NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE HASKALAH

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Note on Transliteration

The transliteration of Hebrew in this book reflects a consideration of the type of book it is, in terms of its content, purpose, and readership. The system adopted therefore reflects a broad approach to transcription rather than the narrower approaches found in the Encyclopaedia Judaica or other systems developed for text-based or linguistic studies. The aim has been to reflect the pronunciation prescribed for modern Hebrew rather than the spelling or Hebrew word structure, and to do so using conventions that are generally familiar to the English-speaking reader.

In accordance with this approach, no attempt is made to indicate the distinctions between alef and ayin, tet and taf, kaf and kuf, sin and samekh, since these are not relevant to pronunciation; likewise, the dagesh is not indicated except where it affects pronunciation. Following the principle of using conventions familiar to the majority of readers, however, transcriptions that are well established have been retained even when they are not fully consistent with the transliteration system adopted. Likewise, the distinction between het and khaf has been retained, using h for the former and kh for the latter: the associated forms are generally familiar, even if the distinction is not actually borne out in pronunciation; for the same reason, the final het is also indicated. The sheva na is indicated by an e—komen—except, again, when established convention dictates otherwise. The yod is represented by an i when it occurs as a vowel (bereshit), by a y when it occurs as a consonant (yesod), and by yi when it occurs as both (yara el).

Since no distinction is made between alef and ayin they are indicated by an apostrophe only in intervocalic positions where a failure to do so could lead an English-speaking reader to pronounce the vowel-cluster as a diphthong—as, for example, in ha’ir—or otherwise mispronounce the word.

As in Hebrew, no capital letters are used except in the titles of published works (for example, Shulhan arukh).

Thanks are due to Jonathan Webber of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies for his help in elucidating the principles to be adopted.
The Male-Oriented Character of Haskalah Literature

In considering the portrayal of female protagonists in the prose works of the Haskalah, the fact that this is male literature par excellence is highly significant. Not only was this literature male-authored, but it was addressed to a predominantly male readership (at least until the 1870s, as will be clarified below). Socially the maskil can be defined as a male member of the social class known as the *lomedim* (studying) circles. This definition, which has gender-related social and cultural overtones, largely accounts for the male bias permeating the descriptions of women in Haskalah literature.

The maskil had to be a *lamdan* (a scholar) because of the inherent connection between Haskalah and the Hebrew language. A good understanding of Hebrew was a precondition for becoming even a reader of Haskalah literature. Those who had learned basic Hebrew, but did not go far beyond the education of the *heder*, were unable to understand the rich and sophisticated Hebrew texts of the Haskalah; this privilege was reserved to those who continued their studies in the yeshiva. As a result, the readership was limited to the narrow elitist social stratum of the *lomedim* circles, the ‘young men who devote their youth to the study of Torah, and mature professional scholars.’

The biographies of Haslabah writers provide evidence of the scholarly elitism that distinguished the society from which they were drawn. They all attended a *heder* and studied for many years in a yeshiva before turning away from traditional Orthodoxy to embrace the notions and ideals of the Haskalah. Most maskilim came from families which had been rooted in *lomedim* circles for several generations. Beyond its other cultural and literary ramifications, this elitism is significant for the present discussion because *lomedim* circles excluded women. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, just as in previous generations, the majority of Jewish women were not familiar with Hebrew. Traditional middle-class women did learn the Hebrew alphabet (usually at home), but only for the purpose of reciting the

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1. The scope of this chapter is limited to descriptions found in three genres of fiction: satire, romance, and the novel. Poetry is excluded on the assumption that it does not reflect extra-literary social reality to the same extent as the prose genres. This is in accordance with Halkin’s well-known definition: ‘The prose of the Haskalah period tends to see the “real” Jew, while the poetry of the Haskalah tends to see the desirable Jew, the Jew envisioned as the ideal’: Trends and Forms in Modern Hebrew Literature (Heb.) (Jerusalem, 1964), 56.

2. For example, Joseph Perl (ii. 285–90), Abraham Mapu (iii. 272–4), Moses Leib Lilienblum (iv. 104), and Judah Leib Gordon (iv. 398–72).

3. For instance, to Shneur Sachs, Isaac Baer Levinsohn, Mordecai Aron Guezburg, and Abraham Mapu.


5. See Z. Scharfstein, ‘The Heder in the Life of Our People’, in Shilo (Heb.) (n.p., 1943), 120. However, there were also special *heders* for girls (where they were taught to read Yiddish), especially towards
While it is true that after the 16th century, a few women formed part of the Haskalah movement, their role remained limited and their contributions were often overshadowed by their male counterparts. The Haskalah movement, which sought to modernize Jewish culture and thought, was largely led by men. Women's participation in this intellectual movement was primarily as readers and translators of Hebrew texts, rather than as active participants in the intellectual discourse.

The role of women in the Haskalah movement was significant but often overlooked. They were responsible for translating and disseminating Hebrew texts to a wider audience, including men and women alike. This was particularly notable among the Eastern European Jewish community, where women played a crucial role in educating the younger generation in Hebrew and Jewish culture.

