

“I SLEEP, BUT MY HEART WAKETH”: CONTIGUITY BETWEEN HEINRICH HEINE’S *IMAGO* OF THE SHULAMITE AND AMY LEVY’S “BORDERLAND”

Luke Devine

Abstract: “Borderland,” by Amy Levy (1861–89), a refiguring of the Song of Songs’ traditional allegory, reverses Song 5:2–6’s climax in which the Shulamite unwittingly neglects the advances of her “beloved” while he waits at the door. In “Borderland,” the Shulamite “lover” assumes the initiative by visiting her “beloved,” while he is instead passive. The diverse ways in which “Borderland” can be read reveal contiguity with “Das Hohelied” and “Lyrisches Intermezzo” by German Jewish poet Heinrich Heine (1797–1856), texts also dependent on the Songs of Songs. Indeed, Heine was Levy’s “favourite poet”; “Borderland” accordingly reflects her reading of Heine and the employment of similar poetics, though not necessarily continuity or unoriginality. This article therefore looks for what Dan Miron has labelled “literary contiguity,” a process by which “tangible contacts” between “players” in the “modern Jewish literary complex” are identified. This approach identifies “relatedness” between Heine and Levy, but also acknowledges the “differences.”

Recent scholarship has restored the significance of late nineteenth-century Anglo-Jewish writer Amy Levy (1861–89) and her corpus.¹ Levy’s poem “Borderland,” a refiguring of the Song of Songs’ traditional allegory, reverses Song 5:2–6’s climax, in which the Shulamite unwittingly neglects the advances of her “beloved” while he waits at the door.² In “Borderland,” the Shulamite “lover” assumes the initiative by visiting her “beloved,” while he is instead passive.³ But this reversal is only one way of reading “Borderland.” The poem’s erotic language means it can also be read as a rejection of the rabbinic allegory, in which the text symbolizes the relationship between God and the community of Israel. Alternatively, “Borderland” can be read as a volte-face of middle-class assumptions about the “Victorian ideal of the passionless

1. The starting point for those unfamiliar with the Levy corpus is *The Complete Novels and Selected Writings of Amy Levy*, ed. Melvyn New (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993). Christine Pullen’s *The Woman Who Dared: A Biography of Amy Levy* (Kingston upon Thames: Kingston University Press, 2010) is also useful given its extensive use of archival material. For an overview of the Levy scholarship see Luke Devine, *From Anglo-First-Wave towards American Second-Wave Jewish Feminism: Negotiating with Jewish Feminist Theology in the Writing of Amy Levy* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2010), 33–44.

2. Amy Levy, *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1889), 42.

3. Christian Ginsburg, *The Song of Songs: Translated from the Original Hebrew with Commentary, Historical and Critical* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1857), 29.

woman.”⁴ And for readers unable to decipher the complex layers of meaning, it can be read as a series of love lyrics. The diverse ways in which “Borderland” can be read reveal contiguity with “Das Hohelied” (The Song of Songs) and “Lyrisches Intermezzo” (Lyrical Interludes) by German Jewish poet Heinrich Heine (1797–1856), texts dependent on the Song of Songs.⁵ In fact, Heine was Levy’s “favourite poet”;⁶ “Borderland” accordingly reflects her reading of Heine and her employment of similar poetics, though not necessarily continuity or unoriginality.

Indeed, Levy’s gendered refiguring of the Shulamite’s role is unique, and Levy’s relationship with Heine demonstrates what Dan Miron has labelled “literary contiguity.” For Miron, “contiguity ... should replace ... continuity. This concept suggests ... fluid and unregulated contacts, even moments of close adjacency, but not containment of one entity by another, not superimposition or *Gleichschaltung*.”⁷ “Literary contiguity” is a process by which “tangible contacts” between “players” in the “modern Jewish literary complex” are identified.⁸ This article identifies “relatedness” between Heine and Levy, but also acknowledges the “differences.”⁹

AMY LEVY AND HER WORLD

Levy was born in 1861 into an affluent, acculturated Anglo-Jewish family. The Levy family attended the recently founded West London Reform Synagogue at Upper Berkeley Street, and maintained close social ties with the established Jewish community. At an early age Levy evidenced basic familiarity with the Jewish biblical tradition, as her analysis of King David, written for the children’s magazine *Kind Words*, demonstrates.¹⁰ Susan David Bernstein speculates that at a minimum, Levy had a “basic knowledge of Jewish traditions.”¹¹ Levy may also

4. Londa Schiebinger, “Theories of Gender and Race,” in *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*, ed. Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 27. The “ideal” was that middle-class women should be “delicate, pure, and passionless, a bastion of moral and spiritual virtue” (27).

5. See “Das Hohelied,” in German, in *Poetry and Prose: Heinrich Heine*, ed. Jost Hermand and Robert Holub (New York: Continuum, 2006), 106–9; this chapter includes a rhyming English translation by Felix Pollak alongside the German. See also Heinrich Heine, “Lyrical Intermezzo,” in *Heine’s Book of Songs*, trans. Charles Leland (Philadelphia: Frederick Leypoldt, 1864), 66–108.

6. Pullen, *Woman Who Dared*, 51; Linda Hunt Beckman, *Amy Levy: Her Life and Letters* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 16.

7. Dan Miron, “From Continuity to Contiguity: Thoughts on the Theory of Jewish Literature,” in *Jewish Literature and Cultures: Context and Intertext*, ed. Anita Norich and Yaron Eliav (Providence: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 35. This approach is not dissimilar to Shachar Pinsker’s concept of “literary passports”; see his *Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

8. Dan Miron, *From Continuity to Contiguity: Toward a New Jewish Literary Thinking* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 276, 362, 412.

9. Miron, *From Continuity to Contiguity*, 361.

10. Hunt Beckman, *Amy Levy*, 9, 15–17.

11. Susan David Bernstein, introduction to *The Romance of a Shop* by Amy Levy, ed. Susan David Bernstein (Peterborough: Broadview, 2006), 14.

have had Hebrew lessons, but only attended synagogue on the major festivals, if at all, which was the norm for assimilated upper-middle-class Anglo-Jews.¹² Thus, Levy was, according to Christine Pullen, “familiar with the prayers and rituals of the Jewish faith.”¹³ Equally, throughout her life, her closest friends continued to be from the Jewish community.¹⁴ However, Levy was educated at the Brighton High School Girls’ Public Day School Trust; according to Ellen Umansky, education beyond the community was seen as “a visible symbol of Jewish adaptability.”¹⁵ Consequently, Levy attended Newnham College, Cambridge, but did not complete her course in classical and modern languages.¹⁶ Instead, she pursued a literary career, writing three novels: *Romance of a Shop* (1888), *Reuben Sachs* (1888), and *Miss Meredith* (1889).¹⁷ She also published several essays in the *Jewish Chronicle*, including on the defunct ghetto in Florence,¹⁸ “Jewish Children,” “Jewish Women,” and “Jewish Humour.”¹⁹ Additionally, Levy produced three poetry anthologies: *Xantippe* (1881), *A Minor Poet* (1884), and *A London Plane-Tree* (1889).²⁰ These anthologies reveal Levy’s engagement with neoclassicist, Sapphic, urban, pessimistic, protofeminist, and New Woman perspectives, which ensured her popularity in avant-garde literary circles.²¹

12. Hunt Beckman, *Amy Levy*, 15, 17. Beckman conjectures that Levy might have had Hebrew lessons on the basis that her cousin Lucy had regular lessons and that the two families were close (17). Stephen Sharot claims that “the majority of Reform members attended synagogue two or three times a year on the major festivals, but only few attended synagogue on the Sabbath or minor festivals.” Stephen Sharot, “Reform and Liberal Judaism in London: 1840–1940,” *Jewish Social Studies* 41, no. 3/4 (Summer/Fall 1979): 215.

13. Pullen, *Woman Who Dared*, 16.

14. Levy’s close Jewish friends included Jenny de Pass, Paulina Meyerstein, and her sister Katie (Pullen, *Woman Who Dared*, 107).

15. Ellen Umansky, *Lily Montagu and the Advancement of Liberal Judaism: From Vision to Vocation*, Studies in Women and Religion 12 (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1983), 27. Pullen speculates that Levy may have “avoided eating meat, pork and shellfish” while at Cambridge (*Woman Who Dared*, 27).

16. Hunt Beckman, *Amy Levy*, 54–55.

17. See Amy Levy, *The Romance of a Shop* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1888); *Reuben Sachs: A Sketch* (London: Macmillan, 1888); *Miss Meredith* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1889).

18. Amy Levy, “The Ghetto at Florence,” *Jewish Chronicle*, March 26, 1886, 9. Levy’s article laments the plight of the ghetto’s former residents, claiming that “It is only sentimentalists, like ourselves, that trouble themselves in this unnecessary fashion. There are a great many Jews here to-night, evidently quite undisturbed by ‘inherited memory’” (9). See Luke Devine, “‘The Ghetto at Florence’: Reading Jewish Identity in Amy Levy’s Early Poetry, 1880–1886,” *Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History* 31, nos. 1–2 (Winter/Spring 2011): 1–30.

