I do not intend to explain the pioneer desire for the Land of Israel, attempts to
realize, borders in the form of wells, paths, roads, settlements, and other such visible
borders, but I do want to explore the land, the boundaries, the
interconnectedness of the land and the boundaries that shape the
landscape and the experience of the pioneer. This book describes these
boundaries, their interrelatedness and the experience of the pioneer.

The book presents the pioneer's land and the Jewish,
constructing a boundary between the Jewish land and the
pioneer's land. This book questions what it means to
construct a boundary and how it shapes the pioneer's experience.

This book examines the interplay between the Jewish
land and the pioneer's land, exploring the concept of
boundary as a means to understand the experience of the
pioneer. It explores the implications of constructing
boundaries, both in the Jewish land and the
pioneer's land, and the impact of these boundaries on
the experience of the pioneers.
explain the causes and sources of this phenomenon, as well as its purpose, miss the mark. Instead of explaining, I seek to describe. To do so, I simply chart pioneer desire. As the many quotes from the pioneers themselves included here demonstrate, pioneer language, the multiplicity of pioneer texts, and their unrestrained expressiveness themselves constitute part of the pioneer desire for the Land of Israel.

The pioneers expressed this desire in descriptions of their experience of being-in-the-Land as an ecstatic, almost mystical sense of actually merging their flesh with its soil, flora, and fauna, of achieving a symbiosis with it, as though the boundaries between themselves and the Land had dissolved. Yosef Weitz, one of the first settlers at Um Juni, on the shore of Lake Kinneret (the Sea of Galilee), wrote that he had not really understood the mystery of the Zionist need to possess the soil until he made the ascent—aliya, the Hebrew word for immigration to the Holy Land—to the Land of Israel and dug his first trench in Rehovot: “Then, when the scent of the soil rose to my nostrils, I sensed something new that had perhaps been hidden away in some secret place under the threshold of consciousness, awakening and spreading through all my bones and sinews. And the deeper I dug, the sensation of the soil became more profound and spread through me, and the feeling overcame me that I (must) embrace the land, merge into it, suck from it the essence of life. The spirit of the generations blew within me from the depths of the soil and I felt, really felt, the powerful connection between me and the soil of Israel.”

These expressions of desire could be explicitly erotic. At midnight, on a visit to Ben Shemen Farm, the author Y. H. Brenner was walking to the home of his friend, the farm’s manager, Yitzhak Elazar-Volcani. As a compatriot who accompanied Brenner later recounted, they walked along a path that ascended to the farmyard. At some point Brenner began speaking of the Land of Israel. They reached a broad field on the hillside that had been freshly and deeply plowed; large brown clods of earth jutted boldly out from the ground under the light of a full moon. The Herzl forest was to be planted there. Brenner halted. Silence prevailed. No one said a word. Suddenly he fell to his knees on the plowed field, embracing an armful of clods, kissing them, and crying out: “Land of Israel, will you be ours?! Land of Israel, will you be ours?!” Another halutz wrote that on one of his trips through the Galilee he found, in a cleft in a boulder, a cyclamen blossom. The flower’s petals were still closed, deep in their dream of blooming. “I bent over the boulder, kissed the edge of its red mouth, the red, red mouth of the flower,” he wrote.

Yet this pioneer desire for the Land has been almost completely omitted from the historiography. Most historians analyze immigration to and settlement in Palestine as a political, socioeconomic, ideological, or cultural process. The few historians who do take up the issue of desire all see it not on its own terms but as a form of expression, as a manifestation of subjective, internal reality, or in a Freudian sense, as an enactment of oedipal patterns.

This book, in contrast, takes desire as a primal, irreducible condition, a state of being that precedes need or purpose or any action such as farming, construction, or road building. For the pioneers, being-in-the-Land was this primal state. I have drawn this concept from the pioneers’ own expressions of their feelings and experiences of being-in-the-Land. I take these expressions at face value, not as sublimations of or metaphors for some other feeling or need. This approach to the pioneers’ desire for the Land allows us to see the pioneer-Zionist act not only as political, economic, ideological, historical, or religious but first and foremost as existential.

A historical narrative is the product of the period in which the historian writes it, emerging from the historian’s identity, political outlook, and worldview. Thus, I focus here on the desire of the halutzim for the Land of Israel—not the desires of others, such as the local Arabs—presenting their history from a classic pioneer-Zionist point of view.

The Halutzim

From the beginning of the Second Aliya in 1903–1904 through the end of the Third Aliya in 1923, a new breed of immigrants arrived in Palestine. In Hebrew they were called halutzim—pioneers (I will use the Hebrew and English terms interchangeably). A modern Hebrew dictionary defines halutz as “the part of the army that precedes the major force, the vanguard,” and as “the first of a conquest, an enterprise, paving the way for those who come after.” According to this definition, the individuals or groups who were the first to engage in any activity in the Land of Israel can be called pioneers.

But when we seek to discuss pioneerism (I will use the Hebrew term halutzut from here on) in the framework of Zionist activity, we cannot disregard the way the Zionists viewed themselves. In this respect, halutzut is a phenomenon with clear form and content. Halutz, the dictionary tells us, is also “a name given in the prestate period to a young man who immigrated to the Land of Israel in order to fulfill his Zionist aspiration to engage in manual labor and to participate in [the Land’s] construction.” According to this definition, to be a pioneer one must live in a certain period, be of a certain age, have certain intentions, and perform a certain kind of work. Those who were the first to perform deeds of any sort in the Land of Israel were, then, pioneers in the simple meaning of the word. They were the vanguard. But they were not halutzim in the classic Zionist sense.
The word halutz, when it appears in the Bible in the story of Joshua's siege of Jericho (Joshua 6:6–9), is rendered in English as "armed man" or "picked troops." The first Zionists who used the term knew not only this context but also the request that the tribes of Gad and Reuben make in the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy. These tribes have settled to the east of the Jordan River and ask to be exempted from the invasion of Canaan. After an exchange with Moses, they relent. Moses tells them that they may retain their land east of the Jordan on condition that they participate, along with the other tribes, in the conquest of the Promised Land (Numbers 20:20–22). Here, too, the translation of the word halutz is "armed man" or "vanguard." The biblical word thus means the warrior in the vanguard of his people. But rather than being an individual soldier, he is a part of a unit, a collective, which leads its people by divine command.

The terms halutz and halutziyyut first appeared in their Zionist sense at the beginning of the Third Aliya in about 1913. They were applied to the Second Aliya only retroactively. David Ben-Gurion wrote that, while it was in progress, the Second Aliya was not linked with pioneering simply because the term halutz had not yet been applied to it. At the time, Ben-Gurion and his cohort were referred to simply as tz'irim, young people. The term halutz first appeared in its Zionist sense at a convention of Tze'iri Tzion, an early labor-Zionist youth movement, in Vienna at the end of 1913. One of the resolutions adopted there was to promote "the training of pioneers for the Land of Israel." Four years later, the federation of socialist Zionist youth movements and organizations founded by the national hero Yosef Trumpeldor called itself HaHalutz, "The Pioneer." At the time, the term was chosen as a direct translation of the word "vanguard."

We first find a systematic exposition of the term halutziyyut in two foundation documents dating from this period. The first, a letter penned in Palestine by socialist leader Berl Katzenelson and sent at the end of World War I to Jewish youth groups in the Diaspora, bears the title "To the HaHalutz Movement." Katzenelson used a slightly different but also linguistically correct form, halutzit, which shows that the term had not yet come into common usage. He defined pioneerism as a "life project" and a "personal vision." It signified restraint and self-control—a pioneer achieved mastery of his world. According to Katzenelson, the pioneer Zionist movement stood apart from other contemporary movements in that it focused not on its leadership or its program but rather on the lives and labor of its adherents. The second document that serves as a milestone in the definition of halutziyyut was an essay Trumpeldor wrote in 1918, titled "The Pioneer, His Nature and Destiny." This piece echoed Katzenelson's major points.

