The Poet as Entrepreneur: The Case of David Avidan

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ABSTRACT: David Avidan (1934–95, Tel Aviv) was a revolutionary shapeshifter throughout his poetic career. As early as the 1950s, while his Hebrew contemporaries were publishing postsymbolist poetry, Avidan's work already embodied the desire to produce poetry that would be read and consumed as both an avant-garde and a commercial product. Four decades later, at the age of sixty-one, Avidan was found dead in his apartment in Tel Aviv—alone, ill, and destitute. Avidan's notion of the poet as merely an "entrepreneur" of his own work can be understood against the background of affinities between high modernism and economics. This article will also consider this stance against Avidan's own economic background.

הפיכות

כָּל הַתָּכְנִיּוֹת הַבִּלְתִּי-מְגֻשָּׁמוֹת
הֵן הַחֹמֶר הַטּוֹב בְּיוֹתֵר לְשִׁירָה,
וְזֶה מְקוֹר הַנִּגּוּד הָעַתִּיק
בֵּין מְשׁוֹרְרִים לְאַנְשֵׁי-עֲסָקִים.

מַה שֶּׁעוֹשִׂים אַנְשֵׁי-עֲסָקִים
אוּלַי חָשׁוּב, אַךְ אֵינוֹ שִׁירָה.
אַךְ מַה שֶּׁרוֹצִים אַנְשֵׁי-עֲסָקִים לַעֲשׂוֹת
— וְלֹא עוֹשִׂים —
זֶהוּ סוּג מֻבְהָק שֶׁל שִׁירָה,
בִּתְנַאי שֶׁמְּשׁוֹרְרִים מְנַסְּחִים אֶת מֶחְדְּלֵיהֶם.

(מתוך "גירוויים קלים, ספר האפשרויות", 1985)

Reversal

All the unrealized projects
are the best material for poetry
as well as the all-time contrast
between poets and businesspeople.

What businesspeople do
may be important, but it isn't poetry.
But what businesspeople **want** to do
—but don't do—
is clearly a certain type of poetry,
provided that **poets** articulate their shortcomings.

(From "Light Provocations," in *The Book of Possibilities*, 1985)[1]

D AVID AVIDAN'S FINANCIAL LIFE WAS SCANDALOUS, a model of anguished reckless-
ness. He was born in 1934, in Mandatory Palestine, to parents who emigrated from
Eastern Europe and belonged to the Labor Movement (Tenuʿat ha-ʿavoda) in Tel Aviv.
His father, an engineer, worked for the Tel Aviv municipality, and his mother was a homemaker.
It was a socialist household of four, with a trace of petite bourgeoisie. When still in high school,
Avidan joined the Youth Movement of the Communist Party, and his first poems appeared in 1951
in the literary supplement of the party's newspaper, *The Voice of the People*. But his Communist
episode was short-lived, and he left the party in 1954. As a parting gift, he wrote a parodic poem
in the style then prevalent in the publication.[2]

Until 1963, it seemed that Avidan was following the well-trodden path of a measured
bohemian. He graduated from high school (excelling in Bible studies and grammar but not
in math), was exempted from his army service because of the asthma from which he suffered
throughout his life, and enrolled at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem but did not complete
his course work. At the age of twenty-seven, he was already part of the editorial team of the daily
Yediʿot ahronot.[3] In a 1963 interview, Avidan described his journalistic career as an "instructive
biographical counterpoint" to his literary career, but his resignation from the cushy job at the
paper marked the financial turning point in his life.[4] "Not a very smart move from the financial

1 David Avidan, *Collected Poems IV*, ed. Anat Weisman and David Weinfeld (Jerusalem: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House and the Bialik Institute, 2011), 73, 93. All translations from Avidan's poetry are by Tsipi Keller unless another translator is acknowledged. See David Avidan, *Futureman*, trans. Tsipi Keller, with an introduction by Anat Weisman (Los Angeles: Phoneme Media, 2017). I would like to thank Tsipi Keller for translating additional poems for this article and for her assistance in enabling the publication of this article in English. I would also like to thank Maayan Eitan for her help.

2 The literary editor of the party's newspaper at the time was the poet Alexander Penn, who translated into Hebrew the Cubo-Futurist-Communist poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, who influenced Avidan's early poems.

3 The newspaper, which was established in 1939, was privately owned and is still circulated today. As an editor, Avidan was instrumental in shaping the linguistic style of the paper, pushing for a more colloquial, everyday language. Even after retiring from his editorial job, he continued to contribute op-eds to the paper.

