

Tradition and Revolution
In search for Roots: Uri Zvi Grinberg's *Albatros*¹

Judith Winther

København

Introduction

Although Uri Zvi Grinberg had published poetry in both Hebrew and Yiddish from 1912 onward,² it was with the appearance of the Yiddish volume *Mefisto* in 1921 and his *Albatros* in 1922-1923 that the new idiom - Expressionism was introduced.

In seeking to explain the transformation of Uri Zvi Grinberg from a minor romantic lyric poet in Yiddish and Hebrew³ into an Expressionist bard who emerged in the 1921 *Mefisto*, critics have advanced a number of elaborate and sometimes contradictory theories.

Critics and scholars were apparently strangely mystified about Grinberg's complete breaking away from his earlier work and adapting a new poetic.

Unable to reconcile Expressionist notions with Grinberg's early writings, baffled by the apparent split between a conventional, conservative poet who hardly stood out from his literary contemporaries and his radical new poetic creeds, critics emphasized mainly

¹ Compare my article: Uri Zvi Grinberg: "The Politics of Avant-Garde, The Hebrew Zionist Revolution - 1924-1929" in *Nordisk Judaistik*, Vol. 17, No. 1-2, 1996, 24-60. If not otherwise mentioned the translations of the Yiddish texts are mine. * All concepts marked with an *asterisk* are discussed fully in the main body of the thesis.

² See Shalom Lindenbaum & Shirat Uri Zvi Grinberg, *Kave Mit'ar* (The Poetry of Uri Zvi Grinberg, Hebrew and Yiddish outline), Tel Aviv 1984; Snira Lubovsky Klein, *The Poetry of Uri Zvi Greenberg in Hebrew and in Yiddish during the years 1912-1924*, (Dissertation in Hebrew), University of California, Los Angeles 1983; Shmuel Hupert, *Exile and Redemption in Uri Zvi Grinberg's Hebrew Poetry*, (Dissertation in Hebrew), Jerusalem 1976; Hanan Haver, *Uri Zvi Greenberg on his Eightieth Anniversary*, (in Hebrew). *Exhibition at the Jewish National and University Library*. Berman Hall Jerusalem. May-June 1977.

³ In his article "Uri Zvi Grinberg's War poetry", Dan Miron scans Grinberg's early lyrics: "He produced mainly short, mostly strophic lyrical poems in which the conventional themes of romantic love, the beauty of nature, and the loneliness of the poet were involved with equally conventional moods of autumnal melancholy and elegiac Weltschmerz. They aimed at a combination of sincerity and elegance and exercised the effects of a soft and rich euphony, of lilting rhythms and a delicate, professedly poetic diction." In Yisrael Gutman, Ezra Mendelsohn, Jehuda Reinharz, and Chone Shmeruk (eds.), *The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars*, University Press of New England 1989, 368.

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psycho-biographical dimensions and sources. Stressing mainly Grinberg's exposure to the horrors of World War One⁴ his critics put forward the so called "War Shock-impact" hypotesis, or as H. N. Bialik coined it "Koshmar" (nightmare) in forming of Grinberg's poetical genius and genesis of his radical poetics.⁵ Terrifying images and expanded horrifying tension surely caused the displacement of Uri Zvi Grinberg's traditional normative centers, and undermined his traditional notions, but he never claimed that it offered a clue to his emergence as a major avant-garde poet. The radical aesthetic patterns and new dynamics emerged first *when in* conjunction with new codes.

A tendency to refute or reevaluate the war impact hypotesis as a viable explanation of Grinberg's growth as one of the leading Jewish modernists or avant-gardists has emerged recently though on different grounds and different approaches.⁶ However, I believe that works of art have a particular history that is not merely biographical but social and political in the broader sense of the terms as well, for as Walter Benjamin has taught us, "the uniqueness

⁴ The first of the two terrifying and jarring events which is liveliest referred to and analyzed was Uri Zvi Grinberg's sight of Serbian soldiers hanging upside down from an electrified barbed wire fence by the Sava River, where he fought as a young soldier on the side of Austria in 1915-1916. Seeing these soldiers' upstretched feet with their hobnailed boots stretching the face of the moon filled Greenberg then with the combined emah (fear) and kosef (yearning) which electrified his being and his verse. Cf. Yom Tov Hellman, *Shirat hake'ev vehakmihah* (Poetry of Pain and Yearning), in Yehuda Friedlander (ed.), *Uri Zvi Greenberg, A Selection of Critical Essays of his Writings* (in Hebrew), Tel Aviv 1974, 41 ff.

First Years later in 1928 at a remove of thirteen years, in "Hazkarat neshamot" (Memorial Prayer for the Dead), in *Anakre'on al kotev ha'itzavon* (Anacreon on the Pole of Sorrow), 49, Uri Zvi Grinberg returned to the compelling barbarity of war haunted by a recollection of universal terror.

The second experience, referred to and dwelled upon, is the terror of almost having been executed by a firing squad together with his family against the wall of a church. In 1918 Uri Zvi Grinberg deserted the army and returned to his hometown Lvov (Lemberg). He was shocked by the war atrocities and by the pogroms perpetrated by the Polish Legion in the town, in which his father's house was also destroyed. Some years later Grinberg recollected the shock, the slaughter of helpless Jews, being Jews and helpless, which henceforth is forever associated in his mind with the cross, an emblem of terror. [U.Z. Greenberg, *Hagnizah shel Paitan 'Ivri Hai, Mizrah uma'arav* (From the Archives of a Living Hebrew Poet, East and West), 1930, 4,2, 134-136]. Quoted by H. Hever, 1977, 22. See also Grinberg's own reference in *Klape tis 'him vetish 'ah* (To the/Against the Ninety-Nine), 1927/1928, 33.

⁵ See H.N. Bialik, *Al hasifrut ha'ivrit hatze'irah* in Bialik, *Dvarim shebe'alpeh*, (Tel Aviv, 1938), Vol. 2, 20; Yom Tov Hellman, *Shirat hake'ev vehakmihah* (Poetry of Pain and Yearning), *ibid.*, Yehuda Friedlander, 1974, 41-62.; David G. Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse*, Harvard University Press 1984, 266-268; Stanley Nash, "The Development of some Key Metaphores in Uri Zevi Greenberg's Poetry", *Hebrew Studies*, Vol. XXXIV, 1983, 121-135; David Knaani, *Lenokakh etz rakov* (In the Glow of a rotten tree), Merhaviah 1950.

⁶ See, Avraham Noverstern, "The Transition to Expressionism in Uri Zvi Grinberg's Work. The Poem 'Mefiste': Development of Stands", (in Hebrew), *Hasifrut*, 3-4 (35-6), Summer 1986, 122-140; Dan Miron, "Uri Zvi Grinberg's War Poetry" in Yisrael Gutman (et al.), 1989, 368-382. I am drawn especial to Dan Miron's concluding assertion: "What triggered Grinberg's modernism was not the war or any other personal and historical experience as much as it was the discovery of Expressionism - the art and the philosophy it entailed. Expressionism as a revelation opened the way for a recapitulation of the meaning of existence, a meaning Grinberg's earlier poems strove to escape and circumvent. The case of Grinberg's conversion was not the one of discovery of an art through experience but, rather, that of the discovering of experience through art", 382.

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of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition. This tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable ...”⁷ Indeed, what makes Uri Zvi Grinberg unique as an artist, and perhaps also most interesting and valuable, is his embeddedness in his time rather than his transcendence of it. To say this, however, is not to limit the significance of Uri Zvi Grinberg’s work to a mirror reflection of his times. On the contrary, it is by reading Uri Zvi Grinberg in the context of the twentieth-century revolutionary Avant-Garde and Jewish historical experience that we discover him at his most revolutionary.

An analysis and an evaluation of Grinberg’s work which is governed by a split between the private and the public, the personal and the political, the poet and history is deficient. To discuss Uri Zvi Grinberg apart from the relation to the revolutionary movements and political battles which surrounded him and his (political-artistic) confreres reflects a lack of sensibility to the importance of movements and concepts in the formation of the artist. Considered in the political-socio-cultural context of his time, Uri Zvi Grinberg’s emergence as a radical Expressionist poet seems obvious.

Uri Zvi Grinberg’s Expressionist-[Futurist] aesthetics emerged in the highly charged atmosphere and intensive experimentation which swept Yiddish literature and art in the 1910s mainly Post World War One Eastern Europe, labeled Yiddish Modernism or Yiddish Avant-Garde.⁸

Uri Zvi Grinberg’s own special “creative force” in interplay with the highly eclectic dynamic of Yiddish modernism, spurred a turning point, which witnessed the return of his artistic attention, as of his confreres to the realities of the phenomenal world, in confrontation with symbolist (aesthetic romanticist) and impressionist art.

⁷ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*. Edited with an introduction by Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zohn, London 1992, 217.

⁸ In his article “Di Khalyastre: The Yiddish Modernist Movement in Poland: An Overview”, Seth Wolitz gives an account of the Yiddish Avant-Garde in Europe divided into groups: “... the Kiev group of 1918-1920 known as the Eygn-Gruppe, which breaks up into the Moscow Shtrom group of 1922-1924 and the Milgroym group of the same period; the New York In-Zikhistn from 1920-1939, and the Khalyastre group of Poland (1919-1924).”, in *Yiddish*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1981, 6(7). See also Seth L. Wolitz, “Between Folk and Freedom: The failure of the Yiddish Modernist Movement in Poland”, in *Yiddish*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1991, 28-29.

In Quest of Secular Jewish National Culture ⁹

t was mainly in Poland¹⁰ that a modern secular Jewish culture flourished most strongly during the years 1919-1925.

The first postwar attempt in Poland for a Jewish cultural renaissance took place in Lodz. The Jewish poets and artists who were engaged in the effort of a Jewish cultural rebirth were in fact native Lodgers or from nearby. They sought to assimilate divers fibres of modernism, especially Expressionism and Futurism, and they hoped to amalgamate them with Judaic content in order to serve Jewish cultural needs. However, the first postwar Yiddish modernist movement came into existence only with the arrival of Moshe Broderzon¹¹ from Moscow. It took the name *Yung-yidish*¹² and was the first conscious effort in postwar Poland to form a literary artistic coterie. It received its initial impetus from the Russian Futurist or more precisely the Cubo-Futurists through Broderzon.¹³

Futurism offered Broderzon a new freedom of language and expression, new rhythms, new themes and taught him how to modify Jewish folkloric matters with modernist techniques, though less experimental than the Russian Futurists. Shmuel Niger, the Yiddish critic, remembers the poet in the Moscow days "caught up in half-refined, half-wild Russian

⁹ See *ibid.*, Seth L. Wolitz. See also Arthur Tilo Alt, "The Berlin Milgroyim Group and Modernism", in *Yiddish*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1985; *idem.*, "A Survey of Literary Contributions to the Post World War I Yiddish Journals of Berlin", in *Yiddish*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1987; *idem.*, "Ambivalence toward Modernism: The Yiddish Avant-Garde and Its Manifestoes", in *Yiddish*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1991. See Ruth Apter-Gabriel (ed.), *Tradition and Revolution, The Jewish Renaissance in Russian Avant-Garde Art 1912-1918*, Jerusalem, 1987.

