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The Advantage of Marginality: R.A. Braudes' Short Stories of His Lviv Period¹

Abstract: This paper discusses R.A. Braudes' short stories that were published in the second half of the 1870s, during his three-and-a-half-year residency in Lviv. This was a period of dramatic changes in Haskalah literature, and also a significant period in Braudes' work when he first attained his status as a novelist. In light of this success, I will explore why Braudes persisted in using the short-story genre, one that was considered trivial and did not earn him the recognition he received for his longer works, and discuss what literary and conceptual possibilities the short story gave him that his novels failed to give.

Keywords: Reuben Asher Braudes, Lviv, Haskalah, Maskilim, Russia

Introduction

Reuben Asher Braudes was born in Vilna in 1851 and grew up during the time of the changing of the guard of the Haskalah movement (Jewish Enlightenment).² He began his literary career at the age of seventeen, contributing articles and feuilletons to a number of contemporary periodicals, including *Ha-Lebanon*, *Ha-Melitz* and *Ha-Carmel*. A few months later, he left for a three-year course of study at the rabbinical seminary in Zhitomir, during which he became acquainted with a number of Haskalah authors, including Sholem Yankev Avramovitsh (Mendele Moykher Sforim), Avraham Ber Gottlober and Eliezer

¹ I gratefully acknowledge Beit-Berl College and the Levinsky College of Education (Israel) for their financial support for the translation of this article.

² On Braudes' history (1851–1903) see: Joseph Klausner, *The History of the New Hebrew Literature* (Jerusalem, 1947), vol. 5: 399–428 [Hebrew]; Ben-Ami Feingold, *The Works of R.A. Braudes*, Dissertation, Hebrew University 1978, 1–19 [Hebrew]; and Gershon Shaked, *Mostly Mendele* (Jerusalem, 2004), 28–30 [Hebrew].

Hacohen Zweifel. Joseph Klausner surmises that, in Zhitomir, Braudes also became acquainted with authors and critics of Russian literature: Turgenev and Gogol, Belinsky and Chernyshevsky.³ Braudes' first foray into Hebrew literature, therefore, was made when he was immersed in the renewed spirit of the literary poetics of Russian realism. Such influences were already evident in his first published article in *Ha-Carmel* in 1870, "Contemporary Israeli Authors in Russia,"⁴ in which he praised the genres of prose, especially stressing its ability to influence people in a way that poetry could not.

During his productive years, Braudes' ventures into prose were varied and impressive. He wrote three full-length novels: *Religion and Life (Ha-Dat ve'Ha-Haim)* (Lviv 1876–1879), *The Two Ends (Shtei Ha-Ktzavot)* (Warsaw 1888), and *From Where to Where (M'Ayin Ul'An)* (Krakow 1891). In addition, one must also note *Failed Expectancy (Tochelet Nichzavah)* (1885), a novel for which Braudes wrote only a few chapters, and *Ancient Songs (Shirim Attikim)*, which was published only partially (in installments) in 1890, and in its entirety posthumously in 1903.⁵ Even though his full-length novels are what earned him critical acclaim, Braudes nevertheless continued to write short pieces on various topics throughout his literary career. These included fifteen short stories in Hebrew, and articles and feuilletons in Hebrew and Yiddish. The acute awareness he had for the issue of the genre is attested to by the subtitles that he gave his stories: "Story" (Erzählung), "Story in Bits and Pieces," or even "Humoresque."⁶

The following will expound on the generic and intertextual relationships between Braudes' short stories and his novel. As a case study, five short stories will be examined: "My Son!... My Son!..." ("Bni!... Bni!...") (1876); "Love Does Wonders" ("Ahava Teholel Niflaot") (1876); "A Hassid Man" ("Ish Hassid") (1877); "The Sin of Rebellion" ("Hatat Meri") (1878); and "The Holy Goat" ("Ha-Taysh Ha-Kadosh") (1878). These stories were all published during what is known as his *Morning Light* period, the three-and-a-half years when he lived in Lviv and as-

³ Klausner, *The History...*, vol. 5: 403–405.

⁴ Reuben Asher Braudes, "Contemporary Israeli Authors in Russia," *Ha-Carmel*, 8 (1871), 20 (1871), 154–155; 21 (1871), 162–163; 22 (1871), 170–173 [Hebrew]. For further comments on this issues see Klausner, *The History...*, vol. 5: 406; Feingold, *The Works...*, 243.

⁵ Klausner, *The History...*, vol. 5: 450–451; Feingold, *The Works...*, 119.

⁶ Feingold, *The Works...*, 117–118.

sisted Avraham Ber Gottlober in editing the periodical *Ha-Boker Or* (literally “The Morning Light”) published between 1876–1886. This period was a dramatic chapter of twists and turns in Hebrew literature in general, and is considered one of the most significant and productive ones in Braudes’ career, as this was the time when he acquired most of his fame and status as a writer and author of novels. Yet, despite, or perhaps because of this success, Braudes continued to employ the short-story genre, a minor one that did not attract critical attention and did not merit him significant recognition of the type he acquired with his longer published works. I will discuss, therefore, what need writing short stories fulfilled for Braudes in his poetic world and what literary and conceptual possibilities they gave him that his longer novels failed to give. While clarifying this, I will emphasize the radical character of Braudes’ novel, that coincided with the poetics and ideology of the younger generation of the Haskalah movement in Eastern Europe, and point out how this contrasted with the moderate character of his short stories, which attained realistic poetic requirements in a more mature, impressive style than in his novels.

Enforced realism: Is this possible?

