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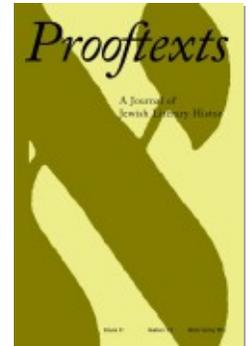
## The Confessions of a Bad Reader: Embodied Selves, Narrative Strategies, and Subversion in Israeli Women's Autobiography

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# The Confessions of a Bad Reader: Embodied Selves, Narrative Strategies, and Subversion in Israeli Women's Autobiography

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## ABSTRACT

*This article reviews contemporary autobiographical writing in Israel. Israeli autobiographical texts take critical, moral stances that both challenge the Israeli collective and assert a deep, very personal commitment to that collective. Israeli autobiographers refigure expressive and narrative models as they expose the frames of reference that mainstream literature has learned to conceal. In contemporary Israeli autobiographies, a fractured embodied self has appeared in both women's and men's works, and the body often seems to unsettle power structures. This article is concerned with the gendered specificity with which this self is represented in women's autobiographical writing in Israel, and offers readings of Netiva Ben-Yehuda's 1948—Bein hasfrot (1981), Judith Kafri's Kol hakayits halakhnu yehefim (1995), Nurith Gertz and Deborah Gertz's El mah she-namog (1997), and Nurith Zarchi's Mishakey bedidut (1999).*

Things are often lost in translation. Chapter 5 of Amos Oz's *A Tale of Love and Darkness*,<sup>1</sup> for example, never made it into the English version of the text. It might be instructive to review what was deemed proper for Hebrew readers, but not for their English counterparts.<sup>2</sup> Chapter 5 is a brief manifesto or essay that presents Oz's vision of his autobiographical project, and directs his reader toward the "correct" ways to consume it. Oz differentiates between the "bad reader" and the "good reader." "Bad readers" are motivated by voyeurism and

gossip, and will search for a “subversive” political bottom line. “Bad readers” will hold the author responsible for the text (accusing Nabokov of pedophilia or Dostoevsky of a tendency to murder).

While Oz parodies concrete readings of fiction, he positions himself in line with authors of the great Western tradition. He also insists that he will never confide in us: “Every story I have ever written is autobiographical, and not a single one is confession.”<sup>3</sup> Therefore, he invites the “good reader” to look for himself<sup>4</sup> rather than for the author in the text: “Do not ask: Are these really facts? Is this what goes on in this author’s mind? Ask yourself. About yourself. And you may keep the answer to yourself.”<sup>5</sup> As Oz encourages his readers to find themselves in the text, he casts his story, in the tradition of male autobiography in the West, as representative and universal.<sup>6</sup>

The role of the individual male author as a representative of the collective, the spirit of the nation, its goals, triumphs, losses and pains within the modern Hebrew tradition, has been widely documented in the last decade.<sup>7</sup> As an individual representative of the nation, Oz attempted to carry the torch of traditional Hebrew autobiography, and he could not have been more successful in the undertaking. As Oz himself said, “I was digging in my own backyard, and I must have touched an underground cable; suddenly the lights in all of the windows began to flash.”<sup>8</sup> Scores of readers lit up along with Oz’s best-selling book, and hundreds did not “keep the answer to themselves.”

In a study based on approximately four hundred readers’ letters sent to Oz after the publication of *Sipur al ahavah ve-ḥosbekh*, Yigal Schwartz showed that the book elicited passionate responses from a very specific group of readers.<sup>9</sup> In his analysis of the letters, Schwartz characterizes the readers who have come to venerate *Sipur* as Israeli-born to parents who emigrated from Eastern Europe (Poland or Russia) between the two world wars (and not after the Shoah). These readers are between forty-five and sixty-five years old, either kibbutz members or residents of well-established towns. Most are secular and professional—that is, they are what used to be referred to as the Israeli elite.<sup>10</sup> According to Schwartz, it was the vulnerable, painful, and exposed nature of Oz’s story that enabled such readers to connect to its suggested collective story. This group has found in Oz’s work a renewed narrative that can depict them, rather than a ruling (possibly

dethroned) hegemony, as fragile and vulnerable. In other words, Oz has supplied a path that can legitimize these readers' "rightful" place in Israeli society as the salt of the earth, clearing them of whatever collective blame might have clung to them.<sup>11</sup>

*A Tale of Love and Darkness* highlights a significant phenomenon in Israeli literature today. Autobiography poses a challenge to Israeli literature. Like autobiography elsewhere, Israeli life-writing is thriving. Works by diverse authors such as Oz and Rabbi Israel Meir Lau have dominated the best-seller lists in the last two decades.<sup>12</sup> These works, which have gained high visibility, may cloud our vision and blur the crucial cultural role Israeli autobiography has taken on, as I hope to demonstrate.

Hannan Hever has observed that national literature is commonly described, within national and liberal thought and practice, as a literature in which the text represents the imagined national community out of which and for which it is produced, but does so by staging a clash between this imagined community and itself, a clash that is perceived as a conflict of aesthetic value, and that produced at once a moral and a political difference between the writer and his or her readers.<sup>13</sup> Traditionally, the national author takes on an individual position that clashes with the collective, as in the manner of a prophet. From this privileged position, the author represents the moral national demands to which the community ought to respond. Hever contends that a substantial part of Israeli canonical fiction today persistently dodges the conflict characterizing the relationship between the national elite and the readers of these texts. This avoidance results not only in lack of moral conflict in Israeli literature, but, as a correlative, also eradicates the complex aesthetic mode that would be the counterpart and backdrop of such moral conflict. This process may explain the popularization prevalent in Israeli literature today. In other words, according to Hever, major Israeli fiction today is produced as popular literature, catering to the collective palate, approving and affirming values and refraining from friction that might restore the tensions of the past. I suggest that in Israeli autobiography this tension and criticism are maintained, and that a reading of the construction of gendered subjectivity in contemporary Israeli women's autobiographies may illuminate this view.

It has often been proposed that autobiography offers a means of "talking

back.”<sup>14</sup> Autobiography is a platform on which the silenced, the marginalized, and the ostracized can speak, and their speech, it has been implied, might disturb the power hierarchies that have relegated the speaker to the cultural periphery. As Sidonie Smith has pointed out, autobiography is a genre in which women may write themselves out of culturally imposed embodied subjectivity and ruffle the clean hierarchical dichotomy between the universal self and the embodied self that is characteristic of the autobiographical tradition in the West. As the by-now classic second wave of feminism has shown, Western culture has positioned body and mind at opposite ends of a hierarchical binary opposition marked by gender.<sup>15</sup> This dichotomy has influenced concepts of self. The Cartesian subject is described as “unique, unitary, unencumbered [by] all forms of embodiment,” eternally rational, and, at the same time, universal.<sup>16</sup> Women’s selfhood is constituted as contrary to the human/male Enlightenment self, as essential, embodied, and nonuniversal.<sup>17</sup> Woman has been evaluated as natural, speechless, inarticulate, and unreflective. This dichotomy marks a bind, since “the woman who would reason like a universal man becomes unwomanly, a kind of monster.”<sup>18</sup> However, writing herself, and more so, by giving the body a story and writing it, a woman may write her way out of this dichotomy. Writing may not be easily accessible, for, until very recently, “Women,” as Carolyn Heilbrun memorably suggested in *Writing A Woman’s Life*, “have been deprived of narratives, or of texts, plots or examples, by which they might assume power over—take control of—their own lives.”<sup>19</sup> Shoshana Felman has questioned whether the core of the problem was indeed the lack of models and women’s hesitation to take power, as that would mean an aberration of their womanhood, or a linguistic unavailability of “*structures of address*”: “we cannot simply *substitute ourselves as center* without regard to the *decentering* effects of language and of the unconscious, without acute awareness of the fact that our own relation to a linguistic frame of reference is never self-transparent” (emphasis in the original).<sup>20</sup>

Yet Israeli autobiography has become a zone in which silenced and marginalized voices can confront, rewrite, and renegotiate their relationship with the Hebrew language and Israeli hegemonics. It has vividly become an arena of friction with Israeli ideology in which the transparent is pulled into sight. These characteristics connect Israeli autobiography to its roots in the middle of the nine-

teenth century as a genre of stinging social critique.<sup>21</sup> As at its inception, the Israeli autobiography written today has taken on critical moral stands that challenge the Israeli collective, while still asserting a deep and very personal commitment to that collective. Israeli autobiographers are refiguring models of plot and of expression as they expose the frames of reference that mainstream literature has learned to conceal.

In contemporary Israeli autobiography, the body appears to unsettle power structures. The disturbance involves either a male or female body who is vulnerable, unsheltered, failing, ill, badly injured, dead, or foul-smelling. The embodied autobiographical Israeli self offers a point of departure for critical meetings of individuals with the national collective. These meetings probe Israeli givens and cultural strongholds despite the authors' otherness, or perhaps because of it.

