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Abstracts

God and the Nation after the Yom Kippur War: *Giluy Eliyahu* by S. Yizhar

Yael Dekel

As is evident by its title, which draws from the Jewish post-biblical tradition of the Revelation of Elijah, Yizhar's novel *Giluy Eliyahu* (1999) presents numerous divine revelations. In this article Dekel argues that throughout his novel, Yizhar re-establishes the theological in order to deal with the trauma of the Yom Kippur War and to enable the nation to move towards the future as a unified whole. This theological revelation is the starting point for reconstructing an analogy between the theological and the political, as famously argued by Carl Schmitt. After examining political theology as present in the novel, this article demonstrates how the analogy of theology and politics is carried out in the novel on the grounds of mythology, in the sense demonstrated by Roland Barthes in his essay *Myth Today*.

Zionism, Religiosity and Irony in S. Yizhar's Literary Representation of Reality

Amit Assis

The desire to represent the Land of Israel is the literary equivalent of the Zionist political desire. This article combines two themes surrounding the acceptance of S. Yizhar's work: his being the first significant Sabra author of prose and his unique poetics of representing reality. A close reading of *Stories of the Plain* (1964) uncovers a quasi-religious poetics of facing that-which-cannot-be-represented; striving for representation while being aware of its impossibility. This poetics is explained as a solution to a challenge posed by the realization of Zionism. The realization of Zionism, both politically and literarily, makes the Zionist desire redundant. Yizhar's work is positioned at the point where Jewish life in Palestine becomes an accessible object for literature rather than an aspiration. His poetics keeps the desire alive by making the signified infinite, like god, thereby turning literature into a ritual of worshipping the absent signified. Yizhar's religious poetics are shown in two phases: a tragic-pathetic attitude - a serious heroic quest for reality as signified, and an ironic-comic one. The tragic attitude is literature's suicide as it annihilates the distance between the signifier and the signified. This suicide is prevented when an ironic distance is opened between the two, a distance that prevents the religious attitude from being fetishistic idolatry.

Mother of Soldiers in Israeli Literature: David Grossman's *To the End of the Land*

Dana Olmert

This article addresses the national-political functions of mainstream Hebrew literature and focuses on one question: What are soldiers' mothers in the canonical literature "allowed" to think, feel and do, and what is considered transgressive in this regard? The article examines changes in the presence of soldiers' mothers in Israeli public life, starting from the First Lebanon War. At the center of the discussion is Grossman's novel *To the End of the Land* (2008). Olmert argues that the book posits "the flight from bad tidings" as a maternal strategy, but simultaneously as the author's psycho-poetic strategy, too. The analogy between the act of flight and the act of writing, which Grossman advances in his epilogue, along with the granting of 'his' parental role to a female protagonist, bear cultural and gendered significances which this article seeks to illuminate.

"Listen, the Path Has Sounds": An Alternative Space for Alternative Ethics in *To the End of the Land* by David Grossman

Mei-Tal Nadler

The article suggest a new reading of David Grossman's novel, *To the End of the Land* (2008), which focuses on a soldier's mother who decides "to be the first notification-refusenik," abandons her home and sets off on a hike throughout Israel. Drawing on Michel de Certeau's spatial theory and gender theories of the ethics of care, the article argues that Grossman adopts a female-mother's position as a moral civic strategy, allowing him to subvert the construction of the Israeli space as a heroic national space and imbue it with a semiotic "mother-tongue" based on sensations, care and intimacy. Grossman, who is associated with voices of peace and protest such as the Four Mothers movement, the Coalition of Women for Peace and Machsom Watch, that called for a new civil discourse by consciously using the discourse of motherhood, outlines a trajectory for an alternative civil discourse for a different kind of nation-building: he weaves together maternal language and maternal thinking about the Israeli space and reconstructs it as a space of ethics, non-violence and peace.

