

IN THE NAME OF THE MOTHER:  
WOMEN'S DISCOURSE – WOMEN'S PRAYER  
IN MICHAL GOVRIN'S THE NAME

Nitza Keren

After all, the name was tattooed on her flesh.<sup>1</sup>  
(Michal Govrin, *The Name*, p. 64).

This essay examines the articulation of a spiritual and religious women's discourse expressive of a unique women's culture, closely allied with the mother and her heritage, as expressed in Michal Govrin's novel, *The Name (Hashem)*.<sup>2</sup>

Govrin poses a series of challenges to the dominant hegemonic order in the name of a subversive women's culture. On a philosophical level,<sup>3</sup> the masculine Jewish halakhic text, which postulates unity as its basic principle and sees the one God as its unquestioned doctrine, is challenged by a feminine culture whose essential assumption (as described in the writings of Luce Irigaray) is multiplicity.<sup>4</sup> On a cultural level,<sup>5</sup> Govrin evokes an ancient archetypal women's culture whose religio-cultic expression was the Canaanite goddess worship that predated the monotheistic conception.<sup>6</sup> On a psychological level,<sup>7</sup> she evokes the writings of feminist scholars who, based on the writings of Nancy Chodorow,<sup>8</sup> describe a symbiotic, fluid feminine identity with porous boundaries, as well as the work of post-structuralist scholars like Julia Kristeva, who, based on the writings of Jacques Lacan,<sup>9</sup> tend to describe fragmented and multiple identities of the subject in general and of the female subject in particular. These different aspects are intertwined like the warp and woof of fabric on a loom, the object that stands at the center of the novel and acquires a symbolic role in it. They sustain each other and contribute to the complex and convoluted nature of the book.

*Religious Repair – Spiritual Repair – Artistic Repair*

The novel's plot is set in Jerusalem. Amalia, the main character returns from New York, where she had led a rather riotous life, and seeks refuge in an ultra-Orthodox seminary, trying, in accord with the laws of repentance, to escape her past and become a "different" person. But the past – her own memories, her parents' nightmares, as well as the nation's history – keeps haunting her, giving her soul no rest. A daughter of Holocaust survivors, she is named after her father's first wife, Mala, who committed suicide in a concentration camp, loading her with a heavy burden that she finds hard to bear.

In the course of the 49 days (7 × 7 weeks) of the Counting of the Omer, between Passover and Shavuot, Amalia (amal-ya – one who toils for the sake of God) weaves a Torah curtain that is described as a model of the heavens above, in keeping with the kabbalistic principle that the terrestrial world is a reflection of the heavenly spheres.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, she writes her confession. She toils over the course of many long days and nights, tying together what was and what shall be into a single knot, in order to hasten the end-time and in the spirit of the Lurianic Kabbalah, to bring about tikkun, the divine Repair of the world.<sup>11</sup> By taking upon herself the role of the scapegoat cast out into the desert, which symbolically carries the sins of the nation (Lev 16:10), she intends, in a defiant, dramatic act of atonement, to return to the dawn of being and repair the "shattered vessels."

Govrin employs the kabbalistic term tikkun in three ways, referring to its deep philosophical meanings, its accompanying psychic significations, and its complex artistic levels. On the

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cultural/artistic level, she relies on a large corpus of mythical literature in constructing the image of the weaving woman – or, as Amalia calls herself, "the weaving spider" (*The Name*, p. 339)<sup>12</sup> – the main and (almost) the only character in the book. On the halakhic/philosophical level, she confronts Maimonides' *Laws of Repentance*, defying its author in his status as an authoritative spiritual father figure. On the psychic level,<sup>13</sup> she focuses on a ghostly mother figure, whose stranglehold she attempts to escape.

*Between the Countings – Between the Authorities*

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The days of counting the Omer provide the novel's temporal and material context, expressing the periodic nature of the seasons and the processual nature of the Hebrew calendar (originally an agricultural calendar), as well as "women's time" as characterized by Julia Kristeva.<sup>14</sup>

Amalia's confession opens during the second week of the Omer: "Today is nine days, which is one week and two days of the Omer. Power of Power" (p. 3). It continues with the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth days, followed by the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth weeks, concluding on the eve of the ending of the final, seventh week. Following Jewish mystical tradition, the references to the progression of this cyclical-mythical time are accompanied by references to the seven lower sefirot in the kabbalistic system of the godhead.<sup>15</sup> Thus, a link is forged between the chronological counting (*sefirah*) and the mystical-religious sefirot,<sup>16</sup> and reciprocal and causal relations between them are established in ways reminiscent of ancient philosophical doctrines that resonate in esoteric Hebrew literature.

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In the valley, the houses of the Arab village are dusty, still covered in gloom. Sheet after sheet, the veil is lifted from the night. Imprisoned in a weakness, in the time that is rolling, coming to an end. The measured area of the Omer Counting. That racing in between. In the pounding pace, trampling every niche of rest. Yearning to stop, to hold the underside of the weaving, to be hidden there in the knots, to calm down another moment before the flight of the shuttle starts again. (pp. 242–243)

Several parallel frameworks – the religious, the chronological-historical, and the mythic-cultic – are at work simultaneously in developing the organization of time in the novel, all in a constant struggle for control. The cyclical cultic framework of time, directed by the counting of the Omer, is preserved throughout the novel; but the chronological framework fixed by the counting of years is continually disrupted.<sup>17</sup> As the novel documents not 49 days but a period of two years in Amalia's life, occasionally even slipping back into earlier times, the overall framework of time is constantly violated. In a move that expresses the struggle between the "symbolic" and the "semiotic" as described in Kristeva's writings, events from the near past (Amalia's and that of her parents) and the distant past (that of the nation) burst into the present and subvert the principles of temporal order. In the end, the cyclical order triumphs over the linear; mythical "women's time" overrides historical "men's time"; and the cultic-mystical framework defeats the halakhic one.

*A Dramatic Personal Monologue – Between the Genres*

Govrin's inclination toward an alternative women's tradition is one of the main characteristics of *The Name*, and a major key to its proper evaluation. This affinity is reflected in her

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adoption of the framework of the lyrical novel – an intermediate genre, between prose and poetry<sup>18</sup> – her rejection of the linear, chronological nature of the traditional novel in favor of a cyclical-poetic structure, and her choice of the dramatic monologue as the novel's main form of expression. The novel's principal setting is also suggestive of a theatrical production – a chamber at whose center is a loom with a woman sitting at it, weaving, mourning, praying, giving voice to her self, conjuring up memories, telling her story, and writing.

May it be Your will, HaShem, holy Name, my God and God of my fathers, that in the merit of the Omer count that I have marked today, there may be corrected whatever blemish I have made in the *Sefira* Power of the Powers. May I be cleansed and sanctified with the holiness of Above, and through this may abundant bounty flow in all the worlds. And may it correct our lives, our spirits, our souls from all sediment and blemish, may it cleanse us and sanctify us with Your exalted holiness. (p. 3)

With these opening words the novel establishes a heavy, melancholy, dramatic atmosphere, invoking an archaic ceremony.<sup>20</sup> In her first encounter with the reader, the female character (still anonymous) is sitting on the stage, engaged in traditional women's work, talking to her God.

Another forty days. To lead the end of the thread, back and forth, to wind it around the slabs of the spools, to empty it sheaf by sheaf on the warp beam, to thread it string by string through the eyes of the rake, the eyes of the thresher, the comb, the tracks, to tie it tightly, loop by loop, between the frames of the loom. Another forty days to pass cord by cord the plaiting of the woof in the trembling of the warp. Another forty days at last, with outstretched arms. Toward You. Body to body and breath to breath. (p. 4)

The heroine narrator counts the days remaining until her expected encounter with her Creator and enumerates the activities with which she is preoccupied in the meantime: She folds, threads, ties, leads the thread, winds. The constant repetition gives her confession the air of a chant, a prayer. In this spirit she continues:

If only it could end here. If only my sacrifice were complete, and my expiation full before I finish my task. May you at night force my hands to completion, as I shall attempt in the day to complete the holy task of weaving. *To you and to you.* With devotion. (p. 4)

The rhythmic speech and the parallelisms give verbal expression to the process of weaving and its measured rhythm – “back and forth,” “advance and retreat” – replicating the murmuring of the soul speaking of itself and to itself as it unfolds the story of its life. Similarly, the cultic rhythm echoes the murmuring of an individual's whispered prayer in solitary encounter with the Creator, the murmuring of the infant in its crib and the lullaby sung to it by its mother. The heroine confesses, prays, back and forth and back again in a cyclical motion that resembles the rhythms of breathing<sup>21</sup> of the baby's suckling, of the body's movements in prayer and in mating.<sup>22</sup> The movement of the loom replicates the rhythm of life, which is constantly woven, unraveled, and remade.

For whole days I was boldly borne by the weaving. For hours on end. Only You and I and the solidity of the fabric tied between us. Whole days in the mute dance of the body swaying, leaning on the pedal, the arms retreating with the press of the beater. With rhythmic drumbeats. Secretly coupling warp and woof, a garden enclosed is my sister, my

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spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Warp and roof crushed with desire, nestling in the rustling sheet of the Torah Curtain, with the tightening, beating, renewing rhythm of the creation of Your Names. Like a sheet in the hand of the embroiderer, he makes it even at will and makes it uneven at will, so are we in Your hand, O jealous and vengeful God, look to the Covenant and ignore the Accuser. (p 320)<sup>23</sup>

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The measured, cyclical rhythm provides the clue to deciphering this novel. Like a dirge or a liturgical poem, it must be read all at once, and should be seen as an alternative women's version of the traditional masculine religious text.<sup>24</sup> In reconstructing her history and recounting what has happened to her, Amalia illustrates the restorative, reconstitutive nature of women's creativity, as described by Annis Pratt, in her book *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*.<sup>25</sup> Pratt traces several basic patterns that surface from the depths of cultural oblivion to be revealed in novels written by women. These archetypal patterns, she claims, express ancient popular practices that were stored in the imagination when they no longer served a function in daily life.<sup>26</sup> Pratt supports her argument with the story of a woman who tried to spin but found the directions in the handbook hard to follow. When she took the strings into her hands and grasped the spindle, however, her fingers responded to the rhythm and performed the proper movements.

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Women's handiwork, then, retraces an internal rhythm that reveals the ancient pre-verbal layer murmuring beneath the surface of what Kristeva calls the "social language of contract," expressing the silenced layers of the soul.<sup>27</sup> It echoes the domestic rhythm that dominates women's lives and shapes their writings, as described by Ann Romines in her book *Women, Writing and Domestic Ritual*.<sup>28</sup> Drawing on the work of theologian Kathryn Allen Rabuzzi, Romines describes the domestic activities performed by women as a kind of cultic ritual in which they participate. She speaks of the daily tasks, characterized by fixed cyclicity, as subverting the progressive masculine ordering of time, and transcending the here and now to enter into a mythic, eternal time.