Although the fractured embodied autobiographical self makes its appearance in both women's and men's works, this article is concerned with the gendered specificity with which it is represented in women's autobiographical writing,<sup>22</sup> and offers readings of Netiva Ben-Yehuda's *1948—Bein hasfirot* (1981), Judith Kafri's *Kol bakayitz balakbnu yebefim* (1995), Nurith Gertz and Deborah Gertz's *El mah she-namog* (1997), and Nurith Zarchi's *Mishakey bedidut* (1999).<sup>23</sup>

One might question what exactly frames these four authors as "marginal." In many aspects of their existence, each of them is an integral part of the Israeli cultural hegemony. The four are Israeli-born and Ashkenazi. Ben-Yehuda's, Gertz's, and Zarchi's books were published by leading publishing houses, and Kafri's text, although now out of print, was originally published as an issue of the kibbutz movement's journal *Shdemot*<sup>24</sup> dedicated to her work (her critique was adopted as representative). Netiva Ben-Yehuda is the host of a program on national Israeli radio.<sup>25</sup> Her father, Baruch Ben-Yehuda, was the principal of the prestigious Gymnasia Herzliya, director of the Ministry of Education, and a laureate of the Israel Prize (1979). Judith Kafri has won the Prime Minister's award for authors, her poems are included in the Israeli high school curriculum, and her parents were among the founders and leading figures of their kibbutz. Nurith Gertz is a prominent literary scholar and critic. Her parents, too, were among the founders of a kibbutz, and after they left it in the early 1930s, her father held a high position in a government office. Nurith Zarchi's childhood was marked by the loss of her father, author Israel

Zarchi, who although not a central personage in the Hebrew canon, has been acknowledged as a literary figure.<sup>26</sup> Nurith Zarchi wrote *Mishakey bedidut* after years of success and international acclaim as a writer for children, and had a stable career as a poet and fiction writer for adults. She teaches and lectures in Israeli universities. To describe her as a culturally marginal figure is to characterize her inaccurately.

These four authors, and others such as Yoram Kaniuk, Aharon Appelfeld, Yossi Sukari, and Haim Be'er, have established a relationship with Israeli culture, based on belonging, suspicion, conflict, and intimacy. They all challenge the Israeli subject and frustrate any attempt to grasp it as a single, stabilized, united whole. A central component in the marginal position that Ben-Yehuda, Kafri, Gertz, and Zarchi adopt is their lived experience as women. As women in a patriarchal national society, their view derives necessarily from the margins.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, their own choice to distance themselves from the dominant strata of Israeli society that they ostensibly belong to is strengthened by the prism of gender and the alternative critical view it offers. Their autobiographical writing delineates gendered marginality, articulates it, and chisels a critical tool out of it. It is through the grid of gender that they make audible a voice both confrontational and representative.<sup>28</sup>

#### NETIVA BEN-YEHUDA: A DEAD WOMAN SPEAKS FOR THE DEAD

At the heart of Ben-Yehuda's 1948—*Bein hasfirot*, as Dan Miron has pointed out, is a detailed and revealing description of what it is like to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.<sup>29</sup> As Yael Feldman has shown, the author's gender had a significant impact on Ben-Yehuda's traumatic injury.<sup>30</sup> On February 22, 1948, Ben-Yehuda, then a nineteen-year-old officer in the Palmah<sup>31</sup> camp at Ramot Naftali, led a group of just-drafted trainees, some of them new immigrants who did not understand Hebrew, to a field exercise. There were not enough guns to go around, and most of the group had never before held a firearm. Although she disapproved of the site chosen for the exercise, and feared it was too isolated and remote, she had been bullied into the situation by a male superior officer, and did not want to be tagged a female wimp. Cornered in a ravine, the group was

attacked and outnumbered by a Palestinian force. Indeed, the attack was in part a personal vendetta against Ben-Yehuda herself, who had recently played a dominant role in a deadly onslaught on a Palestinian bus, killing civilians and military personnel. Her sex and blonde hair made her easy to identify. She was nicknamed *Shagra* (Yellow Demon) by Galilee Palestinians, and a price was set on her head.

A member of her troop, Dov Milstein, named Aharonchik in the book, was shot in the head. From her bad tactical position, and under heavy fire, Ben-Yehuda decided to withdraw and leave the dying soldier in the field. Much of the book is devoted to Ben-Yehuda's efforts to clear her name, justify her action, deny the allegations of her peers and superiors, and present her own experience as a young woman who had just encountered combat, death, life-threatening danger, and the loss of good friends for the first time. She describes Aharonchik's wound in detail:

He had a big hole, huge, the size of a fist, in his head, on his forehead, above the left eye; and blood and splinters of broken bones, tongues of light pink matter, the brain, burst out of this hole onto the face, onto the nose, onto the hands that were still gripping the gun, and the head was slumped over them, and there was a hole almost the same size at the back of the head, nearly reaching the shoulder, behind, and brain at the back, and the blood was streaming down the back as if from a fountain, streaming and streaming on the back, on the neck, on the hand clutching the gun, and the legs were twisted awkwardly upward. Toward the sky.<sup>32</sup>

This description demonstrates that there was not even a remote chance that Aharonchik could have survived: not with a hole the size of a fist in his head. Besides horror, the detail and repetition create an effect of precision and reliability. But Ben-Yehuda's focus on the injured body goes beyond the rhetoric of self-defense, or she would not have repeated a description: upon their return with a British escort, they found that Aharonchik's body had been badly mutilated:<sup>33</sup>

We saw Aharonchik's body through the burning twigs and understood what the smell was. And we began to clear away the twigs. The shining white was his undershirt. Only his undershirt was left on him. All his body was

crushed, smashed, the skull fractured, cracked open. The ears, the eyes, the nose, the hands—everything was cut and crushed, and out of its place; evilly, viciously, the stomach was pummeled and scorched. (250)

Ben-Yehuda dwells on the mutilated corpse to make it quite clear that this death offers no symbolic escape. If in the first quotation the image of the legs pointed up toward the sky might engage us in a polemic of justice, or an accusation of a divine force, here death takes place in material immediacy and cannot be cloaked with heroism, altruism, or any other national salve. It cannot be handled with protective metaphors of significance, or an afterlife. Violent death is an immanence that cannot and must not be softened or made easier to accept.<sup>34</sup>

Ben-Yehuda carried the vision of Aharonchik's body for more than thirty years. Her detailed description insists that the trauma is not a long-past event but a present and a horror that her readers must witness as well. For Ben-Yehuda, combat crushes all common sense. Her traumatic meeting with death—caused either by her loss of close friends, or through her attempt to identify the bodies of soldiers who were strangers to her, or by her killing people as their eyes met hers with fear, or from her own fear and helplessness in battle—shatters her grasp on structured reality. Givens become doubts, and nothing can be taken “for granted” any longer (136). She loses track of time, and common sense collapses. She questions what it means to eat, to throw a party, to sing, to dress, and to match colors. Her gaping stare at the world puts everything in question, including what it might mean to be a woman or a man, and stamps the memory of Aharonchik's body on her vision of her own, thus diffusing, it would seem, the distinction between male and female.

But the specific corporeal presence of the female body has a central role in the construction of Ben-Yehuda's autobiographical voice. Early in October 1947, Ben-Yehuda had been roused from sleep by a fellow officer who tried to rape her. She responded by knocking him down, and he lost consciousness: “I button up fast, to call for help, but—no. I can't! He's naked! What could I say? Who's going to help me? Hell, there is no one” (207-8). As she considered her steps, she overheard her peers, who assumed that she was sound asleep and were discussing her. Ben-Yehuda had just been selected to participate in an officers' training course in handling explosives. Her peers were opposed to sending her. If a token woman

were to be sent, they wanted this person to be “one of their own,” a member of their own political party, and they considered Ben-Yehuda “untalented, she can’t lead, she’s ruthlessly ambitious, . . . she’s a ‘destructive element,’ ‘cynical’” (209).

The attempted rape and overheard conversation are narrated immediately after each other in a sequence that creates a clear link and analogy between them. Both attacks remained secret; Ben-Yehuda never told anyone about the attempted rape nor confronted her peers about her knowledge of their conversation. However, she reproached them for the latter, whereas she blamed herself for the first. While in her autobiographical writing she could retroactively express her mortification and pain at being rejected by her peers, she took on herself the blame for the sexual assault. These linked episodes are emblematic of Ben-Yehuda’s position within the *Palmaḥ* as a rejected outcast and possible victim. Her sex is a disgrace to be concealed: “I was awfully scared that I was a kvetch, a sissy, because I am a woman, or because I am just snot” (87). Her very presence on the front lines marks her as an aberration of nature and of primordial order: “I once heard . . . [them] laughing at me. One was saying to the other, I tell you, listen to me, once, when she raised her leg, in a sports exercise, her balls popped out” (274).