It is accepted by researchers of the Haskalah that the many-decade delay in the emancipation process in Russia was the main reason for the change in the Haskalah’s character in the 1860s, both within the Pale of Settlement and beyond. With Alexander II’s rise to power in 1855, the Jews of Russia sensed that the era of major reforms had finally arrived, something for which they had yearned since the completion of the partitions of Poland, when many restrictions were enforced on the Jews of the Pale. In the 1860s, after the suppression of the January Uprising in Poland (1863), the Russian authorities encouraged Russification and contrived to blur the ethnic characters of the minorities and eliminate any potential support that the Jews might give to the Poles. To this end, government representatives sought to secure the support of the Jews and special concessions were made in favor of the Jewish minority. Nevertheless, comparing the rights that the Jews were granted during the beginning of Alexander II’s rule with those granted for the benefit of other minorities through the general amendments he made in the country, shows that the Jews were still a discriminated minority and that

there was really no significant change in their civil status during that time. However, against the dark backdrop of the reign of his predecessor, Nicholas I, the changes that Alexander II initiated were hailed as harbingers of revival for the Jews of Russia. One can thus understand the feelings of shock, disappointment and frustration that the Jews experienced when, in the second half of Alexander II's reign, these easements were completely rescinded and new edicts were decreed on the Jewish population. The principal reason for this was the concern in Russian conservative circles for a "too successful" Russification; that is to say, a fear of the formation of a milieu of enlightened Jews in powerful economic and cultural positions who might support Russian revolutionary activity. The completion of the amendments process in the 1870s led to a major crisis in the Haskalah movement.

This is, briefly, the background behind the frenetic ideological changes in the 1860s and the reason for the emergence of a new generation of Maskilim who supported an intellectual, literary struggle that was more radical and revolutionary than their predecessors'. Their aim was to change the lifestyle of the Jewish population in Eastern Europe, and their members – including authors Sholem Yankev Abramovich, Yehudah Leib Gordon, Peretz Smolenskin, Avraham Uri Kovner, Moshe Leib Lilienblum, and Braudes – acted on several fronts.⁷ Firstly, like their predecessors, they acknowledged the fact that the Jewish people were foreign and aloof, and lacked a connection with the people amongst whom they lived.⁸ For this reason their primary attack was against the religious establishment and its supporters who, they felt, lacked powers of rationalism or critical thinking. Simultaneously, they opposed the moderation shown by the previous generations of Maskilim, and were reproachful of their predecessors' harmonious and balanced perception of the "Jewish question" and the "Judaism question."⁹ These radical Maskilim, however, also looked inward, questioning wasted efforts of the Haskalah itself,

⁷ For the characteristics of the second generation of Maskilim in Russia, see: Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah and History: The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Awareness of the Past* (Jerusalem, 1995), 375–376 [Hebrew].

⁸ Gideon Katznelson, *The Literary Battle between the Orthodox and the Maskilim: Chapters in the History of Hebrew Literature in Russia in the Sixties and Seventies* (Tel-Aviv, 1954), 11 [Hebrew].

⁹ For the characteristics of the first generation in Russia, see: Immanuel Etkes, "The Story of the "Controlled Haskalah" ["Haskalah Mi-Ta'am"] and the change in the status of the Haskalah movement in Russia," in idem (ed.) *Religion and Life: The Jewish Haskalah Movement in Eastern Europe* (Jerusalem, 1993), 167–216 [Hebrew]; Feiner, *Haskalah and*

and demanding a thoughtful self-examination in light of the effects of a false Haskalah.¹⁰ Finally, a fourth front was adopted by young Maskilim in the 1870s as a result of their continued, accumulated disappointment in the Russian government and its officers, who tended to support the growing anti-Semitism, and in light of the Odessa pogrom (1871) and the expulsion of the Jews from Kiev (1872).¹¹

Not only did the existence of multiple fronts differentiate the two generations of the Haskalah, the social and cultural profiles of the members of the movement themselves were also different. Unlike the “fathers” of the Haskalah in Russia, who developed autodidactically in the Pale of Settlement and saw the Berlin Haskalah as their model, this new generation of Maskilim had been brought up in a school system that had been developed with the aid of the Russian government, and they thus formed an educated Jewish intelligentsia. They included Avraham Uri Kovner, who studied in the preparatory rabbinical seminary (Beit Midrash) in Vilna, Avraham Ya’akov Paperna, Yehudah Leib Gordon, Aharon Shemu’el Lieberman, Shelomoh Mandelkern and Yehudah Leib Kantor, who completed their course of studies in rabbinical seminaries, and Yitshak Kaminer, who studied medicine and mathematics at the University of Kiev. For our purposes, it is important to reiterate that Braudes was also a graduate of a rabbinical seminary in Zhitomir, and the time he spent studying and eventually qualifying in that institution was very significant for his development as an intellectual. Even if not all the young members of the Haskalah generation in Russia were graduates of the government-sponsored educational system,¹² it seems certain that this generation, in general, had exchanged the western European model for one that had some Russian influence, adopting, under its aegis, more radical, positivist and utilitarian views. This emphasis is es-

History, 416–418; idem, *Cultural Wars: The Jewish Haskalah Movement in the 19th Century*, (Jerusalem, 2010), 164–169 [Hebrew].

¹⁰ On the “false Haskalah” see: Mordechai Levin, *Social and Economic Values in the Ideology of the Haskalah Period* (Jerusalem, 1976), 96–97 [Hebrew]; Feiner, *Cultural Wars...*, 279–297.

¹¹ Shmuel Werses, *“Awake, My People”*: *Hebrew Literature in the Age of Modernization*, (Jerusalem, 2001), 505–516 [Hebrew].

¹² Including Mapu, Abramovich, Y. L. Levin, Smolenskin and Brandstetter, who were autodidacts. On other graduates of the government-sponsored education system see: Yehuda Slutzky, “The Rabbinical Seminary in Vilna,” in: Etkes (ed.), *Religion and Life...*, 217–293 [Hebrew].

sential to understand Braudes' complex, multi-dimensional poetics in his Lviv period.

