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Batya Shimony

Israel Studies, Volume 18, Number 1, Spring 2013, pp. 146-169 (Article)

Published by Indiana University Press



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Shaping Israeli-Arab Identity in Hebrew Words—The Case of Sayed Kashua

ABSTRACT

Most research and surveys that deal with the complex identity of the Arabs in Israel refer to the Arab, Palestinian, and Israeli components in their identity. Kashua adds the Jewish-Zionist component to the discussion and explores its dominance in shaping the identities of the Arabs in Israel. I use the term Jewish-Arab as a mirror image of the Arab-Jew in order to analyze the conflicted identity of Kashua's Arab characters. The use of the identity of Arab-Jew by the third generation of Mizrahi writers functions as a challenge to the hegemony of Zionist discourse. Kashua's *Herzl Disappears at Midnight* (2005) and *Second Person Singular* (2008) create a realization of the term Jewish-Arab and take the situation of the conflicted identity to an extreme and provocative end, in order to emphasize the dead-end situation of Arabs in Israel.

INTRODUCTION

THE IDENTITY CRISIS OF THE ARABS IN ISRAEL HAS BEEN DISCUSSED in many studies.¹ One of the main reasons for this crisis is that Israeli Arabs are simultaneously influenced by two significant identity factors—on the one hand, Palestinian society in the occupied territories, and on the other, Jewish society. Studies therefore tend to examine this question of identity from the point of view of shifts between Israelization and Palestinianization. This process is fluid and complex and changes as various events occur in the political, national, and social arenas. Due to the dynamism of the situation, surveys conducted in recent years indicate fluctuations in the identity of Israeli Arabs: at times they emphasize the Palestinian element of their

identity, at others the Arab element, which is perceived as more neutral,² and they do this while defining themselves as Israelis or Israeli citizens. Peres and Ben-Rafael note that within Arab society in Israel are “complex identities that are both in congruence and in conflict with one another, reflecting the internal conflicts to which Israeli Arabs are exposed.”³

Despite the changing emphasis on the various components of identity during times of crisis, it is possible to mark an ever-increasing process of Palestinianization since the 1967 war.⁴ Rouhana argues that the emphasis on Palestinian identity among Israeli Arabs was actually a result of the fact that the State of Israel, defined as a Jewish state, did not provide them any kind of national identity: “The vast majority of my interviewees expressed willingness to become full Israelis, provided that the system was modified to allow such an identity to be meaningful.”⁵

However, these same interviewees knew for certain that such a situation was not possible, and that the State of Israel would not promote such integration. The increasing sense of alienation from the state (and from Jewish society⁶), and the natural need for a sense of belonging to a group, has led Israeli Arabs to emphasize the Palestinian component of their identity, while the Israeli element serves only for practical purposes, such as legal and formal aspects of living within the state.

Smootha argues, on the other hand, that “Arabs in Israel see no contradiction between their Palestinianization after 1967 and their Israelization after 1948. The Israelization process made them bilingual and bi-cultural, without their being assimilated into the Jewish majority. Even today they have high Israeli standards and aspirations. They are resigned to their fate as Israeli citizens and see their future in Israel, hoping that a solution to their plight will be found within the framework of the state of Israel and not by disconnecting from it.”⁷

Historical and sociological research outlines trends (at times contradictory) and presents a broad picture in relation to defining the identity of Arabs in Israel and the way they perceive themselves. Naturally, this type of research deals with generalizations. Upon examining these questions of identity through literature, nuances are revealed that often do not surface within socio-historical discourse. Thus for example, Karen Grumberg learns of the identity perception of Israeli Palestinians in the works of Sayed Kashua through the manner in which he shapes various spaces such as the blockade, the village, and the Palestinian home. She arrives at an interesting conclusion: not only can Israeli Palestinians not identify with the Zionist Israeli narrative, but “. . . they cannot fully participate in Palestinian

national culture either, since its central components are memory, yearning, and the dream of return—to the land where Israeli Palestinians still live.”⁸

The Catch-22 situation expressed in the socio-historical discourse on the tension between Israeliness and Palestinianess receives an added dimension in Grumberg’s discussion as she clarifies the tension inherent in the Palestinian identity.

This article examines further the issue of identity in Kashua’s work, with reference to an additional dimension. Most research and surveys have referred to the Arab, Palestinian, and Israeli components in the identity of Israeli Arabs. Kashua also throws into the cauldron of identities the Jewish-Zionist component and its dominance in shaping the identities of the Arabs in Israel. Socio-historical discussions usually present this component as the national-political factor preventing Arabs from being citizens of equal status in light of Israel’s definition as a Jewish state.⁹ As a writer, Kashua has the freedom to deal with the influence of the Jewish identity over the complex combinations among identities of Israeli Arabs. He offers a bold and innovative perspective on the subject.

NEW CATEGORIES OF IDENTITY: THE ARAB-JEW AND THE JEWISH-ARAB

Sayed Kashua (1975) grew up in the Arab village of Tira. He is a Muslim Arab-Israeli author and publicist and writes a weekly satirical column for an Israeli newspaper. He is the principal writer of Israel’s Channel 2 hit comedy series *Avoda Aravit* (Arab Labor), which deals with Jewish-Arab relations. When he was 15 he was accepted to a prestigious boarding school in Jerusalem—Israel Arts and Science Academy—at a time when very few Arab students attended the school. These years were very significant in shaping his identity. In his first novel, *Dancing Arabs*,¹⁰ the narrator, an Arab adolescent who had never left his village, tells of his first encounter with Jewish society and the prejudices it holds against him.

Kashua is part of a new generation within the group of Arab authors who write in Hebrew. His voice is unusual within this group, alongside that of Ayman Sikseck (1984).¹¹ Members of the previous generation include authors such as Naim Araidi (1950) and Anton Shammas (1950). Reuven Snir¹² emphasizes the deep internal rift bilingual Arab and Jewish authors experience in their creative work and lives. Blending Hebrew and Arab cultures makes Araidi anxious. “On the one hand you don’t want to lose yourself, but on the other hand you do want to fit in.”¹³

According to Snir, Araidí is cautiously having his cake and eating it too, while Shammas takes an active stance that strives for resolution. Shammas “embarked on an all-out war against the exclusive ownership of the Hebrew language by Israeli Jews, and criticizes the ethnic norm that identifies every Hebrew writer as being Jewish. As he sees it, Hebrew has ceased to function as the language of Zionism, [. . .] and has become the language of the State of Israel and all its citizens. He advocates its becoming the language of anyone who speaks it.”¹⁴ Here, the full magnitude of the identity problem faced by Arab authors writing in Hebrew is revealed.

