Imprisoned within the Poetics of Silence in S. Yizhar's "Hashavuy"[1]

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Abstract

This article focuses on S. Yizhar's short story "Hahsavuy" (1948), through the prism of the poetics of silence, a poetical facet that is salient in the way in which this story is narrated. As I argue, due to his extensive use of interior dialogue the narrator of the story can be seen as a silent narrator. Following Ernest Renan's discussion on the nation and its creation in his 1882 essay "What is a Nation?" this article discusses the seemingly paradoxical entity of the silent narrator, and his possible connection to the creation of the Israeli nation-state. I demonstrate how the silent narrator of "Hashavuy" epitomizes the national subject at a crucial historical phase for the formation and consolidation of the Israeli State. The discussion presented in this article enables a perception of silence as an important element for the national subject, one who learns the language of silence, silencing and self-silencing, that is necessary for the consolidation of the nation, and one who maintains silence so as not to interfere with the national narrative.

The short story "Hashavuy" (The Prisoner [of War]) was written by Samekh Yizhar (pen name of Yizhar Smilansky, 1916-2006) in November 1948, and was published in *Molad*, a political and literary magazine then sponsored by the ruling political "Mapai" party.[2] The story recounts the capture of an Arab shepherd with his flock by a military unit, his interrogation and, finally, his transfer to a camp that specializes in interrogations. This succession of events comprises the main thrust of a narrative that is articulated as part of a protagonist-narrator's interior monologue.

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[1] I thank my dissertation advisor, Professor Yael Feldman, for the many discussions and suggestions regarding silence in Yizhar's writing and in "*Hahshavuy*" in particular.

[2] "Mapai" is an acronym for "Mifleget Po'aley Eretz Israel" (lit. "Workers' Party of the Land of Israel"). In 1968 it merged into the Israeli Labor Party, "Mifleget ha-avoda."

Throughout this story the narrator explicitly emphasizes that the capture of the shepherd was superfluous, carried out only to satisfy the unit commander's militaristic desire for action during the 1948 war, other than a mere need for an action in wartime: "One of the shepherds, or at least one of their boys, or maybe several of them, had to be caught. Some action had to be taken, or something be burned. Then we could return with something concrete to point to, something accomplished."[3]

This article deals with the poetics of silence, a poetical facet that is salient in "Hashavuy." The article focuses on the narrator of the story and deciphers the interior dialogue going on within his mind by implementing concepts and terms of the poetics of silence. By examining the possible ramifications of the narrator's interior dialogue, which deals with ethical awareness and, by the same token, with the inability of the self to approach the other through language, I argue that the narrator of "Hashavuy," a silent narrator throughout most of the story, is in effect a national subject. As such, he represents the ideology and sentiments of the newly founded State of Israel and its wish to dominate the country's other inhabitants.[4]

Following Ernest Renan's late nineteenth-century discussion on the nation and its creation in his foundational essay "What is a Nation?" this article further discusses the seemingly paradoxical entity of the silent narrator, and the connection of this silent narrator to the creation of the Israeli nation-state.[5] This perspective allows us to

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[3] S. Yizhar, "The Prisoner." In *Modern Hebrew Literature*. English Translation by V. C. Rycus. Robert Alter (Ed.). (New York: Behrman House Inc., 1975), 295; S. Yizhar, "Hashavuy" (The Prisoner). In *Arba'ah Sipurim* (Four Stories). (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1959), 116.

[4] For an elaboration on the notion of the subject of ideology, and the national subject in particular, see: Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power." *Critical Inquiry* 8:4 (1982): 777-795; Etienne Balibar, "The Nation Form: History and Ideology." In *Becoming National: A Reader.* Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (Eds.). (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 132-151.

[5] Ernest Renan, "What Is a Nation?" In *Becoming National*: *A Reader*, 41-55. Other, newer, theories of the nation apply to the Israeli case among others. However, as I will demonstrate below, the idea of

read the story, which was written and published during the 1948 war, as demonstrating and contributing to the creation and maintenance of the Israeli nation-state. Thus, the silent narrator of "Hashavuy" epitomizes the national subject at a crucial historical phase for the formation and consolidation of the Israeli State.

After surveying previous interpretations of this story, I will elaborate on the poetics of "Hahshvuy" and discuss the connection between poetic silence and the national ideology as expressed in this story. This discussion will enable me to perceive silence as a crucial element for the national subject who learns the language of silence and silencing, including self-silencing, that is necessary for the consolidation of the nation and who maintains silence so as not to interfere with the national narrative.

