

SHIMON ADAF AND THE PERIPHERAL NOVEL

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Introduction

In the 1950s, the vast waves of emigration of Jews from Arabic-speaking countries to Israel created a need to house all the newcomers and impelled the new state to confront problems of infrastructure. Initially, the newcomers were housed in *mahanot olim* (immigrant camps) and later in *ma'abarot* (transit camps.)

Early on, permanent housing was offered to immigrants in Arab neighborhoods and towns that had been vacated after the 1948 war, and later, development towns were constructed to house them. The population dispersal policy aimed to build a series of development towns in peripheral areas in Israel that had been sparsely occupied by Jews; towns such as Be-er Sheva and Ashkelon were classified as development towns. In Acre, Beit She-an, Ramla, and Lod, immigrants were housed in Arab neighborhoods evacuated during the 1948 war; later these towns were also classified as development towns. Some transit camps were transformed into development towns, including Kiryat Shmona, Or Akiva, Kiryat Malichi, and Sderot; from 1955 on, new development towns were built, including Shlomi, Ma-alot, Dimona, Kiryat Gat, and Ashdod. Some immigrants were sent to settle there immediately upon their arrival in Israel. The population dispersal policy incorporated plans for expanding the economic infrastructures that were later deferred, however, due to the country's economic crisis. As a result, the overall planning of the development towns was only partially implemented and although population planning was successful, the economic infrastructure was never put into place. Moreover, the small older communities adjacent to the development towns refused to collaborate. Thus, the dispersal of the population that should have resulted in integration led to its diametric opposite: immigrants found themselves stranded in outlying regions, without resources, with high unemployment rates, and few if any municipal services. The school system was less than perfect and the development towns failed to overcome their economic distress.¹

The canonical Hebrew literature that revolved in the twentieth century around the creation of the "New Jew" and the Sabra image of the native Israeli—who was usually of Ashkenazi origin—chose to locate its protagonists in utopian spaces such as the kibbutz, the moshav, and Jewish cities.² Israeli

spaces such as transit camps, downtrodden neighborhoods, and development towns were rarely mentioned.

In the 1960s, Shimon Ballas's *Ha-ma-abara* (The Transit Camp; 1964)³ was the first to portray the transit camps. The novel describes immigrants from Iraq, living temporarily in the Oriya transit camp, who have no sense of belonging, and are plunged into helplessness. In addition to this novel, other literary works described the harsh conditions in the transit camps, including Sami Michael's *Shavim ve-shavim yoter* (All Men Are Equal, But Some Are More So; 1974), and Lev Hakak's *Ha-asufim* (Stranger among Brothers; 1977).⁴ In Batya Shimoni's study of transit camp stories, she presents the *ma-abara* (transit camp) as a liminal space, a location neither here nor there, where the traits of the past no longer exist but those of the future have not yet formed. She maintains that "the transit camp's central, most prominent quality in all the literary works is that it is ex-territorial,"⁵ a space viewed as a "non-place," detached and isolated, a place of mud, dirt, and death, that is often interspersed with a sense of entrapment; the feeling that there is no way out for the protagonists.

In recent decades, tension between the hegemonic-Zionist space and the peripheral space has become an integral facet of Mizrahi literature. The transit camp has given way to descriptions of a neighborhood or a development town. These describe the vibrant life in marginal and peripheral spaces that is engraved in the identities of immigrants as well as the identities of their children. As Batya Shimoni remarks:

As in transit-camp stories, there is a close affinity between the characters' geo-social living space and their existential condition. But the transit camp was a liminal space with inherent hopes for change, though they were generally dashed, while the neighborhood or development town was usually depicted in literature as a choking, castrating space where the only options for escape were crime or becoming more religious—two choices that reflect not only feelings of alienation from normative Israeli society, but also defiance of it.⁶