4 This interview was published in the student journal *RAMZOR* (Traffic light) in February 1963. Republished in *Akhshav* 66 (1999): 43–49.

point of view," remarked Gabriel Moked, his lifelong friend and editor.[5] From the late sixties onward, after returning from a lengthy sojourn in the United States (which also marked the first time he left Israel), he began to "get off the page," exploring new creative outlets and financial endeavors, until his tragic death in 1995.[6] His writing during this time shifted from the more traditional to the extreme and experimental.

Avidan continued to write and publish poetry while also working as a freelance journalist. But he did more than that: he branched out and became an Ideas and PR man, as well as a visual artist and filmmaker. He served as a television anchor and radio moderator and also ran poetry workshops (calling them "Executional Perception" and "Creative Fitness") at Tel Aviv University and at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. In the seventies, he worked with musician Yossi Mar-Chaim to form an experimental-music band and to establish a lab specializing in electronic music; he was active in the PR department of the Israeli Labor Party and started numerous non-profit organizations, acting as a self-appointed CEO.

In the Avidan archives at Ben-Gurion University, one finds only a few drafts of poems and rather a great number of crates filled with documents and correspondence with various institutional, artistic, or political entities, wherein Avidan outlines ideas and proposals for new projects and enterprises, many of them imaginative and innovative. Here I list a few that "remained on the page," never making it beyond the initial planning stage:

- A book proposal for a collection of lectures on karate.

- A proposal for a short documentary film to stimulate donations to the State of Israel. The document reads: "The aim of the documentary is to boost the potential donor's ego, suggesting that by contributing he becomes a part of an unprecedented historical endeavor: advancing Israel from its 1974 challenges to the challenges of 1975. Budget proposal. CEO, 'The Thirtieth Century,' 11 Shimshon Street [Avidan's address in Tel Aviv]. . . . The strategy of this short film is marketing in the guise of a documentary. Still, it will offer serious and convincing arguments of some depth" (1974).

- In a letter addressed to Israel Gurevich, architect of Netivei Ayalon (Highway 20, a major intercity freeway in Israel), Avidan proposed a project for the company's inauguration: "A flying saucer. Materials: plastic and metal, including light & sound equipment. The object will look real. Like a real invasion from space, and a police force will attempt to surround it, possibly even with a few weapons, light artillery. Shells. Armored carriers. A tank. Need to create an otherworldly spaceship that has landed and is now under siege. Area: At the foot of Bridge Arlozorov, about 25 meters from the bridge." Surprisingly, this project reached the budget phase (1975).

- A bulky folder devoted to a jewelry project: designs for earrings and necklaces, drawn by the poet, including materials and pricing (1975).

- A proposal to produce a fifty-minute TV film for the upcoming elections, titled "Four Nightmare Years, or, All the Likud's Shenanigans" [provisional title]. Confidential. To be viewed only by Labor Party chairman and his closest advisers (1980).

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5 Ibid., 43.

6 I borrow this phrase from Vito Acconci, the pioneering conceptual artist, who began his career as a poet defining the page as a container and area for movement. See n. 9.

- Correspondence with the New York cultural attaché regarding outlandish proposals that I will not detail here because they may make little sense outside of an Israeli context (1988).

- In 1993, two years before his death, he established "An Association for the Advancement of David Avidan's Works in Israel and Abroad." Its dedicated aim: "To advance Avidan's work in various languages and countries, as well as to advance and promote the endowment of grants, prizes, contributions for said works. To advance and hasten the Nobel Prize Committee Members in Stockholm to declare Avidan a Nobel Laureate."

These are just a few examples of his entrepreneurial vision. During this time, Avidan struggled financially, barely making a living. In fact, letters to his mother reveal that he requested her financial assistance throughout his life.

In an article published in the daily *Ma'ariv* on the fourteenth anniversary of Avidan's death, and to mark the publication of the first volume of his *Collected Poems*, Moked writes about Avidan's emotional decline with the onset of old age and his refusal to accept it. Yet, Moked also points an accusatory finger at the banks: "[Avidan's] pecuniary and material circumstances were dire. And even though his debts were not very great, the banks threatened and harassed him with court orders and seized his possessions." Moked asserts that Avidan became a victim of "the banks' piggish capitalism," also blaming the "obduracy of the Ministry of Culture and City Hall . . . who systematically refused to pay Avidan a small salary for the editing and proofreading jobs he had done for them. Only when Kathy Dor [a broadcast journalist] and I found him, nearly dead, lying on the floor in his apartment and unable to move . . . did the establishment move to assist him." Moked concludes: "This is why I consider David's last years as a syndrome of the rampant and anticultural trend practiced by our political and financial institutions. Israel's modernist myth, championed by and celebrated in David's great poetic project, has been undermined by the tycoons and the gray market."[7]