While Yizhar's early writing (1938-1947), which focused on the experience of the individual versus the collective in the pre-State or *yishuv* era in Israel, were well received, both "*Khirbet Khizeh*" (which describes in critical terms the Israeli invasion of an Arab village during the 1948 war) and "Hashavuy" marked a shift in Yizhar's prose as well as in its reception. These two controversial stories sparked debates concerning their content, language and messages. After both stories were published together in one book (along with two other stories) in September 1949, many controversial reviews appeared in daily newspapers, at times reflecting jointly on both stories.

The first wave of reviews was part of a polemic surrounding the stories; therefore they tended to be either positive or negative depending mainly on the political views of the critics. The negative views argued that Yizhar is attentive to the cry of the other while silencing the cry of the self thus reinforcing the enemy as such,

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silence is inherent already in Renan's conceptualization of the nation, and hence my thinking on the subject of silence and the nation is influenced first and foremost by him.

and therefore he could unintentionally serve a partisan cause, unknowingly supporting the enemy.[6] The positive reviewers pointed to the social if not national mission of both stories, a mission which could ultimately serve to protect the nation from a deterioration of its morals, especially toward its weakened enemy.[7] Other positive reviews, wishing to defend Yizhar, emphasized the disparity between the narrator of the stories and the author, whose views were not necessarily identical with those of the narrator.[8] Several of Yizhar's critics of the time noted the issue of silence with regard to "Hashavuy." The earliest of them, Azriel Uchmani, commented on the silent narrator of the story accusing Yizhar of silencing his protagonists and of stopping them before they "committed" a humanist, necessary action.[9]

Over a decade after its first publication, literary critic Dan Miron published an entirely different response to the story and its silences.[10] In his article, Miron presented a detailed analysis of "Hashavuy," and refrained from a judgmental stance regarding the events described in it. Miron divided the story into units, which he categorized according to their narrative techniques; within this division, he noted on the silence governing the first unit of the story, and argued that silence adds to the grotesqueness of this unit.

More recently, "Hashavuy" again stood at the center of critical academic discussions on Israeli fiction. Recent essays, which take into account the earlier

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[6] Shai Pnueli, "Al Sipurav Hahadashim shel Samekh Yizhar" (About S. Yizhar's New Stories), *Dorot* 1 (1949), 16-17.

[7] Matti Meged, "Hasipur Velikho" (The Story and its Lesson), *Al Hamishmar*, 9 September 1949; Yacob Fichman, "Be'einey Adam" (In the Eyes of a Man), *Davar*, 13 January 1950.

[8] Keshet Yeshurun, "Kol Ha'adama Besifrut Hashana" (The Sound of Soil in the Literature of the Year), *Kama* 3 (1950), 383-385.

[9] Azriel Uchmany. "Gdula Vehulsha Besipurei Samekh Yizhar" (Greatness and Weakness in the Stories of S. Yizhar). In *Le'ever Ha'adam: Dvarim Beshulei Hasifrut Vehazman* (Toward Man – Things in the Margin of Literature and Time) (Merhaviya: Hakibbutz Ha'artsi and Hashomer Htsair, 1953): 327-272.

[10] Dan Miron. "He'arot al Shnei Sipurim" (Comments on Two Stories). In *S. Yizhar – Mivhar Ma'amarey Bikoret al Yetsirato* (S. Yizhar – A Selection of Critical Essays on his Writings). Hayim Nagid (Ed.). (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1972), 154-176. This article was first published in two parts in 1961 with a slightly different title: "Comments on '*Hashavuy*,'" *Hapoel Hatzair*, 2 May 1961, 9 May 1961.

polemic responses to the story, mark another shift in its reception: in calling attention to the poetic structures of prisoner narratives in Hebrew literature; [11] comparing the Arabs as depicted in "Hashavuy" with the image of the Jewish Muselmann in the Holocaust;[12] examining the place and gaze of the Israeli soldiers through contemporary rhetoric concerning territory and the occupation;[13] and criticizing the narrator's failure to take responsibility for the decision to release – or to hold in captivity – the prisoner.[14] Adding to the notion of silence as discussed in earlier scholarly works on the story, my article pays special attention to silence in itself as a poetics, and contextualizes silence in literature within the historical framework of the creation of the Israeli nation-state.

Similar to the central position of silence in Yizhar's "Khirbet Khizeh", in "Hashavuy," too, silence is featured as a prominent component, manifested mainly in the story's opening through the narrators' use of different Hebrew words which denote silence (*dmama*, *ilmut*) in their various grammatical forms, as well as introducing neologist variations to these words (*damum, madmim, hitamem-hidahem*).[15] These words are used primarily to describe elements of nature surrounding the soldiers, but they also describe the Arab shepherd who is seen by the narrator as part of nature. Thus, the shepherd's description as an animal and his capturing or hunting by the Israeli soldiers metonymically stand also for the occupation of the space, as shown in

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[11] Nurit Govrin, "Alilat Hashavuy" (Prisoner's Plot), *Sadan* 5 (2002), 98-114. For an earlier survey of prisoner stories in Hebrew literature see: Shimon Levi, "Shvuim Babidyon: Ha'aravim Basiporet Ha'ivrit Hahahdasha" (Fictional Prisoners: Arabs in Modern Hebrew Literature), *Moznayim* 57:5-6 (1983), 70-74.

