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A Nocturnal Passage in an Ibn Gabirol Poem

by

Tova Rosen-Moked

Ibn Gabirol's poem "Like a Tree Roots" is a long forceful monologue in which the speaker reveals a complex and multi-faceted personality as he grapples with the tragic nexus between his grand aspirations and the suffering apportioned to him by Fate. His very search for ultimate wisdom aggravates his suffering and alienates him from his human surrounding.

The speaker's introspective discourse is interrupted by an apparently unrelated description of night scenes: the setting of the sun, the rising of the moon and the stars, and then, their disappearance as day dawns. This nocturnal passage digresses from the main route of the poem. Though syntactically linked to the monologue, it is autonomous, and thus might be easily deleted.

The poetics of the period allows for two explanations with regard to the function of the passage within the poem: (1) to provide relief from its oppressive atmosphere, (2) to serve as a decorative intermezzo. The latter is achieved by employing rich figurative language borrowed from diverse (military, ritual, pastoral) realms of reality.

What is proposed here is a close reading of the nocturnal passage that (a) would account for the figurative unity of the passage (despite its seemingly divergent imagery), and (b) would prove that the thematic digression reinforces the themes and meanings of the rest of the poem.

The subject of the passage – the alternation of day and night in the universe – is depicted in terms of a cyclic, and thus eternal, struggle between light (representing order) and darkness (representing chaos), in which there is no conclusive victory or defeat. The diction used for describing cosmic changes evokes a variety of mythological and biblical allusions (the dying sun and the dark crocodile, the sun chariots, the High Priest, the leper, Moses and other biblical characters).

The Frazerian notion of the Priestly King seems helpful in integrating these scattered allusions. The Priestly King – who murders his predecessor, inherits his position, and, in turn, will be murdered by his successor – is both sacred and profane, chosen and rejected, ruler and victim, victorious and defeated.

According to this reading of the poem, this dialectical pattern, implicit in the imagery and in the allusions, parallels the explicit assertions the speaker makes about himself in the other parts of the poem. Thus, cultural archetypes suggested

by the nocturnal description are analogous to the speaker's self-image as being wise and suffering, powerful and helpless, chosen and rejected.

The alternation of night and day symbolizes the antithetical forces of reason and instinct in the human soul. The nocturnal passage is therefore neither an ornamental intermezzo nor a simple pause, but an "objective correlative" to the speaker's existential drama.

Yehuda Halevi's "Tormented by Passion": a Poetic Formulation of the Conversion Experience

by

Masha Itzhaki

The present new proposed interpretation of Yehuda Halevi's poem, "Tormented by Passion", does not seek to refute previous ones, but rather to add a new dimension, an understanding of the poem as an expression of a mystic, religious experience, that of conversion. The interpretation is based on the model of the conversion experience as presented by William James in *Varieties of Religious Experience*, and described by the Moslem mystic, Al-Ghazali.

The manner in which the experience takes place is defined by James as two interdependent processes. One is the process which precedes the actual conversion experience: active attempts by the person-as a result of non-deliberate arising of strength in him-to abandon the attitude of attaching significance to the normal components of life; these attempts are by nature difficult, accompanied by torment, and are in fact almost impossible so long as the person has not been freed of awareness of the value of the things he is impelled to abandon.

The second, the conversion experience itself, reaches its apogee in revelation that leads to a total surrender of the experiencing ego to the object of the revelation, and its absolute cancellation in view of the divine object; the apogee of the process is a total, non-deliberate act which gives the person the strength to abandon the normal components of his life by guiding him toward an absolute disregard of their value.

One of the ways to view Zion and the Holy of Holies in this poem of Halevi's is as the focus of a mystic revelation, expressed in the linguistic arrangements, and especially the syntactical patterns and internal rhythm of the poem. The poem describes the preconversional experience which is mainly one of painful indecision and the torment of letting go of the ordinary mode of existence; and at a certain stage it expresses the transition toward the conversion itself; which reaches its apogee as the poem ends.

**Compositional Trends of the Hebrew
"Realistic" Narrative in the Enlightenment
(Haskalah) Period: A New Approach**

by
Yair Mazor

The major purpose of this study is to cast a new light upon the compositional poetics of the Hebrew "realistic" narrative in the Haskalah period. (Since the realistic nature of this literary body is in dispute, the word is here in quotation marks.)

Previous studies of the Hebrew "realistic" narrative have determined that the compositional plinth of this corpus is defective and therefore calls for minor clarification.