Bab el Shams: "It Is Impossible to Write a Novel"

Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan

Bab el Shams is a performative novel, which gives the reader an experience of suffering that is analogous, to some extent, to that of its characters. This essay discusses a response combining a nightmarish experience with the incapacity to let go. It traces this experience back to several characteristics of Khoury's novel: its meta-fictional and citational nature; the ambivalent relations between the narrator and his comatose narratee; the tension between coherence and fragmentation, the latter both challenging a hegemonic narrative and giving rise to a plurality of stories that often contradict each other and underscore the inaccessibility of truth; the blurring of the boundaries between reality and fairy-tale or hallucination; and last but not least, the horror of the represented events and the feelings of guilt they provoke in the implied Israeli reader. The essay ends by comparing the complex effect of *Bab el Shams* to the Western literary tradition where the challenge to narrative is both threatening and liberating, such as in the works of Beckett and Genet.

Writing Modernity from the East: Secularism, Tradition and Modernism in the Works of Yitzhaq Shami

Keren Dotan

This essay aims to challenge the way Hebrew literary criticism reads Shami's works and its dichotomous conception of modernism and Mizrahiness. Through a close reading of the stories "The Barren Wife," "Ransom," "Flight," "Hamamah: A Tale of the Arabian Desert," "Father and Daughters" and "The Vengeance of the Fathers," this essay seeks to trace the ways in which Shami challenges the progressive time frame that underlies the European-Mizrahi opposition as well as Zionist perceptions of secularism and tradition.

Source and Translation in the Shadow of Conflict: The Hebrew Translations of Emil Habiby's *The Pessoptimist* and *Ekhtayyeh*

Huda Abu Much

This article deals with Emil Habiby's *The Pessoptimist* (1974/1984) and *Ekhtayyeh* (1985/1988), while focusing on source writing and translation. Habiby's writing exposes his developing inclination of writing with the intention of being

translated into Hebrew, which began following the translation of *The Pessoptimist* into Hebrew. This article describes a process whereby the writer adopts the translator's political vision, as illustrated in the writing of *Ekhtayyeh*, which unlike *The Pessoptimist* was written as a hybrid text that assumed the presence of both Arab and Jewish readers. Habiby's writing process was influenced by Shammass' translation project. In his translation of *The Pessoptimist* Shammass had utilized strategies for making Habiby's works more acceptable to the Hebrew culture, while softening their Arabness so as to serve his political vision of "a state of all its citizens." At the same time, this article points out acts of resistance within the translation. Indeed, Shammass' cooperation with the hegemonic discourse can be read as a camouflage intended to soften other translation acts that undermine the principles of this discourse, to redesign it in a way that would include the Arab citizens of the state and make the repressed narrative present at the very heart of the ruling culture.

Babylonia: Fantasy, Complex and Reality: On Eli Amir's *Farewell, Baghdad*

Itamar Drori

This article offers a new reading of the novel *Farewell, Baghdad* (*Mafriah Ha-Yonim*, 1992) by Eli Amir. This reading undermines the perception of the novel as a political pro-Zionist one. Through tracing the language of the characters in the novel as well as the symbolism and imagery, another layer emerges alongside the necessity to leave the Diaspora and immigrate to Israel. In this sphere, the Jews of Baghdad (Babylonia) perceive their homeland as a primal mythical space, and leaving that space is tantamount to disaster. This attitude is for the most part, subconscious, and parallels Freud's primal fantasy (Urphantasie). The second part of the article demonstrates that this fantasy is accompanied by a Freudian complex known as the Madonna-whore complex toward the Babylonian homeland, a complex central to the desertion of the homeland. This complex is the reason the desertion is incomplete and riddled with hesitation, reservations, and regret.

Between This Place and Other Places: The Ethical Turn in New Israeli Films

Nurith Gertz

Using recent research on ethics and human right (among others, works by Alain Badiu, Simon Critchley, Agamben, Elsasear and new interpretations of Levinas'

philosophy) Gertz explores several recently made Israel films (including *Jellyfish*, *Year Zero*, and *Nuzhat al-Fuad*) which reflect a search for alternative history by linking up to different cinematic aesthetics: that of contemporary American films and that of European art cinema rooted in the great works of the mid-twentieth century (e.g. the films of Fellini, Antonioni, Wenders, Godard, Bergman and so on). Gertz focuses on how those films - though their point of origin is the unending strife between races, genders, nationalities, and ethnicities lacking a common base for dialogue - use mid-twentieth century European cinematic language in order to create an ethical time that leads from the narrow time of the individual towards a broader, transcendental, universal time, or as Levinas put it - the time of the Other.

