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## ABSTRACTS

### A STORY THAT WAS CAPTIVATED: THE EVOLVEMENT OF A TALE BETWEEN ERETZ YISRAEL AND BABYLON

Vered Noam

The Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds offer two variations to the tale of the daughters of the sage Shmuel, who were captured and brought to Eretz Yisrael. The Babylonian version dramatizes the tension between *halachic* demands and human needs. Its primary lesson is the obligation for empathy on the part of the rabbinic authority towards the person facing judgement. However the end of the tale is incompatible with the rest of the narrative and impedes its incorporation into the framework of the Talmudic *sugya* creating exegetical constraints on the *Amoraic* intra-textual discussion. A comparison between this tale and its parallel passage in the Palestinian Talmud suggests that the story originated in Eretz Yisrael as an anti-Babylonian political story. It seems that en route to Babylon its provocative ending was replaced with an alternative denouement that changed its controversial character with a simpler and more neutral message. This phenomenon expresses once again the charged relationship between Eretz Yisrael and Babylon as well as the influence it had over the processes of creation and transference in both centers.

### FATAL CHARADES AND THE DEATH OF TITUS

Joshua Levinson

The narrative of the death of Titus as recounted in *Leviticus Rabba* (22:3) is examined here as a subversive appropriation of the Roman method of punishment aptly called 'fatal charades', where convicted criminals were forced to act out in the arena the narrative of a figure from Greco-Roman mythology as a means of their own execution.

Because the arena was political theater par excellence it is a particularly

rich setting to examine how its participants were formed, re-formed, and enabled or compelled to perform in the society of late antiquity. The structure of sin and punishment which neatly divides the narrative creates a tale of two cities – Jerusalem and Rome – and their respective cultures. In the first half, Titus appropriates the Jewish rituals of purification and profanes them by enacting their grotesque reversal, and the narrator retaliates with a *parodia sacra* of his own, a fatal charade enacting a classical myth. Thus all the characters use a language not of their own devising, and each recounts another's story as his own. This hybridity, as a mode of both appropriation and of resistance, is a type of cultural double-talk: a struggle for identity within a world of shared texts and meanings. This tale of two cities, like the arena itself, combines sacred and profane, power and impotence, sovereignty and sedition, the human and the divine. Perhaps like society in late antiquity itself, this text embodies the collision, collusion and collaboration of different voices and cultures.

BETWEEN 'INNER MOTHERLAND' AND 'OUTER  
MOTHERLAND': LITERARY AND PSYCHOANALYTIC  
STUDY OF THE TALMUDIC TALE ABOUT RAV ASI AND  
HIS AGED MOTHER

Admiel Kosman

This article deals with an Aggadic tale in the Babylonian Talmud (Kidushin 31b) concerning Rav Asi who fled from his mother's sexual overtures to Eretz Yisrael. He solicits Rabbi Yochanan permission to flee upon hearing that his mother was hot on his heels.

The tale explores at a most fundamental level the complicated relationship between two systems or languages: The Aggadic system (which reveals the latent desire between the son and his mother) and the Halakhic system (which 'covers' it with another 'language' or a different set of explanations). This article attempts to understand and explicate the relationship between the two systems, making use of the psychoanalytic model of Jacques Lacan.

EXILED AND SUPPRESSED VOICES: ON THE  
ASHKENAZI PRONUNCIATION OF HEBREW AS A  
POSTMODERN QUESTION

Rachel Albeck-Gidron

The particular sensitivities fostered by the postmodern climate are conducive to a re-examination of the position of the Ashkenazi pronunciation of non-liturgical Hebrew texts originating in Europe at the turn of the nineteenth century, especially of those written in literary prose.

This paper takes as its point of departure two critical issues. The first is the term *quotation*, which was coined by the writer and scholar Umberto Eco and which indicates the inclusion of cultural manifestations from the past within the present as a kind of meta-culture. The second issue is philosopher Emanuel Levinas's ethical view, which demands 'responsibility toward the otherness of "the other"'. In the context of this paper, this implies taking responsibility for the cultural and literary 'otherness' of the Ashkenazi pronunciation of Hebrew, along with the climate it reflects.