Many works portray neighborhood spaces. One notable novel is *Tel Aviv Mizrah* (1998),⁷ the sequel to Shimon Balas's *Ha-ma-abara*, in which he presents the same characters and their lives ten years later. Interestingly, the book was ready for publication in the 1960s, a few years after *Ha-ma-abara* appeared, but it was turned down by the publishers and in fact was published only thirty years later. Balas was the first to write about a neighborhood that was designed to provide permanent homes for immigrants who had left the transit camps. Other literary presentations of such spaces can be found in works of younger authors such as Albert Suissa in *Akud* (The Bound; 1990),⁸ which depicts Jerusalem's Ir Ganim neighborhood, and in Dudu Busi's *Ha-yareach yarak ba-wadi* (The Moon is Green on the Wadi; 2000)⁹ set in Tel Aviv's Hatikva neighborhood. Ronit Matalon's *Zarim babayit* (Stranger at Home; 1992)¹⁰ is a collection of short stories that do not articulate a specific location in Israel, but relate to a peripheral neighborhood

on the fringes of the Tel Aviv metropolis. In these texts, the protagonists are children living in a poor and isolated neighborhood on the outskirts of a large city, a space that produces marginal people, unable to escape from it or find acceptance in mainstream society.

Shimon Adaf's works, including *Kilometer ve-yomaim lifnei ha-shkia* (One Mile and Two Days before Sunset; 2004), *Halev ha-kavur* (A Mere Mortal; 2006), *Panim tzruvei hama* (Sunburned Faces; 2008), and *Mox nox* (2011)¹¹ highlight the tension between Israel's periphery — in this case, a southern development town — and the Tel Aviv metropolis. Unlike most other texts, which are set in poor neighborhoods close to a big city, Adaf's works stress the geographical distance between the two locations, and capture the protagonists' incessant movement between them. In fact, contrary to Shimon's claim, Adaf's protagonists are capable of putting the southern development town behind them and "making it" in the big city without turning to crime or religion. Their success is only external, however, in that a sense of foreignness always clings to them wherever they might be.

Adaf's peripheral novels illustrate the multifaceted relationships between the periphery and the center. These relationships evolve through his writing and utilize different spatial concepts. Here, I examine Adaf's *Sunburned Faces* and *Mox Nox* by applying Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of "striated" space and "smooth" space to elaborate on the differences between the two novels, their diverse attitudes toward space, and their ideological significance. I then discuss the spatial processes in the works of Adaf and his shift toward "nomadic art."

Getting Lost in *Sunburned Faces*

Sunburned Faces is a three-part novel: the first part focuses on Flora, a child growing up in Netivot, the second part depicts her twenty years later, now a mother and a writer living in Tel Aviv, and the third is a shorter part that contains an excerpt from a book she is writing.

The first part, describing Flora's childhood, paints a picture of a vibrant town. Although it is disadvantaged and poor, the town is not viewed through a prism of discrimination or scarcity. The families and their beliefs (such as the holiness of the Baba Sali) are not presented from a distant, folkloristic perspective, but are part of the living and breathing fabric.

At the age of twelve, Flora walks home from school one day and is attacked by a gang from her school. When she gets home, with a deep cut in her forehead, she stops talking and stays mute for two months.

The narrative opens on the night the power of speech is restored to her, the night when she apparently sees a divine vision while watching TV in the living room:

And God told her: 'arise, shine; for thy light has dawned¹²
And he let her fall down from her life, although she did not know how high
she was. And she fell.¹³

Flora attributes divine meaning to the voice emanating from the TV, presumably the daily Torah portion that once concluded Israeli TV broadcasts.¹⁴ The quotation is from Isaiah, 60:1. This metaphysical experience leads her to change her name to "Ori" (literally, "my light"), and to end her self-imposed silence. After this revelation, she changes: the revelation intensifies her awareness of new sights and voices and of her family and friends:

Different birds drew her attention every step of the way: a sparrow, a warbler and a house sparrow. She did not see them as a mass of grey chirping feathers. Each bird existed in its singularity: species separate from species, part separate from part. With no words to hide the difference and cover the boundaries between existence and existence the world grasped by the senses becomes clear. Even if sometime it seems as if the opposite is the right answer. Language pays the penalty for creating distinctions but only to a certain limit. Beyond this limit, it is too general, obscure. It lacks sharpness.¹⁵

Ori's revelatory experience occurs at puberty, at the end of an innocent childhood that plunged her into the world of adults and her mother's illness. Na-ama Gershi commented that "After the revelation, Ori becomes more aware and better understands the townspeople's economic hardships, her parents' battle for everyday existence, and the fear of losing their jobs. Her gaze at her surroundings becomes more involved and compassionate."¹⁶

With her growing awareness of her surroundings, Ori is pulled into the world of books: "During the Passover break, two weeks after her Bat-Mitzvah party, a desire for reading was born in Ori, while a desire for writing hastily followed, like a pair of twins bursting from the womb; the hand of one clutching at her sister's heel, at her neck."¹⁷ Unlike the books on her school reading list, such as Galila Ron-Feder's *Ba-or u-ba-seter* (In Light and in Secrecy), about Ze'ev Jabotinsky, or *El atsmi* (To Myself) with its focus on Israeli teenagers, Ori prefers fantasy and is captivated by a series of books titled *Erela, ha-feya ha-hokeret* (Erela, the Fairy Detective), about an English girl whose parents are killed in an accident when she is twelve. She, after substantial suffering, relocates to a magical land¹⁸ and there, she becomes a heroine and solves mysteries. Once Ori discovers the magic land, she alternates between the fantastic realms of the books and the local space of Netivot. She begins to see Netivot through the perspective of her older sister, who calls this space "*balad jua*," the village of hungry people. The transition between the two spaces reveals both the city and the family space. Netivot is described as heat-wave, insect stricken, production-line,¹⁹ with a glassy east wind and exhausted birds.²⁰ Her family's hardships also worsen. Ori's mother is dying, her sister feels trapped and plans to escape from Netivot, and their brother, Asher, is entangled in an abusive relationship with two gym teachers.

The first part of the book closes as it opened, with a mystical encounter with God. But this time, it is not God who makes contact with Ori; rather she calls Him. During her school's annual fieldtrip to the countryside, Ori seeks to return to God what he had given her:

To give, to return what has been lent to her. What she has grown weary of. Two images appeared before her eyes: Asher surrounded by Judi and Josh, fondling him, her mother in their living-room coughing and spitting blood on the floor. What's the point of it all? She was cheated. It was all a lie from the very beginning, since he restored the power of speech to her.²¹

The book's second part is set in 2006, twenty years later. Ori lives in Tel Aviv, is married to a computer analyst, has a four-year-old daughter, and is the author of a successful series of books for children and teenagers. Ori left Netivot after her mother's death. Her siblings left home, whereas her father, whose love she always longed for but never received, has remarried. Ori left home to attend a Jerusalem boarding school when she was fourteen, and later attempted to build a new life in Tel Aviv, totally cut off from her birthplace, which she refuses to visit. Yet Tel Aviv is not a home for her either: Tel Aviv repels her. It is full of cockroaches,²² and alien. The adult Ori has failed to create a world of her own. She does not know where she is or "why she came here."²³

Ori the grown woman continues to escape from realistic spaces to fantastic ones. In an essay she writes about the land of magic, she describes how the child-heroine can be transported into another world, and thus leaves reality. Similar spatial transitions are created in the books she writes for teenagers, entitled for example: *Me-avar la-harei ha-hoshech* (Across the Dark Mountains), and *Mapa la-halicha le-ibud* (A Map for Getting Lost.) Gershi maintains that the novel's second part:

...becomes a journey of wandering in search of the secret door that will allow the heroine (and the readers) to step out of the nauseating world of the present, but there is no such magical door, neither in the many quotations from literature, nor in the fantasy chapters that Ori writes at the end of the book.²⁴

Though Ori lives in Tel Aviv, she is not wholly there: as her husband says, "it's as if this part takes you over, it's your whole world. You're closed in your own universe... I no longer know where you are—there or here with us."²⁵

The end of the second part might be the conclusion of the whole narrative, since the third part presents an excerpt from the book that she is writing. It can be seen as the end of a long maturation process, and an abandonment of the fantasy world, since Ori returns to her husband and daughter. This part ends with a hint about a third mystical experience—a ray of light strikes her in the novel's actual last line, suggesting a form of acceptance and even a metaphysical tikkun. However, it may be too naive and not convincing enough to conclude with such an optimistic gaze,²⁶ since the final part of the novel presents the last chapter of the Ariella series that Ori is writing, which might imply that the solution to Ori's problem is an aesthetic one.

This last part is shorter, printed in a different font, and ostensibly targets adolescent readers. In this part, Ori describes the character of Ariella, who learns the secret of all the magic lands, and takes on the mission of safeguarding them. Concluding the novel with this excerpt suggests that the continuous zigzagging between spaces continues, as does the unresolved quest for home.

This is also seen in the blog that Adaf creates for Ori. In this blog, her character speaks and answers readers' questions. The blog emphasizes that the narrative is not hermetically closed and thus questions, difficulties, and uncertainty continue to diffuse around the protagonist.²⁷

According to Yael Dekel, *Panim tzuvei hama* constructs "a new interpretation of the tension between 'the place' and 'a place,' an interpretation that nevertheless maintains a gap between the two, manifesting a tension between the periphery and the center in Israel."²⁸ Gurevitz and Aran suggested that "the place" is one that is sanctified such as Israel or Jerusalem, and has an ideological charge that is generally experienced from outside.²⁹ In contrast, "a place," is an uncategorized, tangible, mundane place. Dekel develops the contrast between "a place" and "the place" to include the opposition between periphery and center, between Netivot and Tel Aviv. She creates an analogy between this novel and the works of Jewish maskilim in Europe who saw their birthplace in Eastern Europe as "a place" but aspired to "the place"—that is, the big city. When the maskilim finally reached the big city, they were confronted with a relentless sense of alienation and detachment and, in most cases, they found themselves in limbo.

Dekel discusses the inability to move from "a place" to "the place" successfully. Ori manages to flee from her birthplace in the development town to Tel Aviv. In the wake of her revelation, she begins reading and writing, developing a new language, the language of the hegemony, that leads her to become a renowned children's author.

We meet her in the second part of the work, living a normative, comfortable, family life that is completely antithetical to her childhood in Netivot. Yet at the same time, that experience becomes repellent and Ori fails to find her place, continuing to search but getting lost, mirroring the title of one of her books, *A Map for Getting Lost*.

Deleuze and Guattari use the concept of a rhizome—a branched root-like stem that connects rootless plants to the Earth by means of horizontal (not vertical) ties—to propose a different concept of space. In the context of deterritorialization, they make a distinction between "striated spaces"—arranged, divided, classifiable spaces, spaces of supervision, and territorial borders—that are directed by ideology, and "smooth spaces" that have no markers of transition or borders. These spaces are rhizomatic in that they have no center, and consist of lines of flight and unstable dynamism, offering a "flat multiplicity" that is multi-hued, though without any hierarchy.³⁰

Zionist ideology created a "striated space" with hierarchies of center and periphery, and borders demarcating populations. From this perspective, the development towns and their residents were eternally marginalized. *Panim tzuvei hama* is structured chronologically and linearly. The first part is set in Netivot, and the second takes place in Tel Aviv. Ori rarely leaves Tel Aviv and refuses to visit Netivot. She internalizes the cultural-ideological border between the two spaces, and thus, for her, leaving her birthplace would be a transition with no way back. Yet, by believing in this separation, Tel Aviv also becomes a "quarantine zone"—a place she cannot escape from, except

by entering a world of literary fantasies. In *Mox Nox*, however, the cultural-ideological border is treated differently.