19. See Amy Levy, “Jewish Children (By a Maiden Aunt),” *Jewish Chronicle*, November 5, 1886, 8; “Jewish Women and Women’s Rights,” *Jewish Chronicle*, February 21, 1879, 5; “Jewish Humour,” in Levy, *The Complete Novels*, ed. New, 521–24.

20. See Amy Levy, *Xantippe and Other Verse* (Cambridge: E. Johnson, 1881); *A Minor Poet and Other Verse* (1884; repr., London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1891); *A London Plane-Tree*.

21. Levy was a frequent researcher at the British Museum Reading Room (which was then also the reading room for the British Library and its collections) and was closely acquainted with numerous avant-garde intellectuals, including George Bernard Shaw, Karl Pearson, Eleanor Marx, Beatrice Webb, Havelock Ellis, Olive Schreiner, Ernest and Dollie Radford, Constance and Richard Garnett, and Oscar Wilde (see Hunt Beckman, *Amy Levy*, 35–36, 203–4). For an overview of Levy’s social life see Hunt Beckman,

The historiographical quest to identify the extent of Levy's religiosity and relationship to Judaism has led to emphasis on her corpus, in the absence of evidence. Little is known of Levy's private life, because following her suicide the majority of her private papers were "destroyed" by her parents, leaving only her calendar for 1889.²² Indeed, looking to poems such as "A Prayer," "Magdalen," "Lohengrin," and "Captivity," Cynthia Scheinberg has claimed that Levy was intent on reappropriating the "Hebrew Scriptures . . . in the service of constructing a specific Anglo-Jewish identity."²³ Similarly, Nadia Valman has pointed to the influence of Reform Judaism on Levy's *Reuben Sachs*. For Valman, Levy's novel is predicated on the heroine's "plight," which is figured as a product of traditional Judaism's "pride of sex" iterated in the daily blessing: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord my God, who hast not made me a woman."²⁴ Accordingly, Judith Quixano's alienation is—regurgitating the Christian evangelical critique of the tradition—a product of Anglo-Reform Judaism's ceremonialism and absence of inner spirituality:

Judith Quixano went through her devotions upheld by that sense of fitness, of obedience to law and order, which characterized her every action. But it cannot be said that her religion had any strong hold over her; she accepted it unthinkingly. These prayers, read so diligently, in a language of which her knowledge was exceedingly imperfect, these reiterated praises of an austere tribal deity, these expressions of a hope whose consummation was neither desired nor expected, what connection could they have with the personal needs, the human longings of this touchingly ignorant and limited creature?²⁵

Amy Levy, passim; Emma Francis, "Socialist Feminism and Sexual Instinct: Eleanor Marx and Amy Levy," in *Eleanor Marx (1855–1898): Life, Work, Contacts*, ed. John Stokes (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 113–27; Deborah Epstein Nord, "'Neither Pairs nor Odd': Female Community in Late Nineteenth-Century London," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 15, no. 41 (1990): 733–54.

22. Hunt Beckman, *Amy Levy*, 285 n. 15; Pullen, *Woman Who Dared*, 142. In her remaining correspondence Levy does mention synagogue attendance; indeed, Levy asks her sister: "Being Friday, you can't go—sorry," in reference to Shabbat. In another instance Levy asks: "How did everybody fast? . . . Did you miss your stalwart escort of last year," referring to Yom Kippur. Levy also states: "Please tell Mama that I went to Synagogue," revealing that attendance was at least essential to her mother (Hunt Beckman, *Amy Levy*, 17, 236). Following her suicide, Levy was buried by a Reform rabbi at the Balls Pond Cemetery in London according to halakhic principles (Linda Shiren, review of *Amy Levy: Her Life and Letters*, by Linda Hunt Beckman, *Victorian Studies* 44, no. 1 [2001]: 151).

23. Cynthia Scheinberg, "Canonizing the Jew: Amy Levy's Challenge to Victorian Poetic Identity," *Victorian Studies* 39 (1996): 185. For "A Prayer" see *Xantippe and Other Verse*, 14–15; for "Magdalen" see *A Minor Poet*, 65–68; for "Lohengrin" and "Captivity" see *A London Plane-Tree*, 58, 62–63. For Scheinberg's analysis of these poems see her "Canonizing the Jew" and *Women's Poetry and Religion in Victorian England: Jewish Identity and Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); see also Devine, *From Anglo-First-Wave* for a similar examination of "A Prayer" and "Magdalen."

24. Nadia Valman, "'Barbarous and Mediaeval': Jewish Marriage in Fin de Siècle English Fiction," in *The Image of the Jew in European Liberal Culture, 1789–1914*, ed. Bryan Cheyette and Nadia Valman (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2004), 113; Levy, *Reuben Sachs*, 49.

25. Levy, *Reuben Sachs*, 92–93; Devine, *From Anglo-First-Wave*, 141. For an overview of *Reuben Sachs*' racial/Darwinist underpinnings see Nadia Valman, *The Jewess in Nineteenth-Century*

Like Valman, Naomi Hetherington notes the influence of the “Reform movement” and its attempts to “modernize Jewish worship” on *Reuben Sachs*.²⁶ Equally, Pullen argues that “Levy’s destiny was shaped by ... Reform Judaism” and her “awareness of ... the fundamental asceticism of rabbinical tradition.”²⁷ And lastly, among others, Iveta Jusova suggests, on the basis of Levy’s urban poetry, that she frequently identified herself as an “outsider.”²⁸ But the lack of evidence need not lead to speculation about Levy’s biography, nor should it foreclose a textual analysis of “Borderland.”

LEVY, HEINE, ELIOT, AND THE SONG OF SONGS

Levy was probably first introduced to Canticles interpretation through her reading of Heine.²⁹ Levy’s childhood *Confessions Book* reveals that she counted “Heine” as one of her “favourite poets.”³⁰ Throughout her life Levy read, translated, and praised Heine, the *Dichterjude* or “Jew-poet.”³¹ The socialist Eleanor Marx described Levy as “the best” translator of Heine’s work she had ever known. According to Marx, Levy had an “affinity” with Heine and could be frequently found in the reading room of the British Museum translating his poetry.³² When Ernest Radford, the husband of Levy’s friend Dollie, completed his own translation of Heine, Levy immediately requested a copy.³³ The echoes of Heine appear throughout the Levy corpus.

Levy’s first poetry anthology, *Xantippe and Other Verse*, begins with “Aus meinen grossen Schmerzen Mach’ ich die kleinen Lieder” (From the great pain of my spirit / Come the little songs), an extract from Heine’s “Lyrisches

British Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and Richa Dwor, “The Racial Romance of Amy Levy’s *Reuben Sachs*,” *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920* 55, no. 4 (October 2012): 460–78. *Reuben Sachs* has subsequently been republished with additional material; see Amy Levy, *Reuben Sachs*, ed. Susan David Bernstein (Peterborough: Broadview, 2006).

26. Naomi Hetherington, “‘A Jewish Robert Elsmere?’: Amy Levy, Israel Zangwill and the Post-Emancipation Jewish Novel,” in *Amy Levy: Critical Essays*, ed. Naomi Hetherington and Nadia Valman (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 190. For a complete overview of the influence of classical German Reform Judaism on the Levy corpus see Devine, *From Anglo-First-Wave*; I contend that a number of Levy’s poems are “bound up in the Reform Judaism of the period” (76).

27. Pullen, *Woman Who Dared*, 9, 130.

28. Iveta Jusova, *The New Woman and the Empire* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005), 131. Similarly, for Scheinberg “This theme of being at home nowhere is a theme Levy refers to repeatedly in her work, using it to describe her religious identity, her cultural identity, and her sexual identity” (*Women’s Poetry*, 232).

29. Levy might have come across the Song of Songs at the West London Reform Synagogue. The text is included in the Passover liturgy but would have been read in Hebrew.

30. Hunt Beckman, *Amy Levy*, 16; Bernstein, introduction to Levy, *Reuben Sachs*, 17–18.

31. George Peters, *The Poet as Provocateur: Heinrich Heine and His Critics* (Rochester: Camden House, 2000), 3; according to T. D. Olverson, Levy was “strongly influenced by German literature” (“Such Are Not Woman’s Thoughts,” in Hetherington and Valman, *Amy Levy*, 122).

32. Hunt Beckman, *Amy Levy*, 82; Bernstein, introduction to Levy, *Reuben Sachs*, 45.

33. Pullen, *Woman Who Dared*, 53–54; see Ernest Radford, *Translations from Heine, and Other Verses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1882).