¹⁰ Because of the Revolution, Russian and Ukrainian Jewry were ahead by at least two years, but the year 1919 was a turning point politically for Jewish artists in Poland. The situation was pressing because of the newly emerged national states, which led to the truncation of Eastern European Jewry, and the loss of mass Jewry and its elite, able to act in concert. Aesthetically the artists faced the the same issue that prevailed before the war: how to build a modern secular Jewish national culture.

¹¹ Moshe Broderzon (1890-1956) poet, dramatist, and founder and director of little theatres in Poland. In 1914 as the war front collapsed Broderzon fled Poland. In Moscow of 1917 he shared in the general exhilaration of the Revolution. In the Moscow bohemia Broderzon met El Lissitzky. Their collaboration begat the first modernist Yiddish art and literary text *Sikhes Kholin* (Small Talk). By December 1918 Broderzon left the Soviet Union for Poland. After World War II, he spent seven years in Siberian work-camps. When released in 1955 he was allowed to return to Lodz and Warsaw.

¹² It brings in mind Young Poland, Young Germany, Young Vienna.

¹³ Cubo-Futurism - A term generally assumed to have been coined by David Burliuk c. 1913. Of the writers associated with Cubo-Futurism, the most prominent were Khlebnikov, Kruchenykh, Kamensky and Mayakovsky. In their concern with the applicability of quasi-'Cubist' principles of word-fragmentation and deformation to verbal innovation and with autotelic, non-referential language as outlined in the manifesto *The word as such* ("Slovo kak takovoye"), they were closer in spirit to the poetic experiments of the German Expressionist *Sturmkreis* than to the Italian Futurists, whose influence they in any case always hotly denied. In their reaction to Russian symbolism the Cubo-Futurists repeatedly drew upon Russian Folk art and icon art in their own interpretation of Cubist and Futurist vocabularies. In their anti-art stance, the Cubo-Futurists brashly proclaimed a new dynamic of fragmentation, displacement, dissonance, distortion, and dissemtry.

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'Futurism'", and describes his new Yiddish verse as a "mix of old folkloric Jewishness with the latest word from the Moscow poetic Bohemia."¹⁴ *Yung-yidish* was an attempt to implement what Broderzon learned in Moscow but adapted to Jewish national culture. It viewed itself as the vanguard of a modern evolving Yiddish culture. The *Yung-yidish* journal of Lodz founded by Moshe Broderzon and the artists Yankl Adler (1859-1949) and Marek Schwartz (1892-1962), lasted for one year 1919-1920, (six issues), and was both a literary and artistic journal. It subscribed to the rejecting of the useless past and its art forms, to make art a meaningful part of life, to hasten "etishe sheynkayt" (ethical beauty) and "briderlikhkayt" (brotherhood) - ideas derived from Mayakovsky and the Russian Futurists. But at the same time it fully accepted the aesthetic and moral validity of the Bible - "the eternal speech of the prophets", and other Jewish texts. The second manifesto offers an obvious adherence to European avant-garde: "In our leaning to Impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism, we shall combine all the perspectives with the name *Futurism*."¹⁵

Among the partakers who joined the journal were the Galicianer group: Melekh Ravitch,¹⁶ Uri Zvi Grinberg and Israel Stern (1894-1942), as well as various artists who were directly influenced by the Pathetiker and the Berlin Sturm with its Expressionist perspectives, themes and techniques. A development which pushed the fourth-sixth numbers of the journal towards a mainly Expressionist orientation: "di naye mentshhayt lernt mit der neshome tzu filn di kunst" (The new mankind learns to feel with its soul the new art) (*Yung yidish*, 4).

¹⁴ Shmuel Niger, "Lyrishe Siluett", *Tsukunft*, New York 1920, Vol. 25, No. 8, 485, quoted by Ruth Apter-Gabriel, 1987, 29.

¹⁵ Quotation from *ibid.*, Seth L. Wolitz, in *Yiddish*, Vol. 8. No. 1, 1991, 31.

The influence of contemporary Polish Futurist and Expressionist conceptions on the yiddische modernist-avantgardist poetics must not be overlooked, and the relationship and linkage between Polish and Yiddish Futurism-Expressionism ought to be emphasized. A clear connection in broadest terms is demonstrated in an announcement in *Yung-yidish* (no.4-6, 1920) about a shared exhibition with the Zdrój's (Spring) artists. Nor should Henryk Berlewi's (1894-1967) contact with the Polish Formists and his exhibitions in the Zacheta, the Polish Society for the Development of the Fine Arts, be ignored. Similarly one could call attention to the fact that the Futurist movement in Poland was cemented by the creative and innovative experiments of two young assimilated Jewish Warsaw poets Anatol Stern and Alexander Wat. (See, for example, Zbigniew Folejewski, *The Tortuous Course of Futurism in Poland, in Futurism and its Place in the Development of Modern Poetry. A Comparative Study and Anthology*, Ottawa, 83-96. Jan Jozef Lipski, "Expressionism in Poland in Ulrich Weisstein", in *Expressionism as an International Literary Phenomenon*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest 1973., 299-314. For Lipski description of Zdrój see mainly pp. 307-308. And Ruth Apter-Gabriel, *ibid.*, 1987, 101-121.

¹⁶ 1893, Radymno, Galicia, - 1976, Montreal. Melekh Ravitch was a key figure in various artistic projects, and drawn to the early German-Jewish Expressionists as Else Lasker-Schüler and Franz Werfel. While yet living in Vienna he was invited by Albert Ehrenstein, the distinguished Expressionist poet and journalist, known for his *The White Age* (1914), *Man Scream* (1916), *Tubutsch* (1911) illustrated by Oskar Kokoschka etc., and his articles in *Der Sturm* and *Die Aktion* - to translate into Yiddish the poetry of the New Germany. He wrote neo-primitive verse, essay poems, dramatic narratives and confessional lyrics. Of great interest is Ravitch's *Naked Songs* (Nakte Lieder), 1921, and *Song to the Human Body*, 1922, which anticipated central notions and concepts in Uri Zvi Grinberg's avant-garde texture. He circled the globe in the 1930s, organized many literary and cultural institutions during his visits to Australia, Argentina, Mexico and Canada. Ravitch settled in Montreal during the Second World War and visited Israel from 1954 to 1956.

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Yung-yidish divergent perspectives and multidirectional lines undermined its stamina, and was followed by the *Ringen* (Links) journal group of Mikhel Vaykher (1890-1962) and Alter Katsizne (1885-1941). It appeared in January 1921 in Warsaw, lasted for two years and included altogether ten issues. Many of the *Yung-yidish* artists and writers, namely the Galicianer Expressionists who now were gathered in Warsaw, collaborated. As indicated by its title *Ringen*, it sought to link cultural and religious traditions of Judaism with modernity, to combine Jewish neo-romanticism with full-blown Expressionism. Nevertheless *Ringen* remained ideologically strongly committed to a national cultural expression inherited from Yitzkhok Leyb Peretz.¹⁷

The so called "poetic triumvirate" Uri Zvi Grinberg, Melekh Ravitch and Peretz Markish¹⁸ who at this time no longer regarded the shtetl as a home but the cosmos reflected in the poet's mind, turned down Peretz's Yiddishkayt aesthetics.¹⁹ Their intense drive to rebuild a secular Jewish life in Yiddish in a secular world, drew them together, and they broke off the *Ringen* in the mid-1922.

Jointly and separately Markish, Ravitch and Grinberg were impressive, exciting and revolutionary. They succeeded in outraging public opinion and were thus branded as the *Khalyastre* or "Gang". Accepting this designation as a badge of honor they termed their literary group and their first literary journal which appeared in Warsaw in 1922, edited by

¹⁷ 1852, Zamosc, Poland - 1915. Warsaw. Yiddish and Hebrew short-story writer, playwright, poet, essayist and ideologue. With Mendele Moykher Sforim, Sh. J. Abramovitch and Sholem Aleichem, he established Yiddish literature as vital, legitimate medium of Jewish experience and aspirations. Peretz dominated the Jewish cultural scene in Poland as an orator, polemicist, defender of Jewish national interests, working vigorously and radically for a modern secular Jewish culture. His unique fusion of neo-romanticism and symbolism, with his reworkings of Hassidic materials from the beginning of the century, attracted an emerging Jewish intelligentsia to Yiddish and to things Jewish. Prolific journalist and editor, he stood at the center of Polish Jewish literary life like no Yiddish writer before or since, exerting profound influence on the successive developments of Yiddish Realism, Symbolism and Expressionism.

¹⁸ 1895, Volhynia, Ukraine, - 1952, place of death unknown. One of the most prolific and celebrated of Soviet Yiddish writers. His poems and novels of epic sweep circle on themes of Jewish national decline and regeneration. Drafted into tsarist army in 1916 and wounded on the German front, Markish welcomed the Russian Revolution as a break with the past that would also usher in an explosive new movement in Yiddish poetry. He was briefly associated with the Eygns group in Kiev, but in 1921 he went to Warsaw, where he stepped to the foreground of modern Yiddish literature. His poems of this period, like *Di kupe* (The Corpse Heap), 1921, attempt to give Jewish martyrdom universal significance at the expense of historical context. Markish also lived briefly in western Europe (the second *Khalyastre*-anthology appeared in Paris, 1924) and visited Palestine, returning to the Soviet Union in 1926. Through out his entire odyssey, Markish never slackened in his enthusiasm for the achievements of the Communist revolution. In his *Mayn dor* (My generation), 1927, he glorified the Communist regime and its imminent liberation of the rest of the world. He was awarded the Lenin Order in 1939, arrested in 1949, and executed with other Soviet Yiddish writers on August 12, 1952.