Choosing a Nomadic Existence in *Mox nox*

Mox nox is constructed from two narratives: the first is the childhood narrative describing a sixteen-year-old protagonist living in a small development town. During the summer vacation, he is sent to work in the factory where his strict religious father works. The young man is torn between his need to work and his gratitude to his father, his incapability for physical labor, and his attraction to books and languages. The book's title is in Latin, the language he is teaching himself: *Mox nox* means "night is approaching." The young protagonist befriends R., the factory secretary who, according to rumor, is having an affair with the his father. She understands his difficulties and helps him get an education.

The second narrative portrays the protagonist as an adult. He is now an author who supplements his income by running workshops for affluent older women. Biographically, the protagonist of *Mox nox* has much in common with that of *Panim tzuvei hama*. Both fled from a development town and have become successful writers in the big city. In *Panim tzuvei hama*, however, the protagonist writes fantasies for children and teenagers, whereas the protagonist in *Mox nox* writes for adults and teaches creative writing to adults.

Other differences have to do with the structure of the narratives. *Panim tzuvei hama* is written in the third person, but *Mox Nox* is written in the first person, and is closer to the biography of Shimon Adaf, who was born in Sderot and relocated to Tel Aviv. In *Mox nox* the narrative is not chronologically structured, but rather forms a dialogue between times and spaces.

Like *Panim tzuvei hama*, *Mox Nox* depicts a brutal childhood landscape: "Plants and flowers almost never raised their heads, factories stretched out, coarse concrete houses, and steel, the distant hum of traffic, faded."³¹ The city's infrastructure is neglected:

The town is a patchwork, donations from private philanthropists or diaspora Jews were turned into eruptions of flowery green corners, painted concrete walls casting their shadows, wooden bowers for the recreation of the inhabitants, the calculated work of benches and shadow giving palm trees, cracked villas in the background, unraveled walls.³²

The factory that the young protagonist is sent to is an uninviting place:

The smell of the welders' garage hit my face as I entered; the scorched metal screaming as its singes the water used to cool it, the sweet heavy smell of oil burning my nostrils, other cold scents, of iron waiting to be forged, iron poles, cigarette fumes slowly moving through the air from the abandoned yard peeking from the other side, smoking was prohibited in the welding space with the flammable melding gases, oh, and the smell of fire, not burn-

ing, the exact smell of the flame, the smell of man, a pack-like presence of bodies with a sickening earthly perspiration.³³

The town is presented as an undesirable location, like a prison that is virtually impossible to escape from, although escape is a prerequisite for success. The protagonist's older sister flees the town and when the child narrator feels abandoned, their mother comments "you're a strong boy, a man; you'll find your way out."³⁴

The secretary, R. wants to leave, but fails to do so. She knows that geographical changes are not enough, because even if people leave the town and live elsewhere, the suffocating space of childhood cannot be uprooted. She expresses this belief in a poem:

A new land will not be found by you, a new sea will not spread before your feet
 the city will follow you, you will sojourn the same
 streets. In the same neighborhoods you will grow old
 turn gray and go with the houses.
 you will always reach this city. For another you will yearn —
 for you there is no ship, no path.
 since you destroyed your life here
 in this forsaken corner, this is how
 they slipped through your fingers through all the world.³⁵

As in *Panim tzuvei hama*, the adult narrator moves to Tel Aviv but fails to find his place in the new urban setting. In the narrative of the present, the adult protagonist is living in an Arab suburb of a big city, apparently Jaffa. His house is foreign to him, as are the other people living there:

I stand in front of the apartment door, place the bags on the floor, the key fumbles in the lock, the lock pins are worn-out, either from rust or violent handling, the metal is tired, almost broken, I walk in, the light that I leave when I exit, humming neon tubes, even during the midday hours, imbues the space with unworldly glory, I have entered an alien abode.³⁶

He walks alone; though familiar with the city, he never feels part of it.