Intermezzo.”³⁴ Levy also translated elements of “Lyrisches Intermezzo” in her second anthology, *A Minor Poet*. Reviewers of the anthology frequently pointed to Levy’s overreliance on Heine.³⁵ For example, “A Cross-Road Epitaph” begins with the quotation: “Am Kreuzweg wird begraben / Wer selber brachte sich um” (The suicide lies buried / Where the cross-roads pass o’er), an excerpt from Heine’s poem “Am Kreuzweg wird begraben” (again from “Lyrisches Intermezzo”).³⁶ Likewise, “A Dirge” begins with “Mein Herz, mein Herz ist traurig” (My heart, my heart is weary), taken from Heine’s *Buch der Lieder* (*Book of Songs*),³⁷ the volume that includes “Lyrisches Intermezzo.” So obvious was Levy’s debt to Heine that the poem “A Farewell” was written “After Heine,” and originally entitled “Imitation of Heine.”³⁸ Levy also referred in *Reuben Sachs* to “Ich grolle nicht” (I bear no grudge),³⁹ a line taken from German composer Robert Schumann’s *Dichterliebe*, which includes sixteen of Heine’s “Interludes.”⁴⁰ And in “Jewish Humour,” Levy employed an extract from Heine’s *Buch der Lieder*, which she translated as: “Sun and moon and stars are laughing; / I am laughing, too – and dying.”⁴¹ Levy clearly shared Heine’s pessimism.⁴²

It is therefore hardly surprising that when Lady Katie Magnus, a family friend, invited Levy to translate Heine’s poetry for *Jewish Portraits* (1888), she seized the opportunity.⁴³ Magnus also asked Levy to translate Judah Halevi’s verse from Abraham Geiger’s *Divan des Castiliens Abu’l-Hassan Juda*

34. Levy, *Xantippe*, n.p. Heine, “Lyrical Intermezzo,” 87; Bernstein, introduction to Levy, *Reuben Sachs*, 45.

35. Hunt Beckman, *Amy Levy*, 100.

36. Levy, *A Minor Poet*, 87; Heine, “Lyrical Intermezzo,” 104.

37. Levy, *A Minor Poet*, 74; Heine, “The Homeward Journey,” in *Heine’s Book of Songs*, trans. Leland, 111.

38. Levy, *A Minor Poet*, 86; Bernstein, introduction, 18 (see also 188–89). See Amy Levy, “Imitation of Heine,” *Cambridge Review* 19 (December 1880): 127.

39. Levy, *Reuben Sachs*, 60; Levy, *Reuben Sachs*, ed. Bernstein, 78 n. 1.

40. Levy, *Reuben Sachs*, ed. Bernstein, 78 n. 1; for all the “Interludes” see Leland’s translation. See also Jon Finson, *Robert Schumann: The Book of Songs* (London: Harvard University Press, 2007).

41. Levy, “Jewish Humour,” 522; Heine, “The Homeward Journey,” 150; Leland’s translation reads: “Sun and moon and stars are smiling, / And I smile with them, —and perish.”

42. For an overview of the pessimistic elements of the Levy corpus and the influence of Algernon Charles Swinburne and Arthur Schopenhauer see Ana Parejo Vadillo, *Women Poets and Urban Aestheticism: Passengers of Modernity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); for the influence of James Thomson see Joseph Bristow, “‘All Out of Tune in this World’s Instrument’: The ‘Minor’ Poetry of Amy Levy,” *Journal of Victorian Culture* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 76–103, as well as Levy’s “James Thomson: A Minor Poet,” *Cambridge Review* 21 (February 1883): 240–41.

43. Hunt Beckman, *Amy Levy*, 77; Pullen, *Woman Who Dared*, 51; see Katie Magnus, *Jewish Portraits* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1888), 15–16, 24–25, 30, 70. Levy additionally translated extracts from the work of Moses Mendelssohn in *Jewish Portraits*. According to Bernstein, Levy’s translations “encapsulated . . . layered versions of diasporic Jewishness” (*Roomscape: Women Writers in the British Museum from George Eliot to Virginia Woolf* [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013], 70). See also Cynthia Scheinberg, “Anglo-Jewish Women Poets, 1839–1923,” in *Jewish Women Writers in Britain*, ed. Nadia Valman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2014), 35–65.

“I Sleep, but My Heart Waketh”

ha-Levi.⁴⁴ Fluent in German, Levy undertook German studies at Cambridge and between 1881 and 1885 visited Dresden, Baden, and Alsace.⁴⁵ She was already acquainted with Halevi’s exilic poetry through her reading of Heine, himself a reader and translator of Halevi.

Heine’s poem, “Jehuda ben Halevy,” venerates the “lamenting poet.”⁴⁶ In his tribute, Heine visualized Halevi and claimed:

I could recognize his pallid
Forehead, proudly worn with thinking,
And his eyes, so gentle-stubborn –
Pained, inquiring eyes that pierce me –

But I recognized mostly
By his enigmatic way of
Smiling with those rhythmic lips,
Which are found in poets only.⁴⁷

Heine’s homage imagined a meeting between the two:

By the Babylonian Waters
There we sat and wept
Our harps were
Hung upon the weeping willow ...
That old song – do you still know it?⁴⁸

Like Heine, Levy had written a similar homage to the tradition of exilic poetry in “Captivity,” which was first published in the *Cambridge Review* in 1885.⁴⁹ Scheinberg argues that the poem is “Levy’s most Jewish version of being caught between two worlds, a version whose title and references to a ‘lost land’ position her more directly in line with a tradition of Jewish Diasporic poetry

44. See Abraham Geiger, *Divan des Castiliens Abu'l-Hassan Juda ha-Levi* (Breslau: J. U. Kern, 1851). Geiger is most renowned for his involvement in the Science of Judaism movement (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*). Geiger, an early proponent of Reform Judaism, claimed that Jesus was a Pharisee and that Christianity was not unique in light of its Jewish origins.

45. Scheinberg, *Women’s Poetry*, 198; Hunt Beckman, *Amy Levy*, 75–79, 236.

46. Roger Cook, *By the Rivers of Babylon: Heinrich Heine’s Late Songs and Reflections* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 310–13; Luke Devine, “Exile and Redemption: Amy Levy’s Association with Yehuda Halevi and the Transmission of the Sephardic Tradition of Hebrew Poetry,” *Literature and Theology* 26, no. 2 (June 2012): 132.

47. Heine, “Jehuda ben Halevy,” quoted in Cook, *By the Rivers*, 310.

48. Heine, “Jehuda ben Halevy,” 313. For the German version see Heinrich Heine, *Romancero* (Hamburg: Hoffman and Campe, 1867).

49. “Captivity” was eventually incorporated into *A London Plane-Tree*, 62–63; see Devine, “Exile and Redemption,” 125–43.

longing the loss of the land of Israel.”⁵⁰ “Captivity” incorporates biblical symbolology to contrast the shackled “lion” with the caged “bird”:

THE lion remembers the forest,
The lion in chains;
To the bird that is captive a vision
Of woodland remains.
One strains with his strength at the fetter,
In impotent rage;
One flutters in flights of a moment,
And beats at the cage.⁵¹

“Captivity” speculates about the prospects of their emancipation: the “lion” would search for “the jungle in vain,” while the “bird” would return to his cage, “wrought what is stronger than iron / In fetter and bar.”⁵² The animals are neither “wild thing nor tame,” but both are convinced that their homeland, however distant, is “free as the forest, and sweeter / Than woodland retreat.”⁵³

Levy’s translations for Magnus’s *Jewish Portraits* reveal the extent to which Halevi’s exilic poetry was predicated on Canticles interpretation and its traditional dialogue between God and Israel.⁵⁴ In Levy’s translation of a “marriage hymn,” for example, the Promised Land is figured as a “dove”:

A dove of rarest worth
And sweet exceedingly;
Alas, why does she turn
And fly so far from me?
... My poor heart she has caught
With magic spells and wiles.
I do not sigh for gold,
But for her mouth that smiles;
Her hue is so bright,
She half makes blind my sight.⁵⁵

The symbolic “dove” appears several times in the Song of Songs and is often figured in the rabbinic literature as either the community of Israel or the land itself. Halevi frequently likened his poetry to the “conversation between God and his banished doves” evident in “Song of Songs 2:14, 5:2, 5:12, 6:9.”⁵⁶ Similarly, in another translation, Halevi’s speaker longs for the

50. Scheinberg, *Women’s Poetry*, 232.

51. Levy, *A London Plane-Tree*, 62.

52. Levy, *A London Plane-Tree*, 62–63.

53. Levy, *A London Plane-Tree*, 63.

54. Arthur Green, “Shekhinah, the Virgin Mary, and the Song of Songs: Reflections on a Kabbalistic Symbol in Its Historical Context,” *AJS Review* 26, no. 1 (April 2002): 9; David Aberbach, *Jewish Cultural Nationalism: Origins and Influences* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 52.

55. Magnus, *Jewish Portraits*, 24–25.

“I Sleep, but My Heart Waketh”

city of the world, most chastely fair;
In the far west, behold I sigh for thee.
And in my yearning love I do bethink me,
Of bygone ages.⁵⁷

This verse reveals the Shulamite’s symbolic association with Israel. The fact that Levy’s translations ensure adequate rhyme demonstrates that she understood the complex hermeneutics. Equally, the translations suggest that Levy was already experimenting with Song of Songs interpretation prior to writing “Borderland.”

