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SHORT STORIES AND ESSAYS OF DAVID FRISCHMAN

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters and Ordination

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DIGEST

David Frischman was a major figure in Hebrew literature between the years 1881-1922, as journalist, translator, poet, short story writer, and literary critic. While Frischman shared with the writers of that era a concern with the plight of Eastern European Jewry, he stood alone in his insistence that no one solution sufficed; and in this position he was neutral or opposed the Zionism, Yiddishism, and assimilation alike. For Frischman, the Jews could not consider themselves a nation without a good literature, and it was on behalf of good literature that he fought all of his life. Frischman found all of the emerging literary trends inadequate: either because of their sterile academic quality, or because they were mere copies of experimentation which was current in the West. Jews, he felt, must develop an authentic literature of their own.

This paper is composed of two parts. In the first section I have tried to render a biography of David Frischman which contains the principle details of his life in addition to a discussion of his major aesthetic ideas as expressed in his literary essays. The second unit contains my own analysis and criticism of his short stories and is divided into three parts, corresponding to three major aspects of Frischman's fiction: 1) his depiction of the conflict

between the "fathers and sons" as the latter search for beauty; 2) his literary treatment of the Jewish tradition; and 3) his use of the simple, two dimensional character in shorter sketches which either satirize or comment on the condition of poor, simple people.

Frischman's work has not been available in English, and it is hoped that this paper will make him accessible to those who lack facility with Hebrew.

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CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHY

David Frischman's publishers may not have read his essays very carefully. In two editions of his work, (Igrot Frischman, and the ha Sefer edition of Ba Midbar) his picture appears on the frontispiece. Years before the issue of either of these works, Frischman had remarked on the fact that Peretz's photograph appeared on the first page of a new book of his poetry. Frischman said then:

> It is customary that when a writer has produced much and become the darling of the public, a publisher will come along and satisfy his readers by giving them a picture of their darling.[1]

It is amusing, therefore, that a picture of Frischman - who was not the darling of the public, and never wished to be - looks out at us as soon as we open the pages of these books.

The citation characterizes David Frischman as one who always opposed the mainstream: "With my dreams and my idea I remained alone" and "I will not go with them" are lines from his own poetry which were written on his banner. If he held that banner too high on occasion, we are not surprised, for all fighters are likely to do so.

His first essays "Tohu va Vohu" and "Ba-Kol mi Kol Kol" were diatribes against the literay world of the 1880's, and from then until the end of his career,

he continued to be the harsh judge of Hebrew literature and Jewish culture.

Frischman is well characterized by the term "lonely fighter". Part of him was a Mitneged, and with that part he served as a kind of critical tyrant for more than forty years. But a part of him betrayed a remarkable sensitivity to life and the problems of people. It is fitting that critics speak of Frischman either as "one who sang the song of life", or as "the man of argument and strife", for he was both.

This paper is an attempt to represent many facets of David Frischman: to deal with his comments on the world which he saw, and to probe the world which he created in his short stories. It is not a chronological treatment of all of Frischman's works, although such a study might be fruitful. I have read all of his prose literature, and some seventy representative essays and feuilletons, in order to understand "the world of David Frischman", and to determine changes in his world view. I do not believe that ideological development is the most important aspect of his career. There is no doubt that the later Frischman was somewhat mellower than the Frischman of the 1880's, as Sokolow and Kantor maintained in essays about him.[2] Furthermore, during his lifetime, Hebrew literature and literature in general underwent the kind of growth which would have

had to affect anyone as sensitive as Frischman In spite of this, the cross-section reading of different essays reflects a surprising homogeneity in world-outlook. Those changes which do occur consist of moderation in his attack, and responses to the new developments in literature. There are even instances in which Frischman's temperament guided him along consistent paths when he might well have changed his attitude. The Frischman who bemoaned the state of Hebrew literature in 1883-1885 continued to prophecy literary doom in the early days of the new century in spite of the emergence of Mendele, (in Hebrew), Bialik, Schneour, Berdichewsky, Tschernichowsky, Brenner, and Steinberg. Notwithstanding his personal distaste for the psyshology and realism which pervaded much of this literature, it is clearly difficult to imagine how Frischman could attack this later literature with the same vigor which characterized his attacks on both writer and reader twenty years before.

Frischman wrote in every literary form except the novel, and on nearly every subject. He was a man whose interests ranged wide: from the Jewish problems of his day to familiarity with the literature of the Orient, to the most personal aspects of the literary figures of the West. While there are times when the reader might question the depth of his knowledge,

he was obviously accuainted with the Western literary values which he glorified in speech and essay.

As a young boy, Frischman was able to combine Rabbinic studies with a wide range of reading in Western literature. His early life was spent in Lodz where his father was a sophisticated business man. The Lodz of that day was described by Sokolow as "a city, not Polish, nor German, nor Russian, and not Jewish - but all of these things together."[3] The Frischman household reflected this synthesis. Although religiously observant, and concerned with Jewish education, the family prided itself on its familiarity with world culture, and saw to it that the son had a good, general education. Lachower reported[4] that this free atmosphere did not mitigate the young boy's own religious vitality, and that at one time, he was even fanatic in his observance. In spite of this, even a superficial glance at his early background shows that he did not have an extreme upbringing against which to rebel.

Some critics speak of the influence his mother's poetic spirit, and the practical temperament of his father upon him,[5] but such statements are usually idle speculation. It is apparent, though, that Frischman's home did have much to do with his literary interests, and certainly was responsible for Frischman's early involvement with the secular literature of the West.

In Judaic studies he was drawn to the books of "Deuteronomy" and "Isaiah" for their literary merit, so that even the "holy books" were approached as works of art. Among the Hebrew writers to whom he was particularly attracted were Micah Joseph Levinson and Y. L. Gordon whose literary power reminded him of "Isaiah". Frischman was excited by Shakespeare because he saw in his plays the continuation of the lofty poetry and humanism of the Bible.[6] What is significant in these attitudes is that Frischman related the art he loved to the classical Jewish past.

But if he spoke out of a Jewish context, he was also a secularist, and a man for whom humanity preceded Judaism. Certainly his earliest critical cries were against the lack of humanism and universalism in the Hebrew literature of his day.

When Frischman was sixteen he left his home and any further formal Rabbinic studies and travelled to Germany. There he came into contact with Aaron Bernstein, the editor of Volkes Zeitung who tried to influence the young man to become involved with German journalism. Frischman refused this opportunity, but he did begin his translation of Bernstein's Studies of Nature (Aus Dem Reiche Der Naturwissenschaft) and thus launched an important aspect of his literary career: bringing the West to the East through translation.

At this early stage of his life Frischman began his argument with the writers of his day. In the biting comments about Peretz Smolenskin in Ha Boker Or we can see attitudes which were to characterize his criticism throughout his life. Not only was Smolenskin guilty of over-simplifying solutions to "The Jewish Problem",[6] not only did his novels lack understanding of the human-being,[7] and not only was he over-rated as a writer in general, but he also had the audacity to depend almost entirely on Hess's Rome and Jerusalem for his work on Am Olam.

Frischman's characteristic lack of caution is thus reflected in this early article written in the form of a letter to a friend who was translating Hess's book:

> Your translation is excellent, but don't be surprised, my dear friend, if I tell you to stop your work. The book Rome and Jerusalem has already been translated into our language - indeed in an entirely different form - and in spite of the fact that its translator did not cite the source. The translator is not a young unknown, but a big name in our literature. . . . The scholar translator is Peretz Smolenskin and the "copied book" (Frischman used the word ' ma-a-tik' to render the double entendre) is Am Olam.[8]

The article contains sarcastic comments about Smolenskin, interwoven through lengthy citations from both works. These comments were meant to support the accusation.

They illustrate at best Smolenskin's lack of originality, and it is difficult to believe that Frischman meant that Smolenskin plagiarized Hess in the legalistic sense of the word. It was really lack of originality for which Frischman attacked Y. L. Peretz in one of his Letters on Literature, even though the words "theft" and "plagiarism" are again employed. The citations in the Smolenskin critique seem, rather, to reflect the kind of influence which any writer may have received from an earlier literary figure. Klausner insists that Frischman's accusations were incorrect, no matter what he meant by them, for the general outlook of each book was entirely different.[9]

Two things surprise us about "Me Mistore Sifrutenu", the article about Smolenskin. First, it is interesting that Gottlober, the publisher of Ha-Boker Or, allowed a sixteen year old lad to use his journal for such remarks; and secondly, that it elicited such response, in view of the absurdity of the accusations. It is obvious that Gottlober had personal reasons for printing Frischman's article. His paper competed with Ha Shahar in which Smolenskin's work first appeared, and any opportunity to lampoon the opposition must have appealed to him. The response elicited can be understood in light of the polemical nature of 19th century journalism. Radical statements were common in the rather violent

periodicals of the time. Such irresponsible accusations were not unique to Frischman's salad years, as we shall see, but this is probably the most unfair statement to come from his pen.

In 1883 Frischman, then eighteen, published the article "Tohu va Vohu" which contained his first sweeping attack on the Hebrew literature of the day. The article primarily criticized the amoung of worthless argument which took place on the pages of Ha Melitz, and called attention to the literary weakness of its writers. Frischman chose Ha Melitz as an example of the low quality of literature in the 1880's.

Berdichewsky, in his profile of Frischman, described the impression which this essay made in 1883.[10] Sholom Aleichem, too, expressed his appreciation of the essay in a letter to Frischman.[11] Berdichewsky granted that the essay was a sweeping broadside without a definite focus, but said that Frischman's attacks were justified.[12] (What seems commonplace to us in the essay was apparently quite original in its time.)

The years 1885-1887 were among Frischman's most productive. He returned from Germany to Eastern Europe and wrote a great amount of newspaper articles and short stories. He became part of a literary circle in Warsaw, which Sokolow vividly described as full of intellectual ferment and searching.[13] In this period, two of Frischman's

most significant literary arguments took place - one on behalf of Gordon, and one against him. (If such inconsistency seems surprising, it seems even more incongruous that Frischman variously attacked and praised Gottlober, and even expressed great admiration for Smolenskin at one time.) During these three years he published some of his most important short stories, among them "Be Yom ha-Kippurim" which occupies a central place in this thesis. He also made many comments about the emerging nationalism of the day, (to which he was lukewarm at best), and continued his attack on the low state of Hebrew literature.

In 1886, Y. L. Kantor established HaYom, the first Hebrew daily, and invited Frischman to be his assistant. There was something ironic about this endeavor. The newspaper represented a major step in the establishment of the Hebrew language, and, as such, played its part in the national resurrection, but both Kantor and Frischman used the newspaper to oppose "Hovve Tzion" the most popular nationalistic movement of the day.[14]

Prior to his work with HaYom Frischman had defended Y. L. Gordon against the attacks of Moshe Lev Lilienblum. In his critical essay on Gordon, ("A Critique of Gordon's Poetry"), Lilienblum said that Gordon's poetry was not tempered with judgment and reason.[15] and that Gordon was not really a

national poet. Lilienblum was irritated by the fact that Gordon's "Kotzo shel Yod" did not place the guilt for the Jewish plight on the lack of national redemption.[16]

In such criticism, Frischman saw a lack of the sense of poetry.

> Does Mr. Lilienblum know how to read poetry? I am very doubtful. . . . He comes and argues, making criticism a shovel with which to dig, and to break apart the wonderful delicate material before him. . . . The principle thing is that this critic tries to find fault with the poet because he (the critic) is one of the nationalists and therefore he expects the poet to be nationalistic in all of his poems.[17]

Two of Frischman's attitudes are interwoven in this statement. First he contends that the poet cannot limit his art for the sake of a precise idea or for philosophic accuracy; secondly he expresses his disdain for the nationalists. He disliked the nationalists because he saw their world-view as limiting appreciation of art - (witness Lilienblum) - and also because he felt that nationalism was not the solution to the Jewish problems.

But Y. L. Gordon, whom he once described as being the wonderful, delicate "Goethe-like" poet,* became the object of his next attack. As soon as HaYom

* In the edition of Kol Kitvei Frischman, this comparison is excluded, but Klausner quotes it from the original article.

became a daily, "Ha Melitz", edited by Gordon, followed suit. The publication of two Hebrew dailies in the city of Peterbourg seems somewhat extravagant; but Ha Melitz was a supporter of "Hovvei Tzion", and as such has to counter the effect of her sister journal.[18] Ironically, Gordon had earlier asked Frischman to be his assistant on Ha Melitz in spite of the fact that this newspaper was villified in "Tohu va Vohu".[19] Not long after this invitation was rejected, Frischman was to accuse Gordon of "selling out", of having lost his power as a writer, and of turning to causes which he had once opposed. The first of three articles on Gordon was entitled "Me-Maarachot ha Milchamah", a delightful parody on Gordon's relation to the conventional intellectual atmosphere of the times. Gordon had become like the Rabbi Ishmael in one of his poems, who had prohibited the use of etrogim from Israel because his family in the local town dealt in the commodity.

> The brothers-in-law, and the uncles, and the Rabbis, and everything they owned now turned to the Maskil from Chatzer Soosah who used to attack them, but he was not their helper and defender (play on word "melitz".)[20]

Frischman continued the onslaught in two subsequent essays.

The three articles against Gordon and Ha Melitz reflect Frischman's facility with the language, and his

ability to entertain. They are partly parodies of Godron's own writing, using his themes as mashals, and partly out and out attacks the object of which is not very well disguised. "Is this the Maskil from Chatzer Soosah? Is this the man who donned pride all of his life, and whom they called 'lion of the group'? . . . a great warrior had fallen in Israel!"[21]

Klausner's judgment of Frischman is severe, and it would seem from the evidence that the irascible Frischman was injudicious in these essays as he had been before. But Klausner seems to overlook the fact that such literary quarrels often were characterized by extreme language, and that perhaps the writers themselves were not as effected by their mutual attacks as we of a later period are likely to assume.

HaYom was not only the scene of Frischman's literary vendettas, and his earliest short stories. His feuilletons on Judaism and literature appeared during the three years of its publication and, in addition, Frischman began his "Letters on Literature" - nineteen articles whose publication spanned Frischman's life.

HaYom struggled during the three and one half years of its existence, and eventually closed in 1888. A year before, Frischman had suggested to Sholom Aleichem that he help Kantor and himself with the publishing of HaYom since "I Know that you are not poor" and "the

amount of capital needed is not very great!"[22] The Yiddish writer refused, apparently because of his interest in the development of Yiddish literature.

One of the curious aspects of the correspondence between Sholom Aleichem and Frischman was that each tried to get the other to write more in the language to which he was not accustomed. After the closing of HaYom Frischman did try his hand at "zhargonit", and was praised by his friend for his Yiddish translation of "There on the Height."[23] It is clear that Frischman loved Hebrew too much to occupy himself with Yiddish for very long.

At this point in his life, Frischman's path took a definite turn. In 1890 Frischman left Eastern Europe for Breslau where he studied for five years, and did not maintain his journalistic literary activity. During this period Frischman deepened his knowledge of philosophy, history, and the history of art. It does not require much imagination to see that the young critic might have looked upon a sojourn in Europe as an opportunity to lift himself above the petty and second rate goings-on in Eastern Europe. His stay in Breslau reminds us of the life of the student in the story "Mitzvah" (cf. chapter III): "In those days . . . when I had had little contact with my Jewish Brethren for some time. . . ."

