Lingering Bilingualism: Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literatures in Contact. By Naomi Brenner. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2016. xv, 292 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. $29.95, paper.
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The new Jewish literary sphere that took shape in the last decades of the 19th century under the signs of secularism, nationalism, and aesthetic autonomy in the Polish-Ukrainian-Jewish borderlands was uniquely bilingual from its inception. Most writers of note produced literary work both in high-status Hebrew and in the low-status Yiddish vernacular. Born in double opposition to traditional Judaic religious culture and to the assimilating power of Russian, German, and Polish literary cultures (which it also emulated), this bilingual national-cultural project soon fractured. Some who experimented with "low" Yiddish decided that they preferred it, others embraced it on ideological grounds as the language of the "folk" or the "masses," and by the outbreak of World War I, the secular-national Jewish cultural sphere was divided into two irreconcilable Hebraist and Yiddishist projects. This linguistic-cultural "divorce" was rendered still more bitter because the Hebraist and Yiddishist choices were indexed closely (if imperfectly) to competing political projects: Zionism's bid to recast diasporic European Jewry as a sovereign Hebraic nation in the "old-new land" of Palestine, and a competing family of socialist-diasporist visions of a proletarianized "Yiddish Volk" enjoying collective rights in a somehow-federalist eastern Europe.

Naomi Brenner's *Lingering Bilingualism* begins circa 1920 when this divorce had become irreversible, but when most Jewish writers of east European origin—and many if not most readers, too—were still products of that now-fractured bilingual culture. Brenner makes a many-sided contribution to modern Jewish cultural history, the history of Hebrew and Yiddish literature, and contemporary translation theory through a study of that unique bilingualism's equally unique half-life. Moving across the "east European Jewish diasporas" of 1920s Berlin, Palestine, 1930s Paris, 1940s US, and finally the State of Israel, Brenner examines multiple forms of Hebrew and Yiddish "literary contact" improvised by a wide variety of writers, editors, and ideologues in increasingly idiosyncratic terms—a "series of encounters between Hebrew and Yiddish writers and texts" in which the "demands of monolingualism" were "resisted," or more exactly refracted and negotiated, through forms of literary practice that grappled with the bilingual Hebrew-Yiddish legacy in monolingual contexts.

In particular, Brenner focuses on two kinds of literary practice (and the poetic and ideological fallout thereof): the creation of periodicals and anthologies that engaged with the bilingual legacy and projects of translation or auto-translation. She also offers acute and revealing readings of writers and literary works that engaged the lost world of bilingualism at the level of individual poetics in ways that sometimes defied the terms of the writers' own linguistic-cultural ideologies. Both dimensions are on display in the first chapter (on the creation and reception of the linked periodicals *Rimon* [Hebrew] and *Milgroym* [Yiddish] in the short-lived east European Jewish émigré scene in early 1920s Berlin) and the third (on the auto-translation poetics and pragmatics of two now-minor but still-fascinating Hebrew-Yiddish writers), but the richest and most important analysis is to be found in Chapters 2 and 4.

Chapter 2 reexamines a famous literary scandal touched off in the emerging Jewish national community in British Palestine by the 1927 visit of two leading Yiddish writers. The welcome accorded to them by some of the leading lights of the Hebraist-Zionist literary scene compelled other leading Hebrew writers to respond with furious critiques of "unilateral disarmament" in the Hebrew-Yiddish language war. Showing that the ideological issues were far more complicated than anti-Yiddish

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sentiment but also involved deep worries about the future of diaspora Jewry, Brenner also powerfully demonstrates that beneath their polemical certainty, several of the most uncompromising Palestine Hebraists nurtured a complex literary relationship to the legacy of Jewish bilingualism. The pioneering Hebrew modernist Avraham Shlonsky's most famous poem-cycle recast the son-figure of Genesis as a socialist-Zionist manual laborer; in its bold leap across the temporal-cultural chasm between ancient Israel and modern Palestine, the poem has seemed to many a lapidary example of Zionist-Hebraist "negation of the diaspora." Brenner shows that the poem actually encodes a complex affective relationship to Yiddish in its loving embrace of the poet-figure's parents, who are simultaneously Biblical patriarchs and the poet's own Russian-Jewish parents. Brenner also notes, slyly and powerfully, that this incorporative rather than fully negating relationship to the parents' language was the norm of Hebrew literature in the 1930s.

Finally, Chapter 4 takes up the "terminal" relationship between Hebrew and Yiddish at the moment of a final double rupture within Jewish life: the birth of a fully Hebrew Jewish society in Palestine-then-Israel, and the destruction of east European Jewry. Focusing on series of translation projects from Yiddish into Hebrew in the US and (more significantly) in Palestine and then Israel, Brenner shows us the birth of our own age of Jewish culture: with the language war finished, European Jewry devastated, and a new Hebrew national culture in place, the question now became what could be salvaged from a devastated European Yiddish culture in an age of Jewish monolingualism.

Lingering Bilingualism is a must-read for scholars of Hebrew and Yiddish culture and of Jewish cultural history. The book also makes a substantial contribution to the field of translation theory by presenting a powerful counterexample to the presumption that all linguistic translation is necessarily cultural translation as well. Given that this review appears in *Slavic Review*, it must be acknowledged that there is nothing particularly "Slavic" about the work. Perhaps this itself is a contribution. Slavic studies has shown welcome attention to Hebrew and Yiddish culture in recent years, but also tends to read those transregional cultures as regional ones. Brenner shows us a case of a cultural field born in "Slavic" territory that emancipated itself completely from its regional origins, and reminds us that while there are important Russian and Polish stories to tell about modern Jewish culture, many—and perhaps most—of the most important stories about modern Jewish culture are neither.

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Hard Times: A Novel of Liberals and Radicals in 1860s Russia. By Vasily Sleptsov. Trans. Michael R. Katz. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016. xxii, 193 pp. Notes. Bibliography. $19.95, paper.
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All teachers of Russian literature in translation owe a great debt to Michael R. Katz for his readable translation of one of the most important works of nineteenth-century Russian literature, Nikolai Chernyshevskii's *What Is To Be Done?* (Cornell University Press, 1989). Vasilii Sleptsov's *Hard Times* (1865) did not have the same lasting impact as Chernyshevskii's 1863 work, but it is an illuminating snapshot of gentry and peasant life in the immediate post-Emancipation period. Sleptsov, who is perhaps best known for founding a short-lived commune in St. Petersburg, seems

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