These issues concern not only the extent of 'authenticity' that emerges while reading these texts but also the status of the Ashkenazi pronunciation in relation to various current options of Hebraism.

FACING THE FOREST: TCHERNIKHOVSKY AND GOETHE

Ariel Hirschfeld

It is a known fact that Tchernikhovsky saw in Goethe one of his spiritual forefathers as well as a model for the figure of the 'Great National Poet' that he himself had hoped to assume. Tchernikhovsky's renowned poem 'Nocturno', which was written during his student days in Heidelberg, creates an intensive dialogue with Goethe's image. The whole poem is constructed of quotations from *Faust*, out of which Tchernikhovsky created a new sequence with new meaning, challenging Goethe with an outlook of confrontation and liberation.

**‘THEY SHALL DWELL BY THE HAVEN OF THE SEA’:  
ISRAELI POETRY 1950–1960**

Hannan Hever

How did Hebrew poetry of the 1950s and early 1960s participate in the construction of the national Israeli ‘imagined community?’ One way was through its negation of the sea. Work by Natan Zach, Arye Sivan, Moshe Dor and others – commonly referred to as ‘the poetry of the Generation of Statehood’ – portrays the sea-crossing and arrival in Israel in such a way that the sea itself is occluded. Like their forefathers in early and modern Hebrew culture, the writers tended to represent the sea as a mere obstacle on the way to Eretz Yisrael rather than an object in its own right. By turning their collective back on the Mediterranean they fashioned a native poetry, written on sovereign ground. It constituted a double posturing, a facing toward and away from the sea, in order to create a native Israeli subject despite the poet’s status in many cases as a relative newcomer.

This allegorical configuration of the landscape was a timely solution to the problem of national representation. It removed the abstract subject from a concrete encounter with his surroundings and made it possible to reject those whose presence predated his, including, among other, Mizrahim, Arabs and women. Finally, the poets of ‘the generation of statehood’ sidestepped social and political exigencies by limiting their figurative space to the shoreline, a marginal non-place the main characteristic of which is its temporariness. It follows that the use of allegory, in as much as it helped avoid contradictions in nationalist politics for a time, also contributed to their intensification.

**GEOGRAPHICAL AND POTENTIAL SPACE: A READING  
OF TWO EARLY STORIES BY Y. H. BRENNER**

Dana Olmert

In most of Y. H. Brenner’s fictional works the protagonists wander nervously between geographical planes. In two short stories, ‘Pa’amayim’ [Twice] and ‘Shama’ [Over There], both written and published in 1903, the heroes’ movements through various landscapes are a projection of a psychological process, one that stems from each hero’s desire to shape his inner self and integrate it with his exterior reality. This article offers

a psychoanalytic analysis that attempts to describe these geographical and psychological movements and their complex interrelation.

The heroes of both stories are children whose primary unconscious wish is for a symbiotic reunion with a parental figure. However, fulfillment of this wish is complicated by the family dynamic and high parental expectations; rather, the heroes find themselves torn between their parents' demands and their own fantasy of a symbiotic connection. Unable to resolve this complicated situation, both heroes act out their longings and frustrations by moving from one geographical site to another.

Using some of Donald Winnicott's psychoanalytic concepts, this article focuses on both the thematic and structural dimensions of the relationship between inner and outer journeys. Winnicott's concept of 'potential space' and his analysis of the function of play in children's lives is used in the article as a prism through which to examine the interrelation between reality and the inner world as it is experienced by each protagonist.

### TEXT, INTERPRETATION, SPACE: A READING OF GNESSIN'S 'BA'GANIM'

Gidi Nevo

This article examines two readings of Gnessin's story 'Ba'ganim' ('In the Country') – one by Dan Miron, and another by Eddy Zemach. It highlights two points where the different readings offer diametrically opposed interpretative solutions. A third reading of the story is also proposed, one which connects the story with the narrative topos of a journey into a dark, primeval, vegetative existence along a flowing, winding waterway, the paradigmatic embodiment of which is to be found in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Finally, the article offers some reflections on the nature of the very act of reading (or interpretation) itself.