What is the connection between Avidan's poetics and his failed finances? Is there a relation between Avidan's desperate initiatives and his poetry? What kinds of affinities exist between an avant-garde ethos and commerce? Is Avidan's financial failure the direct result of his naïve attempts to use capital that is not accepted as proper currency—namely, his avant-garde experiments—within the framework of harsh capitalism? Did the cursed modernist rebel, who believed in the artistic and liberal ethos of "everything is permitted," get left behind because of a system that believed that "everything is tradable"? Or is his failure the result of the miscomprehension of a megalomaniac poet, who scorned the ideal of hoarding, a man who failed to take into consideration the possibility that eternal youth, along with the myth of Israelism as an ongoing spring of youth (which he personified in his poems), may be a fantasy, defeated on the shores of reality and old age?

Consider, for example, an early poem titled "Housing." This is an unusual poem compared with the rest of Avidan's oeuvre in the 1950s, in that it is devoid of playfulness and expresses overt anxiety. The poem describes the life of a "reasonable man," a man who strives to save money for an apartment all his life but is doomed to die in misery, while his only achievement, for which he sacrificed his life, is that same apartment, finally inherited by his alienated children:

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7 Gabriel Moked, "David Avidan My Friend," May 10, 2009, https://news.walla.co.il/item/1482493.

. . . .
הַדִּירָה, שֶׁשִּׁלֵּם בַּעֲדָהּ בְּמֵיטַב שְׁנוֹת בַּגְרוּתוֹ,
כֻּלָּהּ שֶׁלּוֹ. עַכְשָׁו אֶפְשָׁר
לִטְפֹּחַ בְּשֶׁקֶט נַפְשִׁי עַל הַכְּתָלִים וְלִלְטֹף
אֶת כָּל הָאֲרִיחִים הַיָּפִים וְגַם לָחוּשׁ
שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ מַשֶּׁהוּ בְּחַיֶּיךָ

. . . .
הַדִּירָה
כְּאִלּוּ בַּת שֶׁלְּךָ. בֵּית-הַשִּׁמּוּשׁ
כֻּלּוֹ שֶׁלְּךָ, כָּל מֶטֶר מְרֻבָּע. וְאָז לְפֶתַע
לָמוּת
מִמַּחֲלָה קָשָׁה אוֹ מִזִּקְנָה אוֹ סְתָם
מֵהַרְבֵּה-הַרְבֵּה שְׁנוֹת עֲיֵפוּת וּנְשִׁימָה
מְשֻׁמֶּשֶׁת עַד אֵינְתַּקָּנָה וּדְאָגוֹת,
אֲשֶׁר בָּהֶן בָּנִיתָ אֶת בֵּיתְךָ. כַּפּוֹת
יָדַיִם עַתִּיקוֹת לוֹפְתוֹת
בְּיוֹם אֶחָד בָּהִיר מְאֹד אֶת הַקִּירוֹת
שֶׁל מִסְדְּרוֹן-הַבַּיִת, כְּמוֹ בְּמִין
רָצוֹן נוֹאָשׁ לְהִוָּכַח בְּמַשֶּׁהוּ
מוּצָק וּבַר-קְיָמָא וְלֹא חוֹלֵף בְּתוֹךְ
הָעֲרָפֶל הַפִּתְאוֹמִי הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר עָטַף
אוֹתְךָ, וְאֶת רַעְיָתְךָ
יִפְקֹד וַדַּאי תּוֹךְ זְמַן קָצָר מְאֹד.

. . . .
the flat,
for which he had paid with the best years of his life,
was all his. Now it is possible
to tap the walls with a peace of mind,
stroke the handsome tiles and also feel
you've accomplished something in your life

. . . .
The flat
is like a daughter to you. The bathroom
is all yours, every square foot. And then suddenly
to die
from a difficult illness or from old age or from just
many-many years of fatigue and the used-up
irreparable breaths and distress
with which you've built your home. One
bright day, ancient hands hold onto the hallway walls
as if in a desperate need to apprehend
something solid and durable and permanent

in this sudden fog that has enveloped
you, and which will soon, no doubt,
call upon your spouse.