The changeover of the guard in the Haskalah in Russia had a cause-and-effect relationship with a host of poetic transformations that characterized literature in the second half of the nineteenth century. During this period, the literary system adopted realistic values and underwent an upheaval in genre, theme, structure and language. The subject of preference changed, and prose, especially the full-length novel, replaced poetry at the top of the hierarchy of genres. In addition, the character of Hebrew literature changed not only as a result of exposure to the positivistic and utilitarian Russian culture, but also due to the intensification of the internal voices of Jewish culture that demanded placing "this world" at the top of the scale of values of the time ("this world," *olam ha-zeh*, refers to the corporal world, which, for orthodox Jews is considered merely a stepping stone on the way to "the next world," *olam ha-ba*, the more important world-to-come after one's death). "All human beings live on the earth, but the Jews live in heaven," declared Lilienblum regarding the way of life of the ascetic Jew, who regards the world as a corridor to the next world.¹³ Realistic poetics, in some way, allowed Haskalah thought to fulfill its demand to examine and repair "this world" through the use of the literary platform. The development of the Jewish press in the nineteenth century provided the physical foundation for publishing works of prose: serialized long novels and short stories.

On this basis, Joseph Klausner, historian of modern Hebrew literature, delineated three distinct periods: the Rationalist period (1781–1830), the Romantic period (1830–1860) and the Realistic Period (1860–1881).¹⁴ This classification greatly influenced literary research of the era¹⁵ but in defining the Realistic period, Klausner created an association between the term "realism" (which is identified with ob-

¹³ Quoted in Eliyahu Cherikover, *Jews in Times of Revolution* (Tel-Aviv, 1958), 199 [Hebrew].

¹⁴ Joseph Klausner, *The History of the New Hebrew Literature* (Jerusalem, 1930), vol. 1, 12 [Hebrew].

¹⁵ See, for example: Gershon Shaked, "Introduction," in Reuben Asher Braudes, *Religion and Life* (Jerusalem, 1974), 36–37; Feingold, *The Works*; Einat Baram Eshel, "'Two Contrasts in One Issue': On the Ideological Bi-values of the Maskilic Novel to History. A Look at 'Donkey's Burial' by Peretz Smolenskin and 'Religion and Life' of Reuben Asher Braudes," in Avner Holtzman (ed.), *From Centers to Center: The Book of Nurit Govrin* (Tel-Aviv, 2005), 126–144 [Hebrew]; eadem, *Representations of Reality in Hebrew Haskalah Literature 1857–1881* (Tel-Aviv, 2011), 14–19 [Hebrew].

jective representation and is impartial to any given way of life) and the terms “conflict” and “fight” (which are used for the purpose of a critical approach), and thus his system of division led to some opposition. In fact, for many years, researchers of Haskalah literature disputed the justification of the term “realism” to describe the poetics that reigned during the period. Literary researcher Simon Halkin attempted to differentiate between “realism” and “actualism,” and he pointed out that literature in the second half of the nineteenth century did take upon itself the task of addressing public and communal questions that were on the Russian Jewry’s agenda. This, he claims, was counterproductive to the development of mature realistic poetics and sabotaged any chance of its maturation.¹⁶ Researchers Josef Even, Dan Miron and Yair Mazor expressed similar views.¹⁷

My view on this issue is that a compromise between the two concepts must exist. The use of the term “realism” is fully justified with regard to the context in which this poetics developed and its purpose and aspirations. However, distance in time now requires us to find a trustworthy validation that will clarify the complex circumstances that hindered realism’s maturation at that time and distorted its achievements. In Yehuda Friedlander’s view, realistic Haskalah literature attempted to accurately represent the world from which it had sprung and commit itself to its description, but because it did not accept this world as it is, it is crucial to understand its ambivalence in depth.¹⁸

This conflict is easily recognizable in Braudes’ works, too. Already in his first article on Israeli authors (1871), mentioned above, he criticized colleagues who did not pay enough attention to contemporary questions, and urged them to combine the pleasurable with the useful in their work. Braudes practiced what he preached, dedicating significant portions of

¹⁶ Simon Halkin, *Introduction to Hebrew Literature* (Jerusalem, 1958), 229 [Hebrew]; idem, *Currents and Forms in the New Hebrew Literature* (Jerusalem, 1984), vol. 1, 228–232 [Hebrew].

¹⁷ Josef Even, *The Emergence of Realism in Hebrew Literature* (Jerusalem, 1972), vol. 1, 7 [Hebrew]; Dan Miron, *Between Vision and Truth: The Emergence of the Hebrew and Yiddish Novel in the 19th Century* (Jerusalem, 1979), 32, 61, 217 [Hebrew]; Yair Mazor, *Faces and Trends in the Poetics of the “Realistic” Hebrew Literary Structure during the Period of the Haskalah: Studies of the Structural Principles of a Selection of Stories of Mapu, Smolenskin, Braudes, Brandstetter, Y.L. Gordon, A. Schulman, Gottlober and Mendele Moykher Sforim*, Dissertation, Tel-Aviv University 1981 [Hebrew].

¹⁸ Yehuda Friedlander, *Changes in the Significance of Basic Values in the New Hebrew Poetry in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, Dissertation, Bar Ilan University 1968, 131–132 [Hebrew].

this literary work to contemporary issues and denouncing the deficiencies in Jewish society. His inspiration for his novel *Religion and Life*, for example, was Moshe Leib Lilienblum's struggle to introduce modifications into religion.¹⁹ While Lilienblum carried out his struggle using the contemporary Hebrew press as his platform, Braudes used his novel for this purpose, introducing the same sharp, assaulting rhetoric, for which he paid the price of refining a deep realistic style. He combined a multitude of key characters in his work²⁰ subjugating the character and experiences of Shmuel, the protagonist, to the public interest of Haskalah ideas. The last part of the novel dodges the plot lines and surrenders itself to opinion journalism, so that the novel is suddenly terminated without a satisfactory conclusion.