¹⁹ In his article, "Ambivalence toward Modernism: The Yiddish Avant-Garde and its Manifestoes", in *Yiddish*, Vol.8, No.1, 52-62, A. Tilo Alt discusses briefly the complicated concept yiddishkayt, focusing mainly on its issue.

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Peretz Markish and Joshua Singer (1893-1944), *Di Khalyastre*.²⁰ It was not only a journal but a new movement.

In August 1922 it was followed by the first issue of Melekh Ravitch *Di Vog* (Scales). And subsequently in September 1922 by the first issue of Uri Zvi Grinbergs *Albatros*. Each of them published in his own as well as the other's journal.

The intense lines, chosen by Peretz Markish in 1922 for the introit of his *Di Khalyastre*, were already published in *Yung-yidish* in Lodz in 1919 by Moshe Broderzon, and read:

We are young ones, a happy song-filled gang (Khalyastre),
we take an unmarked path
In these deeply fearful days
In nights of fright
Per aspera ad astra!

In *Introduction to Modern Yiddish Verse*²¹ the editors describe the nature of *Di Khalyastre* in terms of national implications and universalist perspective, rejecting past styles, embracing new aesthetic theories and artistic techniques:

Di Khalyastre was aggressive, impudent, playful, a Jewish version of the Expressionist temper sweeping European literature after the First World War. These young poets delighted in affronting conventional Jewish sensibilities, whether religious or secular, conservative or radical, bourgeois or proletarian. Employing disjointed syntax, ejaculatory phrases, free rhythms, surrealist images, erotic allusions, and, sometimes, leftist war cries, *Di Khalyastre* (actually Peretz Markish) proclaimed, "Our standard *is not the beautiful*, but the horrible."²²

And Seth Wolitz states:

The *Khalyastre* is cenrifugal whereas *Yung-yidish* is centripetal. It is not a movement toward a new socialist culture but a movement away from a nightmarish world, in which Jewish elements are so much flotsam and jetsam. Yiddish language and culture are not at stake but the poetic vision of the poet and his cosmos. Its delight was shock, blasphemy, and stripping the tradition. Yiddish was to serve as an adjuvant just like Russian, French, or English. The originality of the *Khalyastre* journal

²⁰ See, Sol Liptzin, *A History of Yiddish Literature*, New York 1985, 250; Melekh Ravitch, "A kurtse geshikhte fun a dinamisher grupe fun dray yidische poeten in varshe," in *Pinkes fun der forschung fun der yidisher literatur un presse*, New York, 1972; A. Tilo Alt, "The Berlin Milgroym Group and Modernism", in *Yiddish*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1985, 33-34.

²¹ Irving Howe, Ruth R. Wisse, and Khone Shmeruk (eds.), *The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse*, New York 1987, 40.

²² A better translation concordant with the Yiddish proclamation is: "our measuring stick is not beauty but horror."

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resides not in its violent imagery, blasphemy, or daring, but its fully modernist use of Yiddish turned into a purely aesthetic instrument.²³

The common ground of *Di Khalyastre* aesthetic is Expressionism, although not one of the journals calls itself an Expressionist organ. Max Erik²⁴ was the first critic to identify the common language of Grinberg, Markish and Rawitch as *di shprakh funem yidishn expresionizm* (*The Language of Jewish-Yiddish Expressionism* (Albatros 2, November 1922, 17):

Take, for instance, Uri Zvi Grinberg's works and you shall easily find the language of Jewish-Yiddish Expressionism.

*In tsaytns roysh*²⁵ (In the Rush of Time) does not give anything. Also almost nothing as regards to language.

Perhaps only drawbacks (Germanism).

Farnakhtengold (Evening Gold) still gives more new poetic material than lingual ...

But the language of *Mefiste* (Mefisto) is the language of Jewish-Yiddish Expressionism.

Farnakhtengold is not yet an Expressionist book, even though, or rather, because: it has sea-melody, reverberating, rounded, flowing tones, plunging together, plunging side by side, chasing each other, scattering and chuckling - a sea full with melody and harmony.

Roundedness, musicality, melodiousness are not Expressionist outlines ...

...

These are meanwhile the outlines of Jewish-Yiddish Expressionism:

1. Hatred of the rounded, musical word, of the rounded verse.
2. Deep sympathy for the "bony", heavy, weighty word. Therefore the great use of pure Hebrew words. They are "weighty". But they are not admitted unintentional, careless. It is easy to see how Markish and Grinberg bend them, lengthen them, attach them to other words.
3. The rhythm of the poem is identical with the voltage of the poem - This is the outburst of the forces, that inspirits the poem

²³ Ibid, in *Yiddish*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1991, 36-37.

²⁴ Max Erik (1898-1937) was a literary historian, who directed Yiddish literary research both in Minsk and in Kiev until his arrest and death in a prison camp.

²⁵ *In tsaytns roysh*, 1919, *Farnakhtengold*, 1921, and *Mefiste*, 1921, 1922 are the first Yiddish collections of Uri Zvi Grinberg.

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and holds it bent as a bow.²⁶

These are the outlines of suffocated beings. Of embroiled poets - - - “

Max Erik stresses predominantly wellknown and conventional characteristics of Expressionist style which is a hallmark of Expressionist works - intensity of expression and concentrated energy. Expression precedes form, and free rhythm precedes harmony-missing rhyme and absence of stanza. Additive word-formations. A profusion of Hebrew words and Hebrew-derived words - heavy, hoarse, tense and guttural, as a strategy for revitalizing Yiddish language.

Albatros, jurnal far dem nayem - dikhter un kinstler - oysdruk

Albatros 1, Warsaw, September, 1922. Albatros 2, Warsaw, November, 1922. Albatros 3-4, Berlin, July (?)²⁷1923. In line with *Di Khalyastre* and *Di Vog*, *Albatros* espouses an Expressionist aesthetics - bringing forth with irrepresible force tenets and values of Expressionism. Yet the *Albatros* gravitates along some basic concerns of Futurism, and Neo-Primitivist energy.²⁸ The Futurist vein can be detected in Uri Zvi Grinberg's *Albatros* as in a whole series of avant-garde works per se.

Albatros delineates a pivotal juncture in Uri Zvi Grinberg's formation as a revolutionary poet. It includes a reappraisal of his own and other Yiddishist artistic past and present and projections about the future.

In his efforts to cross old boundaries, to find new expression, Uri Zvi Grinberg's manifestoes, articles and poems in the *Albatros* cover the spectrum of avant-garde confrontation with traditional frames. The journal is characterised by discursive analyses and comments, ruminations on metaphysical absolutes common, mainly, in Expressionist periodicals and publications. Here in *Albatros* Uri Zvi Grinberg sought to voice the pain of human existence and gradually the pain of Jewish existence as directly as possible, to break through the facade of established reality, to capture the essence of things rather than their external appearance. Here he sounds the cry of revolt of man, of Jewish man against modernity as a condition of servitude from which humanity must break free. And it is of primal significance and essentiality in understanding Uri Zvi Grinberg's "vision" - his

²⁶ It brings in mind August Macke's analogy between the Expressionist painter and the wild animal on the hunt: "Seeing his prey, the panther crouches, and as a result of seeing it, his strength grows. And the tension of his strength shows in the length of his leap. The form of art, its style, is a result of tension.", in K. Lankheit (ed.), *The Blaue Reiter Almanac*, London 1974, 85.

²⁷ The exact date is being discussed in the second part of this article.

²⁸ The "primitive" was shared by both Futurists and Expressionists, although not sharing the same vocabulary, and moving along different axes. In its productive manifestations, Primitivism was a form of cultural revitalization, part of a search for less intellectualized, more vibrant sources of artistic energy.

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philosophical - political orientation and aesthetics, as expressed in his Eretz Israeli works in the 1920's.

Uri Zvi Grinberg named his journal *Albatros*,²⁹ elucidating and emphasizing directly the organ's symbolic and aesthetic character.

In his account of the history of *Di Khalyastre*, Melekh Ravitch offers an amusing anecdote about Grinberg's emotive attraction to the suggestive image of the albatross and about his choice of the periodical's name.³⁰

According to Ravitch, Uri Zvi Grinberg "became almost crazy, infatuated, and full of enthusiasm" when he heard Esther Shumiatcher-Hirshbayn's reciting her poem *Albatros*³¹ at a gathering in Warsaw. Accordingly, Uri Zvi Grinberg draw an immediate analogy between the Albatros and the airplane:

The Albatross is gigantic as an airplane and with wings, which enables the bird to keep it self extensively in the air over floating ships. ... (Consequently:) Uri Zvi decided to publish a periodical carrying the name Albatros.³²

If anything the airplane with its forceful design, together with the racing car, the speeding train, radio, telegraph embody the the Futurist cult of dynamism, speed, energy, creative spirit, work of genius, vitality. Uri Zvi Grinberg's *Albatros(s)* = airplane to all intents and purposes is both symbol and organ of his new dawning vision of the future.³³

²⁹ Albatross is a giant, majestic rare royal sea bird. Very clumsy and helpless, when on land, powerful on water. Outstanding in swimming and diving, distinguished by his hunting skills. His wings are strong and sharpened and he is able to soar about also during ragous tempests.

³⁰ Melekh Ravitch, "A kurtse geshikhkte fun a dinamisher grupe fun dray yidishe poeten in Varshe, 1921-1925", in *Pinkes far der forshung fun der yidisher literatur un prese*, Vol. 2, New York 1972, 70-71.

³¹ Esther Shumiatcher's *Albatros* appeared in the first issue of *Albatros* (p. 10):
Albatross,/Albatross, /Your body - mother-of-pearl,/Your wings - bronze,/Water and heaven - your eyes./
Albatross,/rolling waves -/your play./broken foam -/your day./
Your faith is nomadic:/crossing the winds/following ships of steel./
In circles,/Your hunger is seeking/Earthy leftovers./ Albatross!/
And when light/drowns in darkness -/the waves
are your home./The waves/Your bad./Albatross,/Albatross!

³² See also, Arthur Tito Alt comment in *ibid*, *Yiddish*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1985, 36: "This giant and very clumsy bird, as the symbol of a movement and its journal, and likened to an airplane, embodies the power of technology and the imagination and is in keeping with the exuberance, combativeness, and utopian character of the avant-garde aspirations of the entire Khalyastre group. Pertz Markish too used the airplane metaphor in his Khalyastre manifesto".