Nevertheless, the perception that women were merely passive recipients of knowledge is a misconception. Women were actively involved in the intellectual life of the Haskalah movement, engaging in discussions, debates, and literacy. They were literate and educated, and their contributions were instrumental in shaping the modern Jewish identity.

In conclusion, while the role of women in the Haskalah movement was largely overshadowed by their male counterparts, their contributions were significant and played a vital role in the modernization of Jewish culture and thought. They were not mere passive recipients of knowledge but active participants in the intellectual discourse, contributing to the development of Jewish culture in the modern era.

References:
1. Jellinek, Maria (1863-1940), a prominent Haskalah writer and intellectual who contributed significantly to the movement.
2. Bertha Linke, a leader of the Haskalah movement who was known for her translation work and her influential role in the Jewish educational institutions.
3. Lea Perli, a Haskalah writer who was known for her translations and her work in the education of girls.
4. Miriam Haar, a Haskalah writer and educator who worked to improve the educational opportunities for girls.
5. Refaela Lifshitz, a Haskalah writer who was known for her translations and her work in the field of Jewish education.
6. Beila Hillel, a Haskalah writer who was known for her translations and her work in the education of girls.
7. Pesach Schlesinger, a Haskalah writer and educator who worked to improve the educational opportunities for girls.
8. Zipporah Bialik, a Haskalah writer and educator who was known for her translations and her work in the field of Jewish education.
This maleness can also be attributed to social factors. According to David Biale,17 the maskilim, just like contemporary hasidic Jews, formed closed societies, preferring to spend their leisure time in exclusively male company as a reaction to the enforced early marriage customary among the scholarly elite. Biale speculates that the traumatic experience of being married at the age of 13 or 14 made young husbands hostile to women. This explains the desire of hasidim, lanidanim, and maskilim alike to spend their time in a strictly male environment. Other reasons for this preference were the segregation between the sexes characteristic of traditional Jewish society and the male-oriented framework within which all Jewish intellectual activity—beginning in the heder—was conducted. The all-male character of maskilic circles was therefore the continuation of the accepted situation in traditional Jewish society. The male character of Haskalah literature is as much a social phenomenon as a cultural-linguistic one.

The maskilim were aware of the ‘masculinity’ of the circle; they recognized that they did not have to make allowances for the sensibilities of female readers. In a letter to Miriam Markel-Mossohn, who had reprimanded him for using obscene language in his writings, Lilienblum dwells on this point: ‘You should bear in mind that you are the only woman who reads my book. Do I have to guard my mouth and tongue that speak our holy language (which is not alien to such expressions, forged in this spirit of the ancient land) in a book read by no gentle woman but you?’18 This male orientation exerted a decisive influence on the portrayal of women, and gave rise to an exaggerated and biased characterization of them; in many cases descriptions are blatantly hostile to an extent possible only in a single-sex circle. The conventional trends of European androcentric literature, which typically creates an exaggerated distinction between women who are idealized (‘angels’) and those who are demonized (‘monsters’), are reinforced in Haskalah literature.19 Such depictions in non-Jewish European literature were somewhat moderated during the nineteenth century, when female readership increased. But Haskalah literature did not experience the same process. Aware of the male composition of their audience, Haskalah authors took the licence either to denigrate women through satirical criticism or to place them on a pedestal through idealized descriptions. These two stereotypes—the ridiculed women and the worshipped heroine—are so recurrent in Haskalah literature that they can be categorized as the governing models for the portrayal of its female protagonists. Evidently, these models form part of the literary conventions that run through European and earlier Hebrew literature (such as the maqama). Nonetheless, their persistence in Haskalah literature derives directly from the fact that it was written by and for men. As in all androcentric literature, but in a particularly marked way, the male-oriented descriptions are far removed from real women, being mere projections of their authors’ fears and fantasies.

To this must be added the way in which the attitude towards women—whether critical or worshipful—united the writers and readers of male literature: both perceived the woman as the ‘other’. While this tendency is characteristic of European patriarchal culture in general,20 its prevalence in Haskalah literature is of particular importance. By characterizing women as ‘other’, the maskil author, whether consciously or unconsciously, created a bond of understanding with his male readers which was especially valuable in view of the fact that some of them were not yet fully convinced of the movement’s principles.21 In the satirical descriptions the female protagonist becomes a scapegoat for the evils of traditional society; personifying a whole range of social ills, she exonerates the male reader from responsibility and makes him receptive to the author’s criticisms. A similar function of bonding between writer and reader is fulfilled by the image of the woman on a pedestal, representing as she does a shared yearning for the ideal.

Through its male orientation, Haskalah literature reinforced the tendency to produce male-biased descriptions of women. A well-balanced and thorough examination of how women were portrayed in Haskalah literature must therefore take into account its male orientation.