Adaf describes the hierarchy of space in Israeli geography in terms of a new diaspora:

In the Promised Land, the diaspora continues cautiously and securely flourishing like a lethal virus, and time after time pockets of diaspora are created in the Israeli reality. I grew up in that sort of quarantine, it is known as Sderot, and my parents were terminally sick with foreignness.³⁷

Each of the two novels describes an escape from the margins of the development town, situated in the country's periphery, to the center in Tel Aviv. In both works, the characters escape their hometown only to feel foreign in

the big city. For Ori, leaving Netivot implies complete detachment from the hometown, whereas in *Mox nox* the narrator constantly moves between times and spaces.

Unlike the first, in the second novel the protagonist roams and wanders between the different spaces and renounces their demarcation or hierarchy. He simultaneously belongs and does not belong to either of them. Though he aspires to cut himself off from his hometown, the second part of the work provides a detailed description of his visit there and his relations with his mother and siblings. Again feeling entrapped, unable to move from one space to another, he eliminates borders between the sites, creating a continuous and dynamic route.

Michel de Certeau distinguishes between the concepts of place and space: “the distinction emerges not as a binary opposition but as a relationship of potentiality and realization...while place is ‘objectively there,’ the constructed cultural given space is what the subject makes of place in order to inhabit it.”³⁸ Place is static, while space is created by the subject in a changing context, and is always dynamic. Whereas place can be observed from the outside, space is experienced from within. In de Certeau’s words, “in relation to place, space is like a word when it is spoken.”³⁹ The distinction between place and space is analogous to that between a map and an itinerary or trajectory, where space is a specific realization of place. Thus, while a map shows lines and borders, the subject’s wandering through space may cross borders, and transform them into bridges and thresholds, which generates deterritorialization.

In *Panim tzruvei hama*, the protagonist could not move freely between the spaces, which in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, were “striated.” She could only wander between spaces in her fantasy world. Unlike Ori, the protagonist of *Mox nox* lives a nomadic existence, dismantling the borders and constructing a “smooth space.” Yet, this rejection of the border has a price, because the rhizome has no hierarchy and makes it impossible to hold on to anything—whether land, a genetic code, or a household—anything with a principled definition of what belongs, and what is Other.⁴⁰

Thus, for example, the protagonist does not last in any kind of job:

I worked in almost every possible field, I confess, anything made possible by my lack of a profession; I made a career from a lack of profession, I hated every minute, dishwasher in a restaurant, yes that place in that pedestrian mall, salesman, stock-boy in a computer company, sorting mail at night in the main branch, a receptionist in a communication company, before the cellular revolution, a telemarketer, yes me, working in the archives of a national newspaper, cutting articles, gluing, cataloguing, shoe salesman, writing seminars for students, menial editing jobs.⁴¹

He does not know the other residents of his building, “does not speak to the neighbors for better or worse,”⁴² and remains remote from the human race: “I do not despise the masses, to despise would indicate I feel something towards them, that I am angry or frustrated by their rejection, but I am apathetic,

they have nothing to say to me, their culture does not have anything to do with me."⁴³ He enjoys watching events from a distance. For example, he observes the city while riding a bus, providing an extremely detailed description:

I sometimes take buses, the city lines, crossing the urban landscape, along its longitude, along its sides. For no actual reason at all...the air-conditioner in the hot days, and I've mentioned how the air boils, helps. Not during the rush hours, then the solar beasts turn to cattle cars, not to mention death trains with the squeezed paupers, pressed against each other on the way to the day's labor, no, I won't stoop that low. But during the early morning hours, the afternoon, sometimes in the early evening, the sun kisses the shoreline and the light pouring through the window, an ancient polluting radiation. I am known as more than a lonely passenger, I busy myself with something, sometimes wearing headphones, listening to a certain something, when the light human bustle, mostly in the early morning hours that lack the congestion, seeps into it ...I gaze out the windows, a tourist in the big city that inhales cell after cell in my flesh, first in the skin, then with its hatred, and the tar, so much tar, determined to remind us that, in its core, being is a matter of stench.... I prefer the suburban lines, moving through slow elaborate air-polluted paths, in heavy traffic almost asleep, yet awake.⁴⁴

He chooses not to belong, can move freely, but only in a condition of nomadism. He is always an outsider. As in Hannah Naveh's words, he exists:

...beyond the consensus and social structures that their owners consider universal. Because he has no aspiration for territorialization, the nomad does not function in the universal roles deriving from those structures: the roles and duties of family and home, social functions and obligations, and the institutions of the nation-state as defined and structured in Western society, that has constructed itself a home attached to a piece of land.⁴⁵

Interestingly, this nomadism is not only a lifestyle choice but also an aesthetic one since it is articulated in the structure and the style of the novel. The protagonist is a writer who has chosen to write literature that does not target the masses. The book he is writing deviates from a spatial or temporal order, avoids empathy and intimacy (for example, there are no names in the book, no names of people or places, just initials.) It is constructed as a stream, occasionally dotted with periods and commas.⁴⁶ It does not allow the reader to cling to anything.

In thematic and poetic terms, the book actually adopts the nomadic gaze; it is what Deleuze and Guattari define as "nomadic art." It replaces long-distance vision with close-range vision, thus creating a haptic, tactile space lacking any boundaries or categories.⁴⁷ Nomadic movement is grounded on the notion that things are subject to a process-based continuing context, with no place for fixation.

In their writings on nomadism and rhizomatic thought, Deleuze and Guattari devote a pivotal place to the question of "becoming" as a means of escaping the territorial system of power (Oedipal, binary, genealogical.) By

replacing the aspiration for a stable, unchanging identity, “becoming” is associated with an identity that develops *ad infinitum*. The absence of fixation of the home, the temporality of borders, and the unending process of becoming,⁴⁸ which are only possible in the context of a minority, suggests that “there is no becoming majoritarian; majority is never becoming. All becoming is minoritarian.”⁴⁹

Rosi Braidotti deals with nomadism from a feminist point of view, and associates nomadism and the notion of identity; in that context, she maintains that, “this figuration expresses the desire for an identity made of transitions, successive shifts, and coordinated changes, without and against an essential unity.”⁵⁰ The perception of “becoming,” i.e., abandoning aspirations for unity and instead stimulating the desire for a process of infinite becoming, results from the rhizomatic perspective, where there is no center or boundary, and the lines extend everywhere.

The absence of the fixation of the home and the temporality of borders replaces the Zionist ideological aspiration for a stable unchanging identity with the perception of *ad infinitum* “becoming.” *Mox Nox* presents an aesthetic alternative that deliberately resists any fixed notion of space and identity. It creates unease in the reader, prompting a never-ending quest, a continuous estrangement. Yet while doing so, it does not allow the hegemonic concepts take over the self-definition of the minority, but rather reveals its struggle for new formations.

While in *Panim tzruvei hama* Shimon Adaf criticizes spatial perception but does not break down barriers, in *Mox Nox* he expresses the implications of his minority status boldly. In the later novel he takes another step in his mission to transform the defined and demarcated Zionist “striated space”—where R. the secretary is unable to leave town and achieve self-fulfillment—into a “smooth space,” where the protagonist can move around unhindered. Wandering is the only option for him. It is both a way of life and an art, and it is what subverts the possibility of a fixed identity, the kind of identity that only the hegemonic can enjoy. This kind of nomadism liberates him, but also renders him eternally homeless.