The dating of Levy’s poem can also be linked to her criticism of George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* (1876),⁵⁸ a novel about a young Englishman who discovers his Jewish ancestry and emigrates to Palestine. Eliot utilizes Song of Songs’ classic line (5:2), “I sleep, but my heart waketh,” to frame her character Mordecai’s proto-Zionism.⁵⁹ This is the same verse that Levy would reinterpret in “Borderland.” Mordecai’s yearning, “desire,” “dreams,” and passion are likened to the envisioning of the “beloved” (Song of Songs 5:2).⁶⁰ Like Levy, Eliot was fascinated with Heine, and frequently quoted him in *Daniel Deronda*.⁶¹ For example, chapter

56. Halevi quoted in Barbara Ellen Galli, *Franz Rosenzweig and Jehuda Halevi: Translating, Translations, and Translators* (Quebec: McGill–Queen University Press, 1995), 250; Raymond Scheindlin, *The Song of the Distant Dove: Judah Halevi’s Pilgrimage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 85.

57. Magnus, *Jewish Portraits*, 30.

58. See George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (1876; repr., Ware: Wordsworth, 1996).

59. Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 393.

60. Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 393. Eliot’s notes state that Abraham Geiger’s *Judaism & Its History* is the source for the quotation, written in her notebook as “I sleep but my heart is awake” (*George Eliot’s Daniel Deronda Notebooks*, ed. Jane Irwin [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 111–15, 208, 297, 301–2, 394). See Geiger’s *Judaism & Its History*, vol. 1, trans. Maurice Mayer (London: Trübner, 1866), 84. Eliot’s notes also reveal the use of Abraham Kuenen’s *The Religion of Israel to the Fall of the Jewish State*, 3 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1874–75); Eliot states that the Song of Songs “contains glorification of the power of love, which no treasure can buy & which is proof against all temptation” (*George Eliot’s Daniel Deronda Notebooks*, ed. Irwin, 423). Likewise, Eliot quotes *Synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters* by Leopold Zunz, Heine’s close friend (Berlin: Julius Springer, 1855) and its claim, “If there are ranks in suffering, Israel takes precedence of all the nations ... if a literature is called rich in the possession of a few classic tragedies, what shall we say to a National Tragedy lasting for fifteen-hundred years,” in the opening to chapter 42 (*Daniel Deronda*, 427).

61. Like Levy, Eliot also used Halevi in her novel. Indeed, for Mordecai, “Each nation has its own work, and is a member of the world, enriched by the work of each. But it is true, as Jehuda-ha-levi first said, that Israel is the heart of mankind” (*Daniel Deronda*, 439; *George Eliot’s Daniel Deronda Notebooks*, ed. Irwin, 167–69). Similar to Heine, Mordecai reverses the golden age: “It was the soul fully born with me, and it came in my boyhood. It brought its own world—a medieval world, where there were men who made the ancient language live again in new psalms of exile. They had absorbed the philosophy of the Gentile into the faith of the Jew, and they still yearned for our race. One of their souls was born again within me, and awakened amid the memories of their world. It travelled into Spain and Provence; it debated with Aben-Ezra; it took ship with Jehuda ha-Levi; it heard the roar of the Crusaders and the shrieks of tortured Israel”; in another reference, Jacob’s “muscular imitativeness” is “in

34 begins with an extract from his “Prinzessin Sabbath” (Princess Sabbath), which draws on Song of Songs’ traditional allegory: “Er ist geheissen / Israel” (He is welcomed / Israel).⁶² Likewise, chapter 62 starts with Heine’s verse on “fortune”:

Das Glück ist eine leichte Dirne,
Und weilt nicht am selben Ort;
Sie streicht das Haar dir von der Stirne
Und kusst dich und flattert fort.

(Happiness is a little whore
And dwells not in the same place;
She brushes the hair from her brow
And kisses you and flutters away.)⁶³

Moreover, chapter 63 begins with a quotation from Heine’s *Geständnisse* (Confessions): “Moses, trotz seiner Befeindung der Kunst, dennoch selber ein grosser Künstler war und den wahren Kunstlergeist besass....” (Moses, notwithstanding his invention of the art, was himself a great artist and possessed the true spirit of an artist....)⁶⁴ Eliot was more than familiar with Heine’s poetry, as her article, “German Wit: Heinrich Heine” (1856), demonstrates;⁶⁵ there, she claims that Heine is “brilliant among the most brilliant” and “one of the most remarkable men of this age.”⁶⁶ Eliot also suggests that Heine’s “unique German wit is half ... Hebrew,” although “he and his ancestors spent their youth in German air.”⁶⁷ Levy, however, seemed to take offence to Eliot’s analysis of Heine’s “humour.”

Accordingly, while Levy listed “George Eliot” as one of her “favourite prose authors” in her childhood *Confessions Book*,⁶⁸ in “Jewish Humour” her critique is evidently directed at Eliot. She claimed that “In general circles the mention of Jewish Humour is immediately followed by that of HEINE; ... For Heine, in truth, has given perfect expression to the very spirit of Jewish Humour.”⁶⁹ This

sad divergence from New Hebrew poetry after the model of Jehuda ha-Levi” (*Daniel Deronda*, 395, 413).

62. Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 326; William McDonald, “Do I Not Hear the Jordan Rippling?": Heine the Hebrew,” in *German Literature between Faiths*, ed. Peter Meister (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), 110.

63. Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 612.

64. Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 619.

65. *George Eliot’s Daniel Deronda Notebooks*, ed. Irwin, 83, 459; see George Eliot, “German Wit: Heinrich Heine,” *Westminster Review* 65 (January 1856), at Liberal Arts Instructional Technology Services, University of Texas, accessed June 25, 2015, <http://www.laits.utexas.edu/farrell/documents/HeinrichHeine.pdf>.

66. Eliot, “German Wit.”

67. Eliot, “German Wit.”

68. Hunt Beckman, *Amy Levy*, 16. Levy was also an acquaintance of John Cross, Eliot’s widower, and his sister (Hunt Beckman, *Amy Levy*, 77, 241). Levy frequently dined with Eleanor Cross, and Pullen even speculates that in 1889 Cross might have painted Levy’s portrait (*Woman Who Dared*, 148).

comment is then clarified with the statement that “only a Jew perceives to the full the humour of another; but it is a humour so fine, so peculiar, so distinct in flavour, that we believe it impossible to impart its perception to any one not born a Jew.”⁷⁰ Similarly, in “Jewish Children” (1886) Levy argues that Eliot is incapable of understanding “the charms” of Jewish identity:

“I’ll shwop!” said Jacob Alexander Cohen, as he held out the celebrated corkscrew-knife to Daniel Deronda. He spoke, we are told, in a voice “hoarse in its glibness, as if it had belonged to an aged commercial soul, fatigued with bargaining after many generations”; and was possessed of a *physique* which “supported a precocity that would have shattered a Gentile of his years.” “The marvellous Jacob” in his red stocking and velveteen knickerbockers; Adelaide Rebekah with her “miniature crinoline and monumental features”; her fine name and Sabbath frock of braided amber; Eugenie Esther who “carries on her teething intelligently” and looks about her with such precocious interest; these three little persons are drawn, it must be owned, with considerable shrewdness and humour, though with an absence of tenderness ... The rather laboured jocoseness, the straining after pompous epigram which characterise George Eliot’s later manner seem singularly out of place in her description of the young Cohens. She has caught, indeed, the humours; but has failed to catch the charms of Jewish childhood.⁷¹

Additionally, in “The Jew in Fiction” (1886) Levy suggests that a “serious treatment” of Anglo-Jewry is required as a counter to Eliot’s idealized Jewish selves.⁷² Equally, *Reuben Sachs* provides an alternative to Eliot’s idealistic portrayal of Anglo-Jewry with its “boxes in the hall, ready packed and labeled *Palestine*.”⁷³ Instead, the majority of Anglo-Jews in *Reuben Sachs* are unspiritual, legalistic, and materialistic.⁷⁴ The convert Bertie Lee-Harrison is, according to one Jewish character, “shocked at finding us so little like the people in *Daniel Deronda*.”⁷⁵ Likewise, Leo derides *Daniel Deronda*, stating: “I have always

69. Levy, “Jewish Humour,” 521.

70. Levy, “Jewish Humour,” 523.

71. Levy, “Jewish Children,” 528.

72. Amy Levy, “The Jew in Fiction,” *Jewish Chronicle*, June 4, 1886, 13.

73. Levy, *Reuben Sachs*, 115. See Iveta Jusova and Dan Reyes, “Edward Said, *Reuben Sachs*, and Victorian Zionism,” *Social Text* 24, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 35–46.