Although critics have justly indicated defects in the disturbing compositional poetics of the corpus, the present scrutiny endeavors to excavate additional, blatantly different, compositional poetics. The new poetic are varied, intricate, sophisticatedly refined and reach impressive aesthetic achievements which demand a re-evaluation of the compositional fabric of the corpus as well as of the whole corpus. The appealing compositional poetics of the Haskalah "realistic" narrative has been quite cryptic until now because of the dilapidated characteristics of the previously-known compositional poetics. Loose organization (mostly in the novels, as the short stories display a better compositional competence), interwoven plots overfilled with fictional splinters lacking natural, causal development and the narrator's uncontrollable invasions into the continuity of the plot (with didactic sermons detached from the plot) all upset the compositional poetics. These salient weaknesses led the critics to assume a similar unfortunate state in all other compositional elements of the corpus and consequently, discouraged a future probe that could have traced the valuable compositional poetics.

The obtrusive ideological-didactic nature of the corpus also encouraged the critics to concentrate on its thematic layers and treat the compositional stratum only superficially. Furthermore, a considerable proportion of the relevant research was done at the turn of the century when critics preferred to scrutinize themes and ideas rather than composition, and also lacked a proper methodological discipline to deal with the various compositional tissues of a literary text. Undoubtedly, the Hebrew critics who analyzed the Haskalah pieces during that period were deprived of the compositional-methodological achievements de-

monstrated by the Russian Formalists' experimental works. Consequently, the compositional worth of the corpus turned mute, and its careless epidermal composition was its only speaker.

The last decades have seen numerous studies of the corpus by scholars such as Verses, Shaked, Miron, Fridlander, Patterson, Sha'anani and Weinfeld. Yet as a whole, even contemporary critics eminently prefer theme and idea to composition. It is therefore the aim of this study to extricate the corpus' worthy compositional poetics from disturbing neglect and grant it the recognition it deserves. Since it is beyond the capacity of one paper to encompass the full scope of the "other" compositional poetics of the corpus and do justice to its variegated features, a few selected trends which appear to exemplify its cogently aesthetic potential are considered. They are mostly demonstrated by various phenomena in which the implied author (following W. Booth) deliberately molds the order of presentation in a way that yields informative gaps, retarded plots, unexpected digressions, crucial informational suspensions and prolongations of deceptive details which lead the reader astray by spurring him on to nourish expectations which are later, surprisingly, breached. The literary works in focus are *Kevurat chamor (Donkey's Burial)* by Peretz Smolenskin, *Ayit tzavua (The Hypocrite)* by Abraham Mapu and "kol rinah vishu'a beohley tzadikim" ("Cries of Rejoicing and Salvation in the Tents of the Righteous") by Abraham Leb Gotlobber.

In all items studied, the compositional trends, devices and manipulations are extremely valuable as they produce an animated and intriguing reading process which is interlaced in the whole aesthetic context of the works. Furthermore, it is known that the literary pieces faithfully serve ideological-didactic purposes, which in many cases govern the fictional embroidery. Since all the phenomena derive from the "other", latent, valuable compositional poetics are dexterously harnessed to the ideological-didactic frame and assimilated in to its major proclivities, it is evident that the newly-exposed compositional poetics are not alien to the corpus and forced upon it, but constitute an organic part of its comprehensive *ars poetica*.

Thus, casting new light upon the compositional poetics of the Hebrew "realistic" Haskalah narrative, not only uncovers its neglected, attractive composition, but also brings more balance and a proper evaluation of its entire aesthetic portrait.

Time and Space in Mapu's *The Hypocrite*

by

Samuel Verses

The *The Hypocrite* Mapu makes obvious deliberate use of tempo and spatial elements that both affect the shape of the plot and reveal the nature and character of the characters, and also help to convey his didactic message. There are many textual examples of descriptions of holidays and festivals from the traditional Jewish way of life, especially Passover, during which most of the story takes place. Aside from the excursions into Antiquity and his didactic distinctions between units of time, natural ones such as day and night and the different seasons, Mapu also pays attention to present real time, in which the story takes place. The story also contains many chronological references according to the Jewish calendar to functionally mark the various links in the plot. A number of the occasions in the book are also given a symbolic dimension analogous to the course of the plot. The Jewish dates also influence the thinking of the characters and affect their behavior.

One of the central components of the spatial aspects of Mapu's novel is the home in its various manifestations. The real architectural foundation is often accompanied in *The Hypocrite* by the didactic element which constitutes the meaningful framework for the description of various details taken from the real world. The inner structure of these houses is sometimes a decisive factor in the plot due to the movement of the characters in it and the meaning of their actions within the confined space. The house and the constant struggle to possess it here serve as an indication of the existential condition of the character. In this novel Mapu raised the elements of time and space to the rank of effective actors in the narrative fabric, either operating independently or working in close connection.

