IYUNIM BITKUMAT ISRAEL

Studies in Zionism, the Yishuv
and the State of Israel

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ABSTRACTS

‘The Moral Failure’ of Hannah Arendt

Shmulik Lederman

Despite the growing prominence of the political philosopher Hannah Arendt in Israeli public and academic discourse, the discussion regarding her thought still suffers surprising distortions and all-too-common mistakes. This is true particularly with regard to her attitude toward Zionism on the one hand; and the meaning she saw in the term ‘the banality of evil’ on the other. In this article I critically examine one important discussion of Arendt’s thought – by the philosopher Elhanan Yakira. As I show, Yakira’s discussion is paradigmatic of the way Arendt’s political and moral thought is often understood in Israel. It expresses the extent to which the political context in which Arendt is usually discussed in Israel leads even professional scholars to miss essential aspects in her thought. The aim of this article is to shed light on these aspects and by that to offer a more nuanced and fair presentation of Hannah Arendt’s moral and political thought regarding nationalism, Zionism, and the Holocaust.

‘Religion’, ‘Secularity’, and ‘Tradition’ in Public Thought in Israel

Hizky Shoham

Studies of identity in Israel habitually divide the Jewish population into three categories: ‘religious’, ‘secular’, and ‘traditionist’. However, some of these studies, most notably the series of the Guttmann reports (the Guttman Institute: 1993, 2000, 2012) reveal inconsistent uses of these three categories among the

interviewees themselves, therefore questioning the explanatory power of these concepts. To map these diverse uses more systematically, the article suggests discerning three levels: practices, beliefs, and group identification. Next, the article analyses intellectual and public interpretations of the Guttmann report, which portrayed a social map of the Israeli Jewish identities. The analysis points at traditionism as the culture of Israeli mainstream, which deals asymmetrically with religion and secularity: whereas the former is perceived as an institutional and communal phenomenon, the latter is perceived as a non-institutional ethical demand that basically lacks institutional organization.

The Prophetic Mode in Natan Alterman's Journalistic Poetry

Gidi Nevo

Among the large and varied corpus of Alterman's topical journalistic poetry, a group of poems can be delineated in which Alterman, veering from his customary satirical witty tone, uses high rhetoric, thundering pathos, and biblical drama in order to face such crucial, weighty matters as, among others, the holocaust of European Jewry, the struggle against the British Mandate on the question of Jewish immigration to Palestine, the striving towards the establishing of a Jewish state, and the wars with the neighboring Arab states. These poems constitute what I term 'Alterman's prophetic mode'. The article traces the various rhetorical devices Alterman deftly deploys in order to enact a sense of the 'sublime', and maintains that it was mainly through these poems that Alterman achieved and bolstered his status as a national poet.

Humor, Violence, and Creative Resistance in the Sitcom *Arab Labor*

Shiri Goren

This article frames the primetime television comedy Arab Labor, created by the Israeli-Palestinian writer Sayed Kashua, as a site that allows viewers to re-conceptualize Israeli collective memory, rendering it more inclusive for non-

Jewish citizens of the state. A close visual and textual analysis of one particularly bold episode titled 'zikaron' [encompassing in Hebrew both memory and national Memorial Day], reveals that the episode aims to bridge an existing gap between two forming narratives, the celebratory Jewish War of Independence and the Nakba, the Palestinian disaster of 1948. This daring cultural suggestion, indeed an anti-discourse, identifies productive intersections between these competing narratives. Moreover, the article posits that by employing humor, irony, and the genre of the sitcom, the creators of the TV series mask a volatile criticism of prevailing social conventions and norms in contemporary Israeli society. By suggesting creative resolutions to the crises the storyline raises, resolutions that on many occasions transgress social boundaries, Arab Labor creates a meaningful space for identity negotiation and cultural intervention in the Israeli socio-political arena.

The Integration of Hebrew Literature in Translation in the United States: The Pre-Zionist Phase

Omri Asscher

As shown by translation scholars in past decades, the transfer of literature across cultures is never governed only by 'exclusively' literary considerations, and may be strongly influenced by ideologically related factors. This paper examines the integration of Hebrew literature in translation in America during the first decades of the twentieth century with regard to the volume of translation, the selection of works for translation, their reception in the literary discourse, and the interferences of translators in the actual texts. The paper describes the mediation of Hebrew literature in America as it related to and was influenced by the major trends of thought within American Jewry towards the Yishuv in Palestine during this period, a period generally perceived as the pre-Zionist phase of American Jews.