The Hebrew language heralded the New Hebrew identity forming in Israel as the Zionists settled the land. “At the center of the anti-Diaspora ethos [. . .] was a moral distinction between the Diaspora Jew and the new Jew—the Israeli Jew. This distinction found symbolic linguistic expression in the Yishuv period in the term Hebrew (which was really a synonym for Zionist) and, after the state was founded, in the term Israeli,” states sociologist Oz Almog.¹⁵ As a culture, Hebrewism merges the Jewish, Zionist, and Israeli identities, and the Hebrew language is saturated with values derived from them.

Shammas believed that members of his ethnic minority would want to participate in his utopian vision, to overcome the language barrier and expand their horizons. However, in reality, Arab society showed little interest in his views, and some even ridiculed them.¹⁶ Araidí’s and Shammas’ views were unorthodox for their time.¹⁷ Snir, followed by Elad-Bouskila, emphasize that both these writers are not Muslim (Araidí is Druze and Shammas is Christian). Snir implies the two chose bilingual writing precisely because they were misfits in their natural Arab literary arena.¹⁸ Elad-Bouskila adds that their non-Muslim identity allowed them to integrate more easily into the Israeli milieu, and therefore be exposed to the Hebrew language and culture.¹⁹ Rachel Feldhay Brenner²⁰ examined the identity crisis in the Hebrew works of three Arab authors: Attalah Mansour (1934), Anton Shammas, and Emile Habiby (1921–96). While Habiby actually wrote in Arabic, his works were translated by Shammas with the author’s permission and under his supervision. She claims that these authors’ decision to write in Hebrew in an autobiographical mode reflects the interaction between the Jewish and Arab identities and creates a dialogue that carries potential for healing.

Kashua belongs to the third generation of Israeli-Arab writers.²¹ On the one hand he has undergone a process of assimilating into Jewish society and its culture; he lives and works within it and has daily contact with Jews. On the other hand, he belongs to a generation born into the post-1967

reality, whose members came of age in the midst of the first and second Intifadas. According to sociological research, “The more [Israeli] Arabs are young, religious, with lower income and belonging to the Muslim faith, the more they distance themselves from Jews and an Israeli identity.”²²

Kashua’s path differs from that of most members of his generation—he is educated, secular, and successful. However, he too expresses a more extreme stance than his predecessors when it comes to the identity rift experienced by Israeli Arabs. There are several differences between them; first, he is a Muslim; in addition, while the veteran Arab writers maintained a certain balance between both languages in their work, Kashua writes exclusively in Hebrew as a result of being educated within the Jewish school system. While his predecessors could choose and shift between languages and identities, for Kashua Hebrew is his default language as he claims: “To write in Arabic the way I speak it, which is the Palestinian-Israeli dialect, is not an option. Books must be written in literary Arabic, which I don’t know well enough.”²³ Another difference is the choice of genre. Elad-Bouskila notes that the first Arab authors writing in Hebrew primarily wrote poetry, and Feldhay Brenner states that the previous generation of writers wrote autobiographical confessions. Kashua, however, started out with an autobiographical novel, but his next novels, and especially *Second Person Singular*,²⁴ are written in a realistic style taken to an absurd extreme. The plot unfolds in a completely plausible manner, but the absurd result, in which one body is replaced with another, one identity replaced with the other, raises even more anxiety and horror due to the realistic style.

Since his earliest works, Kashua has been preoccupied with the question of identity. In their article about the sitcom *Arab Labor*, Mendelson-Maoz and Steir-Livny shed light on the Jewification process undergone by the show’s leading character, Amjad.²⁵ They analyze a range of surreal scenes depicting Amjad’s pathetic attempts to be a part of the Jewish world, but which repeatedly prove “the impossible situation of an Arab in Israel, belonging to two worlds while simultaneously being shunned from both.”²⁶ While the rules of this particular television genre dictate a humorous presentation of this vexing problem, the researchers show that themes relating to the fate of the Jewish people, also appear in Kashua’s literary works, shaped in a tragic way.

Kashua is not satisfied with presenting the jolting of the Arab protagonist between the Arab or Palestinian aspect of his identity, and the Israeli one. He examines the option of another identity, foreign to the discourse, which creates anxiety—that of the Jewish-Arab. What is the Jewish-Arab identity? How and why was it formed? And in what sense does it create

anxiety? I seek to link this identity to its mirror image—the Arab-Jew, and the manner in which this identity functions within Hebrew society and literature. Thus, I examine Kashua's works against the backdrop of Hebrew literature and the development of a new literary generation—third generation Mizrahi writers.

These writers are the sons and grandsons of Jewish immigrants who came to Israel from Arab and North African countries as part of the great immigration wave of the 1950s. While first and second generation immigrants were forced to suppress their Arab-oriented cultural identity, members of the third generation exalt their parents' identity and seek to bring it back into public awareness. These are young, socially conscious individuals, well-versed in minority discourse. Many of them are intellectuals who were raised on the sabra identity and suppression of their Mizrahi (or Arab) roots, and are now seeking to change things. This group's main offering is an anthology,²⁷ which features different texts (fiction, memoirs, and essays) all seeking to bring to the surface the question of Mizrahi identity and to retrace its roots.

One of the central exponents of this group is Almog Behar (1978), a Spanish-Iraqi-Jewish²⁸ author and poet who was raised in a "white" Israeli environment, devoid of Mizrahi characteristics. Those had been erased by his parents, members of the second generation of Mizrahi-Jews who immigrated to Israel in the 1950s. Only upon achieving cognitive maturity, did Behar experience the depth of this loss and embark upon a process of seeking and recovering his lost culture. This quest can be seen in his work and life.²⁹ He uses the identity category of Arab-Jew to redefine his own identity and establish an alternative to the homogenous Israeli identity. As Hannan Hever and Yehudah Shenhav demonstrate, the term Arab-Jew has appeared in Israeli discourse since the earliest days of the state.³⁰ In those days this was a sustainable identity. The researchers note, for example, how the Zionist emissaries who went to Arab countries during the 1940s to encourage immigration to Israel described the Jews they encountered as Arab-Jews. This identity posed a threat to the Zionist project, which was largely defined on the basis of the conflict and hostile relations that existed between Jews and Arabs.³¹ As a result, the Mizrahi identity was created, its purpose being to erase the threatening Arabness from the identity of Jews from Arab countries.³²

Over the last two decades assertive action has been taken by Mizrahi activists seeking to challenge the homogenous Israeli identity. The identity category of Arab-Jews has been reintroduced into the discourse, when it seemed it had been extinct after generations of using the term Mizrahi.