74. Alternatively, the Quixanos provide a link to Spain’s golden age and an idealized Anglo-Jewish identity. Judith’s close relatives are Sephardim, descended from the “*vielle noblesse* of the Jewish community.” Her father has “reverted to the ancestral pursuits and for many years has devoted himself to collecting the materials for a monograph on the Jews of Spain and Portugal” (Levy, *Reuben Sachs*, 32, 79). Indeed, Joshua Quixano is “full of a simple, abstract piety.” He is immersed in “strange genealogical lore” and is “one of the pure spirits of this world” (Levy, *Reuben Sachs*, 79–80). The social Darwinist underpinnings of the novel suggest that Judith’s Sephardic ancestry can provide what Valman defines as “racial regeneration” (*Jewess*, 183). Thus, like Heine who “mourned” the passing of the golden age, *Reuben Sachs* recalls the Sephardic scholarly and exilic tradition (Jeffrey Sammons, *Heinrich Heine: Alternative Perspectives 1985–2005* [Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006], 84).

been touched ... by the immense good faith with which George Eliot carried out that elaborate misconception of hers.”⁷⁶ Accordingly, as Iveta Jusova and Dan Reyes note, Levy’s novel suggests that her fictional characters are “disinterested in the project of the Jewish resettlement in the Middle East.”⁷⁷ Eliot’s use of Heine and her clumsy attempts to portray Anglo-Jewry were obviously problematic for Levy. Thus, it is possible that “Borderland” was written with similar critique in mind, perhaps as an intertextual dialogue and a “subversion” of Eliot’s writing on Heine and the Anglo-Jewish community.⁷⁸ This could explain the motives behind the publication of “Borderland,” though not the contiguities with Heine.

LEVY’S “BORDERLAND”

“Borderland” predominantly focuses on Song of Songs 5:2–6.⁷⁹ The poem plays on the moment in Song 5:2 at which the male lover (Solomon) “knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled.” In the biblical verse, by the time the Shulamite responds, her “beloved” has “withdrawn” (5:5). In “Borderland,” however, the roles are reversed. The poem begins with the female lover outside seeking to enter, while the passive male awaits her “presence.”⁸⁰ The female lover enters, initiating the sequence, while the male, longing for intimacy, is helpless. Consequently, the female embraces the male speaker amid the heat of a summer’s night. There is, nevertheless, no consummation, as it is merely a reverie. Like in the Song of Songs, the yearning continues as the “beloved” has “gone” (5:6). In a reversal of roles, instead of Song 5:2’s statement: “I sleep, but my heart waketh,” Levy’s inert male lover asks: “AM I waking, am I sleeping?” This question indicates ambiguity, because the “heart does not waketh,” but exists in “dream-rapture,” “Half in swoon” between “waking” and “sleeping”:

75. Levy, *Reuben Sachs*, 115.

76. Levy, *Reuben Sachs*, 115–16.

77. Jusova and Reyes, “Edward Said,” 42.

78. Miron, *From Continuity to Contiguity*, 306.

79. The assumption that Solomon is the author is based on the frequent references to him, such as in the opening sentence (1:1): “The Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s.” According to B. Bava Batra 15a, however, the Song of Songs was set into text by King “Hezekiah and his colleagues.” The actual author, nonetheless, is a matter of debate. Biblical quotations are taken from Abraham Benisch’s *Jewish School and Family Bible*, vol. 4, containing the Hagiography, *Newly Translated* (London: Longman, 1852); the only other English version that Levy might have used is Michael Friedländer’s *Jewish Family Bible in Hebrew and English* (London: W. Rider, 1881), but it was not widely popular. Equally, some assimilated middle-class Jewish women used the King James Version for convenience (see Michael Hilton, *The Christian Effect on Jewish Life* [London: SCM, 1994], 125). All talmudic quotations are taken from the *English Babylonian Talmud*, ed. and trans. Isidore Epstein (London: Soncino, 1936).

80. Levy, *A London Plane-Tree*, 42.

“I Sleep, but My Heart Waketh”

AM I waking, am I sleeping?
As the first faint dawn comes creeping
Thro' the pane, I am aware
Of an unseen presence hovering,
Round, above, in the dusky air:
A downy bird, with an odorous wing,
That fans my forehead, and sheds perfume,
As sweet as love, as soft as death,
Drowsy-slow through the summer-gloom.
My heart in some dream-rapture saith,
It is she. Half in swoon,
I spread my arms in slow delight.—
O prolong, prolong the night,
For the nights are short in June!⁸¹

“Borderland” thus captures what Christopher Meredith calls the “blurring of distinctions between the anticipation and enjoyment of love.”⁸² Similarly, the poem exploits the uncertainty evident within the biblical text concerning “exactly *who* is doing the talking, much less what sex the person is.”⁸³ Even classical midrashic interpretations of the Song of Songs reveal that the Shulamite woman can be either the community of Israel or God and that the allegorical identities are anything but fixed.⁸⁴ Indeed, Levy’s play on 5:2–6 reverses the Shulamite’s earlier statement: “By night on my couch I sought him whom my soul loveth” (3:1). Alternatively, the male lover is assigned the stationary role. Thus, the female’s “presence” means that “love” is necessarily feminine and “soft as death.” This contrasts “love” in 8:6, which is figured as masculine and “strong as death” (8:6). Like in the Song of Songs, the feminine perspective is central.

81. Levy, *A London Plane-Tree*, 42. All future quotations taken from “Borderland” can be referred back to this citation. Hunt Beckman claims that Levy’s poem, “In the Mile End Road,” initiates a “reversal,” similar to that shown in “Borderland.” Hunt Beckman describes the poem as “apparently simple (and yet cryptic)” and suggests it is about a “dramatic confrontation with a self that has experienced death in life.” Accordingly, the final line, “My only love was dead,” is for Hunt Beckman “a reification of a side of the self, not an actual woman.” Thus, the poem implies that the speaker has seen a recently deceased acquaintance, but in a climactic twist the speaker is actually the one who is “dead.” Hunt Beckman posits that Levy “learned” this type of “startling reversal” from Heine (*Amy Levy*, 196; Levy, *A London-Plane Tree*, 50).

82. Christopher Meredith, “The Lattice and the Looking Glass: Gendered Space in Song of Songs 2:8–14,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 2 (June 2012): 368.

83. Daphne Merkin, “The Women in the Balcony: On Rereading the Song of Songs,” in *Out of the Garden: Women Writers on the Bible*, ed. Christina Buchmann and Celina Spiegel (London: Harper Collins, 1995), 240. According to Marcia Falk, the Song of Songs does not resonate with feminine or masculine stereotypes. *The Song of Songs: A New Translation* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990), xiii.

84. See Zhang Longxi, “The Letter or the Spirit: The *Song of Songs*, Allegories, and the *Book of Poetry*,” *Comparative Literature* 39, no. 3 (June 1987): 195–96.

Indeed, the Shulamite's role is unique because sexual intimacy in the Bible is often elucidated from a male standpoint. According to Rachel Adler, of the eleven biblical instances of women being subjects of the words "to love," five occur in the Song of Songs.⁸⁵ For Adler, it is only in the Song of Songs that women's desire is considered acceptable. Adler therefore claims that the text is "antipatriarchal" as readers experience the Shulamite's perspective.⁸⁶ Likewise, for Phyllis Trible it is the Shulamite who "initiates" sex. This is evident in the Shulamite's demand: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy caresses are better than wine" (1:2). Equally, it is the Shulamite who summons her lover (8:14), and who is also "keeper of the vineyards" (1:6).⁸⁷ Trible argues that the Song of Songs confirms the "the mutuality of the sexes. There is no male dominance, no female subordination, and no stereotyping of either sex. The woman is independent, fully the equal of the man."⁸⁸ Athalya Brenner even claims that "There is female superiority" in the Song of Songs.⁸⁹ Levy's poem certainly subverts conventional gender stereotypes.

In "Borderland," the female "presence"—"*It is she*"—takes the initiative, while the male is passive. "Borderland" therefore exploits the way in which the Song of Songs, for Trible, "reverses the meaning of the male-female relationship."⁹⁰ Levy frequently used a masculine voice to transcend her own sexuality. Elizabeth Jay claims that it was common in the Victorian period for women to rely "upon male voices for legitimation."⁹¹ According to Deborah Epstein Nord, Levy deployed her poetry to "achieve impersonality, to use another's voice—a man's voice."⁹² Likewise, Pullen suggests that "Levy's adoption of a male voice ... was a device that she employed primarily to create a distance from [her] own female identity."⁹³ The sexual ambiguity of the Song of Songs and its "voices [that] do not conform to masculine and feminine stereotypes" accommodated Levy's reinterpretation of gender labels.⁹⁴

The passionate exchanges in "Borderland" are at home among the range of voices in the Song of Songs. Indeed, the "night" setting relies on the "nocturnal"

85. Rachel Adler, *Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics* (Boston: Beacon, 2005), 133.

86. Adler, *Engendering Judaism*, 133–35.

87. See Phyllis Trible, "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation," in *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives*, ed. Elizabeth Koltun (New York: Schocken, 1976), 228–32.