As the paper shows, Hebrew literature as it was met by the (Jewish-)American reader during this time, especially between the 1910s and the late 1930s, did not reflect the developing Hebrew literary canon and lacked much of its national components. The volume of translation from Hebrew was much smaller than in later decades, and most works of Hebrew prose that were translated and published in the United States were anchored in the shtetl experience of Eastern Europe, whereas contemporary Hebrew literature's preoccupation with life in Palestine

was scarcely represented. Furthermore, when elements critical of the Diaspora were present in the translated works, these were sometimes subdued on their way to the (Jewish-)American reader, either in the actual translation or in reviews in newspapers. In general, Hebrew literature, a cornerstone of the growing national culture in Eretz-Israel, took on a less national and more diasporic form as it entered the American literary field.

The Struggle to Revive Jaffa's Port, 1936-1947

Tamir Goren

The period of the Arab revolt marked the beginning of a continuing deterioration in the economic situation of Jaffa, which until then had been characterized as a prominent economic center and a thriving city.

The deciding factor that highlighted most of the economic recession of the city was the port. This was a significant moral implication on the Arab public, since the port of Jaffa, a symbol of the city and its heritage, was considered a national symbolic cornerstone of the Palestinian-Arab economy. The deterioration that caught the port from 1936 onwards gave rise to a persistent struggle in an attempt to return the port to its glory days. During the following years the struggle gained momentum and became one of the major issues on the agenda of the Arab Leadership.

The article examines the actions of the local Arab leadership bodies and the Arab Higher Committee to revitalize the port and reclaim its position since the beginning of 1936 until the war began in 1947.

New Statesman and its Attitude toward the State of Israel, 1948-2012

Yosef Gorny

New Statesman is a periodical of intellectuals with a progressive social outlook in England, appearing continually for over a hundred years. It was founded in 1913 by a group of famous personalities of liberal social-democratic view; the most renowned among them at the time were Beatrice and Sidney Webb and the writer George Bernard Shaw.

From the beginning until nowadays the New Statesman has shown interest in Jewish society – first in Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe to England, then in the Zionist movement since the Balfour Declaration, until the founding of the State of Israel and the national confrontation between it and the surrounding Arab nations.

What distinguishes New Statesman with regard to Zionism and the State of Israel is its dual attitude that is expressed on one hand in its stable principled support of the Jews' right for a national state, and on the other hand in unceasing criticism of Israel's policy, especially its attitude about the solution of the Palestinian refugees. New Statesman's distinctiveness is therefore in constant search for the political compromise between the two nations who have a just right for national definition in Palestine.

The article deals with three approaches in regard to the State of Israel that appear in the New Statesman during over sixty years: the consistent political approach of the editorials, the moral critical one, and the intellectual thought concerning Zionism and anti-Semitism in special articles.

From 'Warrior' to 'Mama's Boy'? The Israeli Soldier in the Press

Zipi Israeli and Elisheva Rosman-Stollman

The image of the Israeli soldier has transmuted over time. This is particularly true when examining this image in Israeli media. As media reflects social changes, understanding the development of the image of the Israeli soldier in Israeli media may be indicative of wider transformations.

During the First Lebanon War (1980s), the Israeli soldier was identified chiefly as a tough, adult, masculine figure; a warrior. In the 1990s, we find gradual transformation to a more vulnerable image: a scared, fragile boy, who turns to his mother at times to intervene on his behalf. Conversely, during the first decade of the twenty-first century, the framing of the Israeli soldier in local media becomes more complex, with both images present in the media. However, despite the fact that both images appear, during this final period the 'warrior' image receives more visibility.

Using theoretical literature from the fields of communications and civil-military-media relations, and covering two major Israeli news publications –

Yedioth Ahronoth and Ha'aretz, we trace the image of the Israeli soldier during three decades beginning with the First Lebanon War (1982) and culminating with Operation Cast Lead (2008-9). Methodology included content analysis and data analysis, with content analysis serving as the basis for research and data analysis supporting claims and substantiating our hypothesis.

Abortions as a Reflection of the Yishuv's Complexity

Lilach Rosenberg-Friedman

This article deals with the characteristics of the Yishuv through analysis of the dominant influences that shaped the abortions phenomenon that was prevalent in that society.

The issue of birthrate stood at the center of nationalist Jewish discourse in British Mandate Palestine. It was perceived as an issue of interest to the nation, especially because of the high birthrate among the Arab population. The period, however, was characterized by an ongoing decline in birthrate among the Jewish population due to widespread abortions.

The abortion phenomenon in the Yishuv had both universal characteristics as well as unique traits stemming from the local situation. This article explores this phenomenon, with an emphasis on the factors and the diverse influences that led to the abortions. The analysis from comparative perspectives indicates that the Yishuv was influenced by modern approaches from Western European countries, socialist and traditional gender perceptions from Eastern European countries, and diverse immigration experiences. Universal matters as well as particular ones that were part of the local historical context created a distinct combination that lead to a unique phenomenon.

