revenge for the loss of Henry. When she arrives at his home, she notes that “la grille du jardin est ouverte” (255; “the gate to the garden is open”), a remark that references the earlier intertextual associations between the narrator, in her personified form as the Assembly of Israel, as a gan na’ul (“garden shut up,” from Song of Songs 4.12) within the confining structures of the religious/patriarchal system. In this scene, her “open” revolt is presented as possible only because of the madness that has descended upon her in light of the disastrous consequences of the aforementioned conventions. The revolt is also practically compromised because Roger awakens as she tiptoes into his room. Weeping, he addresses her with a literal sort of paternalism, calling her, “Sarah, ma belle, mon enfant” (254; “Sarah, my darling, my child”), which she rejects by physically pushing him away, again signaling the failed potentiality of his role as a senex figure.
At the very end of the novel, Roger thus reveals the narrator’s first name. This moment points to a fundamental rethinking of traditional Judaic propriety in that it re-envisions the first, and most important, matriarch of the Jewish people (whose life and death are chronicled in Genesis 11–23) along the lines of the narrator’s previous textual exploits. It is also significant because, throughout the entire book, Sarah has effectively hidden her name, and therefore rejected it, choosing to place her affinity instead with people who carry non-Jewish first names, such as Henry, Roger, Bernard, etc. Even Sarah’s mother’s non-Jewish name is only mentioned one time in the book, when the father yells at her, “Camille, il y a quelque chose qui brûle!” (183; “Camille, something’s burning!”).

Granted, the absence of a direct appellation of the mother in Un été à Jérusalem most likely has more to do with the mother’s insignificance in the eyes of the males of the household (as does the indirect appellation of the Arab gardener) than with any symbolic tentative to link her nameless persona with that of the narrator. Be that at it may, it is still she, along with Henry and Robert, for whom Sarah demonstrates the most affection. Furthermore, it is logical that her Hebrew-named brothers, Danny and Joseph, who are serving in the army, should maintain titles denoting the most direct inheritance of Judaic tradition, since they are the ones most involved in, and affected by it (as was Isaac, Mavrika’s infirm lover).

Why has Sarah rejected her Biblical namesake? The first reason for this rebuff involves the archetypal Sarah’s association with the Binding of her son Isaac, whom she bears to Abraham in Genesis 21.2. According to one Kabbalistic midrash that picks up the narrative after the events of Genesis 22, Sarah was informed that Abraham had
actually killed Isaac, and thereafter died of grief. Plapp has noted that Sarah (the narrator’s) refutation of her own name, as well as her eventual metaphoric death through insanity, occurs as a similar reaction against the legacy of the ‘akedah, “because she believes that her progeny will be destroyed as a result of the choices of the state of Israel” (175), in the same way as Mavrika’s Isaac is sacrificed on the altar of collective service.

The name “Sarah,” then, is a constant reminder of the narrator’s agony over being “in conflict with her own people” (Brami 251), especially as the Jewish people are typified through the insistence upon tradition held by her father. Of course, the father has no need for a specific first name (and none is given to him in the text), since he embodies the archetype of the patriarchal counterpart to the narrator’s matr iarchal representation. And this brings us to the second reason for the anima figure’s rejection of her given name: her Biblical namesake’s casting out of Hagar, Abraham’s concubine, and her son Ishmael from the household of the patriarch (Gen. 21.9–21). In the Biblical text, Sarah does not want Ishmael to inherit what she believes to be due to Isaac:

And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne unto Abraham, making sport. Wherefore she said unto Abraham: “Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.” And the thing was very grievous in Abraham’s sight on account of his son. And God said unto Abraham: “Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah saith unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall seed be called to thee. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.” (Gen. 21.9–13)

The significance of the intertextual association between Boukhobza’s Sarah rejecting her own name and the Biblical episode involving Ishmael is that the “nation” referred to

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124 See *Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer* 234, in Friedlander 76.
above is commonly assumed to be the Northern Arab peoples, who were later Islamicized by Muhammad.\textsuperscript{125} Whether or not this assumption is correct, Boukhobza’s anima spends the greater part of the novel bemoaning the loss of what she sees as the Judeo-Islamic symbiosis experienced in North Africa, which existed between the supposed descendants of Isaac (the Jews) and the probable descendents of Ishmael (the Muslim Arabs).

One of the reasons the narrator cites for the severance between these two intertwined communities was the advent of political Zionism, a philosophy also based on “seed,” which provided a reason for postcolonial Arab nationalists to push the Jews to leave North Africa. What’s more, the novel’s depiction of the expulsion of Palestinian Arabs from their territory and from the daily life of Jews in Israel functions as an additional modern-day recasting of this Biblical trope, especially when we consider the fact that it was the narrator (Sarah) who initially encouraged her family (led by her father, the patriarch) to immigrate to Israel, and thereby to participate in the Zionist project, which, in some part, entails the ejection of the local Arab populace (Hagar and Ishmael) from their homes.

Boukhobza’s storyline also intimates that recurring tropes perpetuate recurring (re)actions, the ultimate outcome(s) of which cannot be foreseen. For example, the strange account of Henry’s death by a bullet from the “Ishmaelite” side of the border bears an uncanny similarity to the adult Ishmael’s eventual adroitness as an archer in the wilderness of Paran, as recounted in Genesis 21.20. Roger’s comment to Sarah that, “Un tireur d’élite n’aurait pas fait mieux” (252; “A sharpshooter couldn’t have done any

\textsuperscript{125} For the history of this assumption, see Bakhos 116–22.
better”) signals to the reader that his initial description of Henry’s demise as having been caused by “une balle perdue” (252; “a stray bullet”) only temporarily masks the intertextual connection triggered by the manner of the Algerian’s death. Roger’s comment also foreshadows the final unveiling of Sarah’s true name by alluding to characters traditionally associated with her.

Several other points surrounding the unusual circumstances of Henry’s death are worth mentioning. The first is the sense that the downfalls of both Henry and Sarah, who have not displayed any malevolent tendencies throughout the course of the narrative, have somehow been caused by a kind of divine retribution for their “betrayals” to their people. Sarah had left Israel after refusing to accept as justifiable the sacrifices of everyday Isaacs; and Henry openly declared that he would not take an ideological stance one way or the other regarding ownership of the Holy Land. Additionally, both Maghrebian Jews align themselves with a wholesale rejection of the religious component of Judaic civilization: Sarah heartily disdains it, while Henry simply remains “un parfait athée” (145; “a complete atheist”), only interested in the Judeo-Arabic component of his ethno-cultural Judaism. Moreover, Sarah has chosen to remain anonymous up until the end of novel as part of her incapacity to accept the theological underpinnings of the Judaic tradition, a transgression on account of which Sarah’s father in the text is unable to exact any concrete reprisal upon her for her sacrilegious behavior, save the one instance that he strikes her (178). Henry’s death, however, is what will ultimately drive her from his home forever, presumably to the asylum of Talbiyah.