Books and Literature in Haskalah Fiction

by

Ben-Ami Feingold

The article deals with literature as a subject in Hebrew fiction, of the Haskalah period of the nineteenth century, and examines the place of books, belles-lettres and the fictional hero from various standpoints. During that period, books were

one of the salient instruments for acquiring an education and were generally classified and evaluated on the basis of their contribution to education or lack of it. The reading of literature considered to contribute to the educational process thanks to its reformatory values (not its esthetic ones) such as the novels of Turgenev, was deemed the first and essential stage in the progress of the Haskalah period youth. Books were status symbols and an expression of "underground" activity on the part of Haskalah youth, toward the Orthodox establishment, their fathers. Books also served as a way of becoming acquainted with manners, behavior and reactions to personal crises in the hero's life, especially in relations with the opposite sex, when the hero is in a dilemma, and the youth found in the literary precedent a model of proper and desirable behavior.

Books thus had a pragmatic, didactic, even practical use in the opinion of the Haskalah writers. However, in the course of the period there were also signs of a reaction in the direction of criticism and satire regarding the special status of books. M.D. Brandsteter, for instance, makes frequent fun of Haskalah heroes who act like their literary models, and impose ridiculous forced behavior on themselves. M.L. Lilienblum, in his autobiography *Wild Oats* sharply satirizes the negative influence of books on social and spiritual development and his criticism applies not only to old fashioned religious and moralistic books but also to the traditional belletristic literature accepted by the educated as meritorious Haskalah literature from all standpoints. Later, at the turn of the century A.Z. Rabinowitz in *At the Crossroads* portrayed a character of a hero who degenerates more and more under the influence of the Haskalah novels, the very books that had aroused the enthusiasm of the previous generation.

Another aspect of the problem is the attitude of the literature to its own poetic and esthetic values. Here and there it is possible to find comments by the narrator on the theoretical origin regarding the nature of the literary hero and the manner of characterizing him, or the attitude of the text to its own genre type. But such references are scanty and marginal and Haskalah fiction deals mainly, so far as subject is concerned, with examining literature from the pragmatic and didactic aspects. Finally the literature itself was an object of emulation and of mimetic design. In other words, many works were written following the model of earlier ones, using the same conventions and the same formal and thematic stereotypes. While pretending to provide a realistic representation of life, they actually describe it according to existing literary works, a phenomenon representing a cumulative epigonic process that appears especially toward the end of the period.

Allegorical Elements in the David Frishman Story, "The Golem"

by

Uri Shoham

Modern Hebrew literature, from its beginnings to the present day, has reserved a central place for the allegorical genre in its various forms, and in particular for the allegorical story, from Itzhak Arter to A.B. Yehoshua, from Mendele to Aaron Meged, from Agnon to Itzhak Arpa and Benyamin Tamuz. Among the many stories of this type, Frishman's "The Golem" occupies a special position. This is not because of its artistic quality, which is neither inferior nor superior to that of many others by Frishman, and may even arouse considerable doubt. It is unique because of its theme, its central motif, which is of great importance in religious and cultural thinking in Israel, and the potentialities it embodies in regard to the composition of an allegorical story. It is true that the partial allegory it contains may bring to mind stories like "Between Two Mountains" and "Hasidic Creed" and others by J.L. Peretz where allegorical elements appear and even operate, but the author has not succeeded in constructing a complete, clear and convincing allegory. In any case, "The Golem" contains definitely allegorical elements that support its being assigned to the genre of allegory.

In *The Other Meaning* (published by the Katz Research Institute for Hebrew Literature, Tel Aviv University, 1982) dealing with allegory in modern Hebrew literature, one type of allegorical story, called the *para-realistic story*, refers to a type of allegorical story in which the so-called patent stratum can be understood literally, a story in which the allegorical is disguised as realistic, with a kind of realistic veil covering the veil of allegory. Within the basic assumptions of the theory, a type of allegorical hero is defined as the *ignorant observer*, that is, an observer who does not acknowledge his prophetic powers. The allegorical hero is defined, following Fletcher, also as a *demonic-generative* hero, a hero who creates the characters around him, who are actually concepts that have been joined into one logical whole, working against the hero or with him, and all of them leading to the supreme conclusion of the story. The demonic quality in him is indicated by his behaving like someone guided by a supreme purpose, a command, a hidden supreme force he is not conscious of, because he is an *ignorant observer*. The demonic allegorical hero is attached to one feeling, one idea (which, as we have seen above, divides into the projective character around him).

