

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

TCLC 94

TOPICS VOLUME

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

Topics Volume

**Excerpts from Criticism of Various Topics
in Twentieth-Century Literature, including Literary
and Critical Movements, Prominent Themes and
Genres, Anniversary Celebrations, and Surveys
of National Literatures**



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27500 Drake Rd.
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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 76-46132

ISBN 0-7876-2751-8

ISSN 0276-8178

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

Topics Volume

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Preface

Since its inception more than fifteen years ago, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* has been purchased and used by nearly 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. *TCLC* has covered more than 500 authors, representing 58 nationalities, and over 25,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as *TCLC*. In the words of one reviewer, "there is nothing comparable available." *TCLC* "is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many libraries would have difficulty assembling on their own."

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1960 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of this period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, *TCLC* helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in *TCLC* presents a comprehensive survey of an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of *TCLC* is devoted to literary topics. These topic entries widen the focus of the series from individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

TCLC is designed as a companion series to Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, which reprints commentary on authors now living or who have died since 1960. Because of the different periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between *CLC* and *TCLC*. For additional information about *CLC* and Gale's other criticism titles, users should consult the Guide to Gale Literary Criticism Series preceding the title page in this volume.

Coverage

Each volume of *TCLC* is carefully compiled to present:

- criticism of authors, or literary topics, representing a variety of genres and nationalities
- both major and lesser-known writers and literary works of the period
- 6-12 authors or 3-6 topics per volume
- individual entries that survey critical response to each author's work or each topic in literary history, including early criticism to reflect initial reactions; later criticism to represent any rise or decline in reputation; and current retrospective analyses.

Organization of This Book

An author entry consists of the following elements: author heading, biographical and critical introduction, list of principal works, reprints of criticism (each preceded by an annotation and a bibliographic citation), and a bibliography of further reading.

- The **Author Heading** consists of the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. If an author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the real name given in parentheses on the first line of the biographical and critical introduction. Also located at the beginning of

the introduction to the author entry are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose languages use nonroman alphabets.

- The **Biographical and Critical Introduction** outlines the author's life and career, as well as the critical issues surrounding his or her work. References to past volumes of *TCLC* are provided at the beginning of the introduction. Additional sources of information in other biographical and critical reference series published by Gale, including *Short Story Criticism*, *Children's Literature Review*, *Contemporary Authors*, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, and *Something about the Author*, are listed in a box at the end of the entry.
- Some *TCLC* entries include **Portraits** of the author. Entries also may contain reproductions of materials pertinent to an author's career, including manuscript pages, title pages, dust jackets, letters, and drawings, as well as photographs of important people, places, and events in an author's life.
- The **List of Principal Works** is chronological by date of first book publication and identifies the genre of each work. In the case of foreign authors with both foreign-language publications and English translations, the title and date of the first English-language edition are given in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication.
- Critical essays are prefaced by **Annotations** providing the reader with information about both the critic and the criticism that follows. Included are the critic's reputation, individual approach to literary criticism, and particular expertise in an author's works. Also noted are the relative importance of a work of criticism, the scope of the essay, and the growth of critical controversy or changes in critical trends regarding an author. In some cases, these annotations cross-reference essays by critics who discuss each other's commentary.
- A complete **Bibliographic Citation** designed to facilitate location of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism.
- Criticism is arranged chronologically in each author entry to provide a perspective on changes in critical evaluation over the years. All titles of works by the author featured in the entry are printed in boldface type to enable the user to easily locate discussion of particular works. Also for purposes of easier identification, the critic's name and the publication date of the essay are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the journal in which it appeared. Some of the essays in *TCLC* also contain translated material. Unless otherwise noted, translations in brackets are by the editors; translations in parentheses or continuous with the text are by the critic. Publication information (such as footnotes or page and line references to specific editions of works) have been deleted at the editor's discretion to provide smoother reading of the text.
- An annotated list of **Further Reading** appearing at the end of each author entry suggests secondary sources on the author. In some cases it includes essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights.

Cumulative Indexes

- Each volume of *TCLC* contains a cumulative **Author Index** listing all authors who have appeared in Gale's Literary Criticism Series, along with cross references to such biographical series as *Contemporary Authors* and *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. For readers' convenience, a complete list of Gale titles included appears on the first page of the author index. Useful for locating authors within the various series, this index is particularly valuable for those authors who are identified by a certain period but who, because of their death dates, are placed in another, or for those authors whose careers span two periods. For example, F. Scott Fitzgerald is found in *TCLC*, yet a writer often associated with him, Ernest Hemingway, is found in *CLC*.