The body as weak, vulnerable, and ugly is the focal point of the *Palmaḥ* experience Ben-Yehuda paints. Months of training and combat do not allow her to bathe often enough. She goes into great detail about the eczema and sores that developed on her body, as well as the bodily smells that at moments of crises in the narrative became offensive. It is not surprising that the two showers recounted in the book border on a mystical cleansing. The body Ben-Yehuda depicts is not the young vital and vigorous beautiful body that the image of *Palmaḥ* soldiers preserves in national memory. It is a body of crude odors, excretions, and skin irritations. Ben-Yehuda, from her marginalized and rejected position, employs it to criticize the *Palmaḥ* as well as the society that sent it into combat.<sup>35</sup>

But the body does not figure only in miserable or disintegrating states. It also appears as perfection. Ben-Yehuda meets Nino, the living-dead, shell-shocked *Palmaḥ* soldier who calls himself a “muselman,” at the Tel Aviv café Kasit. Nino

is so good looking. Unusually so. He looks like a movie actor. . . . In short sleeves. In the middle of winter—in short sleeves. And that little

muscle, the one opposite the tip of the elbow, in it I saw life itself. If I were a sculptor. If I ever become a sculptor. I would try to catch that. An arm, bent at the elbow, leaning on the table, supports the head, oh-so-heavy, with that cloud above, the black one, and the muscle opposite the elbow—alive. Full of life. Maybe that's what they meant in the Bible by "and his muscles were made firm." The name of the sculpture would be: Israel will not surrender. Maybe better still: The Hebrew man does not surrender. Will not surrender. The Hebrew. This is the best: A Hebrew. A Hebrew Youth. One of those whom Bialik wrote about in *Megilat ha-esb*. Those gorgeous ones that fall into the Black Sea. I could never understand what Bialik meant. How could I have understood. (338)<sup>36</sup>

In the scene in Kasit, Ben-Yehuda is an object of observation. Nino practically stares holes in her back, but she returns the gaze. His figure is compiled of elements borrowed from popular culture, from the Palmaḥ aesthetic of physical fortitude (the short sleeves), from a neoclassic aesthetic, with a preference for balance, symmetry, and an ideal human form, and from the Hebrew canon: Jacob's testament to Joseph, which is misquoted here,<sup>37</sup> and Bialik's *Megilat ha-esb*. The black cloud she refers to over his head is a mark she imagines following herself as well from the front line. It marks them both as having experienced combat.

The masculine body represents perfection in beauty, self-sacrifice, vitality, heroism, and national continuity (from the Bible through the national poet Bialik). From her marginalized position, there is no way that Ben-Yehuda could understand "what Bialik meant."<sup>38</sup> Yet she imagines how she might sculpt Nino. Her view of him accepts the eternal superiority of the masculine within a national context, but at the same time grants Ben-Yehuda the vantage point of the look that constructs him, and allows her to build herself up as a subject regarding him. Nino is construed as a subject blending the body and the national universal. As she observes him, Ben-Yehuda herself becomes simultaneously an embodied and a universal self.<sup>39</sup>

On the night she spends with Nino, their sexual intercourse and intimate conversation establish a momentary equality. Their exchange is one of lovers as well as of peers in combat, and they agree on everything, as if their experiences

were identical. Reciprocity and intimacy make it possible for Ben-Yehuda to become a representative voice of her generation, as did the corporeal hideousness of war. Ben-Yehuda's gaze at the masculine body, whether irreparably damaged or perfectly ideal, enables her to construct a feminine subject that can preserve its corporeality, join national discourse, and change it from within. The specific components of her voice reframe national discourse, challenge its given universalistic androcentric premises, and thereby expose cracks in a discourse that aspires to be unquestionably hermetic, monolithic, and whole.

Before they part, Nino, who is convinced that he will not survive, asks Ben-Yehuda to promise that she will write about the soldiers who inevitably will die:

[I]f no one will write about us, exactly what happened, and how it happened, with all the shit and all the truth, it'll be like we died for nothing. This is the only thing I have left, that I care about, that it should not turn out that we died for nothing. (346)

Ben-Yehuda fulfills her promise in the book, which is to construct a memorial monument to friends who died. Her autobiographical project sets out to vitalize the memory of the casualties of 1948, and to offer an alternative to the canonical *Gvilei esb*.<sup>40</sup> She challenges hegemonic memory, and in so doing gains her representative voice by recounting the charms, weaknesses, and specific circumstances of the deaths of her many friends. In telling of others, Ben-Yehuda gains what Nancy K. Miller has called "identity through alterity."<sup>41</sup> After Aharon-chik's death, Ben-Yehuda begs her superiors in the Palmaḥ to let her version of the events be heard. She is denied. When she tells of his death in retrospect, however, her story is heard.

#### JUDITH KAFRI: FROM SPLINTERED VISION TO A KALEIDOSCOPE

Judith Kafri reflects a curious case of critical neglect. She has published poetry and prose continuously since the late 1950s, but apart from some passing comments, there has been no serious attempt to discuss her work. In 1995, Kafri published her

autobiography, *Kol hakayitz halakhnu yehefem*, focusing on her childhood at Kibbutz Ein-ha-Horesh, a childhood described as “a kind of perpetual expulsion from Paradise.”<sup>42</sup> Numerous sociological, psychological, historical, and literary studies, as well as personal writings, have been devoted to collective education in the kibbutz movement.<sup>43</sup> Rather than venturing on this well-trodden path, I am interested in understanding the ways in which autobiography has served such authors as adults confronting their childhood, and in the place the body takes in constructing their opposition and their formulated subjectivity, in friction with the Israeli collectivity. Kafri—and as we shall see, Gertz and Zarchi—all relate to the confiscation and invasion of the childish body as an affront on subjectivity. It is in moments such as when Kafri in early adolescence insists on showering alone that her embodied self clashes with the universal. Sarah, the childcare worker (the kibbutz *metapelet*), forgot an agreement and sends a boy in to shower with Kafri: “That feeling that he ‘had seen’ me, that this can’t be undone. I didn’t tell her. I didn’t dare to. I turned around. I turned my back, and hurried away. But it stayed. Inside. Like all the other things that cannot be erased. Even though you try to your whole life” (92). Being “seen,” just as she was enjoying the privacy of her shower, frustrates Kafri’s budding attempts to recognize her sexuality, differentiate her bodily identity from the group, and construct a subjectivity that stems both from an embodied and a universal self. What she could not say as a child, she can now say as an adult. As she preserves and retells the moment, she critically links it to the oppressive system and concepts of equal education.

*Kol hakayits* is made up of brief chapters (usually one or two pages long), set in nonchronological order. The traditional autobiographical self is often described as complete, coherent, and unified, even if it is developed in relation to others. A progressive linear narrative supports this sort of cohesion. Netiva Ben-Yehuda skirts the demand for a linear progressive autobiographical narrative by adopting the rhetorical stand of spoken language. This stand allows her the circular repetitions and lengthy digressions that characterize *1948*. By contrast, Kafri has devised a different solution:

For years I wanted to write about my childhood, and did not. . . . My memory did not preserve a sequential story—day after day, year after

year. Only fragments of images. Until one day I said to myself: there is the answer! Put the fragmentary visions into writing. They will gel into a picture of their own accord. It may not be a complete picture, with many gaps, still—a few major lines will connect, some pieces of the mosaic will be put together, and finally, some sort of a bottom line might emerge. (unnumbered page)

The decision to relate a fractured story built of independent units and pictures resolves Kafri's inability to create a linear progressive sequence, but also serves another purpose. The fragmentary narrative challenges the solid all-inclusive worldview of Kafri's childhood, which she wishes to critique. The very structure of her story puts in question a world that left little room for doubts.

In a section titled "On Truth and Pain," Kafri recalls a book of Chinese folktales that left a lasting imprint on her. One story was about a girl whose mother had died. When the fictional character grew older, her father bought her a mirror and told her it was a magical instrument, and that whenever she missed her mother, she could look into it and her mother would immediately appear. The girl was overjoyed. One day a wise man came to the remote village, and she showed him the treasured object that preserved her mother's face. The man told her it was a mirror, showed her his own unlovely reflection in it, and continued on his way. The girl sank into an incurable depression. Kafri concludes:

I was a little girl, but I already knew a lot about sorrow and truth. Truth was at the bottom of all the uncompromising, disconnected, semi-senseless, absolute, tyrannical orders that guided our upbringing, and that we were too young to oppose. . . . That Chinese tale gave me license to suspect the truth. And in the conflict between truth and pain and pity, it forbade the truth to dominate and destroy the little that was necessary for the continuation of life. Since then I know that sometimes one must lie in order to protect. And then the truth journeys inward, to the deep hidden zone, where emotions and knowledge are fostered, and where poems are born. (179)

It is thus the very dissemination of truth that enables Kafri's speech (where poems are born).

In *Kol hakayits*, Kafri's painful childhood memories of being raised in a children's house on a kibbutz (modeled, as she found out in the process of writing the book, on a Prussian orphanage) intertwine with the sensual pleasures of a childhood spent out of doors. She felt an intimacy with the natural and agricultural landscape surrounding the kibbutz, the orange groves and the wildflowers, and with her own initiation into language and poetry. These various threads meet in the memoir's section titled "About Truth and Pain." On the one hand, her childhood was rich with moments of beauty, as reflected in the reading of the Chinese storybook. On the other hand, collective equal education had good intentions, but as a system was rigid and often cruel toward its young.<sup>44</sup> Only as an adult did Kafri tell her parents that one childcare worker had whipped her with a leather belt.<sup>45</sup>

But Kafri's worst memories concerned the imposition of collective education through a policing of the body. Forced sleep and forced feeding ("Yokheved stops my nose with her fingers. All of a sudden I can't breathe. Instinctively I open my mouth to breathe, and then she shoves in the spoonful of food" [63]);<sup>46</sup> the detested dense black comb that the children call "Hitler" (38); and the humiliation she feels when the childcare worker calls out, "there goes Yehudit again with that grimace of hers" (31) are but a few of the instances in which the childish body is invaded and exposed in public, constituting a denial of its owner's subjectivity. In one stinging section, Kafri recalls how she fought Sarah the childcare worker, squirming with all her might, but with no success, in preventing her from taking her temperature anally, in the presence of older children from another group. The invasion of the body instills control. Hence, Kafri's autobiographical subject is constructed through the body. It is in telling and exposing humiliations in great detail that she constructs her embodied subjectivity and begins to inch her way out of it. For a subject wrestling to free itself of essentialism, autobiographical narrative represents an initial step on the path to universal subjectivity. When the well-defined border between embodied and universal subjectivity is collapsed, however, the vulnerable oppressed body, in the voice of the full-fledged author, conserves the injuries of the past as it takes a clear challenging stand against the social and ideological system that oppressed Kafri as a child. It is in

returning to her lowest moments of pain and defeat that she can confront her upbringing.