A Reconsideration of the "Organ Poems" of Y.L. Peretz

by
Shlomo Harel

An examination of the critical trends regarding Y.L. Peretz's poems shows, as is generally expected, that they range between total belittlement and appreciation that is general (impressionistic) or somewhat reserved. What is surprising is that the poems themselves were not studied systematically (textually). The collection includes compact poems that divide mainly into two thematic groups. Both give rise to a characterization of 'the sick souls'. The "poet speaker" appears in almost all the poems marginally, in utter weakness, and subject to a mood that is defined (in the "world" of the poem) – "lovesick" or "gloomy".

In the presence of the beloved, her magical qualities (her eyes) function to dissipate agony and remove all lowering shadows; consequently he seeks her constant presence or the hope of achieving it. Some of the poems clearly express an ambivalent attitude to the demonic beloved. She frequently changes her "masks" and the lover finds it difficult to ascertain her true image. At times an unequivocally hostile attitude on her part becomes clear. She repels and alienates and even cruelly deceives those who court her. In most cases the lover continues to worship her and hope for an improvement in her attitude to him.

In the transition period such motifs appear in other writers in various proportions and shadings. The uniqueness of these Peretz poems seems to me to lie in particular in their semantic composition. There is no doubt that the collection is not homogeneous as to degree of complexity, structure, and quality of the poems, and the traces of the Haskalah norm are definitely discernible, e.g., a permanent rhetorical situation, composed of experiential or visionary items arranged on the basis of a particular classification (such as "together with all the buds", "mysteries of stars and skies", "the wingless bird") or "gradually itemized" (such as "your pure brow my firmament" and several monologues in the "Palm" chapter). At the same time there is no denying the relatively numerous poems in which a departure from the old norm and an important and in any case – not insignificant start are discernible in the direction of a dynamic thematic structure in the spirit of the "pattern of the reversing poem". Between these two poles it is possible to place a hierarchic scale which is likely to help in the attempt to determine the status and value of the collection in the development of Hebrew poetry on the brink of renaissance.

1. A rhetorical "changing-developing" situation.

- a. At the restricted level of the unit (such as “Vain my God, games” “Its light illumines my head”);
 - b. At the group level (“Evening and morning”)
2. An unrealized potential of a “reversing situation” according to which the vacuum fills up within the context in various ways through an intensive use of ambivalent materials (such as “You are cruel”). The conditions here are essential but insufficient.
 3. A semantic dynamic composition at a primary level (such as “stars of tidings, stars of dawn”). In this case the absence of elements likely to anchor a complete understanding in the course of the reading is discernible. What is gleaned from the text at the start of the reading (A) is actually based on elements in quantity and minimum transference power, because of the brevity of the monologue but not only for that reason.
 4. Poetic integration according to the principles of “the pattern of the reversing poem” at the unripe level (such as “Come let us go to the field”, “Do you know the field, my beauty” and the monologue concluding the chapter, “the Palm”).

Between them the misleading gap between the two polar frameworks is very narrow, because the poet did not sufficiently reinforce the materials and blur the traces.

The last three categories (2, 3 and 4) indicate a potential possibility that evidently did not attain a level of consciousness and consolidation developed and formulated enough.

5. “The pattern of the reversing poem” at a relatively developed level (such as “I will not come to your home” and “Then I drowned”).

These findings thus reflect the mapping (in miniature) of the crossroads at which Hebrew poetry was found at that stage with its dialectical opposites, according to the Russian formalists: Traces of previous sets of norms, typical norms, and norms beginning to sprout.

A Forgotten “Letter” by David Frishman

by
Menucha Gilboa

This forgotten “Letter” (like his “letters on Hebrew Literature”) was published by David Frishman in the daily *Hazefira* (21/2/1914). It is significant in two respects: 1) It contributes to the understanding of Frishman’s critical works,

and reveals a previously untraced line of influence (Kant's *Aesthetics in Judgement*), contrary to the widespread notion that Frishman was mainly influenced by Nietzsche. 2) Frishman was most important among the Hebrew writers in the field of aesthetics, and this "letter" unfolds some aspects of the influence of Kant's aesthetics on Hebrew literature at the turn of the century in general.

The "letter" is about the principles of "taste" (*geschmack*) in aesthetic judgment, and emphasizes the first two basic laws of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. a) The judgment of taste is an aesthetic judgment and refers the representation to the subject, and to its feeling of pleasure without having any interest in possession (aesthetic satisfaction). It is a subjective judgment; b) The judgment of beauty has a kind of universality. It is not a logical judgment.