88. Trible, "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation," 229, 232.

89. Athalya Brenner, "To See Is to Assume: Whose Love Is Celebrated in the Song of Songs?," *Biblical Interpretation* 5, no. 1 (1993): 265.

90. Trible, "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation," 233.

91. Elizabeth Jay, "Women Writers and Religion: A Self Worth Saving, a Duty Worth Doing and a Voice Worth Raising," in *Women and Literature in Britain 1800–1900*, ed. Joanne Shattock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 264.

92. Nord, "Neither Pairs nor Odd," 748.

93. Pullen, "Amy Levy, Her Life, Her Poetry and the Era of the New Woman" (PhD diss., Kingston University, 2000), 15.

94. Merkin, "Women in the Balcony," 240.

sequences primarily of 5:2–6 and to a lesser extent 3:1–5.⁹⁵ The scent of the female lover, figured as “odorous” and in the shedding of “perfume,” relies on references to the Shulamite’s enticing aroma. This can be seen in 5:5, where her “fingers [drip] with liquid myrrh,” and equally in 2:13, 4:10, and 4:14. The symbolism of the “heart” is illustrated in the male’s arousal as the female enters the bedroom: “My heart ... saith, / *It is she.*” This line relies on a similar metaphor in 4:9, which prefigures the nighttime exchange of 5:2–6: “Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my betrothed.” Comparable use of the romantic symbol of the “heart” can be found in 3:11. Lastly, “Borderland” climaxes with the female’s entrance as “an unseen presence hovering, / Round, above, in the dusky air: / A downy bird, with an odorous wing.” This verse conjures the biblical text’s figuring of the Shulamite as a “dove,” evident in the male’s plea (5:2): “Open to me, my sister, my dove.” Analogous metaphors can be located in 1:15 and 2:14.

Accordingly, “Borderland” can be read in a way that maintains the traditional thematic. The “unseen presence hovering” symbolizes the “dove,” traditionally the community of Israel (*Keneset Yisra’el*) and the “female” bride.⁹⁶ Comparably, the speaker, the male, assumes the role of Solomon, who in the rabbinic allegory represents God.⁹⁷ Indeed, in the first complete Jewish commentary on the Song of Songs, a sixth-century Targum,⁹⁸ “‘The beloved’ is the *Lord*; ‘the loved one’ is the *Congregation of Israel.*”⁹⁹ This interpretation flourished in the golden age of medieval Spain. Halevi and others emphasized the feminine nature of *Keneset Yisra’el*, “calling out in female terms” for “a renewed relationship with God.”¹⁰⁰ However, if “Borderland” is read in the context of its erotic or romantic language, the traditional perspective is void.¹⁰¹ The theological premise is also

95. Kenton Sparks, “The Song of Songs: Wisdom for Young Jewish Women,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (2008): 281.

96. According to the first/second-century Tanna, Rabbi Akiva, the text “is the Holy of Holies” as it was first uttered at Sinai (Green, “Shekhinah, the Virgin Mary, and the Song of Songs,” 3; Adler, *Engendering Judaism*, 134; M. Yadayim 3:5). For Akiva, “He who makes it a secular song has no share in the world to come” (T. Sanhedrin 12:10, quoted in Klara Butting, “Go Your Way: Women Rewrite the Scriptures (Song of Songs 2.8–14),” in *The Song of Songs: A Feminist Companion to the Bible*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], 142).

97. For the traditional allegory see B. Shabbat 49a. Equally, B. Sanhedrin 101a states: “Our rabbis taught: He who recites a verse of the Song of Songs and treats it as a [secular] air, and one who recites a verse at the banquet table unseasonably, brings evil upon the world.”

98. William Phipps, “The Plight of the Song of Songs,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 42, no. 1 (March 1974): 85.

99. Ginsburg, *Song of Songs*, 29. Similarly, the classic commentaries by Sa’adiah Gaon and Rashi employed the traditional allegory given the legal restrictions concerning the interpretation of the text (Green, “Shekhinah, the Virgin Mary, and the Song of Songs,” 3 n. 8, 10).

100. Green, “Shekhinah, the Virgin Mary, and the Song of Songs,” 9–10, 18.

101. Chana Bloch, “Book of Song of Solomon: Woman/Lover/Shulamite,” in *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*, ed. Carol Meyers, Toni Craven, and Ross Kraemer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 312.

missed if the poem is read as a reversal of contemporaneous stereotypes about the “passionless” woman of middle-class imagination.¹⁰²

The interpretive layers of the poem thus reveal contiguity with Heine. Levy’s refiguring of Song of Songs is an original innovation, but like Heine’s *imago*, “Borderland” mocks and confuses readers. Similar to “Das Hohelied” the poem’s use of abstract language blurs the line between the rational and the irrational.¹⁰³ Therefore, while it will become evident that “Borderland” reconstitutes themes from Heine’s “Das Hohelied” and “Lyrisches Intermezzo,” it is equally clear that Levy altered the parameters to produce an original verse. In this way “Borderland” can be read as a gendered approach to what Assaf Yedidya defines as the “anti-rabbinical tone of many pioneers of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.”¹⁰⁴ Hence, “Borderland” should not be understood merely as the product of Heine, even if it bound up with Levy’s adulation for “The Poet stretched on his couch of pain.”¹⁰⁵ Rather, the contiguous nature of the comparison suggests that Levy’s poem reveals “evolution.”¹⁰⁶ But of course “continuities [can] exist,” although they are of “secondary importance” to the contiguities and “tangentialities.”¹⁰⁷ The links between the two in this instance are what Miron refers to as “borderline,” “very fine,” and “barely noticed.”¹⁰⁸ These are “contacts” that until now “have not been detected.”¹⁰⁹ Their contiguity rests on the fact that Levy employed Heine’s methods and similarly focused on the Song of Songs, even if the context, language, and product differed.¹¹⁰

HEINE’S “DAS HOHELIED”

Heinrich Heine was well versed in the Hebrew Scriptures, and was one of the cofounders, along with Eduard Gans and Leopold Zunz, of the Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden (the Society for Jewish Culture and Science). Although he converted to Lutheranism, Heine’s conversion was intended to overcome the legal restrictions on Prussian Jews working within academia, as “the ticket of admission into European culture.”¹¹¹ Abraham Geiger claimed

102. Schiebinger, “Theories of Gender and Race,” 27.

103. See Beate Perrey, *Schumann’s Dichterliebe and Early Romantic Poetics: Fragmentation of Desire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 93–103.

104. Assaf Yedidya, “Orthodox Reactions to ‘Wissenschaft des Judentums,’” *Modern Judaism* 30, no. 1 (February 2010): 70.

105. Levy, “Jewish Humour,” 522.

106. Miron, *From Continuity to Contiguity*, 277.

107. Miron, *From Continuity to Contiguity*, 305.

108. Miron, *From Continuity to Contiguity*, 307.

109. Miron, *From Continuity to Contiguity*, 308.

110. For Heine’s counterhistorical perspective see Willi Goetschel and Nils Roemer, “Heine’s Judaism and Its Reception,” *The Germanic Review* 74, no. 4 (1999): 267. For an alternative overview of Levy’s reverence for Heine see Scheinberg, *Women’s Poetry*, 208–10.

111. Heinrich Heine quoted in Clive Brown, *A Portrait of Mendelssohn* (London: Yale University Press, 2003), 83.

that Heine was a “gifted son” never fully lost to the ancestral faith.¹¹² Indeed, according to Klaus Weimar “something remained that could not be changed by changing the social collective, something presocial, extrasocial: the biological substrate of anything societal—the body.”¹¹³

Heine was adept at presenting poetry suitable for a diverse audience, despite the themes containing offensive underpinnings for both Christian and Jewish religionists. In “Das Hohelied” Heine wrote: “just as the Jewish King Solomon sang the praises of the Church in the Song of Songs via the image of a black, ardent girl, so that the Jews would not quite notice, so did I myself do just the opposite in countless songs: I sang the praises of the rational, via the image of a white, cold virgin who pulls me towards her.”¹¹⁴ Heine suggested that Christian readers assuming they were reading an allegory of God’s love for the Church were mistaken. Equally, Heine mocked Jewish readers of the Song of Songs, who, by accepting the traditional allegory, were “ignorant” of its base content.¹¹⁵ “Das Hohelied” is thus predicated solely on the erotics of the biblical text.¹¹⁶ This is what Willi Goetschel calls “Heine’s poetry of ... reason,” demanding “emancipation of the senses and the flesh.”¹¹⁷ Indeed, in “Das Hohelied”

The woman’s body is a poem
Wrote ... the Lord God
In a vast kindred book of nature,
When the Spirit drove him.
... Indeed, the body of the woman is
The Song of Songs;

112. Nils Roemer, “Jew or German? Heinrich Heine’s German-Jewish Reception in the Nineteenth Century,” *The Germanic Review* 74, no. 4 (Fall 1999): 302.