Maintaining open wounds signifies not only an emotional stand, but also a moral commitment. The irreparable scars of the past connect Kafri's perception of World War II and her meeting with Shoah survivors, as a child in Mandatory Palestine, to the present in which she is writing: it is the time of the 1982 Lebanon war, and the IDF is occupying Beirut.<sup>47</sup> As she tells of murdered relatives and child survivors who came to the kibbutz after the Shoah, Kafri also wonders what the children who witnessed the Sabra and Shatila massacre will remember as adults.<sup>48</sup> This comparison sets off a despondent essay on murderousness and war. Although she raises the question, Kafri sustains ambivalence in her references to Palestinians. Brought up on a kibbutz that belonged to the Ha-Shomer ha-Tsa'ir movement, she probes ambiguities in the proclaimed ideals of universal equality and brotherly love between nations while simultaneously exposing the deep fear of Arabs that has been instilled in the children, though she refrains from hammering in her points. An Arab house in the middle of the kibbutz orange groves stands "ruined but real, as if someone designed it to be a very accessible symbol of something" (99). Kafri does not define what that "something" is. Her autobiography is more concerned with maintaining her position of friction and conflict with the collective—be it her family, the kibbutz movement, or the national Israeli collective—than with replacing their truths with alternatives of her own.

#### NURITH GERTZ: RECONSTRUCTION OF THE UMBILICAL CORD

Nurith Gertz's *El mah she-namog*, written in collaboration with her mother Deborah Gertz, challenges an array of concepts: motherhood, authorship and writing, autobiography and biography, memory and imagination, documentary prose and fiction.<sup>49</sup> The story is ostensibly that of Deborah/Dora, a biology teacher born in Poland, who completed her doctorate in agriculture in Italy and immigrated to Mandatory Palestine in 1933, but the voice that narrates and selects, as it quotes letters and diaries, is Nurith's. Generically the book is a

hybrid, a romance that tells of Dora's succession of lovers, dwelling especially on the jilted Lotek; it is also a pioneering narrative about early Zionist settlement in mandatory Palestine; a post-Shoah memoir about Jewish life in pre-World War II Poland; a mother-daughter narrative; and a critique of Zionism. The task of writing Deborah's life is presented at first as a rescue mission undertaken by her daughter in an effort to help her mother:

In May 1993, when she turned 87 years old, she got fired. Until that day she had been an editor of a children's science magazine. Every morning she would get up, get dressed, go to the university, sit in her office for four or five hours and work. When she was fired we were afraid she would decide she'd had enough of life, and we suggested she start writing memoirs. What are memoirs? All the stories that for years we had lent half an ear to, that always began like this: "Have I already told you the story about Alessandro [or about Lotek, or about Grandmother Matel's restaurant . . . ]?" The answer to that was always "Yes, mother, maybe a thousand times," and the persistent sequence was: "Well, Alessandro would sit with me in the garden, by the well. . ." Now she took upon herself to sit every morning, and, like Sheherazade, to write all these stories. One chapter a day. (14)

The daughter sets up a rescue team, but at the same time rejects and belittles the project. In fact, everyone involved is apprehensive about the enterprise. The daughter declares lack of interest in the stories she has been told "maybe a thousand times" but never bothered listening to. Nonetheless, these are early memories of mother-daughter intimacy that she cherishes, and she says:

These memories from Italy . . . were part of my childhood memories. The Italian student songs mingled with the Russian lullabies I grew up on and Alessandro de Philipps [her mother's classmate at an Italian university] would appear after a few Volga songs, and after all the Yiddish songs. "Tell me about Alessandro now." These stories unfold, one by one in a . . . schoolgirl's notebook, in a style that perhaps demands editing, but does not receive any. (15)

The mother's memories have thus become the daughter's dearest ones. Nurith could probably have narrated them more concisely, but she professes that she refrained from tampering with her mother's words.

The therapeutic value of composing memoirs is also dubious. Dora is forced to delve into the choice she made as a young woman, to abandon Lotek, her passionate lover in Poland, and link her life with Aharonchik, Nurith's father, in what evolved into an excessively strained and unrewarding relationship. When Dora is engaged in translating Lotek's letters to her, written in the 1930s, from Polish into Hebrew, Nurith comments: "The last letters are the most difficult. She has to be forced to translate them, and in her diary . . . it says: . . . 'this breaks my heart. I've already lived through this. How can I live it again' (61); and 'Why have you sentenced me to live through this twice?'" (31).

It is likewise unclear if Nurith's and Dora's journey to Poland, recounted at the end of the book, was undertaken in answer to unstated wishes of the mother or to those of the daughter. Nurith quotes Dora: "What an antisemitic country that was, Poland, I wouldn't go there even if you killed me. I have no longing for that country.' . . . After a few months of these conversations I said to her: 'Alright Ma. We'll go to Poland.' And it felt right. Why not?" (104)

Upon their arrival in Poland, however, the answer is clear: "Mother didn't want to go to Poland. But now we are here, and she is in a real state of hysteria. . . . You can tell she's come home" (128). These lines do not reveal who exactly is playing the role of the abstaining "Yiddishe Mama" relinquishing her own wishes in favor of those of the other.

This dual ownership of story, of memory and of its retelling, constitutes the underlying tension of *El mah she-namog*: that of authorship and birth, of unification and differentiation, of ties and severance between mother and daughter. As Nancy K. Miller has observed in reading memoirs of sons and daughters of deceased parents, telling the life of a parent is an opportunity to recreate the one who created you.<sup>50</sup> *El mah she-namog* is an attempt to hold on to life, as well as the daughter's attempt to charm her mother into the desire to live. The mother's voice vibrates in it, and the text becomes an arena of unsolved struggles. The dominant presence of Deborah/Dora is so powerful that it nearly suppresses the fact that the daughter, Nurith, is a mother herself.<sup>51</sup>

Dora's return to the world of her childhood is an experience that marginalizes her daughters. She substitutes Polish for Hebrew, and beg as they may, her daughters are not granted a translation of her conversations until they are back home, watching the video documenting the trip. The voyage to the past threatens the position the daughters hold in their mother's life. It leads to questions about Dora's identity as exclusively a mother, both in her daughter's story and in her own. She emerges with a multiple identity: a woman who has a distinct existence and numerous relations, the most significant of which seems to be with her own parents, who had lived in Tel-Mond and with whom she wants to be buried. Again, this tie has a corporeal manifestation, as Nurith quotes from Dora's diary: "Only when my mother died did I feel the umbilical cord that tied us to each other had actually severed. Until then I did not know how much I had been tied to her biologically" (164).

This comment illuminates the project as an operation to reconstruct the umbilical cord connecting Dora and her daughter Nurith, Dora and her mother, and Nurith to her grandmother and great-grandmother. The book is a verbal manifestation of the cord, or a narrative in search of its conserved presence in the relationship of mother and daughter. Their mutual and separate memories meet in the joint search for the mother's past, a past that is her daughter's as well. Dora's relation to her own mother, Matel, validates her connection to Nurith.

It might seem that the sequence of *El mah she-namog* could fuse into a processed and conscious, and therefore unseverable, verbal umbilical cord, but it does not. Rather, *El mah she-namog* presents a series of characters consumed by incessant longing for their mothers. Nurith's maternal grandfather, Zvi Zevulun Weinberg, had been abandoned by his father as a child, and his mother had sent him, along with his younger brother, to their grandfather, who refused to accept them. When he finally returned to his mother, "she smothered him with embraces and tears and kisses, [but] he did not feel happiness or love. Only longing. And humiliation" (109).

