

more exclusive state now than it was before 1992" (198). The book's final chapters are markedly pessimistic. The prominence of the "primordialist" values and identities in the Israeli Jewish society undermines the "land for peace" approach (chapter 9), the chance of rapprochement between Israel's Jews and Arabs (chapter 10), and the Oslo agreement (chapter 11), reaching an almost inevitable conclusion in Ariel Sharon's grand plan of "politicide" against the Palestinians (chapter 12).

Kimmerling, a public intellectual, was happy to engage in polemics. It thus seems only fitting to end with one, regarding the role of land in Zionism, which Kimmerling held to be decisive. Consider then the "British Uganda Programme" (1903), the extraction of Transjordan from the British Mandate (1923), the Peel Commission plan (1937), the UN Resolution 181 on partition (1947), the withdrawal from Sinai without peace with Egypt (1957) and with (1978–1982), the non-annexation of the West Bank and the Gaza strip (since 1967), and finally the unilateral evacuation of the latter (2005) and of southern Lebanon (2000). All were endorsed (and sometimes initiated) by Zionist leaders. Might it be that demography—preserving a clear Jewish majority, and by extension at least a formal democracy—rather than the acquisition and sanctification of land, is the true hallmark of Zionism? The lively voice of Baruch Kimmerling on this, as in many other key questions, is sorely lacking.

Uriel Abulof
Princeton University

Nili Scharf Gold, *Yehuda Amichai: The Making of Israel's National Poet* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press), pp. 464, \$35.00 (cloth).

Poetry illuminated by biography is the linchpin of Nili Scharf Gold's exhaustively documented *Yehuda Amichai: The Making of Israel's National Poet*. Based on Amichai's papers at Yale University's Beinecke Library, and a private cache of love letters he wrote in 1947–1948, Gold demonstrates that Amichai—the representative Israeli poet—consciously constructed himself as such, and "camouflaged" the fact that he was the product of German culture.

Amichai (1924–2000) emigrated with his parents from Würzburg, Germany, to Mandatory Palestine at the age of 12. According to Gold, Amichai "consistently minimized Wuerzberg's role as his hometown, especially in interviews he granted in Israel" (21), and "repeatedly used the phrase 'my childhood in Jerusalem,' as if his experiences before his migration to Israel had never occurred" (54). Gold observes that "Despite Amichai's firm denial that he had ever written poems in German, there are long series of uninterrupted lines in German that can be read as complete poems" (117). She writes about Amichai's notebooks in the Beinecke,

adding that Hebrew and German are frequently interwoven in his private writings. She finds that the “infant stages of some of Amichai’s most famous poems are hidden in these pads—a number of them originally written in his mother tongue” (118).

Gold’s meticulous juxtaposition of Amichai’s early life with his writings reveals sources of his imagery, such as snow, obviously uncommon in Israel (318). Her material on his life in Germany will interest those readers for whom the poet is a popular icon. But it should not be surprising that Amichai was influenced by his first language and culture. In fact, dozens of multilingual Central and Eastern European poets wrote modern and avant-garde Hebrew poetry at the dawn of the twentieth century, and many contemporary Israeli poets, most of them not famous outside Israel, switched from their mother tongues to Hebrew and became part of Israeli culture and helped to construct it.

Perhaps Amichai’s unprecedented popularity in English—and the appearance of a biographically focused work in English rather than Hebrew, the language of his poetry—has everything to do with his adopted Israeli persona. The image of Amichai is the one that many American Jews want to have of Israelis: a bit less macho than the stereotype, a bit more familiar with Jewish sources, warmhearted and democratic, accepting of the other, particularly, of the Palestinian. It may well be the case that, as Gold argues, that Amichai masked the Germanness of his poetry. But knowing this does not mean we have finished reading his work, for it is also about the world his poems create—and here we could use a critical guide to Amichai’s poetry.

For example, at the opening of the 2008 Jerusalem International Film Festival at the Sultan’s Pool, a well-known Amichai poem, “An Arab Shepherd is Searching for his Goat on Mount Zion,” was projected on the screen in English and Hebrew, presumably because the poem is situated exactly in that space. An Arab shepherd and a Jewish father are presented as equal, in that both have lost something. But the Arab is only missing an animal, a goat, while the Jew is missing a child. In the end they joyfully recover both animal and child. The poem hints at the violence of religious ritual, and the problem of scapegoating, but there would seem to be no scapegoat, no victim here. The Arab recovers his animal. Yet when the poem was flashed on the screen, the Swedish journalist sitting next to me was extremely disturbed by the obvious inequity of the goat-child equation.

In the section “Jerusalem 1967,” the Jewish speaker, whose father’s store “was burned there [in Nazi Europe],” offers a kind of mercantile kinship to an Arab store-owner in the Old City. The “Arab’s hole-in-the-wall shop” is likened to “an open Ark,” imputing an improbable Jewish holiness to the Arab’s space (and a romanticized holiness ascribed to shop keeping). “I told him in my heart that my father too / had a shop like this,” the speaker says. But the speaker does not actually communicate with the Palestinian; he talks to himself. The Arab is depicted

lowering his shutters in the third stanza, without our being told what he thinks: is he closing off his physical space (Palestine) to the persecuted Jews? Is the friendliness offered by Jewish immigrants falling on deaf ears, or has it not been expressed loudly enough?

We need to ask not only where poetry comes from, but where it is going. I sometimes despair to think that poetry does not matter, but it might mean more if we were to stop encouraging people to find biography—the real poet—in the poem, and begin to read poems beyond the ideas that we take for granted.

Lisa Katz

Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Jakob Feldt, *The Israeli Memory Struggle: History and Identity in the Age of Globalization* (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2007), pp. 228, \$29.99 (paper).

Definitions of history intersect with literary analysis in *The Israeli Memory Struggle*. The book presents six essays on history, imagination, discourse; post-nationalist discourse on Israeli history; history and irony; replacing history and identity: back to the Diaspora; history on TV: the *Tekumah* series; and post-nationalist discourse, globalization, and a new Jewish ethnoscape. The scope of the book is broad and at times, overreaching. Though identifying himself as a non-representationalist (12) Feldt nevertheless presents a critical overview of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in concrete, even positivist terms. Although describing his writing as a “re-weaving” which does not come closer to how things really are, Feldt foregoes tentative conjecture for a definitive version of post-Zionist reality with a one-sided recreation of historical events. His writing could have been less judgmental and more nuanced, particularly regarding the motivations and intent of conflict partners. Juxtaposing strategic suicide bombing with the intentions of the Israeli military is one example of a strong position taken by Feldt. He notes in an offhand manner that when an Israeli soldier kills a Palestinian child he considers it “beyond discussion that it happens intentionally” (167). Yet terror is described more vaguely as a counter-attack to “the continued colonization of Palestine” and not the intentional killing of Israeli civilians.

Although Feldt terms texts not to be messages but unfinished vocabularies (13), his definitive conclusions regarding a complicated conflict and heavy-handed language scream out as anything but a request for continued conversation. Ostensibly aiming for nothing less than an informed and coherent inquiry into the use of history in Israeli texts from the 1990s (14) Feldt validates only one view. In his discussion of Zionism as part of European colonialism Feldt terms “Zionist