Confessions of IDF Soldiers in Autobiographical Documentaries from Israel

Ilana Szobel and Shirly Bahar

Visual culture that depicts war and occupation is familiar in the Israeli cultural lexicon. Nevertheless, in the last decade, a significant aspect has been added to it, as we have been exposed to various works of video art and documentary films presenting confessions of soldiers, both men and women, about their experiences in combat army service in the Occupied Territories and in wars. This article explores the cultural and ethical implications of this central cinematic phenomenon. Focusing on shame, blame, narration and subjectivization, the article looks at the juxtaposition of gender, complicity, and national identity in its cinematic representation. Examining the aesthetics and ideologies of these films, it unearths the attitudes towards Israeli acts and decisions that the cinematic medium depicts and the main ethical issues that it raises. Szobel and Bahar argue that the films harness a national perspective of what is called "an internal investigative committee," where the gatekeepers of Zionism and Israel aspire to investigate themselves and the militarist nationalist system that they endorse and maintain. Thus, the article explores questions such as to what extent do these documentaries challenge Israeli nationalism? How does gender play out within these cinematic forms of confession? And in what way are the continuous reproductions and reinterpretations of myth and traumatic memories incorporated into the establishment of Israeli culture?

Her Body Remembers: Jerusalem, Memory and Forgetfulness in Contemporary Israeli Cinema

Anat Zanger

In this article Zanger seeks to trace Jerusalem cinematic space as a dialectic existing between memory, obliviousness and corporality. She contends that recent films, produced during and after the Second Intifada and situated in the city, juxtapose the traditional imagery of the city with its bleak daily life. Drawing spaces and routes through their body they suggest fragmented narratives, between the personal and the collective memory of the city, as an alternative to the hegemonic narrative and time linearity. Zanger analyzes three films, each in its own way tracing the relationship between city-memory and subject: *The Cemetery Club* (Dir. Tali Shemesh, 2006); *Jerusalem's Cuts* (Dir. Liran Atzmor, 2008); and *Seven Minutes in Heaven* (Dir. Omri Givon, 2008). In all of them, the past slips through the corporality of the present while practices of walking, strolling and forbidden driving allude to competing narratives of the past. Older women who survived the Holocaust, a young woman who survived a terror attack, as well as Jewish and Palestinian residents of Jerusalem and veterans of the 1948 War - through their "speech-acts" all point to Jerusalem as a place that has lost the keys to its memory.

Conditions of Visibility: Contemporary Israeli Women's Cinema and Trauma in Michal Aviad's *Invisible*

Raz Yosef

The past decade has seen a renaissance of women's cinema in Israel. Through their films, a new generation of female filmmakers seek to redefine the conditions of representability of women in Israeli society and cinema. They shift the traditional place of the gaze and directly address the film spectator as a woman. Most of the current women's films deal with female trauma, which in itself is embedded in matters of visibility. Focusing mainly on Michal Aviad's 2011 film, *Invisible*, the article argues that the film seeks to question the position from which we view women's traumas. The film does not attempt to depict female suffering realistically, but rather to change the conditions of visibility of women's injury. It reflexively uses both documentary and fictional forms of representation, disrupting the coherent cinematic space and time and repositioning and restaging the gaze and the act of looking. Through this unique aesthetic, the film creates a critical distance for the

viewer that enables a feminist political perspective, which may lead to a social change in representing the ongoing, insidious violent and oppressive reality that women experience in patriarchal society.

Mistakes in the Sun: Reading the Television Drama *Indian in the Sun*

Itay Harlap

In 1981, Israeli television aired *Indian in the Sun* (*Indiani BaShemesh*), a television drama directed by Ram Loevy, one of its most prominent directors. Unlike Loevy's *Khirbet Hiza'a*, which had aired three years earlier and *Lehem* (*Bread*), which would air five years later, both of which would later become Loevy's most well-known dramas and enter the canon of Israeli culture, *Indian in the Sun* was largely forgotten and ignored. However, as this essay illustrates, not only is *Indian in the Sun* situated chronologically between *Khirbet Hiza'a* and *Lehem*, it also shares a thematic focus with both of these important works - the national conflict (*Khirbet Hiza'a*) and the class and ethnic conflict (*Lehem*) in particular, and offers a deconstruction and reconstruction of these themes. Thus this essay aims to return to *Indian in the Sun* and recognize it not only as a rich and complex text, which demands in-depth consideration (and perhaps thereby belatedly grant it canonical status), but also as a groundbreaking work that offers a complex discourse on ethnic, national and gender identities in Israeli society.