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In placing a woman occupied with feminine work of an archaic, archetypal kind – weaving and mourning – at the center of her novel, Govrin provides a contemporary literary version of the popular practices detailed by Pratt: "Ever since Passover, night after night, I have been immersing here in the ritual bath of atonement, in the limited time, tied in the loom of Counting" (p. 322). Amalia describes herself as working in the realm of primeval mythic time.<sup>29</sup> In accordance with the fundamental kabbalistic concept guiding her, she is not content with a limited role of keeping the Laws and Commandments of God, but assumes an active part in the repair of the blemished divine order, going beyond the "banks of darkness" to the days preceding creation:

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Dissolving your body in thanks that the two of you were in the navel of the world, beyond the banks of darkness, for eternity, in the root of creation, in the heart of the movement of the firmament and the Sefirot in their orbit, and a new ancient song rises and shrouds you until the throne of the Name of God... (p. 132),

In so doing, Govrin provides an example of what Luce Irigaray has called "feminine writing" ("écriture féminine"), in which weaving is a key symbol. Feminine writing, Irigaray asserts, is in a continuous mode of becoming; it evades the grasp of defined meaning, moving in a constant process of approach and retreat.<sup>30</sup> "Always in the process of weaving itself, of embracing itself with words, but also of getting rid of words in order not to become fixed, congealed in them."<sup>31</sup> In a similar vein, Govrin writes:

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Always beside things, not daring to go all the way. Running away. Changing names. Evading, (p. 62)

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(Always by oblique roads, like the threads of the woof retreating, running back and forth, joining in a forced return. Never direct, like the strings of the warp, plowing the weave from side to side in one fly.) (p. 203)<sup>32</sup>

The Weaving Spideress – Myth and Archetype

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The weaving spideress at the core of Govrin's novel evokes the mythological archetypal image of the "spider woman", as presented by feminist scholars. In the introduction to her book, *Women Who Run with the Wolves*,<sup>33</sup> Clarisa Pinkola Éstes lists the many names of the "wild woman": "the woman under the river"; "the light from the abyss"; "wolf woman"; "bone woman"; "she of the forest"; "spider woman."<sup>34</sup> "She [is] the one spinning the fate of mankind, animals, plants and stones," explains Éstes,<sup>35</sup>

Similarly, Catherine Clément places the "tarantula,"<sup>36</sup> dancing her ritual dance, at the center of the book she co-authored with Hélène Cixous, *The Newly Born Woman*. In addition to Arachne, the mythological artist who dared compete with the gods and ended up hanging on her string (and who was to become a key figure in Nancy Miller's description of women's poetics<sup>37</sup>), Clément mentions Arigone, who hung herself on a tree in an additional version of the tragic story of the skilled woman. If Icarus corporealizes the typical, transcendental, male movement (as described by Simone de Beauvoir,<sup>38</sup>) audaciously taking flight before tumbling to his death, these figures embody an immanent, female version of the tale – less heroic, but no less tragic.

Govrin gives these mythological stories new form. Like Arachne, who was punished for her ambition and arrogance with a dull, bleak life, and Penelope, who whiled away her days in weaving and her nights in unraveling, Govrin's heroine weaves and confesses, in a kind of stychian movement, back and forth, with the movement of the treadle loom. Like Penelope, the eternal wife/bride, Amalia, too, is trapped in the web of her weaving, imprisoned in the movement of past time, which directs her life in a forced cycle of weaving and unraveling: "Dozen of times you wove and again released the rows of blue and white, winding the wool on the tongues of the shuttles," she says to herself (pp. 78–79). Running away from her past, she only moves "the dough of [her] legs in ever stickier circles" (p. 176), again and again walking along paths already trodden by herself, like a dizzy spideress;

And even if later on you seemed to have forgotten that time, even if its revelations were blurred, that was only one more twist in the curves of the road, only one more traverse of the woof in its climb to the heights of the warp. (p. 241)

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Circularly, cyclically, she reiterates everything she went through in her confession, as if reliving all the events of her life with no possibility of liberation, as though knowing that the warp of her past is inescapably entwined with the woof of her life: "To tell him you wouldn't be able to turn back from your evil way, but would only go back over and over the same way without refuge" (p. 175).

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Another tragic figure resounding in the background of *The Name* is the well-known figure of the Lady of Shalott, imprisoned in a lone tower and condemned to weave the story of her life while looking at her image reflected in the mirror (particularly in the version that describes her hair entangled in the loom).<sup>39</sup> Amalia, too, is entangled in her own webs – a material web of strings and a metaphorical web of memories. She describes the trapped

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feeling of being entangled in "the shelter of the webs I have woven around me" (p. 58). Her memories and especially those of her parents bind her invisibly to a persecuted world that she cannot escape. She changes her name and her identity, calls herself Amy, Emily, and then again Amalia, but immortalizes the life of her double, her father's dead wife, in a restored photo album that she creates to honor her memory. Like the imprisoned noblewoman, she complains: "there is no way back. And all day long I shall pull the thread. I shall weave around myself the webs of the Torah Curtain" (p. 70). Like her, she seeks to free herself of the curse placed upon her, and pronounces her desire, "to write outside the net of webs that trapped me inside it – like a madman who peeps for a minute and sees honestly, with absolute sobriety, the sight of his ridiculous hop" (p. 402) – thus expressing familiar, feminine motifs described by feminist scholars; imprisonment, solitude, and madness.

*Text and Sub-Text – The Authorized Version versus the "Repaired" Version*

As Amalia tells the story of her life, she repeatedly adopts the role of the speaker in the canonical texts, weaving her testimony into their fabric, and thus offering a "repair" of the hegemonic, masculine text. She appropriates Pentateuchal narratives, the words of the prophets, and the Song of Songs, and intersperses her story with passages from the Mishnah, the Talmud, and the apocryphal writings. This explicit connection with the sacred sources and Amalia's correspondence to the model of the weaving, mourning woman transform her from a private character into a representative one, again lending her story a mythical dimension. In echoing the regular, cyclical rhythm described by Kristeva as eternal, she gives her testimony an atemporal aura, as if it were an ancient legend.

The Song of Songs provides Amalia with a poetic and halakhic basis for the description of her relationship with Hashem (The Name), her addressee. She places herself in the positions of both the actual and the allegorical speakers in the sacred text, taking on the role of the beloved and that of the Shekhinah – the feminine embodiment of the godhead whom the beloved is said to represent. Among the gallery of female biblical characters to whom Govrin refers in Amalia's confession, we also find the daughter of Zion weeping over the destruction of Jerusalem, Ruth the Moabite, and Rachel, weeping over her children, refusing to be comforted. All are woven into the archetypal image of the mourning weaver, enriching the central character and in turn imbuing her image with deeper significance and resonance.

Mother Rachel and the mourner of the Book of Lamentations, both of whom hold a place of honor in midrashic tradition, are repeatedly mentioned by the heroine-narrator, who links herself with them in the spirit of Tikkun hatzot, the Midnight Prayer of Repair: "Late at night. Don't know what time it is. As if I had never risen from the dust" (p. 210), she writes, joining her personal fate, as she performs the ritual, with that of the biblical wailers. Similarly, she writes:

I shall go wash my eyes and sit near the doorpost with my sandals off. Now, at the end of the second watch of the night. As on every night, when I put cinders on my forehead like the Mourners of Zion, and truly weep for the Destruction, and the words of the Midnight Prayer flood my lips, (pp. 14–15)

Later, she declares explicitly: "I understood that I and the land, I and Jerusalem Your city, are one, and my fate is their fate!" (p. 245). "May You wash the ruins of our bodies, flood and resurrect us," she adds, "A hot drop pregnant with holiness. And together we shall know repair forever" (p. 272).

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The elegiac voice of the Book of Lamentations pervades the confession of the mourning narrator and lends it rhythm and mythical resonance: "For You will indeed weep secretly, 'Woe that destroyed My house and burnt My temple and exiled my children among the nations'" (p. 211).<sup>42</sup> This symbolic act of "repair," based on a total identification of the individual with the national, and of personal with national destruction, appears both in the biblical prophets and in the hegemonic national poetry, most familiar from the works of Bialik.<sup>43</sup> Govrin's narrator consciously adopts the position of the prophet of God, whose voice, as she describes it, resonates in the room, between the table and the loom:

If indeed You will weep from out of the ruin, only through the silence deepening here, with every breath rustling between the loom and the table, Your weeping echoes. Only through the sheets of papers spread out to the night, through my leaning over now, before dawn, with my hair down (p. 211).

Amalia thus takes upon herself the role of the national "repairer" in addition to that of the national mourner. "That is the secret of the dreadful repair I am doing in Your ruined city, Lord," she explains (p. 216). As a penitent, she prepares herself for redemption and ascent from the lowest level of a life of sin and debauchery, following the instructions of her fiancé's rabbi, the kabbalist Rabbi Avuya Aseraf: "For especially you, Amalia, you have the power to raise sin to holiness. You, Amalia, who sucks your life from the destruction" (p. 121). Aseraf's words resound with the rebuke of the prophet Ezekiel (Chapter 15), who compares Jerusalem to a woman who went awfully before her husband.<sup>44</sup>

The narrator adopts this image and relationship, common in prophetic biblical texts, but presents the events in another version, written from a woman's point of view, exposing the dark sides of the hegemonic official text:

As I walked, for some reason a biblical verse was echoing in me: *I said unto thee when thou was in thy blood, Live, when thou was in thy blood, Live*. It emerged like a shadow from the niches. Out of the blue. A kind of lurking echo, *I said unto thee when thou was in thy blood, Live, when thou was in thy blood, Live ...*, and only now, when the strange echo was suddenly renewed for some reason, did I read the rest of the chapter. And I was shaken from tatters of words buried under the "Prophetic word," a story completely different from the explicit one suddenly screamed out. A voice attacked, testifying to the crime that was blurred, erased, and buried. Completely distorted in a reversal of facts, as false accusations – the body trembles. From fear of what was revealed. And maybe even more from the silencing – that the shout was buried alive, with wicked insolence, under the "rebuke of the Prophet," who blames her, the tormented, despised one... (p. 375).

In a restorative move that brings to mind Freud's analogy (frequently cited in feminist thinking) between the feminine subculture "buried" under the foundations of the dominant culture, and the Minoan-Mycenaean civilization revealed at the foundation of Greek civilization, Amalia rescues the female testimony "buried" under the masculine version of events. From among the shreds of hegemonic culture, she recovers a frighteningly vivid woman's account of exploitation and abuse, and of the shifting of guilt onto the victim.

### The Search for the "Lost" Mother

Govrin's reconstructive move resonates with the search for the lost mother, a project outlined

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by women writers and critics, who characterize the recovery of the relationship to the mother, relegated by hegemonic culture to the margins of consciousness, as the revelation of a hidden layer, buried beneath the surface of the dominant culture. Thus, Sandra Gilbert describes the search of the creative women after the mother's "lost kingdom", found in the works of female poets, as a quest for a lost "Matria" buried under the surface of the "Patria."<sup>46</sup> Inspired by Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*, Gilbert, with Susan Gubar, describes a literary journey to an ancient female diviner, a guardian of women's knowledge and the spiritual mother of all creative women, who lives in a distant land abandoned by God and mankind, a journey made in order to discover her secrets.