- Each *TCLC* volume includes a cumulative **Nationality Index** which lists all authors who have appeared in *TCLC* volumes, arranged alphabetically under their respective nationalities, as well as Topics volume entries devoted to particular national literatures.
- Each new volume in Gale's Literary Criticism Series includes a cumulative **Topic Index**, which lists all literary topics treated in *NCLC*, *TCLC*, *LC 1400-1800*, and the *CLC* year-book.
- Each new volume of *TCLC*, with the exception of the Topics volumes, includes a **Title Index** listing the titles of all literary works discussed in the volume. In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale has also produced a **Special Paperbound Edition** of the *TCLC* title index. This annual cumulation lists all titles discussed in the series since its inception and is issued with the first volume of *TCLC* published each year. Additional copies of the index are available on request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the following year's cumulation. Titles discussed in the Topics volume entries are not included *TCLC* cumulative index.

Citing Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume in Gale's literary Criticism Series may use the following general forms to footnote reprinted criticism. The first example pertains to materials drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books.

¹William H. Slavick, "Going to School to DuBose Heyward," *The Harlem Renaissance Re-examined*, (AMS Press, 1987); reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, Vol. 59, ed. Jennifer Garipey (Detroit: Gale Research, 1995), pp. 94-105.

²George Orwell, "Reflections on Gandhi," *Partisan Review*, 6 (Winter 1949), pp. 85-92; reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, Vol. 59, ed. Jennifer Garipey (Detroit: Gale Research, 1995), pp. 40-3.

Suggestions Are Welcome

In response to suggestions, several features have been added to *TCLC* since the series began, including annotations to critical essays, a cumulative index to authors in all Gale literary criticism series, entries devoted to criticism on a single work by a major author, more extensive illustrations, and a title index listing all literary works discussed in the series since its inception.

Readers who wish to suggest authors or topics to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to write the editors.

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Contents

Preface vii

Acknowledgments xi

Israeli Literature	1
Introduction.....	1
Representative Works	1
Overviews	2
Israeli Fiction	18
Israeli Poetry	33
Israeli Drama	62
Women and Israeli Literature	91
Arab Characters in Israeli Literature	112
Further Reading.....	136
 Politics and Literature	138
Introduction.....	138
Representative Works	138
Overviews	139
Europe.....	196
Latin America.....	226
Africa and the Carribean	248
Further Reading.....	260
 Women in Modern Literature	262
Introduction.....	262
Representative Works	262
Overviews	263
American Literature.....	286
Other National Literatures	304
Fiction.....	333
Poetry	394
Drama	407
Further Reading.....	424

Literary Criticism Series Cumulative Author Index 429

Literary Criticism Series Topic Index 494

TCLC Cumulative Nationality Index 502

Israeli Literature

INTRODUCTION

The creation of the modern Israeli state in 1948 marked the beginning of a new era in Hebrew literature. While Hebrew writers had long been active in the eastern Mediterranean region that was formerly known as Palestine, the establishment of Israel as the culmination of the Zionist movement proved decisive in reaffirming the vital language and culture of Hebrew-speakers. Locked in conflict with surrounding Arab nations, the state of Israel has struggled to define itself through its literature. Combining the concerns of Middle Eastern and European Jews—the latter having suffered near total destruction during the Nazi Holocaust—Israeli literature represents the unique expression of a nation and a people seeking to express a new collective identity. Critics have generally divided Israeli literature of the twentieth century into three periods. Works of the first period are labeled “Palmach” literature, a term derived from the Israeli military. The Palmach authors, who are sometimes called the generation of 1948, flourished in the late 1940s and the 1950s. Their works of drama, poetry, and fiction reflect a social-realist aesthetic, and frequently express themes related to Israelis as a group: political issues, the war of independence, the Israeli army, the *kibbutz*, or collective farm settlement, and the assimilation of immigrants to the region. By the 1960s and 1970s the so-called New Wave of Israeli literature had begun. While national concerns were still prominent, an individual and universal emphasis characterizes the literature of this period. While addressing subjects of vital interest to Israelis, writers of the New Wave endeavored to reproduce the interior lives of individuals and offered a historical contextualization of Israeli life and its past origins in their works, reflecting a move to universal themes. In the 1970s, the voices of women were heard increasingly among Israeli writers, and Israeli poetry and drama developed considerably. The state of Israeli literature in the 1980s and 1990s generally reflects modern attitudes of innovation and experimentalism and has demonstrated a need to more fully confront the subject of Arab-Jewish relations in Israel. Since 1948 Israel has in large part been defined by the brutality of this ancient ethnic conflict. By the close of the century, however, expressions of diversity and dissent are more often heard as the nation struggles to define the meaning and values of its evolving democracy.