Frischman returned to Warsaw in 1895 and resumed publishing his "Letters on Literature"*[24] This was a period of considerable poetic activity for Frischman. In addition between 1893 and 1900 he translated Daniel Deronda, "Veronica", Julius Lippert's The Evolution of Culture (Kulturgeschichte der Menscheit in ihren Organischen Aufbau,) many of Andersen's fairy tales, and Pushkin's poetry. He had been working on Byron's "Cain" for a good deal of time and finally finished that work in 1900.

The translation of "Andersen's Fairy Tales" represents Frischman's concern about Hebrew literature in the 90's. In the period after 1895 he began to criticize Hebrew literature for its loss of "childhood". In its progress and sophistication it had lost the shoes of youth. He had always said that the Jewish people was a victim of "Koved Rosh" (seriousness), and perhaps Andersen represented a solution. In his introduction to the translation,[25] Frischman expressed his desire to bring freshness to the Jews - a taste of the lyric. The Jews were a people who had spent their entire life saying "Mai Ka Mashma Lan" ("What do we learn from this?") and had lost the ability to appreciate the purely lyrical. The years of Haskalah scholarship had desensitized the imagination of those who had managed to break away from

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* The Letters from 1895 are postmarked "Carlsbad".

the Talmud. Both the liberated and the orthodox were insensitive to good literature. Frischman felt that the Jew could be responsive to the child-like and lyric - was, in fact, longing for it, and that it was his desire to re-introduce the glorification of childhood to the Jews. Andersen created a world in which there was no Torah, no Mitzvah, no bitter searching or anxiety.

Frischman himself wrote two kinds of Agadot. One genre is certainly influenced by Andersen's tales, and include "The Little Angel", "Ilu Natan Peh le Metim", "Sulam Ya-akov", "Ha Kupah", and "Or". They are terse narratives which usually incorporate fantasies about divine providence, and the activities of the heavenly family. The second kind of Agada which Frischman created was the "Ba Midbar" tale. In these tales he was really "returning the dew of youth to Israel" for the dominant motif in each of the stories is that Israel's (and hence man's) golden age was before the law was given - in the unrestrained atmosphere of the wilderness.

This lyrical Frischman,- the man with the pen delicate enough to translate Andersen's Fairy Tales and to create literary legends himself, had only a year before resumed his role as the angry "giant killer". In one of his "Letters on Literature" Frischman attacked Y. L. Peretz in such a way that permanent enmity

developed between the two men. We shall consider this letter when we discuss Frischman's literary criticism in more detail.

Frischman's fame was secure by now. If indeed some did not consider him a true poet,[26] he had certainly covered the literary field through a variety of media, and in 1901 Ahiasaf decided to place him at the head of their new literary weekly Ha Dor. Lachower believed that the firm was ambivalent in its decision because of Frischman's supposed lack of religiosity and nationalism.[27] Frischman actually resented being placed outside the camp,[28] and asserted time and again that even when he attacked, he attacked as a friend.

Ha Dor sustained itself for about a year as (what Lachower calls) a journal of extraordinary quality.[29] Lachower agreed with Frischman that "Ha Dor Lo Hayah Ra-ui Lo" (The generation did not deserve it,) but Frischman's own words speak the problem more eloquently and give us further insight into his personality. In the last issue of Ha Dor, Frischman wrote a letter to his readers:

> Since during the last year you have furnished me with 'letters to the editors', at least once I hope that you will allow me to write to you a letter 'from the editor'.[30]

In this letter, he is still the sarcastic battler. He asserted that his generation did not understand literature,

and resented the fact that no donors had come forth to place Ha Dor back on its feet. In addition, he felt that the truly good writers of the time had disappointed him by not writing in the publication.

Ha Dor failed because it was principally a literary journal, according to Frischman, and the people Israel was not yet ready for literature:

> And literature? - why should I deny it? Literature to me is worth no less than an entire colony. The value of a journal for the life of a people is not less than a colony, or a school, or money. In fact the value of literature for a people is seventy seven times greater than the value of all these together. Literature is the source of life for a people. If the people is really alive, if the nation were really resurrected, not only on paper or with speech, then one of the first signs would be the building of a literature. This we have seen amongst all of the tiny peoples which have emerged in recent years. Literature was the first event! But - a people which doesn't feel that spiritual substenance is the principle need, a people like that is not a people.[31]

Don Meron discusses the accuracy of Frischman's evaluation. He asserts that Frischman underestimated the Jewish readership at the time, but does affirm with Frischman, that the bulk of intellectuals was more concerned with problems of nationalism or Yiddishism.[32]

Within this short paragraph are several leitmotifs of Frischman's thinking: the importance of literature; the relative unimportance of a homeland; the lack of spirit amongst the Jews; and the fact that nationalism actually hurt the cause of good literature.

HaDor closed for three years - and during this time Frischman married. When Ha Dor reappeared, Frischman printed a statement of purpose in the first issue.[33] The renewed Ha Dor concentrated even more exclusively on literature, and excluded several items of political interest which characterized it in the earlier period. As if to emphasize his commitment to good literature, Frischman asserted:

> Ha Dor will be essentially a literary journal, the editor has decided that he must change its outer form and issue it in the form of books, a book for each week.[34]

Frischman wrote that he was going to exclude most of the occasional writing on political topics, because the daily journals were better equipped to deal with such questions.

The failure of this second attempt did not discourage Frischman in his role as editor. In fact the years following were characterized by a flurry of editing. In the period between 1904-1914 Frischman worked in editorial capacity on Ha Zman, Sifroot, and Reshafim. In 1911 he edited the Warsaw daily Ha Boker and until the first world war broke out, he edited Ha Tzefirah.

During this time he continued to write with typical energy. In 1911 Frischman visited Palestine

twice and was received eagerly by intellectuals who bore no resentment for his lukewarm attitude to Zionism.[35] Upon his return to Poland he published several essays which indicate that Frischman's basic position was unchanged. He maintained his rather cavalier attitude towards the Zionist experiment. Although Frischman never opposed the Zionists formally, and occasionally had even spoken on behalf of Herzl's efforts,[36] - the settlement in Palestine was for him only another Jewish event, and was in itself no solution.

With prophetic insight Frischman wrote the essay "Avodat Adamah". He began with a mock quotation from a letter by a pioneer friend:

> . . . about every thorn and hill which we have here - and thank God we have many - you wrote and spoke upon your return from here. But you were silent about our colony. . . of course I must not forget that you were always opposed to working the land.[37]

Frischman humorously answered that he was not opposed to working the land - any more than he was opposed to eating bread. History, however, had made the work of the hands obsolete. In just a few years we shall be telling our grandchildren about the farmers that used to be. The mechanization of agriculture in the new age is making farming like any other industry. A new settlement will have to be based on more than "work of the hands."

Frischman clearly stood "above the battle" regarding Zionism. But his blatant denial of its importance, his refusal to become enthusiastic about the work there, and his exaltation of literature above nationalism, was inevitably interpreted as anti-Zionist.

In the same year - the year of the Zionist Congress in Hamburg - Frischman took part in a conference on Jewish Culture in Berlin. At the conference, he delivered a paper "On Literature" whose contents were consistent with what Frischman had been saying all of his life. The importance of literature, the lack of Hebrew readership, and the necessity to write good literature by world standards were the burden of his address. Frischman's temperament was not suited to such "conferences", but being somewhat of a dreamer, he could not resist the hope that this conference could produce patrons who might support a cultural revival.[38] Such hopes were dashed. His experience in Berlin was reported bitterly in his essay "Conference".[39] Long speeches characterized the session; and Frischman noted sardonically that most of the people were there because they were on their way to Hamburg. The disappointment was enhanced by Ahad ha Am's foolish suggestion that a referendum be run among the people to determine whether they really want a conference on culture. The essay ended with Frischman's usual appeal: "Go out and raise

money; close the conference, and if you bring (money) then you can talk all you want!"[40]

Nothing ever came of this conference, nor Frischman's plea, nor - according to him - Hebrew literature.

About the same time Frischman's friends celebrated his thirty year julilee.

The manner in which the public honored its writers amused and disturbed him. We have already seen how he responded to Peretz's popularity in 1895. In 1901 he wrote a humorous essay on the forty year jubilee of Eliza Orzishkovah, the Polish authoress, in which he remarked that the public will do anything to honor its writers, except reading their works.[41] He reacted similarly in 1910 to the jubilee of Ben Yehudah.[42] In view of these oft expressed feelings, the occasion of Frischman's own jubilee is quite ironic. Perhaps Frischman who delighted in comparing himself to Uriel Acosta,[43] even resented this indication of popular acceptance. Thus, in 1914 he wrote to Sholom Aleichem:

> And what you write concerning my jubilee -aren't you a bit ashamed? Can you look me in the face? You are the one who aroused the multitude and sent me into the bellringing, drum-beating crowd - and brought all this horror upon me. And now you stand off to the side, and act as if you know nothing - your hands on your hips - shaking with laughter and rejoicing at the calamity of your friend![44]

When the World War broke out, Frischman moved to Odessa, where he befriended Bialik, (cf. their correspondence in Kneset 1940) and thence to Moscow where he worked as one of the chief editors of A. Y. Steibel's publishing house. This period, too, was characterized by considerable literary activity and a great amount of translating. He brought to the Hebrew reading audience works by Byron, Goethe, Heine, Anatole France, Oscar Wilde, and Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian poet and playwright. Before he left Warsaw he had already translated Thus Spake Zarathustra.

In 1920 the Russo-Polish War sent Frischmann to Berlin where he fell ill from cancer. He died in 1922.

Re-actions to Frischman's death indicate that he was indeed viewed as a man of strife - but that, though he was an extremist, his contribution had been appreciated. The sixteenth volume of Ha Tekufah (a Steibel publication): was dedicated to his memory and noted that "while he may not have respected talented men, he respected talent. . . . He was the editor 'par excellence'." Sokolow, R. Benjamin, Shofman, and Fichman each wrote touching memorials in his honor. Each acknowledged that Frischman had been cantankerous, had been immature in his early days, had lacked certain talents, but that - in the words of Fichman:

> He was one of the last of the greats who carried the burden of our new literature on his shoulders. He worked with them, and fought with them, but with them he built Hebrew literature. . . . He knew how to play on the delicate strings of Hebrew perhaps like no other man.
>
> Although he did not speak Hebrew, from his simple prose, we hear his voice speaking.[45]

Frischman's Aesthetic

Waxman correctly notes,[46] that Frischman's critical mind was not synthetic. Frischman wrote often on such subjects as "what is art", "the role of criticism", the impact of ideology on literature, and literary technique, but he did not compose a "philosophy of art", or an aesthetic manifesto. Even his essay "What is Criticism?" (Letter X) is only a partial statement of his critical world view. He did not believe that there were fixed standards according to which art could be evaluated. In his opinion both art and criticism were dependent upon the independent and subjective outlooks of critic and artist.

But he did have standards, and is considered by most historians of Hebrew literature to be one of the first to emphasize significantly the importance of some kind of standards in Hebrew literature. I have sifted through his articles and culled his artistic world view from a large number of separate writings in which he expresses what these standards are.

In his letter VII on literature, Frischman asserted that art is able to arouse a sense in the viewer or reader that they have perceived something which would not have been perceived naturally. When Frischman spoke about seeing nature, he usually thought in terms of beauty. Although he never discussed the role of the sordid in literature, it is obvious from his own writing, that he did not exclude ugliness as a subject for the writer. Whether beauty or ugliness were being depicted, mere copying did not constitute art. Art, in his view, involved a special confrontation between the artist and life which was conditioned by the "self" of the artist.

> This afternoon I took a walk in a clear, icy, silent wood. It had the beauty of ivory. The quiet was so great that I heard a kind of noise in my head and my blood. I became a kind of higher winter wood.[47]

The relationship between the artist and the object viewed transfigures the artist, and must be reflected in the art.

In addition to depicting what happens in nature, art must clarify man's inner struggles.[48] The realists - who believe that they have achieved this - have failed. In 1895, Frischman bemoaned the realistic impulse to make literature merely "a copy from a slice of life."[49] While he praised the art of

some realists (Gerhard Hauptman,)[50] he insisted that nothing in nature can successfully be copied.[51] Strict realism he felt, had pedagogical value - it is good for documentation and sketching. But "poetic truth" is of a higher order than photo-like realism. Even Agadot are more accurate than the realism of, for example, Zola[52] because they are symbolic of what actually happens in nature, and hence inside of man.[53]

It is possible, of course, that Frischman did react to the brutality of realistic writing, although he did not object to depicting the ugliness in the world. In its extreme form, he may have found that "realism" could not bring beauty to the reader. Certainly he felt that only the "idealistic style" transmits the reader to a higher realm and that this transmission is one goal of literature.[54]

While art is the result of an encounter between man and the world which he sees, art stands alone once it has been created. "The reader must distinguish between a man and his work - between the private morals of the writer and the morals in his work."[55] Frischman made these comments with bitter reference to Oscar Wilde's treatment at the hands of the English.

Among the writers who failed to really see nature, and hence, the world, was Peretz. Frischman criticized him in part for writing a poem in which one

line speaks of the awakening of the world of nature - and is followed by a statement about nature falling asleep.[56] Peretz's problem in this particular poem may have been carelessness, or the fact that he was not really writing about nature. He may even have felt that the contradictory reactions were accurate. But Frischman assumed that the man who could write such lines could not really have been perceiving what he was supposedly experiencing:

> Isn't this a sign of how little this man felt about what he saw in the nature he described and which he claims to transmit to others?[57]

The artist who really feels nature, said Frischman, will not have to depend upon artificial conventions,[58] because having had the dialogue with that which he experienced, he will come to be a part of it,[59] and will be able to transmit his impressions through natural language. This idea is related to Frischman's feeling that many Jewish writers were artificially copying the Western literary values, themes, and conventions, without really perceiving the world they described, and hence were not authentic.

Frischman also felt that the artist and writer must search for literary individuality, for the form which best fulfills him. In his introduction to the translation of Andersen, he spoke of the Danish writer's own search for the solution to this problem.[60]

Only when the proper form has been discovered can the author transmit his experience of life to the reader.

Frischman was disturbed by the number of professional writers on the Jewish scene, whom, he said, could not be true artists because "a man can only write because something is burning in his soul."[61] One result of commercialism in literature is that a writer begins looking for subjects on which to comment. "The true writer", said Frischman, "is born with so much to say that he never has time to express it all."[62]

Not only is the artist born with the need to express himself, but he also creates almost in spite of himself:

> Michealangelo was the greatest sculptor up to our present time, and his desire to create was so strong that he could not even rest from his work. He had to have with him a bit of clay so that he could knead it in his hand constantly - to the point where occasionally without intending it, a form or statue would result.[63]

Frischman constantly sought originality. He idolized Nietzche's originality as man, writer, and philosopher and his comments on "Ecce Homo" reflect this admiration. Besides agreeing with a good deal of Nietzche's philosophy of man, he was enthusiastic about the work primarily because: "It is the strangest

confession ever uttered by the lips of man."[64] Frischman admitted that Nietzche was inconsistent - that "Ecce Homo" contained simultaneously wonderful and worthless ideas, and that many of the specific thoughts in it had been expressed by other thinkers. But the "whole" was something new, and uniquely Nietzche.[65]

He had a special sensitivity to originality which he often could not explain. One of his principle objections to Peretz's poetry was that he used hackneyed imagery and conventions,[66] and he scourged many Hebrew writers who committed the same crime. Frischman himself was often guilty of employing trite imagery, and like other artists, at times he succeeded , and at times he failed.