[12] Gil Anidjar, "'Bluey Havayat Adam': Al '*Hahsavuy'* Vehashoah" (The Tatters of Human Experience: About 'The Prisoner' and the Holocaust) *Teorya Uvikoret* 21 (Fall 2002), 9-19.

[13] Hannan Hever, "Ahrayut Umerhav be *'Hahshavuy'* me'et Samekh Yizhar" (Responsibility and Space in S. Yizhars 'Hashavuy"), *Meẖkarey Yerushalatim Besifrut Ivrit* 23 (2010), 273-278.

[14] Hannan Hever. "Mashber Ha'ahrayut be *'Hashavuy'* me'et Samekh Yizhar" (The Crisis of Responsibility in S. Yizhar's "The Prisoner"). In *Shvuyim* (Captives). Merav Mack (Ed.). (Jerusalem: The Van Leer Institute, 2014), 247-269.

[15] In the story's translation into English these words denote calmness, peace and bewilderment, rather than merely silence.

Hever's analysis.[16] Likewise, according to Dan Miron, the first unit of the story, which describes the capture of the shepherd, aims to communicate the idea of silence by so-called "still nature" descriptions of landscape and people, with hardly any representation of speech in this unit.[17] The silent natural world, which is depicted as seemingly calm, is interrupted only by the soldiers' brutality, and this contrast adds a grotesque element to the soldiers' movement on the land and in space.[18]

After a violent interrogation and after the soldiers decide to "get rid" of the prisoner, events which make up the story's central unit, silence again returns in the story's last unit, and recaptures its role as a central poetic element of the story as a whole. In the story's third and concluding unit the narrator accompanies the jeep that transfers the prisoner to a camp that specializes in interrogations. The space described in this unit – outside the "moldering village," presumably outside the battlefield and "the dry riverbeds" – is an open landscape stretching "to infinity, abandoned to the twilight, to something distant and dreamlike."[19] The movement between the occupied village (which turned after its occupation into a military post) and the camp where the shepherd is to be interrogated takes place within an area of agriculturally worked land.

It is presumably this shift to a civilian context that now allows the narrator to express universalistic values in his inner monologue:

> This man here at your feet, his life, his well-being, his home, three souls, the whole fabric of life, have somehow found their way into the hollow of your hand, as though you were a little god sitting in the

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[16] Hanan Hever, "Ahrayut Umerhav be *'Hashavuy'* me'et Samekh Yizhar."
[17] Dan Miron, "He'arot al Shnei Sipurim," 159.
[18] Ibid.
[19] S. Yizhar, "Hashavuy," Heb. 132; Eng. 306. Following this footnote, all subsequent references to Yizhar's "Hashavuy" will be marked in parentheses following each quote and referring to both the Hebrew original text and its English translation.

> jeep. The abducted man, the stolen sheep, those souls in the mountain village […] suddenly you are the master of their fate. You have only to will it, to stop the jeep and let him go, and the verdict will be changed (133; 306.).

This inner monologue continues with the narrator's self-directed imperative to release the shepherd: "Wait! Free the prisoner!"; and an imagined kindly address to the shepherd himself: "Go home, man, it's straight that way. Watch out for that ridge! There are Jews there. See that they don't get you again" (133; 306-307).

However, this unit of "Hashavuy," even more than the story's opening paragraphs, is devoid of direct discourse as the narrator's monologue here takes place exclusively within his mind. In other words, voices (as well as sounds or noises) are rarely described during the jeep drive. The driver and another soldier occupying the front seats, as well as the prisoner lying on the floor behind them, only break into the narrator's thoughts in the beginning of the monologue. While the prisoner is described as "blind, stunned, and silent," the two soldiers in front are described in grotesque lines as smoking, whistling and singing. The narrator does not "join the harmonizing of the other two," and instead seals himself – and with him, the readers – in his own thoughts. When he does speak up, this happens only in his imagination, as when he exclaims, seemingly to both the driver and the prisoner: "Stop, driver! Send this man away!" (132, 134; 306, 307)