(From *Lipless Faucets*, 1954)[8]

For a poet such as Avidan, always on the move and resistant to finality and stasis (represented here by the flat), choosing to ecstatically accelerate his words, his initiatives and projects, constitutes a mutiny against inevitable failure.

Vito Acconci, the New York conceptual artist, described his transition from poetry to performance and video art in the sixties as follows: "Once I realized I was so interested in movement, it seemed unnecessary to restrict that movement to an 8.5-by-11 piece of paper. There is a whole world out there or at least a street."[9] Avidan, whose poetic ethos is kinetic and whose work embodies movement in time, also attempted to "get off the page" in favor of more physical and utilitarian venues like the cinema, the theater, and the visual arts, but his medium has been and remains, first and foremost, the art of the word. His poetry is where his most compelling, individualistic experiments are rendered. His attempts to create movement in words always combat the finality of the page.

To the end of his life, Avidan remained an *adamila* (wordman)—just one of the many compound words he coined—and the poem on his gravestone reads: "The word I was / the word I will be / the word I was / before my birth / the word I will be after my death / the word that was in me / the word that is with me."

❋

When we apply the term "initiative" to poetry, we diverge from the customary associations with the creative act. As I see it, the goal of a business initiative is to turn an enterprising idea into financial gain. One needs to raise capital, find investors, and have a business plan. If we consider the notion of "poetic initiative" or "poetic management" as alternate terms for "creative production" or "making" (the etymological meaning of "poetics"), we must think about what could be regarded as a successful outcome of a poetic initiative; what its "capital" is in such an instance; what its profit is; and what might be regarded as a successful idea that can be turned into a product yielding aesthetic and artistic gains.

It seems that the concept of the artist as an entrepreneur may undermine the notion of the creative act in the Aristotelian sense of *techne*, since the act/initiative does not belong in the domain of *poïesis* (the thought pattern that views the act of creation as bringing a new thing into the world), but to the domain of *praxis* (actions/applications/practices in the world). Moreover, the term "initiative," applied to the poet's creation, may replace the view of the poetic act as work as well as its designation as text, in favor of what Avidan called, in a poem, "a very beautiful project the creation of the world (universe)," that is, the creation of the world as an artistic ethos

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8 David Avidan, *Collected Poems I* (Jerusalem: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House and the Bialik Institute, 2009), 42–43. The English translation appears in Avidan, *Futureman*, 28.

9 Anne Barclay Morgan, "Revolution Is Sneakier: Conversation with Vito Acconci," *Sculpture Magazine* 21, no. 7 (September 2002), https://www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag02/sept02/acc/acc.shtml. Acconci's poetry was assembled in *Language to Cover a Page: The Early Writings of Vito Acconci*, ed. Craig Douglas Dworkin (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

replacing the ethos of the creative act both as a mimetic act and as an intertextual endeavor.[10] In this context, the term "poetic initiative" carries an imperative weight in the context of Avidan's creation, beginning with his very first poems in *The Voice of the People* and ending with his last book, *The Latest Gulf: Desert Storm Poems and Seven Background Poems* (1991).

Even though Avidan wrote in Hebrew, thereby belonging to what we might think of as peripheral modernism, his poetry, in many ways, is very clearly the embodiment of the general conundrum of the possibility of writing poetry and the ability to write poetry, to be a poet, in the second half of the twentieth century, as well as of the cultural logic of the avant-garde movement in the rear-view mirror of late capitalism. The essence of this late avant-garde (indeed, a paradoxical term!) is a negation that loops itself in an infinite motion: the rejection of success, the rejection of failure, the rejection of the success of failure, the rejection of the failure of the success of failure, and so on.

In economic terms we may describe this situation as an insistence on using commercial or bureaucratic language in order to promote avant-garde projects and, conversely, on employing the language of the experimental poetic lab in order to promote commercialism. Groups that convene for artistic projects, such as Fluxus, and performance artists reflect this trend, but Avidan, who, starting in the late 1960s, tried to "get off the page," personifies, precisely in his poetry, an exceptional model for the actualization of the whirlwind of "getting off the page" on the page—that is, in poetry. Put differently, the ethos of the "initiator" and the "creator" in Avidan's poetry results in artistic achievement (i.e., success) and yet, at the same time, as an ethos that posits *work*, any work, on the threshold of failure. Failure, it seems, becomes a necessary component of poetry's artistic features.