"The Parable and Its Lesson" by S.Y. Agnon and the Thinking of Historical Alternativeness

Roman Katsman

The article observes the elements of alternative history in Agnon's *Ir U'Mloa*, focusing on the story "The Parable and Its Lesson" as a case study. Alternative history is considered here not in the narrow sense as a popular genre that is embedded, as most of the critics mistakenly suggest, in the postmodern situation, but rather as a method of thinking about history and its causality in terms of multiple possibilities, oscillation between them and choice. Agnon's writing applies this method on the levels of characters, plots, imagery and ideas. Its analysis, as demonstrated in the article, reveals the unfolding of the writer's possibilistic philosophy of history, and particularly of the history of the demolished Jewish community in Europe, as presented in his post-Holocaust stories of *Ir u-mloa*.

The Canonization and Censorship of the Modern Jewish Joke in Alter Druyanow's *Book of Jokes and Witticisms*

Tsafi Sebba-Elran

The article discusses Alter Druyanow's popular work, *The Book of Jokes and Witticisms* (*Sefer Habediha Vehahiddud*, 1922) as a turning point in the development of modern Jewish humor. The acceptance of the book is ascribed mainly to its Zionist agenda, expressed not only in the formation of its repertoire but also in the censorship of a large collection of sexual jokes. Following a discussion of Druyanow's main motives and anthologizing principals, the article presents these jokes for the first time, with the aim of analyzing their social roles. The comparative reading of the jokes in their historical and cultural contexts points to what the Jewish society of that time considered its "other," from competing religious groups to other threatening reference groups within this society, such as women and assimilated Jews. In this way, the censored jokes shed light not only on the marginality of the Eastern European Jews and their feelings of inferiority, but also on their creative response to them, and their ideological horizons.

The Demonic Musician in Nathan Alterman's *Stars Outside*, Why Did the Wayfarer Make a Futile Attempt to Abandon the Tune? A Re-Examination

Re'uven Shoham

Since the publication of *Stars Outside* (*Kohavim Bahuts*, 1938), people have asked: Why did Alterman's wayfarer attempt to abandon the tune? The prevailing responses declared that this wayfarer was experiencing an inner confrontation between his commitment to the tune and his commitment to the physical world and the fragile history of his time and place. This confrontation, scholars claim, ultimately leads to a decision: the wayfarer accepts his problematic goal of becoming a "roving" poet, as reflected in poems such as "The Strange Poem" (Ha'shir Hazar), "A Letter" (Igeret) and "Themselves Alone" (Hem Levadam). In this article Shoham seeks to claim, contrary to prevailing opinion, that there is an irreconcilable conflict between these objectives that persisted throughout Alterman's creative life, as depicted in *Inn of the Spirits* (*Pundak Haruhot*), *Dove City* (*Ir Hayona*) and *Summer Revelry* (*Hagigat Kayits*). In *Stars Outside*, this struggle is the eternal conflict in which the speaker, *Homo Poeticus*, repeatedly sacrifices his doppelgänger, *Homo Naturalis*.

Opposing Identity Politics and Venturing Beyond It: Following Carol Jacobs on *The Piano*