According to Katzenelson and Trumpeldor, the halutz is defined by the seminal nature of his actions. He does in his life what the nation will do in the future. The pioneer is a soldier, and as such his role is to conquer—but not in the violent sense. Rather, he conquers—that is, lays claim to and takes possession of—the land by working it. His mission is to farm, to homestead, to labor in construction and agricultural industry. The pioneer is a worker himself, not an exploiter of others. In both documents, the halutz is part of a collective and a socialist. Katzenelson and Trumpeldor sought to turn the pioneer movement into a mass movement. However, they both intimate that political and class criteria determine who is a halutz and who is not. The process of pioneer training, in their view, thus includes an element of selection. Not every young Jew has the ability to settle in the Land of Israel.

Over time, the secular incarnations of many religious concepts would permeate the pioneer ethos. Katzenelson, as noted, already identified halutziyyut not just as an idea or doctrine but as a "personal vision." In the 1920s, additional attributes were ascribed to the pioneer. One was hagshuma, best translated as "realization" but connoting here the implementation of one's Zionist and personal ideals. Other characteristics were leadership and educational and political activism. The term "conquest" as understood by Zionists first indicated conquering the land by working it with one's own hands, but during the 1920s it took on the additional connotations of guarding and defending the land. Since the halutz was to be proficient in military as well as farming skills, he had to be strong, resilient, and prepared for self-sacrifice in the service of his nation, especially through acts of heroism.

In the mid-1930s, the pioneer ethos began to undergo a fundamental change. The halutz came to be perceived also as a warrior defending his nation and land. As such, he had not only to defend but also to attack, kill, and be prepared to be killed. His knowledge of the land and his ability to navigate it now served not only the goal of developing it but also of fighting for it. This "new halutz" became the man of the elite fighting force of prestatehood Palestine known as the Palmach.

But he belongs to the "generation of the sons," which lies outside the framework of this book. The first halutzim were mostly single men and women in their twenties or thirties. They came to Palestine principally from Russia and Poland during the Second and Third Aliyot, motivated in large part by Zionist ideology; many belonged to youth movements such as HaHalutz and HaShomer HaTza'im. They lacked any defined occupation, and had no formal or professional training. Most were socialists by persuasion. The halutz immigrated to Palestine with the express intention of becoming manual laborers. This choice is significant. The labor movement the pioneers established in Palestine was fundamentally different from those in many other countries in that it did not grow out of a tradition of labor or, alternatively and classically, the migration of agricultural laborers from the countryside to work in factories in cities. In other words, in Palestine no pro-
cess presupposed the creation of a proletariat. The halutzim who came to the Land of Israel chose their destination from among other, ostensibly more attractive, options available to them, in particular immigration to the New World. They chose not only to settle in Palestine but also to remain there despite the difficulties they faced. The fact that the difficulty of life in and on the Land led many to leave in the end only underlines the determination of those who stayed. After arriving in Palestine, Ben-Gurion concluded that only two types of workers could remain in a land where life was unbearably hard; those with the capacity to endure such a life—that is, strong young people accustomed to hard labor—and those with an "enormous will." 12

In Palestine, halutzim of the Second and Third Aliyot engaged in various types of manual labor, including farming, construction, and roadwork. They established settlements that were for the most part communal in one way or another. These included the collective (Sejera, 1907), the national farm (Kinneret, 1908), the moshav po'alei (Ein Ganim, 1908), the kibbutz (Degania, 1910), the la'aparitza (Merhavia, 1911), the moshav zedim (Nahalal, 1921), and the kibbutz (Ein Harod, 1921). (These types of settlements varied regarding the extent of collectivization, size, and ideological origin.) The halutzim endured periods of widespread unemployment, hunger, and severe illness. At times, however, their privation and asceticism were deliberate, incurred in order to avoid dependence on others and to remain true to an antibourgeois ideology. 13

Despite being a minority among the Jewish immigrants to Palestine during the Second and Third Aliyot, the halutzim played a decisive role in consolidating Jewish-Zionist settlement in the Land. In this context, the Israeli historian Yosef Gorny has distinguished between "formative aliyot" and "consolidating aliyot." In his view, the first three waves of immigration, from 1882 to 1923, were formative aliyot. While they were quantitatively small, they established standards for the nature and ideology of the Zionist settlement enterprise that later developed into the State of Israel. They were followed by three consolidating aliyot, in the years 1924–1951. While these waves were massive in comparison with their predecessors, Gorny argues, their principal effect was to consolidate what had been set in motion and achieved by the earlier immigrants. They also differed from the first three waves in that most of these latter immigrants came to Palestine because they had no alternative. 14

In recent years, certain historians have sought to tarnish the pioneer aliyot by claiming that the characterization “pioneering” is no more than an image or, some say, a myth. One of the major arguments these scholars present to support their claim is statistical. The number of immigrants who could be defined as halutzim, in their view, is tiny compared to the total number of Jewish immigrants to Palestine during those years. In his study of the Second Aliya, the historian Gur Alroey argues that the pioneer laborers numbered no more than one to two thousand, or 4.5 percent, among the total of 30,000 to 35,000 Jewish immigrants during this period. 15 In a parallel study of the Third Aliya, the historians Baruch Ben-Avram and Henry Near found that no more than 40 percent of the immigrants fit the three defining characteristics of the halutz: young, affiliated with a pioneer youth movement, and engaged in manual labor for the purposes of Zionist hagshama. In most years of this period, such arrivals numbered about 30 percent. Between 1919 and 1922, some 26,000 Jews immigrated to Palestine, but only 8,000 were pioneers. 16 If we add up the figures from the two studies, we find that in the Second and Third Aliyot, some 9,500 halutzim arrived in Palestine, among a total of some 58,500 immigrants—only 16 percent.

Like Gorny, I maintain that, while the halutzim indeed constituted a minority of immigrants in their time—Beri Katznelson himself referred to them as “the distillate of the distillate”—in qualitative terms these people set the tone for the Jewish community in Palestine and thus for the future state of Israel. Their organizations, political movements, and settlements exemplified the Zionist ethos: Hebrew land, Hebrew labor, Hebrew defense, Hebrew language, and more. As I will show, the pioneers were the first to shape the way Israeli and Zionism are experienced in space, in the human body, and through language: they were the first to know the land, the new Jewish body, and the Hebrew language. I maintain that the encounter with the Land of Israel, as it was experienced until the 1960s and 1970s—that is, until the decline of the pioneer ethos and the transition from Zionism to capitalism, or from Zionism to post-Zionism—was largely the work of the halutzim. 17 To a great extent, the halutz period was the constitutive moment of Zionism in the Land of Israel.

When we Israeli Jews of today gaze at the Land of Israel, we see it largely through the eyes of the halutzim. When we feel it with our bodies and souls, we sense it largely through their sensibilities. We are tied to the land and have difficulty giving it up because they were attached to it. The Land of Israel time by which we live is a great extent the mythic time the pioneers defined by their actions. When we speak Hebrew, we speak their language. When we love the land, we love it largely through their love. And when we are willing to lay down our lives for it, we are prepared to die the “beautiful death” for which they, too, were prepared.

The Second Aliya

The great majority of historians agree that the Second Aliya ended in 1914 with the outbreak of World War I. But they disagree about when it began. Some put the
starting point at the end of 1904 with the arrival of the first hallsitzim. Though, as noted, these hallsitzim were a minority among the Jews who immigrated during this period, the Second Aliya has become identified with them. Other historians propose that the Second Aliya began in 1903. They point out that the catalyst for this wave of immigration was the Kishinev pogrom of April 1903. This bloody event stunned Jewish communities in Europe for its brutality but even more so because of the helplessness of the Jewish victims. In this view, the Second Aliya was a pragmatic response to the severity of the attack and to the stinging humiliation felt by many Jews as a result. Many of the pioneers who arrived during this period had been involved, prior to their immigration, in Jewish self-defense organizations.