REPRESENTATIVE WORKS

Shmuel Yosef Agnon
Selected Stories of S. Y. Agnon (short stories) 1970

Nissim Aloni
Most Cruel the King (drama) 1954

Yehuda Amichai
Lo me'-akhshav, lo mi-kan [*Not of This Time, Not of This Place*] (novel) 1964
Selected Poems (poetry) 1968

Aharon Appelfeld
Masot beguf ri'shon [*Essays in First Person*] (essays) 1979
Badenham, ir nofesh [*Badenheim, 1939*] (novella) 1980

Hanoch Bartov
Shesh kenafayim le-ehad [*Each Had Six Wings*] (novel) 1954
Pitse bagrut [*The Brigade*] (novel) 1968
Ha'abady [*The Dissembler*] (novel) 1975

Yitzhak Ben-Ner
Aharei ha-geshem [*After the Rain*] (short stories) 1979

H. N. Bialik
Selected Poems (poetry) 1965

Yosef Haim Brenner
Schokol we-Kishalon [*Breakdown and Bereavement*] (novel) 1971

T. Carmi
The Brass Serpent: Poems (poetry) 1964
The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse [editor and translator] (poetry) 1981

Amir Gilboa
The Light of Lost Sons: Selected Poems of Amir Gilboa (poetry) 1979

Leah Goldberg
Ba'alat ha'armon [*Lady of the Castle*] (drama) 1954

Haim Gouri
Iskat ha-shokolad [*The Chocolate Deal*] (novel) 1964
Hasseper hammeshugga' [*The Crazy Book*] (novel) 1971

David Grossman
Hiyukh hagedi [*The Smile of the Lamb*] (novel) 1983
Ayen erekh ahavah [*See Under: Love*] (novel) 1986

Shulamith Hareven
Ir yamim rabim [*City of Many Days*] (novel) 1972

Amalia Kahana-Carmon
Ve-yareah be-emek Ayalon [*And Moon in the Valley of Ajalon*] (novel) 1984

Yoram Kaniuk
Ha-yored l'ma'alah [*The Acrophile*] (novel) 1961
Himo melekh yerushalayim [*Himo, King of Jerusalem*] (novel) 1966
'Aravi tov [*A Good Arab*] (novel) 1984

Shulamit Lapid
Gei Oni (novel) 1982

Hanoch Levin
Malkat haambatyah [*Queen of the Bath tub*] (drama) 1970

Aharon Megged
Hannah Senesh (drama) 1958
Ha-hai 'al ha-meth [*The Living and the Dead*] (novel) 1965

Sammy Michael
Hasut [*Refuge*] (novel) 1977

- Yitshak Orpaz
Bayit le-adam ehad [A House for One] (novel) 1974
Ha-gevurah [The Mistress] (novel) 1983
- Amos Oz
Makom aher [Elsewhere Perhaps] (novel) 1966
Mikhael sheli [My Michael] (novel) 1968
La-gaat ba-mayim, la-gaat ba-ruah [Touch the Water, Touch the Wind] (novel) 1973
Har haetsah haraah [The Hill of Evil Counsel] (novel-las) 1976
- Dan Pagis
Poems (poetry) 1972
- Dahlia Ravikovitch
Ahavat tapuah ha-zahav, shirim Daliyah Ravikovits (poetry) 1958
- Pinhas Sadeh
Ha-hayyim ke-mashal [Life as a Parable] (novel) 1958
- Yaakov Shabtai
Zikhron dvarim [Past Continuous] (novel) 1977
- Natan Shaham
Heshbon hadash [A New Reckoning] (drama) 1953
- Moshe Shamir
Melekh basar wa-dam [The King of Flesh and Blood] (novel) 1954
Hayyai 'im Yishma'el [My Life with Ishmael] (novel) 1970
- Anton Shammas
Arabeskot [Arabesques] (novel) 1986
- Dennis Silk
The Punished Land (poetry) 1980
- Yehoshua Sobol
Geto [Ghetto] (drama) 1984
- Benjamin Tammuz
Be-sof maarav [Castle in Spain] (novel) 1966
Ha-pardes [The Orchard] (novel) 1971
Mishle bakbukim [Bottle Parables] (novel) 1975
- Avraham B. Yehoshua
Mul ha-ye'arot [Three Days and a Child and Other Stories] (short stories) 1970
Bi-tehilat kayits 1970 [Early in the Summer of 1970] (short stories) 1971
Gerushim meuharim [A Late Divorce] (novel) 1982
Mar maniy [Mr. Mani] (novel) 1990
- S. Yizhar
"Hashavuy" ["The Prisoner"] (short story) 1948
Yemei tsiklag [The Days of Ziklag] (novel) 1958
- Natan Zach
Kol hechalav vehadvash [All the Milk and Honey] (poetry) 1964
Anti-mehikon [Hard to Remember] (poetry) 1984

[In the following essay, Alter views the tension between home and horizon—between the limits of the Israeli state and the expanse of the world—in contemporary Israeli literature.]