Govrin provides a hair-raising shadow version of this quest undertaken in order to restore the "erased" feminine link, a theme that marks women's literature in the modern period.<sup>48</sup> In a kind of reversal of the mythical story of Demeter, who raises her daughter Persephone from the underworld, here the search leads to an eerie attempt to conjure up the shadowy image of the mother from the other world in which she resides. As in a somber Gothic tale, the quest for the mother's heritage takes a nightmarish, feverish cast, expressed in a measured rhythm which, according to Kristeva, restores the pre-verbal level and the "asymbolic memory of the body".<sup>49</sup>

"In the absence of an alternative female system of signification, the ghostly maternal domain often expresses itself through hallucinations, voices, and madness," claims Ann Fogarty, following Kristeva, in an article entitled "The Horror of the Unlived Life."<sup>50</sup> The attempt to forge a link with the mother, which means tapping into the "semiotic" level in the soul (a maternal domain, according to Kristeva), cracks the "symbolic" crust and penetrates "beyond time or beyond socio-political battle, with family and history at an impasse."<sup>51</sup>

Govrin's writing enacts Kristeva's subversive thinking in a text which raises the primordial, primeval, pre-formal underlying levels to the surface and reshuffles times and places, resounding to a mythical order. This kind of writing disturbs cultural schema, evoking a process motivated by psychic forces through the use of fractured linguistic expression.<sup>52</sup> Words lose their function as signifiers; whispered like mantras, like prayers, they acquire magical power.<sup>53</sup>

*Between the Heritage of the Mother and the Tradition of the Father*

The relationship to the "other" mother — her father's dead wife — who takes over and dominates Amalia's life as well as her testimony, is not just a poetic device but carries with it fundamental philosophical ramifications. The shadow mother is a counterweight to Maimonides, the authoritative halakhic father figure with whom Govrin explicitly debates. She explains: "At the core of the book is a melting point engendered through conversation and disputation with Maimonides over his position on memory and its repression in his *Laws of Repentance.*"<sup>54</sup> Weighty philosophical, theological, and also national and personal questions are formulated and debated through confrontation with a recurrent sentence that serves as the novel's *leitmotif*: "I am a different person, and I am not the same one."<sup>55</sup> This sentence, on which, according to Maimonides, the penitent is obliged to meditate, defines the narrator's central problem, as she struggles between remembering and forgetting.<sup>56</sup> Amalia attempts to find out if a woman can truly repent. "Why do all this," she exclaims, "if it's really impossible to stay on the straight path, if it's impossible to start all over again!" (p. 181).

Govrin sees the demand to erase the past as an impossible one, since it opposes the basic concept of Judaism as a religion of memory, as expressed in the commandment, repeated

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frequently in the course of the novel, to "remember what Amalek did unto you" (Deut. 25:17) (Amalek is seen as symbolizing Israel's worst enemy and, more explicitly, as the incarnation of evil on earth – the Nazi regime). In opposition to the requirement to remember stands the basic human need to forget the past in order to exist in the present, as an act of survival.<sup>57</sup>

Amalia is torn between the necessity of remembering, as a national and familial obligation, and the existential, if untenable, need to forget. The struggle between memory and commemoration, on the one hand, and forgetting, on the other; between turning to the future by erasing the past and being sustained by memories of the past, which is part of the documentary aspect of writing, is accentuated by the novel's specific context, the Shoah, which makes the commemorative aspect of writing its sole purpose.<sup>62</sup>

Rabbi Gottlieb, the head of "Neve Rachel," the seminary for repentant girls, that Amalia joins in an attempt to rebuild her life, admonishes her, "Remember that repentance is like death and rebirth" (p. 38). He quotes the words of the prophet Ezekiel (16:7), "by your blood shall you live," a phrase repeated in the Passover Haggadah and thus charged, by virtue of the Haggadah's mythic nature, and the ritual context of its annual recitation, with eternal authority. The eccentric Rabbi Aseraf reiterates these words, glorifying Amalia's power as a penitent who has known the life of sin.

Rabbi Gottlieb sees no advantage in Amalia's past and believes that she should break with it completely. Quoting Nachmanides, he adds: "one should not only keep away from sin but forget it completely, erase from memory the acts of the past" (p. 38). The heroine whose life is shaped by the command to relive life, and whose personal story links death (Mala's) with reborn life (Amalia's) in a tragic example of the mythic-archetypal concept shaping the novel, opposes this position of denial. For her, life in the present means living in the shadow of the past and of memories etched in the soul over the course of many generations. Her failure to liberate herself from the horrifying figure of Mala is decisive proof of the impossibility of escaping the ever-demanding past. Not only does the ghost of her father's deceased wife pursue her, so do her previous identities, "like ghosts which return to her from the past. Like her previous incarnations."<sup>63</sup>

To the halakic world represented by Maimonides and embodied in the novel by Rabbi Gottlieb, Govrin juxtaposes the kabbalah, the world of mystery and magic whose representative is the "other" rabbi, Avuya ben Elisha Aseraf (whose name hints at the character of Elisha ben Avuya, a talmudic figure who embodies the ultimate Jewish renegade). To the hegemonic masculine culture, she juxtaposes a women's world with its own culture. That world is embodied on the one hand by Mala, the talented pianist, and on the other by the powerful "needle woman," representing an ancient women's heritage – the world of the Torah curtain weaver, who seeks to adorn the heavens and bring redemption to the world by uniting herself with the Creator.

Govrin describes her heroine in the image of the virgins who wove the veil for the Temple.<sup>64</sup> Although Amalia humbles herself, saying: "I'm not sure that it is as a wise-hearted woman that I weave a Torah Curtain for the Temple, as one of those whose reward is given from the priestly dues, and when their thread stops they tie it off and toss their needles to one another" (p. 110), she nevertheless presents herself in accord with a presumptuous women's poetic tradition (expressed, for example, in the works of Emily Dickinson and Amalia Kahana-Carmon).<sup>65</sup> with the intention to weave the heavens above:

You, whose Torah Curtain of Your Temple of Heaven I tie with blue and purple and crimson and scarlet and fine linen, interwoven with cunning workmanship; You, who called my name – Amalia, Amy, Emily, and repair of Mala's name, as You called the name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hor of the tribe of Yehuda, who knew how to

combine the letters of Your Name to repair the world; Your Name I make with all my body and soul, the threads of Your garment I tie, warp and woof, like angels coupling with one another, what was, what is, and what will be in one trying; You, whose embrace of truth I shall approach, hour by hour; Hashem, my God, support me a few days more, until I finish the **task**, (p. 316).

Amalia does not see herself merely **as** an anonymous artist, whiling away her days in traditional women's work done in secret (like the spideress in the corner), **nor** does she **designate** her work for use in a synagogue, **she** targets a far loftier goal. **She** adopts the figure of the chosen artist Bezalel, who, according to Exodus, was responsible for constructing the Sanctuary.<sup>66</sup> A midrashic tradition attributes metaphysical powers to Bezalel, beyond his artistic talents, claiming that he knew how to combine letters to repair the Name of God in the world – a kabbalistic activity of the same kind that the narrator takes on.

In a transcendent move, different in nature yet no less vainglorious than the one best known from the mythological tale of Icarus, Amalia seeks to enter the very heavens, clad in the Torah curtain embroidered in blue and white with threads of gold, whose weave and colors are in the image of the sky, and at whose center are the tablets of the Law: “The Torah Curtain also will disappear, wound around my body at the foot of the cliff. The Torah Curtain of heaven, spread out before You, delightful beating of birds and glints of gold” (p. 209).<sup>67</sup>

In an exhibitionistic deed undoubtedly influenced by Mala's public suicide in the extermination camp, Amalia plans to repair the cosmos by performing a religious messianic act (albeit a problematic one, given the halakhic prohibition of suicide), joining the earthly curtain of her own handiwork with the heavenly curtain – the abode of the Creator:<sup>68</sup> “Cloaked in the Torah Curtain as in a garment, the parchment scrolls wound around my breast, I shall return to You. Like all flesh. I and my name. I and the fabric of my life. I and You in one word.” (p. 211)

Govrin thus adopts the “language of the Father”,<sup>69</sup> giving a new interpretation to Psalms 104:1–2:

My soul praises the Lord, Lord you have become exceedingly mighty, you put on glory and splendor: you clothe Yourself in light as in a garment, you spread out the heavens like a sheet.<sup>70</sup>

**Embracing** Hélène Cixous's recommendation in “The Laugh of the Medusa”,<sup>76</sup> and **the practice of** the poets, “thieves of language”,<sup>77</sup> described in Alicia Ostriker's article, **Govrin** steals the masculine language of culture and takes flight, **securing** a place of honor in the cultural **arena**.

### Conclusion

Michal Govrin's work is evidence of a new poetic **approach**. Inspired (no doubt) by Amalia Kahana-Carmon on the one hand and Yona Wallach on the other, **she** **exhibits** liberation from cultural constraints and psychic obstacles. In *The Name*, and more explicitly in *The Making of the Sea: A Chronicle of Exegesis*, **Govrin** appropriates, **explicitly and without fear**, the hegemonic text and the status of its writer, thus freeing herself **of** anxieties **that had** blocked the way of women authors in previous generations.<sup>78</sup> She takes hold **of both** the pen, **traditionally the implement of men, and the needle, traditionally that of women**. Thus, she seeks, as she explicitly declares, “to intervene, perhaps, in the divine fabric. To become

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ensnared in His net and to spin His threads.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Michal Govrin, *The Name* (English transl. by Barbara Harshav; New York: Riverhead Books, 1999); Hebrew publication; *Hashem* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad / Hasifriyah Hahadashah, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> This essay is based on a chapter of my Ph.D. dissertation, written under the guidance of Prof. Tova Cohen, Head of the Gender Studies Program – Interdisciplinary Studies, Bar Ilan University, (2005). I would like to thank Dr. Jackie Feldman, Yaara Keren and Deborah Greniman for helping me translate my thoughts from Hebrew into English.

<sup>4</sup> This basic position is detailed especially in Luce Irigaray, “This Sex Which Is Not One,” in *idem*, *This Sex Which Is Not One* (English transl. by Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 23–33; also in Camille Roman, Suzanne Juhasz and Cristanne Miller (eds.), *The Women and Language Debate: A Sourcebook* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), pp. 94–194.

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<sup>5</sup> On this see: Julia Kristeva, “About Chinese Women,” in Toril Moi (ed.), *The Kristeva Reader*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 138–145; Anna Goldman-Amirav, “Behold, The Lord Hath Strained Me from Bearing,” in Simcha Yom-Tov (ed.), *Gender Culture Architecture*, (Haifa: Technion, 1990), pp. 21–29; Simcha Yom-Tov, “The Day of Atonement – Festivity of Fertility and Revelry of Astarte: Matriarchal Footprints in Jewish Liturgy,” *ibid.*, pp. 231–273; Ilana Pardes, *Countertraditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach* (Cambridge, Mass.–London: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 79–97.

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<sup>6</sup> Nancy Chodorow, “Gender Differences in the Preoedipal Period,” from *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (1978), in Roman et al., *The Women & Language Debate* (above, note 3), pp. 134–164.

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On this see: Judith Kegan-Gardiner, “On Female Identity,” in Elizabeth Abel (ed.), *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Kathleen L. Komar, “Feminist Curves in Contemporary Literary Space,” in Margaret R. Higonnet and Joan Templeton (eds.), *Reconfigured Spheres: Feminist Explorations of Literary Space*, (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), pp. 89–107; Pnina Shirav, *Non-Innocent Writing: Discourse Position and Female Representation in Works by Yehudit Hendel, Amalia Kahana-Carmon and Ruth Almog* (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1998), p. 232.

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<sup>8</sup> Jacques Lacan, “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience” (1949), in *idem*, *Écrits: A Selection* (English transl. by Alan Sheridan; London: Tavistock, 1977), pp. 1–7.