By the same token, Henry’s jaunt to the front line with his fellow Maghrebian Jew, Roger (who has chosen to fight despite his misgivings of Israel’s policies), conveys
a sense of privileged detachment that does not go unpunished. Indeed, it seems as though both Sarah and Henry provoke the fury of God, or at least the wrath of Judaism’s eternal recurrence, for their lack of piety. Henry’s killing, then, and Sarah’s descent into madness, which happen during the Jewish New Year (further concretizing the notion of cyclical patterns of providence) conjure up associations of the Deuteronomic warning of what will happen to those who fail to toe the line of the Mosaic code: “But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. . . . The LORD will smite thee with madness, and with blindness, and with astonishment of heart” (Deut. 28.15, 28).

Clearly, the “madness” and “astonishment of heart” cited above may be attributed to the final state of the character of Sarah, while the “blindness” is a direct intertextual reference (among others) that points to the fate met by Henry. This is an obvious allusion because, earlier on in the text, the narrator’s initial description of Henry revealed that he had only one good eye: “le gauche est aveugle, rendu opaque par une taie blanche qui recouvre la pupille” (144; “the left one is blind, made obscure by a white cover that conceals the pupil”). While it is not mentioned into which eye the Ishmaelite’s bullet entered, the final condition of Henry is indeed one of blindness, at least from an allegorical standpoint. Furthermore, the manner of his execution smacks of predestined retribution for his lack of piety, and overrides the potential “waiver” he might have received for such indecision, since, according to Talmudic decree (Ḥagigah 2a), a person who cannot see from one eye is not required to undertake the annual festival pilgrimages
to the Temple in Jerusalem. Metaphorically, Henry does not even attempt any such “pilgrimage,” and blindness is the mektoub that awaits him.

Similarly, the last action that Henry undertakes before being killed—removing his helmet in order to pour water from a canteen onto his head—shares an acute resemblance with Biblical scenes that portray the anointing of certain sacred individuals. But, here as well, God’s injunction to “Touch not Mine anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm” (1 Chronicles 16.22; Psalm 105.15) proves to be irrelevant in Henry’s case, since, in the context of divine (or nomocratic) retribution, his decision to cut himself off from standardized Judaic norms of propriety cancels out any prophetic function he might have fulfilled. In the end, his fate mirrors that of “Isaac the Blind,” the supposed author of the book of the Zohar, both in the literal and typological connotations of the name (and with respect to that book’s prominence in Un été à Jérusalem). It also leaves him in the same position as the (in)famous Israeli Lieutenant General Moshe Dayan (1915–1981), who lost his eye during a firefight in Lebanon in 1941, as he was helping British forces to liberate Lebanese territory from the Nazi-backed French Vichy government. Dayan, however, did not end up dead; he became one of the most celebrated and controversial

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126 Such anointing occurs in Exodus 25.6, 28.41, and 29.7, 21, 29; in Judges 9.8, 15; in I Samuel 9.16, 10.1, and 16.12–13; in II Samuel 5.3 and 19.10; in I Kings 1.39, 45; in II Kings 9.3, 6, 11.12; and in Psalm 23.5, 89.20–21, and 133.1–2.

127 This theory has been largely refuted by modern scholars of Kabbalah, most notably by Scholem, Origins of the Kabbalah 199–364.
personalities in modern Jewish history. Thus, by symbolically juxtaposing the providence of Henry, a pacifist, with that of the most famous military leader and one-eyed figure in the collective Israeli consciousness, Dayan, Boukhobza leaves the reader to ponder the reasons for which both men left the experience of Lebanon differently. In other words, why did Dayan—a staunch secularist, who nonetheless maintained a lifelong conviction that the Jewish people had a right to the Land of Israel—survive the “Ishmaelite” bullet that struck his eye, while Henry, an ethno-cultural Jew and proponent of peaceful coexistence, ends up dying of the same wound? As with Sarah’s madness, the answer is to be found in the suggested predestined retribution on account of a lack of piety.

Despite the seeming inefficacy of Sarah’s rebellion at the conclusion of Boukhobza’s story, this is also the point in the narrative that compels the reader to consider in a different light the events of the book as they have unfolded. At the very climax of the novel the reader becomes aware, in retrospect, of the form of the anima that has worked as Sarah’s unconscious guide, and which has helped her to unmask the contents of the collective shadow. Namely, this form of anima has provided for her a sort of psychic “compensation” (Hillman, *Anima* 23), in order that her character might negotiate between the realms of consciousness and unconsciousness without losing control. Not until the story’s closing stages does the narrator’s introspective partner,

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129 See Dayan’s *Living with the Bible* as an example of his secular nationalism sans religion.
whose identity had also been concealed up until the tragedy of Henry’s death, come to the forefront. In fact, only in the last line of the novel does Boukhobza make known the narrator’s alter-ego, a personage that actively contradicts the symbolic burden of the narrator’s given name. After Henry addresses the narrator as “Sarah, ma belle, mon enfant” (254; “Sarah, my darling, my child”), the narrator relates her reaction to his pleas for calm in the following manner: “J’ai dit avec violence: ‘Non, à présent, je m’appelle Mavrika!’” (254; “I said, violently: ‘No, from now on, my name is Mavrika!’

The revelation that the narrator, Sarah, had been marching around the city at night in a trance-like state and prostituting herself in the wake of Isaac’s death is significant for two reasons. The first is that Mavrika did not come into existence until the slope toward lunacy grew more slippery, as a result of Isaac’s own insanity. Also, she only returned fully to replace the conscious ego of Sarah after Henry’s death, when she rends her hair, as she had done after Isaac’s death (133), and self-mutilates before running off naked to strangle Roger to death. I am therefore in full accord with Plapp’s estimation that Mavrika is a symbolic “criticism of the destruction caused by the state of Israel” (176), inasmuch it was the metaphoric killing of Isaac by the state that drove Sarah into living a double-life.

The second reason for this character’s importance is that the narrator did not morph into Mavrika at all during her years away in Paris, since she was far from the confines of her father’s household and from the quotidian violence of Jerusalem. Upon Sarah’s return to Israel, however, her transformation into an urban whore who has no obligations to anyone, save to the clients she chooses to entertain, is an extremely compelling method of both eluding the patriarchal structure and subverting it at the same
time. As Brami posits, “Mavrika” may therefore be considered as “the name she [Sarah] chooses to represent her liberated self (252), who, in the guise of the alter-ego of Mavrika, is completely unfettered from the taboos and cultural confinements of her father’s (and Israel’s) patriarchalism, not to mention from the discursive conventions alluded to by her given name. Ironically, the only time that Sarah seems at all to embrace the legacy of her Biblical namesake is when she tries to nurse Isaac back to health after the onset of his lunacy.

That said, I find much legitimacy in Thomas Nolden’s assertion that the Sarah/Mavrika character does not constitute a merely “subversive heroine” in the text, given the fact that she carries out her acts in an altered state, and as “a woman damaged . . . by male sexual aggression.” I also agree with Nolden’s claim that, in “stripping away the misogynist connotations of the image of the whore . . . the book insists that it is the male politics of nationalism that have corrupted Jerusalem” (199). Indeed, I consider both components of Nolden’s above-stated argument compelling precisely because they highlight the primary anima function of Sarah/Mavrika in the text: to bring to the fore the manifestations of shadow contents that the collective has repressed by destabilizing the metaphorical and/or rhetorical devices upon which they rest.