Writing a large part of the story as an internal monologue is characteristic of Yizhar's poetics, which stresses the incongruence between the internal and the external worlds as experienced by the narrator. Thus, while the internal world of the narrator is marked by eloquent speech, his external world is characterized by his silence in the face of the events he witnesses or becomes a part of. The content of the

narrator's internal monologue explicitly treats the tension between speaking and remaining silent, as it expresses the narrator's unfulfilled wish to voice his inner thoughts, to respond to and oppose the reality that he encounters. Hence, the internal monologue of the narrator in "Hahshavuy" is to be understood paradoxically as a silence that is in fact a form of speech, an utterance in every respect. Such a poetics is not unique to "Hashavuy," as noted by almost all of Yizhar's critics. The style of Yizhar's writing – and especially in *Yemey Ziklag* (Days of Ziklag) – can be defined as stream of consciousness, in particular due to its extensive use of interior monologue.

At the high-time of its research, Robert Humphrey defined stream-of-consciousness prose as "a type of fiction in which the basic emphasis is placed on exploration of the prespeech levels of consciousness, for the purpose, primarily, of revealing the psychic being of the characters."[20] The "prespeech level" is indeed a fundamental component of the definition of stream of consciousness as it attempts to offer readers a recourse to characters' thoughts and sensations that cannot be expressed in words; thus this level is in fact a bridging, liminal state between speech and non-speech, communication and its collapse. Therefore, one can conclude that stream of consciousness is a powerful way of characterizing a figure both by his or her speech (or muteness) as by his or her action (or inaction), as happens in "Hashavuy."

The internal monologues in Yizhar's "Hashavuy" are close to the surface of consciousness, as is evident by their poetics of a rather organized prose and high,

[20] Robert Humphrey, *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965), 4. Stream of consciousness is a trope stemming from psychology and phenomenology, and it is primarily the study of the mind's dynamic patterns of experience. For an elaboration on the psychological and philosophical aspects of stream of consciousness, see: Donald Dryden, "Susanne Langer and Willian James: Art and the Dynamics of Stream of Consciousness." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 15:4 (2001), 272-285.

literary language. In addition, their subject matter is the surface of consciousness: These monologues are unspoken, existing on the tip of the narrator's tongue, and thus on the surface of his consciousness, maintaining their prespeech state. Significantly, therefore, it is the story's deep rooting within prespeech that makes it a superb example of a poetics of silence.

Narration, or in fact diegesis (speech representation) in "Hashavuy" has three variations corresponding to the three units of the story. The story begins with a first-person plural narration (with a few brief lapses into singular first- and second-person narration). The plural narration ends before the beginning of the interrogation of the prisoner, at which point an omniscient narrator transmits the experiences of one individual soldier (115-132; 294-306). After the prisoner's interrogation, the stream of consciousness returns and is narrated in the second-person singular (132-134; 306-307). Finally, the story concludes with an inner dialogue representing the inner moral dilemma of the original first-person narrator, or narrative voice (134-138; 307-310).

According to Israeli literary scholar and writer Gideon (Gidi) Nevo, stream of consciousness in the second person is a window to the discourse of the literary character with him or herself.[21] In "Hashavuy," the jeep drive begins with a three-page portion written in the second-person singular which is clearly self-referential (133-136; 306-307). For instance, the narrator debates with a second person (single) "you" within his stream of consciousness, asking, e.g.: "Who's preventing you?" and immediately answering: "It's your duty," "Let him go and you'll save him," "This time you can't escape behind 'I'm a soldier' or 'It's an order' […] You are naked now, facing your duty, and it is only yours" (134; 307).

[21] Giddi Nevo. *Shiv'a Yamim Banegev* (Seven Days in the Negev). (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 2005), 79-81.

It is precisely because this second-person voice remains self-referential and receives no response from any other character that no real conversation ever takes place, and this mode of narration conveys or rather connotes silence. The narrative mood is intimate, closely bound to the protagonist, since what is said comes directly from and is meant for the narrator himself, without any apparent acknowledgement of the reader. Nevertheless, as Nurith Gertz points out, due to the existence of an imaginary second person who is continually addressed in this narrative, the reader of the story is likewise, like this second person, posited within the narrator's speech.[22] Accepting this argument, I suggest that the readers of "Hashavuy" find themselves in the place of the unwitting addressees of the narrator's soliloquy, a position that is self-referential and yet has the power of interpellation, as discussed by Luis Althusser. Interpellation transforms the readers into subjects within the story, reminding them of their involvement and invoking their responses, and possibly their responsibility.[23] The resounding silence in this part of the story, in the narrator’s unanswered address, in turn points to the reader's liability and accountability.

In the story's third unit second-person stream of consciousness is transformed into an internal argument, or, more accurately, into an interior dialogue. This dialogue takes place within the narrator's mind, namely, between a humanist, universalist consciousness or voice (narrated in the second person), and a particular "you" (speaking in the first-person singular). While the humanistic voice urges this "you" to set the prisoner free, the second voice objects by expressing platitudes toward war.