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<sup>9</sup> Julia Kristeva, “Woman Can Never Be Defined,” in Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (eds.), *New French Feminisms* (New York: Schocken Books, 1980), pp. 137–141.

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<sup>10</sup> In *Le Myth de l'éternel retour – Archétypes et répétition* (1969; Hebrew transl. by Yotam Reuveny; Jerusalem: Carmel, 2000), historian of religions Mircea Eliade describes this basic kabbalistic view as the ancient Mesopotamian conception, according to which “reality is a function of the imitation of heavenly archetypes” (p. 12). According to this view, “heavenly Jerusalem was created by God before earthly Jerusalem was built by man” (p. 14). In Eliade’s opinion, however, Judaism undermined these basic concepts by promulgating a linear concept of time (pp. 92–94). Moshe Idel, in his Afterword to the Hebrew edition, argues that the eminent scholar ignored “the clearly cyclical aspects of biblical and rabbinic worship, and... the views on the cyclical nature of the cosmos of the kabbalah” (p. 146).

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<sup>11</sup> According to Isaiah Tishby, in *The Doctrine of Evil and the Kelippah in Lurianic Kabbalah* (1949, in Hebrew; reprinted Jerusalem: Academon, 1971), the doctrine of the kabbalah “is blatantly marked by anthropomorphism” (p. 105). The task of repairing the blemishes in the heavenly and terrestrial worlds is entrusted to mankind. “Man is not only the purpose of creation, and his reign is not restricted to this world alone, but the integrity of the upper worlds as well – including the godhead – depends upon him” (p. 91). This basic claim is repeated frequently, in the *Zohar*: The desired human actions exert a positive influence on both upper and lower worlds. Man is charged with “redeeming the

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captured sparks of divinity and repairing the blemishes in Being” (p. 113). Only at the completion of this process will redemption come.

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Spiders were traditionally linked with women and weaving. See Judy Chicago, *Embroidering Our Heritage: The Dinner Party Needlework* (New York: Anchor, 1980), p 76; Sandra M. Gilbert, and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 539–564, 581–650; Elaine Showalter, *Sister's Choice: Tradition and Change in American Women's Writing* (Oxford-NY: Oxford University Press, 1991) pp. 145–175.

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On the central role of the mother in child development according to the theories of Melanie Klein, see Janet Sayers, *Mothering Psychoanalysis: Helene Deutsch, Karen Horney, Anna Freud and Melanie Klein* (London: Penguin Books, 1991). Sayers writes that Klein sees artistic production, not as the refinement of instinct, as Freud claimed, but as the desire to repair relations with the other, especially with the mother. This insight takes on special significance in relation to Govrin's novel, as the narrator is primarily motivated by her commitment to compensate her "spiritual mother," her father's dead wife. Leo Bersani's book, *The Culture of Redemption* (Cambridge, Mass.-London: Harvard University Press, 1990) is relevant here as well. Bersani refers to the "redemptive aesthetic" that develops after catastrophe in order to create, along with commemoration, spaces of revival and renewal. He argues that "The redemptive aesthetic asks us to consider art as a correction of life" (p. 2). and that "A crucial assumption in the culture of redemption is that a certain type of repetition of experience in art repairs inherently damaged or valueless experience" (p. 1). He adds:

... [107] "...[...][...][...]"....

It is assumed, that the work of art has the authority to master the presumed raw material of experience in a manner that uniquely gives value to, perhaps even redeems, that material. The catastrophes of history matter much less if they are somehow compensated for in art, and art itself gets reduced to a kind of superior patching function. (*ibid.*)

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These words also apply to Govrin's work, insofar as the Shoah and Redemption are prominent themes, and artistic endeavor is depicted as an act of atonement.

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Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," *Signs* 7/1 (Autumn 1981); also in *Moi, Kristeva Reader* (above, note 4), pp. 187–213.

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The seven lower *sefirot*, from the highest to the lowest, are Grace (*Hesed*), Power (*Gevurah*), Beauty (*Tiferet*), Eternity (*Netzah*), Splendor (*Hod*), Essence (*Yesod*), and Kingdom (*Malkhut*). Thus, the journal entries in the novel's first chapter are marked "Power of Power," "Beauty of Power," "Eternity of Power," and "Splendor of Power." The entries (though not all of them) continue with "Grace of Beauty," "Power of Beauty," "Beauty of Beauty," "Eternity of Beauty," "Splendor of Eternity, heart of the counting," "Essence of Eternity," "Splendor of Splendor," "Essence of Splendor," "Grace of Essence," "Power of Essence," "Beauty of Essence," "Eternity of Essence," "Splendor of Essence," "Essence of Essence," "Power of Kingdom," and the final one is marked "Eve of Kingdom of Kingdom." At the end of the days of the Counting, by descent along the spiral of the *sefirot* and with the completion of the "days of Repair," Amalia intends to be conjoined with her Creator in the spirit of the kabbalistic tradition.

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The original meaning of the word *sefirah* is "number," Joseph Dan, in *The Ancient Jewish Mysticism*, (Hebrew: Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense [1989], 1994) explains that the early Greeks, Romans, and Jews used letters for numbers. An ancient Jewish tradition has it that the world was created through thirty-two instruments – twenty-two letters and ten numbers. Thus, according to Mishnah Avot (5:1), the world was created through ten utterances, a reference to the ten times that the words "God said" appear in the first chapter of Genesis. God uttered the letters of the Hebrew alphabet ten times, creating the world *ex nihilo*. It may be concluded that the joining of the power of the letters with the ten *sefirot* brought the world into being (Dan, *Ancient Mysticism*, pp.146–147). Dan adds that the concept of the *sefirot* as it appears at the beginning of *Sefer yetzirah*, which deals with the principles of Creation and its continued existence, and was considered a foundational text of Jewish mysticism, did not refer only to numbers. Rather, these were stages in the process of emergence of the foundations underlying reality (*ibid.*). On the symbolic significance of the numbers among the ancient

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Greeks, see J.E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, (London: Routledge, 1993 [1962]), Pythagoras saw numbers as the basis of all being. The Pythagorean philosophers spoke of the harmony of the universe, created through a numerical system whose internal relations generate "heavenly music." Plato, too, saw number as a basic element in the creation of the harmony upon which the world and mankind are based. This position, writes Cirlot, was further developed in the kabbalah.

The book opens with the words "Today is nine days" (pp. 3–6). This chapter consists mainly of the narrator's prayer. It continues with "ten days," a chapter beginning with a description of events that took place "a year ago, exactly" (*ibid.*, p. 6). Subsequently, when the narrator mentions the date of the Counting of the Omer as "today is eleven days" (p. 15), she slips back into the distant past, describing the emotional maelstrom that took hold of Rabbi Akiva's students during the Counting of the Omer. She then moves into the narrative present tense, describing the unrest that has haunted her ever since she began her confession, around the time of the Midnight Prayer of Repair. She even mentions the Gregorian date, May 1, – Walpurgis Night, on which, according to pagan faith, the spirits roam and disturb humans. Next, she goes to the morning of the tenth day of the Omer of the previous year, and then back to her childhood, describing, in the third person, her initial encounter with Mala: "the first time (at any rate the first time I remember) that she touched her, the little girl was four years old" (p. 16). In her description of "twelve days of the Omer," she returns to the narrative present, describing Isaiah's visit, after the annulment of their engagement (p. 25), and remembering her first entry into the seminary for penitent girls (p. 29). In her account of the second week, she describes her travel to a meeting with Rabbi Gotthelf after the Sabbath; later the same night, she relates her memory of a meeting with Rabbi Tuviah Levov, sensing that "a distance of light years separates that Sabbath and now" (p. 57). She then slips into memory of the past – her first meeting with Mr. Stein, Mala's greatest admirer, as a girl in her father's shop, and much later, after her mother's death, an argument with her father in which she declares that she wants nothing to do with their past. She refuses to take Mr. Stein's telephone number in New York, but later she calls him, her previous, steadfast decision, superseded by "another," more primeval causality: "after all, the name was tattooed on her flesh" (p. 64). The entry for the nineteenth day describes the events of Independence Day, a visit from the rabbi's wife, in the narrative present, her first encounter with Isaiah a year earlier, and her argument with Mr. Stein during her stay in Europe, where, at his request, she took the pictures for the album she is making to honor Mala's memory (pp. 81–106).

18 On the lyrical novel and its characteristics see Ralph Freedman, *The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Herman Hesse, Andre Gide and Virginia Woolf* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963).

20 This description is based on Brigitte Goldstein's essay, "An Ethereal Haunting Song" (*The Jewish Quarterly* [Autumn 1999], pp. 85–86).

21 "The constant repetition of rhythms is an essential part of life. So the heartbeat, the rhythm of breathing, the suckling movements of the baby," writes Rama Yam in *The Secret Magic of Needlework: On Women, Therapy, Arts and Crafts and the Connection Between them* (Tel Aviv: Tcherikover, 2002, p. 87). Yam's comments, based on her practical experience, may enrich this discussion. She adds that in "needlework, especially spinning, weaving and knitting, the process of work is accompanied by a set uniform rhythm which repeats itself over and over again... This monotonous rhythm, a rhythm granting a feeling of order and security... Like the repetition of the mantra in meditation, so too in knitting, this movement brings about relaxation" (*ibid.*). Weaving is a symbol of universal meaning and is common to many cultures (such as ancient Egypt and Peru), writes Cirlot in *A Dictionary of Symbols* (above, note 15). Weaving, like singing, is identified with the force of life. It is linked to creativity, to myth and legend (p. 305). Spiders, which weave and kill incessantly, mark the incessant changes upon which the universe is based (p. 304).

22 Govrin sees the Jewish condition as basically sensual and erotic, and only in the past two centuries, she claims, did censorship appear. According to her: "R. Shneur Zalman of Ladi described the movements of the worshipper's body in prayer as copulation with the Shekhinah. Judaism has a strong physical aspect. The commandments are a writing with the body. Thought is Eros – the power that creates the word" (quoted by Esther Dotan in "The Making of the Sea," *Studio*, 93 [1998], p. 8).

23 This verse in a liturgical poem from the Yom Kippur liturgy compares the world to a piece of cloth

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in the hand of its embroiderer, God. The image is a key to deciphering Govrin's poetic stance.

24 Govrin's doctoral thesis focused on the link between theater and cult. Her article "Jewish Worship as a Genre of 'Sacred Theatre'" was published in David Cassuto (ed.), *Judaism and Art* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 1989), pp. 243–265.

25 Annis Pratt, *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1981).

26 To illustrate her argument, Pratt coins the word "invention" (*ibid.*, p. 178).

27 Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time" and, "The Semiotic and the Symbolic," from *idem*, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984), excerpts in *The Women & Language Debate: A Sourcebook* (above, note 3), pp. 45–55.

28 Ann Romines, *The Home Plot: Women, Writing & Domestic Ritual* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992).

29 In an article analyzing *The Name*, Rachel Feldhai Brenner writes that Govrin is sustained by an alternative portion of redemption, expressed through a utopian–apocalyptic messianism (in Gershom Scholem's formulation), that seeks to return to the dawn of history, to the border between time and myth, in order to restore Paradise; see *idem*. "On Two Options of Redemption – See Under: *Love/The Name*," *Alpayim*, 20 (2000), pp. 154–155.