³³ As Filippo Marinetti puts it: "We affirm that the world's beauty is enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed." Marinetti, Fourth principle of First Futurist Manifesto (20 februar 1909). Or, : "Since we run to our goal through the speed of futurism, our thought moves more swiftly, and whoever lives in futurism is nearer to his aim and further from the past." Kazimir Malevich, "From Cubism and Futurism to Supermatism: The New Painterly Realism, 1915", in John E. Bowlt (ed.), *Russian Art of the Avant Garde*, New York 1988, 125.

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Interesting in our context is, that in the aircraft battle at the Marne the German airplanes were known as Albatros BI, BII etc. and are to be found in Carlo Carrà's collage *La notte del 20 Gennaio 1915 sognai questo quadro*, 1915 (On the Night of 20 January 1915, I dreamed this Picture).³⁴

But Grinberg's choice of the *Albatros* is open to more than one interpretation.³⁵ Generally and usually the journal's title is connected to Charles Baudelaire's poem *Albatros* with which Uri Zvi Grinberg was acquainted.³⁶ Charles Baudelaire, the painter of modern life, gathered the most disgusting aspects of reality, the refuse of the modern city. In order to justify his flight into the domain of intellect and fantasy, he uses those aspects of reality which to his mind reveal the true nature of contemporary civilization. Baudelaire who felt empathy for the rejected and the disadvantaged, who, like him, were scorned and abused by a primarily materialistic society, was at the same time quite conscious of his isolation, partly unavoidable, partly desired, from the unwashed and ignorant masses who would never read his poems. Walter Benjamin notes: "Of all the experiences which made his life what it was, Baudelaire singled out his having been jostled by the crowd as the decisive, unique experience."³⁷

Baudelaire depicted himself as an albatross in a poem by the same name.³⁸ Deprived of its natural element, exiled on earth amid the shouting crowds/sailors he cannot walk. And the poet like the albatross becomes the victim of scorn and neglect. But when in his natural element, the realm of the spiritual and mental, he is graceful, majestic, prophetic. The poet is soaring in the world of fantasy opposite to the prison of physical reality.

³⁴ Linda Landis in "Futurist at War", in Hanne Coffin Hanson (ed.), *The Futurist imagination: Word + Image in Italian Futurist Painting, Collage and Free-Word Poetry*, New Haven, Connecticut 1983. The Polish Futurist -Constructivist Magasin *Zwrotnica* (Rail-switch) published by the so-called Cracow Avant-garde had on the cover of its 1922-issue an aeroplane in line with other avant-garde magazines.

³⁵ See Avidov Lipsker, "The Albatrosses of Young Yiddish Poetry: An Idea and Its Visual Realization in Uri Zvi Greenberg's *Albatros*", *Prooftexts*, The John Hopkins University Press, Vol. 15, No.1, 1995, 89-107.

³⁶ Byron, Baudelaire, Whitman, Heine and Holz were among the Expressionist's especially Die Brücke's, particular favourite poets. And their texts were recycled and reread although the avantgarde nourished a highly contradictory relationship to pre-symbolism.

³⁷ Ibid., Walter Benjamin, 1992, 193.

³⁸

L' Albatros

Souvent, pour s'amuser, les hommes d'équipage/
Prennent des albatros, vastes oiseaux des mers,
Qui suivent, indolents compagnons de voyage,
La navire glissant sur les gouffres amers.
A peine lesont-ils déposés sur les planches,
Que ces rois de l'azur, maladroits et honteux,
Laissent piteusement leur grandes ailes blanches/
Comme des avirons traîner à côté d'eux.
Ce voyageur ailé, comme il est gauche et veule!
Lui, naguère si beau, qu'il est comique et laid!
L'un agace son bec avec un brûle-gueule,
L'autre mime, en boitant, l'infirme qui volait!
*Le Poète est semblable au prince de nuées/
Qui hante la tempête et se rit de l'archer;/
Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,
Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher.* (*Les Fleurs du mal*, ed. Jacques Crépet and Georges Blin Paris, Librairie José Corti, 1942, 9-10).

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Baudelaire's presence is explicitly strong in *Proklamirung* (Proclamation) and serves as a model for Uri Zvi Grinberg's description of the albatrosses of young Yiddish poetry in contrast to the crowds of graphomaniacs whom Grinberg liquiditates vitriolically.

ALBATROS 1, Warsaw, September, 1922.

The first issue of *Albatros* exhibits the pathos, intensity, violent emotion, boldness, grandiosity typical of Expressionism. Like the German Expressionists Uri Zvi Grinberg pursued with a vengeance areas of thought and feeling skirted and shunned until their time: paradoxes, contradictions, incongruities, illogicality, insanity, distorted perspectives.

The first issue included works by Peretz Markish, Peretz Hirshbayn, Esther Shumiatcher, Melekh Ravitch's famous manifesto *Zibn tezn fun der nayer, naketer dikhtung* (Seven theses for the new naked poetry), Henrik Berlewi's essay *Veiking Egegling in zayn abstrakt-dinamicher film* (Veiking Egegling and His Abstract-Dynamic Film), Ze'ev Weintraub *Mayne oysblikn in der kunst* (My Outlook on Art), and Uri Zvi Grinberg's well-known manifesto *Proklamirung* (Proclamation), and *Manifest tsu di kegner fun der nayer dikhtung* (Manifesto to the Opponents of the New Poetry), and the epic poem *Velt-barg-arop* (A World on the Slope).

The cover of *Albatros 1* is designed by Ze'ev Weintraub accompanied by a linoleum-cut by Marek Schwartz.³⁹

Grinberg's two first manifestos *Proklamirung* and *Tsu di kegner fun der nayer dikhtung* display two conjuncted texts, a respond to the immediacy of the political and cultural crisis, and a setting forth of the journal's ideological framework. While *Proklamirung*'s context is basically bound to and relates to a fallen devastated world, and a rebirth of a new expression, *Tsu di kegner fun der nayer dikhtung* is essentially and particularly bound to, and associated with Jewishscape - elaborating on Jewish historical-political experience. Both manifestos offers though the same commanding orientation.

1. Proklamirung (pp. 3-4)

The manifesto is endowed with an acute sense of horizon in the focus on the Now, it includes a passionate claim that the aesthetic of the past were confining, and a posture of the new poets including himself as a collective of heretics withstanding the jeers of established tastes.

The extremism of the manifesto's aesthetic, its tortured energies and obsession lead us to Expressionist emphasis on the intensity of perception secured by infusing the world with violent emotion, and profoundly affected by its conception of man and humanity who might

³⁹ Artists, graphics, illustration, typography are discussed extensively in the second part of the article.

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be regenerated, negation of bourgeois individualism, the dawn of the New Man. All bound up with multiple German manifestoes and works.

The most illustrative manifesto which can provide a starting-point is clearly Kasimir Edschmids, *Expressionismus in der Dichtung*:⁴⁰

Es kamen die Künstler der neuen Bewegung.

Sie gaben nicht mehr die leichte Erregung. Sie gaben nicht mehr die nackte Tatsache. Ihnen war der Moment, die Sekunde der impressionistischen Schöpfung nur ein taubes Korn in der mahelnden Zeit. Sie waren nicht unterworfen den Ideen, Nöten und persönlichen Tragödien bürgerlichen und kapitalistischen Denkens.

Ihnen entfaltete das *Gefühl* sich maßlos.

Sie sahen nicht.

Sie schauten.

Sie photographierten nicht.

Sie hatten Gesichte. ...

In ihm stand die Erde, das Dasein als eine große Vision. Es gab Gefühle darin und Menschen. Sie sollten erfaßt werden im Kern und im Ursprünglichen. Die große Musik eines Dichter sind seine Menschen. Sie werden ihm nur groß, wenn ihre Umgebung groß ist. Nicht das heroische Format, das führte nur zum Dekorativen, nein groß in dem Sinne, daß ihr Dasein, ihr Erleben Teil hat an dem großen Dasein des Himmels und des Bodens, daß ihr Herz, verschwistert allem Geschehen, schlägt im gleichen Rhythmus wie die Welt.

...

So wird der ganze Raum des expressionistischen Künstlers Vision. Er sieht nicht, er schaut. Er schildert nicht, er erlebt. Er gibt nicht wieder, er gestaltet. Er nimmt nicht, er sucht. Nun gibt es nicht mehr die Kette der Tatsachen: Fabriken, Häuser, Krankheit, Huren, Geschrei und Hunger. Nun gibt es die Vision davon. ...

Er sieht das Menschliche in den Huren, das Göttliche in den Fabriken. Er wirkt die einzelne Erscheinung in das Große ein, das die Welt ausmacht.

...

Die Welt ist da. Es wäre sinnlos, sie zu wiederholen. Sie im letzten Zucken, im eigentlichen Kern aufzusuchen und neu zu schaffen, das ist die größte Aufgabe der Kunst.

Jeder Mensch ist nicht mehr Individuum, gebunden an Pflicht, Moral, Gessellschaft, Familie. Er wird in dieser Kunst Nichts als das erhebendste und kläglichste: Er wird Mensch.

...

Doch sind diese Menschen nicht töricht. Ihr Denkprozeß verläuft nur in andere Natur. Sie sind unverbildet. Sie reflektieren nicht. Sie erleben nicht in Kreisen, nicht durch Echos. Sie erleben direkt.

⁴⁰ J.B. Meltzler, (ed.) *Manifeste und Dokumente zur deutschen Literatur 1910-1920*, Stuttgart 1982, 45-48. I would like to draw attention to Ivan Goll: "Und du, Dichter, schäme dich nicht, in die verlachte Tuba zu stoßen. Komm mit Sturm. Zerdonnere die Wölkelin romantischer Träumeri, wirf den Blitz des Geistes in die Menge", *Apell an die Kunst*, 1917, idem, 522. If poetry has to make itself heard, then it must give up any pretension of being polite, agreeable, pretty. It must instead blow the trumpet, bang the drum, make itself heard. If necessary by summoning up its resources into something equivalent to a scream.

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Proklamirung consists of three parts indicated by the sign *.

A. In the *introductory part* Grinberg presents a commanding and passionate portrayal of the new creative poets. Although attention is drawn to the Jewish albatrosses, the picture offered reflects popular accepted Expressionist ideas.

Uri Zvi Grinberg was highly critically of the Yiddish poets commitment to private literary experiments. He felt incensed and mauled these smug and callow poets passionately and violently, discrediting their competence.

The poets role accordingly had to be revolutionary in the cultural sphere, removing completely the focus from the reductive bourgeois individual I to the *who*, which is an uttering channel of "man/human-being-you exist in the millions"⁴¹:

"Floor, four walls and a roof for the homeless sole-poets, in their roaming in strangeness in the different centres of the Jewish People's ex-territoriality. Literary diffusion.