In contrast to the style of his full-length novels, Braudes' short stories followed more restrained channels that gave a balanced representation of the interests, complex yet controlled, of "this world." This was the reason for Joseph Klausner's flattering comment that if there was one author in Hebrew literature where artistry took the first place and opinion journalism took the second, Braudes was the one. As proof to this claim, Klausner quoted Braudes' words at the beginning of his collection of stories *Old Folks with Boys (Zkenim im Na'arim)* (1886), in which he stated that his work was the result of dual loyalty: loyalty to reality and loyalty to the emotions that arise in the author's soul. He wrote, "The eye sees, the heart feels, and the hand writes."²¹ The fact that Braudes is referring with these words to his collection of short stories and not to his longer novels is not unintentional: indeed, his propensity for complex realistic descriptions of real situations did occur first in his Lviv short stories, in which the tension between Haskalah interests and the struggle for realism are significantly suppressed. Yet Braudes did not allow his stories to abandon the philosophical ideas of the Haskalah. He used his stories to indirectly serve this purpose by significantly reducing their didactic tone and forsaking the style of opinion journalism that character-

¹⁹ The novel was published in the periodical *Ha-Boker Or* (1876–1880) and later issued in various publications. See: Braudes, *Religion and Life*, vols. 1–2 (Jerusalem, 1974) [Hebrew]. For details regarding the various publications see: Baram Eshel, *Representations of Reality*, 283, footnote 172. Regarding the fight to amend the religion in Russia and on Lilienblum's activity see: Feiner, *Haskalah and History...*, 403–407.

²⁰ Feingold, *The Works...*, 30, 264, 269.

²¹ Klausner, *The History...*, vol. 5: 432–433; See also: Braudes, *Old Folks with Boys: A Collection of Stories, Plays and Portraits of the Lives of Jews in the Land of Russia*, vol. 3 (Vienna, 1886) [Hebrew].

ized the novel *Religion and Life*, which was serialized in parallel to the publication of the Lviv short stories from 1876 to 1879. In contrast to his novel, which is clearly based on topical public issues, and in which the writer openly articulates the ideology that influences the plot, Braudes, in his short stories, changed his priorities. Here, he focuses on the intimate worlds of the diverse characters he derived from the nineteenth-century Russian Jewish experience; the broader influences and ideas are merely hinted at in the background.

An example of this can already be found in “My Son!... My Son!...: A Play on a Railway” (1876), the first story that Braudes published in *Ha-Boker Or*.²² In the story, Marcus, a Jew who had left his family’s home at the age of fifteen to study mathematics, is traveling back to the city of his birth with two friends, Yaakov and Nikolai. The setting on the train comes as a result of the attention being paid to the technological transformations in the Russian Empire at the time, and the train furnishes convenient settings for different members of the population, whether on national, religious or social levels, to meet. Under the guise of such a meeting, Marcus, with his Russian name and appearance, steps up to protect an old Jewish man who has been caught praying, which is illegal. Marcus is eventually shocked to discover that the old man is none other than his father, whom he has not seen for twelve years.

The meeting between father and son grants the traditional melodrama that is a result of remarkable incidents of timing, but one must not fail to note the meticulous attention that Braudes has devoted to stylistic aspects of the story: the human-emotional aspect takes center stage and he has left national ideals in the background. In this context, it is important to note the documentary-like character of the story, which Ben-Ami Feingold associates with the “sketch” genre: a quick honest sketch of a single frame in a life, which occurs in a limited area of space and time. Hamutal Bar-Yosef, a scholar of the sketch genre, points out that it was used even in the earliest instances of Russian literature as a means of increasing the tension between realism and documentation on the one hand, and an esthetic depiction of an intimate state of mind on the other.²³ It seems that adopting this style into Hebrew literature

²² The story “My Son!... My Son!...” was published in *Ha-Boker Or* 1 (1876), 37–44. Later published in Braudes, *Old Folks...*, 63–72.

²³ Hamutal Bar-Yosef, *The Sketch as a Transition Genre from Realism to Symbolism in Hebrew Literature* (Tel-Aviv, 1989), 30–37, 63–83 [Hebrew].

answered a double need: the first, to give an appearance of relevancy and dedication to the socio-national “this world,” and the second, to allow explorations into the emotional nuances of the world of a specific protagonist. Thus, the discerning author first describes the broad aspects of the scene, as when he observes the railroad station and describes the medley of sounds and the fragments of overheard conversations. However, at the end of the story, he focuses on minute observations: vivid and direct descriptions of the characters, paying attention to fine behavioral nuances, such as the timbre of a character’s voice. Then Braudes adds a summarizing statement that anchors his characters in some typical social experience. So he describes the elderly father: one whose clothes and body language testify that he is from a small town and earns a meager living.

In Braudes’ second published story “Love Does Wonders” (1876), the motivation that drives his characters is also a personal one, and devoid, as it were, of any nationalistic connection.²⁴ This is true, too, in “The Sin of Rebellion” (1878), which tells of a woman’s failed struggle for survival.²⁵ In this story, Dina, a gentle maiden, has married, to the chagrin of her father, a secular Maskil. After her husband has been forcibly drafted to serve in the army and later presumed dead, and because her Hassidic father has rejected her as a result of her marriage, she offers herself as a mistress to the household of the town’s chief-of-police. When, later, her father and husband make amends and appear before her in the chief-of-police’s house, she faints and dies from shock. The tragic plot begins with the mention of the exact date, Lag ba’Omer, 1860, and continues with Dina’s personal story, while the “major” period narrative remains subdued. In fact, Braudes did have difficulty sketching a convincing psychological portrait of his heroine, and his choice of a female protagonist was not a result of defined and well-developed motives, but of an intuitive insight into the female figure as the ultimate representation of the oppressed minority. However, one must appreciate his efforts to involve his readers in the soul-searching that Dina goes through, and the considerations that bring her to the chief-of-police’s house. Klausner therefore summarizes his analysis of Braudes’ short stories by praising

²⁴ The story “Love Does Wonders” was published in *Ha-Boker Or* 1 (1878), 173–200. It was published concurrently in an independent publication of Wolf Publications, Lviv. Third publication: Braudes, *Old Folks...*, 73–110.