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30 This process of approach and retreat can also be observed in stories by Amalia Kahana-Carmon, whose writing illustrates the formulation of sentences through the process of their utterance, as described by Irigaray in "This Sex Which Is not One" (above, note 3).

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31 *Ibid.*, in *The Women & Language Debate*, p. 97.

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... [130] prayer

32 In describing the process of weaving, Govrin uses the expression *ratzo vashov* ("to and fro"). Drawn from Ezek. 1:14, *ratzo vashov* was used frequently in kabbalistic and hassidic literature as an expression for cleaving to God, I thank the anonymous reader of *Nashim* for bringing this to my attention and for listing additional expressions common in mystical literature that all describe touching and not touching of this kind, such as *matei lo matei*, in the writings of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, whom Govrin wrote about in her doctoral thesis. The same reader led me to a prayer by Rabbi Nossan of Nemirov, a disciple of Rabbi Nachman, whose formulation is very close in spirit and letter to those found in *The Name*:

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Draw upon me the light of the holiness of the "restricting and calming of the brains", which is the Supernal Crown. Let me merit by this not to stretch beyond my limits, Heaven forbid. Rather, may my mind strive for perception of the light of the Ein Sof by "rising and descending"; the aspect of "attaining and not attaining"; the aspect of "chasing and holding back"; this balance being created by the power of the "restricting and calming of the brains," with perfect truth and faith, (*Likutey tefillot*, Part 1, Prayer 24; Hebrew transl. by Eliyahu Saar; Jerusalem: Agudat Meshech Hanachal, 1990, p. 724).

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*Ratzo vashov* also appears in *Sefer yetzirah*, and Govrin again employs it in her book *The Making of the Sea: A Chronicle of Exegesis*, (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2000), p. 57, Govrin thus appropriates an expression common in esoteric literature, for her own ends, just as she appropriates other sources of Hebrew cultural expression.

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33 Clarissa Pinkola Estés, *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, (London: Ryder, 1992).

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34 In Navajo mythology, the Spider Woman is described as the greatest weaver of all times, the artist of embroidery who transmits her knowledge through dreams. The Hopi believed that the Spider Woman was the guardian of Mother Earth and one of the important supernatural powers. She was linked with female creativity and seen as a representation of the female principle, writes Judy Chicago in *Embroidering Our Heritage*, (above, note 11), p. 207, As Chicago also remarks, "many of the ancient goddesses were depicted in the image of the eternal weaver, whose womb... contain[ed] the pattern of life" (*ibid.*, p. 24). Among the goddesses linked to textiles were the Egyptian goddesses Neith, called the great weaver, and Isis, whose name is linked with the invention of the shuttle, as well as Net, whose name derives from the verb "to knit," Freja, the Scandinavian goddess of fertility, was also depicted as a weaver who wove the clouds with golden thread. Gaya, the goddess of Delphi, was depicted as enveloped in strings, as befits one dwelling in the navel of the earth. Hesiod described the Moirai, the

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three goddesses of destiny in Greek mythology, as three spinning sisters; the first spins the life-thread of mankind, the second determines its length, and the third cuts it off. So, too, the Norns, the Scandinavian goddesses of fate, were described as weaving destiny. The Aztec goddess Xochiquetzal was the patroness of weavers; Ixchel was the goddess of fertility, and she, goddess of all goddesses, taught women to weave. In *The Madwoman in the Attic* (above, note 11), p. 95, Gilbert and Gubar pictured the Norns, *Gaya*, and the priestesses of Demeter as images of the female strength embodied in the ancient weavers of destiny. They cite Helen Diner, who speaks in *Mothers and Amazons*, of the deep and unique female knowledge whose source is the Great Mother, the Weaver Woman who weaves "the world tapestry, in her cave of power." In "The Blank Page and the Issue of Female Creativity," in Elaine Showalter (ed.), *The New Feminist Criticism* (London: Virago, 1986), p. 306, Gubar cites Olive Shriner, who sees the woman weaving by the shuttle, described in the form of the ancient archetypal mother, as the one who sets the wheels of the world in motion.

The spider, sitting at the center of her web, is seen as a symbol of the center of the world. In India, writes Cirlot (*Dictionary of Symbols* [above, note 15], p. 304), it was known as the eternal weaver of the net of illusions. The moon, weaving the thread of destiny, is described as a giant spider in many fables. The spider is linked with the moon, the world of appearances and the imagination, aspects associated with women's creativity, that are realized in Govrin's work. The telltale circular form of the web finds overt expression in Govrin's circular-cyclical writing, constructed as a circular net of webs that entrap the heroine in its midst.

The Tarantella is a traditional dance, common among South Italian villagers, and traceable to the Bacchanalean festivals of ancient Greece. A woman acts as if she were bitten by a spider, performing rhythmic and cyclical movements and embodying various figures: spider, cow, lizard, hanging doll. She moves in circles, sometimes for an entire day, before returning to her household life. Catherine Clément links the rhythmic movements of the dancing woman, with the movements of Arachne, the weaver who hanged herself on her webs, in an attempt to commit suicide after her contest with the goddess Pallas Athene. Clément, like Kristeva, speaks of the rhythmic rocking movements that are reminiscent of the suckling movements of infants. She mentions the subversive aspects that accompany the ritual dance, as they do every ritual, and links the festivity-madness of women with the wild behavior of children (as indicated by the chapter titles of her essay). Levi-Strauss, she remarks, wrote that the festival, with its typically wild and antinomian characteristics, expresses the "other" side of social life. See Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman (La Jeune Née, 1975; English transl. by Betsy Wing; Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota, 1986)*, p. 22.

Nancy K. Miller, "Arachnologies: The Woman, The Text, and the Critic," in *idem* (ed.), *The Poetics of Gender* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 271-293).

Simone de Beauvoir refers frequently in *Le Deuxième sexe* (Hebrew translation by Sharon Preminger; Tel-Aviv: Babel, 2001) to the dichotomy between these two fundamental conceptions – the transcendental male, bursting outward, and the immanent female, turning inward. In Volume I she argues that the woman's task is traditionally limited to nourishment and is not linked with creativity. Women protect the life of the tribe, provide children, and bake bread. Tied to immanence, they are closed within themselves. Men, on the other hand, dominate the roles that open the group to nature and to the rest of human society. Through hunting and fishing, they grab foreign plunder and appropriate it for the tribe. Man, she added, seeks to escape the immanent circle and establish transcendence, (*ibid.*, pp. 107-108).

Several pre-Raphaelite painters dedicated their paintings to the figure of the Lady of Shalott, immortalized in Tennyson's poem. The most dramatic painting is that of Hunt, who depicts the lady's body and hair entangled in the web of strings constraining her, as she attempts to free herself of the curse and of the destiny forced upon her.

In the preface to *The Madwoman in the Attic* (above, note 11), Gilbert and Gubar mention that images of enclosure and escape, fantasies of madness, and descriptions of frozen landscapes recur in works by nineteenth-century women writers, as do compulsive descriptions of illnesses like anorexia, claustrophobia, and agoraphobia – all disturbances related to physical space (internal or external).

On the traditional role of women as mourners, see: Galit Hasan-Rokem, "The Voice is the Voice of

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*tekhinot* ..., she adds...book, in which she decorates Ann Hutchinson's (a midwife, healer, preacher, theologian and teacher from Rhode Island) plate (...)...as  
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My Sister: Feminine Images and Feminine Symbols in *Lamentations Rabba*," in Yael Azmon (ed.), *A View into the Lives of Women in Jewish Societies (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1995, pp. 95–111)*. On the dirge as one of the sole creative literary options for women in Judaism, see Rachel Elior, "'Absent Presences,' 'Still Life,' and 'Beautiful Girl with no Eyes' – On the Question of the Presence and Absence of Women in the Holy Tongue, in Jewish Religion, and in Israeli Reality," *Alpayim*, 20 (2000), pp. 214–270. She mentions Rachel weeping over her children, the voice of the daughter of Zion in the Book of Lamentations, the whispered prayer of Hagar, and the entreaties of other mothers mentioned in the Bible. This tradition continues through the Yiddish *tekhines* literature and the tradition of dirges assigned to women in various Jewish societies (*ibid.*, pp. 233–234). Govrin adopts this image but lends her narrator the archetypal characteristics of the mourner as pictured in Western culture, described, for example, in Judy Chicago's *Embroidering Our Heritage: The Dinner Party Needlework* (above, note 11), p. 195. Chicago notes that we find evidence of mourning women already at the dawn of history, in Egyptian paintings (*ibid.*, p. 199).

42 See BT *Berakhot* 3a: "R. Jose says, I was once traveling on the road, and I entered into one of the ruins of Jerusalem in order to pray. Elijah of blessed memory appeared and waited for me at the door ... He said to me: My son, what sound did you hear in this ruin? I replied: I heard a divine voice, cooing like a dove, and saying: Woe to the children, on account of whose sins I destroyed my house and burnt my Temple and exiled them among the nations of the world! And he said to me: By your life and by your head! Not in this moment alone does it so exclaim, but thrice each day does it exclaim thus! And more than that, whenever the Israelites go into the synagogues and schoolhouses" (*English transl. by S. Epstein: London: Soncino, 1948, pp. 6–7*). The version in Govrin's book is similar to that in H.N. Bialik and H. Ravnitzky (eds.), *Sefer ha'agadah* (Tel-Aviv: Dvir, 1987).

43 According to Mordechai Shalev, the poet Dalia Ravikovitch takes a similar position: see his essay "Dalia Ravikovitch: Poetess of Lamenting," *Ha'aretz*, February 4 and June 13, 1969 (Hebrew), including his analysis of the poem "Portrait" in relation to the structure of the biblical dirges represented in the Book of Lamentations. Hammutal Tzamir takes a similar view of a poem by Ravikovitch, in her article, "The Living and the Dead, The Believers, and the Uprooted: A Reading of the Poem "The Coming of the Messiah," *Mikan*, 1 (May 2000), pp. 44–63 (Hebrew).

44 According to Amos Elon, the metaphor for Jerusalem in Jewish literature is almost always feminine;

In the Hebrew Bible, Jerusalem was both "as a widow" and "as a 'harlot'; in the New Testament, she was a brilliant "bride" and "the mother of us all." The Divine Presence itself, the Shekinah – a kind of holy ghost, which according to Jewish tradition never deserted the city but continued to brood over her ruins – was also feminine in gender. Perhaps she was some long-forgotten pagan mother-goddess that had somehow entered Yahwist lore. The kabbalists claimed they had seen the Divine Presence with their own eyes in the guise of a slim woman, dressed in black, weeping at the Wailing Wall. In modern lore too, Jerusalem was built by a woman, (Amos Elon, *Jerusalem: City of Mirrors* [London: Fontana, 1989], pp. 32–33, quoted in Hana Wirth-Nesher, *City Codes: Reading in the Modern Urban Novel* [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996], p. 213)

45 It becomes evident from reading *The Name* that this character serves Govrin as an inspiration for the figure of her narrator,

Sigmund Freud, "Female Sexuality," (1931). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, 21 (London: The Hogart Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1953–1974), pp. 223–243.

46 Sandra M. Gilbert, "From Patria to Matria: Elizabeth Barrette Browning's *Risorgimento*," *PMLA*, 99/2 (March 1984), pp. 194–211.