The researchers argue that this is a contrived identity intended mainly for political purposes, to be used for battering the Ashkenazi identity that has dominated the Israeli public domain since the establishment of the state. In fact, most Mizrahi Jews completely reject a definition of themselves as Arab-Jews: "Arab-Jew has become [. . .] the marker for [the] cultural and political avant-garde. The few who have adopted this label generally aim to challenge the basic assumptions and limits of Zionist discourse."³³

The Jewish-Arab identity category through which I explore Kashua's works constitutes a mirror image of the aforementioned Arab-Jew identity. Both cases involve adoption of an identity component perceived as hostile within the Israeli-Zionist context. This is done in order to problematize the identity categories created by the hegemony seeking to neutralize the inherent threat they pose. The Mizrahi identity category was created to neutralize the Arab dimension in the identity of Jewish newcomers from Arab countries. The Israeli-Arab category was created to neutralize the Palestinian element in the identity of the Arabs in Israel, and thus to sever their bonds with the place. Another function of this category was to create the illusion of belonging, without really including these people as part of society.³⁴ The Mizrahi writers on the one hand, and Sayed Kashua on the other, are reintroducing elements that have been eliminated from the discussion, i.e., the Arabness of the Mizrahi Jews and the non-Jewishness of the Arabs, in order to cause provocation within the Israeli identity discourse. These new categories of identities are threatening in that they "contaminate" the hegemonic category of a clean and homogenous Israeli identity, devoid of Arabs and Arabness.

Kashua's innovativeness finds expression in two aspects. The first is his very act of introducing the Jewish identity into the tangle of identities of the Israeli Arab. The second is the manner in which he shapes the consummation of this impossible clash between hostile identities. These are the aspects I examine in Kashua's short story *Herzl Disappears at Midnight*,³⁵ and his latest novel *Second Person Singular*. In the short story, Kashua creates a fantastical realization of the metaphor of the split, when every night Herzl turns into an Arab. At the same time this only appears to be a split, as at their core, the two identities are tangled in a Gordian knot reflecting the stalemate situation of the Israeli-Arabs. In *Second Person Singular* he develops this theme and takes it to an extreme. He describes two options for Arab existence within the Jewish domain. The first is the realistic option of mimicry, while the second is a provocative, fantastical option, in which the Arab protagonist chooses to be completely absorbed into the Jewish identity. By the end of the discussion we shall see how the two fantastical

options intertwine and constitute a brilliant realization of the Biblical-archetypal potential hidden in both texts.

THE CINDERELLA SYNDROME

I offer a comparative reading of two stories: Kashua's *Herzl Disappears at Midnight* and *Ana Min Al-Yahoud*³⁶ by Almog Behar, which were published in 2005 in *Ha'aretz*. The similarity between the two writers should be noted, as they each constitute an original and provocative voice for a marginalized group that dedicates its work to challenging conventional attitudes of identities within Israeli society.³⁷

The initial stage in the problematization of the Arab identity is that of splitting, which is preceded by the discovery of otherness and the shame that accompanies it. These were revealed in *Dancing Arabs*. Fanon describes this stage: "And then the occasion arose when I had to meet the white man's eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. The real world challenged my claims. [. . .] Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity."³⁸ This is the moment in which the "other" experiences his own body as a negative signifier, a threatening presence that cannot be escaped. This moment is experienced as a defining moment by Kashua's young protagonist in his first week of studies in Jerusalem:

There was one time when they picked up on the fact that I was an Arab and recognized me. So right after that I became an expert at assuming false identity. It was at the end of my first week of school in Jerusalem. I was on the bus going home to Tira. A soldier got on and told me to get up. I cried like crazy. I'd never felt so humiliated.³⁹

This moment of "exposure", isolation, and branding, is the moment of shame—shame about the original identity, which until that moment had been as natural as skin, and which had now become a gaping wound.

After becoming aware of his otherness, a necessary split occurs in the subject's identity. This rift receives interesting realization in *Herzl Disappears at Midnight*. The story describes the fate of Herzl Haliwa who was born to a barren Jewish woman. In her distress she turns to God and begs him to bless her with a son "even if he is born half Arab". Her wish comes true, and the child is born "half-and-half". By day he is an Israeli-Jew living in Jerusalem's Rehavia neighborhood and working as an attorney, while at night he becomes a Muslim-Arab. The changes are manifest in all aspects of his

identity, from the language he speaks to actual physiological elements such as his taste in alcohol and cigarettes: “He becomes a different person, with different feelings, fears and hopes. However the only thing prominent about this change is the language. From midnight to sunrise he barely knows one word of Hebrew . . .”

Behar’s story *Ana Min Al-Yahoud* also describes a double identity, the Arab-Jew, wandering through the hostile Israeli domain. It opens with a change in identity that is immediately expressed in the language. The narrator suddenly begins to speak in a heavy Iraqi accent:

At that time, my tongue got twisted, and with the arrival of the month of Tammuz, the Arabic accent got stuck in my mouth, deep down in my throat, deeper than my throat. Just like that, as I was walking down the street, the Arabic accent of Grandfather Anwar, may he rest in peace, came back to me. No matter how hard I tried to get it out of me and throw it away in one of the public garbage bins I could not do it. I tried and tried to soften the glottal “Ayin”, [. . .] the way Mother did when she was a child, because of the teachers and the looks she got from the other children, but strangers passing by just kept me fixed in place. I tried to soften the “Het” [. . .] I tried to get rid of that glottal Iraqi “Quof”, but the effort failed.⁴⁰

Both stories feature a young Jewish man undergoing a surreal experience of double identity. In Kashua’s story, the two identities are dichotomous, whereas in Behar’s story the repressed Arab identity bursts out and takes over the narrator’s Jewish identity. The shift between identities is shaped in similar, yet different ways. Herzl speaks fluent Hebrew by day, but at night, as he turns into an Arab, the Arabic language takes over him and he can only speak a few words of Hebrew, such as, shekel, machsom (barricade), and beseder (ok), which are widely spoken by Israeli Arabs. These words ironically symbolize the status of Arabs in Israel, and express Israeli control over three central aspects of their lives: economic dependence, the restriction of movement through space, and perhaps the main aspect—the restriction of personal freedom—expressed in the submissive word beseder.

The penetration of these words into the fiber of the Arab identity intensifies the nature of the resistance expressed by Herzl’s Palestinian identity. The rift in his character seems absolute, and the two identities hardly mix at all. The Jewish identity belongs to the realm of day, while the Arab one belongs to the kingdom of night. The first is out in the open, it carries neither shame nor fear. The second is bound to a world of darkness, fear, and terror: “He doesn’t become just any Arab, but a proud nationalist

who refuses to go out in West Jerusalem because he cannot tolerate the humiliation and the selection at the door.” On those nights he sits with his friends and plans how to protest against the Occupation. Although nothing changes in his outward appearance it is clear to him that he is becoming a different person—“They can spot him out—of that he is certain.”