<div align="center">❋</div>

In his introduction to *My Electronic Psychiatrist—Eight Authentic Talks with a Computer* (1974), Avidan argues:

> I have never viewed the process of writing as being identical to physical labor, but rather with cutting it down to the minimum, to the point of its absolute extinction. What matters is the idea, the model, the flash, the opening tone, the code. *I have always sought to write chiefly codes, and to a certain extent it is what I have done.* Computerized codes will be the composers of tomorrow's texts, and we will be the confirming eyes. As it is desirable in management models to separate the decision-making processes from the office-managerial labor, so too it is desirable to make an increasingly clear-cut separation between the proper decision (which is the creative operation) and the implementation. And so art will be transformed from work into creation.[11]

The terms used by Avidan to write about his venture—to use the dialogic computer program ELIZA, designed for artificial intelligence, for the purpose of a literary work, or a "literary

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10   I am referring here to the distinction between the theory of the "work" and the theory of the "text" according to Barthes's 1971 article "From Work to Text," in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch et al. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 1326–31.

11   This is a text that Avidan wrote in English and then translated into Hebrew, based on his conversations with ELIZA, an artificial intelligence program published in 1966 by MIT professor Joseph Weizenbaum. Three dialogues from "My Electronic Psychiatrist" can be found in Avidan's *Futureman*, 157–69. The Hebrew version is included in Avidan's *Collected Poems III* (Jerusalem: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House and the Bialik Institute, 2010).

project"—combine several fields of meaning that do not easily comport with one another, and certainly not in the mid-1970s of the previous century: literature, creativity, computers, management styles, and metaphysics.

Let us return here to the sentence: "I have always sought to write chiefly codes, and to a certain extent it is what I have done." In the Israeli context, Avidan always diverged from his contemporaries, the poets of the Statehood Generation (Dor ha-medina), the generation of Hebrew poets who published their first poems after the 1948 establishment of the State of Israel. Avidan was never a party to what is traditionally considered a shift in poetic norms: from the grandiose to the anxious individual, seeking to avoid the masses and speaking in his or her own personal lyrical voice. Avidan's poetry always remained grandiose, designed to be read resoundingly in the market square while also remaining cognizant of the fate of poetry, which is to vanish from that same square. Avidan's agenda was always different from that of his contemporaries, and he wished to remain on the "rug of time": "When the rug of time is rolled under our feet / at record speed / it is the acrobats of quality / who manage to hold always and forever / a piece of time under their feet."[12]

Perhaps this urge to stay alive-in-motion explains why, already in the 1950s, Avidan wrote a wild and hyperbolic ode to a billboard: "No matter that the blush has been dimmed / upon all the lost faces. / I gallop ahead toward you / advertising billboard, / like a great unprecedented love" ("Billboard," from *Lipless Faucets*). Using "archaic," complex linguistic forms—as in, for example, Nathan Alterman's poetry—and imitating them, Avidan repeats them and thereby "samples" them.[13] Reflecting back from the couch of the Electronic Psychiatrist, the Alterman-like segment, its rhythm and lexicon, begin to resurface, sampled, in Avidan's poetic work, *coded* within it, as it were, and an inseparable part of its product, in a way—a shortcut for writing a poem as well as a way to accelerate it, just as technology is a component in the artistic product of the authentic conversations with the computer.

Hence, both in his early and in his late periods, Avidan uses a preconceived algorithm (in *Electronic Psychiatrist* this is the algorithm written to produce the program ELIZA) to set in motion his ethics of kinesis, which aspires to allow the language of poetry the space it deserves. Avidan's greatest fear was stasis, and thus his quest involved a constant movement, all the while being aware of the illusion of conquering death through art. But this was one illusion he was willing to entertain:

אֲבָל יֵשׁ תְּשׁוּקָה חֲזָקָה לִזְרֹם,
כְּמוֹ נָהָר, יְחִידִי, לְאוֹר הַיּוֹם,
לְהִשָּׁאֵר צָעִיר תָּמִיד וְלַחֲלֹם
עַל קֶצֶב נוֹעָז לְאוֹר הַיּוֹם,
כְּמוֹ נָהָר, יְחִידִי, לִזְרֹם, לִזְרֹם,
רַק גּוּפֵנוּ זָקֵן מִיּוֹם לְיוֹם.

12 Originally published in 1978 in the book *Cryptograms from a Telestar*, included in Avidan's *Collected Poems III*, 217.

13 Nathan Alterman (1910, Warsaw–1970, Tel Aviv) was regarded as a new cultural hero and national poet by his generation. The linguistic virtuosity, the rhythms, and the vivid imagery of his first volume, *Stars Outside* (1938), dazzled the Hebrew *yishuv* (prestatehood Jewish settlement in Palestine) and marked a poetic turning point. When Avidan began publishing his poetry, it was a generally accepted view that writing poetry meant writing "like Alterman."