47 Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, (above, note 11), in the chapter "The Parables of the Cave," pp. 93–104.

48 The death of the mother is a key issue in literature by women, erving as a "rite of passage," according to Paola Splendore in "Bad Daughters and Unmotherly Mothers: The New Family Plot in the

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Contemporary English Novel.” in Adalgisa Giorgio (ed.), *Writing Mothers and Daughters: Renegotiating the Mother in Western European Narratives by Women* (New York–Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002), pp. 186–189.

49 Patricia Yeager, *Honey-Mad Women: Emancipatory Strategies in Women's Writing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 256.

50 Anne Fogarty, “‘The Horror of the Unlived Life’: Mother–Daughter Relationships in Contemporary Irish Women's Fiction.” in Giorgio, *Writing Mothers and Daughters* (above, note 46), p. 103; the article is based on Kristeva's book *About Chinese Women* (New York: Marion Boyars, 1977).

51 Kristeva, “About Chinese Women” (above, note 4), pp. 156–157.

52 Rivka Feldhay illustrates this argument in an essay analyzing Kahana-Carmon's poetic language, based on the theories of Kristeva: see her, “New Feminine Midrash: Reading Amalia Kahana-Carmon,” *Theory and Criticism*, 2 (Summer 1992), pp. 69–87.

53 In an interview with Govrin upon the publication of *The Name*, Halit Yeshurun asked her: “You construct the book on the foundations of prayer, and yet you strongly protest against its being labeled a confessional novel.” Govrin responded:

It contains the confession of the heroine, of course, but I was interested, not in repeating the prayers, but in returning to their primeval foundation. To read them simply. As it is written, “may it be your will that you receive me...”; to understand “that you receive me” physically, not metaphorically. In addition, the moment I put these words in the mouth of a woman, the erotic dimension hidden in the words of the prayer surges forth. (“I Knew that Such Writing Would Awaken the Wolves,” *Shishi tarbut*, April 23, 1995 [Hebrew]).

54 *Ibid.*

55 The compulsive repetition of this statement throughout the novel gives it a mystical aura, as if it were a prayer, a dirge, or a mantra. It is thus detached from its original halakhic context and appropriated into the world of myth and cult. Repetition is what imbues spoken words with value and a measure of sanctity, writes Eliade in *Le Myth de l'éternel retour* (above, note 9), p. 10–17. In his opinion, the confession, magical in structure, demonstrates how archaic man attempted to liberate himself from the personal and the historical and link up with the mythical, the cyclical, and the eternal. Ultimately, though, Amalia declares: “I am the same person who sinned; I did not travel into exile from my home, and I did not change my name again, *Amalia*. That is the secret of the name woven into us, for *You are One and your Name is One*” (p. 195).

56 *To Remember and To Forget* is the title of a novel by Dan Ben-Amotz (Tel-Aviv: Amikam, 1968) in which the hero struggles with a similar problem.

57 A special issue of the journal *Zemanim* (no. 53, Summer 1995) was devoted to this subject. In her introduction, the editor, Idith Zertal, raises the question of whether and how it is possible to “remember Auschwitz.” She quotes from Primo Levi, the writer who survived Auschwitz but committed suicide several decades later, to the effect that “things cannot be repaired” (p. 3) – adding a dimension to our discussion, which turns on repair. Detlev Claussen, in his article “Remembering Auschwitz,” focuses on the issue of memory and forgetting. Following Freud, he claims that non-remembering is a vital and formative human need. Hence, various forms of forgetting are a common tactic in modern society. Nevertheless, or perhaps precisely as a result of this, in order to be liberated from the heavy psychic weight imposed by the memory of the Shoah, a society that specializes in all kinds of forgetting must remember Auschwitz (*ibid.*, p. 34). Claussen discusses the dialectic involved in remembering what was, on the one hand, a singular historical event which occurred under particular social conditions that made it possible, and was simultaneously, on the other hand, an event that cannot be understood. “Auschwitz marks the border of Enlightenment,” he asserts (*ibid.*, p. 43).

62 This is especially true of Govrin's work, insofar as it alludes both explicitly and implicitly to the work of Paul Celan, especially his famous poem *Todesfüge*, which resounds throughout the book. That poem engendered a discussion of the nature and status of writing after Auschwitz, launched by Adorno's dictum that “to write poetry after Auschwitz is an act of barbarism” (see Sidra Dekoven Ezrahi, in the special issue of *Zemanim* [above, note 55], p. 22). Adorno later returned to this



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on the

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nourish

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[life (due to the wild sixties: free love, drugs, and alcohol- this is really not necessary at all – can we do without it?)

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<b>Page 1: [6] Comment [j2]</b>	<b>jfeldman</b>	
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We'll need to discuss an appropriate translation for baal teshuva

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The main character, Amalia, a penitent, newly observant Jew, sits at her loom, weaving religious textile objects.

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the main character, is the s

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who

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carry

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We'll need to discuss an appropriate translation for baal teshuva

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and a penitent newly observant Jew who weaves religious objects.

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Back from New York, where she led a rather the 1960s wild life (due to the wild sixties – of free love, drugs, and alcohol,) she has sought refuge in an ultra-Orthodox seminary, there trying, (in according to with the laws of repentance,) she is trying to escape from her past and become a “different” person. But the past – (her own past, her parents’ past, and that of the nation’s past) – keeps erupting back into her present life, giving her soul no rest.

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forty-nine

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miniature

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accordance

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which pictured

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In parallel

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, she toils

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Or the repair of the godhead

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Not content with keeping the Laws and commandments of God, Amalia (*amal-ya* – one who toils for the sake of God) does not content herself with keeping the Laws of God and His commandments, but assumes an active role in the repair of the blemished divine order. By taking upon herself the role of the scapegoat cast out into the desert, which symbolically carries the sins of the nation (Lev 16:10), she intends, in a defiant, dramatic act of atonement, which implies a contestation of the cosmic order, she seeks to return to the dawn of being and repair (in the spirit of Lurianic kabbalah) the “shattered vessels.”

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In a dramatic act of atonement she intends to take upon herself the role of the scapegoat cast out into the desert (Lev 16:10), who symbolically carries the sins of the nation.

Govrin employs

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kabbalistic

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Govrin

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I advise dropping comment 12. The reader should read the book.

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It is reflected in its unique genre which blends prose, lyricism and drama. The novel adopts

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("another forty days... another forty days... to wind... to unravel... to tie... to thread... to pass... string by string... loop by loop", and so on)

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We note the marked rhythm shaping her words by repetition and parallelism: "If only... If only... may you... as I shall attempt..." and so on.

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The process of weaving

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Amalia, who

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provides an illustration of		
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's		
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There, she		
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which		
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and are		
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, as she claims,		
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which		
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, and redeem them from forgetfulness		
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through		
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knitter		
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and		
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But		
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as described here)		
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which		

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<b>Page 4: [26] Deleted</b> Women's handiwork responds to	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>18:06:00 27/04/2005</b>
<b>Page 4: [26] Deleted</b> which controls	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>18:06:00 27/04/2005</b>
<b>Page 4: [26] Deleted</b> writings	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>18:06:00 27/04/2005</b>
<b>Page 4: [26] Deleted</b> the	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>18:06:00 27/04/2005</b>
<b>Page 4: [26] Deleted</b> she	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>18:06:00 27/04/2005</b>
<b>Page 4: [26] Deleted</b> which	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>18:07:00 27/04/2005</b>
<b>Page 4: [26] Deleted</b> perform	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>18:07:00 27/04/2005</b>
<b>Page 4: [26] Deleted</b> type	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>18:07:00 27/04/2005</b>
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so		
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as described by Luce		
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Irigaray, too,, who also makes use of views		
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as		
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Such		
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states Irigaray		
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”		
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. And adds: “(		
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or		
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”, explains Éstes,		
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Éstes' characterization highlights the archetypal nature of the weaving narrator in Govrin's novel.

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(by Nancy Miller's in her essay "Arachnologies")

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she

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also

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, and who provides

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to

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typical

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<b>Page 5: [38] Deleted</b> with its immanent nature (according to de Beauvoir). Their version is	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:11:00 27/04/2005</b>
<b>Page 5: [39] Deleted</b> her	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:12:00 27/04/2005</b>
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as one who

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<b>Page 5: [40] Deleted</b> in a circular motion:	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:18:00 27/04/2005</b>
<b>Page 5: [40] Deleted</b> moving	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:18:00 27/04/2005</b>
<b>Page 5: [40] Deleted</b> your	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:18:00 27/04/2005</b>
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<b>Page 5: [41] Deleted</b> “	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:17:00 27/04/2005</b>
<b>Page 5: [41] Deleted</b> ”	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:17:00 27/04/2005</b>
<b>Page 5: [41] Deleted</b> .	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:17:00 27/04/2005</b>
<b>Page 5: [42] Deleted</b> In accordance with this	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:17:00 27/04/2005</b>
<b>Page 5: [42] Deleted</b> -	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:19:00 27/04/2005</b>
<b>Page 5: [42] Deleted</b> al motion,	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:19:00 27/04/2005</b>
<b>Page 5: [42] Deleted</b> again reconstructs	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:19:00 27/04/2005</b>
<b>Page 5: [42] Deleted</b> all	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:20:00 27/04/2005</b>
<b>Page 5: [42] Deleted</b> during	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:20:00 27/04/2005</b>

<b>Page 5: [42] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:20:00 27/04/2005</b>
out a		
<b>Page 5: [42] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:20:00 27/04/2005</b>
like one who		
<b>Page 5: [42] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:20:00 27/04/2005</b>
s		
<b>Page 5: [43] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>17:18:00 02/06/2005</b>
<i>this novel</i>		
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-		
<b>Page 5: [43] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:22:00 27/04/2005</b>
who was		
<b>Page 6: [44] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>17:19:00 02/06/2005</b>
chain		
<b>Page 6: [44] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>17:19:00 02/06/2005</b>
in		
<b>Page 6: [44] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>17:19:00 02/06/2005</b>
e bonds		
<b>Page 6: [44] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:23:00 27/04/2005</b>
, from whose		
<b>Page 6: [45] Deleted</b>	<b>owner</b>	<b>12:15:00 05/06/2005</b>
by keeping her photographs [?]		
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Amalia describes the trapped feeling of one being entangled in “the shelter of the webs I have woven around me” (p. 58). Like the imprisoned noblewoman,		
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s		
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.		
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She writes of		
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She

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es		
Page 6: [47] Deleted	owner	12:19:00 05/06/2005
the		
Page 6: [48] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	19:28:00 27/04/2005
clear		
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(as		
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)		
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while adopting		
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and		
Page 6: [49] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	17:24:00 02/06/2005
es		
Page 6: [49] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	19:34:00 27/04/2005
of the hegemonic text		
Page 6: [49] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	17:24:00 02/06/2005
,		
Page 6: [49] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	19:35:00 27/04/2005
to		
Page 6: [49] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	19:35:00 27/04/2005
Govrin		
Page 6: [49] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	17:24:00 02/06/2005
Solomon		
Page 6: [50] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	19:36:00 27/04/2005
e		
Page 6: [50] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	19:36:00 27/04/2005
link to		

<b>Page 6: [50] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:35:00 27/04/2005</b>
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religious

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her

<b>Page 6: [50] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:36:00 27/04/2005</b>
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the heroine

<b>Page 6: [50] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:37:00 27/04/2005</b>
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and

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By responding to

<b>Page 6: [51] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:34:00 27/04/2005</b>
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In her confession Amalia interweaves verses and draws on references in the Biblical books.