I do not mean: talents. Poets-in-future. And not their "publishable" things. It is not the time for literary experiments. A whole generation is bleeding profusely from the throat. Galling bile from the mood. A whole generation is standing with a wounded body, running or lying in convulsions (birth-pangs or: death-throes). A shock in the depths. Pillars of smoke on the level surfaces. And talents are sparks. Invisible - in time of conflagration. They are individuals of narrow confines. They are not those individuals who have matured spiritually in the Sturm und Drang and who have grown ideational unto the universal: man/human being-you-exist-in-the-millions ...

Herewith proclaims the millions-of-heads-and-hearts individualism: the heroic man of wounds, who stands with his 248-organs, huge as the world, with torn-eyes-and ears-and-lips, infusing into the flowing life, the blood-pulse of his three-hundred-sixty-five veins deeper, deeper ...

Only when conscience is disturbed, and being is shaken loose by the deformed civilization, and by tremors of inescapable catastrophe - the creative-authentic poets, who are droven by internal necessity, become man/human beings. Their concept of an atomized bourgeois individuality and of the primacy of the ego and the importance of the self is dissolved and denied. Thus when liberated from individuality, and of the self, these poets are transformed to full-blown universalists, embodying concepts as "total-humanity", "total-world".

As authentic poets they are in search for absolute emotional truth - "pure awareness" which only subjective experience can guarantee. Their vision is transferred without being filtered through the intellect. And their expression, derived from internal necessity, is keyed in by emotional or spiritual states rooted deep in the physical body:

Individuals of this kind are the outstanding expression of the convulsion. Their bodies convulse, bearing on their naked backs the pain of the dark globe. Glowing worldview. Idea-cluster: man, world - in all the centuries'

revelations - -

⁴¹ Paul Zech writes: "Jeden Leben wird tausendmal von tausend Leben gelebt" in *ibid.*, Pinthus 1988, 369.

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And there are surely such among us. Complete poets, perfect ones with heavy flaming heads, their spirits- shocked expanses. Poets human beings, who out of their own bones carved a rocky expression for the treasures piled deep-deep in the inside of days and nights' experiences, on all the roads of the world.

- - Doors and gates are opened to the Four Winds, where the eternal pilgrims are nomadic, sons of unrest, of pure awareness of total-world - total-man. Albatrosses of the Young Yiddish poetry. Spiritual food: their own flesh; veins; nerves. The drink bone-goblets of their own: pulsating blood. And black Sabbath bread — our shew-bread: suffering. - - What else is missing in the kingdom of sacred poverty? We, the singing caravan of God's poor people.

Albatrosses. Poets - -

*

B. In the *second part of Proklamirung* Uri Zvi Grinberg alludes to some decisive moments in the general historical framework of the so-called modern experience - or modernization, as "the confining aesthetics of the past", "technology", "crowd", "masses", "the speeded up tempo of life" - the radically altered quality of life. But the new human environments and new age constitute neither progress nor fascination :

Renewal. Breakthrough. Revolution of the spirit. Exaltation - and more. Sure. So it goes. With them, with us. All the literatures have been already shocked in their classical backwardness. Into the idyllic daydreams and the poet's elegiac poetic-tranquility entered a whirlwind: Bra! The gaping-mouthed Colossus: man with a million-heads roars (according to Grosz⁴²: like a machine. Technological age!). The fate of the old books is as the fate of the Gothic churches and Roman towers: fossilized antiquity. Terrifying to look at. *The roads pass them by in a run.* World and red century are standing on the slope. Optimists fix spectacles over their eyes trying to bewitch intuitively (for the time being) a glowing piece of new moon somewhere at the edge of horizon. Meanwhile, setting, and the world drags the red creaking chariot and the bleeding century to its decline Downhill with the rotting bundles: generations' - remains.

The means of existing artistic expression handed down by culture are obsolete and no longer capable of interpreting the emotions which come to us from a world that has been completely transformed by the horrors of war, and doomed to an inescapable catastrophe, to its final end.

So it is. Whether we want it, or not. We are standing as we are: with splitted wounds, with exposed veins and unscrewed bones, after canon bombardment and "hurras", after gas-attacks; after bowls of gall, opium and daily water: Disgusting. And foam of degeneration on the lips.

Hence the cruel in the poem.

Hence the chaotic in the image.

⁴² George Grosz (1893-1959). It is remarkable that the one and only artist mentioned in the Proclamation is the Expressionist, dadaist and communist Grosz. He was the master of radical sourness in Berlin. He was famous at the time for his caricature of Weimar society. In Grosz' Germany, everything and everybody is for sale, and all human transactions, except for the class solidarity of workers, are poisoned.

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Hence the outcry of the blood.⁴³

Cruel. Chaotic. Bleeding. Meanwhile it is twilight. In our worldly towers the table is set with spiritual food for the generation of the lost, and black-Sabbath-bread - is our showbread. Twilight, at the foot of Past-world a generation celebrates three red meals for the world's black Sabbath. Behind our backs - black columns of crosses. *Such songs must be sung*. Cruel. Chaotic. Bleeding -

Perhaps the song following the birth of the new moon will be different and glories shall rest upon the the albatross - heads of the poets-*biryonim* (Roughnecks)*. But meanwhile we are *naked*. Disheveled. Exposed. A horror-and-disgrace-gospel of a chaotic-restless-generation's veins and bones, *that stands on the cross-roads Eldorado - Nirvana*.

Uri Zvi Grinberg suggests apparently a reductive mimetic model of the relationship between art and reality - a mimetic notion of modern chaos, - art responds to the scenario of our chaos, which seems to be a veiled allusion to Kurt Pinthus. In his seminal anthology of 1919, *Menschheitsdämmerung*, Kurt Pinthus states:

Muß sie (Dichtung) nicht chaotisch sein wie die Zeit, aus deren zerrissenem, blutigem Boden sie erwuchs? ... Und immer wieder muß gesagt werden, daß die Qualität dieser Dichtung in ihrer Intensität beruht. Niemals in der Weltichtung scholl so laut, zerreißen und aufrüttelnd Schrei, Sturz und Sehnsucht einer Zeit, wie aus dem wilden Zuge dieser Vorläufer und Märtyrer ...⁴⁴

But at the same time we experience in Uri Zvi Grinberg's works presented in the *Albatros* radical modes of subjective representation of reality; to the extent that outside reality comes to lose its habitual, mimetic reliability. Subverting thus social, moral and aesthetic

⁴³ *Blood* serves as a necessary image motif of Khalyastre. Seth Wolits sums up: "This powerful image fuses, within Yiddish Expressionism, the collapsing reality, the hemorrhaging of meaning, the literal and psychic suffering of the human condition. This archetypal image appeared more and more in Khalyastre poetry under the impact (...) of the Jewish nation bleeding away de facto and figuratively". Cf. Seth L. Wolitz, *ibid.*, *Yiddish*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1981, 11.

⁴⁴ Kurt Pinthus, *Menschheitsdämmerung*: Ein Dokument des Expressionismus, Revidierte Ausgabe, Hamburg 1988, 25, 30. The subject headings of the anthology are revealing: Sturz und Schrei, Erweckung Des Herzens, Aufruf und Empörung, Liebe den Menschen.

Hermann Bahr who regards the new movement as an outcome of the spiritual distress of the times, and of the reaction against the soulless materialism of modern industrial society writes in one of the most famous manifestos of the Expressionist movement:

This is the point: that mankind wants to find itself again (...) Everything we experience is only tremendous struggle for mankind, *struggle of the soul with the machine*. We don't live actively, we live passively. We have no freedom any more, we are not allowed to decide for ourselves, we are finished, man has lost its soul, nature is dehumanized. (...) Whether through a miracle the soulless, buried man will rise again. Never was there a time shaken by such error, by such dread of death. Never was the world so deathly silent. Never was man so insignificant. Never was he so afraid. Never was happiness so distant and freedom so dead. *Misery cries out, man cries out for his soul, the entire time is a single scream of distress. Art too cries into deep darkness, it cries for help, it cries for the spirit*. That is Expressionism. (Expressionismus, Munich 1916). Quoted in Rose-Carol Washton Long (ed.), *German Expressionism*, 1995, 90.

categories. Uri Zvi Grinberg's conception of avantgardist or modernist paradigm vacillates as with a whole range of Expressionist artists, between mimetic notions of modern "chaos" reflected in one way or another in his or others works, and an understanding of avant-garde or modernism as a chaotic subversion of communicative and semiotic norms of society.⁴⁵

C. *The final part.* The Expressionist fashion took hold among groups of Yiddish poets. Uri Zvi Grinberg ridicules them, naming them "Pseudo-Expressionists", pretenders, imitators taxed with mannerism. When exploited by these Pseudo-Expressionist, Expressionist style degraded into a mere stammering and babbling. Poetic language was teetering on the brink of becoming a parody of itself. Rethoric and banalities were expressed "expressionistically":

Such creatures are tricky, sharp: "Writing in such a way is called: modern"? "Then we are also writing modern": Climb the walls! Down with the roof! Forward on foot over the sea on spider's web-bridges! And why not? By all means! ... And so on, and so forth. Imitation. Pseudo-Expressionism. Cheapest imitation, sacrilege to one of us...

Such a wantonness I want to stop. Against this desecration of Expressionism which has been conceived in seventy tongues with blood-and-marrow, I shall fight a battle with all the fibres of my limbs-edifice.

Against the trashy imitation: Pseudo-Expressionism. Against the concealed lie of talentlessness which covers itself under the sacred star-robe of modern poetry. ...

The concluding operative line of *Proklamirung* sounds

*And: for the free, naked, blood-flowing human expression.*⁴⁶

The poet's subjective vision can only be transferred when not being filtered through the intellect or socially conditioned perspectives, so that it is experienced as lived truth. Human *expression* must be unpremeditated, instinctual "blood-flowing, *naked*", and appeal to the pre-rational, primitive levels of the mind. The visceral side of life takes precedence over the intellectual: "the blood" needs to be made manifest through "primitive" imagery, cruel, dark, chaotic-like, naked,

⁴⁵ According to Erich Auerbach, Modernist works tend toward chaos, toward the breaking down of cultural unity or "whole". Whereas the break with traditional methods of representation are signs of "confusion" and "a certain atmosphere of universal doom" and "something hostile to the reality which they represent. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, Princeton University Press, 1953, 551. See also, Bradbury and McFarlane, "The Name and Nature of Modernism", in Bradbury and McFarlane (ed.) *Modernism 1890-1930*. Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, Durhan, Nc 1987, 275.