The complete division between the two identities seems to point at the possibility of choosing between two options for existence: assimilating into the dominant, “white” society, or complete identification with the Palestinian identity. But this is only an alleged choice, as the two identities in fact abide within one body. The story of the protagonist’s conception is shaped as a mythological one and enables another, more complex way of examining the issue of identity. This story is revealed when Herzl mulls over how to explain to his girlfriend his strange disappearance at night:

And maybe rather from the beginning, from that Rosh Hashanah 30-something years ago, when he was born . . . He’ll start with how his mother, that pious and childless woman who was about 40 at the time, was hoping for a child and in her prayer at the Western Wall begged God for a son, even if he was born half Arab.

The mythic dimension is constructed through symbolic elements such as the sacred date, the sacred location, and the Biblical story pattern of childless women giving birth after their prayers had been answered (especially relevant in this context is the story of Rebecca, whose twin sons, Jacob and Esau, whirled around within her). Also the opening: “And maybe rather from the beginning” brings to mind the Biblical Genesis, implying an attempt to retrace the origin of the tragedy of the Arab identity. However, all these elements hail from the Jewish religion. Thus Kashua points to the complexity of the Arab-Israeli situation. According to this interpretive framework the two identities are bound in a primordial, Gordian knot, like twins inextricably entangled in one another. The story of Herzl’s birth, shaped using mythical Jewish sources, reflects the Palestinian problem at large, which is also the result of having faith in God’s promise. Hence, the symbiotic links between the Jews and the Arabs, trapped in one body, in one land, are destined to remain unresolved. Behar’s protagonist also experiences a situation of a double identity—Arab and Jewish. The story opens with the Arab accent taking over the Jewish protagonist. The Arab identity of grandfather Anwar, who immigrated to Israel from Iraq, returns and breaks out from the darkness in which it was repressed. Despite his efforts to resist, he cannot ward off the identity that insists on resurrecting itself.

Unlike Kashua's character, whose identity is distinctly split, here the Arab identity pours into the Jewish-Israeli identity, and the whole process takes place in broad daylight.

The two stories are similar also in terms of the territory in which their plots unfold. They both take place in Jerusalem, a highly symbolic and meaningful place in the context of national and religious identity in Israel. However, this similarity serves to highlight the difference between them; in Kashua's story the physical split between West and East Jerusalem beautifully reflects the dichotomous split between the Jewish and Arab identities, whereas Behar's story presents an amalgamation, with the Arab region, after having been Judaicized, resurfacing in the white Jewish city. Herzl shifts between extremes—between the two parts of the city, the two parts of the day, and the two parts of his identity—in an organized, almost regimented manner. The day belongs to the Jewish identity, which is shaped as bourgeois, respectable, and white; the night belongs to his Arab identity, which is dark and dangerous.

Behar's protagonist moves through the streets of contemporary West Jerusalem but its Arab image keeps surfacing as it was prior to the 1948 War:

And I would start walking the streets of Katamon and the streets of Talbieh and the streets of Baqa and instead of seeing the wealthy Jerusalemites who dwelled there in the spacious homes, and instead of reading there on the street signs "Kovshei Katamon" and "Yordei Hasira", I'd once again see the wealthy Palestinians, as they were before the '48 war, as if there had never been a '48 war. I see them and they're strolling in the yards among the fruit trees picking fruit . . .⁴¹

The narrator walks through the streets of Jerusalem and with the power of his new-old awareness, the current landscape seems to be erased before his eyes, and he sees Jerusalem from behind the imperial landscape that was recoded following the '48 War.

The term "imperial landscape", as defined by W.J.T. Mitchell,⁴² indicates that the landscape is a clear expression of the imperial discourse. The landscape reflects the balance of social power and constitutes an instrument for applying blatant and real imperial force. The narrator peels the thin imperial veil off Jerusalem's contemporary landscape, manifested in the names of its streets, intended to claim ownership over the place: Kovshei Katamon⁴³ (the Conquerors of Katamon) and Yordei Hasira (commemorating the story of twenty-three Palmach fighters who disappeared on a sabotage mission in Lebanon in May of 1941); both represent military

actions and are part of the national narrative of Zionist Israel. The narrator's gaze simultaneously erases and resurrects. It erases the vestiges of the occupation while resurrecting the Arab names that echo the history of the place, as he observes the residents going about their daily life, strolling through the yards and picking fruit off the trees. The narrator uses verbs in the present-progressive tense to describe the Arabs, as if they had suddenly awakened from an imposed standstill of many years, picking up from where they had left off.

This almost romantic resurrection of the past is doomed to failure because in his tour through the neighborhood and his desire to make contact with its residents, he once again faces the language barrier. The same Arabic of longing that made him stand out to the Jewish policemen, becomes, upon encountering Arabs, the language of occupation and force, the Arabic he learned in the army, which does not allow him to communicate with them. Behar presents a near-impossible situation of a third generation Mizrahi-Jew raised with an empty identity, who in his longing for community and continuity seeks his roots in his grandfather's past. However, this is an Arab past that has been scarred almost beyond recognition by Israeli reality, which is dominated by a belligerent discourse and militaristic practice. Any attempt to revive the Arab past is met with suspicion, be it from the Jewish or Arab society, because the connecting thread has been lost, and the language has become a barrier instead of a mediating tool.

The public sphere also occupies a central place in both stories. The otherness exists out in the open, for all to see and judge, and is subject to social regimentation. While the secular Jewish identity is transparent and attracts no special attention, the Arab identity creates a commotion the moment it rears its head. Behar's protagonist says,

And policemen started to head assertively towards me on the streets of Jerusalem, and started pointing at me and my black beard with threatening fingers, started whispering among themselves in their patrol vehicles, stopping me and inquiring as to my name and identity. And for every passing policeman on the street I wanted to stop and pull out my identity card, point out the nationality line and tell them, as if I were revealing a secret that would absolve me of tremendous guilt: "Ana min al yahoud, ana min al yahoud."⁴⁴

The Arab identity within the Jewish-Israeli arena always involves "tremendous guilt", the result of nothing but the very identity—symbolized by the Arabic accent and the beard.⁴⁵ Repeating the sentence "Ana min

al-yahud”, poignantly reflects the trap the narrator finds himself in: if he shouts it out, it will not relieve him of the alleged guilt, but will only make him appear even more suspicious. In fact this is a hybrid sentence that echoes the hybridized identity Arab-Jew, a hybrid that the Israeli public sphere cannot tolerate.