The "Volkstyp" as Speaker in Bialik's Dramatic Monologues and "Folksongs"

by
Ziva Shamir

Towards the turn of the century, right after a collection of Yiddish folksongs was published,¹ Chaim Nachman Bialik became increasingly interested in folklore, and even made some preliminary attempts at imitating the tone and atmosphere of authentic folksongs.

One of the cardinal differences between "naïve" folksongs and their "sentimental" imitation is in the character of the speaker. Whereas the speaker in the "naïve" folksong is commonly identified with the anonymous author. In the cases of a speaker who is a literary persona, the speaker in the literary imitation does not represent the moral code, the values and standards of the author. Therefore, the speaker in the literary imitation is very often an *Eiron* or an *alazon* who reveals naïveté or arrogance, and is by no means to be mistaken for the author and his personal set of values.

During the first decade of his literary career Bialik wrote a large number of dramatic monologues, and in some of them he characterized a speaker who is a "Volkstyp" (= Folkstyp): a tailor, a poor country teacher, a milkman, etc. Some of these monologues include motifs from authentic folksongs, and dramatic irony plays an extremely important role in them, since their

1. Ginzburg and Marek, (1901). *Yiddish Folksongs*, St. Petersburg.

simple-minded heroes tend to engage in optimistic dreams which prove illusionary. The common milkman from the unpublished monologue "Advise Within Prayers," for instance, is sure of his talent and ability to be the poet laureate of his generation. However, when he criticizes in detail the flaws of contemporary poets, it is evident that his poetic lines too are afflicted with the very same flaws that he finds in those of other poets. Since the simple milkman is also a pretentious poet, his monologue sounds as though it is permeated with a great deal of self irony. The versifier in this poem is not merely an *alazon*, boasting about his qualifications, but also an *ieron* whose words sound stupid and are, in fact, unwittingly wise. This multifaceted characterization of course adds to the intricate nature of the poem.

In the first version of *To a Bird*, Bialik also characterized a simple-minded Volkstyp, similar in his style to the provincial speaker of "Advise Within Prayer", who owns a cow-shed. When this poem was later revised and rewritten in the form of a sentimental address by a devout Zionist, the original characteristics of this speaker were justifiably obliterated.

The sophisticated characterization of the speaker is one of the main devices in Bialik's "Folksongs" written during the first decade of the twentieth century as a playful attempt to create folklore in an unspoken language. The single girl in "Betwixt Tigris and the Euphrates" is urging the bird to fetch the bridegroom, but her personal tragedy is viewed with irony by a sober author who is an outsider in this drama, a spectator with his tongue in his cheek. Multifaceted irony is also achieved in the "folksong" "Someone Is in Possession of...", where the speaker is an arrogant *alazon* who advises his fellow men to follow him in his "nightly" experiences, in order to rid himself from their suspicions. By characterizing simple minded, provincial persona, Bialik succeeded in creating rich connotative irony and in transplanting the achievements of Mendele Moicher Sforim and Scholem Aleichem into the poetic field.

The "Wild Poem" Indications of the Literary Climate and Style of Eretz Israel Poetry in the 1920s.

by
Uzi Shavit

Despite individual characteristics in various writers, it is possible to generalize and speak of a literary climate and poetic style shared by a generation of poets. It is thus possible to develop a "collective portrait" peculiar to that literary generation, which also constitutes the proper background for the study of an

individual poet or individual work. The period is roughly between 1922 and 1928, and the poets are the beginners whose first books of poems were published during that period (the outstanding representatives being Shlonsky, Greenberg and Lamdan). The main characteristics of Eretz Israel poetry at the time were: consciousness of primacy and innovation; rebellion against the prevalent "classic" poetics and aspirations to modernism with various trends; modernistic, "wild" style, influenced by the post-symbolistic trends in European poetry, especially Russian and German, and exhibiting especially expressionistic elements along with imaginistic and symbolistic ones; a decided predilection for free verse; a preference for "grand subjects", and for large forms, long and complicated, at the expense of the small, personal lyric poem; emphasis on the elements common to the writers of the new generation and concealment of literary and ideological inner tensions, and that is the origin of the stylistic pluralism that characterizes the period.

These common features gradually disappeared toward the end of the decade. The inner polarization-stylistic, social and ideological-increased and the common stylistic climate of the 1920s gave way to the different principal literary trends in the poetry of Eretz Israel in the 1930s and 1940s.