⁴⁶ When Nietzsche asserts "I have always written my works with my whole body and life, I do not know what is meant by intellectual problems," (Quoted in H. J. Blackham, *Six Existential Thinkers*, London 1961, 24), he is offering, in its simplest form, an exemplary principle of Expressionism, the unhesitating reliance on the *direct expression* of feelings arising out of the creator's own life without the mediation and probable interference of rationality. This is to emphasize a tendency in many Expressionists to disdain cerebral control.

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The trope "naked" displays the avant-garde's/Expressionism's insistent on anti-intellectualism and its quest for the essential - the desire to strip away from reality its misleading surfaces and penetrate to true reality beneath the veil of matter; to reveal the "heart", "essence," or "core" of all things beneath their conventional definitions:

Everything has appearance and essence, shell and kernel, mask and truth. What does it say against the inward determination of things that we finger the shell without reaching the kernel, that we live with appearances instead of perceiving the essence, that the mask of things so blind us that we cannot find the truth?⁴⁷ By breaking through the facade of established reality (aesthetically, intellectually, socially), the Expressionist sought to discover the other realities that lay beyond, or a ruthless penetration to the roots of things, the return to man's "roots", whether in the psyche or prehistory.

2. Manifest tsu di kegner fun der nayer dikhtung (pp. 4-5)⁴⁸

According to A. Tilo Alt,⁴⁹ the manifesto was "probably directed against the Galician neo-romantics in particular who attacked Yiddish expressionism in Moyshe Zilburg's journal *Kritik*."⁵⁰

The manifesto mirrors Uri Zvi Grinberg's deep-seated dissatisfaction with the current state of Yiddish contemporary literature. A literature which he meant, was equipped with untalented, anachronistic, conservative and bookish writers, seeking to revive the romanticism of the past, yiddishkayt aesthetics. Uri Zvi Grinberg turned against the disdainful aloofness from contemporary reality, that characterized these writers, and whose works were thus an aberration of Jewish context, unable to incorporate the essence of Jewish existence. He points to the extraordinary circumstances of Yiddish literature, the manifestation of a tortured-bleeding, dreaming, bargaining people, marked by homelessness.

⁴⁷ Franz Marc, "Briefe, Aufzeichnungen und Aphorismen", 1, 126 in Herschel B. Chipp. *Theories of Modern Art*, University of California Press 1968, 180.

Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) speaks of experiencing the "secret soul of all things," of cultivating an "inner seeing" which can penetrate the surface of the world and "allow us to apprehend the inner pulsation of things with all our senses at once." W. Hess, (ed.), *Dokumente zum Verständnis der modernen Malerei*, Hamburg 1956, 45.

⁴⁸ "Manifesto to the Opponents of the New Poetry."

⁴⁹ In "Ambivalence toward Modernism: The Yiddish Avant-Garde and its Manifestoes", in *Yiddish*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1991, 58.

⁵⁰ Moyshe Zilburg (1884-1942) was the editor of *Kritik*, a militant quarterly, which fought against the rising tide of Expressionism. In a series of articles he attacked all Zionist and communal leaders who wrote in German or Polish, neglecting the living Yiddish word. As antithesis to those whom he named "neo-intellectuals", Zilburg hailed the genuine ghetto Jew, rooted in the language and folkways of Jewish traditions, and advocated the slogan: "Back to the Ghetto!"

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There are in the new Yiddish poetry many noxious weeds, poison-herbs. There are in the new Yiddish poetry banalities, absurdities, mimicry, incidental absorptions, indeed: talentless ones, who procure their existence only thanks to a winged form of new-tones of some ism and the delusion of eyes-and-ears through phraseology and foreign words. There are in the new Yiddish poetry dragged-graphomaniacs, in the language of professionals: extortioners. Exceptional individuals "sniff" from afar their dishonesty, see their nakedness.

But more or less, other great literatures are also surely suffering of it, literatures of healthy cultural nations who-have-one-home - If so, what's all the fuss about, precisely here, in a flimsy literature of *a people that is bleeding on one side, dreaming on the other and bargain-trade on the third?*

If the above-mentioned, your sense of honesty, is that which alienates you - we can offer you our hand! It matters more to us. Strikes us deeper. Because *ours* is the poetry: Fruit of awareness and pain, which we are carrying with our two-hundred-and-fourty-eight boiling limbs in our Jewish-human homelessness. But if you are going to throw mud-clods unto the new rocky-springs that have been-dug -with-toil-and-violence in the aridity of wilderness, and you will speak biblical-language: "and it was in the evening, and *you* came with your jars to draw water, and you noticed, that the water is poisoned" -- Then we shall deafen you with our un-biblical flotsam and jetsam language: Go away! You shall not come *with your earthenware-jars to the springs*. Stop it!"

...

We do not want to carry the dark globe on our back yet six thousand years!

...

We are not guilty that the shtetl has spat us out with the blood of its throat, and hurled us, shaking, into a palate of unrest. - To the cities-of-electricity, -bridges, -storey-buildings, -coffe-houses, -fallacy, - disgrace, - and opium! It be so: Guilty is he, who turns the wheel of the world. *Surely you believe!* ... The rhythm is in our poems, in our pictures. Probably you have blocked your ears with cotton-wool and closed your eyes (till the storm blows over ... perhaps). And when you don't know, you shudder - that things are different, different, different.

The Manifesto is fed from the maelstorm of modern life in general, synthetized with the specificity of Jewish existence that interacts or reacts to modernity. Uri Zvi Grinberg places the Jewish experience of catastrophe - pogroms, massacras, destruction - within the general historical framework of the so-called modern experience. He points out the connection between the immense demographic upheavals, severing millions of people from their ancestral habitats, hurtling them halfway across the world into new lives, rapid and often cataclysmic urban growth, infernal modern city life, and the new aesthetics, new rhythms, new imagery, new expression.

The Jewish poets and writers displayed an uncommon ignorance as regard to Jewish existence and experience, failing to understand the interrelation between deformation of the man, the generation, the Jew, and aesthetic poetic renewal. The implications called forth are

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thus radical: "old clothing must be shifted out with revolutionary clothing"⁵¹ in order to disrupt the catalogue of Jewish suffering. The radically altered quality of life and the universe as well as our place in it, obligates a change in artistic means. A tattered reality demands poetry in its unprocessed rawness, violence, cruelty, chaos, cry, blood.

And once again although roughly, the famous lines from the first manifesto, but alluding to exclusively Yiddish national expression:

Hence the cruel in the poem-
Hence the chaotic in the image -
Hence the painful outcry of the blood -
Those who do not understand us — for them we do not exist. Merely
our echos terrify them - - Close your doors and windows: so you don't drop death⁵²
We go by your thresholds and leave you alone
The way is long, long.
To the threshold of the world.

Artistic convention must be broken not only to signal the defeat of Western civilization, its oppression and restriction, but to undermine it. And Grinberg concludes:

But who is to be accused if the way leading up to the shrine is not more seen?

3. Velt-barg-arop⁵³ (pp. 12-14)

The epic poem *Velt-barg-arop*, a harrowing nightmare, elaborates on a dark hatred of Western civilization still haunted by Christianity; by its brutal, destructive, repressive force.

Man's ethical landscape is stripped of all signposts. All absolutes are annihilated. Nihilism and apocalypse are interlaced. An aversion from traditional humanism, as necessiated by a historical development, that called man and his values into question.

⁵¹ In the 1913 draft of his "Futurist Manifesto of Men's Clothing" Giacomo Bella tells us: "We must destroy all passéist clothes". The result we are promised will be "hap-hap-hap-hap-happy clothes", in Umbro Apollonio (ed.), *Futurist Manifestos*, London 1973, 132. And in *From Cubism and Futurism to Supermatism: The New Painterly Realism*, 1915, Kazimir Malevich declares: "Their bodies fly in airplanes, but they cover art and life with the old robes of Neros and Titians. / Hence they are unable to observe the new beauty of our modern life. Because they are living by the beauty of past ages." Quoted by John E. Bowit, *ibid.*, 1988, 120.

⁵² Compare, Blaise Cendrars proclames in his poem *Contraste*: "Les fenêtres de ma poésie sont grand'ouvertes sur les boulevards." Accordingly, "The role of the new poetry is to throw one's treasures out the window, among the people, into the crowd, into life." Quoted in Majorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment*, The University Chicago Press, 1986, 11.

⁵³ "A World on the Slope."

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The poem's subject - a man, a Jewish man, captured in an estranged morbid universe, of spiritual sickness decay and lust, being in the process of losing grip on reality. Reinforced by the present tense of the poem.

In a collocation of brutal and bold images Uri Zvi Grinberg conveys the essentiality of Jewish existence and its constituent - suffering. We are offered a Jewish world sloping downward within a world of claustrophobia, violence and injustice.

Depravity lurks everywhere in the poem's universe, peopled as it is by beggars, prostitutes, murderers and Christian priests. Uri Zvi Grinberg assimilated the Expressionists and Futurists negative view of sexuality, gender oppositions, fear of the "female principle", and polemics against the "feminine", whose erotic advance causes the breakdown of intellectual and social balance. Uri Zvi Grinberg exposes in the poem the negative power of woman's sexual desire threatening the "male". Woman is depicted with obsessive morbidity, being, "nothing but sexuality ... she is sexuality itself".⁵⁴ And the prostitute who draws, attracts, fascinates the male-poet is attacked with venomous vindictiveness. Curse and damnation governs genealogy:

Unroll my limb-book limb-for-limb, sinew-for-sinew.
It is already perforce torn. It has no longer any binding
And tear the Gospel-of-disgrace out of my body,
The generation's Gospel-of-disgrace, of the-dying-century!
And sniff with your nostrils my boiling blood:

Inhale
into your lungs horror-perfume, the poison-wine,
the hashish
The green-grass' smell of hatred, daily-water: disgust!

What can I tell you in language? The language has become
a lawless harlot:

Every one has already slept with her.
Today she is blind in the eyes and deaf in the ears
And the blood in her veins has turned green as leavened milk,
Rather: death ...

...
Hey, place me opposite a burning continent
Without a shirt on my body, with the glowing limbs exposed -
My hair will stand on the brim of an open brain.
And nights - smaragds of poison will green and flash
And bodies will dance in smoky reddish vapour.
And lampheads - flayed horseheads - thus will swing

⁵⁴ Quoted in Otto Weininger hugely influential book *Sex and Character*, New York 1975, 92. Edward Munch's many portrayals of woman tend to show her as a vampire intent on emasculating her sexual partner. And Gottfried Benn has one of his heroes refer to woman as a "heap of secondary sexual characteristics, grouped in anthropoid fashion" Quoted in M. Hamburger, *Reason and Energy*, London 1957, 287.