Hannan Hever

The dangers of identity politics are currently a burning theoretical and political issue in Israel because of its role in justifying racism and fascism. This article looks at this with reference to Carol Jacobs' exemplary discussion of Jane Campion's film, *The Piano* (1993). In her article Jacobs, refusing to subjugate the interpretive act to a structuralist binary of identities, and hence of meanings, proposes a reading of the political and moral dialectics of identity politics. Beyond Paul de Man's resistance to mimetic interpretation that focuses on effects, Jacobs employs a method that allows for a moral stance by distorting and suspending the interpretation of the text's array of signifiers. Identity politics is not the final word in addressing oppression and disaster. Jacobs' interpretation of the film points to a tenet reached through a state of emergency in which viewers are pulled out of what she refers to as "blind analphabetism"; it is a reading that bypasses the problematic nature of a rhetoric of political struggle based on solid identities. Jacobs' reading does not hide behind a political world of organized and institutionalized identities, but deals with the rhetoric of political struggle. By distancing oneself from the text its figurativeness stands out, allowing one to hear its otherness. Jacobs' feminism goes beyond the demand for women's liberation and avoids reproducing oppressive male authority by means of a slow reading that distorts the rhetoric of oppression. She suggests turning what is disturbing, unpredictable and strange into the focus of the interpretive process, thus enabling an impulse toward political action based on the film's performance. There is no question that Jacobs' critique on the lack of flexibility of the identity politics is crucial. But there are many cases when an immediate response towards an eruption of violence could be too prolonged. Publication of such an important article in the current State of Israel where the hopeless is exposed frequently to an immediate cruel violence can actually teach us how dangerous can be any postponement in its recommendation of a moral judgment.

"When Have You Ever Grasped Light?" The Novelist Sami Berdugo Baptizes the Reader in Black Ink

Yoni Livneh

Critics tend to describe Sami Berdugo as a novelist who is supposedly immune to external influences. Early critics have evaluated his work based on his ability to

express an autonomous artistic voice, disconnected from his biographical background. An analysis of his debut short story "Shouk" demonstrates the ambiguous and ironic way in which Berdugo depicts a mother-son relationship as a conflict between an artist and a character of his own creation. Seemingly, the protagonist narrator uses the narrative medium inadvertently, as if he were an unaware raconteur. "Shouk" obliges its reader to discard this path of interpretation based on the narrator's ethnic labelling; to doubt the way he defines his life alongside his mother as an exemplary aesthetical failure. A second reading of the story extracts a new narrative paradigm: an *ars poetica* on the young Mizrahi artist. The narrator is characterized as his mother's artistic master who breathes life into her character. A further reading of the story and its auto reference narrative provides new meaning to the text's imagery. Sowing threads, the deceased mother's shroud, an appendix bound to his mother – all later understood as the umbilical cord that allegorizes the artist struggle to detach himself from his own biography and wipe off the formal signs of identity forced upon him as his mother's son.

Grace and Irony: A Note on Sami Berdugo's Voice

Ariel Hirschfeld

This essay deals with two main modes in Berdugo's prose – the ironic gaze and the voice of grace and compassion. An analysis of two early short stories by Berdugo shows the immanent connection between these modes and the role of two kinds of symbiosis that create them: the symbiotic relationship between a child and his mother in "Shouk" creates the voice of compassion, and the profound relationship between a boy and his ailing and dying father in "Flard" are the origin for the sharp and complex ironic mode in Berdugo's writing.

List of Contributors

Dr. Huda Abu Much is a postdoctoral fellow at Freie Universität Berlin and teaches at Beit Berl College and in the Department of Literature, Language and the Arts at the Open University. Her PhD dissertation, written in the Department of Hebrew Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, deals with the Hebrew translation of three of Emile Habibi's works: *The Secret Life of Saeed the Pessoptimist* (1974, translated in 1984); *Ekhtayyeh* (1985, translated in 1988); and *Saraya, the Ogre's Daughter* (1991, translated in 1993).

Dr. Amit Assis is a scholar of Hebrew literature and Jewish cultures. He earned his PhD from the Interdisciplinary Program for Hermeneutics and Cultural Studies at Bar-Ilan University and spent two years as a Flegg postdoctoral fellow at the Department of Jewish Studies at McGill University, where he continued his research in authorship in Jewish cultures, and specifically in Modern Hebrew literature. The publication of his book, *Facing a Silent Autumn Eve: S. Yizhar and the Birth of the Sabra from the Spirit of Literature*, is forthcoming at the Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism.