Analysis of the phenomenon and its causes in a comparative perspective reveals that the Yishuv was heterogeneous, and despite its national and socialist character, aspired to adopt the norms of the modern Western world.

Women's Strategies in Creating and Renewing Religious Rituals

Rivka Neria Ben-Shahar

The exclusion of women from public religious space is a known, widespread phenomenon. Recent years, however, have seen women creating and renewing religious rituals for themselves, thereby forging a place for themselves in a space from which they were previously barred. This article examines some strategies women employ in creating and renewing female-religious space as exemplified by two rituals carried out by Jewish women: 'amen meals' (a new ritual) and public 'taking-challah' ceremonies (a renewed ritual). It argues that these rituals, which paradoxically appear to preserve the existing order, actually undermine it. The women direct the main weapon used to control them—obedience to the rules of order—in order to destabilize and reconstruct the social structure.

The Mental Hygiene Movement in Palestine

Jacob Margolin and Eliezer Witztum

During the early decades of the twentieth century, psychiatry was strongly influenced in science and practice by different political and ideological interpretations of public health. The mental hygiene movement, instead of focusing on the treatment of mental illness, emphasized early intervention, prevention, and the promotion of mental health. This movement, originating during the first decade of the previous century, was influential until about the early sixties, and then became increasingly incorporated into mainstream psychiatry. In this article we attempt to explore the mental hygiene movement in Palestine since its early beginnings during the second decade of the twentieth century. The first part, which mentions some of the various definitions offered for the term mental hygiene, is followed by a description of the mental hygiene movement in the world, its origins and development. A review of the mental hygiene movement in Palestine, its history, and eminent figures then follows. The professional fields of the movement are discussed, emphasizing that eugenics was not a mainstream subject in the agenda of the mental hygienists in Palestine. Finally, a retrospective view of the mental hygiene movement in Palestine is offered.

The End of 'the Historic Leadership' in Hakibbutz Haartzi and in Mapam, 1956-1973: Economic, Social and Political Aspects

Tal Elmaliach

During 1967-1973, the two main bodies that constituted the Hashomer Hatzair movement in Israel – Hakibbutz Haartzi and Mapam – underwent a seemingly contradictory process of strengthening and institutionalization, together with a decline in their internal cohesion and political power. This article seeks to show that this contradiction can be explained through examining the interaction between economy, society, and politics.

The article shows how the accelerated economic development of the kibbutzim of Hakibbutz Haartzi, which has occurred since the mid-1950s, created a state of incongruence between the social and political structure that had existed since their establishment and the new living conditions of the kibbutz members. Consequently, since the late 1950s, the leadership of Hakibbutz Haartzi and Mapam was involved in a survival struggle to preserve its power. This struggle aggravated the internal crisis in the movement and in the party, since it caused most of the attention to focus on their internal balance of power, and prevented innovations, initiatives, and the growth of a future leadership. In the mid-1970s, an era ended in Hashomer Hatzair, when the traditional social and political structure, which had existed since the beginning of the operation of this movement in Eretz Israel, completely crumbled, precisely when, economically, the kibbutzim were at the height of their power.

Pinhas Lavon as a Political Figure, 1949-1955

Yechiam Weitz

The article discusses the political character of Pinhas Lavon during six years, from 1949 when he was appointed secretary general of the Histadrut until he resigned his position as minister of defense (1955). The questions that arise are: How did Lavon, a Labor leader who dealt mainly with social and economic issues, become a senior figure in the field of Israeli defense and be appointed minister of defense, thus climbing to the top of Israeli politics? How is it that Lavon, once an opponent

of Ben-Gurion, became a senior figure in Ben-Gurion's inner circle? Regarding the above, the article also examines the relationship of Ben-Gurion to Lavon during this period.

The Soviet Regime and the Polish Refugees in Lithuania, December 1940

Brought to print, prefaced, and translated by Matityahu Mintz

In the documents of Alexander Nikolayevich Yakovlev (1923-2005), a senior member of the Russian Communist Party, I found several documents that show the attitude of the Soviet authorities toward refugees from Poland (Jews and non-Jews) who fled into Vilnius, Lithuania, during the first occupation of Poland by Germany and Soviet Russia (September and October 1939). The document presented here deals with the instructions for the treatment of refugees after Lithuania was annexed by Russia and became a Soviet Republic (August 3, 1940). The Politburo decision cited here is from the 12th of December 1940, a few months after the Soviet takeover of Lithuania.