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Bleeding flames on petrified streets - -

Through me, streets with street cars' cross rails in the capitals,
Through me, through the body limbs, black cross-gangs
In days of despairing floods-of gloom: *Jews' funerals* ...
Through me, from belly-shore, from the middle upward to my forehead,
A black rainy pillar with an *iron of Jesus*.
A woman uncovers her breast to a street urchin near the gas-lamp.
(The gaslamp is burning as insanity: as the brain's flame ...)
Hanging. And a man turning blue. The sun - a bloodspot.
Trenches. Battlefields. Barbed-wire fence. A moon.
And soldiers' heads. One head as mine. Dishevelled and muddy.
A bloody slaughter-house. Glassily bull-eyes: Mercy!
A yellow, a lonely hand with a dark browning.
Trainbridges. Peddlers. With bells, bim-bam, flashing.
With heads- downward-bodies-are-sinking into water.
Frightened Jews with sidelocks and fringes blowing - -
And she sits in a corner, half-light half dim, my mother
with a taitsh khumesh.⁵⁵
The clock ticks at the head.
On the intestines sits a feetless beggar
And sings tunes about anguish-nights of mine, of all of us,
Coins are falling - -

Sick is the blood in the limbs of Europe's women.
They no longer emit infants from their wombs.
They are barren, not becoming fertile, not becoming pregnant.
Manliness: one blazing night in drunkenness.
Womanliness: one revelling night in lust.

And she, who bears her first born in a European poison-night,
Sees the rose of disgrace in the flesh of the first born
Who sucks her poisonmilk with animal desire
And squeezes with his gums the breast nipples
As a lustful adult, not as a sucking child - -

I do'nt want a matrimonial-wife, I shall take a prostitute
night after night, the naked streetground is my bed.
The dogs copulate when passing by. A bitch miscarries.
And it is impossible that I shall not procreate a creature -
In my image after my likeness: *an homunculus*. The fruit of agitation.

*

⁵⁵ A Yiddish version of the Pentateuch, traditionally read mostly by woman.

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Oh, bald Christ-priests, womenless beings!

Until my ears in my deafen nights
comes such a weeping of alas and alack from you -- and I am vigil
at the foot of a world on the slope, I am Job without a roof,
And without a dream, without a spark, only green-mould in the blood.
I am holding with two frozen arms the globe - mine - bra!
My furious head, with rows of grinding teeth,
And I am tearing in my fantasy pieces of my flesh in rage --

... No one has yet cut your veins from the hands.
And no one has stuck his nails in your throats.
No one has brought one of yours to Golgotha
And hung him naked on a blooming tree --

If all churches are mine - what does upset you?
If my brothers are hanging there with congealed blood
And with bare mourning-heads -- whose is then the lament?

Golden-shining halos are torn from the heads
We leave our brother-God without holiness on the pillar,
A naked body, wounded, with cold human-blood,
Let his apostles go to chew straw in the stable --

*Not your lament! Our woe, the Judéan-Christian-woe!
Not your torment! It is our wound and yours - in hypnosis.
And now - be vigil and regard: Mine is desecrated here:
The Judéan-Christian holiness - You have been slaves!*

The panes are glowing red in cities and in villages - towards the evening of the world.
It is the evening of black Sabbath -- Regard: It is burning, falling are
the pillars of anguish with God's and the pillars of disgust
And we - no longer ring the bells: fire!
Because all the bells are in the dust as leadpots --

The mood of degeneration and apocalypse in *velt-barg-arop* leads to feelings of despair and doom, but also to a sense of a new beginning. And it is through the primal, naked *cry/scream*, the shedding of cultural inhibition (second issue of *Albatros*), that Uri Zvi Grinberg moves toward a new phase of cultural-political insight.

Albatros 2, Warsaw, November 1922

So violent was Uri Zvi Grinberg's imagery against the West, and his blasphemies against Christ, in *Albatros 2*, that he was accused of blasphemy "got-lesterung" by the Polish government, particularly for his prose poem *Royte epl fun veybeymer* (Red Apples from the

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Trees of Pain). *Albatros 2*, was quickly banned by the Polish censors and Uri Zvi Grinberg fled to Berlin.

Uri Zvi Grinberg's own contributions to the second issue are: *Der mentsh shrayt*; *Uri Zvi farn tseylem INRI*, and *Royte epl fun veybeymer*.

Marek Shwartz' title page, a linoleum-cut, is a commanding portrayal of Expressionist textures.⁵⁶

1. *Der mentsh shrayt*⁵⁷ (p.2)

Der mentsh shrayt has strong affinities to Neo-primitivistic Expressionism and is bound up with the Expressionist cry:

We ourselves have to become barbarians to save the future of humanity from mankind as it now is. As primitive man, driven by fear of nature, sought refuge within himself, so er too have to adopt flight from a "civilization" which is out to devour our souls. The Savage discovered in himself the courage to become greater than the threat of nature, and in honour of this mysterious inner redeeming power of his, which, through all the alarms and terrors of storm and of ravening beasts and unknown dangers, never deserted him. ... So, brought very near the edge of destruction by "civilization", we discover in ourselves powers which cannot be destroyed. ... Expressionism is the symbol of the unknown in us which we confide, hoping that it will save us. It is the token of the imprisoned spirit that endeavours to break out of the dungeon - ...⁵⁸

Hostility to modern society and the artistic forms that reflect its assumptions, links Expressionism to primitivism. And the avant-garde's/Expressionism's exalting of the unconscious, and emotional side of human nature, provides an antidote to a civilization that almost exclusively emphasizes the rational and intellectual.

The notion that the alienated subject is trapped in an intolerably uncertain universe represents one extreme of the Expressionist conception of man. It attains its most forceful expression in that notorious *scream* which condenses into a single, utterly emphatic utterance the full weight of Expressionist emotion.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ See the second part of this article.

⁵⁷ "The Man Screams/Cries."

⁵⁸ Herman Bahr, *ibid.* Here quoted in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (ed.), *Art in Theory 1900-1990*, Oxford 1993, 121.

⁵⁹ It is the passion for intensity which explains among other things, phrases as "Höhe des Gefühls", "Spitzen des Gefühls", "Berge des Herzens" that abound in Expressionist literature, and embodied in the Expressionist *Schrei-Drama*.

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Edward Munch's (1863-1944) famous and influential painting of this title *Skriket* (1893) (*The Scream/ Cry/Shriek*) is one of the key images of Expressionist art.⁶⁰ It comes sharply into focus in the description of the art historian Peter Selz:

A writhing figure emerges from the picture plane, and its convoluted form is repeated throughout the landscape in the sinuous line of the shore and the equivalent rhythm of the clouds. This curved line is strongly emphasized by its contrast to the straight, rapid diagonal cutting through the imaginary space of the painting. The cry that the central figure seems to be uttering pervades the landscape like a stone creating centrifugal ripples in water ... these lines make the human figure merge with the landscape to express a total anxiety that evokes an immediate response from the observer.⁶¹

Disorientation in *der mentsh shrayt* is absolute. The subject can establish no foothold in a space which shifts and writhes about him. He is crawling in a dream state in a terror-stricken realm in which there is none to answer his choked cry. Uri Zvi Grinberg attempts to expose, or "open" in the text, the gates to the forces of the irrational and to the darker regions of the mind, to the most primitive levels of human consciousness:

The days are screaming/shrieking in their bright madness unto hoarseness, finally choked in their bleeding sun. ... In the dwellings fear is lurking, the terror of the nights. The space is vaporous with sleep and in the sleep bright moon's rings are turning round. Green snakes are coming from the ancient mountains' rock's clefts, crowds of snakes are crawling through the sleep - - the nerves-system trembles. Nerves are becoming railway lines. From all distances locomotives are running. And the blood(s) flow(s) from all the veins: becoming rivers . . .

Uri Zvi Grinberg uses quasi-mythical material, returning to the prehistoric "roots" of man-Adam, the uncivilized, together with present material - industrial urban civilization, materialistic, technological, repressive sexuality, nihil God:

Across the entire globe a roar is on the go, as in Adam's first day of pain. The man stands naked and sees himself: without fig-leaves. Not a heart, a little stream on the left, is the cave of longing, the cave of feeling. Only bones, all the bones. Longing, feeling, yearning. Veins scream through the body. Blood boils. It has learned the rhythm from the seas. In the brains rises the sunken primeval-world. He howls the Adam

of ancient, a slice of the chaos:

My wife by marriage has become a whore, wants that I shall empty the semen that procreates children on her belly, that her womb shall not be

fertilized.

To other males she says the same, the others obey her ...

⁶⁰ It had unusual appeal to a broad spectrum of artists at the turn of the century. It was commented on, referred to and analysed in various avant-garde periodicals from Berlin til Moscow.

⁶¹ Peter Selz, *German Expressionist Painting*, Berkeley 1957, 52.

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A world of unborn babies weeps in my nights of anguish.

Foam on my lips, gnawn by sin; I am not touching the heaven with them. I'm not kissing the parokhet⁶²

With every bite of bread I devour God.

With every mouthful water I drink hatred.

With every breath of air revulsion comes into my palate.

and

where to, the gait in the days and where to, the going-to-sleep on beds in the nights?

And the head on the shoulders glows. By no means is it possible to remove it from the shoulders and throw it like a pot with brain on the stones of the street.

The Eyfal Tower dries up. It does not want to stand: frozen and stretched out. It wants to fall!

To become dust! And so are other towers desirous of.⁶³

The *giant-Wheel* in Wien groans, Wien sleeps in the night. Wien fornicates by night.

Every morning New York's chimneys hum, crying/screaming with smoke, and the clouds demand: more. Thus the chimneys are crying every where.

And some cubits deeper in the earth of the entire globe are lying millions by millions of corpses: Adam's sons, Eva's daughters; and the worms have food eternally, and the worms are creeping. Earth and man is going, the naked man is going, foam on his lips, flames in his eyes. In front of him walks the heroic scream to the threshold of the world - -

Man believes, that the millions of bones in the earth are feeling the pain.

So underground is he.

So dark is he.

and

So infinite is the earth.