Frischman had a unique way of saying that the Hebrew writers really had nothing original to say. He accused many of plagiarism. We have already seen that his attack on Smolenskin was possibly unjustified - and it seems that he was often too eager to make this particular assault. In 1887, in his Letter III on Literature, he commented on the book, Ha Nidachat, by Nahum Meir Shaikewitz:

> The author was very fond of Smolenskin and his story "Ha Toeh be Darchei Haim". He therefore endeavored to do what Smolenskin had done. And whereas Smolenskin chose a male using a seghol under the ayin, this author chose a woman with a kometz under the ayin,

> and made a story. . . . Adon Shaikewitz was not able to use a man, because someone else had already done so, and he was, therefore, forced to seek a helpmate from the women's section - ("ezer knegdo me-ezrat ha Nashim").[67]

In the same year Frischman wrote that the poet Ezra ben Yizhak Goldin was too strongly influenced by the poetry of Pushkin and other Russians.[68] Frischman's accusation of Peretz is the most surprising. Besides "not really seeing nature", employing trite imagery, and being the darling of the public, Peretz plagiarized Heine. Perhaps an example of the form in which this accusation appears will clarify what Frischman meant by plagiarism:

> Let us look at the first poem:
>
> - With all of the buds
> The lily of my heart awakens.
> And with the singing of the stars of
> morn and eve
> My song of love overflows.
>
> Is this not Heine! . . . When we take the collection of poems called "Lyric Intermezzo" we indeed find words like these:
>
> - In May, the Magic month of May
> When all the buds were breaking,
> Oh then within my heart
> The fires of love awakened.[69]

The accusation is flimsy. Frischman did not have to acknowledge that this was not a word for word transposition. This illustrates his flamboyant tendency to condemn other writers for plagiarism - when they were

really guilty of a lack of creative vitality. Poets before Heine spoke of nature as arousing the fires of love, but Frischman could not have accused Heine of plagiarism.

In each of his literary phases, Frischman believed that Jewish writers were neither authentic, nor original. Even in "Tohu va Vohu", where his primary concern was to criticize the dry academic quibbling which characterized Ha Melitz, and to encourage Jewish writers to follow the West and begin thinking in terms of "good literature", the young Frischman criticized one of the writers (Horowitz) for borrowing all of his ideas.[70]

Frischman expressed concern for the tendency of Hebrew writers to copy the West when they had not matured adequately to justify the use of the new techniques. In 1895, he acknowledged that Hebrew literature had begun to mature - had, as he hoped it would - broken out of the Eastern European ghetto. But he bemoaned the fact that the new writers had rejected simple natural beauty.[71] He contended that having cast off the shoes of childhood, Hebrew literature was now going barefoot. It had matured too swiftly, and had nothing which was authentically its own.. He expressed similar attitudes in 1900 and 1910. The idea of the "new wave" (ma-halach hadash) appalled

him, because Hebrew literature was not old enough - nor good enough.[72] In 1910, he made essentially the same evaluation.[73] Whether written by West Europeans or by East European Jews, certain elements of the new wave bothered Frischman, (realism, for example.) But, and this he stresses over and over again, the new styles of writing: realism, decadence, pscyhological analysis, were for Jewish writers like a knife in the hands of a child.[74] Frischman demanded authenticity, and these new fashions were not a legitimate concern for the Hebrew writer.

It is most important that the writer be a part of the world he depicts. Membership in a particular "club" or committment to a fashion cannot replace the artist's natural perception and transmission of what he sees. It is this kind of natural talent and authenticity which, in Frischman's eyes, established Mendele as the greatest writer of the era.

Mendele, who nearly fell victim to the ideological Pilpul of the Haskalah,[75] emerged in the 1880's the true artist, involved with the world he portrayed and possessed of a superior ability to describe.[76] Mendele employed no special techniques to capture his characters and their problems, but was able to depict his people because he knew them, and because he had acute vision.[77] Mendele's world is

full of character types, but for Frischman this did not mean that the people were stereotypes. A Mendele beggar, for example, belongs to a world of beggars which has all the characteristics of other worlds.[78]

Mendele shared one quality with the naturalists. By a mere careful description of a character "type", he was able to elicit sympathy.[79] But it must be remembered, as noted above, that for Frischman, Mendele was not describing a "slice of life" of which he was not a part. This author, above all, had an encounter with the world he described, and hence he brought his "self" to the life which he portrayed.

Frischman's evaluation of Mendele was highly subjective and, at times, even immature. He grants that Mendele did not understand composition and that his stories are a series of episodes strung together.[80] But this he saw as an asset. In another essay he wrote:

> Mendele does not pay great attention to the composition of his stories. Does the Jew who does business in Jew street know what is composition? And Mendele is a Jew! And Abramowitz himself is a kind of Mendele.[81]

This is a good insight in itself, but Frischman failed to mention the limitations inherent in poor composition. While he clearly perceived Mendele's great skill in rendering character in brief description,[82] he was mistaken when he asserted that: "the externality of

a character can tell us what is inside."[83] This is clearly impossible, for we can never understand a mere character type as an authentic individual. He considers Mendele's lack of psychologizing to be his strength:

> Mendele does not occupy himself with writing psychological examinations. Does the Jew who does business in Jew Street know what psychology is? And Mendele is a Jew, etc. . . .[84]

Frischman's evaluation is certainly legitimate in part. Mendele's works are written from Mendele's point of view, and it would be incongruous for him to have engaged in "psychological examination". But Frischman was not willing to accept the limitations which were inherent in this method. Mendele's weakness in structure and character analysis should not be overlooked, in spite of his great authenticity.

We have noted already that Frischman's initial contact with the literary world was his criticism of quibbling and axe grinding which characterized Hebrew literature. Throughout his life he resisted the intermingling of ideology with literature. In 1882, he stated that the Jews are so involved in social problems that they permit such problems to dominate their literature.[85] In 1901, he complained that Zionism was giving anyone a chance to write,[86] because men believe that embracing a cause means that you are an artist.

Any great concern with social, scientific, or academic questions threatened aesthetic potential, according to Frischman.[87] Yet he himself did not avoid polemical writing. Most of his short stories have a moral bias, and a great many are blatently polemical. His principle objections were either that 1) poor literature was being written with the excuse that the cause was of primary importance, or 2) that the moral of so much of the literature was not intrinsic to it.[88]

The Jewish writers consistently lacked the values which Frischman embraced. During his early period, he felt that Hebrew literature was bogged down in journalistic quibbling - and that Jewish writers would never be able to think simply in terms of writing "good literature". Later he felt that Jewish writers approached literature artificially, succumbing to fads and borrowing ideas, methods, and conventions from literatures which were older and more mellowed. He consistently believed that Jewish writers lacked a sharp eye and "real feeling". This is not to say that he did not esteem individual writers like Bialik, Sholom Aleichem, and others. When he attacked Hebrew literature he did not usually cite the exceptions.

Frischman also had views on the nature of criticism, which are more easily discovered than his attitudes on the nature of art. Frischman wrote "Letter X"[89]

in 1906 as a statement of the subjective nature of criticism:

> In matters of criticism, it is impossible to work according to fixed principles, since such fixed principles do not even exist.[90]

The individuality of the critic is the principle thing that can be demanded of critics simply because there are no rules.

> The critic must be a special kind of individuality, an obtruding "I". Let the critic be what he will, he must be a special kind of individuality. Be he right or wrong, he must tell us something big.[91]

Frischman admitted that one of the roles of criticism was to advance culture,[92] but such advancement is only achieved by critics of strong individuality.*

Frischman had asserted that it was impossible to define standards for good literature. He stated, once, that he could always tell why a bad poet is bad, but not why a good poet is good. "It is like catching a ray of light in your hands."[93] He laughed at critics who - attempting to be scientific - devoted themselves to analyzing form at the expense of appreciating the way in which the artist struggles with his characters,

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* Frischman was consistent in his admiration for the dynamic individual. His great respect for ben Yehudah was not because of the resurrection of spoken Hebrew (which did not interest him), but because of ben Yehudah's individuality and personal strength.[94]

and the way in which the characters tell us of life.[95] Such activity leads the critics to petty sophistry, which makes it impossible for the critic to stand in awe of the best literature.[96] If literature is great, Frischman felt, the critic's task was to make the public appreciate that greatness.

According to Frischman the critic shares certain qualities with the creative artist. In addition to the "special individuality" which he expected from critics, he believed that the critic should have a beautiful literary style of his own to transmit his appreciation of the beauty of the work he is discussing.[97] He must write out of the same kind of inner need which impels the creative writer. The artist writes out of a need to respond to something which he experiences, the critic to something which an author has written.[98] Thus there is a partnership between him and what he experiences.

Frischman loved good literature, (most of which was not written by Jews), but attacked violently when literature was bad. He defended this negative tendency in one of his essays "On Literature", written in 1901. Here he asserted that he had been unfairly damned for his destructive attitudes. He believed that he assaulted bad literature in order to help others see the bad, and learn what the good could be.[99] He had also been accused of being too personal in his criticism, as for

example, in the case of Peretz. In 1913, Frischman explained what it was that made him attack a writer personally. The critic has his argument with the author - and hence, it is a personal matter indeed.[100]

Good literature was Frischman's panacea. The Jews must learn a sense of beauty, of fine style, of good language, and build an authentic literature of their own. When good literature is written the people Israel can begin thinking of themselves as a nation. This would be a tangible representation of the undying Jewish spirit in which Frischman believed, (cf. for example vol. 3, p. 70 in response to Asch's article on "Milah"). Literature can elevate the Jewish people. When writers are created, readers will be created too, and perhaps literature can draw the youth and make them proud to be Jewish at the same time that Judaism will begin speaking to them.[101]

With all of Frischman's secular tendencies, and mocking Jewish culture, a concern for Judaism and its survival underlay his involvement with literature throughout his forty year career.

CHAPTER II

SEARCH FOR BEAUTY

The beauty which Frischman demanded in literary style also served as a subject in his own literature. In several of his best works, young people struggle their way out of the narrow confines of the Jewish milieu in order to find beauty and freedom in an outside world. Yet this quest has negative consequences. The new spirit - the new breeze which crosses their paths-yields as much grief as it does beauty.

The story "Hu Nifter" most literally poses the problem of the two worlds tugging at dismayed youth: the dark, sterile world of the academy and all it entails, and the world of beauty, nature, and freedom. The nature imagery of this story represents the free, secular world which seduces the young and cloistered Jew.

In the story before us, the narrator recalls a certain day, when, on his way to the Heder, the woods had beckoned to him:

> The trees in the wood swayed to and fro, humming over my head, while darkness and quiet enclosed me. I imagined that the wind contained eternal secrets, and I hearkened with open ears. Sometimes beams of light broke through and the sun appeared for a moment. And when I continued on, the thick darkness returned as before the silence. Tiny mosquitoes and flies buzzed hither and thither before my eyes, whispering their sounds and filling the woods with their secrets. I walked still further on, until my heart was no longer with the Heder.[1]

The schoolboy knows, that it is the "evil inclination" which drifts him into that world of the woods - a universe of secret and dark beauty dappled with rays of the sun. But the reader understands Frischman's ironic reference to the evil inclination, since he knows that in the author's scale of values attraction to nature ranks high. In "Tikkun Lel Shevuot", for example, he writes about communion with nature in this tone:

> In moments like these man is uplifted and exalted, glorified and sanctified and his eyes see visions of God.[2]

The seduction of nature's wonders takes its toll and the awareness of the penalty for his truancy causes an uprush of fear which suggests the alibi: the Tzadik of Smilov is dead. Frischman thus describes how the darkness of the world of beauty enchants - but also creates fear.

The immediate problem of the boy's anguish is solved by the fact that the old Tzadik is indeed dead; so that the excursion into the secular world is not damaging in the ultimate sense. The story is unravelled, but Frischman does not resolve the central theme: the struggle of the young boy to place himself in the world of beauty and leave the world of the academy. The lad is nowWell, and is sure to be drawn once again to the mysterious darkness where the tiny insects whisper their secrets to each other.

Frischman returns to this central theme in several stories but in a more forceful manner. Unlike the hero of "Hu Niftar", the children of these stories actually forsake their homes. Not only are terror and anguish felt by the generation which falls prey to the seduction of the outer world, but their lives are also permanently marred. The very contact with the longed for beauty and freedom gives rise to pain, anxiety, and destruction. (A hint of the pain which the younger generation experiences is sensed in "Hu Niftar".)

Each story, on the surface, treats the traditional problem of the "Fathers and Sons", and their struggle to communicate - a theme made famous by Turgenev. Frischman, however, adds a new dimension by applying this theme specifically to the "search for beauty". The young lad in "He is Dead" muses: "Can I tell her (mother) how beautiful is the wood from one end to the other?" "Can I tell her how confining is the Heder?"[3] The son cannot tell, for the mother would not understand. Frischman relates the dilemna of the father in "Tikkun Lel Shevuot":

> It was still too incredible for him to understand what happened to his son in those days. This son of his was always so careful, and it was difficult to comprehend how this evil spirit passed over him.[4]

Both the mother and the father would agree that an

evil spirit had passed over their children,* despite divine and parental providence.

Frischman symbolically expresses the difference between the two worlds in the introduction to "Tikkun Lel Shevuot" - not as simply as the two lines of "Hu Niftar", but perhaps more beautifully. The narrator places himself in relation to the tradition - narrating his introduction while standing outside on a beautiful evening of Shevuot:

> In those moments I heard nature's sound of joy - a joy which went from one end of heaven to the other . . . and that night was one of clear skies, the night of "Yom Tov Shevuot": and as the holiday became sanctified that night - even the earth beneath my feet became holy earth, and I walked on at a slow pace, hearkening to the stars above. . . . What's that! A man reading "Hallelujah" in my ear, and behind the window I observed an old Jewish man with aristocratic bearing at a table reading aloud but quietly.[5]

It is important to see that he opposes the outside world of the lovely night to the world of Jewish tradition - with its all-night study, its darkened walls, and its severe lack of communication with the rest of the world. (Everyone in the house is asleep, except for the old man fulfilling the holiday Mitzvah.) The contrast between the woods and the academy occurs to us once again; this time Frischman uses the

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* The "wind" motif occurs frequently throughout Frischman's work. In 19th Century Hebrew literature, it is often a symbol for the "new spirit" which swept the young Jews away.

opposition of the old man and the outdoors to set up the conflict.

We are thrown into the action of the story by way of the old man's memory, and are told very little about what is to happen except that his children are no longer with him and that their absence pains him very much. The Shevuot Eve readings impel the old man to remember each incident of his abandonment. He muses the night away in lonely memories.

We see two reveries at once, then; the narrator's reverie of uplifted feeling, and the old man's reverie of pain. That which stimulates the first reverie is responsible for the horror of the second, for each child has gone outside of the darkened room, the elder two sons to study at a Yeshivah of the enlightenment; the younger son to study in the enlightened world and to involvement in revolutionary action culminating in his death; and a daughter to an even more enlightened world where she is drowned on the shore while in the arms of a Christian lover. "And he is left alone" - just as he is alone on this holiday with the rest of the household asleep; just as the rest of his world is dead.

The characters of the children and their problems are not developed - it is the old man's story. The few details of the children's life, however, imply a great deal. We are told that the daughter

struggled against the overtures of the young Christian before finally succumbing to his seductions; and we are told that the sons who left together bid their father goodbye in a note hastily written in the dark of night. We see the fear and hesitation involved in striking out for this new mysterious world from which, in Frischman's stories, no one ever returns.