It seems to me often that life in this tiny country is a powerful stimulant but that only the devout are satisfied with what they can obtain within Israel's borders. The Israelis are great travellers. They need the world.

—Saul Bellow, *To Jerusalem and Back: A Personal Account*

One of the most striking qualities of Israeli literature since the beginning of the 1960s and, increasingly, into the 1970s, is that it remains intensely, almost obsessively, national in its concerns while constantly pressing to address itself to universal issues and situations, perhaps to an international audience as well. This dialectic is inherently unstable, and of course its operation will be felt differently in different writers, or in poetry and prose. Nevertheless, one can detect in most contemporary Hebrew writers a high-pitched vibration of nervousness about the national setting which is the principal locus of their imaginative work; and if we can understand the peculiar nature of that nervousness, we may be able to see more clearly why the Israeli literary imagination has adopted certain characteristic modes and even certain characteristic constellations of plot and dramatic setting.

The nervousness I have in mind is not about the specific problems that confront the state of Israel, grave or abundant as they may be, but rather, to put it bluntly, about the simple fact of being in Israel. I do not mean to suggest, as some observers outside Israel would no doubt like to think, that Israeli writers tend to be covert anti-Zionists. On the contrary, what particularly characterizes most serious writers in Israel is their surprising combination of chronic disaffection and unswerving commitment. Whatever radical doubts they may, on occasion, raise in their writing, they are notable for their unwillingness to drop out of, or rebel against, the troubled national enterprise. Whether high school teachers, university instructors, kibbutzniks, or journalists by profession, they tend politically to gravitate toward small, ineffectual groups of the responsible opposition (usually on the Left). They seem ever ready to lecture to popular audiences, to join in symposiums with Arab intellectuals, to sign manifestos, to deliver scathing statements on current controversies to the daily press, or to picket the office of the prime minister, as the case may require. But it is one thing to be an engaged intellectual and quite another to be an imaginative writer in a constantly beleaguered nation-state the size of Rhode Island, and it is the pressures and constrictions of the latter problematic condition that repeatedly make themselves felt in contemporary Hebrew literature.

In a sense, this tension of attitudes is part of the legacy of classical Zionism and of the antecedent Hebrew literature which flourished in Central and Eastern Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Modern

OVERVIEWS

Robert Alter

SOURCE: "Afterword: A Problem of Horizons," in *TriQuarterly*, No. 39, Spring, 1977, pp. 326-38.

Hebrew literature was born out of the German Enlightenment, with a vision of progressive cosmopolitanism, the dream of a new brotherhood of man in which a nascent Hebrew culture within the European sphere would be accorded the opportunity to play its rightful role. By the end of the nineteenth century—the old cosmopolitan optimism having collapsed under the pressures of a new European era of fierce particularism—the early Zionists nevertheless argued for a nationalism which would somehow be universal in scope. A resurgent Jewish commonwealth, they hoped, would not be a new kind of ghetto on a national scale or simply a “Bulgaria in the Middle East,” but a vital center for all world Jewry and, with intricate links both to the best modern culture and to the Jewish past, a small but precious beacon for mankind. One might conceivably argue from the complex facts of Israeli actuality in the seventies that the visionary notions of the Zionist founders were not entirely off the mark; yet the discrepancy between vision and reality is obviously enormous, and it is out of the pained consciousness of this discrepancy that Israeli writers tend to shape their work.

When your whole cultural tradition tells you that you should be a universalist, though with a proud particularist base, and when, in this tension of expectations, you find yourself part of a tiny linguistic pocket hemmed in at the eastern end of the Mediterranean by enemy guns and a wall of nonrecognition, striving to maintain connections that sometimes must seem tenuous with the “great world” thousands of miles away—you are quite likely to experience flashes of claustrophobia. The only dependable antidote to this collective sense of cultural entrapment is a strong dose of messianism. For if you believe that the future of mankind rides with the ebb and flow of your nation’s destiny, then no political or geocultural encirclement, however constricting, can ever cut you off from a realm of larger significance. Old-fashioned messianism, however, is not much in evidence these days among serious writers in Israel. In fact, the only convincing example that comes to mind is the poet Uri Zvi Greenberg, now in his eighties, whose fierce, mystic nationalism has produced poetic moments of awesome power but who has not inspired any literary emulators. The overwhelming majority of Israeli writers, for whom national identity is an incontestable fact and not an incandescent faith, must settle for scrutinizing the surfaces and depths of their national reality while sometimes secretly longing for a larger world to embrace—perhaps even feeling, in some corner of awareness, the persistent needle of doubt as to whether, if it were only possible, life might not be more fully livable somewhere else.