The initial instance of such destabilization occurs when the narrator presents the figure of Mavrika to the reader for the first time:

A Jérusalem il y a quelques années, j’ai connu une prostituée. Elle se faisait appeler Mavrika, “étincelante.” Elle avait simplement orthographié en hébreu les consonnes de son ancien prénom arabe qui signifiait bénie et a changé les voyelles pour offrir un nouveau titre à sa condition de femme (131).

[Several years ago in Jerusalem, I knew a prostitute. She gave herself the name of Mavrika, which means “sparkling.” She had simply spelled out in Hebrew the
consonants of her former Arabic first name, which meant “blessed,” and changed the vowels in order to propose a new title for her condition as a woman.]

From this description, the reader realizes that Mavrika hails from an Arab country and originally went by the name of Mbraka. The text tells us that in both its Arabic and Hebrew configurations, this name contains the consonantal root of the verb for “to bless,” hence the denotation of “blessed” in both of these Semitic languages—a peculiar appellation for a prostitute in the language of two traditions in which institutionalized patriarchy is a fundamental part of the religiously conservative atmosphere.\textsuperscript{130} Evidently, there are intertextual, as well as connotative, explanations for the chosen name of Sarah’s alter-ego, which can also mean, “glittering,” “shiny,” or “brilliant.”

One rationale for the selection of the prostitute’s first name lies in its connection with an expression found in Daniel 12.3, “And they that are wise shall shine (yizharu) as the brightness (zohar) of the firmament; and they that turn the many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” While the terms mavrik (“shiny,” “brilliant”) and zohar (“brightness,” “radiance”) do not actually share similar consonantal roots in Hebrew, their literal senses are very similar, especially in the context of the semiotic processes they generate. More importantly, the correlation between the narrator and the verse cited above from the Book of Daniel is significant inasmuch as that it is the exact verse from

\textsuperscript{130} Boukhobza’s transformation of Mbaraka to Mavrika is correct, etymologically speaking, although the denotation of “blessed” in both the Hebrew and Arabic roots is not. While “Mavrika” is indeed the vowelized Hebrew configuration of the Arabic root بركة, the Hebrew equivalent of “to bless” is written בָּרָה, the last letter of which differs from the way in which the root of Mavrika’s name is spelled: בָּרָה. Nonetheless, the two roots in Hebrew may sound similar, depending upon their usage, and thus the symbolic effect of these homonyms remains relevant.
which the name of the Kabbalistic work of the Zohar is taken. Already discussed briefly in this chapter in conjunction with the narrator, the book of the Zohar figures prominently again in her regard in the coming pages.

The semiotic characteristics of Mavrika’s name also direct the reader to two midrashic tales involving the archetypal matriarch Sarah, the namesake of Boukhobza’s narrator. The first is a midrash on the story of Abraham (then Abram) and Sarah (then Sarai), who, in Genesis 12, must journey to Egypt in order to escape a famine in Canaan. According to the midrash, Sarah was hidden by Abraham in a crate so that the Egyptian customs officials would not see her. However, building on the Bible’s account that, “And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair” (Gen. 12.14), the author of the midrashic text recounts that a bright light emanated from the crate when Abraham was forced to open it (Gen. Rabbah 50.5). Similarly, another midrashic tale in Genesis describes the sun shining as Sarah gave birth to Isaac with a radiance unparalleled since God’s creation (Gen. Rabbah 53.8).

With respect to the mention of Isaac, there is a direct textual link between the meaning of Mavrika’s original Arabic name of Mbraka, “blessed,” and the promise of God to Abraham after Abraham proves his willingness to sacrifice his son. According to the Biblical account:

And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: “By Myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast hearkened to My voice.” (Gen. 22.15–18)
The “blessing” of Abraham’s seed referred to above, through which God vows to make all the nations of the world blessed, contains the same root, “birekh,” as Mavrika’s former Arabic first name, which means “blessed.” From that perspective, the symbolic affinity between Mavrika and Isaac suggested by their common signifying titles also points to both of their statuses as victims in the patriarchal pyramid, especially if we recall Boukhobza’s sardonic take on the uncertain legacy of God’s promise.

In the novel, Sarah’s aunt Aliza unknowingly alludes to this connection between Mavrika and Isaac, as she scolds the narrator over her lack of religious observance: “Tu n’as pas changé. Un cœur de pierre. Ton père n’a pas été béní avec toi!” (50; “You haven’t changed. A heart of stone. With you, your father was not blessed!”). The last part of Aliza’s comment, which might be more liberally translated as, “Your father has not been blessed with you as his daughter,” may be understood in two different ways in the context of the entire narrative. The first way of understanding this comment is to think about it from the standpoint of its speaker, Aliza. That is to say: in Aliza’s eyes, the implication of the term “blessed” is that Sarah’s father, the patriarch of the household, has not received the blessing spoken of by God to the first patriarch, Abraham, because his “seed” has produced a daughter who is a non-observant Jew with no respect for tradition. The second way of looking at this comment is from the retrospective vantage point of the reader who knows that Sarah is Mavrika/Mbaraka, a character who is indeed “blessed” by the semantic virtue of her name, not to mention “blessed” with the agency, compromised though it may be, to undertake a revolt against the first way of understanding Aliza’s remark.
The discerning reader will notice several clues throughout the text indicating that Sarah/Mavrika are two halves of the same individual. One of the early indications is related to the narrator’s disgust at her father’s conception of corporeal modesty. Although she does not openly dress (or operate) as Mavrika the prostitute under the gaze of her parents, she arrives in the country “juchée sur des talons trop hauts (9; “perched on heels that are too high”), and consistently pushes the limits of corporeal modesty that her father attempts to impose on her. In particular, the copious amounts of make-up that the narrator applies in her conscious state may be seen both as a revolt against the patriarchal codes regarding bodily conduct and physical appearance, as well as an indication of her nocturnal transformations into Mavrika, who is the anima come-to-life of Sarah.

The insinuation that revolt is part of the rationale for her face-painting is evidenced in the narrator’s own description of her nightly jaunts into the city: “Je marche, maquillée avec violence, pour heurter la ville, humilier la ville. J’ai rempli ma peau de couleurs comme on comble une fosse” (128; “I walk, made-up with violence, in order to scandalize the city, to humiliate the city. I have filled my skin up with color the way that one seals a grave”). Note the explicit use here of the term “violence,” which appears very rarely in the text in such an unambiguous configuration. The reader will recall one other section of the novel in which the word is used as unequivocally: the section in which the narrator, while introducing the character of Mavrika, explains the reasons for which Isaac went insane: “Il n’a pas supporté le sang versé, les copains disparus . . . la violence (151; “He couldn’t stand all the blood spilled, the friends who were no more . . . the violence”). Keeping this connection in mind, the supposition according to which the character of Sarah/Mavrika represents the consequences of the violence of patriarchy and nationalism
seems particularly relevant here, especially since many of the reactions to Sarah’s appearance both legitimize her revolt and foreshadow her connection with Mavrika, which at this point in the text is not openly stated. As Sarah remarks: “Il y a ceux qui aboient avec netteté, ‘putain’!” (128; “There are those who bark clearly at me: ‘Whore’!”).