The father is a complex character whose very complexity elicits sympathy from the reader. He is not a two dimensional proponent of the tradition. His dismay over what has happened is pathetic because he cannot understand wherein he has failed. But he is not ridiculous, for we understand that the events of the new world had a cruel effect on the older generation. A hint of heroism is seen in the fact that he willingly yields up his youngest son to the "new spirit" when he has the power to keep him at home. And, finally, though the world of the tradition is opposed to the stance of the narrator, the old man's adherence to the tradition ennobles him even further. On the morning of the festival, he must put off his face of despair and smile to greet the day because it is a sin to be sad on a festival. Frischman ends the story on an ironic note: "This is the strength of the Jew: Today is holy unto God, and a man may not be sad."[6]

But the hero's pain is not really healed. That the sadness of the old man continues, we have no doubt; the holiday will soon be over, and perforce his memories will return.

The author's point of view vis á vis the hero's fate is only implicit. Although the tradition is part of the hero's nobility, Frischman undoubtedly intends the concluding statement of the story to be ironic: he uses this bitter statement in several instances. This "strength of the Jew" grows out of a world which causes the suffering and pain which requires the strength.

"Be Yom ha-Kippurim" is a longer short story and affords us a much better chance to perceive the problem of escape into beauty. Esther, the daughter of the widowed Sarah, supports the home by selling flowers, a symbol of the beauty which will cause her downfall. Crossing the river into the gentile quarter of town, she visits a tavern owned by a Jew and notices, for the first time in her life, a world of beauty where people enjoy themselves in unrestrained fashion. The strains of Beethoven Lieder set to words of Goethe grip her firmly and haunt her as she returns to her mother and home. And this life draws her from day to day to the tavern on the other side of the river, a river which marks the distinction between the old world and the new.

The seductions there are over-powering and Esther - who has never told her Mother of the encounter - soon leaves Gridov with a troupe of entertainers. She travels about Europe in an ambivalent mood, passively accepting the new life she leads, learning foreign languages and responding to the overtures of the young men, but pained over the loss of her mother. But this is a double Odyssey - because Sarah pursues Esther throughout her wanderings - suffering with each discovery of her daughter's "sins". The mother finally despairs and returns to Gridov, a broken woman. Despondent over the death of her illegitimate child, Esther returns to Gridov to attempt a reconciliation with Sarah. The latter is too distraught to be forgiving.

The tragic resolution of the story is achieved through irony. Esther decides to appear on Yom Kippur eve at Reb Moshe's tavern in hopes that her mother will at least communicate to rebuke her. She now gropes for contact with her mother as she had groped for beauty. The broken woman does, indeed, lie in wait for her daughter at the exit to the theatre, and when the latter appears in the doorway, she can only leap upon her daughter and choke her to death. In the final line we see the mother kissing her Esther in frantic regret - as if she realized, only after the deed, what has transpired.

Frischman communicates the pain of both mother and daughter, successfully relating the mother's pain and the reasons for her fear of the Christian world which brings about that pain. Such "Gentile hatred" was native enough to the Jews of this milieu, but it is heightened by the fact that Sarah's husband had been mortally abused by one of the Christian gentry for whom he was serving as a kind of minstrel. Frischman symbolizes this hatred by having Sarah stand in front of the Catholic Church in confusion and scorn, and by relating her fright at the thought of Esther's being educated among Nuns.

The world which Esther had come to see as the world of light and beauty - Sarah sees as responsible for the death of her husband. Sarah's internal struggle is described so poignantly: Her constant memories of the death of Joseph, her husband, punctuate her basic anxiety about what is happening to her daughter. Esther's soulful musing on life and beauty confound the mother to the point where communication is shut off - though at a later point she asks a question which elicits our sympathy:

> Were our forebears really correct in seeing life and educating their children as they did? Were they correct in not developping their senses and their emotions?[7]

Our response to her final tragic act is the culmination of our compassion for her - a compassion which has

been building up throughout the story. Our pity is marred only by the unpleasant possessiveness with which she treats Esther at the time of her husband's death.

Frischman succeeds in creating two sympathetic characters by telling the story from both points of view. This is no small achievement when one considers that the two characters stand in opposition to each other. Although Sarah is really the protagonist of the story in one sense, (she goes on living, after all; and is driven mad by the realization of her "tragic" action), Esther emerges as a more complex and hence more important character. It is she who wrestles her way out of the ghetto and into the world of life and beauty. It is her story which attracts us the most, standing as we are likely to be, on her side and admiring those who are willing to grope their way out of the musty prayer-filled Heder. Furthermore her story is foreshadowed by her father's experience. For Joseph, too, was outside of the Jewish world - playing beautiful music for the Gentiles who reciprocated by killing him. This gentile world did away with Joseph and is indirectly responsible for the death of his daughter: it is directly responsible for the malice which the mother bears towards that outside life, and hence her dismay at her daughter's having chosen it.

Esther suffers pain because of her quest - but not only the ultimate pain of death. She even suffers in her initial confrontation with the life on the "other side of the river" which separates the two sides of the city - and the first time she finds herself in the tavern she hastily departs, because "the place cannot contain her." This pain foreshadows the ultimate pain which she is to experience. The trauma of the experience remains with her, and she significantly keeps her secret from her mother. Like so much forbidden fruit, thw power which pulls her soon conquers all inhibition:

> And she realized that there was a pleasant life completely different from any of the life which she had seen in the Jewish Street, and her heart beat inside of her to the point where she did not know what was the matter.[8]

Her hasty departure from the tavern is contrasted with what soon follows:

> However on the first day of the next week, and on Wednesday and even on Friday, Esther came a second and third and fourth time to the house of Moshe, and soon after she came every day - not understanding the hidden power which pulled her to this lair with such a mighty hand.[9]

Esther is bewildered as the prayers which she had learned to recite with her mother recede in the face of her daily contact with the new life. The significance of her confusion is not even diminished by her

growing familiarity with the new life. She sings lustily, but on occasion it seems as if this singing is "to help her forget something"; and although she does adjust herself to the gayer life of the musical troupe, the tone of the story continues to suggest her pain. She learns to tolerate the advances of the young Polish gentiles, treating them condescendingly in typical feminine fashion - (for she has learned to become a woman) - but strains of the old life survive. Her first wound occurs when she accepts the overtures of a young man with this rationalization: "What are the mores and customs to me?" But when she becomes pregnant, the nobleman does behave in customary fashion - leaving her with a child who is soon to die. Now Esther's singing indeed fulfills the need to replace the pain in her heart, and she wanders from place to place aimlessly. The old power - which pulled her to the other side of the river and into the cosmopolitan world, into womanhood, and into the lover's bed is now replaced by the strong pull of her old life - always latent in her ostensibly carefree spirit. Pain gives birth to regret, regret to a desire for reconciliation which, in turn, determines the steps that lead her to her Mother and her eventual death.

So the world of beauty continues to carry within it suffering for those who were not born to it: a lost

child, a stricken mother, and the death of the one who quests after beauty. The horror of the young boy caught delinquent from his Heder - though not so monumental - makes the same point. This is a dangerous world into which the curious young Jews are about to dive - a world like the "Midrashic Pardes" which smites the one who looks in.

"Be Yom ha-Kippurim" probes another facet of this pain which emerges from the world of beauty. Not only does this pain result in the terrible event of death, not only is it frightening because of its mystery, but it is also ironically sordid, in and of itself. It is significant that initiation into this world takes place in the relatively unromantic atmosphere of a tavern instead of, for example, in the shaded garden of a villa, ("Yizcor") or even in the woods ("Hu Niftar"). For whatever degree of beauty and unrestrained happiness the tavern may represent, it surely contains within it elements of sordidness. It is in this very tavern that Sarah later meets Pulaski, a Christian Pole who had previously made suggestive advances to Esther. Pulaski is drunk and still recounts the lovely coquetry of Esther to the stricken Mother:

> Why, yes, what a beautiful girl the little one was . . . nobles and princes knew her and sought her love, and the girl was wise enough not to scorn them or reject their gifts. Surely you had a good living, and each day she must have

> brought you coins and at night she brought home worthy guests. . . .[10]

The scene is effective as a means of enhancing Sarah's bewilderment and sorrow, but it adds a dimension of ugliness to this "world of beauty". We need little imagination to see Esther amid the unruly and cynical Polish gentlemen - perhaps sitting on their laps as she drops a newly acquired bauble down the bosom of her dress. The attraction of the outside world for Esther is sinister - not merely because of the pain which results to the heroine, but because of the sordid aspects intrinsic in that world. Beauty in the conventional sense is not what attracts Esther, and Frischman does not emphasize beauty through nature imagery. But whether or not this power which draws her is only beauty or something alloyed with it, she clearly perceives it to be beauty. "How wonderful and very different this life is." And from that time on - from the moment of perceiving this new and wonderful life, the mother and daughter stand apart - groping for each other across the abyss. The "How can I tell my mother how wonderful is the wood, and how confining the Heder", which we saw in "He is Dead" has become more severe - more important, perhaps, and certainly more complex:

> Then a wind blew into this peaceful habitation, destroying and uprooting it; and no one could halt this great and strong wind - the widow and the

> girl could not bar it. How could the widow understand what was before her? Who would open the book of life so that she might know what was written in it? But Esther read from this wonderful book , which had opened before her and was read of itself - and when life lifted its voice to her she could not restrain her spirit, for a horrible flaming fire burned within her and melted like the burning wick.[12]

We shall consider later the role which lack of communication (as illustrated in this passage) plays in bringing about the crises that result from the search for beauty. At this point it is essential only to indicate that the beauty for which the generation of the sons looks is completely foreign to any beauty which the older generation understands. It is a product of the "new Ruah".

Both literary motifs and philosophical attitudes found in the previous three stories find fullest expression in "Yizcor". This time the Jewish world is not embodied in tradition, poverty, or old fashioned attitudes, but in Rozengeld, the wealthy money lender. The widowed father loves Esther so much that he sees the death of his wife as enabling him to be closer to his daughter. (It is reminiscant of Sarah's pleasure at having Esther to herself when her husband died.)

The story is related in flashback. The sight of Rozengeld standing for the Kaddish prayer inspires

the author to fill in the details of the experience which brings the old man to the memorial service. The narrator recollects: Rozengeld, returning from the cemetary after his wife's death, clasps the little girl Esther - "full of the dew of youth and Spring of new life."[13] Rozengeld is a tight-fisted money-lender, "anything for a price" is his reputation; anything, that is except his daughter. As Esther grows older, she slips away from the father's grasp, and spends most of her time with Polish Christians. Her internal struggle as she experiences this part of her life is not related in the narrator's flashback, but in a separate part of the story in which the trees in a wood whisper to each other "Esther's tale." It is only from this second account that we understand Esther's impulse to leave her father. When she does leave, Rozengeld extracts Shylock's "Pound of Flesh" by raising his interest rate one per-cent.

The Esther of "Yizcor", like the Esther in "Be Yom ha-Kippurim", regrets her infidelity, and attempts an abortive reconciliation with her anguished parent. This overture is a crucial point in her life, for now she is free to follow the ways of the Polish nobility: gay parties, long voyages, and even big game hunting - the kind of activity which helps one forget. Years later it is Rozengeld's turn to be rejected. Esther

is by now ostensibly completely liberated, as is indicated by her conversation about the stubborness of the Jews on the very day when her father comes to see her. Esther's rejection of Rozengeld brings about his death. Anguished over her action, Esther, is compelled to leave the scene of these events, and pursues big game hunting in Africa, where she turns a gun on herself in an attempt to take her own life.

On the surface, the story seems to have little to do with Esther's "search for beauty" as such; for it could merely be the tale of a young Jewess who chooses to assimilate the values of the Polish aristocracy and to lead the life of a Jewish Hemingway heroine. But through this simple plot are woven elements which relate Esther's life specifically to her painful struggle for the same kind of beauty and freedom which was sought by another Esther. Frischman's first introduction has precisely the kind of nature imagery which opens "Tikkun Lel Shevuot".

> Outside the earth was full of great light and carefree joy, and I thought to myself that around me all the earth burst forth in song. . . . But after a moment a new spirit confronted me, a dark spirit, indeed, and bitter memories suddenly came together with the rays of light. . . . How is it that so many times we find that the thread of gold which comes down to us from heaven brings with it a memory as bitter as wormwood to pour darkness upon the earth?[14]

Here is symbolized what occurs to our heroes in the other stories: out of beauty can come a kind of darkness which eclipses pleasure and thwarts the fulfillment of beauty's purpose. It is in the enchanting woods that Esther does most of her soul searching, and it is here that she reaches her decision to leave home. Out of her quest for beauty comes pain. The woods, the Haskalah, profane love, and the tavern are as destructive as they are attractive.

Once again, the trees of the forest are a treasure house of secrets - wondrous mysteries seducing the uninitiated. In this instance, however, the trees have a specific knowledge without which the reader cannot know the protagonist. They have seen Esther's struggle, whereas her own people were ignorant of it. In the writer's flashback, the motive for Esther's departure is obscure even to the reader. The friends of Rozengeld ask: "How could she leave him? With what did the enchanter take her? What charm seduced her?"[15] But in this second account, the trees know:

> An old heavy oak stands in the midst of the garden, bent and doubled over, and her wide branches spread a great shade about her. Who can count the number of wonderful stories which this old woman had heard. . . the trees then whispered one to the other of the great nobleman with large, dark eyes, who would come to them to sit beneath their leaves; sometimes he would sing loudly and sometimes he would cry. . . there were times when he would come to sit from morning to evening or from evening to morn daydreaming with open eyes. The trees told each

> other of the angry face full of sadness which appeared amidst the garden beds, and about the golden hair and blue eyes which were a part of this face. . . she would hide her face in her tiny soft hands and after a while a weak sighing voice would be heard: 'I suffer so', for the world oppresses me and there is no air to refresh me!'. . . And suddenly the trees hummed and bustled - touching one another and told the hidden wonderful secret of the sound of kissing lips. . . they told of the times when the young girl would come to the garden to dance and rejoice - happy and full of new life; dancing joyously and kissing the green leaves which fell from the trees, while she hugged the yellow flowers unyieldingly - and afterwards they told the story that the young girl hastened to the garden and yelled: "Save me, my angel and my refuge, save me for I am dismayed. For I live in the midst of a stubborn people who do not know or understand what happens in a man's soul."[16]

The trees are omniscient - because they witness, not only the pain in Esther's heart, but also the crucial events which turn her life towards the palace across from the garden. All of the love scenes between the young nobleman and the Jewish girl take place within the garden, punctuating the moments of compulsive joy and sadness and culminating in the decision of both young people to ignore the imperatives of their respective backgrounds. The old tree, interestingly personified as an old woman, tells a younger tree that the apparent happiness is only a cover for the real heartache which would accompany the girl throughout her life - she would never be able to forget her people. Because the trees - especially

the old one - are assigned this omniscient perspective, we know that the "old woman" is right - and we expect Esther's future to be determined by her eternal discontent much as the unhappiness of Esther in "Be Yom ha-Kippurim" determines the steps which lead to her murder.

The "tree's story" reveals the passions which drive Esther to leave home and people, and presents a backdrop against which her cavalier mannerisms are seen in an ironic light. The Jewess' cavalier mannerisms no longer only hint at her sorrow and discontent, but reflect it literally.