Another significant event that motivated Jews to move to the Land of Israel was the Uganda controversy during the Sixth Zionist Congress in Basel in August 1903, a crisis that nearly fractured the Zionist movement. The territorialist faction proposed that the Jews accept an alternative location as a temporary or permanent solution to the Jewish problem, whereas those who rejected any alternative and advocated settlement in the Land of Israel sought to establish facts on the ground there, so as to demonstrate that the Land was the only solution to the Jews' tribulations. The death of Theodor Herzl a year later, in July 1904, also induced many young people who had seen him as a father figure to immigrate to the Land. They believed that in immigrating and settling in the Land, they were fulfilling Herzl's legacy.

Aliya to the Land was also, during this period, a recourse for Jews disappointed by the abortive Russian revolution of 1905—not only because it had failed to live up to their high expectations but also because they were being accused of rebellion against the tsar. Their shattered hopes for the equality promised by the revolution prompted many to set out for the Land of Israel in an effort to realize the same ideals on new soil. About two months after the failure of the revolution, Yosef Vitkin, a teacher from Kfar Tavor who had arrived during the First Aliya, beckoned the Jews of Russia to come to the Land of Israel and bring new blood into its Jewish community, which had, he said, degenerated in the years following the arrival of the first wave of Zionist settlers.

During the Second Aliya, the Jewish population of Palestine grew from about 50,000 to 80–85,000. In 1914, the Jews made up approximately 12 percent of the territory's population of about 700,000. One-third of that growth was the result of natural increase, while the rest came from immigration. Most Second Aliya immigrants belonged to two groups that were very different from the hallsitzim. The largest group consisted of middle-class people of modest means who settled principally in the Jewish moshavot—farming villages, such as Rishon LeTzion, Petah Tikva, and Zichron Ya'akov, that had been established over the previous quarter-century by the immigrants of the First Aliya. Socioeconomically, this group resembled the First Aliya immigrants. The second group, pious and urban, came from the same background as the Jews of the Old Yishuv, the Jewish community of Palestine prior to the First Aliya. These immigrants settled largely in the four large Jewish cities, principally Jerusalem. Another small group of immigrants during this period arrived from Yemen, a source of immigrants to the Land beginning during the First Aliya. They arrived in two principal surges, one in 1907 and one in 1912, and numbered about two thousand. Some mixed with members of the Old Yishuv and some worked as laborers in the Jewish farming communities.

While the hallsitzim were indeed a minority among immigrants of the Second Aliya, the role they played in shaping the Jewish community was decisive. The aliya's major figures set the tone for the entire Yishuv, and most of the State of Israel's top leadership positions were occupied, in its early years, by these same people: David Ben-Gurion, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, Moshe Sharet, Levi Eshkol, Zalman Shazar, and Berl Katznelson.

The pioneers of the Second Aliya would not have achieved what they did without the support of the Zionist Organization, founded in 1897 at the First Zionist Congress in Basel at Herzl's initiative. Its goal was to settle Jews in the Land of Israel with the consent and support of the great powers, in particular the Ottoman Empire, which then controlled Palestine. The Zionist Organization developed the financial means needed to purchase land and fund settlement. In 1903, the Zionist Organization founded the Anglo-Palestine Bank in Jaffa. It also established the Jewish National Fund (JNF; known in Hebrew as the Keren Kayemet LeYisrael) to purchase land that would permanently remain the property of the Jewish people and be leased out to settlers. From 1905 to 1907, the JNF made its first purchases, at Ben Shemen, Hulda, and Hiltin. The Palestine Office was founded in 1907 in Jaffa to serve as the Zionist Organization's agent and executive arm, and Dr. Arthur Ruppin was appointed to head it. Hachsharat HaYishuv (the Palestine Land Development Company, established by the Zionist Organization) served as an agent for the purchase of land with private capital.

The Second Aliya's pioneers envisioned and founded new types of settlements unknown to previous Jewish immigrants, including collectives that maintained communal societies and economies. The first such community was founded in 1907 by a group of laborers from the Jewish Colonization Association farm at Sefera, which trained young Jews to live and work as laborers. It was the only farm in the Land at that time in which all the workers and guards were Jewish, and it lasted for about a year before it was dismantled.

Another type of settlement was the national farm, where Jewish agricultural
laborers received training. The first national farm, Kinneret, was founded in 1908 on the southern shore of Lake Kinneret by the Palestine Office of the Zionist Organization, on land owned by the JNF that had formerly belonged to the Arab village of Delaika. The establishment of the farm marked the beginning of the Zionist Organization’s settlement enterprise in the Land. Its first residents were eight men and one woman. But after a dispute between the workers and the farm’s manager over salaries, work quality, and the hiring of Arab laborers, the Jewish laborers left the farm for Hadera, a moshava—one of the farming villages established by the immigrants of the First Aliya—on the coastal plain, where they established a commune. In 1910, its members returned to the southern shore of Lake Kinneret and founded the first kevuta—a small, independent agricultural commune—which they called Degania. In 1913, the Kinneret national farm was handed over to a group of thirteen men and three women laborers who, along with several others, founded the Kinneret kevuta. Other national farms were founded at Hulda and Ben Shemen, both in the center of the Land.

In 1907, the JNF purchased the lands of the Arab village Um Juni, adjacent to the Kinneret national farm. Shortly afterward, the lands were leased by the Hachsharat HaYishuv and the Palestine Office. About a year later, the Palestine Office handed over some of the land, for a year, to a kevuta of six men and one woman. At the end of that year the Office permitted the members of the Hadera commune to settle on and farm the Um Juni land. Each settler received a fixed monthly stipend from the Office. Half the annual profits were to be paid to the settlers directly, while all losses would be absorbed by the Office. The Degania communal farmers advocated agricultural labor as the proper way of life and believed they could demonstrate that a farm could be run on Jewish labor alone, without the need for Arab workmen. They were led by Yosef Bussel. The kevuta was a settlement partnership based on communal ownership of property, self-sufficiency in labor, equality, and collectivization of production, consumption, and education. The flagship type of Second Aliya settlement, it was by definition small and intimate, based principally on farming. In contrast, most communes established by Third Aliya pioneers were larger kibbutzim, influenced explicitly by Marxism and the October Revolution in Russia. They sought more than just the establishment of ideal societies for themselves—they advocated nationwide collectivization of all labor and production.

The ko‘operatzia, the first example of which was Merhavia, was inspired explicitly by the ideas of the German economist and sociologist Franz Oppenheimer. Merhavia was the first Jewish settlement in the Jezreel Valley, at the lower boundary of the Galilee. Its land, which had previously belonged to the Arab village of Fula, was purchased by Yehoshua Hankin and transferred to Hachsharat HaYishuv and the JNF. At the end of 1920, a group of HaShomer self-defense organization members arrived to prepare the land for settlement. A short time later the ko‘operatzia was founded.

Oppenheimer laid out a number of management principles to which the Merhavia members remained faithful. The ko‘operatzia was not a collectivist settlement in the same sense as Degania. The members worked together to prepare the land for cultivation, but they and their families farmed individual plots and social life was not communal. Supplies were purchased jointly. The settlers decided together what types of crops to grow, to be marketed cooperatively, with individual farmers receiving the profits from their crops. At first, the settlers worked under the supervision of an agronomist, who taught them their craft. Later, after the settlement became profitable, they became administratively independent. The ko‘operatzia was disbanded in 1918, principally as a result of economic problems, and in 1922 it was reestablished as a moshav, with similar operating principles. In 1929, the site became the home of Kibbutz Merhavia, founded by HaShomer HaTza‘ir.

Another innovative settlement created by the Second Aliya halutzim was the moshav po‘alim, which sought to combine urban and agricultural labor. All families received small kitchen gardens of more or less the same size, which they tended in addition to the adults’ work in the city. The moshav po‘alim differed from the moshav ha‘amim in that it did not advocate settlement of national lands and collectivism. The first moshav po‘alim was founded in 1908 at Ein Ganim, near Petah Tikva. In the end it failed, becoming no more than a passing phenomenon of the Second Aliya. The main reason for its failure was that the kitchen garden was too small to support a family. In 1937, Ein Ganim became a neighborhood of the city of Petah Tikva.