Certainly, just as Sarah functions a stand-in for all the women who have been subjugated under such rhetoric, the fact that she describes her made-up countenance as possessing the topographical features of Israel (166–67), or resembling that of a “rescapée de Dachau” (166; “a survivor of Dachau”) signifies her particular connection with other exploited Jewish females throughout history. Suggesting that this phylogenetic and historical bond of “être juive” (166; “being a Jewish female”) is the cause of her impending “foltie” (166; “madness”), Sarah wonders, “Quelle malédiction biblique allait fondre sur moi?” (166; “What kind of Biblical curse would swoop down upon me?”). The answer for “Sarah” is another playing-out of the Binding of Isaac, which will happen this time with Henry. Interestingly enough, Henry is the only one in the text who makes a direct reference to his discomfort at seeing Sarah’s heavily made-up face, when he says to her, “Ta folie à toi est visible” (169; “Your madness is visible”). In the framework of his quasi-senex function, Roger expresses his wish for her to exit the cycle of hereditary mania, telling her that he would like to see her “nue de ton fard” (169; “without make-up”).

Another indication that Sarah’s face-painting is part of an aesthetics of revolt occurs during a conversation with her brother, Joseph, who is on furlough from the war in Lebanon. Without prior contextual explanation, he asks her: “Tu sais que le verbe
‘chercher’ a la même racine en hébreu que le mot ‘liberté’? Mais sais-tu qu’il a aussi la même racine que le verbe ‘déguiser’? Réfléchis à ca” (124; “Do you know that the verb ‘to seek’ has the same root in Hebrew as the word for ‘liberty’? And do you also know that it has the same root as the verb ‘to disguise’? Think about that”). Joseph’s query to his sister, which involves the Hebrew verbs lehapes (“to seek”), lehithapes (“to disguise oneself”), and the noun hofesh (“liberty,” “freedom”), also is partially relevant for the Francophone reader of the text who knows no Hebrew, as the French verb se maquiller may signify, “to disguise oneself,” in addition to the quotidian meaning of, “to make oneself up” with cosmetics. Indeed, Sarah does apply make-up when she goes out searching for her liberty, but as a compromised being, she also feels compelled to disguise herself as she does so.

Cairns (“Hyphenated Identity” 68) points out that the linguistic interplay between these actions of Sarah’s, in both Hebrew and French, are relevant to the repetition in the text of Sarah’s phrase, “Je la cherche” (133; “I’m looking for her”) with respect to Mavrika, because the connotations of “liberty” and “disguise” are also tied up in the nature of the search. Significantly, Sarah points to Mavrika’s anima function when she notes that, “Je la cherche dans la rue des Prophètes” (133; “I search for her on the Street of the Prophets”), making veiled references to Mavrika’s visionary role in the text. Sarah’s other brother, Danny, had earlier alluded to this function when he mentioned to Sarah the transformative power that she exemplified for him, before leaving Israel for France: “Quand j’étais prêt à faire des compromis, je me souvenais de toi, de ta détermination à obtenir ce que tu souhaitais . . . Tu te rappelles ? Tu crias: ‘Plutôt mourir que d’obéir à des ordres qui me dérangent . . . Tu m’as rendu rebelle, petite sœur” (121;
“When I was about to compromise on something, I thought of you, of your determination to get what you wanted . . . Do you remember? You used to shout: It’s better to die than to obey commands that irritate me . . . You made me into a rebel, little sister”).

In light of the support evidenced above for the narrator’s transformative and quasi-prophetic role in the text, I disagree with Eli’s assertion that the rebellion taken up by Sarah/Mavrika continues to serve the patriarchal pyramid, inasmuch as it also fulfills “men’s desires” (112). Rather, I am of the same opinion as Haunani-Kay Trask with respect to the release of “erotic impulses” as a form of feminine agency: namely, that they “transform the point of repression—the life instincts—into a force for liberation” (*Eros* 99), since these are the very impulses suppressed by the patriarchal pyramid. Moreover, because the repression of erotic impulses strikes a particularly resonant chord with Jewish women writers who are, as Cairns has demonstrated, “more sensitive to gendered structures of experience” (“Post-war” 27) than their male counterparts (as a result of their position in the pyramid), their tendency to utilize these components of female identity to undermine the dominant patriarchal discourse seems highly logical, if not necessary. Regarding the Tunisian-Jewish subculture, it would not be an exaggeration to say that almost any reference to female sexuality is enough to destabilize this discourse, which in Mavrika’s case points to a direct objective of her anima function.

A case in point is illustrated by a comment in the narrator’s initial description of Mavrika’s behavior after Isaac’s institutionalization. Recalling Mavrika’s desire to fornicate with a great number of men, the narrator notes dryly, “Elle prétendait que le sperme la purifiait” (151; “She used to claim that sperm would purify her”). In addition to the sub-culturally subversive nature of this remark, which contradicts entirely the
discursive conventions of patriarchal North African mores, the reference to sperm as a purifying agent is an intertextual slap in the face of the Biblical directives (Gen. 38; Num. 5.13; Deut. 23.10) that discourage followers of the Mosaic code to be in close proximity to semen, unless it is for the purpose of procreation. For example, in Leviticus 15.16–18, 32, it is written:

And if the flow of seed go out from a man, then he shall bathe all his flesh in water, and be unclean until the evening. And every garment, and every skin, whereon is the flow of seed, shall be washed with water, and be unclean until the evening. The woman also with whom a man shall lie carnally, they shall both bathe themselves in water, and be unclean. . . . This is the law of him that hath an issue, and of him from whom the flow of seed goeth out, so that he is unclean thereby.

The reader is by now well aware that Mavrika’s yearning for sperm as the flip side to her other “purification ritual” of face-painting is part of the composite of outlandish sexual behaviors that ultimately alienate her from her Arab and Jewish clients, for whom such a thoroughly seditious kind of gendered revolt must seem perverse, at best. This is especially true if one considers the polysemous intertextual implications in the Judaic tradition of sperm as “seed,” which, as has been demonstrated here, range from injunctions regarding bodily discharge to the phylogenetic founding of nations. Keeping the latter implication in mind, it seems quite likely that Mavrika’s fascination with “seed” hearkens back to Sarah’s (her conscious ego’s) legacy as the inheritor of the seed of Abraham, “blessed” by God in Genesis 22.18, which of course had gone into the vessel of Sarah before the near-sacrifice of Isaac took place.

Aside from Mavrika’s textual and sub-culturally specific taboo-breaking motivations, her neurotic conduct is also tied to her anima role as the guide to the unconscious sources of collective mania, for her behavior serves as a language of mirrors
through which the collective may be exposed to its neuroses, and then caution against perpetuating them—in short, as “le témoin ou le prophète” (184; “a witness or a prophet”), as the conscious narrator refers to her. In that respect, Plapp points out that the Biblical prophet most likely to be associated with Mavrika is Jeremiah (173), who, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, has figured prominently in several recastings carried out by Boukhobza.