In neither account, however, does Frischman tell us precisely where Esther's hatred towards the Jewish world is directed. To what does she refer when she says that she lives in the midst of a "stubborn people"? It is as if our author assumed that we infer the unpleasant aspects of Esther's life from a general knowledge of that environment, or from the other stories in which a similar theme is found. We do know that the father is an unscrupulous money lender who at one time - in half jest - suggested to the Polish noble that three per-cent interest on his daughter was not enough. We also know that Esther asks anxious questions of her father concerning the Gentile attitudes towards Jews.[17] But these instances are not given enough weight.

Not only is the scene of the trees the first in which we gain insight into Esther's quest for beauty, but it is also the last. Subsequent to this all we see of her life is a kind of gaiety "enjoyed" by the aristocracy, and a compulsive involvement in the pursuits of the wealthy. Is this the "beauty" she sought? Does she no longer sojourn in the garden near the palace which is now her very own? We recall that the Esther of "Be Yom ha-Kippurim" no longer stood in awe of the new life she led - living it only, and not appreciating what she originally thought was beautiful. There is then, a kind of sordidness in the new world of this second Esther.

Frischman's portrayal of Rozengeld - like that of Sarah and the old man in "Tikkun Lel Shevuot" - is subtle. Once again our hearts go out to the parents who cannot cope with the disappearance of their children. But in the case of Rozengeld, even more skill is required to achieve the portrait. For Rozengeld is an unpleasant man - "anything for a price" - even, perhaps, his daughter. Frischman therefore uses many devices to enhance our sympathetic reaction. Following the passage which related this mercernary thought, we do find pathos:

> Only at night, when he sat alone in his room, did his heart cry and did he suffer over the fact that a Pole had presumed to speak that way.[18]

This pathos, we see, does not arise from Rozengeld's regret over what he had said, but because a Goy had presumed to speak to him in such tones. The fact that he heard the noble whisper to a friend: "believe me, even this is business to him - he is a Jew and a Jew will do anything for a profit,"[19] is significant, not because he feels ashamed, but because it reinforces his hatred for Christians. Somehow the despicable qualities in Rozengeld add pathos to his portrait, for he seems doomed to his unpleasantness, - and the pain which he feels when Esther forsakes him almost surprises us into empathy.

Pathos is achieved in another way. In a second introduction to the story related as a reminiscence of youth, we see a certain Shmuel Mordecai Rozengeld walking to the synagogue on the holiday of Shevuot, with his mother and father. The boy perceives that this man looks older than the two people accompanying him, but that he is also a man of great stature. It is as if we are being introduced to a man who was once important:

> And suddenly all those walking to the synagogue stood still in their places, for the head of the community - R. Shmuel Mordecai Rozengeld was coming; and on his right an old man and woman were walking - his mother and father. These two were very old indeed, leaning on staffs as they walked. But if we look at Shmuel Mordecai and see his face, it

> seems for just a moment as if he were older than his parents, for his beard was entirely white and his face full of lines which told of his weariness. Suddenly this man stood straight and lifted his head and we were amazed because we saw that he was very tall.[20]

Rozengeld's position in the community does indeed add to our feeling of sympathy, for we are always sorry for the broken man of high position.

Frischman prepares us for such sympathy by reporting his childish wonder at the fact that Rozengeld remains in the synagogue for memorial service:

> How can a Jewish man stand inside of the synagogue during Yizcor while his mother and father are still alive? Why have his mother and father not seen him and taken him out? Hasn't anyone seen him to command him to leave? And whom is he saying Yizcor for? . . . who . . . who?[21]

Rozengeld is standing at Yizcor for his daughter, and the suspense built up in this paragraph - ("for whom is he saying Yizcor?") - adds to the pathos which we feel when we discover who the mourned person is.

Unlike the parents in the three previous stories, Rozengeld does not represent a religious point of view, or a way of life against which the child rebels. He is "The Jew", the money lender - the man who typifies what the Polish Gentiles despised in the Jews. He lives among those people from whom he will draw the greatest profit: The Christians; setting his house in

their way, as it were, so that they cannot pass by without being drawn into commerce with him. Rozengeld has chosen his way of life - and for that reason we can hate him too - but somehow he seems bound up in it, not understanding that perhaps it is this very way of life which sent Esther to the other world.

But we pity Esther more. She has come to a world which seems brighter, but which - the old tree in the garden knows - can only bring her pain. As the narrator forecasts in the symbolic first paragraphs of the story, the pleasures of the new and fresh world are soon to be covered by a dark cloud. We are told of a prior marriage of a Jewish daughter to a Polish noble which was cursed by the Rabbi of the city.[22] It is as if that curse is eternal - applied to all such cases. In any event, this comment indicates that Esther's crisis is inevitable - a curse hovers over the attempt to find beauty and new life. The sylvan mysteries which seduced the young girl deceived her, and Esther has died to the world which bore her. She has died, but is left without a Memorial even before her father's death, for he stands during the Yizcor, but will not open his mouth, and only the author of a Hebrew short story is willing to recite Yizcor for her.

Only in one story does Frischman describe a successful escape from the servitude of the dark and typically Jewish world. In the elegant setting - of a buffet cocktail party - the narrator hears the story of how the hostess was able to find all of the beauty and vigor of life only after having venturing into the Pietist's world and then withdrawing from it.

Olga is married to a pious boy who takes her to his village where she is expected to lead the life of the perfect Jewish wife. Her girl friends had fled to the freer life of the large cities, and she too had hoped for the same kind of experience. But she acquiesces and gives herself to the naive piety of the lonely village in preference to the grand life of Peterburg. She remains sad and regretful, while at the same time conforming to outward forms - except one! She had never shaved her head, and refused to do so, hiding her most unusual beauty under a head covering in the same way in which the shaven women hide their ugliness. It is the revelation of her hair which leads to her "banishment from slavery":

> I had become so exhausted by life which I could not accept to the point where the curls of my head came out, and hit me on the face - returning me to a better life. . . The day came which nearly darkened my world completely, but which later yielded for me a store-house of eternal light.[21]

On this day Olga strolls through the fields and pastures following her instinct to breathe the free air and call her greeting to nature. During this escape she realizes that the world is full of beauty - and that she must, for the first time, "draw her husband to her and be a wife to him." Libidinal arousal is shattered by the harsh sound of accusing women who note that her hair has been blown out by the wind.* Olga is ultimately driven from the community and forced to make a new life. As she says "her hair sent her on the way" - on the way to Peterburg and ultimate comfort and beautiful life.

Although the heroine of "Shtei Searot" does not suffer as a result of her struggle for beauty - this story does not completely differ from the other stories. Olga's flight into the world of beauty was not artificial as was the flight of the two Esthers, or children in "Tikkun Lel Shevuot". In fact, "My simple parents did not keep me from reason, and I studied 'language and book' for the girls of my city did so."[24] In a way, her attempt to belong to the world of the pious was artificial. Her destiny was to find beauty, (the fateful hairs, willy nilly, appear), and her end is as much determined as was the destiny of the other characters who suffered.

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*The "two hairs" are truly a sign of her sexual maturity, corresponding to the Halachic formula.

Were we to read the short stories just discussed without knowing Frischman, we might draw an incorrect conclusion about his notion that contact with beauty can bring only sorrow for the young Jews. We might well say that the author judges the younger generation critically: while he may "feel for" their struggle, he nonetheless assigns them to doom. If this were so, Frischman's three stories: "Tikkun Lel Shevuot", "Yizcor", and "Be Yom ha-Kippurim" would be reminiscent of Tolstoi's Anna Karenina; both in terms of the judgment rendered, and the deceptive way in which it is indicated. Tolstoi's portrait is deceptive because we sympathize with Anna's ambition to forsake the mundane and clumsy world of Karenin; and we identify with her as she is pulled into love with Vronsky and drawn into a daring world which might yield some light and life for her. Anna's death at the railroad station corresponds in many ways to the death of the two female characters in "Tikkun Lel Shevuot" and "Be Yom ha-Kippurim" and to the pitiful fate of Esther in "Yizcor". It indicates Tolstoi's judgment of her attempt to grope her way out of bourgeois darkness; for she should have stayed with Karenin and her children, in a fat and comfortable world which was stifling for Anna.

The parallel is striking, but we know David Frischman, and so we know that he is not indicting the Esthers of the Jewish world as Tolstoi is judging the Anna of bourgeois Russian society. His sympathetic portrait is not deceptive - as is Tolstoi's - it attracts us to the younger generation because it does represent the author's cause. But if Frischman sides with the "new" Jew, what is it that brings about the great suffering which is experienced? We must forget that we know the author, and try only to cull his point of view from internal evidence - from within the stories themselves.

As we read "Tikkun Lel Shevuot", "Be Yom ha-Kippurim", and "Yizcor", we are convinced that the world for which the youths are looking cannot receive them. There is something inevitable in the doom which they experience. We have already noted his thesis that out of beauty can come the most horrible darkness. This attitude he suggests by way of his nature imagery in, for example, the introduction to "Yizcor". But it is suggested even more firmly in the same story by the wisdom of the old tree - the tree knows all - and she knows that Esther will certainly suffer.

In "Be Yom ha-Kippurim" the attitude is only implied. The author describes Esther's Odyssey as

typical of the young girl who tries to live a life which is not possible for her: her confusion, her seduction, and abandonment. The inevitability is indicated by her father's death. Similarly, we find in "Tikkun Leil Shevuot" that of all the revolutionists the son of the hero of the story is one of those who is caught and hung. The new world cannot contain those who have not prepared for it. Frischman's belief in inexorable destiny is even more apparent in the case of Olga in "Shtei Searot" - for, as we have already noted, her beautiful hair revealed itself of its own accord - as if it "were bound to happen." Her discovery of beauty is as inevitable as is the tragedy of the characters in the other three stories. It is clear, when we realize the implications of "Shtei Searot", that Frischman does not judge those who try to come into the world of beauty. One of his characters succeeded, and it seems that she succeeded simply because she grew up in an atmosphere which allowed its young girls to go to Peterburg on their own. In the other stories merely crossing the bridge into the Gentile section of town is dangerous ("Be Yom ha-Kippurim"). And Rozengeld's decision to dwell in the Gentile quarter of town yields only pain.

Frischman only implies why the quest for beauty must inevitably be aborted and why the questers are doomed. In none of the three stories where disaster

occurs to the "sons" are they able to communicate with the fathers as to why they are groping for new forms of life. As the hero of "Hu Niftar says: "They will never understand the difference between the beauty of the woods and the narrowness of the Heder." But we must remember that - if the parents are involved in the world of Judaism and darkness - it is still the world in which the young generation has spent most of its life. It is more a part of the "sons" than that world which is barely touched by their brief forays into the wood. Perhaps they cannot really communicate their longings to themselves, perhaps because they are too much a part of the world into which they were born. And perhaps just because of that, their destruction is determined from the beginning. Frischman is not condemning the struggle of the sons, as they reach out for a newer and brighter world - as Tolstoi judges Anna, but the failure of his characters is as inevitable as Anna's. Beauty will always attract; the lad of "Hu Niftar" must return to the forest but it will bring pain. Frischman, unlike Tolstoi, seems to prefer the death of the quester to the life of darkness. The inhabitants of the dark world also suffer and their suffering is just as inevitable.

The five stories which we consider in this chapter illustrate simulteneously some of Frischman's

greatest strengths and greatest weaknesses. While he is a master at suggesting the personality of a character by sketching in a very few lines, he tends to clutter his plots. Some of the magnificent reveries in which he engages (especially in the nature imagery) are so long that the plot is detained - the focus is misplaced.* The emphasis on the fanatic love of the parents in "Yizcor" and "Be Yom ha-Kippurim", the Oedipal attachment to the children confuses the principle theme. We are never quite sure whether the overbearing love of the mother and father in these two stories is in part responsible for the flight of the two daughters. This lack of clear statement is another of the problems which we find in these stories. The struggles of the young people lack development; we see the struggles only in flashes. The lack of dialogue and the absence of obvious and soul searching makes it difficult for us to know the heroes. Perhaps his focus is too diffuse for him to achieve the proper psychological development of the most important figures. Only in the old man of "Tikkun Lel Shevuot" is the full impact of anguish available to us, and perhaps because the focus is almost exclusively on him. In one sense, Frischman reminds us of the realists whom he has the

* In "Yizcor", and "Tikkun Lel Shevuot" the lengthy introductions relate man to the world of nature, and in "Be Yom ha-Kippurim" the setting requires too many paragraphs. Frischman reminds us of Balzac in this technique.

wont to criticize for being so limited. "The internal struggles of man must be clarified through literature," he said in an essay on this subject.[25] Yet he carries with him much of the realism of Zola and de Maupassant - telling the facts and letting the reader fill in the details. Just as the type "Norman farmer", or rural bureaucrat" elicits a set of associations by way of which we know a character of the French master's, so the image of a ghetto beauty in search for new life implies more detail than what is stated. His specific psychological insights are somewhat artificial - tossed into the stories sporadically, often by means of special conventions. (The trees in "Yizcor".)

While Frischman may confuse us by drawing two principle characters in many of these stories, his ability to paint a sympathetic portrait of the parents is astonishing. None of the lampooning or mocking which dominates his critical essays is present; nor any of satire which we find in "Fremiah" or "Ben Azzai ha-Sheni". This older generation struggles and suffers, and we understand anyone who experiences such pain - even if he represents a world which the author boldly rejects.

Never is this rejection so explicit as when Frischman apotheosizes the world of nature. In "Tikkun Lel Shevuot" and "Yizcor" he shows his own involvement with it, his deep committment to it; and how far this

beautiful world is from the old man studying all night or the mother awaiting her truant son.

Frischman read widely in Heine, Goethe, and Schiller - and his ties to nature remind us of them. Certainly he lacks the "weltzshmerz" with which young Werther describes the effect of the natural world upon himself, and is certainly not as mournful as Heine can be when describing natural beauty. In both Heine and Goethe, however, we find the idea that pain emerges from the perception of natural beauty.

In several stories Frischman brings us to the plot (a plot which has tragic conclusions) by describing the wonders of the natural world. In these passages he is standing in reverie, awed and uplifted by the wonders about him - when all of a sudden the experience recalls for him the saddest memories and these constitute his story. Certain parallels are interesting:

(in "Den Strauss den mir Mathilde band")

With pleading hand I wave away
Mathilde's freshly picked bouquet

I cannot look at the flowers in bloom
Without a shudder for my own doom.

They tell me I'm alive no more,
But have one foot behind Death's door;

A poor, unburied corpse, who lies
And waits for Death to shut his eyes.

When I smell flowers I have to cry. . . .

There is, of course, a distinct difference between what Frischman achieves and what is asserted by his German idol. For Heine, the sight of the Flowers makes one realize how finite he is when compared to the infinite quality of beauty.

Frischman never articulates this idea, but it underlays his thinking and makes it possible for him to see the dark cloud descending onto the glorious world of nature. It is, after all, because of the limited experience of his heroes that beauty brings them pain. Beauty is possible only to those who have been prepared for it, and even the narrator (who, presumably, has been prepared) cannot long sustain the reveries which are inspired by nature.