The Second Aliya pioneers also founded the self-defense organization ("guard") organization in Hebrew Bar Giora in 1907. Bar Giora originated in Jaffa, established by seven members of the Po‘alei Tzion party, among them Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, Alexander Zeid, and Yisrael Shohat, the last of whom served as chief of his Jewish defense organization in Russia. Bar Giora was small and elitist. Its initial members settled in Sejera, where their success led them to accept responsibility for guarding Mes‘ha and other Jewish settlements in the Lower Galilee. In 1909, an assembly at Sejera decided to expand the organization’s mission, and to change its name to HaShomer. In its new incarnation, the organization also pursued an agenda of settling the Land, developing methods based on learning local conditions and the customs of the local population, the Arabs in particular. It quickly broadened its ranks and deployed throughout the Land, defending Jewish settlements in the south as well. At its height HaShomer had about three hundred
members. Some founded settlements of their own—Tel Adashim in 1913, Kfar Giladi in 1916, and Tel Hai in 1918. In 1920, HaShomer was disbanded because of a dispute between two factions: one that sought to make it a broader and more popular force and a second that insisted it remain elitist. Its members were quickly absorbed into a new self-defense organization, the Haganah.

Politically and organizationally, most Second Aliya halutzim belonged to one of two parties: the Marxist Po’alei Tzion or the socialist-nationalist HaPo’el HaTza’ir. Both were founded in the Land of Israel in 1905, although the former had political roots in Russia dating to the end of the previous century. Po’alei Tzion’s members viewed themselves, at least in the party’s early years, as a part of the world socialist revolution. Its first leader was Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, and most of its activity involved establishing labor unions and staging strikes. In seeking to found a socialist society in the Land of Israel, party members saw the establishment of independent settlements as the principal way of reinforcing the position of Jewish workers. In its early years, Po’alei Tzion also advocated the use of Yiddish as the Jewish language of culture and creativity. But relatively quickly, Yiddish was abandoned and the party supported the use of Hebrew as the language of the Zionist revival, just as it abandoned its doctrine of international class warfare.

HaPo’el HaTza’ir vehemently rejected the principle of class struggle, although it aspired to found an egalitarian Jewish society. It also viewed the allocation of national capital as the correct and proper way to strengthen the working class in the Land of Israel, and from the start advocated the use of Hebrew. The party was founded by Shlomo Tzemach and Eliezer Shohat, with the purpose of “conquering” Hebrew labor. In 1908, it declared that its goal was “an economically and culturally healthy Jewish majority.” Members of the party took part in self-defense activity, although they had reservations about HaShomer, which—as mentioned—had been founded by members of Po’alei Tzion.

The Third Aliya

Palestine’s borders were closed during World War I, and transport difficulties made immigration almost impossible. Furthermore, the Ottoman regime expelled Jews who were foreign nationals, and the war and the collapse of the economy caused the death rate to climb among those who remained. Toward the end of the war, in November 1917, the British foreign secretary, Lord Balfour, issued the declaration that granted British recognition to the right of the Jews to settle in Palestine, their ancestral land. After the war, the declaration was incorporated into the League of Nations decision to hand Britain the Mandate for Palestine, thus granting formal international recognition to Jewish rights in the Land.

The Balfour Declaration was a central factor in the decision of many Zionists to move to the Land of Israel as soon as conditions allowed. Another prod was the sense of elation many Jewish youth felt in the wake of the Bolshevik revolution. They believed they could realize their dream of an egalitarian, just society in the Land of Israel, especially since the Bolshevik regime had not lived up to their expectations. Like their predecessors, the Second Aliya, they were also motivated by the pogroms experienced by Jews in Europe, mainly the anti-Jewish riots that erupted in Ukraine during the civil war that followed the revolution. Another, if indirect, influence was the struggle for self-determination by European national groups, culminating in the establishment of new, independent countries such as Poland and Czechoslovakia. These countries served as exemplars of the vision of a Jewish nation-state.

The Third Aliya began in 1919, shortly after the war ended. Its starting point is generally considered to be the arrival of the Ro’alan, a ship bearing Zionist immigrants, in December 1919. The Aliya ended in 1923 when the Land plunged into a severe economic crisis. By this point, the Jewish population in Palestine had recovered its prewar numbers. Given the growth in the population and the lack of income sources, the Yishuv was unable to take in more immigrants. The promulgation by the British of the White Paper on Palestine, which limited Jewish immigration, also made it difficult to maintain, and certainly develop, the Jewish community in the Land of Israel.

As in the Second Aliya, most of the Jews who arrived in this wave settled in existing communities, such as Tel Aviv. Still, thirty-one new Jewish settlements were founded from 1920 to 1923; most were communes of one type or another. The Third Aliya was typified by several forms of settlement. The kibbutz, first called a “large kertaz,” simply expanded the principles of that earlier form. It grew out of the thinking of Shlomo Lavi of Kevutzat Kinnetz, who advocated establishment of a new cooperative system that combined the principles of collectivism with respect for the life of the individual and the nuclear family. Kibbutzim were established for the most part on land purchased by the JNF and placed at the disposal of the settlers. Their economy was based on the labor of the members, eschewing hired workers, and on a range of agricultural work. The kibbutz was meant to be a self-sufficient system not dependent on the urban economy. Full equality was the rule in property, finances, education, and culture. The first kibbutz was founded in 1921 at Ein Harod, in the Jezreel Valley. Unlike the intimate kertaz, where members were chosen carefully and the community segregated itself from the surrounding world, the kibbutz was an open, nonisolational society that saw itself playing an important role in molding Jewish life in the Land of Israel, by working the soil and by absorbing immigrants.
Another type of Third Aliya settlement was the moshav ovdim; its founding spirit was Eliezer Yaffe of HaPo‘el HaTza‘ir. Yaffe aspired to meld the principles of collective and private settlement, so as to serve social, national, and collective needs, and respect the initiative of the independent farmer. The basic principles of the moshav ovdim were settlement on national land, individual labor and initiative, mutual aid among the members, joint purchase of necessities and joint marketing of crops, as well as common public services. The nuclear family stood at the center of its social structure. In this, the moshav ovdim resembled the ko`ahut of the Second Aliya. Like the kibbutz, the moshav was built on national land, but in contrast each family leased its land from the national organization that owned it. Self-sufficient labor was pursued in the framework of the family. No farmhands were hired, and any member who did hire outside help risked being expelled. The profits from each farm accrued to the family that farmed it.

The first moshav ovdim was founded in 1921 in Nahalal in the Jezreel Valley by agricultural laborers from the Second Aliya, members of HaPo‘el HaTza‘ir, some of whom had been among the founders of Degania.

Among the arrivals during the Third Aliya were the first members of the HaShomer HaTza‘ir youth movement. The movement’s inspiration came from a variety of sources, among them central European Jewish nationalism, the German youth movement, the Scout association, and the philosophies of Martin Buber and Siegfried Bernfeld. HaShomer HaTza‘ir rejected Jewish life in the exile (the Jewish Diaspora, called galut in Hebrew) and the existing social order. These were to be replaced by an independent youth culture, devotion to labor Zionist ideals, zealous dedication to the Hebrew language, and a synthesis of Jewish nationalism and socialism. About seven hundred members, most from Galicia, arrived in the Land of Israel during the Third Aliya. The movement’s first kevu‘at was founded in 1920 at Bitanya Ilit in the Lower Galilee. Its first kibbutz, Beit Alfa, at the eastern end of the Jezreel Valley, was founded in 1922.

In the summer of 1920, members of the HefHaltz youth movement founded the Yosef Trumpler Labor Battalion, which went about paving the road from Tiberias to Tzemach, on the southern end of Lake Kinneret. The Labor Battalion aspired to establish a commune that would include all Jewish laborers in the Land of Israel. In its early days, it paved roads, including those leading from Haifa to Jaffa (present-day Ramat Yishai, southeast of Haifa) and from Afula to Nazareth. It also engaged in construction, road-grading, laying of railroad tracks, stone quarrying, swamp draining, and hauling. Battalion members lived in tent camps and went to work as labor details they called companies. They took upon themselves the task of rebuilding the ruins of Kfar Giladi at the northern tip of the Galilee panhandle and the settlement of Beer Sheva in the southern Negev Desert, as well as laying train tracks from Rosh HaAyin to Petah Tikva. Their wages were paid into a common pool from which their needs were provided.