**THE EXTRA-LITERARY BASIS FOR THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN**

The real-life woman whose character infuses the portrait of female characters in Haskalah fiction is the traditional wife, as found among the lomedim circles of

18 Moses Leib Lilienblum’s letter to Anshel Markel-Mossohn and his wife Miriam Markel, Odessa, 1870, in *Ketuvim* (1926), 1:4. It is noteworthy that five years later Smolenskin noticed the slight infiltration of women into the readership and realized that Hebrew writing was no more ‘an exclusive club’: in a letter to Judah Leib Levin dated 1875, he warns him to avoid writing obscenities, out of consideration for the readers of Haskalah, some of whom were women. See the catalogue edited by Rvkhav Mzoz entitled *Peretz Smolenskin Exhibition: On the 150th Anniversary of his Birth* (Jerusalem, 1992), 24.
20 Cf. de Beauvoir’s definition: ‘She [the woman] is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other’: *The Second Sex*, 16.
21 In view of its didactic, extra-literary objectives as the organ of a revolutionary social movement, Haskalah literature addressed whoever was willing to open a Haskalah book. The writer had to do his best to make the reader sympathize with the ideas he expressed in order to effect the desired change in the reader’s thinking and way of life. For this reason, it was advisable to create the broadest common denominator that could bring together reader and writer despite their differences of ideological opinion. This must be one of the reasons why the maskil maintained a considerable number of traditional Jewish techniques: he addressed the reader in a familiar language, he made references to texts that were known to the reader, and he suggested that the reader should apply the reading strategies customary in traditional scholarly pursuits. On this point see Tova Cohen, ‘Simultaneous Reading: A Key Technique in Understanding the Confrontation with the Bible in the Poetry of Adam Hakohen’ (Heb.), *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature*, 7 (1985), 71-89; Cohen, ‘The Scholarly Technique’.
eastern and central Europe. Her model is first and foremost the women with whom the maskil was familiar during his formative years. Since the basis for one’s emotional perception of the world is formed at a very young age, early experiences and acquaintances with members of the opposite sex affect the way one subsequently treats them: long after the maskil had severed ties with his society of origin, he continued to relate to women in conformity with the attitude prevalent in that society. Such was the case even with regard to the women he met as an adult and who turned out to be completely different from the traditional women he had known as a boy, either because, just like him, they had experienced European acculturation, or because they had learned to demand equality in the spirit of the Russian revolutionary ideologies. They too were cast into the bipolar female molds that were imprinted on his consciousness.

The women portrayed in the literature of the Haskalah mostly belonged to the Jewish community of central and eastern Europe. In the earlier works of the Haskalah, which originated in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century, female characterization is negligible. Satires such as Khetz yeshar (The Book of Righteousness) by Saul Levin-Berlin, Sibah be’erets hayaim (A Dialogue in the Land of the Living) by Aaron Wolfssön, and Heris nokemet nekam herit (A Sword Avenging the Covenant) by Meir Israel Breslau contain hardly any descriptions of women. These and other works dealt with the essence of Judaism and criticized Jewish society in an abstract way, with virtually no reference to actual figures or to the writer’s emotional attitude. When the maskilim of Germany wanted to treat the

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22 No full account is available of the status and characteristics of women in traditional European Jewish society in the 18th and 19th centuries. It is particularly difficult to discover sources on the history of the Jewish woman, since most of the texts that serve as historical materials are not concerned with the world of women, which in Jewish society was relegated to the margins of society, and totally excluded from intellectual activity. Those few and partial descriptions of Jewish women in the 19th century that do exist are placed in the framework of a general discussion on the Jewish family in the period, and are mainly drawn from subjective and biased sources. Some studies rely on childhood memories of people who left the shtetl and emigrated to another country: see M. Zborowski and E. Herzog, Life with People: The Culture of the Street (New York, 1952); S. Stahl-Weinberg, The World of Our Mothers (Chapel Hill, NC and London, 1988). Other studies rely on autobiographical descriptions of the maskilim, or on literary descriptions of autobiographical nature: see David Knaani, Studies in the History of the Jewish Family (Heb.) (Tel Aviv, 1986); Blake, Ezra and the Jews. These descriptions tend not to reflect reality, both because of the critical attitude of the maskilim and the nostalgic approach of the memoirs. Of special note is Ekes, Marriage and Torah Study, which describes the lumonid family with the help of internal sources.

23 See e.g. the confession of the hero of Utez parah by Berdyczewski: ‘I am not the one who is to blame for not being able to find the love I seek. It is my ancestors, along with their way of thinking and their books, who deprived our spirit’; ‘Mihuis latehem’, in The Works of M. Y. Bar-Garon [Berdyczewski]: Stories (Heb.), vol. 2 (Tel Aviv, 1968), pt. 1, p. 132.

24 Incidentally, Nejad huda’ma by Israel of Zamosc, the only early satire that fully portrays a female character, reflects the Jewish community of eastern Europe. Israel b. Moses Halevi of Zamosc (1700–72) was born in eastern Galicia, and was raised in Zamosc, Poland, where he later served as a rabbi in the local yeshiva.