In connection with Mavrika’s above-cited penchant for sexual intercourse and for “seed,” the prophet Jeremiah is significant because he speaks to the people of Israel by the collective names of “daughter of Jerusalem” and “virgin daughter of Zion” (Lamentations 2.13), just as Mavrika has been referred to by the narrator as a “fille publique” (133; “communal daughter”).131 Also, Jeremiah addresses the people of Israel as a loose woman who has strayed from her husband (God) and prostituted herself. His admonishment of Israel’s “harlotry” is reminiscent of the Biblical laws regarding purification after sexual activity, which Mavrika has openly defied: “Thine adulteries, and thy neighings, the lewdness of thy harlotry, on the hills in the field have I seen thy detestable acts. Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem! thou wilt not be made clean! When shall it ever be?” (Jeremiah 13.27).132

Perhaps a more important parallel between Mavrika and Jeremiah is that Jeremiah’s prophecy predicts the eventual downfall of the Kingdom of Judah to the

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131 In French, a more colloquial translation of “fille publique” could be “streetwalker.” I have translated this term here as “communal daughter” in light of its metaphoric significance in the narrative.

132 See the book of Hosea for the earliest harlot imagery in the Hebrew Scriptures; see also Jeremiah 2.20, 5.7, 8, and 11.15 and Ezekiel 16.17 for similar allegories/imagery.
Babylonians, as well as the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE at the hands of the Romans. According to the prophecy, both disasters come upon the people of Israel because they have “prostituted themselves” in the form of idol worship.\textsuperscript{133} The character of Mavrika in Boukhobza’s text is also involved in warning the modern-day people of Israel of the consequences of the adulation that they display toward nationalism, militarism, and soulless religious observance, which she decries as “false idols.” The result of this adulation, she suggests, may be seen in the quagmire of the Lebanon War, which also references the Biblical warning of Jeremiah: “I see a seething pot; and the face thereof is from the north” (Jeremiah 1.13).\textsuperscript{134} Paradoxically, Sarah/Mavrika’s ethnocultural form of Judaism does not enable her to offer a clear alternative to Israel’s political path, other than to bemoan the preponderancy of patriarchy, and to hold up the example of the North African Judeo-Islamic symbiosis that she knew in Tunisia as the ideal toward which Israel should strive.

There is one final, and fundamental, component to the Sarah/Mavrika character that is the most important to highlight with respect to this symbolic duo’s anima function.

\textsuperscript{133} See Plapp’s discussion of Jeremiah’s prophecy as it resounds in Boukhobza’s text in his \textit{Zionism and Revolution} 173.

\textsuperscript{134} The full warning in Jeremiah’s prophecy alluded to by Boukhobza is as follows:

\begin{quote}
Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying: “Jeremiah, what seest thou?” And I said: “I see a rod of an almond-tree.” Then said the LORD unto me: “Thou hast well seen; for I watch over My word to perform it.” And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying: “What seest thou?” And I said: “I see a seething pot; and the face thereof is from the north.” Then the LORD said unto me: “Out of the north the evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter My judgments against them touching all their wickedness; in that they have forsaken me, and have offered unto other gods, and worshipped the work of their own hands.” (Jeremiah 1.11–16)
\end{quote}
And yet, the discussion of this component can only be undertaken in retrospect. The reason for this retrospective maneuver is because of the necessity to understand the contextually- and intertextually-specific recastings and subversions of traditional Judaic themes, figures, and motifs utilized by Boukhobza before ascribing the appropriate meaning to this final component. In particular, the knowledge that there exists a second, hidden side to Mavrika the prostitute is only relevant if one realizes that Sarah and Mavrika are the two opposing sides of one woman’s un/consciousness. This second aspect analyzed below—more intertextually essential than the first—is initially brought up by Sarah during her waking state by way of the following comment: “Mavrika ressemble à cette femme impénétrable que traquent depuis vingt siècles les cabalistes et les talmudistes . . . En hébreu, on l’appelle la Shehina. La Présence” (151; “Mavrika resembles that mysterious woman whom the Kabbalists and the Talmudists have been pursuing for twenty centuries . . . In Hebrew, they call her the Shekhinah. The Presence”).

The reader will recall the earlier references in this chapter to the Shekhinah—literally, “the dwelling,” or, more figuratively, the composite of the feminine attributes of the Divine Presence—as they were made in conjunction with the portrayal of the narrator as a delusional “Assembly of Israel,” as seen through the eyes of the Palestinian (senex) gardener and through the allusions to specific figurative components related to the Shekhinah in the Song of Songs. Outside of that context, however, the Shekhinah has also been identified with an introspective feminine quality that shares many parallels with anima consciousness in general, archetypal recastings notwithstanding.\(^{135}\) To that end, in

\(^{135}\) See Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess* xlviii, and 34–35.
the paragraphs that follow, I elaborate on both facets of the representation of the Shekhinah in Boukhobza’s text: its embodiment by Sarah/Mavrika as a subverted Judaic trope, and its anima function in the novel as the mediatrix between repressed collective contents and existent collective psychoses.

Conceptually, Boukhobza’s very mention of the Shekhinah is a radical undertaking, given that the historical understanding of the figure that emerges in Kabbalah as “the bride of God” is intimately linked to the debunking of the myth of Mosaic monotheism. As Raphael Patai has shown, the surfacing of the Shekhinah during the composition of the Kabbalah may be regarded as restoration of sorts of the ancient female Semitic divinities regularly worshipped alongside the (masculine) Hebrew God during the periods described in the Hebrew Scriptures, in particular the goddess Asherah (The Hebrew Goddess 34–53). As a representative of “divine punitive power” (The Hebrew Goddess 109), the Shekhinah also figures prominently in Judaic thought with regard to issues of ethical judgment. For instance, the Talmud tells us that, “Where three judges sit, the Shekhinah is with them” (Berakhot 6a); and that God’s feminine Presence is what causes prophets to reveal their divine messages (Pesakhim 117a). However, despite these numerous appearances throughout the (inter)textual sources of the Judaic tradition, the general perception regarding the Shekhinah is that it is “mysterious, obscure, subconscious” (Gottlieb 65), largely because of the anecdotal and exegetical nature by which its intellection has customarily taken place.

In Un été à Jérusalem, the introduction of the Shekhinah as part of the gan na’ul (“garden shut up”) before the appearance of Mavrika is significant because its appearance in the text is related to the ego-conscious side of the protagonist, Sarah, who also
functions as a stand-in for “the Assembly of Israel” (Zohar II 4a, par. 39). According to a thirteenth century mystic, Rabbi Joseph Gikatilla, “Sarah” was the name of the Shekhinah during the time of Abraham (204)—a further illustration as to how the pre-Mavrika relationship between the protagonist and the eventual materialization of the Shekhinah are textually linked. The Zohar, which has occupied symbolically strategic spaces elsewhere in the novel, also provides an important set of associations between Boukhobza’s Sarah, who represents the repression of the feminine principal at the hands of the patriarchal pyramid, and the calamity raging in modern-day Israel. According to the Zohar, God has no dwelling (Shekhinah) where male and female are not as one (Zohar 1.55b).