Similarly, on their visit to Poland, the women are guided through the town of Sovalki by Nahum Edelson, the last Jew left in the place. He too misses his mother:

[H]is mother died and he fell into depression. He had nothing left. She was the closest person to him. Edelson's eyes are teary. He is seventy years old. Cannot eat (cancer, my mother says), leaves us every few

minutes (prostate trouble, my mother guesses) alone in a town of *goyim*, an orphan. (111)

Dora's commentary, which Nurith cites in parentheses, curbs the pathos of Edelson's words. It is not the content of her comments—they obviously carry no positive relief—but the fact that Nurith can face Edelson's bereavement supported by her mother that gives significance to these words. Armed with her mother's interpretation, she can handle her fear of becoming an orphan herself, as Dora's presence cannot be taken for granted. The book is saturated with longing for mothers living and dead, for at its core lie betrayal and an inappeasable rage:

For years I thought that anyone who lived on a kibbutz could only die from a bullet in the heart. "Eternity in a fleeting moment," it said in *Kebilyateinu* [a formative text on life in a collective, published in 1922]. I too, evidently rose to life in the kibbutz. According to my mother, I was one year old and did not want to eat, and so they sent me to the kibbutz. There, in the kibbutz, on the spacious lawn, opposite the children's house, in the shade of the weeping willows, among the red geraniums, I was left alone in a crib, with no food and no water for twenty-four hours. No one in the family was allowed to approach me. That was the system. After a day and a night, when I had almost collapsed from crying and fatigue, I began to eat. It worked. (90)

This episode links the writer's personal story with a Zionist socialist pioneering narrative: pioneer values esteem a death only if it takes place in violent and national circumstances.<sup>52</sup> Vulnerability of body or soul, let alone that of babies, does not fit into the nationalist vision, especially that which venerates youth and its spirit of extremes, as the publication of *Kebilyateinu* did. *Kebilyateinu* is the group diary produced by the founders of Kibbutz Beit Alfa, who were members of Ha-Shomer ha-Tsa'ir. Nurith's narrative suggests that the ideals adopted by that youth movement in such manifestos promoted a group behavior that endangered the vulnerable and weaker members of society, and permitted severe parental betrayal. The attractiveness of this text, accepted as an inspiration in kibbutz life, as well as the agreeable kibbutz landscape that Nurith cannot

possibly remember from infancy (weeping willows, spacious lawns, red geraniums), only magnify the grimness of the event. Dora is the source of this information, and she offers varying explanations.<sup>53</sup> The different versions indicate the absence of a sole true and correct story that one might grasp, attack, or seek comfort in. The evasiveness of a solid and comprehensive truth that can be reconstructed is raised again and again, as the journey toward the past proceeds. The multiple versions call into question the value of pursuing a bare single truth, or of learning where it might be found.<sup>54</sup> The impact exceeds family relations, and takes on a collective representative role.

Yet in her preface, Nurith claims that *El mah she-namog* documents only known facts:

This book is compiled in fact from three books, and maybe more. The first is a book about a ruined Arab house, in the hills near Moza. Once I was in it. In distant childhood, maybe earlier than that, and recently I rediscovered it. I had thought that should I ever write a book it would be about the people who had lived in that house, and about what had happened to them. But since I do not know anything about the people who lived in that house, that book did not get written. (9)

The implication is that all the details of the actual book were verified and corroborated. Multiple documents, including letters and oral testimonies quoted in the work, support this assumption. Yet the ruined house does not disappear. Its image becomes a key motif in the book, and is part of the mother-daughter journey from its early stages, when the two travel to Ein ha-Ḥoresh to meet the people with whom Dora began her life in mandatory Palestine:

We are trying to reach the Ein ha-Ḥoresh of January 1933, the mud and the swamps. On the way we stop by the palm, in the wadi; there stands the stone house, with its arch, the ruined garden, a few early anemones and rain. And every time that same feeling: I've been here before. This is a familiar place. Maybe during the Mandate. Before childhood memories began. (29)

The house flickers all through the book, but the image crystalizes only at the end. Cracks have appeared in the book's commitment to documentation all along, but it is only when they reach Ostrov Mazovietski, grandmother Matel's hometown, that the story shakes itself free of this demand. As their journey nears its end, Dora and her daughters, Nurith and her elder sister Dalit, search for the grave of Rabbi Wolfe Ber, Matel's father. His house is gone, but the search for it provides Nurith with a vision:

Between the red roofs, on the brick road of Ostrov Mazovietski, I can finally see Rabbi Wolfe's wooden house, from the end of the previous century. . . . And Matel's mother is making jam out of the blueberries she picked with her brothers in the woods. "Come in, come in," I can hear her mother, her voice seductive, sweet. She calls me. No. I do not come in yet.

But if I did enter that house, I might find a kind of oval china plate hanging above the chest-of-drawers, and on it a picture of a wadi, and beyond it, how wonderful: a palm tree, a few prickly pear bushes and a ruin with an arched roof. That plate hung on Rabbi Wolfe Ber's wall to remind him of where he should be bound. . . . [Matel] would sit there for hours and look at it, and slowly enter it, cross the river-bed, go into the ruined house, light the fire in the clay oven, and go out in the garden to pick pomegranates for her mother, who was ill, and they said the fruit of Eretz-Yisrael could save her. So I came all the way to Ostrov to find out that I remember the house in the riverbed from there: from Rabbi Wolfe Ber's house. From my grandmother's longings. (169)

Gertz here intertwines Zionist longings for a land supposedly ruined and deserted that will heal the Diaspora's ailments, with her own Zionist existence in the place where Zionism has attempted and practically succeeded in erasing a previous life form. National aspirations blend with private dreams: Matel dreams of healing her mother with the fruit of Eretz-Yisrael, which grows on a tree planted by an unrecognized other. Rabbi Wolfe Ber's plate holds the traditional image of love of Zion that preserves Zion in its ruins as an aesthetic, emotional, and ideological stance. Nurith, his great-granddaughter, links her present-day existence as an Israeli to this untouchable past, which has a concrete but unacknowledged pres-

ence in the Israeli landscape through her grandmother's imagination. However, unlike the Palestinian ruin, which has a material presence in the present Israeli landscape, Rabbi Wolfe Ber's home can only be summoned up in Nurith's mind.<sup>55</sup> It is a missing past, or post-memory, that she draws from the image on the plate, extending like a photograph of sorts, an "umbilical connection to life."<sup>56</sup>

Ruth Ginsburg has observed the polar dichotomy in Hebrew literature, naming it "the paradox of motherhood," between the monstrous sexual mother and the asexual, silent, self-sacrificing one.<sup>57</sup> At first reading, Dora and Matel seem to represent the two opposing ends of the split. But if the grandmother and her granddaughter after her are permitted authorship and imagination, and if the limits of the fictional and the documentary are challenged, as are the strict divisions between biography and autobiography, diary and memoir, biography and fiction, dreams and wakefulness, then perhaps the two poles of "the paradox of motherhood" can be dispelled as well. Perhaps Dora can be permitted a story; perhaps the absent, silent mother, who sacrifices all for her children, can meet the creative, sexual, present monster who threatens to annihilate her children. The daughter who writes is reborn, and gives birth to her mother, her grandmother, and her great-grandmother. The revision of the familial story revises the national story as well. If the binary opposition that defines women in Hebrew literature is upset, then the place women have occupied in this national discourse can be renegotiated. Women can inch their way out of the silent symbolic place they occupied as embodied subjects in formative canonical texts such as *Kehilyateinu*. Retold, as it is here, the Zionist story shifts and allows voices that were silenced in the past to be heard as individual and as representative, universal subjects. The embodied mother-daughter story of reconstructing the umbilical cord becomes a national, representative, and universal story. Both family and nation abound with questions and gaps, paving the way for a subversive narrative that will permit marginal voices to be heard.

#### NURIT ZARCHI: CARTESIAN BEING AND THE MANAGEMENT OF PAIN

At the end of her autobiography, *Mishakey bedidut*, Nurit Zarchi questions her own motivation and asks: "Is there any other way for a person to envision a second

chance?" (116). For Zarchi, autobiography is an attempt "to grasp the moment before it all began, the white moment in which it was as if there still could have been another life" (116). This second chance materializes when a second person is close enough to offer another view of her life alongside her own. The second look, or the other's look, corroborates Zarchi's vision. Zarchi recounts two occasions on which she returned to visit her kibbutz as an adult: "Both times to permit someone whom I wanted to, and he agreed to, glimpse back into my childhood, and maybe in his presence to confront it myself" (111). But even the witness she finds cannot help her touch the distant girl that was she. However, in writing she casts us, her readers, as such witnesses who can see that girl, and our retrospective vision of her can provide her with a second chance. Autobiography allows the other to be "me," and extracts Zarchi from otherness. She becomes the self, and the other accepts her as such. Autobiography thus dispels the dichotomy between the gaze and the observed. Zarchi can turn from object to subject when she places her readers in her own position.

Zarchi's narrative is predominantly occupied with perspective, shadows, darkness, light, and fields of vision. Memory has a visual quality: it is eternally what flickers in and out of sight. Her vision rests on literary and mythological scaffoldings. As is the case with many other autobiographers, her road to memory is paved with her identity as a reader. If she had not read Proust, she says, she would not have remembered her early childhood home. She quotes Colette to describe her own mother, and has repeated meetings with the monstrous dog Cerberus.

Zarchi's prose often borders on poetry. Her images expand and interrupt the narrative's direct linear development. The arrival of her mother, her younger sister, and herself at the kibbutz in their black mourning dresses is pictured as the end of a pilgrimage; the eucalyptus trees lining the road arch over them like a church vault. This elicits from Zarchi the same sort of revelatory declaration that a secular pilgrimage might have evoked:

At the kibbutz I arrive at the land of the denial of the I. "If you don't exist you don't feel pain"<sup>58</sup> is the slogan etched wordlessly across the horizon. I decide to be reborn, a proud and selfless birth in Emek

Yisrael, and in this way I try to exist without taking my self, and my non-self, into account. (27)

As she twists the Cartesian dictum, Zarchi slits a crack into the kibbutz worldview. Deference to the collective in order to protect the “I” is read in very personal, utilitarian terms. Rather than an adoption of altruism, it is a form of survival.

Zarchi encounters the kibbutz partly as the outsider who would pay any price to be accepted, partly in the manner of an anthropologist studying a remote society. The kibbutz is referred to as “an order” and “a tribe”: “To an outsider, [kibbutz society] may seem like Chinese society, whose class structure is difficult to read. But to the locals it is like Indian society, where it is crystal clear that there is no way to change caste and [to change] whomever is considered a pariah” (31).