Roadwork became the touchstone of a unique culture of equality, social justice, common purpose, brotherhood, joy in living a productive life, and modest needs. The Battalion’s ideology drew on that of the Second Aliya kevu‘at, on Russian-Tolstoyan notions of anarchic and self-sufficient communal existence, and on early romantic communism in the Soviet Union. In 1921, some of its members settled at Ein Harod and, a short time later, at Tel Yosef. The two settlements were soon united. The Battalion, which operated for six years, had some seven hundred members at its peak. In 1922, a dispute broke out at the kibbutz and in July 1923 it split into two camps: right wing and communist. In the end, the latter wing of the Battalion membership rejected Zionism, and some of its members moved to the Soviet Union. In August 1927, the three Battalion companies at Tel Yosef, Kfar Giladi, and Ramat Rachel united to form HaKibbutz HaMe‘uhad, known in English as the United Kibbutz Movement.

The Histadrut (General Organization of the Hebrew Workers of the Land of Israel) was established in 1920, uniting most of the Land’s Jewish wage laborers and a large portion of its self-employed residents. Its founders sought to mitigate the division between the Ahдут HaAvodah (formed by a merger between HaPo‘el HaTza‘ir and the “Independents” led by Berl Katzinelson and Po‘alei Tzion parties, each of which maintained its own health service, labor bureaus, agricultural organizations, and trade unions. As laid out in its charters of 1920 and 1923, the Histadrut’s goals included creation of craft unions in all labor sectors, establishment of farms and factories in the cities and rural areas, and establishment of credit associations and settlement funds. It also worked as a contractor taking on and carrying out projects, acted to increase labor productivity, organized purchasing and supply cooperatives to raise the economic level of the working public, sought to defend the rights of laborers and improve labor conditions on private farms, and instilled a devotion to the Hebrew language in its members. The Histadrut founded cultural, educational, and training institutions, promoted immigration and the absorption of new immigrants, established ties with Jewish and international labor organizations overseas, and founded mutual aid organizations such as a health fund and a life insurance fund. It thus quickly became the most important political, economic, and social force in the Yishuv.

Ahдут HaAvodah, formed early in 1919, united in a single party some 80 percent of the Land’s Jewish workers. Its ideology was socialist and nationalist—it sought the establishment of a Jewish national society in the Land of Israel. Until the creation of the Histadrut a year later, Ahдут HaAvodah operated in the economic, social, political, and settlement fields. After transferring responsibility...
for these areas to the Histadrut, it remained active in politics and education. HaPo'el HaTza'ir remained independent until, in 1930, it merged with Ahдут HaAvodah to form Mapai, the Workers Party of the Land of Israel, of which Israel's Labor Party is a direct descendant.

Many of the Yishuv's central institutions were established during the Third Aliya years. Among these Kupat Holim Klailit, the General Health Fund, was created in 1920 from the unification of the health funds of HaPo'el HaTza'ir and Ahдут HaAvodah. Solel Boneh, a company that first engaged in road construction, then in building construction, was founded in 1921. Bank HaPo'elim, the Workers' Bank, was established in 1921 and served as the Histadrut's central banking institution.

The Haganah, the Yishuv's underground military force, was founded in 1920, in the wake of Arab attacks on Jewish settlements in the Galilee and Jerusalem. Ahдут HaAvodah had voted at its convention that summer to establish a self-defense organization. The Haganah would function throughout the Mandate period, until it was dismantled in 1948, when the Israel Defense Forces were founded. Unlike HaShomer, which viewed itself as relatively closed and was not subordinate to any political organization, the Haganah's ranks were open. It functioned under the aegis of the labor movement, which provided most of its human and material resources. Its guiding principle was that Jewish arms and fighters should be under exclusively Jewish control. As a result, the Haganah always viewed itself as an illegal underground organization.

Desire for the Land before the Halutzim

Jews have desired the Land of Israel ever since the destruction of the First Temple in the sixth century B.C.E. This desire found expression in different forms: philosophy and scholarship, prayers, fantasies, messianism, art, and pilgrimage. But Jewish desire for the Land prior to Zionism was of a different stripe. This difference goes beyond the Zionists' actual consummation of their desire. Nor does it derive only from the modern nationalist character of Zionist desire, as opposed to traditional religious desire for the Holy Land. More than anything else, the difference emerges from the status and position of the Land of Israel within the framework of that desire.

The Jews of the exile distinguished between the concrete geographic Israel and the spiritual one, a practice that enabled them to decouple the physical land from their vision of redemption. The exile Jewish bond with the land was not formulated in terms of ownership. This was why the Zionist bond of ownership raised concern among many halachic authorities. The concepts "Land of Israel" and "Zion" did not express, for the Diaspora Jew, a concrete aspiration to "ascend" to the land and settle in it. Rather, the Land defined the frame of reference for location in space and time. For example, the calendar of the Jew living anywhere in the exile followed the seasons of the Land of Israel.²⁰

By contrast, pioneer desire for the Land of Israel was a desire for the real, for a concrete land. Anthropologist Zali Gurevitch and sociologist Gideon Aran note that, prior to pioneer immigration, only in extremely rare instances did a Jew really leave his "land and homeland" in the Diaspora with the intention of reaching the Holy Land. Even when Jews arrived during the course of history, their arrival was more symbolic than real because they viewed themselves as coming not to the physical land but to the Land promised by God. The halutzim, in contrast, came to the Land of Israel not to intensify and continue the spirituality of the exile but rather to shatter the holy vessels of traditional spirituality and change their lives utterly. The pioneer revolution was a discovery and revelation of the physical, material Land of Israel. The halutzim turned the Land from a magical object, a symbol, a precept of the Torah, into a living actuality. The Zionist revolution was an attempt to redefine the meaning of "being in place" in Jewish consciousness.²¹ Pioneer Zionism, as the Judaic scholar Hagai Dagan has put it, was an expression of the seemingly obvious—that one cannot live within an image or symbol.²²

Berl Katznelson wrote that the stories of the Land of Israel told to him by his father when he was a boy made clear to him once and for all that the Land was not the next world or a mystical concept, but rather that "there is a Land of Israel in our time."²³ When Berl heard from his father of the descendants of a saint who still lived in the Land, he burst into tears. He asked himself why, if the saint's descendants could be there, he could not be there also. This story changed his world entirely, beginning his connection with the real Land of Israel. Five months after arriving in Palestine, David Ben-Gurion wrote to his friend Shmuel Fuchs that Zionism was no longer an ideal for the future but "an actual present reality."²⁴

As for the Jews who settled in the Land before the appearance of Zionism, they did not desire the land in a concrete way as did the halutzim. For example, the Hasidim who settled there in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries came primarily because of the Land's sanctity, God's proximity to its inhabitants, and the opportunity it offered for observance of all the Torah's precepts.²⁵ In general, these pre-Zionist settlers had no real interest in the Land's soil, its natural environment, its landscapes, its sights. Above all, they sought the Land's God.

The pre-Zionist Jewish community in Palestine—the Old Yishuv—did not naturalize itself. These Jews lived as "exiles in the Land," as historian Israel Bartal...
has termed them. Jews from different countries who settled in the Land almost never mixed with each other. They preserved their languages and customs in the original forms of their Diaspora communities. These settlers kept to their cities, looked upon outsiders with fear, and depended on the protection of locals or the European consulates. Even when these settlers emerged from the walls of their cities, they did so only to make the walls encircle a larger area.²⁹

Bartal writes that three parameters characterized the exile in the Land in the pre-Zionist period. First, the Old Yishuv, rather than being an independent entity, functioned as a set of “auxiliaries” of their respective Diaspora communities. Second, its way of life was virtually the same as in Diaspora communities. Third, the exile in the Land constituted a real state of being. The settlers lived in “exile” among the Arabs, vulnerable and dependent on the protection of the Arab majority society. They did not fight this “exile” in the ways that characterized the pioneer Zionist struggle. Bartal concludes that there is good reason for skepticism regarding the existence of a single, common history of the Jews in the Land of Israel before Zionism. The Zionist bond between the people and the land was not part of the experience of the Old Yishuv.³⁰

Bartal suggests that we can use these same parameters to understand the pioneer experience. By “ascending” to and settling in the Land of Israel, the halutzim sought to negate the exile, its way of life, and its existential presence. In this regard, the pioneer act was revolutionary. It brought about a fundamental transformation.