113. Klaus Weimar, “A Third Meaning of the Word *Jewish*: Heine in German Literary Histories of the Nineteenth Century,” *The Germanic Review* 74, no. 4 (Fall 1999): 296.

114. Heine quoted in Perrey, *Schumann’s Dichterliebe*, 92. Heine’s reading of Halevi and Song of Songs capitalized on an already extant tradition. In Germany, beginning with Moses Mendelssohn in 1788, vernacular translations of the Song of Songs became commonplace. Mendelssohn’s version was followed by translations, not only by Geiger, but also by Aaron Rebenstein, Heinrich Graetz, and Kaufmann Kohler. See Abraham Geiger, *Urschrift und Übersetzungen der Bibel: in ihrer Abhängigkeit von der innern Entwicklung des Judentums* (Breslau: J. Hainauer, 1857); Aaron Rebenstein’s (pseudonym of Aaron Bernstein), *Commentary on the Song of Songs* (Berlin: n.p., 1834); Heinrich Graetz, *Shir Ha-Shirim oder das Salomonische Hohelied übersetzt und kritisch erläutert* (Wien: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1871); Kaufmann Kohler, *Das Hohe Lied* (New York: B. Westermann, 1878). In England, Christian Ginsburg, a Polish convert to Christianity who had already completed his rabbinical training, translated the Song of Songs in 1857; see his *Song of Songs Translated from the Original Hebrew: Commentary, Historical and Critical* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1857). Similarly, Friedländer, principal of London’s Jews’ College from 1865 to 1907, translated the Song of Songs into English in 1881 (see his *Jewish Family Bible*).

115. Perrey, *Schumann’s Dichterliebe*, 93–94.

116. Perrey, *Schumann’s Dichterliebe*, 94.

117. Willi Goetschel, *The Discipline of Philosophy and the Invention of Modern Jewish Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 32.

As all wonderful verses are
The sleek, white limbs.¹¹⁸

Accordingly, the poem can be read as either a religious allegory or a rationalist homage to the beauty of the Shulamite.¹¹⁹ In this latter interpretive reading the subtext is concealed, as it would later be in “Borderland,” within simplistic verse. This suited Levy as, according to Rebecca Styler, “simpler” poetry “was regarded as suitably feminine” and resonated with “notions of womanly character.”¹²⁰

Late-Victorian women writers frequently concealed religious subtexts in otherwise conventional poems. This was necessary for Levy as her surname inescapably marked her out as a Jewish author.¹²¹ Indeed, when the manuscript of *A London Plane-Tree* was passed to Macmillan for review it was rejected on the grounds that according to the anonymous reviewer: “These are all very puny pieces—more like the Jew’s harp than any more resourceful instrument.”¹²² As Ana Parejo Vadillo has suggested, this is why the publication of the anthology was accompanied by J. Bernard Partridge’s drawing of “The Temple Church,” which sought to “eradicate” the Jewishness of *A London Plane-Tree* and instead was to create a “Christian-centered urbanism.”¹²³ But Levy’s poetics were not solely based on toning down the obviously “Jewish” elements. In “Jewish Humour,” Levy eulogized the “quality of the tribal humour” in Heine’s poetry.¹²⁴ As evidenced in her critique of Eliot, Levy imagined that humour was a dynamic of Jewish identity indecipherable to “any one not born a Jew”:¹²⁵

As far as we can judge we should say, that only a Jew perceives ... the humour of another; ... The most hardened Agnostic deserter from the synagogue enjoys its pungency, where the zealous alien convert to Judaism tastes nothing but a little bitterness. ... The trappings and suites of our humour must vanish with the rest; but that is no reason why what is essential of it should not remain to us as a heritage of the ages too precious to be lightly

118. Heine, “Das Hohelied,” 106. The translations of “Das Hohelied” are my own; see also Pollak’s similar translation, though with adequate rhyme (106–9).

119. Perrey, *Schumann’s Dichterliebe*, 93–94; Paul Peters, “A Walk on the Wild Side: Heine’s Eroticism,” in *A Companion to the Works of Heinrich Heine*, ed. Roger Cook (Woodbridge: Camden House, 2002), 88. Peters’s chapter includes “Das Hohelied” in German (86–87) with accompanying analysis.

120. Rebecca Styler, *Literary Theology by Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 13.

121. According to Scheinberg: “Levy herself never gave up her Jewish name, and in choosing to publish as a Jewish woman, she took up a particular challenge, cognizant that as a Jewish writer her poetic identity in Victorian England would always be judged in relation to her Jewish identity” (“Canonizing the Jew,” 195).

122. Vadillo, *Women Poets*, 58.

123. Vadillo, *Women Poets*, 58.

124. Levy, “Jewish Humour,” 522.

125. Levy, “Jewish Humour,” 523.

lost; a defence and a weapon wrought for us long ago by hands that ceased not from their labour. If we leave off saying Shibboleth let us at least employ its equivalent in the purest University English.¹²⁶

Shibboleth (“flowing stream” or “ear of grain”) was a password used by the Gileadites in Judges 12:5–6 to identify the Ephraimites by their different pronunciation. The Ephraimites dropped the “sh” making shibboleth *sibbolet*.¹²⁷ For Scheinberg shibboleth is a literary means of crypto-Jewish dialogue and a “marker of identity” Levy hoped would allow Jews to recognize each other without appearing “Jewish to non-Jews.”¹²⁸ Moreover, Scheinberg argues that “there are often markers of Jewish identity in many of Levy’s poems, her own ways of ‘saying Shibboleth’ to those who know how to identify that term.”¹²⁹ Levy assumed, Scheinberg suggests, that “only Jews can understand each other.”¹³⁰ Similarly, Pullen compares Levy to the mid-Victorian writer, Adelaide Procter, who was adept at “sugaring the pill.” Indeed, Procter was able to convey “a political message and still [able to] remain within the bounds of mid-nineteenth-century literary convention,” thus creating the “impression of being ‘exactly what women’s poetry ... was expected to be: pious, flowery, sentimental and sweet.’”¹³¹ Equally, Bernstein suggests that Levy “treasures elements of Jewish humor that defy translation, ‘the dear vulgar, mongrel words’ that only the ‘we’ of her *Jewish Chronicle* audience can comprehend ..., whereby a cornucopia of unspecified wordplay ... conveys a special humor that non-Jews cannot disparage because they cannot ‘crack’ its language.”¹³² Such “markers” and “wordplay” are evident in “Borderland.”

The contiguities between “Das Hohelied” and “Borderland” are thus evident in the diverse readings these poems can elicit. “Das Hohelied” is essentially what Paul Peters labels a “rehabilitation of the original impulse of the *Canticum canticorum*,” a return to the raw physicality of the biblical text and rejection of its rabbinic allegory.¹³³ By emphasizing the erotic and downplaying the religious, Heine encouraged a more literal reading and was retrospectively able to claim: “This is not an abstract poem.”¹³⁴ According to Perrey, in his rational approach to the Song of Songs Heine was aware of the “conflict between explicit eroticism and implicit allegory.”¹³⁵ “Das Hohelied” emphasizes the beauty of the Shulamite: “the woman is the Song of Songs.”¹³⁶ For Heine, “The woman’s body is a poem,” her “verses” are “sleek, white limbs,” her “neck” is “bare,” her “breasts

126. Levy, “Jewish Humour,” 523–24.

127. Devine, *From Anglo-First-Wave*, 72.

128. Scheinberg, *Women’s Poetry*, 211.

129. Scheinberg, *Women’s Poetry*, 212.

130. Scheinberg, “Canonizing the Jew,” 189.

131. Pullen, “Amy Levy,” 84.

132. Susan David Bernstein, “Mongrel Words: Amy Levy’s Jewish Vulgarly,” in Hetherington and Valman, *Amy Levy*, 141–43.

133. Peters, “A Walk on the Wild Side,” 88.

134. Perrey, *Schumann’s Dichterliebe*, 97.

135. Perrey, *Schumann’s Dichterliebe*, 97.

136. Heine, “Das Hohelied,” 106.

are rosebuds,” her vagina is a “beautiful place,” she possesses “beautifully rhyming lips,” and she is “unspeakably adorable.”¹³⁷ This focus on the Shulamite’s body removes her from the allegorical context. However, a surface reading of “Das Hohelied” implies throughout that the Song of Songs was written by “The Lord God,” “highly excited,” and driven by the “Spirit.”¹³⁸ Such a reading assumes the basis of a “divine idea” and that the “woman” is a product of the “creator” and his sculpting.¹³⁹ This perspective accepts that the speaker will “sing praises to thee, O Lord,” “worship ... from the dust,” and “sink, O Lord” in reverence to “your song.”¹⁴⁰ But Heine was mocking his readers. The poem is a rejection of the traditional allegory and an affirmation of the rational. For Perrey “the inversion is perfect: what, by readers of Heine’s poems, was perceived as an expression of worldly love ... has at its centre the Divine Virgin, and what by readers of the Song of Songs was assumed to represent Solomon’s love for the Church was rather, Heine suggests, for a real woman.”¹⁴¹

In comparison, while Levy’s gendered reading draws on Heine’s *imago* of the Shulamite “woman,” the subtext does not foreclose a reading of the rabbinic allegory, but refigures it.¹⁴² Levy’s Shulamite accordingly initiates the dream sequence, contrary to 5:2–6. Indeed, Levy’s female is the “dove,” “hovering, / Round, above, in the dusky air: / A downy bird, with an odorous wing.” Obviously, the “dove” is an allusion to the community of Israel, but the focus is on the exclamation: “It is she.” This comment can therefore be read simply as the introduction of the female lover (as in “Das Hohelied”), or theologically, as corporate Israel, and thus a gendered refiguring of the traditional interpretation. Likewise, while Heine’s subtext glorifies the female form and is a corporeal exercise, it can still be read as a theological allegory.