CHAPTER III

FRISCHMAN AND THE TRADITION

The stories considered in the previous chapter are not specifically polemics against the tradition. In fact, in "Yizcor" the daughter runs away from a background which is not predominantly grounded in Jewish law and custom, and in "Tikkun Lel Shevuot" the represen-tative of the tradition is decidedly heroic. We have no doubt that Frischman speaks as one who loves beauty, and it is clear that he describes an ugly Jewish world from which noble spirits must run. This is a "total Jewish world", which includes the tradition, the poverty, the occupatinns, the mode of day to day life, and a world view. Not any one of these components- but all of them - make the escape into beauty desirable but impossible. Only the old man in "Tikkun Lel Shevuot" is able to retain the dignity which the Jewish way of life is supposed to yield, but he is also the only character who submits to the inevitable. Those parents who fight the inevitable are bound to suffer as much as those children who seek to escape from the life into which they were born. Implicit in these stories then, is the view that the Eastern European world is destructive, and that there is no escape from this destruction. Implicit also ia an anti-traditional bias.

We turn now to stories in which the anti-traditional bias is explicit. Here Frischman poses a variety

of problems which relate to the tradition: The Mitzvah as binding man to a limited world, beauty opposed to the world of the tradition, the stubborness of the traditional Jew, the cruelty of the religious community, and the fact that the tradition is an end in itself.

The narrator of "Mitzvah" muses on the old saying: "The Commandment is a lamp, and the Torah is a light." Doubts steal into his mind. "Where is the light about which they speak?" Does a man really keep the commandment because of the light which it sheds, or is it out of dark, brute fear?[1] Although the keeping of the commandment involved occasional acts of heroism, there is no evidence that the observance "per se" is heroic. A stubborn willingness to submit drives men to be true to the law; a blindness which shuts out the beauty which is life's purpose.

The chief character in "Mitzvah" acts out of the sort of brute stubborness typical of a Polish Jew when he interrupts the narrator in the quiet of his study in Germany. It is with a similar stubborness that Jews, (represented by the intruder) adhere to the law.

Questions about the law disturbed the narrator "even when he dwelt in a distant land amidst Gentiles, when he had had very little to do with his fellow Jews."[2]

We note the nuance which reflects the exile of many Jewish intellectuals of Frischman's period into the non-Jewish milieu of Western Europe where they could pursue secular studies. While Jewish questions may have occurred to him at this time, they certainly did so with far less frequency than they would have back in Eastern Europe. If we understand the suggestion of "escape" in the author's remark, the dramatic impact of the old Jewish man's intrusion is heightened:

> The Polish Jew with his long cloak and strange appearance. . . fat and beefy with a red face. . . . These things I noticed immediately, though I could examine him no further, since he was speaking to me the moment he entered.[3]

And though the narrator condescendingly notes that such intrusions had occurred before, the young student - who desires to "stay among the Gentiles" - can only be antagonized by the interruption.

Although the staccato speech and the "chutzpah" of the visitor repel the narrator, he is ensnared by the bitter account of his children's disloyalty. (He resists setting down his pen, but finally does so.)

Once again we see the parents' generation standing alone. On the surface, none of the sensitivity nor heroism of some of the other "fathers" is evident in this character, but we soon learn that his cavalier

condemnation of his children is merely a disguise for his true emotions. (His hands tremble at the end of the story.)

The problem raised by the narrator's introduction: "Is the Mitzvah darkness or light" emerges as the old man relates what happened to his youngest son. The son, he says, was a fool who refused to divorce his barren wife ever after ten years. "I won't deny it, They lived happily with 'Shalom Bait' - much peace, in fact," admits the old man turning to the East to pray before he even finished his sentence.[4] Frischman satirizes Halachic casuisty in which the father and son engage: the son looking for a "Mekil" (lenient opinion) to cite, and the father relieved of a great weight at having found "ehad ha mahmirim" (a strict expositor) who under no condition would allow the marriage to continue. The father's delight in finding a stringent opinion suggests that the adherents of the law are primarily concerned with its preservation. The narrator's distant attitude towards such legalistic concern is made clear:

> And he washed his hands and stood
> against the Eastern wall to pray;
> while I sat dreamily in my place,
> lighting one cigarette after another.[5]

Halacha which shatters a happy marriage militates against the beauty which Frischman valued. The ugliness

of the world of the Mitzvah is suggested by the image of the old man sucking the bits of fish as he concludes his tale. Although the story concludes with a re-statement of the question which opens it, the question is now rhetorical. We read these final lines from a new point of view - fully aware that in the narrator's mind the Mitzvah does not bring light to the spirit.

In "Kohen be-vet ha Kevarot" Frischman touches on many of the themes which are part of his anti-traditional attitude: the opposition of nature to the world of the talmud student, the sadism of the Jewish community, and the theme of "driving out the sinner". It states primarily that the Mitzvah (both directly and indirectly,) restrains men from expressing love.

David Jacob's love for Leah is frustrated by her death from cholera, and in despair, his only solace is to visit her grave:

> Inside the house he felt oppressed, and the atmosphere around him could no longer contain him. His heart lifted him up and took him outside to seek refuge from his sorrow under God's heaven. . . . "Go back you poor wretch, have you forgotten that you are a Kohen? What is a Kohen doing in the cemetery?"[6]

Until he is discovered, David Jacob's clandestine visits at the grave become routine. Frischman's offended religious communities always respond

hysterically and cruelly to the transgressions of their members. (cf. "Shtei se-arot", "Ish uMiktarto", "ha-Mekoshesh", and "Kupat Rabbi Meir Ba-al na-Nes".) In this case the people accuse the offender of uncommited sins.

Overcome by a sense of guilt, David turns to a young priest who opens the gates of mercy to him. The young "Kohen" is then allowed to visit the cemetery as often as he likes, because he is a "Mumar" and the Jews, (as Frischman bitterly notes) respect the Mumar. The experience with the Priest symbolizes the inadequacy of Judaism. Frischman's Jewish tradition never contains an attribute of mercy; the sinner is never encouraged to return to the fold, he is always driven out.

Cruelty, however, is not the only quality of the tradition. The Mitzvah even inhibits David's love while Leah is still alive. This is obvious by his stammering and awkward overtures:

> Do you realize, Leah, that the sky
> is now clear; do you realize that
> the rain has gone?7

The narrator states that, although the boy was shy and might not have spoken at all, love opens the mouth and makes it possible to speak. The statement is ironic because love inhibits the young lad who has been

imprisoned by the world which has nothing to do with beauty and love. As if he had used "Ha Matmid" as his example, Frischman describes David's awakening to nature:

> When the sound of a bird singing in the morning among the branches, or a crane chirping on the roof would reach his ear, then a breeze from the flower beds in the garden would cross his face and enter him like a sacred secret; it intoxicated yet depressed him . . . and there was no one in his small town who could understand these things or interpret them to him.[8]

The new "ruah" was strange to the people in most European villages, and David's acquaintanceship with the breeze (nature) and the new spirit alike had to be nurtured through a love about which he reads. He cannot experience the real world, for he does not understand it - his world is books, and the concept "ahavah" is understood in the abstract. Only after this does he find "real" love in the clumsy relationship with Leah.

Frischman's light imagery appears once again. As soon as David is with his beloved, the sky becomes clear, and he is ready to participate in the world of beauty through either nature or love. Leah's death shuts out this light, but the law extends the darkness further, and forbids David's visits to the grave.

But the Mitzvah also keeps man from more light-hearted pleasures, which for Frischman, add to the beauty of life. In the story "Ish uMiktarto", Frischman playfully describes how a man's lust for smoking brings about his downfall within the world of the commandment.

Rabbi Meir is famous in all Israel for piety and learning, and his one vice (he smoked a pipe constantly,) really endears him to his admirers. A comment about his remedy for various ills reveals the narrator's affection:

> And when someone made a suggestion to a man, the Rabbi would assert his opinion that the iniquity of man turns him aside when he tries many ways which are of no help, but will not turn to tobacco or smoke which is the source of all life, and hence a cure. He even taught the little children to smoke . . . and when he was told that in our time even women walk in town and country with cigarettes in their mouths, he rejoiced greatly.[9]

Meir is lovable because of his vice and noble in spite of it. It "after all, wasn't really one of the most disgraceful."[10] It makes no difference that the Rabbi was a slave to this lust, for on Shabat he was able to conquer his "yetzer", put his pipe aside, and retire to his study to pore over the sacred texts. "That is the strength a Jew has," affirms the author, reminding us of the mournful father in "Tikkun Lel Shevuot" who

was able to cast aside his depression in favor of the holiday. Frischman asks ironically: "Is there another like your holy people Israel who can conquer its inclination, and control its desire, its delight, and its lust?"[11] The question occurs just as we are introduced to a scene in which the narrow room, the hot summer day, and the oppression of Sabbath rules take their toll, and the Rabbi essays a few puffs on his pipe. His contrition is followed by his resolve not to backslide again,

> But days passed and the chastisement eased. This "fearer of sin" sinned secretly in comfort, and his spirit ceased oppressing him and punishing him. What he had become accustomed to became natural, sins committed in error became sins committed wantonly; and each Sabbath when he was alone in his room, he would enjoy the smoke from the burning tobacco. . . . The man began to dig holes in the wall of religion.[12]

His search for liberal Halacha to justify his action, gives way to acceptance of the severity of his sin.

Rabbi Meir's secret conversion is manifest only in the privacy of the room which he fills with smoke each Sabbath afternoon. The open door which leads to his being discovered indicates his increasing acceptance of his misdeed. We note the sense of relief which sweeps over him when his wife discovers

his secret:

> The bond is broken; until now I have acted in secret, but now I can act openly![13]

It is now revealed that the commandment has been a bond for the Rabbi. Hysteria is followed by divorce, and divorce by the Rabbi's expulsion from the community:

> Then the man went from bad to worse, and was a sinner in the eyes of all Israel. He did every abominable thing and every disgraceful act in public. They cursed him with the 613 Mitzvot which are written in the Torah, and with the curse of Elisha.[14]

Meir, in short, is ruined. But "Is he ruined by his lust, or by the Mitzvah?" We must note two important elements in the story in order to answer this question: the author's playful attitude towards Meir's one vice, ("a vice not really so disgraceful") and towards Meir himself; and the unpleasant hysteria of the community.

Meir's actions are sympathetic, we share in his plight, and empathize with the oppression which he feels on the Sabbath. The community accuses him of misdeeds which he had not committed, exaggerating that he had become a Christian, driving him out of society - and not even asking him to repent. Surely the author's rejection of the Mitzvah and of the community which embraces it tells us that it is not the lust which is Meir's ruin - but the commandment.

The narrow room in which he was wont to pass his Saturday afternoons symbolizes the confining nature of the tradition. Smoking his pipe makes it possible for the hero to break the bond, and his statement that "at least the bond is broken" indicates that even the pious Rabbi had always felt the restraint of the Mitzvah.

"Tsurah Boletet" is an anti-traditional sketch which condemns the commandment concerning art. A Doctor friend of the narrator introduces the story with a statement that many true artists never express their potential:

> And how many artists like these died of strangulation in the Jewish quarter in the course of many generations without anyone, much less themselves, knowing what was in their hearts?[15]

The Doctor tells the company about a Jewish patient of his who was, indeed, a true artist. The young man had an incredible sensitivity to beauty in spite of certain Jewish prohibitions. The Doctor's description of the young man's attraction to art recalls the inexorable lull of beauty discussed in Frischman's other works:

> Beauty it seemed, was unconsciously one of his chief values. Lovely objects excited him every time he looked at them. However, as we know, such matters were vanity. (When he heard a Chopin march or the voice of a singer) a kind of battle took place in his heart. . . . He never had the power to close his ears.[16]

The statue of Diana in his new home captivates the young man, and he stands awed by the figure, "bathing in a sea of joy". But he remembers that the statue is a "Tzurah Boletet", and this realization recalls the entire Halacha: with all the possibilities of interpreting the law, the "Tzurah Boletet" can never be allowed.*

He has no choice except to scrape the figures:

> And with a sharp knife, he stood in front of the stove, rubbing and scraping at the nose of Diana and he scratched out anything which protruded on the deer, and rubbed out the entire figure so that it was not recognizable. His hands were shaking.[17]

This, too, is the "power which a Jew has"; to let the commandment literally destroy art, just as it destroyed the Shalom Bait of "Mitzvah", and darkened the world of David Jacob. Frischman's judgment is unequivocal, as he speaks through the Doctor this bitter line: Is this not the great tragedy of petty life? This is the first instance in which the tradition is explicitly associated with pettiness. It is always implicit, however, that in Frischman's world man is made bigger through art, the experience of beauty, or the quest for it.

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* It is interesting that in three instances Frischman teases us with the possibility that the "Halacha" will permit a doubtful act. But in all three cases, the possibility of a lenient decision is rejected.

Frischman condemns the tradition from yet another point of view: it contains a fund of archaic and damaging beliefs.

"Tehiat ha Metim", though not primarily an anti-traditional polemic, relates the twisted effect that Jewish doctrines have upon a child. The narrator relates how the death of his grandmother wrought an upheaval in his life.

The child learns from his mother that the resurrection which will allow him to see his grandmother again will be followed by the One Perfect Sabbath. "Thank God, I have found a way," declares the boy - believing with a child's logic, that such a goal is easily attained. His mother's deception does not occur to him, as he begins making plans for his campaign to see that the Jews in the neighboring communities keep the coming Sabbath in perfect detail. "Only a few days separate me from my grandmother!", he rejoices.

Frischman shifts from a narrative of this childish fantasy to cold reality:

> Behold, it is difficult to find agreement between two people, and how much the moreso one thought amongst all the people of the land, And why should I continue? The one perfect Sabbath was never fulfilled, and therefore the Messiah did not come, nor resurrection - and I never again saw the face of my grandmother.[18]

The major theme of the story is the idea of "one common spirit for different people". But the sketch contains this important secondary theme: the criticism of the "old wives tale" which confuses the boy who accepts the words of the tradition with an honest consistency. The child comes to see as deception that which is not even understood as such by his elders.

The confusion of the child over the ideas in the tradition is high-lighted more clearly in "Kiddush ha-Levanah". The same child could be the protagonist of each - the events of the first story combining with those of the second, and contributing to the spiritual collapse of the child under the onslaught of disillusion.

In the beginning of the story, the narrator announces that he is going to tell us how he came to lose childhood, his naivete, and his faith in a single day.

There is an old saying that "he who blesses the new moon will not die an untimely death in that moon." Such a belief is current in the narrator's community which enthusiastically particpates in the blessing of the new moon.

Frischman describes the child's wonder at participating in the ritual of "Kiddush ha-Levanah", and through the acuteness of a child's observation he

highlights various elements within the ceremony: the bizarre formulas which are recited, and the jumping towards the moon. At the conclusion of the ceremony he repeats with comforting assurance that "he who blesses the new moon will not die a strange death in that month." Rabbi Kalman's death is not only accidental, but also ignominious. (He falls into a hole in the road.) But the news of this death is received with disbelief:

> I knew that it couldn't be so!
> Such a thing is not possible.
> For I knew that "he who blesses
> the new moon will sure not die a
> strange death during that month".[19]

But when the boy sees the Rabbi lowered into the grave, he realizes that the death did, in fact, occur. He stands at the grave weeping - not for the Rabbi - but for his childhood and his faith which had just been buried.

Renditions of the Jewish folk attitudes need not be viewed as criticism of the tradition. Peretz and Sholom Aleichem often reflect on the foibles of their people, and do so with tolerant affection. But in the case before us, the focus is on the disappointment of the young children - a disappointment so intense that it precludes a sympathetic handling. The tradition deceives them, and once this has been discovered, the tradition will never re-capture its hold. As the

narrator of "Kiddush ha-Levanah" recalls: his faith was buried with the Rabbi. Frischman transmits this anti-traditional stance by making us mourn with the children.