> feel a strong urge to flow,
> like a river, alone, in broad daylight,
> to remain always young and to dream
> about a bold rush, in broad daylight,
> like a river, alone, to flow and flow,
> only our body, day by day, grows old.[14]

Later, in poems like "Talks" (Diburim), whose repetitive pattern suggests the delaying of an inevitable end, Avidan attempts to create movement in words and to aesthetically realize "the simple cutting fact / we have nowhere else to go" ("Power of Attorney"). After twenty-one stanzas, "Talks" ends, declaring itself arbitrary:

<div dir="rtl">

הַמֶּלֶל הַזֶּה יִגָּמֵר כְּשֶׁהַמֶּלֶל הַזֶּה יִגָּמֵר
וְהַמֶּלֶל הַזֶּה יִגָּמֵר אִם הַמֶּלֶל הַזֶּה יִמָּשֵׁךְ
וְהַמֶּלֶל הַזֶּה יִמָּשֵׁךְ כְּשֶׁהַמֶּלֶל הַזֶּה יִגָּמֵר

עַד כָּאן הָעִנְיָן עַצְמוֹ וּמִכָּאן עִנְיָנִים אֲחֵרִים
עַד כָּאן עִנְיָנִים אֲחֵרִים וּמִכָּאן הָעִנְיָן עַצְמוֹ
וּמִכָּאן הָעִנְיָן מַתְחִיל וּמִכָּאן הָעִנְיָן נִפְתָּח
וְעַד כָּאן הַהֶמְשֵׁךְ נִמְשָׁךְ וּמִכָּאן הַהֶמְשֵׁךְ נֶחְתָּךְ

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> This verbosity will end when this verbosity will end
> And this verbosity will end if this verbosity continues
> And this verbosity will continue when this verbosity will end
>
> Up to here the issue itself and from here other issues
> Up to here other issues and from here the issue itself
> And from here the issue begins and from here the issue is open
> And up to here continuity continues and from here continuity ends[15]

What Avidan does, in all cases, early and late, is to create "engines of poetry," or poetic machines, which in principle could keep on running forever, and in which he plays the removed part of a poetic administrator or overseer. In other words, in many parts of Avidan's poetry, in all the periods of his creative life, he uses finite elements of the poem and of the language in an excessive and extreme way, thus creating an illusion of infinity.

Avidan lived as he wrote. His need to earn a wage in a world in which poetry is no longer a viable source for such daily endeavors is epitomized in the last volume of poetry published during his lifetime. *The Latest Gulf: Desert Storm Poems and Seven Background Poems* (1991) has two sections: poems in direct and real-time reaction to the First Gulf War, and "background" poems. Avidan published the "reaction" poems in the newspapers first, for remuneration, describing their style as "designated writing," namely, a work that has a "definite and immediate publishing

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14 Originally published in 1957 in the book *Personal Problems* and included in Avidan's *Collected Poems I*, 76. From "Power of Attorney," in Avidan, *Futureman*, 46.

15 Originally published in 1973 in the book *Practical Poems* and included in Avidan's *Collected Poems II* (Jerusalem: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House and the Bialik Institute, 2009), 317–20. From "Talks," in Avidan, *Futureman*, 75.

objective," as opposed to what he termed "Platonic writing…that has no external stimulus or deadline."[16] Indeed, the poems responding to the very first war to be broadcast twenty-four hours a day on TV screens around the world contain no classic elements. This poetry is a dizzying vortex of words, facts, names, assertions, and similes, competing only with a militant and warring reality.

In his book *After 1945: Latency as Origin of the Present*, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht observes: "It is obvious how both Socialism (which existed chiefly as utopian ideology) and Capitalism (which still exists as action and movement at an ever-accelerating pace) depended on the old chronotope of progress, transition, and taking distance from the past."[17] The ability to combine an ever-accelerating pace, an ethos of sudden growth, and hysteric entrepreneurship in the effort to stay on the rug of time is the unique challenge that Avidan's poetry poses for the ongoing discussion on creativity, art, self-destructive capitalism, and financial irresponsibility as the existential drama of our present world, which seems to believe in no progress but the technological one. Ⓐ

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[16] Menachem Ben, "Interview with David Avidan," in *Diokan* 3 (Tel Aviv: Nimrod Publishing House, 2002): 19.

[17] Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *After 1945: Latency as Origin of the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 208.