Finally, before the realization in the text that Sarah and Mavrika are two sides of the same unit, the references to Sarah’s “folie” (169; “madness”), which Henry labels as “visible” (169; “visible”), comes on the cusp of the most important description of Mavrika. In this description, the narrator relates that Mavrika “prétendait que le sperme la purifiait” (151; “used to claim that sperm would purify her”), in tandem with her concurrent assertion that Mavrika is the Shekhinah (151). The connections that we have already seen between Sarah’s “impurity” in the eyes of her family (the “visible” indication of which is the “madness” of her elaborate face-painting) and the “impurity” of Mavrika (which is established by her assertion that sperm is a purifying agent) indicate that both of these personae, as “the Assembly of Israel” and the feminine attribute of the Divine Presence, respectively, embody intrinsically constructive roles in the text, despite their supposedly seditious characteristics. Just as Jeremiah refers to the people of Israel as the “daughter of Jerusalem” throughout the Book of Lamentations as one whose
“impurity was [visible] on the hems of her skirts (Lamentations 1.9), the “fille publique” (133; “communal daughter”) of Sarah/Mavrika displays her impurity in various ways. Nonetheless, in light of the knowledge that the Shehkinah is personified by both of them reflects the Talmud’s assertion that the Divine Presence exists among the people of Israel even during their states of impurity (Yomah 56b).

Boukhobza’s re-envisioning of an ancient Semitic mother goddess/feminine attribute of the Divine/bride of God as a prostitute follows what Naomi Goldenberg sees as the most meaningful manner in which women can deal with feminine archetypes “in the way that patriarchy traditionally has displayed [them]” (448). According to Goldenberg, they must “re-create the archetypes,” a moral imperative that she equates with the destruction of “accepted, and degrading, patterns of thought (449). Boukhobza’s portrayal of Sarah as one who has patently rejected her archetypal namesake, and whose subsequent transformation into a prophetic power, “blessed” because she warns the people of Israel of the shadows in their midst, certainly conforms to Goldenberg’s designation of this directive. The visionary function represented by both Sarah and Mavrika also recalls Hillman’s notion of the anima as a force that “struggle[s] with history” (Anima 19) in both the conscious and unconscious realms. Hillman also asserts that the anima sees “ourselves as cases [of] our ancestors” (Anima 19), inasmuch as it brings to the fore the manifestations of shadow contents that the collective has repressed by destabilizing the inherited metaphorical and/or rhetorical devices upon which they rest. In the case of Saraha/Mavrika, this destabilization entails, as Brami correctly estimates, “a deliberate ethical claim” (252).
4. Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been to show the ways in which Chochana Boukhobza subverts and recasts the recurring tropes, figures, and discourses from the intertextual reservoir of Judaic culture in her novel *Un été à Jérusalem* from a decidedly feminist perspective. In particular, I have demonstrated how Boukhobza’s deconstruction of foundational Judaic myths and metanarratives, which she executes along the lines of emphatically feminist concerns, is informed by her protagonist’s revolt against the patriarchal confines of the Tunisian-Jewish subculture from which she hails. Furthermore, I have illustrated the archetypal parallels that exist between the discursive insurgency advocated by the narrator and her mourning of the loss of the Judeo-Islamic symbiosis experienced in North Africa.

Since there is no room for compromise with the logos principle in the context of the revolt portrayed by Boukhobza, the archetype of the senex in *Un été à Jérusalem* is markedly dissimilar from the familiar senex figures of rabbis, teachers, elders, etc. that appear in the literary works of Yehoshua and Potok. This difference may be explained by highlighting three key factors. The first factor is that Boukhobza does not recast a single well-known archetype from Judaic lore to function as the avatar of the archetypal senex, although she does suggest strong parallels between the image of the Palestinian Arab gardener and the Biblical figure of Moses. These parallels are formed by creating a composite of thematic, intertextual, and sub-culturally-specific tropes that work in conjunction with the other instantiations of Biblical and Kabbalistic motifs and/or characters in the text in order to highlight the senex function. The second factor for the uniqueness of Boukhobza’s senex is that it is decidedly apolitical in its indirectly-
transmitted wisdom—a tendency that mirrors Boukhobza’s own non-committal, ethnocultural syndrome of Judaic existence. In other words, as opposed to proposing a precise series of normative guidelines for lived experience, the senex simply elucidates the fantastic nature of the idea that Israel is a viable, pan-Jewish homeland, concurrent with its portrayal of the affinities that exist between political and domestic violence. The third reason for which Boukhobza’s senex principle is distinctive in the Judaic literary discourse examined herein is that her senex is a non-Jew. This choice reflects her intimation that the reliance upon structures of authority transmitted solely by phylogeny perpetuates the oppressive patriarchal pyramid.

The shadow archetype in Boukhobza’s literary work crosses the line from dogmatic posturing to openly destructive acts, often expressed via a penchant for physical and psychic violence. Boukhobza suggests that the cause of this violence upon both the familial and societal frameworks in which the female protagonists find themselves may be linked to the trajectories of two dominant Judaic discourses. The first of these overarching discourses is religious piety, which Boukhobza portrays as inherently repressive, in addition to having provided the conceptual foundation for the unwavering trust in the second malevolent discourse, (Zionist) Israeli nationalism. The author dissects the dogma inherent in both of these self-legitimizing philosophies by way of a particular kind of female epistemology, in which she suggests that the destructive qualities of both aforementioned discourses might be explicated through the lens of patriarchal oppression. She portrays this oppression as akin to the suppression of the Palestinian Arab populace on the basis of Israel’s Biblical right to the land.
The anima archetype in Boukhobza’s text appears in several different recastings of familiar characters and tropes from the intertextual store of Judaic culture, and is involved in destabilizing the manifestations of shadow contents. This destabilization occurs by providing a sort of psychic “compensation” (Hillman, *Anima* 23) for the persona of the text’s protagonist, whose collisions with the shadow ultimately lead her to reveal, through her actions, what the collective has repressed. The main subversive re-envisionings that appear in the form of the anima are the prostitute Mavrika, which Boukhobza characterizes as the feminine attribute of the Divine Presence, the *Shekhinah*; and the conscious ego of Mavrika, whose real name is revealed to be Sarah, the same as that of first Biblical matriarch. Boukhobza depicts Sarah as one who has patently rejected her archetypal namesake, and whose subsequent transformation into the prophetic figure of Mavrika, the “harlot” bride of God, serves to warn the people of Israel of the shadow contents that the collective has repressed by debunking the metaphorical and/or rhetorical devices upon which they rest.
Conclusion

This project has presented three case studies of the ways in which the modern interpretation of foundational Judaic narratives is codetermined by several key environmental factors. These factors, as demonstrated in the preceding chapters, include: geo-political affiliation; degree of religious observance; attitudes regarding gender roles; and notions of ethnicity. Such factors create the conceptual frameworks through which Jewish writers from differing backgrounds reference, recast, re-envision, or subvert traditional and/or religious figures, themes, tropes, discourses, or narratives from the intertextual reservoir of Judaic culture. The foundational texts in this reservoir are made up of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Talmud, the Kabbalah, and other celebrated, canonical works that are familiar to Jews the world over as symbolic points of reference. Jewish writers who choose to incorporate into their literary texts well-known elements from the continuum of Judaic textual history ultimately generate the meaning of this incorporation by way of the sub-cultural variables that define the nature of their respective, environmentally-based conceptual frameworks. In the same way that the differences in those frameworks illustrate the sub-cultural schisms that exist between modern Jewish sub-groups, such frameworks are also responsible for the varieties of aesthetic formulae chosen to depict those schisms in the literary text.