These two sketches do not touch on the problem of the Mitzvah as do the others which we have considered. But they do belong in a consideration of his total argument with the tradition, and suggest perhaps his concern (discussed in his essays,) that the younger generation cannot be maintained by Judaism as it existed in his day. (cf. Chapter I.)

The works which most elegantly present Frischman's religious world view are the Bamidbar Tales. This series of idylls depicts Hebrew man in his earliest phase - before the law had taken hold. In various ways, these tales picture the noble primitive in his original state, and close to his God. In several of them the law corrupts man's basic nobility. Before the law was given, man loved purely and innocently, ("Be Har Sinai"); man was free to live as he chose, ("Bamartzea"); and no power group held sway over the people, ("Ha-Mekoshesh"). Frischman introduces many of these stories with lyrical portraits of the wilderness: "The grass was seven times as green and the sky seven times as blue." The world was more

beautiful before the Mitzvah, as Rousseau had stated. One of these stories describes the law as corrupting man's essential nobility, and eliciting cruelty from its adherents.

In "Ha-Mekoshesh", Gog ben Bechar leaves his tent on Shabbat to gather wood for a fire, while caring for his sick wife and children. Frischman tells us that the Priestly hierarchy had just established itself:

> And these were the days of the new dominion of the priests which had risen only recently around Mt. Sinai. It had not yet established itself securely and was still floundering so that the priests and princes, the officers and officials had to exert special effort seeking ways to strengthen authority.[20]

Laws and punishments had been decreed,

> But one moment the people heard and the next moment they forgot. The people were still like the wind of the wilderness - free.[21]

It is important to note that the entire people refused to submit to the yoke of the law - not because of stubborness, but because it was something foreign to them, and their subsequent enthusiasm at punishing the transgressor comes as a surprise. The upholders of the new law were a class of men who were more concerned with firming their own position than with the needs of the people; and the members of this class were held in low regard, as the author indicates in his

characterization: "one still wet behind the ears" presumptuously affirming the latest commandment; another fat and pot-bellied dressed like a fancy gander strutting to the sound of his own voice.[22]

The priests declaim the new laws and the people listen with half an ear - because they do not understand or believe that these self-important men are serious. The description is delightful.

The Sabbath is a new concept to Gog, and he is apprehended while gathering wood. Frischman describes a kind of preliminary hearing at which the young members of the new power structure decide to let Gog return to his home. Their reason is simple:

> Surely only a few days or a month ago they or their brothers or fathers were doing the same thing. There was no sin in that![23]

What seems to be an honorable admission turns into an example of the tenuous nature of their position which exaggerates the necessity to prove their authority. Under their first impulse, the young officers allow Gog to return home, but they recall him immediately, saying:

> Who knows, perhaps after all it is not such a good idea to allow a captive to go free. Perhaps it would be better to put him under guard until the high priest comes.[24]

Phineas, the notorious high priest, does come - and pompously invokes sentence:

> I the Priest Phineas the son of Elazar the son of Aaron the son of Amram announce this in your ears: the man shall surely die. Gog the son of Bechar shall surely die![25]

Throughout the trial Gog is confused like a savage in a civilized world. Not only is he unaware of the law, but he was also obeying the noble impulse to take care of his family. The announcement of his punishment, therefore, is greeted with disbelief. As we have seen in earlier examples, Frischman has an acute eye for hysteria. Here, too, the people delight in participatin in the festive execution - a kind of "Oneg Shabat".

> And all the congregation from small to large cried aloud together: "He shall surely die, he shall surely die!"[26]

His daughter's participation in the stoning is the crowning touch in the bitter pathos of the story. The irony of this mass hysteria is that - as the author has informed us - the people do not really know or care about the law. They are swept up in the brutal action for its own sake, and we wonder about the indignant peitists in the other stories in which the community bands together against the "sinner". The quality of mercy is absent (as discussed above) because of the delight which the community experiences in punishment.

In the wide range of themes upon which Frischman reflected, the tradition comes under attack both in short story and in essay. But within the total world of his writing it is clear that he spoke as one who was a friend, a member of the Jewish community who would purify it. In an essay written fairly late in his career, Frischman bemoaned the fact that some critics considered him an outsider.[27] Although his essays most clearly reflect his positive concern with Judaism, his short stories, too, resound with a sympathetic note. Sympathy for the opposition is reflected in a variety of ways; we recall the soul searching and tragedy of Sarah in "Be Yom ha-Kippurim"; the trembling hands of the old man in "Mitzvah", and in "Tikkun Lel Shevuot" the tradition itself calls up the nobility of the forsaken father.

In the well known story "Shlosha She-Awchlu", Frischman conceives of the breaking of the fast as a sign of true heroism and, in fact, opposes it to the glib superficial heroism of the three "Maskilim" who are dining in an apartment across the street from the synagogue. It might follow from Frischman's view as discussed in this chapter, that the pain which the congregation feels in breaking the Mitzvah is a mockery - but it is not reported in that fashion. The pain which is suffered reveals a noble dimension in the traditional Jewish folk.

This positive portrait of the representatives of the Mitzvah helps make Frischman's polemics more convincing. In fact it is interesting to consider exactly what are the qualities which contribute to the success of his anti-traditional sketches. The point of view of a polemical short story can be made believable by several means: 1) the work must maintain the proper balance between subjectivity and objectivity. Even didactic literature cannot be a mere pedestrian outline of syllogisms, for the writer has goals other than convincing the reader of a point of view. The trick is to employ the other goals in presenting a position - but this is not always possible. While a polemic which presents an absurdly over-drawn picture will not always be convincing, exaggeration is part of literary license. The purely objective world is not one in which literature is at home. 2) The consequences of a story must be believable. Caroline Gordon speaks of the events that go before the resolution as preparing the way for that resolution.[28] The resolution of a story must naturally follow from the world in which the action takes place. 3) The reader can be drawn to the side of the narrator through symbolism; 4) The author must restrain the immature impulse to attack all aspects of the complex against which the polemic is directed, and 5) Sympathy

for the opposition, within the world of a writer's literature, is likely to influence the reader to accept his polemical point of view.

Frischman succeeds in these anti-traditional pieces because he takes account of all of the above factors. His stories do take place in a real world - peopled perhaps by character "types", but real nonetheless. The sufferings of his characters are a believable consequence of the domination of the tradition. We do stand outside of the window with him as he looks on the old man reading the holiday liturgy, and we sit in his chair gazing at the prayerful hero of "Mitzvah". Interestingly enough, Frischman is more restrained in his short stories than in his essays where he tends to lash out more bitterly.

Certainly his attitude about the tradition is not precisely articulated in the short stories. Even his journalistic writings do not present his clear-cut world view on the tradition. It is very difficult to "get at" his position - to see the degree of his sympathy. There are times, certainly, when it seems that Frischman would not reject the whole tradition, but would purify it as a means to the more important end of achieving beauty in life. Yet there are times when we would agree with Baruch Kurzweil who,

in the first chapter of his book, clearly states that Frischman and his ilk would reject the tradition per se.[29]

CHAPTER IV

THE USE OF MINOR CHARACTERS

The characters in a writer's world function in a number of ways. They serve as a clue to the artist's values, and they demonstrate the author's psychological insight - whether it encompasses the intricate workings of the mind at all levels, or merely centers upon a single human emotion. In longer works, characters likewise serve in the "genre" sense to fill in the scenery, (the world of a novel must have a population), or as foils to major characters.

The writer uses characters to state his values in one of three ways. He either distorts character "types" to reveal his attitude about what they represent; he may reveal his point of view by the sheer choice of characters; or he may create genuine people with whom we so totally identify that their values become ours, and thus through the characters, we come to share the author's point of view. The fate of a character is sometimes a key to the writer's values, but this can be misleading as we have seen in "Be Yom ha-Kippurim", where , although the heroine dies, Frischman does not really believe that her quest is futile.

Many writers focus their attention on psychology. In such cases the writer tells us something of the condition of man: his longings, struggles, and pain.

Frischman believed that one of the primary functions of the author was to clarify man's internal struggles.[1] We must note that the short story, the vehicle which Frischman employs, is a particularly difficult one with which to achieve this goal.* Not enough time passes in a short story to achieve a fully three dimensional character. There is neither enough "interdependence of characters", nor sufficient space for long spans of introspection. The lack of space militates against the slow, cautious unravelling of the character's personality which makes it easier for the reader to penetrate the emotions. The character must be sketched in a kind of shorthand: some terse descriptions, a minimum of dialogue, brief details of surroundings, and a few flashes of introspection - which are often contrived. But the key to the form is brevity, and complicated characters are not created easily in the abbreviated world of the short story where the emphasis is likely to be upon action. Nonetheless, the masters of the 19th century short story did develop a story of action which emanates from the nature of its heroes. De Maupassant's characters are not fully three dimensional, but they are also not shallow. He is able to make economical notes about a character,

* O'Faillon notes: "The author chooses the short story because it is in accord with all the tendencies of his thought."[2] This is surely not the case with Frischman whose tendencies might have led him to write a novel.

cautiously place his few insights, introducing a great deal of dialogue, and combining this with information about the character "types" to reveal a mental and emotional life within each of his people.

Frischman succeeded in much the same way in his longer short stories - (those which I have called "larger" because of the nature of their themes.) The Esther of "Be Yom ha-Kippurim" becomes a complex figure by virtue of limited but carefully placed data: the fact that she sells flowers; the awe with which she beholds the tavern; her "singing as if to forget", and her relationship with Sarah. It may be argued that the distance from which Frischman describes his people is not the best vantage point for revealing character, and that his works contain too little dialogue, but it would be impossible to say that either of the two Esthers, or any of the parents are "flat" characters.* Frischman is able to draw close to them at certain times, revealing that they have complex personalities and are not merely symbols for one point of view or idea. The fact that even his more complex characters are patterned after certain character types can tell

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* See Forster, E. M. Aspects of the Novel, pp.43ff.

us something about their internal struggles, even though character types may not seem like real people at times.

These complex people are a part of Frischman's world, but they are not only means by which the author tells us about man's inner struggles. While our identification with them helps us to understand their drives and problems, it also serves to indicate Frischman's values: his belief in the quest for beauty, and his sympathy with the parents' generation.

Frischman's values are most clearly reflected in a galaxy of characters who are almost pure "character types". They reveal little of "man's inner struggle", and the author does not even employ the usual devices to make them more complex or real. At best, they portray a single emotional posture - but only as symbols and not as real people living through a struggle. They become known to us through the briefest statements of setting, some remarks about their physical and emotional state, and the way in which a few events occur to them. While this does not in itself preclude complexity, most of these characters can be "summed up in a single sentence."* They are real to us in part because we know them prior to meeting them. And we even know

* See Forster, pp. 43ff. A "flat" character is one who can be summed up in a single sentence.

something of their personal struggles merely by knowing who they are. Frischman uses such characters either for purposes of satire or to point to one quality in the emotional makeup of his people, or as types of Jews representing one or another aspect of ghetto life. These are his "minor characters".

In Frischman's satires, a simple "flat" character is usually the center of the story. Frischman found the most effective vehicle for his satire to be a character type who is either comic or pathetic, so that the reader would scorn or pity him along with the author.

For Reb Moshe Baruch, ("Biglal Nekudah Ahat") grammar is so sacred a science that violation of it causes him to murder a student. He is introduced to us as one "who filled his belly with grammar", who was sent into exile by a tiny dagesh, and whose face was grammatical:

> The head which rested on two protruding shoulders was a holem over an ayin; the mustach under his nose was like a patah under a waw; and his nose and eyes looked about like a seghol beneath his brow.[3]

After the lengthy description of Reb Moshe we are specifically told that it is obvious that he was a grammarian. The author assures us that we know all

there is to know, that the hero can be "summed up in a single sentence".

Another facet of Moshe's personality is tentatively suggested at the end of the story:

> And Reb Moshe sat in his house mourning and trying to comfort himself. He felt undone.[4]

This hint at another dimension to the hero's personality is quickly discarded, for we see that his regret for his violence is just another part of the grammarian's world view:*

> For he soon learned that Shmuel had been innocent - that he had spoken the truth when he said that he had not made the dagesh.[5]

Had the boy really erred, the murder would have been justified.

There are actually many statements defining the Melamed, (the description occupies nearly two pages), but they all say the same thing. The amount of description does not enrich the character, rather it emphasizes the extremes to which he represents his characteristic. It also makes the hero more ridiculous so that his pathetic fate shocks us the more. Frischman's description of Reb Moshe sets a light hearted tone which does not prepare us for the macabre turn of events. We

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* The irony with which Frischman treats the teacher's regret is reminiscent of his treatment of Rozengeld's regret in "Yizcor".

are shocked by the resolution of the story - even though, for Frischman, it emerges naturally from the personality of his chief character.

Our grammarian may be viewed as one of the people of the ghetto - a genre character. But it is primarily the satire on his mentality and the polemic against his dry, narrow scholarship which is Frischman's central theme.

As I have indicated, Frischman felt that the love of dry scholarship for its own sake caused the loss of the sense of beauty.[6] In numerous essays he lashes out against the sterile academic activities of the Haskalah. Moshe Baruch stands for this situation, or at least a part of it, and he is significant as a symbol of the decay which Frischman felt the Haskalah mentality had created.

Moshe Baruch's personality determines his fate. The droppings of a fly are the immediate cause of his demise, because he has the grammarian's disposition. Firschman's deterministic outlook - that such men are doomed - is reflected in the opening lines of the story: "tiny causes result in big effects."

In "Biglal Nekudah Ahat" we have an example of two ways in which Frischman used characters to indicate his point of view. We understand Frischman's

attitude by the way in which this character type is exaggerated, and by his fate.

"Ben Azzai ha Sheni" is another narrow scientist who is doomed. Here, too, a simple description suffices. Dubbed ben Azzai because of his love for learning, he differs from his namesake only in that he married:

> And he took a wife for himself, and this he did only because of his love of learning. One was a bachelor, and the other married, but both did what they did only because of great love for learning. Both suffered because of it.[7]

Fokulkes, the scholar, awakens to the world of antiquity. His appearance - like that of Moshe Baruch - reflects his field of study:

> All these characteristics were signs of the antiquity which Fokulkes loved so much. . . . the man went and took a wife who was also a remnant of ancient days.[8]

When a woman bookseller refuses to part with a volume of supposed academic merit, the hero of the story marries her in order to gain the object of his desire. The book turns out to be useless, and ben Azzai ha Sheni is doomed to a bitter life with a worthless book and domineering wife. "Were it not for his lust for antiquity, he would have been healthy in spirit and body."[9]

"Ibn Ezra Omer" reflects a similar theme. However, in this story, the chief character is even more faintly described. A ridiculous scholar has written a monograph on the Sephardic commentator which he hopes the narrator will publish. His interruption of the narrator's busy day reminds us of the "chutzpah" of the old man in "Mitzvah":

> I was very busy - I had sat all day, and every moment was precious to me. In the hall stood the boy from the printer's. . . at that moment came a knock on the door. Bad! But before I even had a chance to call "come in" the man entered, and before I had a chance to offer him a chair, he sat.[10]

The visitor is described simply and completely by the abruptness of his entry, and by his incessant quotations from Ibn Ezra. These two indications coupled with the fact that his monograph is never published suffice to create the satire.

In ""Kadkadiah", Frischman comments on the intelligentsia of his day, and the popular mentality by employing a single character. The unreality of the story's atmosphere, and the simplicity of its hero make the reader receptive to the strictly allegorical treatment.