²⁵ The story “The Sin of Rebellion” was published in *Ha-Boker Or* 3 (1878), 424–437. Later published in Braudes, *Old Folks...*, 135–151.

his marvelously portrayed characters, the likes of which had yet to be found in Hebrew literature, and even for some years after him.²⁶

Braudes, in the introduction to his collection of short stories, *Old Folks with Boys* (1886), shows his awareness of the characteristic linguistic mimesis of the Hebrew language, which was not, at that time, a spoken one. Braudes points out that authors who write in a living language can usually create characters that present convincing manners of speech and realistic behavior. But this is not the situation in Hebrew, in which the author is forced to represent “dumb people” and is burdened with the task of reliably dubbing in their language.²⁷ Braudes seems to be an author who was successful in this task. Avigdor Hayim Sternberg, the publisher of the book, states in his preface how impressed he is by the vitality and credibility of Braudes' stories and characters.²⁸ Braudes' qualified victory over the language barrier, and his choice of a minimalistic framework with a defined and convincing focus, led critic Simcha Kopshtick to declare that in Braudes' novel the rebel ruled; in his novels, the artist ruled.²⁹

Radical writing (long novels) / moderate writing (short stories)

As stated, the literary stage upon which Braudes published his stories was *Ha-Boker Or*, a periodical edited by Avraham Ber Gottlober (1811–1899). Gottlober belonged to the first-generation of Haskalah in Russia and was inspired by the Berlin Haskalah. Including such personalities as (Rabbi) Shemu'el Yosef Fuenn, Kalman Schulman and Eliezer Zweifel, this generation of Maskilim aspired to achieve a synthesis and harmony between the God-given orthodox Torah and the philosophy and values of the secular person. In fact, Gottlober founded *Ha-Boker Or* in 1876 as a direct response to Peretz Smolenskin's subversive opinions, expressed in the periodical *Ha-Shaḥar*, contradicting both Mendelssohn's momentous opinions and questioning the virtues of the

²⁶ Klausner, *The History...*, vol. 5: 456.

²⁷ Braudes, *Old Folks...*, III. Klausner expanded on Braudes' views on the subject of language: Klausner, *The History...*, vol. 5: 457–460.

²⁸ See: Braudes, *Old Folks...*, IV–VI.

²⁹ Simcha Kopshtick, “Reuben Asher Braudes (On the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of His Death),” *Ha-Olam: The Main Publication of the WZO* 15 (1928), 49, 946–949 [Hebrew]; Klausner, *The History...*, vol. 5: 167–168; Avraham Sha'anani, *Channels of New Hebrew Literature*, vol. 2 (Tel-Aviv, 1962), 68–69 [Hebrew].

Berlin Haskalah. Gottlober admired Mendelssohn and believed in the ways of the German Haskalah, and he could not condone such an attack. Despite his friendship with Smolenskin, he publicly challenged him and instigated a vehement debate to defend Mendelssohn's concepts. Gottlober nurtured Braudes' works during this struggle, as they offered a substantial counterweight to Smolenskin's writings, which had begun drawing a large audience to *Ha-Shaḥar*.

As Klausner explains, although *Ha-Boker Or* was purposely published in Lviv to circumvent certain censorship and bureaucracy issues, it can be cautiously surmised that the place itself imposed a certain influence on the periodical's character, especially in its first years. At that time, Lviv was the capital of Galicia, an area of Poland that had been handed to the Habsburg monarchy when the partition of Poland was finalized at the end of the eighteenth century (other parts of Poland had been handed over to the Russian Empire and to Prussia). Situated in eastern Galicia, it was a cultural hub in which Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish culture flowered. This led the Jewish Haskalah to being doubly influenced: On the one hand from the Hassidic narrow-mindedness that proliferated in this atmosphere and evoked a sharp Maskilic attacks, and on the other, the spirits of moderation and enlightenment that emanated from the West and that were entwined with the growth of a Polish-speaking Jewish bourgeoisie.³⁰ Braudes often published articles in *Ha-Boker Or*, including a regular column called "Judging New Books." He stopped these contributions in June 1879, three months after the publication moved to Warsaw, when he stepped down from his position as a columnist following a difference of opinion with Gottlober.³¹

What is important is that despite the overall moderate tone of *Ha-Boker Or*, the novel *Religion and Life* was neither restrained nor moderate. In fact, one can say that it was the opposite, and is one of the reasons why Braudes scholars, for many years, persisted in assuming that its author was a "recruited," militant artist in every sense of the word, fight-

³⁰ Shmuel Feiner teaches on the tradition of adoration amongst the Maskilim in Galicia towards the Berlin Haskalah and on the tight connection between the Maskilim in Galicia and those in the western area of the Austrian-Hungarian empire, that was expressed by visits, study and trade with Vienna, Prague and cities in Hungary and northern Italy. See: Feiner, *Cultural Wars...*, 106–107, 172–174. On the Jewish culture in Galicia see also: Alon Rachamimov, "Jews and non-Jews during the Habsburg Monarchy," in *A New Jewish Period: Jewish Culture in the Secular Era*, vol. 4 (Jerusalem, 2007), 37–41 [Hebrew].

³¹ Klausner, *The History...*, vol. 5: 409–410.

ing the war for the Haskalah in the Russian Empire. Already at the beginning of the twentieth century, Reuben Brainin claimed that Braudes “the rebel” had “strangled” Braudes “the artist,” a sentiment echoed by the critic Kopshtick, who on the whole praised Braudes’ restrained style, but was convinced in this case that he had not been able to stand fast against the tide of Haskalah thinking.³² Yirmiyahu Frenkel, whose comments were added to the abridged version of the novel (1947), addressed the dichotomy of topics within it and the fact that they did not tie the general and individual problems together in a pleasing fashion. Studies in the second half of the twentieth century also tended to attribute a very militant character to this novel.³³ Ben-Ami Feingold emphasized that Braudes did not instill into his novel a challenge to the fundamental principles of Jewish identity, even if he did include a sharp condemnation of the rabbinical establishment.³⁴ However, one cannot disregard that this novel is considered one of Braudes’ more confrontational works.