In *Herzl Disappears at Midnight* the public gaze also plays an essential role. At night, as an Arab, he raises the suspicion of the border police officers in East Jerusalem. Although nothing has changed in his outward appearance:

They recognize it too, he’s sure. Before sunrise, Israeli Border Police often stop him on his way back to Ussishkin. It’s something else, maybe a smell, maybe fear. He knows it. He can feel more glances sent his way between midnight and sunrise. He feels looks of hatred and is gripped by a sense of persecution.

However, when he awakes at dawn in a hostel in the Old City, Jewish once again, he is graciously greeted by the warm smile of the reception clerk, the same clerk who just a few hours earlier forcefully addressed him in Arabic. When he wants to flee East Jerusalem because as a Jew he is vulnerable there, he practically runs, frightened, feeling almost as conspicuous as a group of yeshiva boys walking down the street—an easy target for fanatic Arabs.

Both stories therefore realize the identity categories of Jewish-Arab and Arab-Jew. Seemingly, this is simply a process of hyphenation, which occurs regularly within contemporary multicultural societies. However, this is not so simple but rather accentuates the complexity of these two Israeli identities, rejected due to their Arabness—the Arab identity on the one hand and the Mizrahi on the other. Much like Grumberg’s position, this is not a hybrid situation as was defined by Homi Bhabha.⁴⁶ The clash between these two identities does not create a new, fertile, and fluid space for identities, but rather intensifies and validates the social and political stands that created the tension between the two in the first place.

SECOND PERSON SINGULAR—AN IDENTITY CRISIS

In *Herzl Disappears at Midnight*, Kashua chronicles the simultaneous merge and split between Jew and Arab. This idea is taken even further in Kashua’s latest novel, *Second Person Singular*, which presents two parallel storylines that intersect frequently. One storyline describes the life of a successful,

nameless attorney and is told in the third person. The second plotline tells the story of Amir Lahav, a social worker, and is told in the first person. Both protagonists are Arabs who live in Jerusalem and travel along the boundary between East and West Jerusalem, each designing his own version of the Jewish-Arab hybrid identity.

Although these appear to be two characters, to a great extent they mirror each other. They represent the Arab whose identity is castrated upon encounter with Jewish society. This castration is expressed through various aspects, a central one being sexuality. In contrast to the widespread Orientalist notion that Arabs have stronger sex drives, a notion voiced by Jewish characters throughout the story,⁴⁷ both protagonists do not function sexually. They are not quite impotent—it is more of a general sexual anxiety from which they suffer. Thus, we first meet the successful attorney as he awakes in his young daughter's bed, sleeping on her Bratz sheets. He has been living in his daughter's room for years, supposedly for purposes of convenience, surrounded by stuffed animals and waking to the sound of a bunny-shaped alarm clock. Sleeping in the childish room is symbolic of the latency period in which the attorney is stuck. He suppresses his sexual urges and does not know how to deal with his wife's libido. He expresses the hope that his wife will "agree just this once not to have sex",⁴⁸ even though it has been two weeks since they last had intercourse. He is aware of the problem and admits that something is not right. At first, after getting married (at the age of 25 and still a virgin) he felt humiliated because he could not satisfy his wife. He succeeded for the first time when, during intercourse, he recalled his grandfather's funeral. The intercourse is described in parallel to a description of the grandfather's naked corpse, the funeral march, and the lowering of the corpse into the grave. He climaxes as he remembers the thump of the corpse hitting the grave.⁴⁹ The grotesque merging of the two events points to a connection between the death of the grandfather, symbolic of the Arab male potency characteristic of previous generations, and the man's current lack of sexual ability. To pleasure his wife and claim his manhood he must conjure the memory of his dead grandfather, a memory that preserves the lost libido of the Arab male identity.

Amir is also intimidated by women and is terrified by the slightest contact with them. When using public transportation he looks for a place to sit next to other men or older women.⁵⁰ When Laila, a young intern, starts working with him in the department of social welfare, he cannot act naturally, does not meet her eyes, and is quick to blush. On one of their house visits, Laila suggests they stop for some hummus because they arrived early. This mundane event stirs up all his anxieties, to the point where he cannot

eat. Here an interesting gender role reversal occurs. While Laila ravenously eats her hummus, shoveling it off the plate in broad sweeps and taking big bites of the onion,⁵¹ Amir is embarrassed by eating in public. He says: "Eating seemed embarrassing to me, vulgar, something one should do in private, behind closed doors."⁵² After she encourages him to eat he says, "I gently tore off a small piece of pita and dipped it in the deep bowl. I lowered my head and put it in my mouth, chewing gently, mouth closed, trying not to make eating sounds, and immediately wiped around my mouth with a napkin."⁵³ He does not manage to finish his food, and Laila asks if she can have his leftovers. According to Freud, eating and sexuality become linked during the first days of life when the baby experiences oral pleasure as he suckles his mother's breast. This pleasure is experienced in the erogenous organs—the mouth and lips.⁵⁴ Amir's restrained and refined eating practice and the fact he perceives eating, and therefore sexuality, as embarrassing and vulgar aspects of life, are indicative of his own repressed sexuality.

Both men are characterized as cowards. When the attorney discovers a love-note written by his wife, it serves as seeming proof of her infidelity. He wants to murder her, as is the custom in Arab society when dealing with women who have desecrated the family's honor. However, all his images of revenge remain murderous fantasy. He admits to himself that he is nothing but "a coward, a worthless, pathetic coward".⁵⁵ Amir is also characterized as a coward. After he gathers the courage to go out with Laila to a party (at her invitation), he hesitantly moves towards the dance floor, afraid that anyone looking at him might recognize his embarrassment. Suddenly he sees his friends from the office laughing at him from a distance. Gripped by shame and fear he flees the place, after a hasty farewell to Laila. This event is of crucial significance to him, as immediately afterwards he decides to leave the office and his former life and completely assimilate into a new, Jewish life. Seemingly, this move is not explained well enough. Is an insult at a party really enough to make him abandon his previous identity and choose a new life? Undoubtedly, this event is symbolic and alludes to the Arab identity's loss of libido and potency, a loss that demands of the protagonist a new method of coping.