"Joy of the Poor" by Alterman – A Study of an Essential Aspect of the Text's Dynamics

by

Tzila Abramovitz

Alterman's two collections of poems: "Stars Outside" and "Joy of the Poor", were widely discussed by critics who pointed out both differences and similarities between them, referring mostly to thematic aspects. The aim of this short study is to point out a structural principle common to both, from which a similar process of reading is derived.

An immediately realised difference between the two collections lies in the use of metaphorical language. While "Stars Outside" employs a condensed, rich and complicated metaphorical language, "Joy of the Poor" seems to reduce it and replace it with directness, which answers (among other rhetoric devices) for the powerful effects of the text.

A close study will show that though this observation is true, the speakers in both collections share the same structural principles which determine the

characteristics of the reading process. It might be assumed that "Joy of the Poor" does not "need" overflowing metaphors in order to delay and de-automatize the reader's perception, due to its "plot" which occurs in such an estranged level of existence – the dead visiting and relating to the living. However, a textual analysis reveals that besides this comprehensive frame, the text employs a rich complex of devices, which compensate for the reduction in metaphorical use. It does so mainly by a variety of quasi-logical structures i.e., structures that appear to be logical but do not fulfill this expectation. These structures consist of constant contradicting arguments, denials and paradox. Thus, they result in a constant process of misleading assumptions and expectations, which forces the reader to correct his understanding and to build new frames of context in order to reach a plausible interpretation. The reader therefore applies the same methods he uses when interpreting metaphorical expressions.

The text achieves this mainly by its syntactic structures which are proved paradoxical due to a gap between formal structures (such as negations, analogies, syllogisms, contradictions) and their contents. These contradictions refer to conventional concepts or "truth"; to well established allusions; to automatic expectations derived from the structure itself. This misleading process is rich and complicated, such as: an apparent denial of some "truth" turns out to be a re-enforcement of its validity; a long sequence of self-contradicting arguments; a seemingly sophisticated structure leads the reader to expect an unusual conclusion, only to result in trivial deduction; etc.

This principle is applied not only to whole poems or units within them, but to the overwhole frame of context. Thus, repeated motifs and symbols which might be perceived automatically after a while, are used as allusions which are contradicted within the text; habits of reading already established are broken and replaced by others.

Paradoxes, contradictions and constant shifting from the concrete to the abstract – the characteristics of the metaphorical language in "Stars Outside", can thus be described as one of the main structural principles of "Joy of the Poor". They result in the same process of interpretation the reader is confronted with.

The quasi-logical structures are not only compositional devices, they carry the meaning of the whole collection. The constant destruction of conventional logic is analogous to the destruction of conventional concepts, views and values, to the collapse of the world we know, which leads to a realization of the tragic paradox of human existence.

**Aharon Amir's "Song of the Land of the Hebrews":
A "Canaanite" Utopia**

by
Avner Holtzman

For more than forty years, Aharon Amir has engaged in writing belletristic literature, both poetry and prose, while at the same time taking an active part in support of the "Canaanite" idea in various frameworks. Yet as a rule literary work does not serve Amir as a channel for direct expression of ideology, and in it his ideological affinity emerges only indirectly – in metaphors, symbols, themes and phraseology – whose identification is conditional on previous familiarity with that affinity.

Only once did Amir remove the divider and openly try to elucidate his political and cultural dream in a poetic work, "Song of the Land of the Hebrews" (1947-1949) whose position in his work resembles that of "Walkers in Darkness" in the work of Jonathan Ratosh. It appears that most of the points in the "Canaanite" platform, as stated in manifestos, articles and interviews, found their way into "Song of the Land of the Hebrews" in various degrees of prominence or suggestion, at times through the use of phrases reiterated in those publications, yet the work almost never descends to the obvious expression of ideological clichés. It avoids this mainly due to the pictorial-narrative framework which encloses the ideological statements within a broad metaphoric description of the new day dawning on "the Land of the Hebrews".

Besides the direct statements presenting a Utopian view of the realization of the "Canaanite" dream in all its components, a series of indirect devices operate to strengthen and enrich the outline of the ideological message. The structure of the work, based on sets of details united into organizing frameworks, reflects the scenic wealth of the Land of the Hebrews and the diversity of its population which is welded into one integrated nation. The language of the poem – combining archaic and modern elements – parallels the two principles of the "Canaanite" creed: the creation of a new nation on the basis of a common affinity with the heritage of the ancient past. The speaker's position revealed mainly in the series of pathetic appeals he voices in view of the current reality, reflects the sense of exaltation in the realization of the vision, whose high point is in fact the consecration that ends the work. The pathos surrounding "Song of the Land of the Hebrews" is strengthened also by its unconventional literary form – a prose-poem, that has no counterpart in the rest of Aharon Amir's work and was undoubtedly chosen to fit the contents.