Recall that I identify the pioneer period as that of the Second and Third Aliyot. Why do I not include the First Aliya? After all, most of the immigrants in all three of these waves were Zionists. What then distinguishes the First Aliya immigrants from the later pioneers? This distinction will emerge more clearly in later chapters, but in general it lies in their attitude toward the Land itself, the Jewish body, and the Hebrew language. While the desire of the halutzim Hebraicized the soil, the Jewish body (through labor), and their own speech,²⁸ settlers of the First Aliya did not bond with the land by working it with their own hands. For the most part they employed local workers, mostly Arabs, to perform agricultural labor and to serve as guards. They viewed the land as “business,” and they had no interest in creating a new Jewish body or establishing Hebrew as a native language. For them, the Land of Israel was not Mother Earth.

Many religious Jews came to the Holy Land in order to be buried there. Gur Alroey found that 13 percent of the immigrants who set out from the port of Odessa to Palestine in the years 1905-1913—that is, during the Second Aliya—did so specifically for this reason.³¹ The halutzim, in contrast, set out for the Land of Israel in order to build it and be built by it, and, as we will see, to be “reborn” there.³² A pioneer who arrived in 1907 wrote shortly afterward that in coming, he was not doing God’s will, since he did not believe in God. Rather, he was simply doing what was morally right and in practice absolutely necessary.³³ In a letter from the early 1920s, Berl Katznelson described a period of severe unemployment as one of the low points of the pioneer period. Yet he remained optimistic because “there is a father in heaven, or the Land of Israel—mother.”³⁴ The pioneer desire for the Land belonged to the era after God’s death. It was desire for the Promised Land in the absence of He who promised it.

Historiography of the Halutzim

Pioneer immigration and settlement in Palestine during the Second and Third Aliyot—in other words, the process of bonding with the Land of Israel—has been examined by historians from many points of view. Their studies can be divided into two principal groups: the material and the ideological-cultural. The first category sees the process by which the halutzim established their connection to the land as principally political or socioeconomic. These studies include analyses focusing on the various pioneering-political organizations (workers’ associations, political parties); Zionist organizations and their roles in the pioneer enterprise (the JNF, the Zionist Organization, the Palestine Office); along with pioneer socioeconomic structures (the collective, national farm, kvutzot, kibbutzim) and their links to other socioeconomic structures (old and new Jewish moshavot, cities).

Material historiography addresses principally political or socioeconomic conflicts among the different actors involved in the process of immigration and settlement. Examples include the rivalries between the different labor parties (Po’a’lei Tzion versus HaPo’el HaTza’ir) and between these two parties and others (religious, bourgeois). These studies also examine socioeconomic conflicts among the pioneers (“conquest of the Land” versus “conquest of labor,” communal versus individual settlement, men versus women, youth versus old-timers) and between the pioneer interest and the socioeconomic interests of other groups present in the Land of Israel (settlers of the First Aliya, Sephardi Jews, Arabs). The success or failure of a group’s connection to the land is perceived in materialist historiography as a consequence of its ability to implement a political or socioeconomic agenda.

Note that methodologically, no significant difference exists between a study that examines, for example, the immigration and settlement of halutzim belonging to the Po’a’lei Tzion party or the HaShomer HaTza’ir youth movement from a liberal economic point of view and another that takes a Marxist point of view.
Both amount to descriptions and explanations of the political and socioeconomic mechanisms in the process of immigration and settlement.\textsuperscript{13}

Materialist historiography also includes studies that examine these same phenomena from a geophysical point of view. By looking at factors such as climate, geographical and topographical conditions, location, and the symbolism of settlement sites, such studies track the process by which the pioneers gained a foothold in the land. They generally answer questions like: Where did the huletztim settle? Why in that specific location? What challenges did they face?\textsuperscript{14} Also in this category are studies that examine pioneer settlement from an environmental and ecological standpoint.\textsuperscript{15}

As their name suggests, ideological-cultural studies view the process by which the huletztim became attached to the land as primarily ideological. They include studies addressing various pioneer ideologies and utopias (Zionist, nationalist, socialist, social-nationalist, masculine), the pioneers' struggles amongst themselves, and their common confrontation with other ideologies (autonomist, territorialist, Bundist, bourgeois liberal, feminist). In this category we also find studies of the new culture established by the huletztim, a culture that redefined the pioneers' concept of identity, language, the body (the "new Hebrew man"), and self-images (Zionist, national, socialist, masculine, feminine). For these studies, the success or failure of the process of pioneer attachment to the land is determined by the implementation of the idea, the extent of realization of the planned utopia, and the establishment of a new culture. Here, too, no significant methodological difference exists between a study that examines, say, pioneer ideology as a socialist ideology and another that examines it as a masculine ideology. Both focus on the existence of a specific ideology and culture among the pioneers and how these were manifested in reality.\textsuperscript{16}

The ideological-cultural category also includes points of view that identify the pioneer connection to the Land of Israel as the actualization of historical or religious bonds. This work focuses on the natural (with or without quotation marks) ties between Jews and the Land of Israel. In this case, the pioneers' attachment to the land is seen as the fulfillment of ancestral Jewish longing, receiving concrete expression in historically unprecedented proportions in the form of the Zionist movement. Historians who take this approach generally identify Zionism as a "secular national religion."\textsuperscript{17}

Little, if any, historiography falls exclusively into any one of these methodological categories. Works that present huletztigung from a purely ideological point of view will always include political and economic factors to one extent or another. Some studies deliberately integrate different approaches—for example, ideological and social analyses of the pioneer enterprise based on the assumption that the utopia for which the pioneers strove could not be realized, given practical constraints and external circumstances.\textsuperscript{18}

Historiographical debates over the pioneer-Zionist enterprise divide the field in other ways as well. Take, for example, the central debate between intentionalist historians, who view pioneer immigration and settlement as the product of conscious intent, and functionalists, who reject all conscious and unconscious pioneer intent and instead suggest impersonal processes and dynamics that led, in one way or another, to the actualization of huletztigung. Such a debate surrounds the question of the emergence of the kevutzot during the Second Aliya. The intentionalist historian Henity Near maintains that the establishment of the kevutzot was a direct result of the ideological and personal contacts among its founders before their immigration to Palestine. According to Near, the future settlers of Degania drew the idea of the kevuzot from a section on collectivism in the manifesto of HaTehiyya, a movement to which they belonged that originated in Pinsk. In contrast, the functionalist historian Baruch Ben-Avron maintains that this lifestyle, based on sharing in all areas of life, crystallized only in Palestine, in the context of the social reality faced by the agricultural laborers from the Second Aliya, especially those at Degania. The kevuzot, according to Ben-Avron, was not born out of conscious intention but rather as an authentic innovation spurred by life circumstances.\textsuperscript{19}

Other historiographical debates about the Zionist movement as a whole and its pioneer sector in particular touch on questions such as: Was Zionism a national revival movement or a colonial movement? Was it a national movement that should be understood in the context of modern nineteenth-century European nationalism, and if so, was it a Western political nationalism or an Oriental cultural-ethnic nationalism? Nationalist or hypernationalist (i.e., chauvinistic)? A socialist, nationalistic, or social-nationalist movement? Conservative or revolutionary? A pragmatic secular movement, a messianic religious movement, or some combination of both? Was the pioneer Zionist movement unique among nationalist, socialist, and social-nationalist movements? Is there a unique Jewish, Zionist, pioneer path in modern history?\textsuperscript{20}

As it happens, a reading of the historical documents from the period confirms all these different analyses of the pioneer enterprise. The huletztim themselves explained their process of bonding with the land in political, economic, ideological, and historical-religious terms. None of these factors emerges as dominant; indeed, each is insufficient in itself. Only by integrating all these points of view can we develop an adequate description and explanation of the process of immigration to and settlement in the Land of Israel.