Both protagonists are in a similar predicament. Theirs is a defective identity that does not enable their true existence within a hostile environment. This state of crisis forces them to find a way out of their existential distress. They toy with the Israeli-Jewish option, each in his own way. The attorney functions as a mimic in the full post-colonial sense of the term. To assimilate into Jewish society he adopts a set of social manners he identifies as characteristic of the western yuppie world and his Jewish

counterparts. He and his wife host cultural evenings with a group of friends from the same socioeconomic class, serving expensive sushi delicacies, driving luxury cars, and wearing designer clothes. To feel part of the dominant culture, the attorney makes considerable efforts to read the “right” books, all western literature of course. Ironically, his persistence in his mission of mimicry brings about his calamity, and immediately his cultural mask is removed. In one of the used books he buys he finds a note in his wife’s handwriting. The note, intended for another man, makes him suspect his wife is having an affair. His reaction is extreme and violent. He fantasizes about murdering the “whore” by stabbing her to death, slitting her throat, gouging her eyes out.⁵⁶ Kashua uses this fantasy to mock the refined image of the “new Arab”, a character who to a great extent he has created in his own image. Despite his western cultural veneer, deep down he still holds conservative patriarchal stands that are identified with traditional Arab society.

The second variation of changing identity is far more daring and challenging. At night, Amir nurses Yonatan, a young Jewish man who attempted suicide and became a vegetable. During the long nights he spends with Yonatan, Amir absorbs his being—he reads his books, listens to his music, and adopts his hobby of photography. On the night of the fateful party, he wears Yonatan’s clothes, which fit perfectly. The next morning, while he waits at the bus station, Rachel, Yonatan’s mother, pulls up beside him in her car and offers him a lift. For a moment he is afraid she will be angry with him for wearing her son’s clothes. Yet immediately, something inside him rebels and he decides not to apologize: “I’m sick of being afraid, sick of it,”⁵⁷ he thinks to himself, although Rachel never even broaches the issue. Throughout the drive he is unsettled as he plans his next moves at the office. He will stand in front of his colleagues who scorned him and put them in their place: “I saw myself standing tall, taller than all of them, shouting [. . .], and them, my colleagues, all silent, afraid, the smiles wiped off their faces . . .” He then fantasizes about going to Laila’s dorms, buying her flowers and professing his love to her in front of everybody.

Both fantasies are intended to heal the Arab protagonist’s male ego and libido. Yet, as he gets out of the car, he thinks of his newfound courage in distinct Zionist language: “I walked differently, [. . .] I felt like a new man, muscular, with my head held high, no longer hiding, coming to lead a revolution, with a pickaxe in one hand and a rifle in the other.”⁵⁸ These are the attributes of the Zionist who came to the Land of Israel at the turn of the previous century in order to undergo dramatic transformation in all aspects of his being—to become muscular, stand tall, excel as a worker

and a guard, and be a pioneer. So here is the new Arab pioneer, marching sovereign towards the office, exploding with imagined pride, a pride which abates exactly five minutes after he arrives at the place, and he decides to leave everything behind and run away.

Arab society, as presented by Kashua, is in a similar predicament to that of Jewish society on the eve of the Zionist revolution. It is a society whose body and spirit are bruised and it must find its way anew. The passive, frightened, diasporic Jews, devoid of body and sexuality, reinvented themselves when they arrived in Israel. Kashua shines an ironic light on his protagonists, as they make their way back to Arab subjectivity guided by the light of the Zionist promise. He does so in this novel, and in the short story, where the protagonist's name is Herzl. "Herzl" alludes to the dominant Zionist identity that controls the protagonist's territory, and simultaneously embodies the object of his desire—a different identity that will shelter him under its wings.

It seems that in *Herzl Disappears at Midnight*, Kashua plays with the initial idea that later takes on full form in *Second Person Singular*. A comparison of the texts raises interesting findings. Herzl was born to a Jewish mother who begged God for a child "even if he is born half Arab". Thus Kashua creates the Jewish and Arab identities as twins whirling within the same entity. The violent rift between the two cannot be mended and Herzl effectively descends into this split identity. At the end of the story he confesses his true identity to Noga, his girlfriend, who does not believe him, so he asks her to accompany him at night and witness the transformation for herself. The next morning she asks him, "What's going to happen with this whole Arab thing?" He replies, "As far as I'm concerned, [. . .] they can all go up in flames." The story ends with these words, leaving the protagonist in a helpless state, trapped in his double identity.

BEFORE A SILENT BODY

While Herzl is kept in a paralyzed state of in-between, in *Second Person Singular* Kashua brings the issue to a surprising and terrifying close. During the long nights Amir spends in Yonatan's room, he studies his identity: he acquires Yonatan's cultural taste in music and literature and his hobby of photography. Finally he starts studying in the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, under Yonatan's name. The more Amir becomes like Yonatan, the more his Arabness fades away, until he takes the final step of officially switching their identities at the Ministry of the Interior. When Yonatan

dies he is buried in a Muslim cemetery under Amir's identity, and Amir becomes Yonatan.

Surprisingly, an almost identical character to that of Yonatan appears in Lea Aini's *Rose of Lebanon* contemporaneous novel.⁵⁹ The frame story takes place during the First Lebanon War, when the narrator decides to volunteer in a hospital treating those injured in battle. She is charged with taking care of a young soldier named Yonatan, who attempted suicide by shooting himself in the head a short while before his platoon entered Lebanon.

Kashua's and Aini's "Yonatan" characters bear remarkable similarities: they are both rich Ashkenazi kids from affluent neighborhoods in Jerusalem, they are both into photography, and both attempted suicide at a young age without leaving behind a note to explain their actions. Their function in the novels is also similar—they represent Zionist, beautiful, and hegemonic Israel. Both writers use this character to establish the identity of their protagonist, who is pushed to the margins of social and political existence. Aini's protagonist is a young girl of Mizrahi descent growing up in south Tel-Aviv, while Kashua's is an Arab. Somewhat ironically, they both require the Yonatan character to be paralyzed and silent—a live body with an erased, dead consciousness.

However, each writer needs this character in a different way. Aini's protagonist establishes her identity in relation to Yonatan through her stories. She sits at his side once a week and tells him her life story, spanning her early childhood in the shadow of her father's nightmares (an Auschwitz survivor from Thessaloniki) to the present time, as a young soldier rising up against war and the establishment. She needs Yonatan, who represents the hegemonic identity, to be silent so she can give herself a voice, an identity. Her sense of closeness to him stems from their common otherness, her being a rejected Mizrahi and he a soldier who tried to kill himself. Still, she understands that while they are both others, he ranks much higher than she does, and she will never be able to occupy his place. To establish her own selfhood, she pours her stories into his silent consciousness, thus making herself visible in a world that perceives her as a "piece of nothing who embarrasses everyone".⁶⁰

While Aini's character establishes her own authentic identity in relation to the silent body, Kashua's Amir does the exact opposite, and the process has much more severe implications, as he in fact erases his own identity and takes on Yonatan's lost identity in its place. His body becomes the corporeal vessel in which Yonatan's dead identity comes back to life. Yonatan/Amir receives a pitiful and degrading burial, as one of the undertakers spits into his grave assuming he was a collaborator. And indeed, Amir seems to be a

collaborator, as he has chosen to throw away his identity and adopt in its stead the completely Jewish, Ashkenazi identity of Yonatan Forschmidt.