Critics think too much, and their thinking cripples them. When the hero informs a watch maker that his head hurts him, the watchmaker examines him and comments:

> The bearings are worn down a bit from too much use. . . and the thinking wheel is somewhat twisted.[11]

When Kadkadiah's head has been removed, he begins to rise in cultural and political circles. Everyone tenders great respect to the headless man:

> What a wonder! . . . it seemed to him as if everyone stared with great respect - not as if he didn't have a head - but as if he had two heads! . . . How remarkable people are! They give great respect to the very man who has no head.[12]

> It seems that people have long been accustomed to the fact that only the man who has no head is considered a man of great wisdom.[13]

One of the high points in the headless man's career is his scholarly achievements. At learned gatherings he spins out a fund of knowledge, and people respond to his scholarly writing with great enthusiasm - even though he has never studied, and they do not understand him.[14]

"Be Vet ha Redaktziah" is a fifth story in which the sterile academic world is satirized. Here, however, the hero is described at two levels so that the satire loses its force. At one level, the old editor is a ridiculous figure who has written a monumental amount of trivial articles which he publishes in his private newspaper. He has been forced to do this,

he says, because "the publishing world has conspired against me."15 But he is also a pathetic figure whose alienation from the world is depicted by the fact that he never speaks, lives in a distant stelier, and goes to his grave unaccompanied. The old editor is really a two dimensional figure at each level, the different aspects of his character do not serve to make him a more complex person, but create an ambiguity which impairs the story.

Minor, two dimensional characters also serve as heroes of other small works, in which very little happens to the principle figures. Here again, simple descriptions of the characters are enough to indicate the author's point of view. Among those portrayed are the "phony" artist whose strange behavior is "justified" just "because he is an artist", ("Ha Oman"); the bank clerk who is a Zionist and does not know what Zionism means, ("Fremiah"); and the "Baal Bait Hagun" whose status in the community enables him to escape conviction on a paternity charge.

But while Frischman satirizes through his two dimensional characters, some of them are used to emphasize the importance of the "moment of longing". Frischman's world is inhabited by simple people who focus their entire lives on the achievement of a single wish: the hope of dying in Eretz Yisroel,

("Le Eretz Yisroel"); the yearning for a new garment, ("Tithadesh"); the striving for physical love, ("Ha Golem"); and the satisfaction of hunger which drives them to steal, ("Kupat Ra bi Meir Ba-al ha Nes"). This wish is never gratified, and the struggle for the unattainable is frighteningly like the struggle of the young heroes who search for beauty. These stories do not depict the complex psychology of men, but they do emphasize that even the simple mind has an inner world - hidden from the superficial glance. Interestingly, Frischman, as author, often stands closest to the struggles of these people - who are not nearly so complex as his characters in the larger works.

Some of Frischman's ghetto people spend their lives in an effort to understand the new world of the late 19th century. In "Me ever la Nahar", Frischman describes a poor marriage broker who does not realize that a river flowed between two towns from which he had made a Shiddoch. Because his ignorance of geography cost him a large fee, he dedicates his entire life to seeing that his son learn geography.

Frischman's most poignant portrait of this type has to do with a ghetto "shlemiel" named Reb Zalman who could not keep pace with the temper of the new day. Reb Zalman is the hero of the story, "Ma-on ha Ka-itz",

which begins with these innocuous lines: "Years ago I knew a pitiful man who was directed by his doctor to spend some time in a summer resort. Why is he pitiful? He was one of those people who excused himself when he stepped on a rock." Nothing more need be told us about our hero, and we are not surprised to find that he had contracted a cough similar to his mother's and his father's, nor that he refused, (as had his father) to visit a doctor.

Reb Zalman is the kind of figure affectionately described by Sholom Aleichem and Peretz, and hated by Schneor and Brenner. Zalman is the victim of a cough and a new world which are stronger than he. The Doctor explains his illness to him at length, but:

> Reb Zalman did not understand a thing. Only the words "milk" and "air" remained suspended in his ears and entered his understanding.[16]

Milk and air mean a resort - an institution totally foreign to the poor melamed. But when he arrives at the summer resort, he soon learns the ways of the world. He could still pursue his work in Petersburg:

> Even Reb Zalman did what the important businessmen at the resort did. All day long he was busy in Petersburg, and in the evening he hurried to his summer resort and remained there until sunup. The doctor prescribed a summer resort, and he was following orders![17]

Zalman's attempt at cure is pathetic: he makes the four to six hour journey from the resort to city by foot; sleeps on a bench in the hall of the hotel; and stays awake most of the night in order to be up before sunrise.

> And only one hope remained to him, that the winter would soon come so that he would be free of this new burden.[18]

The winter does come when the old man dies from the exertion of living at the summer hotel.

Once again we note a deterministic overtone in Frischman. It would seem that Zalman's cough was his natural state - and that escape from it was impossible. The new world of medicine and summer resorts was passing him by, and he, like the marriage broker,could only seem ridiculous trying to catch up with it. In fact, through this sympathetic portrait, Frischman may be satirizing those Jews who tried to rise into a sophisticated social world by assimilating Gentile values. Reb Zalman, "like the important men", commutes to the metropolis. While he is ingenuous in his efforts, he, like all the Jews, can only suffer by imitating the ways of the Gentile world.

The shorter sketches do not reflect the depth of Frischman's talent. They are reminiscent of his feuillitones: terse statement about one side of life

or people, which are lacking in scope. They point, nonetheless, to his skill as a story teller and his ability to paint a character with a few strokes of the pen. They are important, too, because they fill out the world of our writer, that is, not only a world of people whom he wanted to introduce to his readers, not only a world of values, but also an inner world of the human being which, (as Frischman stated in his essays), only the artist could penetrate.

CONCLUSION

Although Frischman often "stood alone", he was also a child of his era. As a social and literary critic Frischman did not share popular attitudes about developments within Jewish life. No idol was too big for him to smash, nor was any popular commitment sacred to him. He looked with suspicion on social panaceas, and mocked the praise which was heaped on Hebrew writers in his day.

While this is so, we can view his literature as a product of both the Western and Jewish world of his day. From our distant vantage point he does not seem so "out of step". Rousseau, Turgenev, Andersen, The German Romantics, de Mauppasant, Wilde, and Balzac fed his artistic mind, and his belles lettres reflect a remarkable synthesis of the various currents which were important in the Nineteenth Century. This is most evident, it seems, in his somewhat morbid determinisn, a quality which he shares with naturalists like Zola and Hardy. The rising industrial age which drove these men into deterministic pessimism as they depicted the struggle of man against modernity, may really underlay Frischman's pessimism. The insulated Jewish world is no longer invulnerable to the march of the progress of the new world. And its people become victims of that progress, one way or another. His out and out determinism can even be seen in his

essay "Avodat Adamah" in which he predicts that what is becoming the New World, (life in Palestine), will soon be obsolete. Here, indeed, the industrial age controls man and takes destiny out of his hands. The new man, no less than the people of the old world, will be controlled by one force or another. His themes, style, and method clearly indicate the age of which he was a product.

Frischman is not totally atypical within the Jewish literary world, for he shares his themes with many contemporaries. Although he was one of the first to see the decaying Jewish world so clearly, he shares this insight with Mendele, Brenner, Schneour, Steinberg, and Agnon. They, too, see Jewish piety and the hegemony of tradition as part of another age. For many of them, as well as for Frischman, those who try to enter the new age cannot make a complete break, for they are made up of the "stuff" of the past.

As a publicist he did often stand alone. But as a short story writer and poet, Frischman seems to have been in harmony with the world.

FOOTNOTES

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Chapter I:

1 David Frischman, Kol Kitvei Frischman. Vol. 1, Part II, p. 102.

2 ibid. Part I, p. 35.
Y. L. Kantor. "David Frischman". (Ha Tekufah, Vol. 16) p. XI.

3 N. Sokolow. "David Frischman". ibid. p. IX.

4 Kol Kitvei Frischman. op. cit. pp. 5ff.

5 Menachem Ribalow. Kovetz Sipurim. p. 136.

6 Kol Kitvei Frischman. Vol. 5, Part I, p. 36.

7 ibid. Vol.1, Part I, p. 13.

8 ibid. Vol. 3, Part II, p. 9.

9 J. Klausner. History of Modern Hebrew Literature. Vol. 5, p. 74.

10 Kol Kitvei Frischman. Vol. 1, Part I, p. 39.

11 Sholom Aleichem. Letter to Frischman. (Igrot Frischman). p. 118.

12 Kol Kitvei Frischman. op. cit., p. 40.

13 Ha Tekufah. op. cit., p. vii.

14 Klausner, op. cit., Vol. 4, p. 394.

15 M. L. Lilienblum. Kol Kitvei Lilienblum. Vol. 3, p. 62.

16 ibid., p. 65.

17 Kol Kitvei Frischman. Vol. 3, Part II, p. 99.

18 Klausner, loc. cit.

19 Kol Kitvei Frischman. Vol. 1, Part I, p. 9.

20 ibid., Vol. 3, Part II, p. 141.

21 ibid., p. 153.

22 Igrot Frischman. op. cit., p. 119.

23 ibid., p. 120.

24 Kol Kitvei Frischman. Vol. 1, Part I, p. 11.

25 ibid., Vol. 2, Part II, pp. 123ff.

26 ibid., Vol. 1, Part I, p. 11.

27 ibid.

28 ibid., Vol. 3, Part I, p. 68. An article which he wrote in 1901.

29 ibid., Vol. 1, Part I, p. 13.

30 ibid., Vol. 3, Part I, p. 32.

31 ibid., p. 30.

32 Don Meron, "Ha Sifrut ha Ivrit Be Reshit ha Meah ha Esrim". (Measef, Vol. II), p. 436.

33 Kol Kitvei Frischman. op. cit. pp. 88ff.

34 ibid., p. 90.

35 ibid., Vol. 1, Part I, p. 13.

36 ibid., Vol. 2, Part I, p. 76.

37 ibid., Vol. 5, Part I, p. 171.

38 ibid., Vol. 3, Part I, p. 94.

39 ibid., pp. 91ff.

40 ibid., p. 105.

41 ibid., Vol. 1, Part II, p. 191.

42 ibid., p. 208.

43 ibid., p. 166.

44 Igrot Frischman. p. 150.

45 D. Fichman. "David Frischman". (Ha Tekufah. Vol. IV) p. xvi.

46 Meyer Waxman. The History of Jewish Literature. Vol. IV, p. 351.

47 Kol Kitvei Frischman. Vol. 2, Part II, p. 156.

48 ibid., p. 162.

49 ibid., Vol. 1, Part II, p. 141.

50 ibid., Vol. 3, Part I, p. 195.

51 ibid., p. 184.

52 ibid., Vol. 2, Part II, p. 173.

53 ibid., p. 162.

54 ibid., p. 172.

55 ibid., Vol. 3, Part I, p. 186.

56 ibid., Vol. 1, Part II, p. 111.

57 ibid.

58 ibid., p. 128.

59 ibid., p. 76.

60 ibid., Vol. 2, Part II, p. 128.

61 ibid., Vol. 1, Part II, p. 215.

62 ibid., Vol. 3, Part I, p. 46.

63 ibid., Vol. 1, Part II, p. 45.

64 ibid., Vol. 2, Part I, p. 126.

65 ibid., p. 127.

66 ibid., Vol. 1, Part II, p. 113.

67 ibid., p. 30.

68 ibid., p. 14.

69 ibid., p. 112.

70 ibid., Vol. 3, Part II, p. 57.

71 ibid., Vol. 1, Part II, p. 42.

72 ibid., p. 173.

73 ibid., p. 203.

74 ibid., p. 175.

75 ibid., Vol. 2, Part I, p. 169.

76 ibid., p. 172.

77 ibid., p. 176.

78 ibid.,.

79 ibid., p. 180.

80 ibid., p. 178.

81 ibid., Vol. 1, Part II, p. 88.

82 ibid., p. 87.

83 ibid.

84 ibid.

85 ibid., Vol. 3, Part II, p. 45.

86 ibid., p. 43.

87 ibid., p. 63.

88 ibid., Vol. 1, Part II, p. 26.

89 ibid., p. 159.

90 ibid., p. 162.

91 ibid., p. 164.

92 ibid.,

93 ibid., p. 165.

94 ibid., p. 145.

95 ibid., p. 208.

96 ibid., p. 161.

97 ibid., p. 153.

98 ibid., p. 145.

99 ibid., p. 148.

100 ibid., Vol. 3, Part I, p. 68.

101 ibid., Vol. 1, Part II, p. 222.

Chapter II:

1 David Frischman. Kol Kitvei Frischman. Vol. 5, Part II, p. 135.

2 ibid., p. 171.

3 ibid., p. 137.

4 ibid., p. 176.

5 ibid., p. 172.

6 ibid., p. 178.

7 ibid., p. 43.

8 ibid., p. 22.

9 ibid., p. 24.

10 ibid., p. 36.

11 ibid., p. 15.

12 ibid., p. 17.

13 ibid., p. 188.

14 ibid., p. 181.

15 ibid., p. 196.

16 ibid., p. 198.

17 ibid., p. 191.

18 ibid., p. 192.

19 ibid., p. 191.

20 ibid., p. 190.

21 ibid., p. 184.

22 ibid., p. 182.

23 ibid., p. 102.

24 ibid., p. 100.

25 ibid., Vol. 2, Part II, p. 162.

Chapter III:

1 David Frischman, Kol Kitvei Frischman, Vol. 6, Part I, p. 149.

2 ibid., p. 151.

3 ibid., p. 152.

4 ibid., p. 156.

5 ibid., p. 158.

6 ibid., Vol. 5, Part II, p. 93.

7 ibid., p. 91.

8 ibid., p. 90.

9 ibid., p. 114.

10 ibid., p. 113.

11 ibid., p. 115.

12 ibid., p. 118.

13 ibid.

14 ibid., p. 120.

15 ibid., Vol. 6, Part II, p. 127.

16 ibid., p. 129.

17 ibid., p. 130.

18 ibid., Vol. 6, Part I, p. 49.

19 ibid., p. 54.

20 David Frischman. "Bamidbar", p. 62.

21 ibid., p. 64.

22 ibid., p. 65.

23 ibid.

24 ibid., p. 67.

25 ibid., p. 69.

26 ibid.

27 ibid., Vol. 3, Part I, p. 69.

28 Caroline Gordon. How to Read a Novel. p. 48.

29 Baruch Kurzweil. Sifrutenu he Chadashah, Hemshech o Maha pechah? p. 23.

Chapter IV:

1 David Frischman. Kol Kitvei Frischman. Vol. 2, Part II, p. 126.

2 Sean O'Faolain. The Short Story. p. 30.

3 Kol Kitvei Frischman. Vol. 5, Part I, p. 72.

4 ibid., p. 76.

5 ibid.

6 ibid., Vol. 2, Part II, p. 157; and Vol. 3, Part I, p. 52.

7 ibid., Vol. 5, Part II, p. 123.

8 ibid., p. 124.

9 ibid., p. 127.

10 ibid., Vol. 6, Part II, p. 119.

11 ibid., Vol. 6, Part I, p. 57.

12 ibid., p. 58.

13 ibid., p. 60.

14 ibid., p. 62.

15 ibid., p. 38.

16 ibid., Vol. 6, Part II, p. 89.

17 ibid., p. 90.

18 ibid., p. 91.

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