Somewhere Else, in fact, is the symptomatic title of Amos Oz’s first novel, published in 1966 (the English translation is entitled *Elsewhere Perhaps*). It is one of several books of the early and mid-sixties that could be taken as points of departure for the so-called New Wave in Israeli fiction. Shimon Sandbank is surely right in proposing a new uncertainty about values as one of the distinguishing traits of the last decade and a half of Israeli writing. Viewing the transition from another angle, however, I

would suggest that the difference is also essentially the difference in the imaginative horizons of the fiction and poetry. I am not using the word “horizons” in any metaphorical sense; what I am referring to, as I shall try to illustrate through some specific instances of Israeli writing, are the actual geographical limits that define the imagined world of the literary work.

The novelists of the generation of 1948—writers like S. Yizhar, Moshe Shamir, Natan Shaham, Aharon Megged—created fictional worlds focused on distinctive Israeli social realities like the army, the kibbutz, and the socialist youth movement, with horizons that never visibly extended beyond Israel. In these works Europe appeared, if at all, as a bad memory, and America was simply not a presence. The writers may have been, like writers elsewhere, acutely unhappy with what they saw, but they never seemed to imagine or seriously muse over any arena of existence other than this newly independent national one in which they were struggling to articulate an authentic identity.

Somewhere Else is, like earlier books by Shaham, Shamir, and others of the older generation, a novel of kibbutz life (Oz in fact has remained a kibbutz member since adolescence). Yet it is profoundly different from Hebrew fiction of the forties and fifties, not only because of its pronounced symbolism and its plangently lyric style but, more crucially, because its imagined horizons are different, as the very title declares. Oz’s kibbutz is not simply an assumed institutional framework within which certain social and moral problems may be explored. Sitting in the shadow of ominous mountains and enemy guns, huddled within the perimeter of its own fences, it becomes a parable of claustrophobic collective existence. All the action takes place within the kibbutz, but all the urgent pressure on the action originates “somewhere else”—whether in the dark beyond the Syrian border, where jackals howl and primordial forces lurk, or in the moral quagmire of postwar Germany, which, through the agency of a sinister visitor, penetrates the kibbutz. The novel’s oppositions between here and elsewhere tend to be too simple and sometimes melodramatic—Oz was scarcely twenty-six when he completed the book—but the schematism has the effect of making the symptomatic aspect of the novel vividly clear. Whatever “somewhere else” may actually be, it embodies a disturbing, and alluring, depth, complexity, ambiguity that go beyond the rationalist, optimistic commitment to the salubrious collective endeavor of Israel’s tight little island.

Recent Israeli literature, I would contend, galvanized by these claustrophobic flashes, has tended to swing in rapid oscillation between two poles: on the one hand, an imaginative leap outward to Europe and the West; on the other hand, a return to roots, an attempt to recapitulate the Israeli self in all its distinctiveness by imaginatively recovering the world of the writer’s childhood. Let me offer a variety of examples of this dialectic movement in Israeli fiction of the sixties and seventies. Haim Gouri, an established poet of the 1948 generation, set his first

novel, *The Chocolate Deal* (1964), in postwar Germany. This fable of the moral ambiguities of Jewish survival was followed by a work written in a totally different vein, *The Crazy Book* (1972), an affectionate evocation of Palestinian life in the Mandatory period when Gouri was growing up. Hanoch Bartov, a contemporary of Gouri, returned to his own childhood in *Whose Are You, Son?* (1970), a subtly convincing re-creation of a boy's experience in the town of Petah-Tikvah during the 1930s. On the other hand, his most recent novel, *The Dissembler* (1975), is set mainly in England and deals with a mysterious accident victim who turns out to have three national identities—German, French, and Israeli—and with them three different, internally coherent personal histories. The plot of *The Dissembler* is actually a brilliant focusing of the whole problem of horizons—Israel collapsing into France and Germany, or vice versa, until the entire structure of national identities seems like a house of cards—but Bartov's rendering of the psychological dimension of his situation, as the "serious" conclusion to his whodunit scheme, is unfortunately lame.

There is often, it seems to me, some problem of artistic authenticity in Israeli fiction set in another country. The simple and obvious reason is that no Israeli writer can ever know, in all their nuanced variety, the foreign milieus he chooses to evoke. French people in Hebrew novels show a propensity to eat nothing but pâté de fois gras; Englishmen repeatedly consume tea and scones; and so forth. This effect of straining after a European horizon is transparently illustrated by Rachel Eytan's recent book, *The Pleasures of Man* (1974). In its first half this is a competent, more or less feminist novel of conjugal distress and social satire, focused on what passes for the glittering circles of Tel Aviv society, but it noticeably loses credibility at precisely the point where the heroine runs off to the south of France with a French lover. The general rule of thumb seems to be that when a Hebrew novelist moves dialectically in his work between fictions of Israeli origins and fictions of foreign horizons, the realm of origins is the one that is most consistently handled with authority and conviction.