In order to offer a varied range of responses by Jewish authors to some of the most significant events in modern Jewish history—primarily, those events linked to the Holocaust and to the founding of the nation-state of Israel—this research has focused on
the literary works of three major Jewish writers, all of whom were born in the last century. These writers are: the Tunisian-born, French-Israeli author Chochana Boukhobza (1959–); the American author Chaim Potok (1929–2002); and the Israeli author A. B. Yehoshua (1936–). I have chosen these particular authors in light of several factors, the first of which is a practical one: they write in the languages in which I am fluent (French, English, and Hebrew). Academically speaking, the sub-groups or “syndromes” that they represent conform to accepted ethnographic categorizations of the composition of modern-day Jewry: the ethno-cultural, or non-affiliated/observant syndrome; the “caste” (religiously observant) syndrome; and the “national,” or Israeli syndrome (Ben-Rafael, *Jewish Identities* 37–52). Furthermore, these writers’ linguistic affiliations represent three major languages in which modern Jewish literatures are written: French, English, and Modern Hebrew. Their national affiliations also correspond to the countries with the largest present-day Jewish populations: France, the United States, and Israel. Additionally, all three authors possess a solid command of Hebrew and Aramaic, the necessary languages with which one must be acquainted in order to understand the Judaic discursive tradition. Lastly, the literary works of all three have been characterized by their tendency to use religion, myth, and metanarratives to probe crises of identity and interaction in the modern Jewish paradigm, and so a comparison of the cultural variables that influence their literary works seems entirely valid.

The central methodology used in this study has been taken from the discipline of “archetypal” post-Jungian psychology, which analyzes literary texts from the standpoint of recurrent themes, motifs, or figures (archetypes), historically transmitted as patterns or models, that seem to follow a specific ethnic blueprint. In particular, the conception of
archetypes to which I have adhered categorically denies an inherent cross-cultural value in all archetypes. Instead, it posits that common experience and shared ethnicity are strong enough to unite such images over time in the collective unconscious of any given culture. However, this approach also implies that many different interpretations of a people’s sub-cultural disposition may be found in a single archetype, depending on the specific sub-group involved. For example, the archetypes present in the common intertextual Judaic narratives or motifs that function as the building blocks for Boukhobza’s, Potok’s, and Yehoshua’s fiction (e.g., the Binding of Isaac, the Genesis Creation story, the revelation to Moses at Mt. Sinai, or the enigma of the Shekhinah) as well as the figures that appear in them (such as Abraham, Isaac, Sarah, Moses, the God of the Hebrew Scriptures, etc.) are re-envisioned as modern-day figures (avatars) according to the environmental conditioning of each particular author. Close reading chapters have been organized by the so-called “universal” archetypes of the senex, the shadow, and the anima, all of which function as preliminary “vessels”—i.e., characters or themes that occupy organizing principles of emotional patterns—into which the specifically Judaic contents are placed. Following the illustration of that placement, the actions of those archetypes have been shown to be sub-culturally specific, based on the manners in which they manifest themselves in the text.

For instance, I have demonstrated that A. B. Yehoshua’s Judaic archetypes are grounded in a distinctly Israeli reality. This distinctiveness is seen via the senex in the short story “Early in the Summer of 1970,” which Yehoshua has recast as the figure of Abraham, the Biblical patriarch of the Jewish people. In Yehoshua’s story, Abraham is re-envisioned through the character of an elderly Bible teacher, who is portrayed as
completely out of touch with the current political situation, and whose students reproach him for somehow attempting to justify, through scriptural reasoning, the continual shedding of blood. Such justification shares a strong associative link with the “seed and creed” ethos of the original Abraham, who (in Genesis 22) agrees to sacrifice his son for the perpetuation of a covenant. In Yehoshua’s counter-narrative, the universal category of the senex archetype functions as a vessel for the Abrahamic form, and exists simply because the Biblical narrative has become an indelible part of the Judaic cultural code, and therefore one of the prisms through which Israeli reality is constructed. The fact that Yehoshua subverts the long-held connotations of the Biblical tale by metaphorically killing off the son and by denouncing the idea of sacrifice as a perpetual inevitability is indicative of his own sub-cultural affiliation. Specifically, Yehoshua’s irreverent subversion of characters from this foundational Judaic metanarrative may be explained by way of the following explanation: as a secular Israeli, Yehoshua regards the present instantiation of the Jewish people as a self-governing political entity inextricably linked to the nation-state of Israel, where civil, legal, and humanistic (as opposed to religious) concerns should outweigh outdated historical agendas.

In opposition to the senex figures in the fiction of Yehoshua, Chaim Potok almost always presents the archetype of the senex in a positive light, implying that the curmudgeonly unwillingness to budge from Ashkenazi (Eastern European) Judaic propriety is, in the larger scheme of things, ultimately benevolent and beneficial for the ensured continuity of the Jewish people. Potok’s recasting of traditional Judaic figures is also less subversive than Yehoshua’s, in that he does not display the blanket irreverence for such figures inherent in Yehoshua’s re-characterization of them.
For example, in the short story, “The Trope Teacher,” Potok also re-envisions the commonly-held associations regarding the characters of Abraham and Isaac in the foundational Judaic story of the Binding of Isaac, which is found in Genesis 22. In Potok’s modern version of the tale, it is the father, instead of the son, who is sacrificed. However, Potok’s motivation for the reversal of these roles is to actively encourage the “son” (the younger generation) to take responsibility for those whose consciousness is still tied to the Old World (the “father”). Elsewhere, in *The Gift of Asher Lev*, Potok’s protagonist performs a metaphoric re-enactment of the offering up of Isaac for sacrifice in the precise fashion of the Biblical text, without deviating from the original covenantal significance. At the same time, this very protagonist, an orthodox Jew who also happens to paint nudes and crucifixions, agonizes over whether or not his choice is the moral one in that particular situation.

In examining both of these instances as a composite, it becomes clear how Potok both reforms and perpetuates the symbolic associations with the foundational narrative, thereby intimating that the long-revered meaning of the text in the Judaic tradition has a modern relevance, albeit one that is open to interpretation. Potok’s recast characters, then, do not seriously wish to turn away from religious Judaic themes; their actions simply serve to suggest, in a distinctly (Conservative) American Jewish manner, that balance, objective reasoning, and reconciliation between opposing worldviews is a pressing moral imperative in the modern Judaic paradigm.

In the work of Chochana Boukhobza, the distinctiveness of the main senex figure is that this figure is a Palestinian Arab whose symbolic attributes she associates with the Biblical character of Moses. The choice to leave the potential Jewish figures in the text
outside of the category of the “giver of wisdom” vessel reflects her intimation that the reliance upon structures of authority transmitted solely by phylogeny perpetuates the oppressive patriarchal pyramid. To that end, the author also dissects the dogma inherent in both of the self-legitimizing discourses of Zionism and Judaic religious piety by way of a particular kind of female epistemology, in which she hints that the destructive qualities of both aforementioned discourses might be explicated through the lens of patriarchal oppression. She portrays this oppression as akin to the suppression of the Palestinian Arab populace on the basis of Israel’s Biblical right to the land, which she also highlights as antithetical to the Judeo-Arabic coexistence experienced in North Africa for over a millennium. In doing so, she applies a particularly Tunisian-Jewish subcultural sensibility to her subversion of traditional discursive configurations of Judaic religious symbolism, not to mention to certain facets of the Zionist agenda that are based upon them.