Understanding the purposes and form of "Song of the Land of the Hebrews" the author's testimony on the circumstances of its composition are helpful. It was written in direct response to the UN decision on partition and shows traces of various literary influences, primarily a deliberate, conscious affinity with the poetry of Walt Whitman, whose source is the ideological kinship with the American Model of the making of a new nation, which Whitman's poetry was the clearest expression of.

Agnon's Narrative as a Narrative: A Reading of "Ido and Eynam"

by
Reuven Tsur

This puzzling story by Agnon is full of what appear to be irrational or supernatural happenings. There are two analogous worlds in it, each of which can be conceived of as an ironic comment on the other. All the "supernatural" events in the foreground action (that takes place in Jerusalem) turn out, eventually, to be perfectly natural. As for the background action (that take place at the dwelling of a faraway, forgotten Jewish tribe), all information about it is given by Gamzu to the narrator, and there is no way to check whether the supernatural events in it too may turn out to be natural. So the reader must be prepared to accept both a natural and supernatural law operating in the world of the story. At the same time, this uncertainty brings the story within the scope of the genre described by Todorov as "fantastic literature." This puzzling quality gave rise to a host of allegoristic interpretations of the story, most of them relating false but obtrusive cues from the story to false but obtrusive cues from Jewish tradition, in an arbitrary manner. It is claimed here that they are not only unjust to the narrative as a narrative but are bad as allegoresis as well (they do not even bother to collect the most obvious facts from Jewish tradition or Cabbalistic literature relevant to their allegoristic purpose, nor do they care to observe a minimum degree of consistency). They seem to be aimed at achieving certainty at all costs.

From the point of view of Gamzu's (and the narrator's) partial knowledge, the two worlds of the story are packed with analogous events, persons and objects. These are based on an underlying action in the Aristotelian sense, culminating in a scene of peripety and recognition, with an extreme reversal from the state of ignorance to a state of knowledge. Many of the foregoing events must be reinterpreted in the light of this reversal: most notably, the majority of the

supposed analogies turn out to be identities (very much in the manner of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*), yielding a sudden understanding of the meaning of Gamzu's life. It is this reversal and sudden understanding – rather than the hidden allusions to Cabbalistic literature and Jewish tradition, which at all events are quite dubious – that generates the atmosphere of mystic insights.

Agnon's "Seder Kabbalat Shabbat" as a Key to the Understanding of His Book *Ir u-Melo'a*

by
Dan Laor

Seder Kabbalat Shabbat, a short piece by S.Y. Agnon, first appeared in the *Ha'arets* literary supplement in April 1965, and was aptly included in Agnon's *Ir u-Melo'a* ("A City and the Fullness Thereof"), published posthumously in 1973.

Seder Kabbalat Shabbat ("The Service for Welcoming the Sabbath") is a description of the Friday night ritual in the Great Synagogue of Bucacz, the Jewish village in eastern Galicia where Agnon was born and raised. The comparison of this piece with various other Jewish sources demonstrates both the exactitude with which Agnon portrayed the centuries-old ceremony and his conscious use of language which constantly alludes to the vast body of traditional literature related to the Sabbath. Interestingly enough, Agnon makes expressly clear the *raison d'être* of the work: to remind our "sons" about the tradition of the "elders" to which he himself was so committed. Such bluntness is reminiscent of rhetoric quite common in his later work.

Seder Kabbalat Shabbat in many ways captures the essence of Agnon's *Ir u-Melo'a* as a whole. This unique and complex book is by and large a chronicle of Agnon's home town, intended to preserve at least in the language of tradition, the forms of life of a community destroyed (by the Nazis in World War II) and thus promote a model for Jewish life in generations to come.

A Sabra Named Charlie...
On Myth as a Language, Mythical Reality, and a Mythological Play

by
Ziva Ben-Porat

The assumptions underlying the notion of the problem of a realistic representation, in dramatic form, of ideological-mythical material, are the following:

1. Ideology transformed into a myth (i.e. a system of signification) is a cultural *objective* fact, partaking of various semiotic codes.

2. It is neither fiction – an imaginary reality – nor a set of political beliefs and convictions, which can be presented logically for approval or refutation.

3. As a “type of discourse” it appears in the significations of many real physical objects, as well as actions, historical events, particular individuals and types of people.