### THE ZIONIST ANIMAL

Uri Cohen

This essay attempts an inquiry into the nature of figurative language and the way it deals with space during the founding years of Zionist culture. The essay undertakes a close reading of poetry by Abraham Shlonsky and other major poets writing between the two world wars, and lays bare how

violence is embedded in a figurative language that blissfully ignores its own violence. This view is put forth contrary to the commonplace that the literature of the epoch could be described as ‘universalistic symbolism’. The essay deals with one animal that can be seen as a natural figure of the east, the camel, tracing its transformations from a wild and potent figure of the desert, to the vehicle of transport of building materials in Tel Aviv, and finally as a specter of the defeated Arabs who haunt the Israeli landscape. This figurative itinerary demonstrates one of the intimate trails through which culture prepares for war.

‘THE LANDSCAPE LOSES ITS NAME’:  
NATHAN ZACH’S NATIONAL-ISRAELI SUBJECT

Hamutal Tsamir

The poetry and the poetic ideology of the Generation of Statehood in the 1950s–1960s attempted to speak in the singular, personal voice of the universal individual, which was seen as standing in opposition to the collective and national ethos. This opposition has been accepted, replicated and perpetuated in the criticism and the historiography of the Generation of Statehood to this very day. This article proposes to question and to deconstruct such an alleged opposition, given that the personal and the national always fabricate and define one another within the context of a charged national ethos. I argue that post-Independence Hebrew-Israeli poetry remains national and that the subject-matter should be thus understood as a new, *Israeli* (sovereign) version of the collective, one which defines itself (perhaps for the first time in the history of Modern Hebrew literature) *as if it were* in opposition to the national identity.

Focusing on Nathan Zach, the leading poet and ideologue of the Generation of Statehood, I argue that in his highly influential *Shirim Shonim* [Different/Miscellaneous Poems], published in 1960, he constructs a subject-citizen whose identity is based on the ‘naturalization’ of his relation to the land. Instances of naturalization are found in the abstract use of language, in denial and in the erasure of particularities – such as his sense of (national) place and of everything which might connect him to his family and the past. The nation’s conquest of the land finds its strongest expression in the erasure of the antecedent struggle for nationhood and its specificities (landscape, place names) in Zach’s poems, under the disguise of ‘transcending’ or ‘liberating’ oneself from such concerns.

The poem 'A Citizen of the World' epitomizes this 'transcendence' / liberation, as it offers the possibility of being a 'citizen of the world' without going anywhere: belonging to a locality that is *supposedly* so self-evident and arbitrary that it needs not – or rather, *must not* – be marked. Only six years later, in Zach's subsequent book, *All the Milk and the Honey* (1966), this possibility is no longer feasible, since the arbitrariness of belonging to a national place leads to an extreme estrangement from it, and yet the totality of it allows no way out, so that the speaker is left with an unbridgeable abyss, which one might call a type of schizophrenia.

'THE WORLD WAS FULL OF ABYSSES AND MYSTERIES':  
THE SPACE IN YACKOV SHABTAI'S *ADOSHEM*

Dror Burstein

The aim of this article is twofold – walking and excavating; walking in a literary-urban space and an 'archeological' digging in it. The walking follows a journey: the hero's and the author's. This journey takes place upon a literary map based on, but not identical to, the actual map of the city of Tel Aviv. The text, based on this map, and on an image of the city, re-creates this image into a singular, literary urban mythos of the city. For a better understanding of this image, the article tries to read both the text and some relevant parts of the real city.

The 'archeological' section of the article investigates a possible origin of the above mentioned image and mythos. At this point the article claims that Shabtai's Tel Aviv has its origins in a familiar image of the *shtetl*, the small Jewish community in Eastern Europe. Thus, a major Israeli-born author conducts a dialogue (in 1972) within an 'archaic' spatial model, in spite of and in contrast to the strong tendencies toward Israeliness, sometimes called 'normality', among some of his more prominent contemporaries.