Amos Oz, whose first novel gave us our point of departure for defining this whole problem, provides an instructive instance of how a gifted writer can variously work with the geocultural tensions we have been observing. All his early fiction—the volume of stories *Jackal Country* (1965) as well as *Somewhere Else*—is obsessed with a claustrophobic sense of constriction. The penned-in kibbutz, its recurrent symbol, is in turn converted into an image of the human condition, hedged in and menaced (as Oz conceives it to be) by vast and inimical forces that man, through his self-deceiving schemes of rational order, vainly hopes to subdue. This essentially symbolic conflict in the early fiction forms the base for Oz's more probing psychological portraits, beginning in the later sixties, of deeply troubled protagonists whose mental disturbances mirror certain distinctive focuses of neurosis in Israeli life. After one remarkable novel in this manner, *My Michael* (1968), and a striking novella, *Late Love*

(1970), Oz was for once seduced by the beckoning expanses of "somewhere else." In *Touch the Water, Touch the Wind* (1973), he tried to put together a novel that would embrace past and present, Poland, Russia, Israel, the Western world at large, even time and infinity. The result is unpersuasive, especially when compared with the genuinely hallucinated intensity of his best writing. Finally, in his most recent collection of novellas, *The Hill of Evil Counsel* (1976), Oz has gone back, in his brooding fashion, to his Jerusalem boyhood, just as Bartov, Gouri, Kaniuk, and others have turned to the Mandatory Palestine of their formative years. In these three utterly compelling stories, set in the last years before the establishment of the Jewish state, Oz manages to enjoy the imaginative benefits of Zionist messianism without having actually to believe in it himself. In each novella, there is at least one central character obsessed with the apocalyptic vision of a "Judea reborn in blood and fire." These prophetic delusions of the extreme Zionist Right have a profound subterranean appeal for Oz, an antimilitant man of the Zionist Left. By re-creating such messianism in his characters, the writer partly suspends disbelief and momentarily transforms a minutely particularized Jerusalem setting into a landscape of ultimate significance—just as U. Z. Greenberg, with no such ventriloquistic obliquity, does in his poetry. In these fictions, then, set on the threshold of Jewish statehood, there are no inviting horizons to distract attention from the portentous fullness of this time and place.

The nervous shuttling between home and horizon in Israeli writing is also perceptible in the new prominence it has given to the role of the expatriate. Again, in order to keep biographical and literary facts properly sorted, we should remember that scarcely a single Israeli writer of any consequence has actually emigrated, although most of the writers find repeated occasions to spend a year or more in England, on the Continent, or, most frequently, in America. Expatriation, in fact, never seems to solve anything for the spiritually displaced personae that populate this literature. Nevertheless, the expatriate is now a figure who has to be contended with, empathically explored, because he tries to follow to the end a personal way out of Israel's landlocked location in history. Hebrew, one should note, has no comfortable neutral way of saying "expatriate." The usual term for an emigrant from Israel is *yored*, which literally means "one who goes down," and which has at least some of the pejorative force (depending on who is using the word) of "turncoat" or "renegade" in English. In recent years, writers have tried to see what light this conventionally deplored figure could throw on the perplexities of the Israeli condition in the second generation of national independence.

The earliest Hebrew novel I can recall that focuses on an expatriate is Yoram Kaniuk's *The Acrophile* (1961), which in Hebrew is called, much more pointedly, *Ha-Yored L'Ma'alah*—"the upward yored," or "he who goes down upward." Kaniuk himself had been living in New York for some time when he wrote this first novel, which deals with the marital and spiritual confusions of an ex-Israeli

teaching at a university in New York. Kaniuk's subsequent novels, like their author, have returned to the Israeli scene. The terrific tension between home and abroad then became the explicit subject of *Rockinghorse* (1973), a wildly uneven novel about an expatriate who, out of a sense of radical disorientation, returns from New York to Tel Aviv to try to make contact with his earliest origins. Kaniuk's latest book, and in many ways his most appealing, is *The Story of Big Aunt Shlomtziyon* (1976). Like the novels we noted by Bartov and Gouri, this is an affectionate, imaginative engagement in personal history—working back anecdotally, through the outrageously domineering figure of Aunt Shlomtziyon, to family beginnings in the pre-Mandatory period. Finally, Kaniuk's story "They've Moved the House," included in this volume, swings once more to the other pole of the dialectic, following the farcical and pathetic odyssey of two expatriate Israelis through California and Central America in search of a kind of El Dorado—deeply uneasy in a world where houses roll along on trailer frames instead of sitting on permanent foundations. (A story by Amalia Kahana-Karmon, "To Build a House in the Land of Shinar," provides a neatly complementary opposite to Kaniuk's fable of the moving house. Her model Israeli household in a new town, visited by a foreign home economist, is a quietly claustrophobic setting of stale domesticity. The ironic epic overtones of the title—no national symbolism is intended—alluding to the builders of the tower of Babel in Genesis, imply that this is not a house which will stand.)