Yet even this integration would still be inadequate, because one factor has
been omitted almost completely from Zionist historiography—the pioneers’ desir
desire for the Land of Israel. The pioneers themselves explained, described, and jus
tified their enterprise in various political, economic, ideological, and historical-religious terms, given that the political views of Po’alei Tzion differed from those of HaPo’el HaTza’ir, that the economic principle on which the kibbutz was based differed from the one that grounded the moshav odnim, and that A. D. Gordon’s worldview was different from David Ben-Gurion’s. But the one recurring motif is desire for the Land of Israel. The world and experience of the hutzim are saturated with articulations of attraction, craving, pining, and love for the Land. While the political, economic, ideological, and historical-religious fields have, over time, been problematized in historiographical discussion of the pioneer phenomenon, in the case of desire this process has been minimal.

Approaches to Pioneer Desire

The few historians who do address the ecstatic-symbiotic pioneer experience use one of three basic paradigms to understand and describe it. All, however, treat it reductively instead of taking it on its own terms.

The first paradigm, nominalist, assumes that testimonies by the hutzim about such experiences are simply forms of expression, modes of speaking that should not be taken literally by scholars since they do not describe actual events. The second paradigm, subjectivist-psychological, assumes that the experiences are real, but personal and internal. As such, they can tell us nothing about the geographical, social, and ideological realities in which the hutzim acted. The third paradigm, psychoanalytic, presumes that the ecstatic experiences reported by the hutzim are reenactments or projections of situations from their early lives. All three paradigms evade real confrontation with pioneer testimonies, because each takes the hutzim’s words as an expression of something else—language in the nominalist case; internal reality in the subjectivist-psychological case; or oedipal relationships for the psychoanalytic.

The nominalist paradigm sees hutzim testimonies as no more than images, metaphors, allegories, and so on. When hutzim wrote, for example, about being children who wished to return to the bosom of Mother Earth, “bosom,” “Mother Earth,” “sons,” and similar terms are viewed simply as forms of speech with no connection to the pioneers’ actual feelings and experiences, nor to how they lived and functioned in their world.

We might say that the nominalist paradigm assumes that language is really just “noise” that must somehow be filtered out in order to arrive at true descriptions, explanations, and understandings of historical reality. The better histori-

ans are at neutralizing this noise, the better will be the history they write. Corre-

spondingly, the more seriously and literally they take language, the further they will stray from the truth.

Broad areas of scholarship take language as their subject. Literary studies, by
definition, address “the textuality of the text”—that is, its construction from linguistic elements. The critic Gershon Shaked, for example, uses this approach in his work on pioneer literature. Among other things, he examines the experiences of aliyah, settlement, and labor as depicted in these writings. But as fruitful an approach as this may be, it has its problems. In focusing on the textuality of the text—images, metaphors, allegories—the literary scholar does not address the historical reality behind the texts. Shaked admits as much when he argues that if Hebrew literature were taken as an accurate account of the times in which it was written, one would find that decisive events in the history of the world, the Jewish people, and the Yishuv never occurred.

Studies of pioneer literature, then, are not historical studies, and are distinct

from research on the history of the texts themselves. This latter type of inquiry points to connections between the texts and events, describing and explaining the historical background against which a given text was produced. It seeks to answer questions such as: Who wrote it? When? What was the author’s overt or covert, conscious or unconscious intention? These studies also examine the text’s history and reception. Who reads it? When was it read? What did readers understand from their reading? But such studies also maintain a rigorous distinction between language or text and reality. They, too, conceive of pioneer testimonies as linguistic expressions with only a tenuous link to historical reality and the world in which they were produced.

Another group of historical studies focusing on the language of the hutzim does consider pioneer testimonies to contain content about the pioneers’ historical experience. These works fall into two major categories. The first type examines the pioneers’ language as a device of representation. Some, for instance, might account for representations of male and female pioneers in political and social discourse from the pioneer period through the present day. They examine the representations of pioneer language in history books, art, and the writings of the hutzim themselves. Other studies might address the various incarnations of the term hutzimut—from being a reverent term of obligation during the pioneer period and the first two decades of the State of Israel, for example, to acquiring negative connotations in the 1960s and 1970s, when Israeli society moved into a capitalist and, perhaps, post-Zionist phase. Still, these historical studies are not fundamentally different from literary inquiries, since they consider pioneer testimonies and language to be distinct from the extratextual historical reality.
The second category of historical studies on language focuses on the history of pioneer language itself. One example is the work of Henry Near, who has looked at the terminology used in defining communal bodies during the early Aliyot, terms like kevutzah, kibbutz, commune, collective, and havura (another form of commune or collective). According to Near, tracking the complex, long-term semantic evolution of these terms can cast light on historical and ideological trends. Historian Aviva Ufaz looks at the world of symbols appearing in the collective diary Khamitaim (Our Community), written by the HaShomer HaTza'ir settlers of Britannia. Ufaz's research method is fundamentally exegetical. Taking pioneer language seriously, she argues that the world of symbols in the anthology seems at first sight to be eclectic and lacking in any order or logic. But a more careful look uncovers unity and ties to contemporary history, society, psychology, and esthetics. Ufaz seeks to decipher what she calls the pioneers' "secret language" and to establish its links with other phenomena. She concludes that the symbols "soil," "sky," "sun," "fire," "stone," and "mountains," or "eros," "woman," "man," and "childhood," play both romantic-religious and metaphysical-mythological roles in the anthology. These dual roles support the pioneer aspiration to cloak the secular in sanctity and symbolism. It is impossible, she says, to detach the pioneer "symbolization of reality" from traditions and from both older and contemporary social and artistic currents—the turbulent spirit of the early twentieth century, the influence of messianic religious movements, of Symbolism and Expressionism, of the catastrophe of World War I and the vacuum of values and beliefs created by the war.

Undoubtedly, studies like Near's and, in particular, Ufaz's bring us closer to a more empathetic conception of pioneer language. Significantly, they do not decouple the language from the reality behind it. They show this language to be immersed in the history and the world of the halutzim. Language here creates what Anthony Smith calls "poetic spaces." Nevertheless, Near, Ufaz, and others like them still perceive language as having an ontological status different from the other components of the same historical reality. Thus Ufaz, for example, sees pioneer language as a collection of symbols, which are ostensibly less "real" than events. Pioneer language responds to the events, stems from them, and acts on them in return. But in and of itself, the language remains symbolic.

By making this nominalist assumption that language is merely language, historical scholarship overlooks its most important and perhaps its richest source material—language itself. In later chapters, I will demonstrate that pioneer desire, as manifested in pioneer language, was in every sense a praxis, just as was working the soil, paving roads, and sculpting the body. Beyond this, pioneer language—its images, metaphors, and the myths it created through speech—itself played a decisive role in the pioneer desire for the Land of Israel. Just as the halutzim created the Land of Israel by working the soil and paving roads, they also created the Land’s images, metaphors, and myths.

The subjectivist-psychological paradigm does not reduce pioneer testimonies to linguistic phenomena but rather accepts them and treats them with considerable empathy. In this view, halutzim who wrote, for example, about their desire to return to the bosom of Mother Earth were indeed children seeking to return to their earth-mother. Their statements expressed real emotions, feelings, and experiences. We find the subjectivist-psychological paradigm in studies that describe the pioneers’ inner world and its roots. Their experiences are understood as deriving from the social and cultural movements to which the halutzim belonged or that influenced them either directly or indirectly. Thus, their ecstatic relationship with the Land’s open spaces and natural elements appears as an aspiration to return to nature. This inclination may arise from Russian romanticism and Tolstoyan ideas that influenced many haluzim of the Second and Third Aliyot. Similarly influential were youth movements in the pioneers’ countries of origin, most notably the German Wandervogel. Most historians who take the subjectivist-psychological approach discern the roots of the ecstatic pioneer experience in the romanticism of the contemporary central and Eastern European nationalistic movements. Sociologically and psychologically, they surmise that the pioneers’ youth amplified the sense of Sturm und Drang in their world.