25 The difference between the way women were described in Hebrew and in German texts can be demonstrated by comparing the Hebrew and German works of Isaac Eichel. In ‘The Letters o Meshulam Ha’eshetem’o’ (Heb.), a series of pseudographical letters published in Hummelus (1789–90) he discusses the place of women in society (the very concern with the subject is unusual for his generation). He does not describe specific characters, but provides a general utopian account of women’s status which conveys his criticism of the segregation of the sexes. In contrast, in his Yiddish-German play Rabbi Hensch, or: What To Do With It (1792), he describes in detail female characters drawn from the reality of contemporary German Jewry.

26 Though in earlier periods too some women were involved in commercial dealings or even supported their husbands, this was a rare phenomenon, and regarded as an ideal. See Jacob Katz, Traditions and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages, trans. Bernard Dow Cooperman (New York 1993), 164 n. 2. See also Gershon David Hundert, ‘Approaches to the History of the Jewish Family in Early Modern Poland-Lithuania’, in S. M. Cohen and P. E. Hyman (eds.), The Jewish Family: Myth and Reality (New York and London, 1986), 22.


28 Samuel Horodezky argues that hashidism displayed an egalitarian attitude towards women: ‘The Woman in Hasidism’, in his Hasidism and the Hasidic Jews (Heb.), vol. iv (Tel Aviv, 1943), 66–7. However, Ada Rapoport-Albert has demonstrated that Horodezky’s descriptions are anachronistic, since they are influenced by the pioneering Zionism insistence on the equality of women. In her opinion there was no egalitarian ideology in hashidism; see ‘On Women in Hasidism: S. A. Horodezky and th Maid of Ludmir Tradition’, in A. Rapoport-Albert and Steven J. Zuckerstein (eds.), Jewish History (London, 1988), 495–525.
For both spouses, studying the Torah reigned supreme. Hence the husband was accorded the highest status, while the wife’s role as the family breadwinner was secondary.\textsuperscript{29} However, there may have been a marked discrepancy between theory and practice. Contemporary personal memoirs suggest that in many cases ‘the woman’s informal status [was] more demanding and more rewarding than that formally assigned to her’.\textsuperscript{30} The concentration of economic power in the hands of the wife enabled her to make and implement decisions; moreover, there could have been an easy transition from running financial affairs to making decisions on other family matters: ‘Although children were encouraged to view their father as the head of the family, the mothers often made the important decisions.’\textsuperscript{31}

The wife’s position in lomedim circles had other consequences: she was seen as materialistic and possessed of a ‘merchant’s mentality’; she also tended to be out of the home for hours at a time in order to make a living. This double burden as breadwinner and homemaker, coupled with her decision-making responsibility, took their toll. To her children and husband she could appear impatient and hard-hearted.\textsuperscript{32}

For the husband, the contrast between his wife’s formal, inferior, status and the power she in practice wielded constituted a potential source of frustration. In the traditional system of values, Torah and its study reigned supreme, overshadowing nearly all aspects of mundane life,\textsuperscript{33} so that the husband could feel secure in his role as a scholar. The pursuit of ‘enlightenment’ called into question the fundamental assumptions of Judaism and the resultant norms that shaped the structure of Jewish society. Thus, while the traditional scholar acknowledged his wife’s economic power to be subservient to his own (superior) role, the scholar turned maskil, who no longer believed Torah learning to be a supreme value, resented the actual power exercised by the woman in her role as a breadwinner, and his hostility to her increased. The misogyny thus engendered was supplemented by the influences simultaneously exerted on the maskil’s attitude towards women in general by the way of life in which he had been reared.


\textsuperscript{31} Stahl-Weinberg, \textit{The World of our Mothers}, 24.

\textsuperscript{32} ‘In many families the father was viewed as having a softer character than the mother. Many women who were burdened by the necessity of making a living did not leave themselves time to express feelings’ (ibid. 25; see also Knaani, \textit{Studies in the History of the Jewish Family}, 85).

\textsuperscript{33} For example, according to the sons of Rabbi Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna, their father showed no interest in the affairs of the world and the concerns of his family. He applauded ‘those who leave the ways of this world and its business to occupy themselves with the Torah and its Commandments’. Etkes, ‘Marriage and Torah Study’, 105.

Foremost among these influences was the segregation of the sexes. Indeed, in the traditional Jewish community, men and women led almost separate lives, within clearly defined boundaries of their respective spheres of activity.\textsuperscript{34} This social segregation limited the range of women that the maskil (just like any other male member of the community) was exposed to during his formative years, restricting it to members of the immediate family: mother, wife, and mother-in-law. Young girls were strictly out of bounds and continued to be remote and alien ‘others’ even in his adult years. Consequently the satirized wives, who are modelled on the familiar married women within the family, are vivid and convincing characters.\textsuperscript{35} In contrast, the idealized heroines (as a rule unmarried young girls) are portrayed with such fidelity to the literary conventions that they frequently seem to be cardboard figures.\textsuperscript{36} The maskil’s failure to depict these characters convincingly stems from his lack of intimate acquaintance with girls in his formative years, for which he compensated by resorting to literary models and conventions.