Is it possible that Braudes’ choice of writing a long, social novel dictated, at least somewhat, the radical nature of *Religion and Life*? To answer this question, one must recall the changes that occurred in the character of the Hebrew literary genres in the second half of the nineteenth century. The main part of these changes included the emergence of prose in general, and the process in which the social novel – because of its special power to engage the readers and instill in them the values of the time – became a central voice for Haskalah ideology. Avraham Sha’an’an drew attention to this very issue: from the moment the novel appeared in the new Hebrew literature, it became an inseparable part of the contemporary ideological battle.³⁵ The framework of the novel suited the dramatic battle for the reform of Judaism. Even if Braudes had been of a restrained nature, his use of the long mimetic narrative encouraged the inclusion of those controversial issues that he chose to paint in prominent militant shades.

³² Kopshtick, “Reuben Asher Braudes...”; Moshe Pelli, *Haskalah and Modernism: Beginnings and Continuations* (Tel-Aviv, 2007), 290–291 [Hebrew].

³³ Yirmiyahu Frenkel (ed.), in Reuben Asher Braudes, *Religion and Life (A Mofet book for schools)* (Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv, 1947), 160–161 [Hebrew]; Menucha Gilboa, “Between Maskilim and Hassidim,” *Davar*, 5 Iyar (1990), 19 [Hebrew]; Yehuda Friedlander, “Reuben Asher Braudes: An Echo of a Far-Away Life,” *Ma’ariv*, 21 Shvat (1990), 8 [Hebrew].

³⁴ Feingold, *The Works...*, 50, 271; idem, “Introduction,” in Reuben Asher Braudes, *Two Extremes* (Jerusalem, 1989) [Hebrew].

³⁵ Sha’an’an, *Channels of New Hebrew Literature...*, 68.

In this context, it is illuminating to examine again the short stories that he wrote in tandem with *Religion and Life* and verify that their tone was significantly different. Feingold, who studied Braudes' works in the 1970s, addressed this difference. While Braudes' novel deals with national and social issues, claimed Feingold, his short stories focus on the individual. Even when the conflict presented in the story has a clearly expressed ideological nucleus, the ideology per se is not the central issue, and the conflict is firmly positioned on the individual-personal level. Feingold relates this individualistic character of Braudes' stories to the primary – one might say universal – traits of the genre. He claims that choosing the short story framework forced Braudes to focus on the individual: his personality, his individual destiny, and his reflections and considerations in the limited environmental background in which he lived and acted.³⁶

It is possible that there is some justification to Feingold's claims, but it is important to clarify that the moderation in his stories and their balanced nature is not specifically a result of the genre in which they are written, but from a number of additional characteristics that are *not necessarily compulsory* to the form of the short story. One such characteristic, for example, was Braudes' tendency to place at the forefront of his stories unconventional protagonists, such as those traditionally included in stories of the Haskalah and presented in an unflattering light: rabbis, dayanim and Hassidim. This is illustrated at the very beginning of Braudes' *Ha-Boker Or* period with the story "The Repentant" ("Modeh ve'Ozev") (1875), in which he broke with one of the dominant conventions of Haskalah literature, one that went to great lengths to depict representatives of Orthodoxy and Hassidism as corrupt and ignorant. In this story, David, a young community leader from a small Lithuanian town, reveals the story of his life and the reasons that led to his moral deterioration.³⁷ The purpose of the story was, indeed, in line with the

³⁶ Feingold, *The Works...*, 120. He expounded on the basis of an earlier conclusion by Joseph Klausner that until then had not received substantial attention and development. See: Joseph Klausner, "In Our Beautiful World of Literature," *Ha-tsefira*, 21 (1894), 140, 603 [Hebrew]. For more on the short story in this connection see Einat Baram Eshel, *Between the Pathway and the Highway: The Flourishing of the Novella in the Beginning of the Twentieth Century* (Jerusalem, 2001), 34 [Hebrew].

³⁷ The story "The Repentant" was independently published in Schriptgeiser Publications in Warsaw in 1875. Later published in Braudes, *Old Folks...*, 31–62.

goals of the *Haskalah*, but its examination of the Orthodox character's way of thinking and action was the first of its kind.

During *Ha-Boker Or* period, this trend strengthened and matured, which harmonized with the spirit of the didactic-conservative publication journal that Gottlober edited in Lviv. Especially prominent in this context is the story "A Hassid Man," whose protagonist, Klonimus, is a Hassid who set out to wander the roads as a result of the economic hardships that had befallen his family and his fears that he would be arrested due to his financial debt.³⁸ For five years Klonimus wanders far from his home in an attempt to accumulate enough money to help pay back his debts and marry off his daughter with dignity. However, when he finally returns to his family, he discovers that his daughter has, in his absence, married her Maskil lover. Even though she has got married for love, and the marriage, in fact, provides financial stability for the family, Klonimus cannot accept the new liberated lifestyle that has invaded his house. After a few weeks, he leaves his home and eventually dies in a poorhouse.