Seemingly this is a story intended to protest against the state of Arabs living as a minority within Jewish society. The protest is apparent in the grotesque solution to the existential distress of an identity that seeks refuge behind the ultimate mask—a mask that can erase, once and for all, the Arab's intimidating “black skin” and enable him to live a tranquil existence. However, further examination of the story may present an even deeper and more radical move, through an archetypal allegoric allusion to the biblical story of Jacob and Esau. Rebecca was barren, so Isaac petitions God to give her a child. His prayer is answered and Rebecca, carrying two sons, undergoes a difficult pregnancy. God tells her that her pregnancy heralds the birth of two nations, adversaries who will compete against each other, and that the firstborn will serve his younger brother. Thus, the twins Jacob and Esau were rivals from their inception. According to biblical tradition, Esau's offspring became the Edomites, rivals of Jacob's descendants, the Israelites.⁶¹ This relationship pattern beautifully matches the details of the plot in both of Kashua's texts. In *Herzl Disappears at Midnight*, the mother, after having been childless for many years, gives birth to a son with a split identity, symbolizing the two nations occupying one body.⁶² *Second Person Singular* then recounts the struggle for the birthright.

After Jacob buys Esau's birthright, Rebecca instructs Jacob, through an elaborate deception, to masquerade as Esau in order to steal from him Isaac's blessing. Isaac senses that something is wrong, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” Nevertheless, he blesses Jacob. Amir also masquerades as Yonatan and steals his birthright. Like Jacob, he does so with the approval of Yonatan's mother who adopts him as her own son.⁶³ The act results in a realization of Isaac's words, which are now interpreted symbolically: the voice, the identity, is that of Yonatan, but the body is that of Amir. Thus the act of deception gains a biblical-archetypal dimension.

The link to the story of Jacob and Esau is alluded to in other ways. For example, when Amir curiously looks at Yonatan's ID card it turns out his parents' names are Jacob and Rachel,⁶⁴ and that he and Yonatan were born the same year. The visual similarity between Amir and Yonatan is implied throughout the story, to the point that they seem to be twins. Osnat, Yonatan's nurse who hired Amir to work says, after she sees him in Yonatan's clothes:

You know [. . .] not only are you the exact same size as Yonatan,

From the moment you walked in here [. . .] my heart just cringed, somehow I felt like I'd known you for years and I felt comfortable with you. It was only later that I figured out why this was. **You really look like him, you know?** Like Yonatan. Right, Yonatan? You two really look alike?⁶⁵

The allusions to the biblical story place the battle of identities on a primordial foundation—the mythical jealousy of the rejected son towards the favorite son. However, it should be emphasized that the analogy between the biblical story and Kashua's story is not complete. To the contrary, the modern text twists the biblical story and thus undermines its validity. For example, Yonatan's parents' names are Jacob and Rachel, and not as one would expect—Isaac and Rebecca. Even more important is the role-reversal in the struggle. Esau was the elder son whose birthright was deceitfully stolen by his younger brother Jacob, whereas in Kashua's text, Amir, representing Esau, deceitfully steals Yonatan's birthright.

The asymmetry and distortion between the biblical story and *Second Person Singular* function as a key for another interpretive reading. At first it seems the identity swap in the story stems from the feelings of jealousy and frustration of one who is banished to the margins of social, cultural, and political existence, as he seeks to penetrate it. According to this interpretation, Amir committed Jacob's act of stealing the birthright—he steals the chosen identity, the aspect of cultural-consciousness, or in Isaac's language—the “voice”. However, Isaac mentions the physical resemblance too—the hands are the hands of Esau. The struggle is between the voice and the body, between the abstract identity and the tangible, corporeal one. The unification of Amir's Arab body with Yonatan's voice/identity allows for additional insights. The centrality of the body points to the physical, earthly dimension of the identity battle—the national battle for the actual land. Understanding the body as earth, as land, allows for interpretation that shifts the emphasis from the oppressed to the oppressor. Thus it is not Amir who takes over Yonatan's identity seeking to steal his birthright, but the other way around—what has been stolen is the Arab body, and more precisely, the Arab land, the earth. Yonatan's identity settles into Amir's body and Jewifies him, thus bringing his existence to an end, on both the personal and national levels.

Kashua revisits the mythological text that generated the Jewish right over the land and distorts it. What appears on the surface as the Arab's jealousy of the Jews and his desire to take over the dominant identity is in fact a condemnation of the original theft, when Jacob stole Esau's birthright,

his body, his physicality, and poured his own voice, his own identity into it. The garbled use of the Bible generates a subversive stand that objects to the Jewish ownership of the land and inverts the story of the theft.

CONCLUSION

Kashua's work is generating a true revolution in Israeli literature, and even more so in the space between the Arab and Jewish identities. Although he repeatedly refers to himself as a coward,⁶⁶ he bravely presents the devouring of the Arab by the Jewish identity, his desire to be engulfed, alongside the fear of being completely absorbed. His work is condemned by Arab society, which considers him to be a Zionist collaborator. Kashua tries to explain this by saying that Arab readers take his words at face value and do not appreciate the sarcasm.⁶⁷ On the other hand, part of the Jewish society considers him a radical anti-Zionist.⁶⁸ Kashua represents the Jewish-Arab existence in Israel, which is full of the contradictions of Israeli society. He has full command of Hebrew, imbued with the cultural, social, and political values of Jewish society in Israel. His work reveals the dialectical existential levels of that third type of existence, one that is not at peace and which conducts no dialogue; it is simply stuck in a hopeless daily battle for survival.

NOTES

1. Sammy Smootha, *Arabs and Jews in Israel: Conflicting and Shared Attitudes in a Divided Society* (Boulder, CO, 1989); Nadim N. Rouhana, *Palestinian Citizens in an Ethnic Jewish State: Identities in Conflict* (New Haven, 1997); Ruth Gavison and Dafna Hacker, eds., *The Jewish-Arab Rift in Israel: A Reader* (Jerusalem, 2000); Yochanan Peres and Eliezer Ben-Rafael, *Cleavages in Israeli Society* (Tel-Aviv, 2006) [both in Hebrew].

2. Peres and Ben-Rafael, *Cleavages*, 65.

3. *Ibid.*, 64.

4. Sammy Smootha, "Ethnic Democracy: Israel as a Prototype," in *The Jewish-Arab Rift in Israel: A Reader* (Jerusalem, 2000), 168–72.