Zarchi’s mother became a member of the kibbutz, but remained a second-class one. The family lived on the outskirts in a wooden structure called “a Swedish hut” where other marginal residents were housed. However, liminality offered Zarchi a vantage point of observation and common ground with various Others in the kibbutz, such as the future poet Dalia Ravikovitch, whose mother also moved to Kibbutz Geva after being widowed. Ravikovitch gave Zarchi her collection of art postcards, and Zarchi began to collect postcards herself, accepting the gift as an instruction from the older girl and a direction to pursue. Meeting the older girl, it is implied, is perceived as her anointment into the world of art by the future major poet.

Zarchi never became a member herself. Her feelings of rejection are parallel to the sense of betrayal by her mother from a young age. As in Gertz’s narrative, the violence and alienation experienced on the kibbutz are analogous to the ambiguous rejection by the mother: “I wander by myself along the pathways of the kibbutz while the others go to their parents’ rooms. I cannot join mother. I’m sure she’s going to leave me; I know in my heart that I’m leaving her” (51).<sup>59</sup>

Being considered a social misfit demands a price in the kibbutz:

I wasn’t even insulted when at the kibbutz meeting it was decided not to approve my application to take the matriculation exams because it was evident from my character and life style that I would not take part in the

construction of the country. I wasn't even curious about who it was who had intervened in my favor. (109)

As in the other autobiographies considered in this article, the body appears on the one hand to sustain the opposition between the individual and the collective, and between women and nationality, and on the other hand to serve as an instrument that polices the individual in the hands of the collective. When Zarchi's mother is away, and she brings a boyfriend to spend the night in her mother's room, the representative of the education committee appears at their door the next day: "They were heard," he says to the mother; "one can hear through the walls, you know, what she did with him could be heard" (92-93).

Zarchi's repeated attempts to be redeemed of her own otherness slit the perfection of the Other, and illuminate his ferocity. These attempts are grounded in embodied subjectivity, and test its limits:

Everyone's sure that I did it on purpose, like the time when I was a little older and the barber from Afula trimmed my hair down to the skull. When I stood at the entrance to the dining hall, the people sitting down froze in astonishment; their eyes followed me as I sat at an empty place at table, while I tried to pile food on my plate from a serving platter, and to shove it into my mouth.

Though I nearly wanted to die because my ears stuck out, I was considered a rebel in the classic spirit of the kibbutz. Like Madame de Pompadour at the court of Louis the 15th, but in reverse.

I am compelled to become the other. Who is that? I think of myself as absent islands swept away into an absent sea, while the other, in contrast to me, is a continuous presence. In order to revive and be saved from nonexistence, I pass a hand over the flame of the Sabbath candle, lingering longer than is feasible. I bite my hand in secret to see whether I feel alive. Meanwhile I observe the faces of the others in order to mimic good behavior. I am the one always making an effort to act according to the rules, while time after time a dark and mysterious factor surfaces and ruins my plans. (46)<sup>60</sup>

Rebellion can thus only be practiced physically. Zarchi has no public voice beyond bodily demonstration. But in narrating the embodied subjectivity that is experienced as an absence of self, she positions her readers at a point of critical observation.

What Zarchi describes as her Copernican Revolution is the discovery of “warmth, affection, attraction, an emotional focus that was not mother, but the boys from agricultural training, the older boys at school, that someone would want and seek me out” (91). Being wanted is the key that triggers her revolution. If conceding to be a passive object of desire is often accepted as a loss of subjectivity, Zarchi actively constructs her subjectivity on the bodily and emotional sensation of mutual affection and attraction. In the puritanical environment of their adolescence, the kibbutz boys and she are too shy to meet each other’s eyes; they avoid physical contact “like a hot iron” (92). Zarchi then finds that the timid gaze of affection and desire, of which she has become a focus, does not cancel her being but permits her to exist. That is, she becomes a presence by being desired, but since the desire is mutual, it does not obliterate her as an object. Rather, it positions her in control of her story, as the autobiographical narrative itself does.<sup>61</sup>

The powerful movement that these and other Israeli autobiographies have stirred has gone mostly unnoticed by readers, but it has been recognized by authors. Certain authors have adopted a corrupted mode of the same stand of personal exposure within confrontation—and of vulnerability, failure to attain the ideal empowered masculine Zionist body, and a self-fashioned marginality<sup>62</sup>—as a foothold from which they might critique the stagnant Israeli givens. In Johnathan Gefen’s popular autobiography *Isbah Yekara*,<sup>63</sup> the attack on people perceived as founding pillars of Israeli society—the Dayan family, the author’s grandparents, his mother and his uncle Moshe Dayan, as well as his father who was a high-ranking army officer—ultimately confirms the author’s status as a cornerstone of Israeli society today; he is its representative. The distance essential for critique is lost here. Amos Oz’s narrative carries the wimpish right-wing duckling from Kerem Avraham to hegemonic left-wing lauded author who contemplates writing a column for Israel’s most widely read newspaper, *Yediot Aḥaronot*, in order to explain to his misguided neighbor, a right-wing Shoah survivor, how true peace must be made.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, *A Tale of Love and Darkness* has been read by most readers as a great ode to Zionism.<sup>65</sup>

The high visibility enjoyed by works as various as Gefen's, Rabbi Israel Meir Lau's, and Oz's cannot overshadow the rift that autobiography has torn in the Israeli consensus. Autobiography has provided a space, albeit a narrow one, in which ethnic, class, national, and gender borders are challenged and refigured. The overall impact of works such as Ben-Yehuda's, Kafri's, Gertz's, Zarchi's, and many others may be dismissed as negligible, but, to adopt Oz's "bad reader" position: bottom line, they allow, no matter how marginally, subversive voices to be heard.

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## NOTES

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- 1 Amos Oz, *Sipur al ahavah ve-hoshekh* (Jerusalem: Keter, 2004; English translation by Nicholas de Lange, *A Tale of Love and Darkness* [Orlando, Fla.: Harcourt Books, 2005]).
- 2 The "sweetening" of Israeli literature for international consumption may perhaps be a trend. In Dorit Rabinyan's *Ha-hatunot sbelanu* (Strand of a Thousand Pearls), for example, a happy English conclusion is substituted for the Hebrew open ending.
- 3 *Sipur*, 36.

- 4 Oz addresses a male reader throughout, and casts his text as a female victim of rape and cannibalistic murder.
- 5 *Sipur*, 40.
- 6 Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck (eds.), Introduction, *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988), 1. Nancy K. Miller has problematized concepts of representation in autobiography in her "Representing Others: Gender and the Subjects of Autobiography," *Differences* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 1-27.
- 7 The classic modern Hebrew autobiographical canon consists solely of works by men, but the issue of women's exclusion from the Hebrew canon has received serious attention. See, for example, Hannah Nave, "Leket pe'ah ve-shikhehah: ha-ḥayim mi-ḥuts la-kanon," in *Min, Migdar, Politica*, ed. Dafna N. Izraeli et al. (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad, 1999), 49-106; Dan Miron, *Imahot meyasdot, ahayot borgot* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad, 1991, 2004); Michael Gluzman, *The Politics of Canonicity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003); Tova Cohen, "Be-tokh ha-tarbut u-miḥutzah lah," in *Sadan* 2 (1997): 69-110; Pnina Shirav, *Ketivah lo tamah* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad, 1998); Amalia Kahana-Carmon, "Ishto shel Brenner rokhevet shuv," *Moznaim* 59 (1985): 10-15; and Yaffa Berlowitz, "Siporet meyabeshet avuda," in her *She'ani adamah ve-adam* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad, 2003), 319-60.
- 8 Avirama Golan, "Haim hasipur shelo hu hasipur shelanu," *Ha'aretz, Sfarim* (August 31, 2005): 1, 12. See also Batya Gur, "Hatragedia haleumit shel av, em u-ven," *Ha'aretz, Tarbut ve-sifrut* (March 15, 2002): 2, and Nurith Gertz, "Hanofim shelo ve-hanofim sheli," *Israel* 7 (2005): 211-217, as well as the complete issue of *Israel* 7 (2005) devoted to *A Tale of Love and Darkness*.
- 9 Yigal Schwartz, *Mah she-roim mi-kan* (Or Yehuda: Zmora-Bitan, 2005), 265-304. One of the letters Oz received was from Judith Kafri, whose own distinctly different memoir is analyzed in this article. In her letter, Kafri marks Oz's mother's death as the watershed moment in the narrative, which Oz will reclaim as his own, and past which she, Kafri, will no longer be able to read herself in the telling. Kafri formulates this moment as a shift from light to darkness (parallel to the time of day—sunset—she devotes to reading the book). It is worth noting that in the Hebrew edition of *Sipur* (p. 565), the part that Kafri refers to as a turning point comes immediately after the only photograph in the book, of Oz the child and his parents, a photograph that materializes the concrete specificity of his story.

These are Kafri's words (my translation):

September 5, 2002

Rosh Ha-Shana

Greetings to you Amos Oz,

I am on page 565 of your story of love and darkness, and am finally writing you a letter about reading it, the letter that I have been writing in my head as I have read day after day for several months.

What made me realize that I could not postpone writing to you any longer was the knowledge that in the very next pages I would probably be reading about your mother's death, and that this will sadden me to the point that if I write you then, I will be unable to convey to you the feeling that has accompanied me through all the months in which I have been reading the book. Sorrow will dampen it, and it is such an illuminated feeling.