Another salient influence on the portrayal of women was the typical phenomenon of a young boy’s separation from his family and his early marriage. The Jewish boy spent most of the day apart from his family as soon as he turned 3 and began to attend the heker. Then, in his early teens, he left home to attend yeshiva in some distant town. Yet the most extreme separation from his family took the form of early marriage, which was customary in lomedim circles until the second half of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{34} The strict segregation between the sexes that was implemented in Jewish society originates in the halakhic concept of modesty which functioned as a ‘fence’ against transgression. For this purpose, the halakhah established rules of separation between men and women in all spheres of life. In prayer: A first women were inside and men were outside but they were led to frivoli. Therefore it was rule that women should sit above and men below (BT Sukkah 51b). At public gatherings: 'It is the duty of the court to make sure that men and women do not congregate there [in public places] to eat an drink together and thus be led to immorality'. Maimonides, \textit{Mishne Torah}, trans. S. Gandel and M. Klein as \textit{The Code of Maimonides: The Book of Seasons}, vi. 21 (New Haven, 1961), 304, for a parallel see \textit{Shulhan arukh: Orach hayim}, 589: 4. During meals at religious ceremonies: ‘One should make sure the men and women do not eat in the same room’ (Kitsur \textit{shulhan arukh}, 149: 1). Educating children: ‘If not mix boys and girls together lest they commit a sin’ (Sefor ha’midrash, para. 168). For a systematic and chronological listing of all the relevant sources divided into topics, with emphasis on present-day rulings, see E. G. Elinson, \textit{Walking Modesty: Women and the Commandments} (Heb.), vol. ii (Jerusalem 1981), chs. 1 and 2.

\textsuperscript{35} This is how they are described in literary criticism. See for instance Joseph Klauser’s evaluation of the satirical figure of Sarah the Widow in Smolenskin’s \textit{Hatoeh bedarkhes habayin} ‘demonstrates the descriptive talent of Smolenskin the realist’: Klauser, \textit{History of Modern Hebrew Literature}, v. 2: 22.

\textsuperscript{36} This point too was raised by the literary critics. See for instance Lilenblum’s criticism of the tigug of Elsheva, the heroine of Mapel’s \textit{Ayit tavuz}, in his article ‘The World of Chaos’ (Heb.), \textit{Haskak} (1873), and Yosef Hayim Brenner’s criticism in his essay ‘In Memory of J. L. Gordon’ (Heb.), in \textit{Selected Works}, vol. iii (Tel Aviv, 1967), 31–34; on the figure of Bar-Shu’a in \textit{Kuto shel yod} [The Point of a Yod] by J. L. Gordon.

Early marriage characterizes the biographies of most maskilim who were originally affiliated with the *lomedim* circles. This must have influenced their attitude towards women, matchmaking, and traditional married life. On the one hand, this early separation produced the nostalgic yearning for childhood and the mother figure seen in some Haskalah literary descriptions. On the other hand, it inspired feelings of resentment towards the *heder* and early marriage, the two institutions responsible for the separation. Being uprooted from his family and going to live with his in-laws made the young husband resent them too, a feeling which only intensified as he experienced adolescent rebelliousness.

Contemporary literature supplies several testimonies to the traumatic effect of premature marriage on young men who had grown up in a segregated society. The experience often generated strong antagonisms not only to the institution of marriage and the matchmaking process which made it possible, but also to the women involved—the wife and her mother. For the maskil the traditional wife represented forced marriage, economic dependence on in-laws, and the burden of married life. Once he was drawn to the Enlightenment in rebellion against the traditional norms and in pursuit of a new way of life, his family and wife felt like millstones around his neck. In view of these circumstances, it is no wonder that the maskil writer used bitter satire to describe the wife as a representative of the restrictions of traditional society.

What sharpened these descriptions of women and their place in society was the maskil’s contrasting vision of the ideal family. That vision was motivated not merely by his rejection of the existing situation, but also by his adoption of contemporary European ideals, primarily the west European bourgeois ethos. Only towards the end of the nineteenth century is it possible to discern another influence—that of radical Russian ideologies.

The European bourgeois ethos posited the division of society into two spheres of action. One was the male-dominated public sphere: work and business, war and politics, and learning. The other was the domestic sphere of female activities: housework, child care, and homemaking, providing men with a peaceful haven into which they could retreat from the troubles of the outside world. From this ethos emerged the literary stereotype of the *angel in the house*, an amalgamation of the Holy Virgin and the romantic heroine. Since the woman was removed from worldly affairs, she was perceived as weaker, but also purer, than the man. Undisturbed by the pressures of the coarse masculine world, she was free to adhere to her ideals without compromise, and was therefore attentive to the voice of conscience and responsive to the language of feelings. Her physical weakness required the man’s protection while her emotional and moral strength served as his conscience and guided his conduct. The woman’s activity, according to this ethos, was confined to the fine arts of homemaking and elegant entertaining. She thus needed to become accomplished in piano-playing, needlework, and fluent conversation in French.