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[22] Nurit Gretz, *Khirbet Khizeh Vehaboker Shelemohorat* (Hirbet Hizah and the Morning After) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1984), 124.

[23] Althusser claims that "All ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects." Althusser's famous example is of an officer hailing "Hey, you there!" Explicating this example, Althusser writes: "Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject." Louis Althusser. *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 115, 118.

For instance, the voice of the particular "you" explains that "there's a war and this man is on the other side […] What would happen if we all start to set prisoners free? Who knows, maybe he really knows something important." (135; 308). The voice of this "you" appears within parentheses, which are common in Yizhar's prose, especially in his work of 1948. These parentheses in the interior dialogue in "Hahshavuy" have a double function: on the one hand they suggest that their content is of secondary importance in the narrator's mind, and on the other they stress the irony of the story, in that they emphasize, graphically, the existence of that very content, and thereby its importance.

The Dialogue, taking place mainly between the two voices in the narrator's mind, is distinguished from the narrator's interior monologue in that the monologue now includes several diatribes to the driver as well as to the prisoner, who is softly directed to leave the jeep. Thus, the second-person "you" takes several forms in the story: it is the voice addressed by the universalistic voice, as well as the driver, and also the Arab prisoner.

In general, the dialogic form should suggest awareness to the interlocutor, awareness which could be perceived as an ethical responsiveness. Nevertheless, the dialogue in "Hashavuy," as well as the second person narrative that precedes it, does not respond to any mutual relations. Although it might appear so, neither the narrator's humanistic thoughts nor his striving for communication cross the threshold of speech. This is an *inner* dialogue between the two voices of the narrator, pointing, first and foremost, to his failure in approaching the ones to whom he addresses his thoughts. Precisely because it is a dialogue, and thus has the potential for relation, it illustrates the lack of this relation and the narrator's failure to speak up.

In addition, just as the narrator of "Hashavuy" succeeds in addressing the reader through his use of the second-person pronoun, in his interior dialogue he is also able to manipulate the reader’s possible responses. Thus, after his ethical contemplation (which, as explained above, transposes the readers into subjects), the readers are directed by the narrator to identify with the narrator's self-justifying response to his own (and possibly, their) universalist, moral views. Consequently, through a dialogical-rhetorical process that in the end justifies the narrator's silence, the reader is also directed to choose silence.

Who, then, is the prisoner in the story? Who is the captive? The plot proffers an Arab prisoner for his role. However, ironically, the prisoner in the story is not only the innocent Arab shepherd caught by the group of bored Israeli soldiers. It is also just as well the narrator who is entrapped in his ethical thoughts yet fails to voice them. This is hinted in a sentence toward the end of the story. Using the second person when referring to the prisoner, this sentence blurs the seemingly clear distinction between the prisoner and the narrator: "Too bad for you, prisoner, he does not have the strength to act" (138; 310).

The narrator of "Hahshavuy" is the prisoner of his own silence; yet his silent contemplation liberates him from committing an action on behalf of the Arab prisoner. The narrator's captivity, therefore, can be seen as liberating him. It should be noted that the image of the narrator as a prisoner blurs the distinction between aggressor and victim. Moreover, it suggests ethical contemplation as imprisoning the soldier. As shown by my survey of the early reception and criticism of "Hashavuy," such stories can bother the Jewish-Israeli reader who does not want to think about issues of Jewish violence in the 1948 war, and present issues concerning the Israeli

occupation and superfluous military actions toward Arabs.[24] As demonstrated above, the story expresses a wish similar to that of its Jewish-Israeli reader: to be free of these moral dilemmas.

As in the conclusion of "Khirbet Khizeh," the contemplative narrative of "Hashavuy" ends with a description of nature. The vista seen at the end of the story is flat and open: "The glimmering plain was a thin, bright foil. Thousands of acres shone – a magical expanse without riverbeds or hills, ascents or descents, trees or villages" (138; 310). The landscape, empty of human beings and their traces, is transformed by the end of the story into the silent inner world of the story's narrator. While nature around the village of "Khirbet Khizeh" sounds the voices of its expelled inhabitants, in "Hashavuy" nature expresses only doubt and sorrow:

> And yet behind us (but no one is gazing there) in the misty evening coming over the mountains, there, maybe, there is a different feeling, a gnawing sadness, the sadness of 'who-knows?,' of shameful importance, the 'who knows?' that is in the heart of a waiting woman, the 'who knows?' of fate, a single, very personal 'who knows?', and still another 'who knows?' belonging to us all which will remain here among us, unanswered, long after the sun has set ("Hashavuy", 138; 310).