I've instituted a reading ritual, and every evening around 7 PM, at dusk, I sit on the easy chair on our balcony that looks westward, to the darkening light summery sky, and read a few small chapters of your book, and save the rest for the days to come. Now that I have got little more than twenty pages left, I am sorry in advance to reach the end.

I have not been so deeply impressed nor have so profoundly enjoyed a book for years. I laughed a lot, felt a lot, and simply took pleasure in it. I call this half hour of reading the magic hour. You did a truly wonderful thing with this book. Everyone must be telling you that, and here I am, telling you as well.

Thank you,

Judith Kafri.

(Oz archive, Ben-Gurion University, third notebook, 514).

Oz, incidentally, was touched by the letter, and responded with a grateful epistle of his own. I thank Yehudit Kafri for sharing this with me.

10 Schwartz, *Mah she-roim*, 288.

11 In his recent study of Israeli literature of the 1980s, Dror Mishani questions whether the Israeli Ashkenazi cultural domain had ever been lost, and suggests that a great rhetoric effort, which *Sipur* might be considered as part, was invested in its defense and preservation. See *Bekhol ha-inyan ha-mizrabi yesh eizeh absurd* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2006).

- 12 Avner Holtzman, writing in 1999, was the first to note the boom in Israeli autobiographical writing, and its tendency to focus on the authors' parents. Holtzman listed sixteen works, all but one by male authors, and of these, only one non-Ashkenazi (A. B. Yehoshua). This allegedly comprehensive list created a slanted and limited vision of the actual multivoiced range of Israeli autobiographies, and overlooked their frequently subversive nature. Although Holtzman does mention one woman, Yehudit Hendel, she is not noted for her major contribution to Israeli memoirs—*Hakoakh ha-aḥer* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad, 1984)—but for the short story “Namukh, karov la-ritspa” (Avner Holtzman, *Mapat-derakhim: siporet ivrit kayom* [Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad, 2005], 27–31). The present paper can only begin to offer an alternative look at Israeli autobiography. I hope to complete a more comprehensive survey elsewhere.
- 13 Hannan Hever, “‘Tnu lo badranim ve-yana'uh be-shalom,’ sifrut yisraelit bi-zman shel kibush,” *Alpaim* 25 (2003): 155–69. For a brief English version, see “Israeli Fiction and the Occupation,” *Tikkun*, 18, no. 1 (January 2003): 63–7.
- 14 Sidonie Smith, *Subjectivity, Identity and the Body: Women's Autobiographical Practices in the Twentieth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 20. See also James Olney, “Autobiography and the Cultural Moment: A Thematic, Historical, and Bibliographical Introduction,” in *Autobiography, Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 13–17.
- 15 Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), vii.
- 16 Smith, 6. “Yet the individual self could endure as a concept of beingness only if, despite the specificities of individual experience, despite the multiplication of differences among people, the legend continued to bear universal marks. This self has to move freely toward its cultural positioning as universal subject but retain a threshold of particulars” (9).
- 17 Smith, 11. See also Hélène Cixous, “Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays,” in Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 63–132.
- 18 Smith, 15.
- 19 Carolyn Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 17.
- 20 Shoshana Felman, *What Does a Woman Want?* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 156.
- 21 Shmuel Werses, *Megamot ve-tsurot be-sifrut habaskala* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press,

1990), 249–60; Alan Mintz, *Banished from their Father's Table: Loss of Faith and Hebrew Autobiography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Marcus Moseley, *Being for Myself Alone: Origins of Jewish Autobiography* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006).

- 22 It would seem that while women need to write themselves out of silenced embodied subjectivity, men invest their unruly corporeal subjectivity in the universal one. One might think of the physical examination Aharon Appelfeld describes before he is drafted into the army in *Sipur haim* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1998; English translation by Aloma Halter, *The Story of a Life: A Memoir* [New York: Schocken Books], 2004); of Yoram Kaniuk's description of Jews lynching an Arab man in Tel Aviv in *Post Mortem* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad and Yediot Aḥaronot, 1992) and of his parents' sick bodies in that book. Or Yosi Sukari's grandmother exposing the number tattooed on her arm in *Emilia u-melaḥ ha-arets, vidui* (Tel Aviv: Bavel, 2002), and Haim Be'er's father in his underwear on his son's school trip, and his mother deciding not to take her own life when she gets her period, when the realization of potential motherhood dawns on her in *Havalim* (Tel Aviv: Am-Oved, 1998, English translation by Hillel Halkin, *The Pure Element of Time* [Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2003]). Michael Gluzman's contribution to the study of the male body in Modern Hebrew literature has been the most significant and continuous. See, for example, *Haguf hatsioni: Leumiyut, migdar u-miniyut basifrut ha-ivrit ha-hadasha* (Tel Aviv: Midgarin, Hakibbutz Hame'uchad, 2007).
- 23 All but the first are related to kibbutzim. Kafri was born and raised on Ein-Ha-Ḥoresh, Gertz's parents left that same kibbutz after she was born, but maintained very close ties with it (Gertz quotes Kafri in *El mah she-namog* [Tel Aviv: Am-Oved Publishers, 1997], 32; subsequent references will be given in parentheses in the text); and Zarchi moved with her mother to Kibbutz Geva after her father died when Zarchi was five years old. In spite of their common kibbutz backgrounds, the three authors present very different perspectives on childhood in a kibbutz specifically, and on life writing in general.
- 24 *Sbdemot* 4 (1995).
- 25 There have been periodic threats of taking the program off the air, or of cutting Ben-Yehuda's fee. In 2003, the intervention of the Israeli Journalists' Association, and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, a personal friend, removed the threat.
- 26 Amos Oz mentions Israel Zarchi in *A Tale of Love and Darkness* as the devoted friend who bought all the copies of his father's first book: "I did not tell anyone except,

- many years later, his daughter Nurit Zarchi, who did not seem overly impressed by what I had told her” (135).
- 27 Orly Lubin, *Ishah koret ishab* (Haifa and Or-Yehuda: Haifa University and Zemorah-Bitan, 2003), 15–61.
- 28 For an illuminating discussion of autobiography, women’s bodies, and the nation in the 1940s, see Orly Lubin, “Ha-emet she-bein misgarot ha-emet, otobiographia, edut, guf ve-atar,” in *Aderet le-Binyamin*, ed. Ziva Ben-Porat (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame’uchad and Tel Aviv University, 1999), 133–149.
- 29 Dan Miron, “Ilu nikhtav bi-zmano,” *Siman keriah* 16–17 (1983): 519–21.
- 30 Yael Feldman, *No Room of Their Own: Gender and Nation in Israeli Women’s Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 177–91.
- 31 The Palmah was a pre-state Jewish underground military organization, founded in 1941 and dispersed and integrated into the newly formed Israel Defense Force (IDF) during the 1948 war.
- 32 Netiva Ben-Yehuda, *1948—Bein hasfirot: roman al bathalat hamilhama* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1981), 231. Subsequent references will be given in parentheses in the text. The translation is, unless stated otherwise, mine. This sort of detailed description is not common practice among autobiographical authors of Ben-Yehuda’s generation, even decades after the war. Raphael Eitan, for example, when faced with the memory of the mutilated bodies of his friends, says: “The bodies were brutally crushed. I can’t describe the details,” *Raphul: sipuro shel hayal* (written with Dov Milstein, Tel Aviv: Ma’ariv, 1985), 37.
- 33 The official IDF memorial Web site records Milstein’s death as having happened in defense of a direct attack on Ramot Naftali, the settlement and base that Ben-Yehuda and her group had set out from that morning, and not in an ill-planned exercise (<http://www.izkor.mod.gov.il/izkor86.asp?t=88942>).
- 34 Ben-Yehuda may be aligning herself with women poets of her generation, who as Hannan Hever has shown, in poems published immediately during and after the War of Independence rejected the dominant figure in the Hebrew poetry of the time, that of the living-dead, and insisted on the corporeality of death as a way of confrontation rather than camouflage of loss and the price of war. As Hever has shown, the living-dead metaphor was not only a way to symbolically sanctify death in violent national circumstances but was also a trope that functioned at the expense of women, relegating them to the margins of Israeli culture. Insisting on concrete bodily death was a way for women to reenter the national discourse from