Other historians identify the pioneer experience as primarily religious in character. The sociologist Oz Almog, for example, states that, starting in the first decade of the twentieth century—with the establishment of the city of Tel Aviv on April 11, 1909, the founding of the HaShomer organization in Mes’ha the following day, and the founding of Degania, the "mother of the kibbutz," on October 28, 1910—the Zionist movement became a "secular religion" combining belief in a Marxist utopia, ideas from Tolstoy and the Narodniki (Russian populists), Jewish messianism, and European nationalism. Almog depicts the pioneer experience as an "ecstatic spiritual" one. Other historians point to Jewish sources, for example Hasidic ones, to explain the ecstatic bent of the halutzim.

Another explanation locates the source of pioneer ecstasy in the dramatic change, both conscious and unconscious, that the new immigrants underwent when they were severed from their former world, their parental homes, tradition, and the exile, and entered the new, young, radical world of the Land of Israel. One historian to take this approach is Yael Weiler, who links the aliyah of members of HaShomer HaTza’ir to such experiences. Weiler sees a connection between the "physical" aliyah to the Land of Israel and the "spiritual" aliyah that was expressed in a "unique mental-spiritual worldview," whose language and pan-
religious expression were drawn from Greek and Roman mythology, from the doctrines of the Buddha and Lao-Tse, from Christianity and Judaism alike, and from the theoretical language of Nietzsche and Freud. She argues that inherent in their alyha to the Land of Israel and settlement activity was a wish for a profound and all-embracing spiritual and emotional experience. A prominent characteristic of this experience was the search for the wondrous, the sublime, and the enthralling in the world surrounding them. They were primed to be open to these experiences and moved by them. This great openness was part of the conscious and unconscious process of creating a new identity and a new culture. Weiler sees in these young people an ecstatic, boundary-shattering religiosity, melded together from unconventional and daring mystical experiences, principally of the Land of Israel, and an aspiration for self-sacrifice and self-negation.

Ze'ev Sternhell is one of the only historians who takes the Zionist-pioneer-ecstatic experience seriously. In his history of Zionist and pioneer social-nationalism, he identifies in this experience an expression of a new nationalism born of the central and Eastern European nationalisms of the nineteenth century. Unlike Western European liberal nationalism, which was based on political, legal, and civil concepts of citizenship, social nationalism was an organic nationalism of "blood and soil," based on cultural, historical, and even biological ideas of what made an individual part of the body politic. This organic nationalism subverted the foundations of liberalism's intellectual, moral, and political principles. More than anything else, such nationalism, of which Zionism was the Jewish instance, symbolized the collapse of the cosmopolitan Enlightenment age and its ethos. The new nationalism appeared principally in the territories of the multinational empires of central and Eastern Europe, and it evinced the desire for revival of repressed nations that had been denied more than just independence. In many cases, these nations' cultural identities had also been suppressed. The spiritual father of these nationalisms was Johann Herder. The Jewish version's spiritual father, according to Sternhell, was A. D. Gordon:

As it began to be implemented in the Land, Zionism developed the classic features of organic nationalism. The experience of contact with the soil, the desire to strike roots in it, and the need to lay a foundation for the legitimization of a return to the Land led to a blossoming of the romantic, historical, and irrational aspects of nationalism. The cult of ancient history, from the conquest of Canaan to the rebellion against Rome, and the "sacralization" of places where Joshua Bin-Nun or the kings of Israel had fought were not very different from similar phenomena in the Czech, Polish, or German national movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The founders' love of the Land and its landscapes, enthusiasm for its vegetation, and sense of the soil's holiness had a truly mystical quality, which was paralleled in Europe.

Despite the great empathy displayed by historians like Weiler and, in particular, Sternhell for the pioneer experience, they (and historians of their ilk)—like the nominalists—still do not completely understand and accept the halutzim's desire for the Land of Israel; they, too, treat it reductively, as an expression of something else. Their working assumption is that the inner, emotional, subjective world of the halutzim was distinct from the ostensibly external, material, objective world. They perceive the pioneers' sense that they were the returning sons of Mother Earth as real and true, but only in the pioneers' inner world. The soil of the Land of Israel in and of itself, they would argue, was not really Mother Earth, even to the halutzim. Furthermore, most writers who take this view also see the internal, emotional, subjective world of the halutzim as secondary to their external, political, economic, and social world. To these commentators, therefore, the texts in which the halutzim depict their inner world are untrustworthy. Sternhell expresses this point clearly. He interprets the organic nationalism of blood and soil as a kind of superstructure imposed on a foundation consisting of the tangible Zionist-pioneer economic interest. Sternhell certainly would seem able to empathize with the pioneers' sense of themselves as sons returning to the bosom of Mother Earth as an expression of romantic social-nationalism. Yet, at the same time, he would argue that this experience produced socioeconomic structures from which, for example, anyone not perceived as a son of Mother Earth—the Arabs, in this case—would be excluded. He thus sees the return of the halutzim to their Mother Earth as real only in a subjectivist-psychological sense, as no more than an expression of a social-nationalist political, economic, and social worldview. He cannot accept pioneer desire on its own terms.

I maintain that it is irrelevant whether the texts of the halutzim are subjective or objective, reliable or unreliable, just as I would not use these criteria to categorize working the land or paving a road. In the end, no meaningful distinction can be made between subjective and objective farming. The large quantity of testimonies left to us by the halutzim is, in my view, a pioneer praxis in and of itself, one that should be analyzed according to ontological, not epistemological, criteria. The distinction between subjective inner reality and ostensibly objective external reality is both extremely problematic and fundamentally moot. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, for us to distinguish between these two realities, and even more so to locate the boundary between them. Even if we could distinguish between so-called subjective and objective realities in some way, we have no appropriate criteria for determining which reality is more relevant for historical research. For ex-
ample, psycho-historians will view the experience of returning to the bosom of Mother Earth as a much more "real" experience than any experience supposedly located in the outside world.

As noted, the third basic paradigm historians use to understand the ecstatic-symbiotic pioneer experience, the psychoanalytic, is the only one to make both the modes of desire and the materials from which desire is crafted central to its analysis. Thus, the next chapter explores this paradigm in detail.

2 Desire and Rebirth

Psychoanalytic interpretations of history are speculative in the extreme, as well as more complex than I can present here. Nevertheless, I will examine the various psychoanalytic approaches to the ecstatic-symbiotic pioneer experience at some length because almost every historiographic explanation and description of pioneer Zionism is based—intentionally or unintentionally—on the oedipal mechanism. My critique of psychoanalytic-oedipal explanations applies equally to these other historiographic narratives of the Zionist-pioneer enterprise.

Oedipal Desire

In the psychoanalytic view, the pioneers’ desire for the Land of Israel was a reenactment of patterns shaped in their early lives. By this logic, when the holutzim experienced themselves as children returning to the bosom of their Mother Earth, they were in effect reenacting in the Land, or projecting onto it, their oedipal relations with their parents.

Certain elements of the pioneer psyche in which a longing was expressed for the Land reproduced, in the psychoanalytic view, the process of psychosexual development as formulated by Freud. Freudian theory provides a way of describing, explaining, and understanding the attraction to Mother Earth and the praxes of amalgamation, assimilation, and suckling that characterized the pioneers’ world. The holutzim spoke of suckling from the breast of Mother Earth, like a child in the oral stage—a stage at which the child still does not distinguish between “inside” and “outside,” between its own body and that of its mother.

Similarly, other elements of the pioneer psyche in which a longing was expressed for the Land of Israel reproduced the anal stage. At this stage, the child derives pleasure principally from its bodily substances, until it undergoes toilet training. The pioneer world was indeed permeated by fluids of all kinds, including bodily fluids. In human life and society, however, progress requires a certain dryness. Culture is based on concealing, or at least channeling, fluids such as sweat, blood, and tears. The pioneer world was, in contrast, saturated with these fluids, and contact with them was often a source of pleasure for the holutzim.