Elsewhere, the *yored* stands at the center of Yehuda Amichai's farcical extravaganza, *Hotel in the Wilderness* (1971), a novel about an Israeli residing permanently in New York. He works for a Zionist agency propagandizing Israelis in America to return to Israel (!), and eventually finds an outlet for his dormant powers as a long-silent poet in writing advertising copy for ladies' underpants. Bartov's *The Dissembler*, of course, takes as its subject the intriguing impossibility of a man who is simultaneously an *oleh* (immigrant to Israel, "one who goes up") and a *yored*, at once a rooted Israeli and a rootless cosmopolitan. Still more recently, in a collection of poems which the quarterly *Siman-Kriyah* began publishing in installments with its Spring 1976 issue, a gifted new poet (in fact an important figure in literary-academic circles in Israel) adopts the persona of "Gabi Daniel"—a Russian-born Israeli living in Amsterdam. In experimental Hebrew verse of Mandelstamian formal intricacy, he ponders the role of his peculiar language and culture in the vast arena of human languages and cultural perspectives. In the dramatic setting of these poems, as in much contemporary Hebrew fiction, the figure of the expatriate is used to test some of the fundamental assumptions of the Israeli national enterprise.

Finally, the value-challenging idea of the *yored* is given an ultimate turn of the screw in a chapter of a novel-in-progress by A. B. Yehoshua, published in this volume. Here the expatriate Israeli, having returned to his homeland chiefly to look after a legacy, finds himself caught in the deadly meshes of the October 1973 war. Seeking,

like a number of his fictional counterparts, a way out, he finds it paradoxically through a way in: disguising himself as an ultra-orthodox Jew, he slips away from the Sinai front to one of the old quarters of Jerusalem; there, in the beard, sidelocks, and black kaftan of a pre-modern, pre-Zionist Jew, he is for the moment exempt from duty, exempt from history.

In Hebrew poetry contemporaneous with the New Wave in fiction, the problem of horizons is not usually so transparently evident—except where, as in the case of "Gabi Daniel," there is an elaborated dramatic or narrative context for the poems. The simple reason is that a lyric poem is not under the same obligation as a novel to articulate an imagined geography or a set of characters moving within or against cultural limits. Nevertheless, I would argue that the oscillations we have been observing in Israeli fiction are present in a good deal of recent Israeli poetry—sometimes on the level of explicit theme, sometimes in the formal shaping of the poem's world.

The situation in Israeli poetry today stands in marked contrast to that of the Israeli novel. Although there has been abundant and at times highly interesting activity among younger poets, no new creative figure has emerged to rival in stature the leading poets who achieved prominence after 1948, like Yehuda Amichai, Natan Zach, Amir Gilboa, and, just a few years later, Dan Pagis. Given this circumstance, shifts in the literary fashionability of the various established poets become revealing.

The poet par excellence of the so-called Palmach Generation (the war generation of 1948) was Haim Gouri. Although he is still very much alive and still writing, his plain-spoken style, his frequent focus on group experience, his nostalgic impulse, and his pervasive Israeli-ness now seem out of date, and his poetry attracts little attention in serious literary circles. Yehuda Amichai, in my view the finest poet of this generation, combines a colloquial sense of place with rich imagery, inventive allusiveness, and an easy movement between disparate cultural worlds. He has managed to remain a perennial favorite, even though at various moments his preeminence has been partly eclipsed by the very different modernist idioms of Natan Zach and Amir Gilboa. In the last few years, some younger literary intellectuals seem to have fixed particularly on the poetry of Dan Pagis, and Pagis' popularity, though well deserved on the genuine merits of the poems, is instructive. This is a poetry that visibly, in terms of its optic perspectives, shrinks the Israeli landscape to one dot out of many on an imagined global scene. Local allusions are relatively rare, and the language is for the most part meticulously clinical, manifestly a distancing medium. Beginning with his 1970 volume, *Transformation*, Pagis has frequently favored science-fiction situations (using verse for many of the same ends that Italo Calvino has used prose) in which terrestrial space and time are seen at an enormous telescopic remove—either from the other end of evolution, long after a global holocaust, or from the observation post of a spaceship or alien planet. This peculiar distanced

mode is an authentic development within Pagis' poetry. It clearly gives him a means of confronting historical horror with artistic restraint and intellectual lucidity (he himself was a concentration camp prisoner as a child, and demons of disaster haunt his work); but I suspect that the gift of globality which the poetry offers is at least one important reason for the attraction it now holds for Israeli readers.