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Solomon

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her

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the

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both

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both

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that

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to

<b>Page 6: [53] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:40:00 27/04/2005</b>
are the Shulamite – the paramour of the Song of Solomon,		
<b>Page 6: [53] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:40:00 27/04/2005</b>
(Book of Lamentations)		
<b>Page 6: [53] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:40:00 27/04/2005</b>
(whose descendant was King David, founder of the kingship)		
<b>Page 6: [53] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:40:00 27/04/2005</b>
without consolation		
<b>Page 6: [53] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:41:00 27/04/2005</b>
granting		
<b>Page 6: [54] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:34:00 27/04/2005</b>
<b>Page 6: [54] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:43:00 27/04/2005</b>
ing woman		
<b>Page 6: [54] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:44:00 27/04/2005</b>
which serves as the novel's key scene.		
<b>Page 6: [54] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:44:00 27/04/2005</b>
to		
<b>Page 6: [55] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:45:00 27/04/2005</b>
“		
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”		
<b>Page 6: [55] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:45:00 27/04/2005</b>
.		
<b>Page 6: [56] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:45:00 27/04/2005</b>
Casting herself as the mourning woman of the Book of Lamentations she		
<b>Page 6: [56] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:46:00 27/04/2005</b>
admits that,		
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,		

<b>Page 6: [56] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:46:00 27/04/2005</b>	adding
<b>Page 6: [56] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:46:00 27/04/2005</b>	.
<b>Page 7: [57] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>19:48:00 27/04/2005</b>	, between the fate of the individual and that of the nation,
<b>Page 7: [58] Comment [J9]</b>	<b>Jeckie</b>		Check your quotes for spelling
<b>Page 7: [59] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>21:25:00 27/04/2005</b>	. She thus presents the female figure of the canonical text in a different light
<b>Page 7: [60] Comment [J10]</b>	<b>Jeckie</b>		Check this. The sentence in Hebrew was not clear to me.
<b>Page 7: [61] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>21:26:00 27/04/2005</b>	Amalia rescues the female testimony “buried” under the masculine version of events,
<b>Page 7: [62] Deleted</b>	<b>owner</b>	<b>12:23:00 05/06/2005</b>	the context of Amalia’s journey towards her father’s dead wife, Mala. is in accordance with The
<b>Page 8: [63] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>21:44:00 27/04/2005</b>	ir
<b>Page 8: [63] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>21:44:00 27/04/2005</b>	under
<b>Page 8: [63] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>21:46:00 27/04/2005</b>	for example,
<b>Page 8: [63] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>21:46:00 27/04/2005</b>	the
<b>Page 8: [64] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>21:46:00 27/04/2005</b>	after the
<b>Page 8: [64] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>21:46:00 27/04/2005</b>	.
<b>Page 8: [64] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>21:46:00 27/04/2005</b>	r
<b>Page 8: [64] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>21:47:00 27/04/2005</b>	

(in her book

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)

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along

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,

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reveal

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e

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search

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for the mother

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,

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(as detailed in Adalgisa Giorgio's book *Writing Mothers and Daughters*) marking women's literature in the modern period

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In this novel

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for the mother

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as in a somber Gothic tale,

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her the

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, as in a somber Gothic tale, and a kind of reversal of the mythical story of Demeter, who

raises her daughter Persephone from the underworld, and

<b>Page 8: [69] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>21:54:00 27/04/2005</b>
As the mother is a shadowy image residing in the “other” world,		
<b>Page 8: [70] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>17:36:00 02/06/2005</b>
nature		
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through		
<b>Page 8: [71] Deleted</b>	<b>owner</b>	<b>16:37:00 11/06/2005</b>
described by Kristeva		
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,		
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<b>Page 8: [73] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>21:55:00 27/04/2005</b>
<b>Page 8: [73] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>21:58:00 27/04/2005</b>
(based on Kristeva’s book, “About Chinese Women”)		
<b>Page 8: [73] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>21:59:00 27/04/2005</b>
which is		
<b>Page 8: [74] Deleted</b>	<b>owner</b>	<b>18:36:00 06/06/2005</b>
Govrin provides explicit expression of Kristeva’s subversive thought through’s writing		
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that		
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,		
<b>Page 8: [75] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>22:12:00 27/04/2005</b>
and		
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ing		

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designating		
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a		
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In such writing		
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and		
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, thus whispered like mantras, like prayers		
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;		
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it expresses a fundamental philosophical position		
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:		
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the relationship to the powerful image of		
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-		
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the character of		
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, and representative of the Jewish halakhic world that		
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with		
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Weighty philosophical and, theological, and also issues. national and personal questions are also formulated and debated through a confrontation with a recurrent key sentence that serves as the , frequently repeated in the course of the novel's, serving as its *leitmotif*: "I am a different person, and I am not the same one."<sup>1</sup> This sentence, on which, according to Maimonides' *Laws of Repentance*, the penitent is obliged to meditate on, defines the narrator's central problem of the author who, as she struggles between remembering and forgetting.<sup>11</sup> Throughout the novel Amalia attempts to find out if a woman can truly repent.,

and “Why do all this,” she exclaims, “if it’s really impossible to stay on the straight path, if it’s impossible to start all over again!” (p. 181)

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. This struggle accompanies the narrator throughout, and is indeed imposed by the attempt to become another, as required by the laws of repentance.

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Govrin sees the demand to erase the past as an impossible one **and as opposed** to the basic concept of Judaism as a religion of memory, based on as expressed in the explicit requirement commandment, repeated frequently in the course of the novel, to, “remember what Amalek did unto you” (Deut. 25:17). Yet, in opposition to the command, frequently repeated in the course of the novel, to remember the crimes of Amalek (is seen as the symbolizing of Israel’s worst enemy, and, more explicitly, as the incarnation of evil on earth – the Nazi regime. In opposition to the requirement) to remember stands the basic human need to forget the past in order to exist in the present, as an act of survival.<sup>III</sup>

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(although according to the novel forgetting is not a possible option)

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through

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nourished from

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the

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through

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of the novel

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–

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“Neve Rachel”,

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which

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reminds

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,		
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to her		
<b>Page 9: [83] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>22:44:00 27/04/2005</b>
,		
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,		
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through		
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the		
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of the Hagaddah		
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ta		
<b>Page 9: [84] Comment [J13]</b>	<b>Jeckie</b>	
I might suggest "through the mythic nature of the Hagaddah and the ritual context of its annual recitation"		
<b>Page 9: [85] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>22:46:00 27/04/2005</b>
Avuya		
<b>Page 9: [85] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>22:46:00 27/04/2005</b>
, Isaiah's (Amalia's fiancé) eccentric rabbi,		
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repeats		
<b>Page 9: [85] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>22:46:00 27/04/2005</b>
her		
<b>Page 9: [85] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>22:46:00 27/04/2005</b>
force		
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knew		
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He

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, quoting Nachmanides, that this means		
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that		
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in the shadow		
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a		
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In contrast		
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embodies		
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the world of		
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the embodiment of the ultimate “other” in Judaism		
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As opposed		
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In a transcendent move, different in nature yet no less vainglorious than the one best known from the mythological tale of Icharus, she seeks to enter the very heavens, clad in the Torah curtain embroidered in blue and white with threads of gold, whose weave and colors are in the image of the sky, and at whose center are the tablets of the Law.

Amalia adopts the lofty figure of the chosen artist Bezalel son of Hor, who was (, according to the text in Exodus), was responsible for of constructing the Sanctuary.<sup>IV</sup> A midrashic tradition attributes metaphysical powers to this artistBezalel, beyond his artistic talents, and claimings that he knew how to combine letters to repair the Name of God in the world –, a kabbalistic activity action of the type same kind that the narrator takes on. In an exhibitionistic act deed undoubtedly influenced by Mala’s public suicide in the extermination camp, Amalia plans to repair the cosmos by performing a religious messianic act (though albeit a problematic one, that is quite problematic given the halakhic prohibition of suicide), joining the earthly curtain of her own handiwork with the heavenly curtain – the abode of the Creator:<sup>V</sup> “Cloaked in the Torah Curtain as in a garment, the parchment scrolls wound around my breast, I shall return to You. Like all flesh. I and my name. I and the fabric of my life. I and You in one word.” (p. 211).

In Amalia’s description, “clothed in the Torah Curtain as in a garment”, Govrin thus adopts the “language of the Father” and fills it with her own content,<sup>VI</sup> giving a new interpretation to In quoting the verse of Psalms 104:, 1–2:,

“My soul praises the Lord, Lord you have become exceedingly mighty, you put on glory and splendor; you clothe Yourself in light as in a garment, you spread out the heavens like a sheet”.,<sup>VII</sup> she gives the Scriptures a new interpretation.

“The Torah Curtain also will disappear, wound around my body at the foot of the cliff. The Torah Curtain of heaven, spread out before You, delightful beating of birds and glints of gold...”<sup>VIII</sup>” (p. 209)..

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explicitly and without fear

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This parenthesis referring to Gilbert and Gubar belongs in the footnotes.

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first published as Hashem in Israel by Hakibbutz Hameuchad/ HaSifria HaHadasha, Tel Aviv, 1995, translated from Hebrew

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the		
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Mircea Eliade, <i>Le Myth de L'éternel retour – Archétypes et répétition</i> , 1969, Hebrew translation by Yotam Reuveny, Carmel, Jerusalem, 2000		
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refers to this position in his afterword to the Hebrew translation of Eliade's book and claims		
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<i>(The Doctrine of Evil and the Kelippah in Lurianic Kabbalism, Academion, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1971,</i>		
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“Essence of Essence,”		
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– I DON’T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU MEAN HERE! I re-corrected the list according to the English edition –WHY did YOU CHANGED IT?		
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<i>b</i>		
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says that		
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referring		
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medieval Judaism		
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touched her, in the third person

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the narrator

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Isaiah's

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was written on the subject of

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the anthology

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, (David Cassuto, ed.),

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The David and Batya Kotler Institute for Judaism and Contemporary Thought,

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Ramat-Gan,

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Bloomington,

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' instead of the word 'invention'

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responds to the typical proceeding

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's stories

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*Luce Irigaray, "This Sex Which Is Not One", from This Sex Which Is Not One*

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the Hebrew version of the novel

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describes the process of weaving by using

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The source of the expression is

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Ezekiel

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*It later becomes*

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in kabbalistic and hassidic literature throughout the generations

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’, mentioned in the literature

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Breslov

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o mentions that in the

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We should add that the expression "

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: Contacting the Power of the Wild Woman,

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London,

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. According to this conception, the spideress is

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*The Dinner Party Needlework*

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the Egyptian goddess

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is

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d

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, and Isis, whose name is linked with the invention of the shuttle.