Dr. Shirly Bahar is the Director of Public Programs at the American Jewish Historical Society and the founder of the 1st Mizrahi Film Series at NYU (2014). She is currently working on a book based on her dissertation, *Reliving Pain, Living On: Performance, Affect and the Body in Palestinian and Mizrahi Documentary Cinema 2002-2012*, which was written at NYU. Her article, *Restrictions Apply: Agency, Affect and Reenactment in Einat Amir's Performance and Video Installation 'Our Best Intentions'* was published in *Third Text* (August 2015). Shirly's article *Coming Out as a Queen: Queer Studies, Jewish Identity, and the Book of Esther* was published in the *Studies in Gender and Sexuality Journal* (September 2012).

Mr. Sami Berdugo is an Israeli writer and editor. He was born in 1970 in Mazkeret Batya, studied at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and currently lives in Tel Aviv. He edited five novels and authored the books *Black Girl* (1999), *And Say to the Wind* (2002), *That Is to Say* (2010), *The Last Child of the Century* (2011) and *An Ongoing Tale on Land* (2014). He has received several major literary awards for his literary work, including the Yaakov Shabtai Prize (2002), the Bernstein Prize (2003), the Prime Minister's Prize (2006), the Neuman Prize (2007) and the Kugel Prize (2016).

Dr. Yael Dekel received her PhD from NYU in 2014 and is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies at Northwestern University. She wrote her dissertation on *The Poetics of Silence and the Making of the National Subject in S. Yizhar's War Fiction*. She is interested in Hebrew literature and specifically in its role in the relationship between discourse, social norms, power dynamics, ideology and the state. Her current research deals with the history, theory and ideology of Canaanite fiction. She is an editor and a translator. Her literary reviews and essays have appeared in a number of publications. Since 2012 she has been working as an editor and translator at Ra'av, an independent publishing house.

Dr. Keren Dotan wrote her dissertation in the Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at NYU. Her dissertation discusses the writings of Sephardi/Mizrahi writers in Eretz Yisrael/Palestine at the end of the Ottoman rule and the beginning of the British Mandate, including: Yehuda Burla, Yitzhaq Shami, Shoshana Shababo, David Avisar, Rabbi Saliman Mani, Rabbi Dr. Ariel Bension and Avraham Cohen-Mizrahi. *The Beauty of the Defeated*, a collection of essays on Yehoshua Kenaz which she edited together with Chen Strass, was published in 2016 by Am Oved and Heksherim Institute at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

Dr. Itamar Drori is a lecturer at the Department of Literature of the Jewish People at Bar-Ilan University. He is a member of the editorial board of the Encyclopedia of the Jewish Story and a member of the Da'at Hamakom Center for the Study of Cultures of Place in the Modern Jewish World (of the I-Core). Dr. Drori explores Modern Hebrew prose and the story of the Jews in Iraq and in the Islamic countries in the nineteenth century. His book *Yemenite Redemption and New Hebraism* was published by Bar Ilan University in 2014. His book *Hazaz: Portrait of a Storyteller* is to be published by the Ben Gurion Heritage Institute at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

Prof. Nurith Gertz is a professor emerita of Hebrew literature and film at the Open University of Israel and a full professor at the Department of Culture Creation and Production at Sapir Academic College. She has served as head of the cinema studies program at the Department of Film and Television at Tel Aviv University and headed the Department of Culture Creation and Production at Sapir Academic College. She won the Brenner Prize for Literature in 2009 for her book *Unrepentant*, which was also nominated for the Sapir Prize for Literature. Among her recent

books are *Captive of a Dream: National Myths in Israeli Culture* (Valentine Mitchell, 2000); *Holocaust Survivors, Aliens and Others in Israeli Cinema* (Am Oved, 2004, in Hebrew); *Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma and Memory*, with George Khleifi (Edinburgh University Press & Indiana University Press, 2008); and *An Ocean Between Us* (Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, 2016)

Dr. Itay Harlap is a senior lecturer at the school of Audio and Visual Arts, Sapir Academic College, and at the Steve Tisch School of Film and Television, Tel Aviv University. His PhD dissertation deals with questions of trauma in Israeli television drama. Dr. Harlap's publications include *Television After: Contemporary Israeli Drama* (Resling, 2016) and *Television Drama in Israel: Identities in Post-TV Culture* (Bloomsbury, 2017, forthcoming). His papers on Israeli television have been published in various academic journals, among them *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, *Critical Studies in Television*, and *Jewish Film & New Media*. Dr. Harlap is among the founders and organizers of the Fiktzia annual conference on Israeli television studies.