- which they had been excluded, and to take on a representative stand (Hannan Hever, *Pitom mare' h hamilhana* [Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad, 2001], 50, 194-99). Ben-Yehuda's retrospective narrative casts the living-dead metaphor into a lived experience. Her living-dead are not the dead that go on living, and haunt the living, but the living—the soldiers who have survived combat—and go on with their lives as if they were dead.
- 35 Yitzhak Rabin also describes the Palmah troops' exhaustion as so overpowering that they could not keep their eyes open long enough to hear Ben-Gurion announce the establishment of the State of Israel on the radio. But throughout his narrative of the 1948 war, although he counts the casualties and the wounded, he refrains from describing bodies and bodily injuries. See *Pinkas sherut* (written with Dov Milstein [Tel Aviv: Sifirat Ma'ariv, 1979]), 49. Raphael Eitan mentions lack of food, but recounts that what the Palmah troops stole from the kibbutz storage rooms was enough to make up for the deprivation (*Raphul*, 12).
- 36 H. N. Bialik began writing his long narrative poem *Megilat ha-esh* (Scroll of Fire), subtitled "A Legend of the Destruction" during the Potemkin battleship mutiny in June 1905 in Odessa; he based the work on a Ḥurban story (Gitin 57b). In Bialik's version, following the destruction of the Temple, four hundred young people are taken prisoner and abandoned on an island. The women march blindly into a ravine, where a deep black river is rushing, and the men dive in to try to save them. All but one, who did not jump, dive to their deaths. This is the scene to which Ben-Yehuda refers. *Megilat ha-esh* is concerned with the preservation of the "sacred flame" of the Temple in the hearts of the survivors. Traditional criticism has noted the blurred and mystifying vision that this poem evokes of youth and beauty, love, individuality, self-sacrifice and self-destruction, redemption, and national spiritual survival. See Ya'akov Fichman, "Megilat ha-esh," in Gershon Shaked, ed., *Bialik: Yetsirato le-sugeiha bi-r'i habikoret* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1974), 314-16; Hamutal Bar-Yosef, *Magaim shel decadence* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1997), 127-28.
- 37 Genesis 49:24 refers to Joseph's arms, not his muscles.
- 38 Generations of readers have found *Megilat ha-esh* to be an obscure poem, yet the accepted reading stresses individual responsibility and devotion to the national cause at all costs.
- 39 Smith, *Subjectivity*, 5-17.
- 40 *Gvilei esh* is the official commemorative anthology published by the Israeli Ministry of Defence in memory of soldiers who died in Israel's War of Independ-

ence. It includes their personal writings, letters, and literary work. Zarchi says of *Gvilei esh* in *Mishakey bedidut*: “I know all of *Gvilei esh* by heart, all the letters those boys that fell wrote to their sweethearts. I recite them more than any other literature that I will ever read. I follow their conflicts, the books they’ve read, the red sunsets they saw over the Jerusalem hills during cease-fire, and the heart-aches they suffered because of a delayed letter, a lost kiss, a moment before it was all lost” (Tel Aviv: Yediot Aḥaronot—Sifrey Hemed, 1999), 95.

- 41 “Autobiography—identity through alterity—is also writing against death twice: the other’s death and one’s own. Every autobiography, we might say, is also an autothanatography” (Miller, 12).
- 42 Judith Kafri, *Kol ha-kaits balakbnu yeḥefim* (Tel Aviv: Tag, 1997); originally published in *Shdemot* 4 (1995): 21. Subsequent references will be given in parentheses in the text.
- 43 One might return to Bruno Bettelheim’s *The Children of the Dream* (London: Macmillan, 1969), or consider a recent comprehensive addition to this discourse, *Hinukh be-kibbutz mishtaneh*, ed. Yeḥezkel Dar (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1998). See also Tal Tamir, *Linah meshutefet: kevutsab ve-kibbutz ba-toda’ah hayisraelit*, Exhibition Catalogue (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 2005).
- 44 Kafri describes sin, guilt, and punishment as her earliest memories. She was separated as a newborn infant from her parents and spent only a few hours a day with them. The childcare worker at the children’s house was in charge of her health, nourishment, physical growth, clothing, and education. Her parents had no right to intervene, nor did they seek it. She recollects her fear of sleeping in the children’s house, with no adult nearby or a light to soften the pitch-black darkness. She remembers pining for dolls; there were hardly any toys in the kindergarten playroom which was locked most of the day, and possessed two dolls to share between seven girls. Only the bigger girls ever got to play with them.
- 45 Nurith Zarchi writes of this as well: “One of the childcare workers hit me, . . . intense, hard blows, until once, when the water supply was disconnected and we went to eat in the teenagers’ dining room, another worker who witnessed an incident stopped her by threatening to expose her at a kibbutz meeting” (*Mishakey bedidut* [Tel Aviv: Yediot Aḥaronot-Sifrey Hemed, 1999], 53). Translation by Lisa Katz, *World Literature Today* (September–December 2004): 36. Subsequent references will be given in parentheses in the text. The published translation is of a chapter of the book. Unless stated otherwise, the translation is mine, kindly reviewed by Lisa Katz.

- 46 Forced feeding is central also to Gertz's memories of Ein-ha-Horesh, in a section I will discuss later in detail. See also Zarchi's *Mishakey bedidut*, 52.
- 47 *Kol hakayits*, 28.
- 48 The Shoah was a dominant presence in Ein-ha-Horesh. Most of the founders, including Kafri's parents, had lost their families. After the war the survivors who joined the kibbutz, the poet Abba Kovner among them, carried testimony and memory with them. I thank the anonymous reader of *Prooftexts* who brought this point to my attention; I hope to develop this idea further in future work.
- 49 As the authors share a surname, I will refer to them by their first names.
- 50 Nancy K. Miller, *Bequest and Betrayal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), ix-xiii.
- 51 Nurith's mothering emerges in relation to her maternal grandfather, Zvi Zevulun Weinberg, a teacher and author who never achieved recognition, and his jokes that Nurith tells her daughter:
- Years later I would pinch her and ask what city had Joshua conquered, and she would say "Ai" and it was still funny. (127)
- The joke has a physical dimension that links the grandfather's world of Jewish learning, and the trivia stemming from it, to the bodily sensation that can be transferred in time. The material presence of the body figures repeatedly in framing family relations. (The joke plays on a paronomasia: the Hebrew word for *ouch*—*ai*—sounds like the name of the city.)
- 52 See Jonathan Frankel, "The 'Yizkor' book of 1911: A Note on National Myths in the Second Aliya," in *Religious, Ideology and Nationalism in Europe and America*, ed. H. Ben Israel (Jerusalem: Historical Society of Israel and the Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1986), 355-384.
- 53 "According to [family] lore, when my father was asked, 'how much does she weigh,' he said 'as much as she weighs is too much.' Maybe that is why I did not want to eat and had to be sent to the kibbutz. But I got sent to the kibbutz also because there was a war going on (explanation A) and also because my mother worked at two jobs, in the morning and in the evening, and it was difficult for her (explanation B). And the explanations vary according to need" (91).
- 54 Another pivotal event that cannot be pinned down to one cause is Dora's and Aharon-chik's departure from the kibbutz. Was it because he was ill with malaria, or because she wanted to separate him from his old lover, because he wanted to be a

manager and the kibbutz wanted him to do field work, or because Dora was fed up with socialism, or because her attempts at agriculture had failed? (74-75). It is the multiplicity of versions that interests Nurith, more than the isolating of a truth.

55 I thank Zohar Weiman-Kelman for this insight.

56 Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 23. "Post memory characterizes the experience of those who grew up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can neither be understood nor recreated" (22).

57 Ruth Ginsburg, "The Jewish Mother Turned Monster: Representations of Motherhood by Hebrew Women Novelists 1881-1993," *Women's Studies International Forum* 20, no. 5-6 (1997): 631-38.

58 The Hebrew here reads: "im einkha kayam einkha koev" (27); it echoes the Hebrew version of Descartes (*ani hoshhev mashma ani kayam*) in sound (*hoshhev vs. koev*) and in structure.

59 Translation by Lisa Katz, *World Literature Today*: 37.

60 Ibid., 36.

61 A fine example, in a very different context, of this mode, and of the subversive role that the embodied self may take on in contemporary Israeli autobiography, is the final scene of Alona Frankel's *Yalda* (Tel Aviv: Mapa, 2004). It is noteworthy that *Yalda* was awarded the Sapir Prize in 2005. On December 31, 1949, when she was twelve years old, Frankel arrived aboard the filthy, reeking ship Gallila at the port of Haifa. She had survived the Shoah in hiding, and was reluctant to leave Communist Poland. Aboard the ship she saw Israelis returning from Europe:

[a] group of men from Israel, one of them was in fact a woman, crowding together, grunting, clapping one another on the shoulder, spoiling the beautiful Russian songs with their coarse, harsh, language (244).

The nausea of seasickness coincided with the arrival of Frankel's first menstrual period. Bleeding, terrified, and disgusted she watched the Israeli *halutsim* (pioneers) on board tossing oranges from the upper deck at the new immigrants. All that concerned her was that the wad of cotton in her pants would not hold her menstrual blood. She lightly and scornfully kicked one of the "Sabra Oranges" into "the depths of the ancient sea, the Mediterranean" (248).

Frankel's important work deserves a comprehensive reading that this article

and this writer cannot accomplish. For discussions of women, the Shoah, and autobiography see Carol Rittner and John K. Roth, eds., *Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust* (St. Paul, Minn.: Paragon House, 1993); and Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman, eds., *Women in the Holocaust* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998). I thank Manuela Consonni for pointing out both of these references to me. For further recent discussions of Israeli women's autobiography, see Orly Lubin, "Bein mitbah ha-poalim lakafeh ha-hungari: otobiographiah shel ishah ironit," *Tarbut demokratit* 10 (2006): 357-394; Margalit Shilo, "Prati ke-tsiburi: Itta Yelin ve-Yehudit Harari kotvot otobiographia," *Katedra* 118 (2006): 41-66; and Zohar Weiman-Kelman, "'Emergency Regulation': Our Autobiography: Shulamit Hareven's *Many Days* as Fictional Autobiography/Autobiographical Fiction," *Thirdspace* 5, no. 1 (July 2005): <http://www.thirdspace.ca/vol5/toc5-1.htm>.

62 I thank the anonymous reader of *Prooftexts* for this formulation.

63 Tel Aviv: Zemora-Bitan, 1999.

64 *A Tale*, 350-51.

65 See for example, Gershon Shaked, "Matseva le-avot, siman le-vanim," *Israel* 7 (2005): 1-24, and other articles in the same issue of *Israel*.