As shown above, the external plot of "Hashavuy" is silent, taking place in the narrator's mind and tracing the victory of silence over speech. Accordingly, the story ends with the emotional weight of rhetorical questions, which, being rhetorical, neither expect nor receive explicit answers. It should be noted that in the Hebrew

[24] Interestingly, the legend of the Arab shepherd whose life was spared by a convoy of thirty-five fighters (in Hebrew, the *Lamed-He convoy*), and who later disclosed the unit's location to Arab fighters who attacked and killed the thirty-five, is not explicit in the narrator's inner dialogue. This historical story was dominant in the Israeli discourse of that period, and thus it is implicit in "Hahshvuy"; nevertheless, it is never presented as part of the soldiers' deliberations about how to treat the shepherd.

original, no question mark is added to the phrase "who knows," which means that other than in its translation into English, this utterance is not really a question, and thereby it blocks any attempt at an answer. By the end of the story, the domination of silence is complete: the narrator, the reader, and even nature are all silent. Furthermore, the narrator still refrains from describing sounds from the external plot, like, for example, any of the voices of the other protagonists participating in the jeep drive.

Despite the silence, but also because of it, the "different feeling," the "gnawing sadness" and the accompanying question of "who knows," which all sneak into the mind of the narrator, have a powerful effect for the story's ending, due to the integral contradiction created in its closing passage: The story's poetics of silence is able both to intensify and diminish the urgent and painful political debate that is raised by it. Silence has the capacity to hold within contradictory ideas, intentions and hopes all at once.

As discussed above, the stream of consciousness technique of the interior monologue points to the gap between the internal and the external realms. The content of the interior monologue is important for this discussion of "Hashavuy" because it deals precisely with the problem of silence: the internal monologue is the narrator's contemplation of the ethical need for speech and the inner process by which he nonetheless chooses to remain silent. Thus, although they are fashioned out of words, these interior thoughts and monologues manage to convey silence, and are thus one of the expressive modes of a poetics of silence. The idea of a poetics of silence may appear paradoxical in literature in general, and especially in Yizhar's prose, in which words, minute descriptions and eloquent language of the highest resolution predominate. A few abstract, theoretical ideas can help in deciphering the very

position of silence within literature in general and Yizhar's prose in particular. In her essay "The Aesthetics of Silence," Susan Sontag discusses the dialectics of silence and speech, suggesting that silence be understood in relativistic terms. Silence or emptiness in an artistic work, argues Sontag, is dialectical in its essence. Sontag calls this form of silence "resonating silence," or "eloquent silence." [25] *Eloquent silence* – a term which appears in studies about silence – is understood by Sontag as a dialectical product, which by definition consists of oppositions defined by their relativity.

The notion of eloquent silence helps to render clearer the idea of a poetics of silence. Israeli linguist Michal Ephratt, building on Roman Jacobson's model of communication, defines *eloquent silence* as a means of communication, which the speaker knowingly chooses in order to deliver his or her message.[26] Ephratt defines *eloquent silence* as "a means chosen by the speaker for significant verbal communication alongside speech; it is neither the listener's silence nor the silencing of the speaker," but rather "[e]loquent silence alone (not stillness, pauses or silencing), is an active means chosen by the speaker to communicate his or her message."[27] This definition of *eloquent silence* contributes to the notion of a poetics of silence as a meaningful rhetorical device that exists alongside speech within the story. In addition, as Sontag explains regarding the aesthetics of silence: "Silence remains, inescapably, a form in speech […] and an element in a dialogue."[28] Hence, a poetics of silence takes into account also the speech-silence dialectics, in their variety of poetic appearances.

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[25] Susan Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence." In *Styles of Radical Will*. (New York: Picador, 2002), 3-35-6. The notion of silence has scarcely been addressed from a theoretical-literary perspective. Therefore, Sontag's formative essay, as well as notions from the works of the American composer John Cage, is at the root of my interest in silence. A section of my dissertation is devoted to the theory of silence, in literature and in other disciplines. John Cage. *Silence*. (Middletown Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1961).

[26] Michal Ephratt, "The Functions of Silence," *Journal of Pragmatics* 40 (2008), 1909-1938 (1909, 1913).

[27] Ibid., 1909.

[28] Susan Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence," 11.