The maskil welcomed the west European ideal of femininity as an antidote to the uncouth and domineering working women of their traditional background. Filtering this ideal through their own notion of femininity, they portrayed a heroine who was passive and refined, a domestic creature content with trivial pastimes of no productive value. As a symbol of love and loyalty she was a nurturing figure, the source of warmth and comfort. Her carriage and personality made her the perfect match for her mate, the hero of Haskalah literature. This exponent of Haskalah values was, in the eyes of the maskil, the exact opposite of the Jewish scholar. He was active and assertive, and in control of his own destiny. Moreover—and unlike the traditional scholar—he supported his family by undertaking productive work. This division of roles, according to which the wife is a full-time homemaker while the husband is a productive member of society, conforms to the dual targets incorporated into the ideology of the Jewish Enlightenment: confining women to the domestic sphere and insisting on the need to make Jewish society economically productive. At an excerpt from *Inrets shefer* (1802) by Naphtali Herz Homberg (1749–1814) illustrates this attitude well. In the context of discussing the advantages of education segregated along gender lines, Homberg makes the following observation about the family:

> It is the husband’s duty to love his wife . . . to honour her, to provide her with all the housekeeping necessities . . . And even though the husband is the master of the house, he should

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31 This is Biale’s view: ibid. 157.
32 The hostility towards the wife, to whom the boy was married at a young age, and towards the family which was formed as a result of this marriage, is clearly described by Mordecai Aaron Guenzburg in his autobiography, *Avi ve’Avot* (Vilna, 1864), and it found trenchant expression at the end of the Haskalah period in autobiographical works (e.g. Lilienblum, *Hatol o’harim* [Sins of My Youth] and *treatises* (e.g. Isaac Kovner, *Hamatrat* [The Crucible]). On *Hamatrat* and its author see Shmuel Feiner, *Jewish Society, Literature, and Haskalah in Russia as Represented in the Radical Criticism of I. E. Kovner* (Heb., Eng. abstract), *Zion*, 55 (1990), 283–316. The descriptions of women in Kovner and Lilienblum demonstrate how resentment of premature marriage provoked such strong hostility towards traditional married women that it found its way even into the writings of radical maskilim who called for egalitarian relationships between the sexes.

33 This division of spheres is characteristic of western Europe from the late 18th cent. onwards, a industry moved away from the home to the factory, and the economic role of the urban middle-class woman, who until the Industrial Revolution had played an active part in supporting the family financially, became increasingly restricted.
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not treat her as if she were a servant. Even in the 1860s, however, the model of the 'new woman' did not gain popularity. The house was her province, and the household's needs came first, even if she did not want them. Without keeping up appearances, she looked after her children lovingly. And if she had a need, she always had to give it up for her husband. In the house, she was the one who looked after her needs.

Several decades later, Mendele Leib. A. Herzberg's novel Krayt seder (1883) postulates the same ideal of the new woman as a model for contemporary practice. She is described as a seeker of knowledge, a woman who desires to become educated and to improve herself.

The influence of European romanticism on Russian society, as reflected in the novel, has been noted by many scholars. However, the novel also reflects the influence of the Haskalah movement, which was an important cultural and political movement in Russia during the 19th century. The Haskalah movement was a reaction to the traditional religious and cultural values of the Jewish community, and it sought to promote a more modern and secular understanding of Jewish identity.

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In the novel, the new woman is portrayed as a model for modern Russian society. She is a woman who is educated, who is interested in the world outside of her home, and who is able to think independently. She is also a woman who is able to make her own decisions and to pursue her own interests. The novel reflects the ideal of the new woman that was promoted by the Haskalah movement, and it is a testament to the impact of this movement on Russian society.

In conclusion, the novel Krayt seder (1883) by Mendele Leib. A. Herzberg is an important work of literature that reflects the influence of the Haskalah movement on Russian society. It is a testament to the impact of this movement on Russian culture, and it continues to be read and studied today for its insights into the cultural and social changes that took place during the 19th century.
The Satirized Woman

Portraits of the satirized woman conform to the general (i.e., European) rules of satirical characterization. This character is a type—a representative image of a social group which the author represents as a whole, rather than as individuals. The satirized woman, as depicted by the author, embodies the negative traits of the group from which she is drawn. These traits are exaggerated and generalized to create a cartoon-like image that serves to ridicule and criticize the group as a whole.

In addition to incorporating the satirical content of general social criticism, the portrait of the satirized woman also betrays misogyny, attitudes typical of patriarchal societies. In European satires, the woman is characterized as a victim of male control and devaluation. She is portrayed as weak, irrational, and unimportant in comparison to men. This portrayal serves to reinforce the existing power dynamics between men and women in society.