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, weaving

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were described by Hesiod

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what

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will be		
Page 5: [136] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	22:19:00 05/05/2005
destiny		
Page 5: [136] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	22:20:00 05/05/2005
,		
Page 5: [136] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	22:30:00 05/05/2005
the figures of		
Page 5: [136] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	22:30:00 05/05/2005
the prophetesses of		
Page 5: [136] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	22:30:00 05/05/2005
illustrations		
Page 5: [136] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	22:30:00 05/05/2005
the figure of		
Page 5: [136] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	22:32:00 05/05/2005
,		
Page 5: [136] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	22:32:00 05/05/2005
her book,		
Page 5: [136] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	22:33:00 05/05/2005
, speaks		
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Page 5: [136] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	22:33:00 05/05/2005
( <i>The Madwoman in the Attic</i> , p. 95).		
Page 5: [136] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	22:34:00 05/05/2005
This position is further strengthened in Gubar's article		
Page 5: [136] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	22:33:00 05/05/2005
,		

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where she		
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e		
<b>Page 5: [136] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>22:36:00 05/05/2005</b>
ic		
<b>Page 5: [136] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>22:35:00 05/05/2005</b>
actually		
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<i>(New Feminist Criticism, p. 306)</i>		
<b>Page 5: [137] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>22:36:00 05/05/2005</b>
his		
<b>Page 5: [137] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>18:26:00 02/06/2005</b>
for		
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, writes Cirlot in his <i>Dictionary of Symbols</i> (p. 304)		
<b>Page 5: [137] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>22:38:00 05/05/2005</b>
– thes		
<b>Page 5: [137] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>22:38:00 05/05/2005</b>
e		
<b>Page 5: [137] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>22:38:00 05/05/2005</b>
, generally		
<b>Page 5: [137] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>22:38:00 05/05/2005</b>
,		
<b>Page 5: [137] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>22:39:00 05/05/2005</b>
woven by the spider is one of its telltale signs, this aspect		
<b>Page 5: [137] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>22:39:00 05/05/2005</b>
the		
<b>Page 5: [137] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>22:39:00 05/05/2005</b>
of Govrin		
<b>Page 5: [137] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>22:39:00 05/05/2005</b>
which		
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“Tarantula”

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. It

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s traces may be found in

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Bacchinallean

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, practiced in

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During the festival

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who

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s

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embodies

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, which supposedly were meant to heal her from the bite of an imaginary spider,

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woven

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ed

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typical

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too

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In support of her words She quotes

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who

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), (		
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trans.)		
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Page 5: [138] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	22:50:00 05/05/2005
, Minneapolis, London		
Page 5: [139] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	22:52:00 05/05/2005
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Page 5: [139] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	22:52:00 05/05/2005
Nancy K. Miller (ed.)		
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New York,		
Page 5: [140] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	22:57:00 05/05/2005
T		
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conception which		
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s		
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s		
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conception which		
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s		
Page 5: [140] Deleted	Deborah Greniman	22:57:00 05/05/2005
s, are often mentioned by Simone de Beauvoir's in her book, <i>Le Deuxième Sexe</i>		

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1		
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claims		
<b>Page 5: [141] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>22:58:00 05/05/2005</b>
which		
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s		
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s		
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s		
<b>Page 5: [141] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>22:56:00 05/05/2005</b>
(Hebrew translation by Sharon Preminger, Babel, Tel-Aviv, 2001		
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,		
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figure		
<b>Page 5: [142] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>23:01:00 05/05/2005</b>
with the strings		
<b>Page 5: [142] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>23:01:00 05/05/2005</b>
with her body and constraining her, her hair too entangled		
<b>Page 5: [142] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>23:01:00 05/05/2005</b>
from		
<b>Page 5: [142] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>23:01:00 05/05/2005</b>
,		
<b>Page 5: [142] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>23:01:00 05/05/2005</b>
as well as from		
<b>Page 6: [143] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>23:01:00 05/05/2005</b>
their book		
<b>Page 6: [143] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>23:02:00 05/05/2005</b>
are often repeated		

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of		
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of the 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. So		
<b>Page 6: [143] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>23:03:00 05/05/2005</b>
are		
<b>Page 6: [143] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>23:03:00 05/05/2005</b>
treatment		
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Based on extensive quotes from the works of writers and poetesses of the 19 <sup>th</sup> Century, They argue that women's writing is marked by imprisonment, illness, madness and attempts at escape.		
<b>Page 6: [144] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>23:05:00 05/05/2005</b>
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, Jerusalem		
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the option of		
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Presents		
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Language		
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<i>tekhinot</i>		

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, she adds

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book, in which she decorates Ann Hutchinson's (a midwife, healer, preacher, theologian and teacher from Rhode Island) plate (

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as they appear

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the

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Tractate

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, it is written

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S. Epstein, trans., *Babylonian Talmud*, Tractate Berakhot,

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of

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similar terms (Hammutal Zamir,		
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Believer		
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Arrival		
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Sandra M.		
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&		
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Susan		
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: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination,		
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one of the		
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s frequently appearing		
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women's		
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and serves		
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s		
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her article		
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sentence		
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his original proclamation		
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its		

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hibits		
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failure to express		
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it		
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about comfort		
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So claims		
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an		
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g		
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d		
<b>Page 9: [157] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>17:06:00 19/05/2005</b>
treat the image of		
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as		
<b>Page 9: [157] Deleted</b>	<b>Deborah Greniman</b>	<b>17:06:00 19/05/2005</b>
poetic		
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adopted by Dickenson, claiming, based on a line		
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e		
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, that this character enables her to weave “the tapestry of Paradise”		
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r		
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claim that

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re

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e

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We find a

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. This is based on the Midrash,

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, in which the words were attributed to Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua

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claims

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Woman

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their book,

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They document the

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that oppressed women writers in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, who

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<sup>i</sup> Amalia frequently repeats this sentence throughout the novel: “I am a different person and not the same one, I am a different person and not the same one” (p. 9). “*I’m a different, I’m a different, different*” (p. 10). “*To separate himself far from the object of his sin, to change his name*” (p. 11). “It’s hard to explain the fear. [...] – How will I succeed in saying *I am a different person and not the same*”

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*one who sinned?* How will I find in myself the force of soul to confess everything that happened afterward, and to complete the repair?" (p. 14). Later on in the book we find: "*To separate himself far from the object of his sin, to change his name, as if to say "I am a different person!"*" (p. 39). "*I am a different person and not the same one, I am a different person and not the same one*" (p. 89). "*I am a different person and not the same one who sinned, I am a different person and not the same one who sinned*" (p. 110). "*To change his name, as if to say I am a different person and not the same one who sinned*" (p. 120). "Is no longer the same person" (p. 133). And finally, "For I am the same person who sinned, I did not travel into exile from my home, and I did not change my name again, *Amalia*. That is the secret of the name woven into us, for *You are One and your Name is One*" (p. 195). The compulsive repetition of this statement throughout the novel gives the sentence it a mystical aura, as if it were a prayer, a dirge, or a mantra. It is thus detached from its original halakhic context and appropriated into the world of myth and cult. Repetition is what imbues spoken words with value and a measure of sanctity, writes Eliade (in *Le Myth de l'éternel retour* (above, note 9) *Eternal Return*, p. 10–17). In his opinion, the confession, magical in structure, demonstrates how archaic man attempted to liberate himself from the personal and the historical and link up with the mythical, the cyclical, and the eternal. Ultimately, though, *Amalia* declares: "I am the same person who sinned; I did not travel into exile from my home, and I did not change my name again, *Amalia*. That is the secret of the name woven into us, for *You are One and your Name is One*" (p. 195).

<sup>ii</sup> *To Remember and To Forget* is the title of a novel written by Dan Ben-Amotz (Tel-Aviv: Amikam, Tel Aviv, 1968) in which the hero struggles with a similar problem.

<sup>iii</sup> A special issue of the journal *Zemanim* (no. 53, (Summer 1995) deals with was devoted to this subject. In her introduction, the editor, Idith Zertal, raises the question as to if whether and how is it possible to "remember Auschwitz." She quotes from Primo Levi, the writer who survived Auschwitz but committed suicide several decades later, to the effect that "things cannot be repaired" (p. 3) – adding a dimension to our discussion. His words add an additional level to this discussion whose central axis is which turns on repair. Detlev Claussen, in his article "Remembering Auschwitz," focuses on this the issue of memory and forgetting question. Following Freud, he claims that lack of memory non-remembering is a vital and formative human need. Hence, various forms of forgetting are a common tactic in modern society. Nevertheless, or perhaps precisely as a result of this, in order to be liberated oneself from the heavy psychic weight imposed by the memory of the Shoah, a society that specializes in all kinds of forgetting must remember Auschwitz (*ibid.*, p. 34). Claussen discusses the dialectic involved in remembering an event that what was, on the one hand, a singular historical event, as an event that which occurred under particular social conditions that made its existence possible, and was simultaneously, on the other hand, while remaining an event that cannot be understood. "Auschwitz marks the border of Enlightenment," he asserts (*ibid.*, p. 43).

<sup>iv</sup> In the book of Exodus it is written: "The Lord spoke to Moses: See, I have singled out by name Bezalel the son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. I have endowed him with a divine spirit of skill, ability, and knowledge in every kind of craft; to make designs for work in gold, silver, and copper, to cut stones for setting and to carve wood to work in every kind of craft" (Exodus Ex. 31:1–5; NJPS translation).

<sup>v</sup> We may note that Govrin is engaged here and throughout the book in a hidden conversation covert dialogue with Bialik's "Scroll of Fire – Among the Legends of the Destruction" (H.N. Bialik, *Poems* [Tel Aviv: Devir La'am, Tel Aviv, 1966]). In his opening lines, Bialik describes the heavens as a sheet enveloping God – a description that suits Govrin's. His description of God as "tranquil and terrible" and as a "God of vengeance" fits the nature of God in Govrin's novel. We might add that the Moreover, the poem's female character figures in his work – the fawn of the dawn morning star and the hind of the fields, the white cloud and the pure maiden with tender eyes – are all aspects of the Shekhinah, the feminine manifestation of the godhead; see as detailed by Rachel Elior in her article, "Absent Presences", 'Still Life' and 'Beautiful Girl with no Eyes' – On the Question of the Presence and Absence of Women in the Holy Language, in Jewish Religion, and in Israeli Reality". Bialik's "Scroll of Fire", with its mystic valences echoes through Govrin's work and lends it midrashic-kabbalistic-literary depth. (above, note 39).

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vi

On appropriation as an option enabling women to overcome their marginalization in cultural discourse, see Tova Cohen in her article, "In Culture and Outside It: On the Appropriation of 'the Language of the Father' as a Means of Intellectually Shaping the Feminine Self," *Sadan 2, : Studies in Hebrew Literature*, II (Tel Aviv, 1997), pp. 69–110.

vii This verse is part of the prayer recited in the traditional morning prayer upon donning the *tallit* (prayer shawl) in the morning prayer.

viii The description of the blue and white curtain embroidered with birds and with sparkles of gold is reminiscent of the sheet of lace described by Kahana-Carmon, in her story "Neima Sasson Writes Poems", in which "we may find [...] among the nets and tendrils the shape of birds flying like bats or standing birds of paradise" ("Neima Sasson Writes Poems" *Under One Roof*, [above, note 59], p. 138). The lace sheet described by Kahana-Carmon in her story is enmeshed in textual expressions like the curtain presented by Govrin. This is an indication and the curtain are expressions of the all-out attempts by of both authors to reach the furthest farthest frontier;. as Kahana-Carmon explicitly states: remarked upon receiving the Bialik Prize, "the heavens sky is the limit", (*Haaretz*, "Words Spoken at a Ceremony upon Reception of the Bialik Prize", Culture and Literature Section, November *Ha'aretz*, 11.2, .1994).