In view of such a speech-silence dialectics, the narrator of "Hashavuy" in fact narrates in a stream-of-consciousness style that brings out the tension between silence and speech. Therefore, this narrative can be understood as a manifestation of the poetics of silence. To use Ephratt's words, it communicates the narrator's message, a message of constant indecision. This argument is relevant, but since Ephratt mostly deals with everyday conversations and with the process of communication, it only partially expresses the complexity of the notion of silence in a literary text: the poetics of silence in "Hashavuy" allows for the story to engage in the dialectics at the root of silence, in order to produce a meaningfully *eloquent silence.* The interior monologue, the bi-vocal interior dialogues, and beyond them the figure of the silent narrator, all participate in the continuous dialogue between silence and speech. It is especially the silent narrator, containing the multitude of clamoring voices, who embodies the dialectics of *eloquent silence*.

"Hashavuy," therefore, is narrated through a paradoxical narrator-figure: the silent narrator. Needless to say, the concept of a silent narrator is not unique to "Hashavuy." Such figures are common in literature written as a response to trauma. The connection between trauma and questions of language and silence is well-established in psychology (through analyses of the language of victims or witnesses of traumatic events) as well as in cultural studies and in history (by looking at cultural and social products of Holocaust testimony, or of post-trauma accounts); there is a consensus about the psychological difficulty of expressing trauma in words.[29]

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[29] A collaboration of psychoanalysis, history and literature, and their joint understanding of questions of trauma and language in relation to the Holocaust, is found in Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman's *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing, in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*. (New York: Routledge, 1992). In addition, the idea of silence as a response to trauma was delineated by Jean-François Lyotard, through his notion of the *Differend*, and by Dominick LaCapra, through his idea of the lacuna of incomprehensibility, faced by those who try to speak after trauma. Jean-François Lyotard. *The Differend*, *Phrases in Dispute*. (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Dominick LaCapra. *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). In his book, Amos Goldberg provides a clear and helpful survey of the concept of "trauma" through the

Moreover, after the atrocities of the twentieth century, and especially after the Holocaust, the question has been raised as to whether "we are passing out of an historical era of verbal primacy […] into a phase of decayed language, of 'post linguistic' forms, and perhaps of partial silence?"[30]

The silent narrator can be accounted for by literature written in the phase of decayed language, by literature written as a response to, or in the shadow of, trauma. In Hebrew literature, silent narrators can be found, for example, in the writings of Aharon Appelfeld: in his short stories (e.g., "Kitty", "Aviv Kar" [Cold Spring] [1962]) as well as in his novel *Masa el hahoref* (Journey into Winter) (2000), which is narrated throughout by a silent narrator.[31] The silence of Yizhar's narrator is not necessarily an outcome of a traumatic event of which he cannot speak. While the participation in the 1948 war and the experience of the brutal capturing of the shepherd can be perceived as traumatic, the story's narrative does not portray them as traumatizing to the narrator. Therefore, his silence needs to be explained otherwise.

As I argue, silence in "Hahshavuy" expresses the narrator's complex relation to discursive power, and his paradoxical wish to both differ from it and to agree with it. It is important to stress that by publishing his story, Yizhar spoke up against the silencing forces of Zionist discourse, especially because he published it in a

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reading of diaries written during the Holocaust. See: Amos Goldberg, *Trauma Be-Guf Rishon* (Trauma in First Person). (Or Yehuda: Kineret Zmora Bitan Dvir, 2012). Recent scholarship, however, challenges these theories, suggesting that trauma is, indeed, accessible to memory and describable in language. This calls into question the link – which became a consensus over the 1990's – between silence and trauma in psychology and literature. See: Joshua Pederson, "Speak, Trauma: Toward a Revisited Understanding of Literary Trauma Theory." *Narrative* 22(3) (2014), 333-353.

[30] George Steiner, *Language and Silence*, (New York: Atheneum, 1967), VII.

[31] On silences in Appelfeld's stories see: Yigal Schwartz, "*Hazman Hakarpati: Dibur, Toda'a Ve'ilmut Baprosa shel Aharon Appelfeld*" (Carpathian Time: Speech, Consciousness Muteness in Aharon Appelfeld's Prose), *Moznayim* 59:9 (1986), 10-12; Lili Ratok, *Bayit al Blima* (House on the Edge of the Abyss). (Tel Aviv: Heker, 1989); Dana Ben Zaken, *"Merhav, Ilmut Vedibur Besipurey Aharon Applefeld*" (Space, Muteness and Speech in the Stories by Aharon Appelfeld) *Mikan* 5: *Olamo Shel Aharon Appelfeld* (The World of Aharon Appelfeld) (2005), 111-117. On Appelfeld's early, chaotic stories versus the authoritative (though occasionally silent) narrators in his later writings see: Yael Feldman, "Whose Story Is It, Anyway? Psychology and Ideology in the Representation of the Shoah in Israeli Literature," *Probing the Limits of Representation* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1992), 223-240.