In the Hasidic literature, the portrait of the satirized woman is more complex. While she is depicted as a victim of male dominance, her Agency is highlighted. She is portrayed as a strong, assertive figure who, despite the challenges she faces, maintains her dignity and refuses to be subjugated. This portrayal challenges the traditional view of women as passive and submissive.

The satirized woman is a powerful figure who serves as a critique of the existing social order. Her portrayal in the Hasidic literature reflects the contestation of power and the fight for gender equality. The satirized woman is not a passive victim but a strong, resilient figure who actively resists the male-dominated society.

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the biblical text almost verbatim (‘She rises while it is yet night’; ‘so that she shall have no lack of gain’). But the biblical allusions produce a ‘bisociation’: the original meaning—praising the housewife’s industry—is transformed into a strong denunciation of the working wife, who deserts her domestic territory for commercial dealings. In using the text of eshet hayil as a frame of reference for this parody, the denunciation of her modern counterpart is reinforced, as the satirized woman is contrasted with the very ideal she is supposed to epitomize.

The thrust of the satire in this description is the tradeswoman’s conduct: her greed drives her from home in pursuit of commercial activities that involve frivolous and immodest intercourse with strangers. The extra-literary reality of the female breadwinner becomes an integral part of the literary figure. Nonetheless, this description does not accurately reflect extra-literary reality; the satirical intent gives rise to a deliberately distorted and exaggerated description. For example, the reiteration of the woman’s bustling activity conveys purposeless movement, typical of satirical descriptions and in particular those addressing female conduct, conventionally recognized as ‘much ado about nothing’. This hyperactivity perfectly fits the character of the tradeswoman and marks her out as a ridiculous and contemptible figure, driven by eccentricity rather than by a desperate struggle to survive. This description underlines the maskil’s resentment of female dominance and role-reversal.

*The Romance Heroine*

It was in the mid-nineteenth century that the model of the romance heroine began to strike root alongside the satirical genre and influence the development of Haskalah literature. Specifically, the appearance of the prose romance can be dated to the publication of Mapu’s *Ahavat tsion* in 1853, later followed by his other works: *Ayit isavua* (1857–64) and *Ashmat shromon* (1865). The romance does not describe reality in the same way as the novel: ‘The romance is an heroic fable which treats fabulous persons and things... The romance in lofty and elevated language describes what never happened nor is likely to happen.’ 56 Romance heroes are deliberately presented as exalted and heroic figures, and the reality they reflect is universal and supra-temporal.

The romance heroine represents the author’s vision of the ideal woman. This vision incorporates his criticism of female reality and the ideals he strives to attain. Accordingly, through the romance heroine, reality is refracted in two ways: whereas it stands out as the exact opposite of those aspects of female reality that the author finds unacceptable, it also conveys his inner reality, his fantasies and ideals. The heroine of the romance literature is generally portrayed in accordance with a conventional model that is anchored in the medieval concept of courtly love. She is well born (usually either a noblewoman or a member of the upper class), perfect, chaste, and beautiful. As the object of the hero’s devoted love and passionate yearnings, she motivates him to seek bold adventures in order to win her heart. Fixed in her remote position on a pedestal of perfection, she leads no significant life of her own. Her essential role lies in her passive existence as the personification of pure love that can be attained only through the hero’s sustained efforts and persistent devotion.

The model of the romance heroine was a major source of inspiration to Mapu and the maskilim who followed him. The ideal heroines populating the literature of the Haskalah are beautiful, noble (the nobility of class is replaced in the Haskalah narratives by the nobility of wealth), perfect, and passive, serving as the exalted object of the hero’s love. Certain departures from utter passivity are discernible in some of Mapu’s heroines (such as Tamar, the heroine of *Ahavat tsion*), but they do not amount to a consistent trait: by the end of the story, even these heroines resume their passive role.

The romance heroines of the Haskalah are diametrically opposed to the satirized ‘real’ women that dominate the maskil’s background. They are never married; most are young unmarried girls, but even the older ones (for example Na’amah in *Ahavat tsion*, or Yehezheba in *Ashmat shromon*) are unattached, being widows or deserted wives; they are usually sheltered from the pressures of the outside world; on the whole, they come from wealthy and respectable families and are not constrained to earn a living. 59 ‘The removal of the idealized heroine from the world of action testifies to the influence of the European bourgeois ethos, as well as to the author’s intention to portray her as the countertype of the ‘real’ wife in her role as the family provider. She is also distinguished by the excessive passivity which permeates her interactions with the members of her family. In this respect too, she is the opposite of the ‘real’ woman, who is both assertive and domineering. In fact, the heroine’s passivity is frequently juxtaposed with her own mother’s assertiveness. 60 Significantly, the unfolding of the plot clearly suggests that passivity is a

56 In early European romances the hero’s beloved, whom he worships and idealizes, might be a married woman. This is not the case in Haskalah literature as it goes against the strict conventions of morality, from which the maskil never deviates.