On its surface, the story has all the necessary components of a traditional Maskil story whose intention is to demonstrate the folly in Hassidism: a poor, oppressed family; a father who wants to force his daughter into a marriage with a God-fearing man; traveling for the purpose of *schnoring* (begging for handouts), indicating the desperate financial situation; and a resolute, upstanding Maskil who redeems his beloved's family from abject poverty. Yet, as Klausner points out, this story does not give a "cheap" portrayal of the *Haskalah* point of view.³⁹ The story reveals the consciousness of the individual protagonist, allowing the typical didactic tone of *Haskalah* literature to give way to a lyrical one. It seems that Braudes is aware that the most significant barrier confronting the *Haskalah*'s struggle against ignorance and the political interests of the leaders of the Jewish communities is the steadfastness of its religious sentiment. Klonimus' vehement faith awards him the empathy of the readers, who do not consider him evil, lazy or stupid, as is the case in most of the portrayals of Hassidim in *Haskalah* literature of the time.⁴⁰ For this reason, one should not, in my opinion, accept Feingold's

³⁸ The story "A Hassid Man" was published in *Ha-Boker Or* 2 (1877), 183–202. Later published in Braudes, *Old Folks...*, 111–134.

³⁹ Klausner, *The History...*, vol. 5: 454.

⁴⁰ About the tradition of these descriptions and their influence on the Russian authorities who were very much interested in Hassidism, see: Shmuel Ettinger, *Studies in*

view that this story does *not* express a change in Braudes' attitude to Hassidism, because he presents his protagonist primarily as "an individual," leaving the fact of his being a Hassid only secondary.⁴¹ On the contrary, I consider this precisely the point where Braudes' attitude to Hassidism *did* change: for the first time, a Maskil author is prepared to look at a Hassid as an individual and not merely as a generic representative of his community.

David Weinfeld also addresses the overbearing emotional sentiments of the story, seeing in it an innovation with which Braudes has altered the prevailing tone used when describing Hassidim and the Hassidic movement. This change in tone is a result of the intense defense that Braudes supplies to justify the outcome of the story and its central character, who is a member of the "enemy" as it were. Weinfeld speculates that Braudes' choice of subject in this story was inspired by his teacher in his rabbinical seminary in Zhitomir, Eliezer Hacoheh Zweifel, the author of the book *Peace for Israel (Shalom al Yisroel)* (1868-1873), which suggested a re-evaluation of Hassidism. Braudes met Zweifel at a seminal time in his life when his world-views were being formed, and there is a reasonable basis to assume that their acquaintance did influence Braudes' choice of theme for "A Hassid Man" and how he would deal with the subjects that arise within. Nevertheless, considering that Zweifel was primarily involved with Hassidic philosophy and not with the personal aspects of Hassidic life, and that Braudes' story was published six years after he left Zhitomir (and thus had left the realm of Zweifel's direct influence), we can conclude that the theme expressed in this story was not some temporary, superficial impression, but a perspective that had formed and matured over the years.⁴²

Another significant characteristic that is recognizable in Braudes' short stories during this period was his preference to use lyrical-sentimental modes of expression instead of cutting satire, and his replacement of biting satire with gentle humor. This characteristic is also not necessarily limited to the short story. Hebrew Haskalah literature was

the History of the Jews in Contemporary Times: Between Poland and Russia, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1994), 240 [Hebrew].

⁴¹ Feingold, *The Works...*, 59.

⁴² David Weinfeld, "A Hassid Man" by Reuben Asher Braudes in Relation to Hassidism in the 1870s, in Immanuel Etkes, David Assaf, Israel Bartel, Elchanan Reiner (eds.), *Within Hassidic Circles: Studies in Hassidism in Memory of Professor Mordecai Wilensky*, (Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv, 1999), 237–244.

turning to satire already in the first half of the 19th century, as a means of undermining the strict, pedantic attitude of Judaism to life.⁴³ Particularly prominent satirical authors were Josef Perl (*The Revealer of Secrets, Megalle Temirin*) and Isaac Erter (*Observing the House of Israel, Ha-Tzofeh l'Beit Yisroel*) in Galicia in the first half of the nineteenth century. Thus, it is interesting to note, especially in light of the fact that Braudes lived and worked in Galicia, that he faithfully avoided depicting observant Jews as amusing caricatures. Instead, he took pains to present the attractive side of traditional Judaism, contrary to the general literary tradition of the Haskalah movement.

This moderation in criticism towards Hassidism is obvious in his story "Love Does Wonders" (1876), a comic farce in which a pair of young lovers give the impression of divine intervention in order to force their parents to agree with their *shidduch* (match). This story joined an existing narrative tradition, one of whose developers was Mordekhai David Brandstetter, a writer who had a moderate, easygoing, restrained style. However, this moderation exacted a price: already by the beginning of the 1870s, Brandstetter's ruse of anti-Hassidic stories had begun to be considered outdated. Hebrew culture and the Haskalah movement in the late 1870s now became preoccupied with other issues, including the regression of the Russian approach to the Jews or the "false" Haskalah. The assumption that was fundamental to the radical literary treatment in these issues was that it would be impossible to bring about a change of Jewish culture without a sharp internal self-reckoning. In fact, though, the Maskilim discovered that the more their public struggle turned violent and desperate, the more the differences between the beliefs of the various strata of Jewish society turned extreme, which undermined their chances of bringing about a change through mutual cooperation. Braudes' practice of the farce, using restrained mockery and subterfuge teaches us, somewhat, of his measured reluctance to use biting, piercing criticism of contemporary issues, and his feelings on the need for soul-searching and conceptual moderation.⁴⁴

⁴³ Yehuda Friedlander, *The Mysteries of Satire: Studies in Satire in the New Hebrew of the 19th Century* (Ramat Gan, 1984) [Hebrew].

⁴⁴ Baram Eshel, *Representations of Reality...*, 271–291. J.L. Gordon also replaced with humor the satire that characterized his stories. See: Avner Holtzman, "The Stories of J. L. Gordon: From Satire to Humor," in: *Loves of Zion: Studies in Modern Hebrew Literature* (Jerusalem, 2006), 51–76 [Hebrew].