5. Rouhana, *Palestinian Citizens*, 147.

6. Peres and Ben-Rafael, *Cleavages*, 81–3.

7. Smootha, "Ethnic Democracy," 170.

8. Karen Grumberg, "The No-man's-Land of the Israeli Palestinian": *Place and Ideology in Contemporary Hebrew Literature* (New York, 2011), 156.
9. Smooha, "Ethnic Democracy," 165–8.
10. Sayed Kashua, *Dancing Arabs* (New York, 2004).
11. Ayman Sikseck, *To Jaffa* (Tel-Aviv, 2010) [Hebrew].
12. Reuven Snir, "Overlapping Circles of Hebrew and Arab Literature," *Bein Avar le Arav* 1 (1998): 177–210 [Hebrew].
13. *Ibid.*, 191.
14. Snir, "Overlapping Circles," 194; Hannan Hever, "Striking Achilles's Heel," *Alpayim* 1 (1989): 186–93 [Hebrew].
15. Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew* (Berkeley, CA, 2000), 76–7.
16. *Ibid.*, 195.
17. They both constitute the first generation of authors who sought a way into Hebrew literature by using the Hebrew language in their work and were born right after the establishment of Israel. Their adolescence was saturated with political and national tension, which peaked during the 1967 war and the conquering of the Gaza strip and the West Bank. Ami Elad-Bouskila marks the mid 1960s as a time of change that facilitated the beginnings of Arabic writing in Hebrew, *A Homeland Dreamt, A Country Lost: Six Chapters on Modern Palestinian Literature* (Or Yehuda, 2001) [Hebrew].
18. Snir, "Overlapping Circles," 190.
19. Elad-Bouskila, *A Homeland Dreamt*, 51.
20. Rachel Feldhay Brenner, "The Search for Identity in Israeli Arab Fiction: Attalah Mansour, Emile Habiby, and Anton Shammas," *Israel Studies* 6 (2001): 91–112.
21. Grumberg, "The No-man's-Land," 126: "Mahmoud Kayyal posits Attallah Mansour as a representative of the first generation and Shammas as a representative of the second."
22. Peres and Ben-Rafael, *Cleavages*, 91. See Izhak Schnell, "Adolescent Territoriality and Identity," in *Perceptions of Israeli Arabs: Territoriality and Identity* (Aldershot, UK, 1994), 96–110.
23. Neri Livne, "The Wandering Arab," *Ha'aretz*, 5 January 2004, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.937524>
24. Sayed Kashua, *Second Person Singular* (Jerusalem, 2010) [Hebrew].
25. Adia Mendelson-Maoz and Liat Steir-Livny, "Hibridity in Israeli Television: 'The First Israeli-Arab Sitcom,'" *Misgarot Media* 6 (2011): 31–59 [Hebrew].
26. *Ibid.*, 49.
27. Mati Shemoelof, Naphtaly Shemtov, and Nir Baram, eds., *Echoing Identities: Young Mizrahi Anthology* (Tel-Aviv, 2007) [Hebrew].
28. Behar's identity is complex: his mother was born in Iraq; his father's family had origins in Istanbul and immigrated at the turn of the twentieth century to

Berlin, Germany, and then to Denmark, from where they immigrated to Israel upon the establishment of the state.

29. Almog Behar, "Dreams in Aspania," in *Echoing Identities*, ed. Shemoelof, Shemtov, and Baram, 95–117 [Hebrew].

30. Hannan Hever and Yehudah Shenhav, "Arab-Jews: The Metamorphosis of a Term," *Pe'amim*, 125–27 (2010–11): 57–74, 71 [Hebrew].

31. *Ibid.* 59–60.

32. *Ibid.* 62–5.

33. Hever and Shenhav, "Arab-Jews," 71.

34. Azmi Bashara, "On the Question of the Palestinian Minority in Israel," in *Israeli Society: Critical Aspects*, ed. Uri Ram, 203–21 [Hebrew].

35. Sayed Kashua, "Herzl Disappears at Midnight," *Ha'aretz*, 3 October 2005. All quotes taken from <http://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.1048468>

36. The story won first prize in the 2005 *Ha'aretz* short story competition.

37. While Almog Behar merits a more comprehensive study, the article is primarily devoted to Sayed Kashua.

38. Fanon, *Black Skin*, 110.

39. Kashua, *Dancing*, 91.

40. Behar, *Ana*, 55.

41. *Ibid.*, 57.

42. One of the formulators of the field of "Visual Culture". His writing deals with the status of images, pictures, and representations (including representations of landscape) in contemporary culture. W.J.T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscapes," in *Landscape and Power* (Chicago, 2002), 5–34.

43. The Katamon neighborhood was captured in the War of Independence.

44. Behar, *Ana*, 57.

45. The question of the beard is no trivial matter for Behar who regularly sports a bushy beard: "I always dreamed of a moustache like Omar Sharif's or Saddam Housain's, but I found that it stirred up some extreme reactions and made complete strangers as well as members of my close family very upset, because of its Arabness. So I gave in and hid the moustache inside the beard." See Eli Eliyahu, "Poet Almog Behar writes prose, and explains that the Mizrahi-Ashkenazi conflict is far from being over," *Ha'aretz*, 6 January 2011 <http://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.1156502> [Hebrew]

46. Grumberg, 126–7.

47. See for example: Kashua, *Second Person Singular*, 262: "In Bezalel I was left-wing, like most of the students I studied with. They taught me that Arabs are horny, that they think with their dicks, mainly about pussy."

48. *Ibid.*, 47.

49. *Ibid.*, 48.

50. *Ibid.*, 74.

51. *Ibid.*, III.

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*
54. Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (London [1905] 1962) 45–9.
55. Kashua, *Second Person Singular*, 54.
56. Kashua, *Second Person Singular*, 52.
57. *Ibid.*, 122.
58. *Idem.*
59. Lea Aini, *Rose of Lebanon* (Or Yehuda, 2009) [Hebrew].
60. *Ibid.*, 187.
61. The interpretation according to which Edom was the embodiment of Christianity became established only in the Middle Ages.
62. The link between the texts is expressed in a conversation between Amir/Yonatan and his girlfriend Noa (note that Herzl's girlfriend is named Noga). Glad to finally see him in the evening, she says: "I'm so happy to finally see you in the dark. You know I started thinking you turn into a princess at midnight?" (270)
63. See Kashua, *Second Person Singular*, 253–61.
64. Although these are not the names of the biblical parents of Jacob and Esau, they are related to the story.
65. Kashua, *Second Person Singular*, 117; the bold is mine. See also 271.
66. See the documentary film by Dorit Zimbalista, *Sayed Kashua—Forever Scared*, 2010.
67. Livne, "The Wandering".
68. Despite the fact that his literary works are well received and won him many awards.