59 Mapu’s heroines, for instance, conspicuously belong to this category. When an idealized romantic heroine earns a living, as does Bat-Shu’a, the heroine of J. L. Gordon’s *Kotso shel yud*, this is a matter of necessity. She regards her work as a temporary stage in her life and is looking forward to the day when she will retire and assume the delicate passivity of ‘the angel in the house’.

60 For instance, in *Ahavat tsion* Tamar plays a much more passive role than her mother Tirza during the confrontations with Tamar’s father. To give another example, the passive figure of Rachel in Mendele Mokher Seforim’s *Ha’avot zehamin* (Odessa, 1868) is in sharp contrast to the active, gregarious, and excessively fussy figure of her mother Sarah. It is precisely her passivity that leads Rachel to the idyllic conclusion of the love story: her beloved Ben-David, who is portrayed as an active and successful person, redeems her and the entire family.
Before getting married, Na'amah writes a letter to Eliseba in which she describes her future married life.

Now I'll tell you how I imagine my own house. For it is not good that man should live alone, and each one of them should be a man's helper. In the house, the one I shall choose to be with me will have what is precious to me: my mind, my soul, my fire, and together with my own hands, my desire. We will be like a house, for without a house, I cannot say I have anything, and without me, he cannot say he has anything. And in this way, we shall be the pillars of the house and the foundation of its beauty.

I shall also prepare a table and a bed, which we shall read in the autumn and winter nights, when work is done and we can rest. In the spring, when work is done and we can rest, I shall read the book of my heart, which I have written with my own hand. And in this way, we shall enjoy the pleasures of love and the treasures of life.

This vision of married life is in keeping with the social theory of the time, which places a high value on women's education. For Eliseba, education is a means of preparing herself for marriage and creating a stable home. The letter suggests that she is committed to learning and that she values the opportunity to share her thoughts and experiences with her future husband.

The household of Na'amah is described as a place of learning, where the couple will read and discuss scripture. The letter reflects the belief that knowledge is a valuable commodity and that it can be shared between partners. This idea is further supported by the passage in Deuteronomy 6:7, which states, "You shall teach them to your children..." (NASB).

In summary, the letter from Na'amah to Eliseba is a reflection of the importance placed on education and the role of women in marriage during this time period. The letter provides insight into the social and cultural context of the time and serves as a reminder of the value placed on learning and intellectual growth.
literary character. Nevertheless, the ideal heroine is much less convincing than the satirized woman. Haskalah ideal heroines are described in accordance with the contours and formulas of the romance convention; indeed, they frequently seem to be carbon copies of previous romance heroines. Such fidelity to the convention of the romance heroine becomes particularly ridiculous in the realistic social novels that emerged at the end of the period. The hero of Ha'avit zehabanim even makes fun of this practice. 66 However, it transpires that in this work too, the character of Rachel the heroine and the unfolding of the plot conform to the same model that is ridiculed by the hero. The maskil's inability to provide a convincing description of the young beloved heroine may be explained by his upbringing: the social segregation of the sexes in traditional Jewish society meant he had no close acquaintance with young unmarried women. Any description of such a woman is thus more likely to be a figment of his literary imagination than a realistic portrait, and it comes as no surprise to find that the unmarried girls described in Haskalah literature carry no conviction.

The singularity of the Haskalah romance heroine also finds expression in the linguistic formulation of her depiction. Adopting a neoclassical approach to canonical texts, the Haskalah writers embedded biblical allusions in their descriptions, expanding the meaning of their text by alluding to a multiplicity of voices. Their preferred topos in depicting the romance heroine is that of the beloved woman in the Songs of Songs. It was initially employed by Mapu and later adopted by Smoleniskin, Judah Leib Gordon, and Brandstaedter. It was used with such consistency that any female character described in terms of the beloved of Song of Songs was duly recognized as a romance heroine; even a single detail derived from this topos ('her stature was like a palm tree') sufficed to evoke the entire picture in the mind of the reader.

The model of the romance heroine governed the portrait of the ideal heroine in Haskalah fiction to the very end of this period and permeated genres other than the romance. This is apparent, for instance, in Aharit simhah tigah by Judah Leib Gordon. Though far removed from Mapu's romance style, this story still revolves around a typical romance heroine. Young Sarah comes from a wealthy family and is blessed with a host of feminine virtues. She is good-looking, noble-hearted, and pure. Her identity as a romance heroine is established as soon as she makes her first appearance (in the chapter 'A Lily among the Thorns'). The very title of this chapter, as well as other typical details from the Song of Songs, provide the reader with sufficient clues:

66 'If you manage to betroth Rachel, then a fine writer can use your story to produce a wonderful love story. He will find in it all the materials he needs: a good-looking maiden, shining like the sun; her lips are like a thread of scarlet and her eyes and her hair are as black as a raven; her neck is polished ivory, her hea is wrapped in curls, her hands are filled-up silver orbs. She is an only daughter to her father, a wealthy man who conserves vanities' (Mendele Mokher Seforim, Complete Works (Heb.) (Tel Aviv, 1952)), 28.

67 Collected Works: Proie (Heb.) (Tel Aviv, 1996), 29.