The man cries: What is happening to me here?!⁶⁴

Uri Zvi Grinberg did not share *at this phase** the Futurist cult of the scientific and did not translate it into poetic myth, nor did he share the fascination of global possibilities of communication or Marinetti's, Appolinaire's, Mayakovsky's glorification and enthusiasm of the city.

Although concerned with *the Eiffel Tower* the master-image of culture at that time and the great, turning Wheel that electrified many avant-gardistes Uri Zvi Grinberg avoided the

⁶² Curtain in front of the Ark of the Covenant in the synagogue.

⁶³ Compare Blaise Cendrars's well-known dedicated poem to the structure of the Eiffel Tower : Tu es tout/ Tour/ Dieu antique/ Bête moderne/ Spectre solaire/ Sujet de mon poème/ Tour/ Tour du monde/ Tour en mouvement/. *Oeuvres complètes*, 16 Vols., ed. Raymond Dumay and Nino Frank , Paris 1968-71, 1:55.

⁶⁴ The precariousness of Being is a thematic constant in whole range of Expressionist writings. Franz Werfel's poem *Aus meiner Tiefe* provides a good example. Its title situates the theme of metaphysical disquiet in terms of a "de profundis" accented towards the subject:

"Aus meinen Tiefen rief ich dich an. Ich rief wie aus versunkenen Fiebern tretend: *Wo bin ich?* Tieftaumelnd stand ich in schwankender Landschaft, im Schwindelgeheimer Erdbeben, und rief: *Wo bin ich?* Ich erkannte die Welt. Sie hing einem letzten zuckenden Nerv. Ich sah den Todesschweiß der Dinge, Sie schlugen um sich ineckiger Agonie." In K. Pinthus, (ed.) *Menscheitsdämmerung*, Hamburg 1959, 217.

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Futurist vocabulary, in which the Eiffel Tower is figuring as the symbol of the new sensibility, as a powerful image of modernity, a prophet of the future. For Uri Zvi Grinberg the Eiffel Tower is a condenser of anxiety doomed to collapse.⁶⁵

The very world had become poisoned and deformed in terms of malaise, neurosis, nihilism. Reality was, so to speak, mutilated, and it needed a fresh vision to redeem it. The barbarism of Western civilization and the suffering of the Jewish people could not longer be ignored: "We do not want to carry the dark globe on our back yet six thousand years!"

2. Uri Zvi farn tseylem INRI ⁶⁶ (pp.3-4)

The physical arrangement of the printed page is striking by the graphic scansion of the words printed in the form of a cross. Actually a manipulation of traditional iconography of the cross as symbolic of the suffering of Christ. The cross-motif, rendered concrete by the poem's cross shape, expresses Grinberg's dawning solidarity with Jesus, the martyred Jew.

At the beginning of the century the figure of Christ became an object of sympathetic contemplation as a new relationship emerged, conditioned by historical insight and enlightenment; artists dealt in a secular way with ideas hitherto repressed or forbidden. Christ is addressed as a brother who will in the future return to his people, wrapped in the traditional prayer shawl. The church and cross motifs that were prominent among Yiddish Expressionists, manifesting a kind of oblique solidarity with Jesus, the symbol of Jewish suffering.⁶⁷

In his book *Against the Apocalypse* David G. Roskies points out that the "neglected realm of Christianity" becomes for Yiddish artists "as valid a source of inspiration as hasidic folklore and haiku". And he states:

For all their radicalism, Yiddish writers could not have broken the Jesus taboo had it not been for prior developments in Christian Europe: the various attempts to modernize and dechristianize Jesus that had been gathering momentum since the Enlightenment, and the strict separation of the Man from

⁶⁵ Background information about the symbolic status of the Eiffel Tower can be found in Virginia Spate, *Orphism: The Evolution of Non-figurative Painting in Paris, 1910-1914* (Oxford 1979); Majorie Perloff, *Deus ex machina: Some Futurist Legacies; The Futurist Movement: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture*, Chicago 1986, 195-213, and *Literatur im Industriezeitalter*, ed. Peter-Paul Schneider (et al.), Marbach 1987, 283-9.

⁶⁶ "Uri Zvi Grinberg in Front of the Cross" - The word INRI is formed by the initials of Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum.

⁶⁷ The basic motifs and imagery of the *Khalyastre* movement can be found within the pages of *Yung-Yiddish*. The Christ theme and motif is one of the most arresting. The *Khalyastre* artists and poets alternately appealed to Christ on the cross as a fellow brother in misery or repudiated the blind stone image as the source of Jewish suffering. The cross, the bloodied Christ, the church porch where beggars congregate, the tolling bells, the steeples, form a continuum upon which the *Khalyastre* poet and artist express their exaltations, umet, and ultimate isolation all in a heavy grotesque mode against the backdrop of night. Seth Wolitz, *Yiddish*, Vol, 4, No. 3, 1981, 10.

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the Church. ... The separation of the Man from the Church allowed Jewish writers to disentangle the historical and human Jesus from the horrors later perpetrated in his name. The hope for universal redemption could be linked to the suffering man on the cross only if he was dissociated from the Crusades, blood libels, ghettos, and auto-da-fés.⁶⁸

The relationship to Christianity, and challenging Christianity and the West for the ownership of Christ on the cross begins with *Uri Zvi farn tseylem* to surpass the importance of every other theme. Uri Zvi Grinberg's apocalyptic imagery is now fused with the cross-motif that has become established as a modern expression of the traditional Jewish apocalyptic symbolism of destruction and exile as the emblem of the cyclical course of Jewish history.

In death, Jesus was of limited use to Uri Zvi Grinberg as a Jewish symbol. So long as he remained nailed to the cross, Jesus was deaf and blind to the call of Jewish history. To make him unanswerable to the call, Grinberg challenged him outright in an outrageous gesture.

Addressing himself to brother Jesus⁶⁹ he speaks thus:

- - How come I am one of the pained caravan,
who is not hanging next to you on a village-like pole
by a cross-road, sun is drying me, night is bending over me? !
Your brother, behold, my body's bones. My spiral chord: In the world's-light-at-sunrise I'm
transparent. Suffering purify. ! Day is bronze. Night is ink. Dumb like you I'm in the daytime. (I
can't carry the burden of bronze on my head and eyes). But at night the deep water's allusion is
pulling me: to sink, ah - - to over the head. Around are walls. A three-storied building and dead
streets of a church-town. I twist, brother Jesus, a twist of Jewish skin and bones (two thousand
years after you. Ancient!) And my lips are cracking: Red wound in the darkness - - My voice is
going like a snake, flashing: Alas! From the blood - - ! You want to sever from the pole when
singing rain falls, trees drop leaves. You are wailing loudly. Forests are crying. *The world hangs
itself for you - and you - on everyones woe-nights - are crying, crying, a cry-of-Jewish-calamity - -*
! Do you remember, brother, the holy village Bet-Lehem? Do you remember your meeting with
Miriam (Mary) on a Galilean field-way: A pitcher with anointing oil. Her curls on your feet. A
white Hebrew mantle on your body and a sky-blur girdle on your loins. Damn it. It is possible: You
don't remember longer. So many thousands of bells-bells are ringing. So many mad prayer-voices
and a bloody Latin *INRI* above the brain. - - But why does your look turn to heaven waiting to
moan: My God my God why have you forsaken me? But sometimes I stand during a rosecoloured
Minhah-time (afternoon), sunset. Damn it, my father trembles in the robe, trembles with holiness

⁶⁸ Harvard University Press 1984, 263-264. See also Noah Rozenblaum *The Theological-Historical Antitheticality in Christianity in the Poetry of Uri Zvi Grinberg*, (in Hebrew), New York 1966.

⁶⁹ Walt Whitman's* poem *To Him That Was Crucified* was hugely influential, offering a radical vision of human solisarity:

"My spirit to yours dear *brother*, Do not mind because many sounding your name do not understand you, I do not sound your name, but I understand you, I specify with joy *O my comrade* to salutethose who are with you, before and since, and those to come also, (...) Till we saturate time and eras, that the men and women of races, ages to come, may prove brethern and lovers as we are" (1860). Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, edited by Sculley Bradley and Harold W. Blodgett, W. W. Norton & Company 1973, 384-385.

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and draws with his thirsty eyes the grief of a declining-day-world. But my father waits for the rise of the stars. For Sanctification of New Moon. I -- not. I'm standing: A cloud, (sun)set in my body, and I'm thinking (sun)setting-wise unto my weeping blood, while it is flowing thus: You have become inanimate. Brother Jesus. You have two thousand years of tranquility on the cross. All around you *the world expires*. Damn it, you have forgotten everything. Your petrified brain can't think: a Star of David at your head, over the star - hands in priestly blessing. Under them date-palm-olive and ethrog gardens. I - Petrified eyes don't see: at your feet: a heap of hewn Jewish-heads. Torn Talliths. Pierced parchments. White linen with blood-stains.

And above all that - a he-drunkard with a she-drunkard. They have putrid gums. Slavering mouths - disgusting and detesting. Snow. Frost. Petrified Hebrew-sorrow. Primeval-Jewish-pain. Golgotha, brother, you don't see. Golgotha is here: Around-around. Pilatus is alive. And in Rome they are saying Psalms in the churches --

I would've brought you glowing embers on a fire-pan: in an emptied skull of a Jewish-head. In order to warm your feet, the frozen - . But a thought occurs in my mind: I've slaughtered brothers. I've broders in the Red Biryonim*-army. And I've young brothers who are planting eucalyptus(es) in Haderah's swamps. Malaria devours them. Jackals'-wail.

But they have a sea. They have mountains and the *Kinneret is certainly - Kinneret*. Not (the) Vistula - -Damn it. I've brothers at the Vistula ... What shall I tell about them? A moon on the Vistula. Boats anchor alongside the coast. Ships sail. Not my ships -- all over the world's waters ships are carrying my brothers --

Snow. Frost. Freezing. Petrified Hebrew-sorrow. Primeval-Jewish-pain. You have become inanimate, you have tranquility on the cross.

I - not. Not I - - - - -

How come I am one of these pained recluses, who is not hanging next to you on a village-like pole by a cross-road? Why is there no solar-eclipse? -- Jesus is blind to the signs of his Jewishness and inanimated to the screaming agonies of the Jews. "Golgotha is here - all around, (Pilatus is alive.) But Jesus Hangs indifferent , unmoved on the cross.

Against the nightmare world of the Church and the theological Christ, Uri Zvi Grinberg sets Jesus - the Jewish -historical-religious-national, as emblem of possible renewal and hope.

- To be continued in Vol. 19.