mainstream hegemonic journal of the time. Yet the narrator he created demonstrates the ambiguity of speaking and silencing at the same time, and eventually he chooses silence. The action of the silent narrator in "Hashavuy" is twofold: On the one hand he is able to demonstrate his moral objections, and to this end he implements a poetics of silence to challenge the Zionist discourse on the 1948 war. To use the words of Hever, Yizhar here creates the "minority discourse of a national majority."[32] On the other hand, by remaining silent in the external or action realm, the narrator responds to the Zionist discourse aiming to silence voices that seem to jeopardize the national project. These complex relations with discursive power, as expressed in "Hashavuy" all within the figure of the narrator, effectively diminish the need to distinctly voice subversive thoughts and to take action on behalf of the Arab prisoner: such silent thoughts are a convenient outlet for rebellious urges, which, once discharged, allow the power dynamics to continue, practically undisturbed, in their original course. My thinking on silence and the national subject as molded in Yizhar's "Hashavuy" is framed by the interconnection of oblivion and silence with the national narrative. Thus, seen as dialectical and ambiguous, the poetics of silence in "Hashavuy" can be seen to mirror one aspect of the nation and its creation. Renan concludes his formative 1882 essay "What Is a Nation?" asserting that:

> A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the position in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present day consent, the desire to

[32] Hannan Hever. "Minority Discourse of a National Majority: Israeli Fiction of the Early Sixties." In *Producing the Modern Hebrew Canon*. (New York and London: New York University Press, 2002), 140-175.

> live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form[33.]

While the principle of the nation is clearly based on shared memories, forgetting, too, is a crucial factor in the creation of the nation: "the essence of a nation", Renan writes, "is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things."[34] Since forgetting is essential for forging the nation, "progress in historical studies often constitute a danger for (the principle of) nationality. Indeed, historical enquiry brings to light deeds of violence which took place at the origin of all political formations, even those whose consequences have been altogether beneficial."[35] Hence, Renan understands the forgetting of the violent past as crucial not only for the creation of the nation, but also for its maintenance and consolidation over time.

Furthermore, in his autobiographical *Recollection of my Youth*, Renan connects oblivion to the notion of silence, as he writes: "Oblivion and silence are the proper punishments to be inflicted upon all that we meet with in the way of what is ungainly or vulgar in the course of our journey through life."[36] The connection of oblivion to the consolidation of narratives is central also in Bendict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, where he compares the history of the nation to the biography of the individual:

> All profound changes in consciousness, by their very nature, bring with them characteristic amnesias. Out of such oblivions, in specific historical circumstances, spring narratives. After experiencing the physiological and emotional changes produced by puberty, it is

[33] Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation," 47.
[34] Ibid., 45.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ernest Renan, *Recollection of My Youth* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1897), Xiii.

> impossible to 'remember' the consciousness of childhood. How many thousands of days passed between infancy and early adulthood vanish beyond direct recall! How strange it is to need another's help to learn that this naked baby in the yellowed photograph, sprawled happily on rug or cot, is you. The photograph, fine child of the age of mechanical reproduction, is only the most peremptory of a huge modern accumulation of documentary evidence (birth certificates, diaries, report cards, letters, medical records, and the like) which simultaneously records a certain apparent continuity and emphasizes its loss from memory. Out of this estrangement comes a conception of personhood, *identity* (yes, you and that naked baby are identical) which, because it can not be 'remembered,' must be narrated.[37]

Following from these ideas, and as a conclusion to this article, I understand the poetics of silence used in Samekh Yizhar's "Hashavuy" as connected to an explicit process of "coming of age" that entails repression and forgetting some segments of a nation's past necessary for the construction of the national narrative and for the creation of a nation. Thus, the paradoxical figure of the silent narrator utilizes the seemingly paradoxical poetics of silence, but while doing so he accentuates an inner struggle, which is fundamental in the creation of the nation: this is the struggle to silence, a struggle to repress and thereby to forget the violence in its origins. This forgetting was – and still is – necessary for the becoming and maintaining of the nation-state.

"*Hahsavuy*" brings out the paradoxical possibilities inherent in silence. As demonstrated above, silence in "Hahshavuy" has the potential to subvert power; at the

[37] Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. (London: Verso and New Left books, 1996), 204. Emphasis in the original.

same time it can be understood as monitored by discourse, to the extent of empowering it. Moreover, similar to its function in "Khirbet Khizeh," silence in "Hashavuy" blurs the distinction between self and other, victim and perpetrator and between past and present. In the actual moments of the creation of the nation, torn between the voice of the particular and that of the universal, striving for dialogue and yet leaving it in the realm of the mind, the narrator of "Hashavuy" chooses silence. The silent narrator of the story demonstrates the process of the creation of the national subject: one who tells a story and at the same time silences it.