Prof. Hannan Hever is a Jacob and Hilda Blaustein professor of Hebrew language and literature at Yale University. He teaches at Yale in the Comparative Literature Department and is affiliated with the Program of Judaic Studies. He has published extensively on the topic of Modern Hebrew literature and culture and literary and cultural theory from political, post-national and post-colonial perspectives. He has taught at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv University, Northwestern University, Ann Arbor University and Columbia University. Among his books are *Beautiful Motherland of Death: Aesthetics and Politics in U. Z. Greenberg's Poetry* (2004, in Hebrew); *They Shall Dwell at the Haven of the Sea: The Sea in Modern Hebrew Culture* (2007, in Hebrew); *By the Power of God, Political Theology in Modern Hebrew Literature* (2014, in Hebrew); *Nativism, Zionism and Beyond: Three Essays on Nativist Hebrew Poetry* (2008, in Hebrew & 2014); *To Inherit the Land, To Conquer the Space: The Birth of Hebrew Poetry in Eretz Yisrael* (2015, in Hebrew); and *We Are Broken Rhymes: The Politics of Trauma in Israeli Literature* (Magnes Publishing House, 2017).

Prof. Ariel Hirschfeld is a full professor in the Hebrew Literature Department and the Head of the School of Literature in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His research interests are Modern Hebrew poetry, S. Y. Agnon's oeuvre, H. N. Bialik's oeuvre, the concept of place in Hebrew literature and music and poetry. His books include *Voi, Che Sapete: The Dialogue of Love in Mozart's Operas* (1994); *Local Notes (Essays)* (2000); *Toward the Last of the Gods: The Fountains of Rome* (2003); *Notes on*

Epiphany (2006); *The Tuned Harp: The Language of Emotions in Bialik's Poetry* (2011); and *Reading S. Y. Agnon* (2011).

Prof. Carol Jacobs is a Birgit Baldwin Professor of Comparative Literature and a professor of German Literature at Yale. She received her PhD in comparative literature from Johns Hopkins University. She currently teaches literary, philosophical and theoretical texts ranging from the 18th to the 20th centuries. She has written on Lessing, Kleist, Nietzsche, Benjamin, Rilke, Sophocles, Plato and the English Romantics, among others. Her books include *The Dissimulating Harmony* (1978); *Uncontainable Romanticism* (1989); *Telling Time* (1993); *In the Language of Walter Benjamin* (1999); *Skirting the Ethical* (Stanford University Press, 2008); and *Sebald's Vision* (Columbia University Press, 2015). Among other awards, she has been the recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship and the ACLS award, and has been a fellow at the Internationales Kolleg Morphomata, University of Cologne.

Prof. Roman Katsman is a member of the Department of Literature of the Jewish People at Bar-Ilan University. His major research fields include Modern Hebrew literature, theory and poetics and Russian, Jewish and Israeli literature. Among his most recent books are *A Small Prophecy: Sincerity and Rhetoric in Ir U-Mloa by S.Y. Agnon* (2013); *Literature, History, Choice: The Principle of Alternative History in Literature (S. Y. Agnon, The City with All That is Therein)* (2013); and *Nostalgia for a Foreign Land: Studies in Russian-Language Literature in Israel* (2016). His new book, *Laughter in the Heavens: Symbols of Laughter in the Works by S.Y. Agnon* is soon to be published by Magnes Press.

Mr. Yoni Livneh has been a literary critic and journalist at Yedioth Aharonoth since 2007. His Master's degree thesis (the department of literature at Tel Aviv University) deals with the work of Israeli novelist Sami Berdugo.

Ms. Mei-Tal Nadler is a poet and doctoral candidate at the Department of Hebrew Literature at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. She is a young researcher at the Israel Democracy Institute and a member of the Landscapes and Carnes: Nature, the Environment and National Identity in Palestinian and Israeli Literature project at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. Her first poetry book, *Exercises in Electricity* (Yedioth Press) was published in 2014 and won the Teva Prize that year.