Boukhobza also subverts the foundational myth of the Binding of Isaac in the aforementioned novel, although her placement of the figure of the Shekhinah into the vessel of the anima is the predominant recasting in that book. In her subversion of the story of Genesis 22, Boukhobza concentrates on the character of Sarah, the mother of Isaac, whom Boukhobza re-envisions as the conscious ego of the female protagonist of the story, whose name is finally revealed at the novel’s ending. Sarah, the protagonist, has rejected her Biblical namesake as a reaction against the legacy of the ‘akedah—a legacy that, as she intimates, had earlier been responsible for sacrificing the lover of Mavrika (her delusional alter-ego), also named Isaac, on the altar of collective service. Archetypally, Boukhobza establishes a connection between Sarah’s (the protagonist’s)
metaphoric death over the loss of her lover and a Kabbalistic midrash that picks up the
said narrative after the events of Genesis 22, according to which Sarah was informed that
Abraham had actually killed Isaac, and had thereafter died of grief over the loss of her
son.

Another reason that Boukhobza’s Sarah rejects her given name has to do with her
Biblical namesake’s casting out of Hagar, Abraham’s concubine, and her son Ishmael
from the household of the patriarch (Gen. 21.9–21). The significance of the intertextual
association between Boukhobza’s Sarah rejecting her own name and the Biblical episode
involving Ishmael is that the “nation” referred to above is commonly assumed to be the
Northern Arab peoples, who were later Islamicized by Muhammad. The novel’s
depiction of the expulsion of Palestinian Arabs from their territory and from the daily life
of Jews in Israel functions as an additional modern-day recasting of this Biblical trope,
especially when we consider the fact that it was the narrator (Sarah) who initially
encouraged her family (led by her father, the patriarch) to immigrate to Israel, and
thereby to participate in the Zionist project, which, in some part, entails the ejection of
the local Arab populace (Hagar and Ishmael) from their homes. The point of such
subversion, Boukhobza suggests, is to provoke the realization that acknowledgment of
this shadow content is entirely necessary in order to proceed to a different, more just kind
of Jewish continuity.

Based on the brief, aforementioned examples of the ways in which each writer has
subverted the foundational narrative of the Binding of Isaac from Genesis 22, I use that
particular subversion as a microcosm through which to relate to the other transformations
of Judaic discourse as shown in this study as a whole. To that end, I draw the following
conclusion: that the depiction of Abraham (or, for that matter, any other foundational figure, trope, discourse, etc.), far from being represented monolithically as the long-esteemed progenitor of the Jewish people, varies according to the environmental perception of each author regarding the necessity of sacrifice. For instance, both Yehoshua and Boukhobza present their recastings of the patriarch in a ridiculous fashion: Yehoshua’s Abraham is a “crank,” unaware of the moral severity of his actions; and Boukhobza’s Abraham is the Israeli state, wholly indifferent to the tragedy of the perpetual wielding of its proverbial knife. In contrast, Potok presents two possible recastings for Abraham: In *The Gift of Asher Lev*, Asher alludes to his own transformation into the Abrahamic archetype. He recognizes the necessity of personal sacrifice for the sake of one’s people, yet acknowledges that the impossible situation in which he finds himself—having to give up his son in order to ensure the continued prosperity of his boyhood community—is highly unjust. Conversely, in “The Trope Teacher,” the chilling association suggested by Potok between Abraham and “the ones holding the knife” (251) in the context of the Holocaust (the Nazis) cautions against overly-dogmatic adherence to any kind of creed. The story also stresses the importance of “the ram,” a Biblical element left out of Yehoshua’s and Boukhobza’s versions of the tale, which Potok links to the main protagonist’s willingness to put himself into a position of danger (in this case, volunteering to fight the Nazis) in order to prevent the occurrence of an immoral act.

As evidenced in the above-cited series of comparisons regarding the notion of sacrifice, the core contribution of this project for the field of literary studies is that it is the first to examine the comparative aspects of cultural variables in the concept of
“Jewishness” as it appears across national, linguistic, and gender-based paradigms. In so doing, it makes a relevant contribution to existing scholarship on Francophone Maghrebian, Anglo-American, and Modern Hebrew literatures by offering a fresh approach to the interpretation of the work of some of these genres’ major literary figures. As far as the field of Jewish literature is concerned, this research breaks new ground in that it offers explanations as to why the idea of “Jewish literature” as literature produced by groups of dissimilar Jews must undergo a scholarly reckoning. In turn, these explanations point to the establishment of new theoretical frameworks for the study of varying kinds of Judaic literary expression, which until now have been classified according to a logic that is neither methodical nor inclusive.

In addition to their significance for the comparative and archetypal approaches mentioned above, the implications of this research are also relevant for the general study of the transmission and interpretation of cultural forms in non-Judaic contexts. For instance, the fields of cognitive and symbolic anthropology, which share many similarities with Hillman’s archetypal psychology, may very well benefit from the demonstration of the “conceptual mapping” executed here with respect to persistent, recurring motifs in the cultural production of Jewish authors. Similarly, the results of this project are important for scholars of intertextuality and interdiscursivity, inasmuch as the relationships between the authors studied here and their subverted (inter)texts may shed light on the subjective forms of recontextualization that they undertake in their literary enterprises. Moreover, discourse-oriented semioticians or social semioticians may be interested in the typological ways in which the works of Boukhobza, Potok, and Yehoshua communicate their multimodal sign systems to the reader both through the
symbolic function of their archetypes, as well as through the chosen medium of their avatars.

From a completely different perspective, another direction in which there are promising possibilities for further study of the authors and texts analyzed in this project lies in the realm of reader-response theory. For example, a future query might resemble the following: inasmuch as the research presented here has proposed the reasons for which the composition of modern Judaic fiction differs across linguistic, sub-cultural, and gender-based models, what might we learn from the ways in which the subversion of Judaic metanarratives is understood by the readers of such texts? How, for instance, might a series of readers from divergent Judaic sub-groups react to each other’s sub-culturally unique subversions of a particular figure, trope, or discourse? What is the position of the reader’s dialectic or affective reaction to such texts with regard to the constructing of meaning?

Although limited in its nature as a case study of the cultural variables of modern Judaic discourse, the research undertaken in this study stands to make a significant contribution to future scholarly endeavors on the aforementioned points of interest. Indeed, this study’s strategy of reading highlights the interdependent nature of art, interpretation, and transmission of cultural capital both inside and outside of their immediate environments. As such, I invite the reader to consider this literary investigation itself as a kind of archetype: conceptually dynamic, contextually dictated, and inherently malleable.
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Participation grant from the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies (at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum) for a workshop on “Sephardic Jewry and the Holocaust,” 2010 ($1,000)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE
Middle East Studies/Jewish Studies Programs, Middlebury College:
HEBM 0101: Introductory Modern Hebrew I
HEBM 0102: Introductory Modern Hebrew II
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