At the other end of Pagis' high-powered telescope, and on the opposite side of this geocultural dialectic, one discovers a poet like Dahlia Ravikovitch, whose imagination has virtually a fixed focus on a palpable Israeli geography that repeatedly becomes a screen for the projection of her personal anguish. A sense of entrapment and a dream of escape are recurrent presences in Ravikovitch's poetry, and although hers is a very private claustal distress, she manages to give it a local place and habitation in her encircled native land. One of her best known poems, "The Blue West," is in fact an archetypal expression of the problem of horizons that figures so importantly in the Israeli literary imagination. The poem begins (I shall quote from Chana Bloch's fine translation) with an image of ruins which is a distinctive piece of local landscape: "If there was just a road there / the ruins of workshops / one fallen minaret / and some carcasses of machines, / why couldn't I / come to the heart of the field?" But there is an opaque impenetrability at the heart of the field, at the heart of the native landscape, so that the attempt to penetrate it only reinforces the poet's sense of desperate entrapment. She then turns, at the Mediterranean shore, to a "blue west" which is not real like the landscape around her, but a visionary gleam that can only be imagined on another temporal plane, at the end of days. First, she conjures up a kind of surrealistic extension of Israel's actual beleaguered situation, a desolate coast with unvisited harbors: "If only we could reach / all the cities beyond the sea— / And here is another sorrow: a seashore where there are no ships." Then, in the two concluding stanzas of the poem, she shifts into prophetic style, mingling the grandeur of biblical eschatology with the naive fantasy of a fairy tale:

On one of the days to come
the eye of the sea will darken
with the multitude of ships.
In that hour all the mass of the earth
will be spread as a cloth.

And a sun will shine for us blue as the sea,
a sun will shine for us warm as an eye,
will wait until we climb up
as it heads for the blue west.

It would be simplistic, I think, to draw direct political inferences from this underlying tension between homeland and horizon in Israeli literature. What the tension reflects most profoundly is the key psychological paradox of an imaginative literature that feels itself to be a full participant in modern culture at large, and yet is boxed into a tiny corner of geography, linguistically limited to at most a scant two million readers. In this regard, contemporary Hebrew literature provides a vivid if extreme

paradigm for the difficult fate of all small cultures in an age of vast linguistic-cultural blocs and of global communications. In order to define the outlines of the paradigm, I have been stressing points of resemblance in distinctly different novelists and poets, although the points of divergence among them are at least as prominent, and in any case writers may do remarkably different things with the same set of oppositions. Most Israeli writers, it seems to me, tend to cluster at the end of the spectrum we have been concentrating on, where the imaginative confrontation of here and elsewhere is felt as a continual distress of creative consciousness. To avoid any misleading schematism, however, I would like to offer one final example from the other end of the spectrum—the poetry of Yehuda Amichai.

For Amichai, the West has not been a blue vision calling to him from beyond the shore, but a variegated, concretely perceived intellectual and emotional legacy. His German childhood reverberates through his poetry. Rilke and Auden are as natural sources for his poetic idiom as are Israeli speech and the Bible; and the various American and European scenes he has passed through as an adult are evoked with little sense that they present a challenging or alluring alternative to the Israeli setting in which he has taken root. Indeed, some of Amichai's finest poems over the past ten years, beginning with the remarkable cycle, "Jerusalem 1967," have been imaginative realizations of distinctive Israeli cityscapes and landscapes, where topography, architecture, cultural history, politics, and the record of age-old vision are so extraordinarily interfused.

Amichai is surely as aware as any other Israeli writer of the pull of the great world and of the exiguous dimensions of his national sphere (as his novel, *Hotel in the Wilderness*, makes clear). Yet the peculiar acerbic, playful, and at times visionary intimacy with the local scene which he has cultivated in his poems tends to keep the problem of horizons outside them. It may be that the messianic perspective, which makes one little state an everywhere, still remains, despite the prosaic logic of intellectual history, more available to Hebrew writers than I have allowed. In Amos Oz, we observed a ventriloquistic messianism which might reflect the writer's half-willingness to believe, or rather to surrender to, a fiery doctrine of national redemption that he would reject on the grounds of sane political principle. In Amichai, one sees instead a wryly nostalgic messianism that reflects an affectionate, self-ironic longing for the flashes of transcendental vision that in the past so repeatedly illuminated the Jerusalem landscape in which he lives. The nostalgia does not dissolve into sentimentality because his attraction to Jerusalem as the seedbed of prophecy is always articulated through an unblinking perception of the terrestrial Jerusalem—in all its hodgepodge of noise, stench, dirt, color, and piquant incongruity, and always rendered through the flaunted inventiveness of an imagery that constantly yokes feelings and spiritual entities with the most earthy of mechanical accouterments of the workaday world. These characteristics can be observed in