Dr. Dana Olmert is a lecturer at the Literature Department at Tel Aviv University. Her first book, *Predicaments of Writing and Loving: The First Hebrew Women Poets*, was awarded the 2009 Bahat Prize by the University of Haifa and was published in 2012. Her second book, forthcoming in 2017, concerns Hebrew literary works written between 1905 and 2010, whose protagonists are mothers of soldiers. Its theoretical perspectives combine psychoanalytical and feminist theories with sociological writings about Israeli militarization and gender-based social roles. The book, entitled *Mothers of Soldiers in Hebrew Literature (Imahot Baolam – Kechoma Amodna: Imahot Le'chayalim Basifrut Ha'ivrit)* aims to illuminate the perceptions of motherhood imprinted in works from different decades, and to critically examine the intimate and national motives that lie behind their characters' behaviors. Olmert's other publications include essays on poetry, mostly by women, and essays on critical writing by women, as well as on the writings of Y. H. Brenner and U. N. Gnessin.

Prof. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan is a professor emerita of English and comparative literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a member of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities. She is the author of *The Concept of Ambiguity – the Example of James; Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics; and A Glance Beyond Doubt: Narration, Representation, Subjectivity*, as well as numerous articles both on literary theory and on specific authors, including James, Faulkner, Nabokov, Brooke-Rose and Morrison. She has also worked in interdisciplinary junctions, such as literature and psychoanalysis, historiography, law and medicine. She is currently working on a collaborative project with Prof. Susan Lanser of Brandeis University, exploring narratives of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from a narratological perspective.

Dr. Tsafi Sebba-Elran is a lecturer in the Department of Hebrew and Comparative Literature at the University of Haifa. Her research interests include the formation of cultural memory in Israel, the contribution of the national anthologies (including the humoristic anthologies) to the construction of a Modern Hebrew canon, and the social as well as epistemological changes those anthologies reflect. She has authored the book *In Search of New Memories: The Aggadic Anthologies and their Role in the Configuration of the Modern Hebrew Canon* (Yad Ben-Zvi Research Institute, 2017).

Prof. Reuven Shoham is a professor emeritus at the Department of Hebrew and Comparative Literature at the University of Haifa and Oranim College. His research focuses on New Hebrew poetry. He has published seven books and dozens of articles and his eighth book has been accepted for publication.

Prof. Ilana Szobel is an associate professor of Modern Hebrew literature at the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies at Brandeis University. She is currently a visiting professor at the Department of Near Eastern Studies and the Berkeley Institute for Jewish Law and Israel Studies at UC Berkeley (2016-2017). Her research interests include Modern Hebrew literature, gender studies, psychoanalysis, sexual violence, Israeli film and disability studies. Her book, *A Poetics of Trauma: The Work of Dahlia Ravikovitch* was published in 2013 by Brandeis University Press, and constitutes the first comprehensive examination of the entire oeuvre of Israel Prize Laureate Dahlia Ravikovitch.

Dr. Raz Yosef is an associate professor and chair of the Cinema Studies B.A. Program at the Steve Tisch School of Film and Television at Tel Aviv University. He is the author of *Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israeli Cinema* (2004); *The Politics of Loss and Trauma in Contemporary Israeli Cinema* (2011); and the co-editor of several anthologies, including *Just Images: Ethics and the Cinematic* (2011); and *Another Sex: Selected Essays in Israeli Queer and LGBT Studies* (2016, in Hebrew). His forthcoming book (with Prof. Nurith Gertz) is *Traces of Things to Come: Trauma and Ethics in Contemporary Israeli Cinema* (in Hebrew).

Prof. Anat Zanger is an associate professor at the Department of Film and Television and chair of the MA Program in Film Studies at Tel Aviv University. Her research subjects include Israeli cinema, mythology and women, history and collective memory, intertextuality, phenomenology, space and landscape. She is author of *Film Remakes as Ritual and Disguises* (Amsterdam University Press, 2006) and *Place, Memory and Myth in Contemporary Israeli Cinema* (Valentine Mitchell, 2012). Her project on Israeli space and cinema has received a grant from the Israeli Science Foundation (2008-2012) as did her more recent project on Jerusalem in Films (2013-2017). She is the co-editor of the book *Just Images: Ethics and the Cinematic* (Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2012).