4. Representation of the myth by mimesis of these elements entails a reduction of secondary discourse to primary discourse, and of mythical concepts to types.

5. Such a reduction reflects the ultimate victory of the myth-creating ideology: mythical significations become linguistic meanings through “naturalization.”

6. Such realistic representations are, therefore, the norms as long as the myth – and the group whose ideology initiated it – is in power. They become obsolete, anachronistic and ineffective when a cultural (i.e. ideological) change occurs.

7. Realistic (i.e. mimetic) representation of a myth from a non-mythical standpoint entails a reduction of the myth to formulated ideology. Objects lose their significations so that such a presentation is not a representation of the myth.

8. Allegorical representation entails a similar reduction: the conventional arbitrary signification refers the reader/spectator to a set of abstractions.

9. All three of the above forms of textualization, realistic and non-realistic alike, prove inadequate for representing the myth as myth (its formative stages, mode of existence, processes of “naturalization” and breaking down) from a non-mythical standpoint.

10. Factorization of reality is one possible solution to the problem of textualizing a myth for its pseudo-realistic presentation. Factorization allows the simultaneous presentation of imitations (reality-like patterns) and their denaturalization.

11. Whereas neither the problem nor this solution are unique to drama, a dramatic representation of a myth *qua* myth sharpens the problem. The tensions between meanings and significations grow stronger because of the interaction (and counteraction) of the mimetic potentials of narrative and dramatic representation.

A description of the realistic but non-mimetic dramatic representation of the major Israeli myth, Dany Horwitz's "Charlie Ka-charlie" elaborates and substantiates these claims.

"Charlie Ka-charlie" represents the mythical Sabra, including the various types to which the myth gave birth at different stages of its development. But it does not do so by a representation of a typical character.

The play probes the "myth-as-discourse." It presents the ways in which an ideology made a certain color, a particular dress or a specific mode of action appear the natural, unquestionable characteristic of this imagined type. In this sense the play is the work of a Barthian mythologist. Some illustrations clarify this point.

Instead of presenting a young man in short pants and sandals, keeping his hands in his pockets and carrying a backpack-as a representation of a "real" Sabra, the author lets speakers claim that they *are* "bare feet in sandals" or "hands in pockets," "blue shirts" or "shepherd's pipes."

The reduction of the myth into a type – which symbolizes the total victory of the myth – is thus eliminated. There is no mimetic (here identical with realistic) representation of a type. Rather, the features which have become mythological characteristics are represented verbally as mythical objects. Their signification is represented and not their objective existence (i.e. first degree denotations). The latter is disposed of through the transition from the literal to the figurative plane. For instance, actors refer to themselves, using the first person, in synecdoche or metaphor. The use of props may enhance or counteract this tendency. But even concrete representation of sandals (such as having the actor appear in sandals and flaunt this fact) cannot make the statement a realistic referential representation.

The resulting effect of such presentation is that of fragmentation or, rather, factorization. The statements which refer only to the Internal Frame of Reference (e.g. "I am Charlie Ka-charlie the first, king of boy and girl scouts...") remain almost meaningless until they are translated into statements referring to the External Frame of Reference: the myth of the Sabra and its habitat. Thus, the dominant reliance on supply of material, information, patterns, meanings and significations from the External Frame of Reference heightens the "realistic" effect of the play. The absence of these materials in the

actual dramatic presentation, and the lack of explicit references to the External Frame of Reference, counteract the same effect. This combination justifies the term “realistic non-mimetic drama.”

A number of devices are manipulated to achieve this particular effect, to present realistic objects, minimizing their reality-like qualities on the one hand, but maximizing their potential for presentation of reality on the other hand.

The major devices are:

- a. Representations embedded in dramatic monologues;
- b. Metaphoric representation;
- c. Metonymic representation;
- d. Dramatic representation emphasizing unlikeness;
- e. Misplaced mimesis.
- f. Incompatible mimetic patterns.

To sum up, it is possible to present real objects in a manner which does not make the representation itself “real-like” (i.e. resembling reality or homologous to it). The more “real” (i.e. grounded in an External Frame of Reference) the objects used in the representation – the stronger the counter-real effect of their peculiar “non-dramatic” dramatic presentation. The weaker the illusion of reality, the stronger the spectators’ orientation away from the representation towards reality.

These alternative modes of realistic representation prove highly effective for the representation of mythical discourse as a secondary semiotic system. The objects incorporated by the myth, the values it embodies and the superimposition of significations over meanings are all represented as factors of a complex whole. The factorization of the naturalized myth sustains the realistic effect in the absence of mimesis.