Heine’s “Lyrisches Intermezzo” is often compared with the Song of Songs. Perrey claims that Heine’s reliance on the biblical text is “astonishing.” For Perrey, Heine’s verses read as homilies to the Shulamite woman.¹⁴³ These poems, their lyrics and style, help to inform the composition of “Borderland.” Indeed, Levy’s poem, like the “Interludes,” is built around a *dream* sequence, grounded in the *night* and the heat of the *summer*, based on mutual *love*, the *perfume* is intoxicating, and the imagery of the *dove* is essential. These are not simple continuities, however. Levy used these themes to refigure the Song of Songs.

First, the *dream* setting: dreams are used in nineteen of the sixty-nine “Lyrical Interludes.” Dreams are an opportunity to visualize the Shulamite. She is seen “but lately in a dream,” “oft in dreams,” in “musing and dreaming,” in a “dream of old,” and “EACH night in dreams.”¹⁴⁴ Similarly, the speaker is

137. Heine, “Das Hohelied,” 106, 108.

138. Heine, “Das Hohelied,” 106.

139. Heine, “Das Hohelied,” 106, 108.

140. Heine, “Das Hohelied,” 106, 108.

141. Perrey, *Schumann’s Dichterliebe*, 93–94.

142. Perrey, *Schumann’s Dichterliebe*, 91.

143. Perrey, *Schumann’s Dichterliebe*, 92, 95.

144. Heine, “Lyrical Intermezzo,” 69, 93, 98–100.

“dreaming of a palm-tree,” a metaphor for the Shulamite (Song of Songs 7:7), as well as of “the fairest princess seen.”¹⁴⁵ Certainly, in dreams he can “hear thee gently calling,” echoing 5:6.¹⁴⁶ In the same way, the *night* is a constant within “Lyr-isches Intermezzo” and is referred to on sixteen occasions. The Shulamite is “waiting for the night,” “the moon is her own lover” (in 6:10 she is “fair as the moon”), and she only visits “by night.”¹⁴⁷ Similarly, as in Song of Songs 3:1, the “night-time” is “better,” tales are told on a “summer’s night,” the speaker sings “by night” his “songs of love,” and he yearns for the “endless night.”¹⁴⁸ Equally, a number of the “Interludes” are grounded in the *summer*. There is singing “through summer hours,” the “summer days are heating,” and the “summer” is “gleaming.”¹⁴⁹ Moreover, the speaker yearns for “summer in your heart” and “the ruddy rays of summer” ensue.¹⁵⁰ *Love* is the single most consistent theme and is referred to more times than there are “Interludes.” The symbolic “roses” (2:1) confess “warm love,” the Shulamite is “thou loved and loveliest one,” “my life’s great love,” and will be loved “till life be past.”¹⁵¹ Also, *perfume* is a frequent marker of sensuality in the “Lyrical Interludes.” The Shulamite is “perfuming,” the bedroom is “sweet-perfumed,” dreams bring “sweet enchanted scents,” metaphorical roses (echoing 2:1) are “soft-perfumed,” and “Love’s sweetest airs” are prolonged.¹⁵²

Decisively, the “dove” is a recurrent symbol in the “Lyrical Interludes.” The third begins, “For the dove or the sun, rose or lily sweet growing,” linking the verse to the Song of Songs.¹⁵³ Indeed, the Shulamite is “my sister, my love, my dove” (5:2), she is “clear as the sun” (6:10), she is the “rose of Sharon,” and she is “lily among the thorns” (2:1–2). Correspondingly, in Lyrical Interlude 50 the “dove” is required to relate her “experience in love,” just as in 38, songs are “flight upwinging” and “fluttering.”¹⁵⁴ Equally, in 57 the narrator laments: “Oh that I were a birdling.”¹⁵⁵ Similarly, the Shulamite’s “eyes are doves” (1:16) and she is the “dove ... in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the cliff” (2:14). Thus, Heine’s “dove” is a marker linking the “Interludes” to the Song of Songs. However, his “dove” is solely a metaphor for the Shulamite woman, not corporate Israel, even if the verses can be read this way.

By contrast, Levy’s softly feathered “hovering” dove, with its fanning and perfumed wings, can be an allusion to the Shulamite and carries traditional meanings. Levy’s “dove” can also be read as symbolic of the community of Israel. In this way, while Heine mocks his readers who assume the traditional allegory,

145. Heine, “Lyrical Intermezzo,” 85, 91.

146. Heine, “Lyrical Intermezzo,” 100.

147. Heine, “Lyrical Intermezzo,” 72, 91.

148. Heine, “Lyrical Intermezzo,” 89, 94, 99, 105.

149. Heine, “Lyrical Intermezzo,” 68, 76, 84.

150. Heine, “Lyrical Intermezzo,” 95–96.

151. Heine, “Lyrical Intermezzo,” 71, 87, 93.

152. Heine, “Lyrical Intermezzo,” 71–72, 102–3.

153. Heine, “Lyrical Intermezzo,” 68 (see also 69); Perrey, *Schumann’s Dichterliebe*, 97.

154. Heine, “Lyrical Intermezzo,” 87, 97.

155. Heine, “Lyrical Intermezzo,” 98. In B. Shabbat 49a: “The Congregation of Israel is likened to a dove, ... just as a dove is protected by its wings, so is Israel protected by its precepts.”

Levy's poem remodels its traditional meaning. "Borderland" is nonetheless equally mocking. Those readers who assume it is merely a hypersentimental poem will miss its complex layers.

* * * * *

"Borderland" is a refiguring of the Song of Songs that demonstrates contiguity with Heine. His "Das Hohelied" and "Lyrisches Intermezzo" inform some of the themes and style of Levy's poem. While these are contiguities, of course, the languages and contexts are different. Moreover, Levy's gendered rereading of Song of Songs is unique. Thus, it is not a case of simple continuity between Heine and Levy.

Miron's model of "literary contiguity" allows for the fact that the links between "Jewish literatures" are not necessarily "linear," "chronological," or "causal." Indeed, according to Miron's model, there are connecting elements that need not marginalize the "diffuse spatial" contexts.¹⁵⁶ Rather than implying a system of simplistic continuity, Miron's "contiguity" adds nuance and is a "corrective" to assumptions of teleology.¹⁵⁷ This approach allows for Levy's poetry to bear the imprint of Heine, and still be original in its own right. Thus, comparison between the two need not marginalize "their own experiences of alienation."¹⁵⁸ Accordingly, Miron's "literary contiguity" underscores what Sheila Jelen calls the "'winks' and 'nods' of writers from disparate places and writing in different languages"¹⁵⁹—"winks" and "nods" that are often missed. Heine was adept at "counternarrative," "exposing reality," and "counterhistory,"¹⁶⁰ and Levy too seems to have utilized these methods, though of course for different reasons.

Research into Levy's life, milieu, and religiosity is hindered by the destruction of her personal papers.¹⁶¹ But her poetry, when analysed as text (as opposed to assuming it can shed light on Levy's biography), continues to be a wellspring of diverse perspectives and new lines of inquiry that, like Heine's poesis, transcends history.¹⁶² The link is not mere continuity between writers; rather, there are subtle contiguities between the two that are not immediately apparent.

Luke Devine
University of Worcester

156. Miron, *From Continuity to Contiguity*, 412.

157. Miron, *From Continuity to Contiguity*, 362.

158. Alison Schachter, *Diasporic Modernisms: Hebrew and Yiddish Literature in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 11.

159. Sheila Jelen, review of *From Continuity to Contiguity: Toward a New Jewish Literary Thinking*, by Dan Miron, *Religion & Literature* 43, no. 3 (Autumn 2011): 255.

160. Michael Mack, *German Idealism and the Jew: The Inner Anti-Semitism of Philosophy and German Jewish Responses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 12; Willi Goetschel, "Nightingales instead of Owls: Heine's Joyous Philosophy," in Cook, *A Companion to the Works of Heinrich Heine*, 157; Goetschel and Roemer, "Heine's Judaism," 267.

161. Hunt Beckman, *Amy Levy*, 285 n. 15.

162. Goetschel and Roemer, "Heine's Judaism," 267.