Endnotes

- 1 Dvora Cohen, "Aliya u-klita," *Megamot ba-hevra ha-israelit*, ed., E.Ya-ar Z. Shavit (Tel Aviv: The Open University Press, 1995), vol 1, 365–486.
- 2 Ktzia Alon, and Dalia Markovich, "Yalda sh'hora, pere atzil," *Hakivun mizrah* 8 (2004): 10–12. See also, Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, trans. H. Watzman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.)
- 3 Shimon Ballas, *Ha-ma-abara* (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 1964.)
- 4 Sami Michael *Shavim ve-shavim yoter* (Tel Aviv: Bustan, 1974), Lev Hakak, *Ha-asufim* (Tel Aviv: Tamus, 1977.) Translated into English as: *Stranger Among Brothers* (Los Angeles: Ridgefield Pub. Co., 1984.)
- 5 Batya Shimoni, *Al saf ha-geula* (Or Yehuda: Kinneret, zmora bitan, 2008), 80.
- 6 Shimoni, *Al saf ha-geula*, 256.
- 7 Shimon Ballas, *Tel Aviv mizrah* (Tel Aviv: Bimat kedem, 1998.)
- 8 Albert Suissa, *Akud* (Tel Aviv: Ha'kibbutz ha' meuhad, 1990.)
- 9 Dudu Busi, *Ha-yareach Yarok ba-wadi* (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 2000.)
- 10 Ronit Matalon, *Zarim ba-bait* (Tel Aviv: Ha'kibbutz ha' meuhad, 1992.)
- 11 Shimon Adaf, *Kilometer ve-yomaim lifnei ha-shkia* (Jerusalem: Ketter, 2004), *Halev ha-kavur* (Tel Aviv: A'huzat bait, 2006), *Panim tzuvei hama* (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 2008) and *Mox nox* (Or Yehuda: Kinneret, zmora, bitan, 2011.) *Mox nox* was awarded the Sapir Literary Prize in 2012.
- 12 Transliterated from Hebrew as: "kumi, ori, ki ba orech."
- 13 Adaf, *Panim tzuvei hama*, 14. All literary excerpts have been translated into English by Tamar Gerstenhaber.
- 14 Yosef Oren, "Panim tzuvei hama," in: *Tzav kri-a la-safrut ha-israelit* (Rishon Le-zion: Yahad, 2009), 128–143.
- 15 Adaf, *Panim tzuvei hama*, 17.
- 16 Naama Gershi, "Netivot," *Haaretz Literature Supplement*, 796 (May 28, 2008), 16.
- 17 Adaf, *Panim tzuvei hama*, 27.
- 18 Unlike those written by Ron-Feder, which refer to actual books, the series of books on Erel, the fairy detective, is an invention.
- 19 Adaf, *Panim tzuvei hama*, 9.
- 20 Adaf, *Panim tzuvei hama*, 206.
- 21 Adaf, *Panim tzuvei hama*, 210.
- 22 Adaf, *Panim tzuvei hama*, 297.
- 23 Adaf, *Panim tzuvei hama*, 220.
- 24 Gershi, "Netivot."
- 25 Adaf, *Panim tzuvei hama*, 386.
- 26 See Oren, "Panim tzuvei hama."
- 27 See <http://blogs.bananot.co.il/showPost.php?blogID=48>.
- 28 Yael Dekel, "A Chronotope of Periphery to Center—Between Netivot and Tel Aviv in Adaf's 'Panim tzuvei hama,'" (paper presented at the 25th annual conference, the Association for Israel Studies, Be-er Sheva, Israel, June 1–3, 2009.)
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- 44 Adaf, *Mox Nox*, 21.
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- 47 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 492–4.
- 48 Rosi Braidotti, "Affirming the Affirmative," *Rhizomes* 11/12 (Fall 2005/Spring 2006.)
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