The advantage of marginality

As mentioned above, Feingold was convinced that the differences between Braudes' novel, *Religion and Life*, and the short stories that he wrote and published concurrently were a direct result of the qualities inherent in the different genres, as the short story was inherently more suitable for recounting intimate portraits. However, this explanation is not adequate. In fact, the causative connection between the genres and their underlying nature might actually be the reverse. Is it not possible that Braudes' moderation is what dictated his use of the short story as his chosen genre and not the opposite? If this is the case, then it is easy to understand why these stories were recognized by their means of description that promoted a balanced portrayal of contemporary life (as demonstrated in the previous section), without any specific connection with the genre. The integral restraint that Braudes' shows in his short stories is revealed, for example, in the symbolically conciliatory title that he gave the collection of short stories published in 1886: *Old Folks with Boys*. The trans-generational communication that the title refers to suggests a potential reconciliation between traditional, conservative fathers and their modern enlightened sons, and/or between the generation of "fathers" and the generation of "sons" of Jewish Haskalah in Russia. One way or another, the short-story genre allowed Braudes to express his message of moderation already in the 1870s without attracting vocal opposition. In fact, as Joseph Klausner asserts in his comments to "A Hassid Man," the way in which Braudes told this outstanding story was so unusual for the literature of the period, that it was actually ignored by the Hebrew-reading Maskilim. In fact, according to Klausner, this was a story that was ahead of its time.⁴⁵

At this point, I would like to point out how the fact that Braudes' story did not impress his readers relates to the title of this paper. My intention is to emphasize the marginality of the modern short story, which as many of its creators and researchers stress, has received, then and since, minimal critical attention compared to the novel. This marginal-

⁴⁵ Klausner, *The History...*, vol. 5: 453. On the enthusiastic reception to this story see also: Feingold, *The Works...*, 279. About the influence of the short story one may see the story of Peretz Smolenskin, "The Scream of the Wind" ("Yilelat Ha-Rua'ch," 1878) that was written later. Smolenskin wrote his story about a God-fearing mother, who allows her daughter to follow her heart and leave the ways of her people. At the end the mother dies of a broken heart.

ity characterized the short-story genre in most of Western literature, including Anglo-American, Russian, and French, in which the genre is viewed as one that evolved as a sort of precursor to the novel, which is considered the more prestigious form of prose. Once the novel had matured, it eclipsed the short story genre and stalled its development.⁴⁶ The development of the short story in Hebrew literature paints a similar picture. The Haskalah literature had a long prosaic tradition, but it had been positioned at the margins of the literary system for many years, changing only after the full-length novel appeared in its arena.⁴⁷ In other words, the short story developed in the shadow of the prestigious full-length prose, remaining a marginal literary form that was relatively distant from the critical eye that was focusing on the more prominent genre. For this reason, it is difficult to identify authors of Haskalah literature who exclusively devoted themselves to the short story genre. Even Mordechai David Brandstetter, who was prolific in this sense, avoided defining himself as a professional writer, apologetically claiming to be merely an “amateur” one.⁴⁸ However, it is precisely this “trifling” status of the short story that attracted some writers to the genre: either sporadic writers or those at the beginning of their literary careers, or important authors of their time who found this a comfortable framework for personal growth and original self-expression.⁴⁹ This marginality, especially considering the disadvantages of the demanding stylistic heritage, presents a distinct advantage: it gives the short story a flexible character and provides a comfortable platform on which authors can practice and experiment with their literary craft.

Examining all of Braudes' output indicates a similar generic interaction, especially during the Lviv period in which he concurrently published a long, serialized novel and a number of short stories. It is especially revealing to note that his full-length novel was enthusiastically received upon publication, yet his short stories did not receive any

⁴⁶ Charles E. May, *The Short Story: The Reality of Artifice* (New York, 2002), 1–2; Eva Kagan-Kans, “Short Story,” in Victor Terras (ed.), *Handbook of Russian Literature* (New Haven, 1985), 410–417.

⁴⁷ See: Halkin, *Introduction to Hebrew Literature...*, 1–3; Uzi Shavit, *Poetry and Ideology: About the History of Hebrew Poetry and Its Development in the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Tel-Aviv, 1987), 40–41 [Hebrew]; Moshe Pelli, *Genres and Issues in the Literature of the Hebrew Haskalah: The Enlightened Genre and Its Characteristics* (Tel-Aviv, 1999), 11–27 [Hebrew].

⁴⁸ Mordechai David Brandstädter, “From the Chronicles of My Life”, *Ha-Do'ar* 5 (1926), 12, 184–185; 20 (1926), 364–365 [Hebrew].

⁴⁹ Baram Eshel, *Representations of Reality...*, 230–234.

critical attention for over a decade and a half: the first review of his short stories was published only at the end of the 1880s.⁵⁰ This marginality of the short stories thus speaks for itself and it is not surprising that Braudes did not devote himself entirely to this literary genre. Nevertheless, they fulfilled the need he had for portraying reality more successfully than the novel, and it must be assumed that herein lay the advantages as far as Braudes was concerned. In other words, his prose formed a balanced structure in which an internal dialogue existed between two literary genres that were very different in character from each other: a demonstrative, prominent genre on the one hand, and a seemingly more trivial genre on the other, but one that – because it developed under the shelter of the former – naturally allowed representations of authentic reality.

Is it not possible to claim that Braudes relinquished the propaganda characteristics of his stories in advance and did not “bother” to recruit them for his intellectual struggle on behalf of the Haskalah because of the genre’s trivial standing? Such a claim is reasonable, yet it must be stressed that Braudes consciously chose to use his full-length novel as the vehicle for his persuasive efforts and knowingly gave his short stories a more restrained character. That is to say, the absence of propaganda in Braudes’ short stories can be explained precisely because they depended on the ideological fervor that emanated from his full-length novel. However, this is not due to the preference for the long novel, but rather because he used its characteristics to prepare the way for the restrained poetics of the short story. In other words: Braudes used his novel to “preach” for realism but “practiced” realism through the short story.

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⁵⁰ Feingold, *The Works...*, 124, 220.