DAVID SHAHAR'S JERUSALEM

Michal Peled-Ginsburg and Moshe Ron

This paper sets out to examine David Shahar's representation of Jerusalem, the city which serves as the setting for most of his fiction. We begin by noting that in his major work, the seven-novel sequence entitled *The Palace*

of *Shattered Vessels*, nearly all major events and characters are anchored in one very closely circumscribed part of Jerusalem: the Street of the Prophets and its immediate neighborhood, which is also a border zone between the city's various communities. The *Palace* sequence seems to ignore almost entirely other parts of Jerusalem, notably the more recently built Jewish neighborhoods, as well as the rest of the Zionist Yishuv and the country at large. We then show that this is not the case in Shahar's earlier short stories or in his other mature novel, *His Majesty's Agent*, which range more freely about the city in ways that indicate their chronotopic affinity with other types of plots. Finally we argue that Shahar's Street of the Prophets may be seen as a 'heterotopia' – a real urban space where heterogeneous elements are physically co-present in ways not accounted for by the existing ideological map. We further argue that Shahar subscribes to a multifaceted and even fluid conception of personal identity and repeatedly diagnoses the outbreak of violence as occurring when individuals become absorbed into a group identity with mob-like features. Taking into account that the *Palace* privileges the period just prior to the 1936 Riots, we conclude that its chronotope suggests the plot type of an urban idyllic novel, which is motivated by the desire to recreate the idealized heterogeneity of a lost childhood world.

## HAROLD SCHIMMEL'S AR'Á

Shachar Bramm

This essay examines different meanings of the Hebrew term *ar'a* as used by Harold Schimmel in his long poem so titled. *Ar'a* is a poetic journey extending over a period of 15 years and three separate books: *Ar'a 1–8* (1979), *Lowell* (1985), *Sefer Midrash Tadshe (Ar'a 12)* (1992). This essay focuses on the first part of the journey, the initial step of the poet's inquiry into the foundations that constitute his identity as a man and a poet, while keeping in mind the project in its totality as it is reflected in the interrelation between each volume. As the title of Schimmel's long poem suggests, the concept of space in its metaphoric and literal sense is a major 'tool' as well as an underlying theme in the poem. While drawing his poetic map of identity, Schimmel develops a 'poetics of space', which is the poetics of *Ar'a*, of which he considers himself a native son. The poet uses this method to weave a tapestry of meanings whose ramifications this essay sets out to explore.

POST-COLONIAL INTERTEXTUALITY IN ANTON  
SHAMMAS' *ARABESQUES*

Michael Gluzman

Focusing on Anton Shammas' *Arabesques*, this paper examines the ways in which Shammas employs a poetics of intertextuality in order to create a space for himself in a language not fully his own. Through the exhilaration and overdetermination of the Hebrew language, Shammas creates an endlessly allusive text. However, his linguistic virtuosity is not simply an act of appropriation and mastery. Caught in 'the discontinuous time of translation and negotiation' – which Homi Bhabha ascribes to the bearer of a hybrid identity – Shammas presents intertextuality as a process of subjectification. My reading of Shammas's intertextual practice focuses particularly on a short paragraph from *Arabesques* in which he alludes to, indeed rewrites, a passage from Bialik's 'The Pond', widely considered the greatest and most complex *Ars Poetica* long poem in Modern Hebrew literature. In rereading and rewriting Bialik from the margins of Israeli culture, Shammas makes a surprising use of this canonical text by positioning it in the context of identity politics. This act of rereading/rewriting not only subverts the text's originary meaning but also offers a new, revolutionary version of the center-margin divide.

This act of rewriting, however, is not directed only at Bialik. As is well known, Anton Shammas and A. B. Yehoshua engaged in a drawn-out, bitter polemic on the State of Israel's self-definition as a Jewish state. This polemic which erupted in 1985, prior to the publication of *Arabesques*, infiltrates the novel, albeit in an encrypted manner, via a series of intertextual moments, culminating in the extended allusion to Bialik's 'The Pond'. Shammas's rewriting of Bialik aims to subvert the very meaning of the national poet's text, just as it clashes with A. B. Yehoshua's 1974 novel *The Lover*, which also contains an extended allusion to Bialik. By re-appropriating Bialik, Shammas asserts his presence in this predominantly Jewish arena, thereby extending the traditional boundaries of Israeli national culture.