

## **“We Are Fragments of Rhymes”: The Poetry of Erez Biton between East and West<sup>1</sup>**

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When Erez Biton's first book, *Minha Marokait* [A Moroccan gift] was published in 1976, it constituted a breakthrough in Hebrew literature from which Biton emerged as the founding father of Mizrahi poetry in Israel.<sup>2</sup> Biton's appearance on the Hebrew poetry scene was compared to Bialik's breakthrough in its time.<sup>3</sup> But positioning Biton as the sole, monolithic founder of such a distinct poetic vision may divert attention from his unusual and complex singularity—perhaps because his initial breakthrough was so significant. It is essential to emphasize that Biton's Israeliness is not an obvious and stable starting point; the source he embodies is also unstable, even though it appears to be “authentic” and a spring from which inspiration flows smoothly and seamlessly to other Mizrahi poets. It seems that the source we have before us is dichotomous, entrapped in the thicket of the trauma experienced by immigrants from North Africa to Israel. This has created a complex and heterogeneous cultural model for the poets who followed in his footsteps.

The trauma of immigration, like all trauma, is very difficult—perhaps almost impossible—to represent and communicate. Like any trauma, it challenges the witness who is trying to describe it and convey a coherent symbolic representation. The listener finds it difficult to perceive what is being said. Indeed, Biton opened his first book by highlighting the difficulty of communicating trauma, even by poetic means:

He moves quietly  
they say, he must be composing a poem,

They don't say  
 maybe he's bleeding inside.<sup>4</sup>

While attempting to express his trauma in poems, Biton also emphasizes the abysmal lack of understanding of and resistance to his poetic witness. The parallel positioning of the two utterances—that which “they say” and that which “they don't say”—creates a symmetrical opposition between the aesthetic representation of trauma and the representation of pain. The aesthetic representation, “he must be composing a poem,” organizes the trauma into a set mold, processing it and closing off its chaos. In this way the readers are protected from the difficult encounter with trauma, allowing the pain to remain unspoken.

Trauma, as we know, is a double feature: There is the event itself, and then there is a later resurfacing that revives the event and transforms it from a specific occurrence into a general sense of trauma. Art cannot bear witness to trauma because trauma is beyond representation and mediating language; art cannot bear witness because trauma is experienced not when the actual event occurs but only in a place and time that differ from those of the original event.<sup>5</sup> In other words trauma does not represent a concrete, private event; rather, it creates an effect within a specific social space and time—that is, it creates a political effect.<sup>6</sup> An aesthetic paradigm rehabilitates and organizes bits of battered and pulverized human experience into closed categories; through its use the trauma that Biton seeks to reconstruct might, in the words of Dominick LaCapra, be redeemed because it omits the proper processing of the trauma. LaCapra, who warns against a redemptive perception of grief,<sup>7</sup> positions the phenomenon of acting out in non-binary opposition to the act of processing. He does so because for a victim of trauma the “acting out is related to repetition, and even the repetition compulsion—the tendency to repeat something compulsively,”<sup>8</sup> which prevents the processing of grief. And so, according to Jill Bennett, the appropriate politics of the artistic representation of trauma is not the artistic and faithful translation of witness—it is the exploitation of art's unique ability to actively bring about this politics. In other words: art itself must challenge the distinction between art and the reality of the trauma.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, Biton perceives his readers as desiring what LaCapra calls “the redemption of trauma.” While Biton wants to tell of his bleeding wound by way of acting out, the readers turn their gaze from him and prefer to focus on the distant, aesthetic act of writing a poem. They want the act of writing to be a way of closing the story and framing the trauma as an event situated in the past, and they want the witness to appear before them as someone who experienced trauma and was

redeemed. Such is the case in Erez Biton's story about the Israeli name he was given at The Jewish Institute for the Blind, the school he attended as a youth, in an attempt to help him seal off the past and violently redeem him from the story of his traumatic immigration:

She says to me: "Your name is Ya'ish? What's that?" And before I manage to stutter a reply, she says: "From now on we'll call you Erez. It's a nice Hebrew name." And she orders two children: "Zaki and Baruch, take Erez and show him around the institute."<sup>10</sup>

Biton speaks out strongly against the attempts to tame and redeem the trauma of Mizrahi immigration. This, for example, is what he writes, in his poem "Mashehu al ru'ah tzazit" [Some comments on turbulent wind]:

And you ask us not to get dizzy like a turbulent wind  
And you ask us to sigh subtly  
Into the smoke of cigar  
Or at the most, in a rhyming whistle  
But our sigh is a turbulent wind  
We were sickening to you  
Our blows hard and strange<sup>11</sup>

The hegemonic Ashkenazi reaction is twofold: It avoids the pain of a bleeding wound that demands that it take moral and political responsibility for the oppression of Mizrahi Jews, and it violently negates the Mizrahi Jews' expression of their posttraumatic state (turbulent wind). Biton protests this when he asks why the Ashkenazi reaction includes actions of oppression and violence:

But why did you throw us in the cradle  
Why did you shake us through all of the ruins?<sup>12</sup>

(1)

What exactly is this Ashkenazi hegemony that wants to redeem Erez Biton's immigration trauma? What is this hegemony that Biton opposes but also, as will soon become apparent, wishes to find his place within?

For Biton as a poet this hegemony is first and foremost literary and linguistic, since it stands in opposition to the posttraumatic witness who attempts to testify before it in his own language. Even if it is clear that, in principle, the linguistic representation of trauma is impossible, what nonetheless *is* possible is the expression of the stuttering, fragmented, broken speech or writing with which the victims

of trauma reveal their story. Therefore, for Biton the poet, the hegemony is first and foremost the linguistic creation of the state: that is, the “poetry of the state.” This poetry, in accordance with the Zionist vision, seeks to redeem the traumatic acting out of immigration and integrate it into the narrative of sovereign national redemption, the ideal of which is the official “melting pot.”

As with any sovereignty, the meaning of which implies the act of ruling over a land and its inhabitants, Israeli sovereignty is based on violence, which enabled its establishment. The sovereign, according to Carl Schmitt, is the one who declares a state of emergency—a situation where the state attempts to violently defend itself against the violence of its enemies, both internal and external—and it is this that gives legitimacy to the rule of the sovereign and enables him to designate that which is deviant, meaning that which is out of the ordinary, as an enemy.<sup>13</sup> The fact is that the state of emergency instituted during the British mandate has never been canceled, enabling Israel to function as a semi-democracy whose Palestinian citizens were under martial law until 1966; in the case of the occupied territories, Palestinians there have been denied civil rights since 1967.

However, as Michel Foucault—unlike Schmitt—claims, the legal model of sovereignty cannot provide a concrete and sufficiently comprehensive analysis of the multiplicity of power relations that lie at its foundations.<sup>14</sup> In the field of literature as well—and with regard to Israeli sovereignty—there are power relations in the poetry of the “Generation of the State” that contribute to the creation of the sovereign subject of the State of Israel. The mechanism of literary power used in the creation of the sovereign Israeli subject can be reconstructed through what Hamutal Tzmir has written about the spokespeople and formulators of the “Generation of the State” literature, which defines “the processes of **individuation** and **autonomization** of the author and the literature in terms borrowed directly from the collective political situation of their times: the struggle for freedom and independence, the establishment of a **sovereign** state, the issuing of **identity cards** to members of the nation that have become **citizens**.”<sup>15</sup> This duality is enabled by the duality of the term “subject,” which indicates both the citizen who is subject to the state and the autonomous individual for whom subjugation is an expression of his individual will, while through the aesthetic experience—that of poetry, for example—the paradox of the state is replicated, as it represents the members of the nation as individuals while at the same time embodying the universal idea of the state.<sup>16</sup>

In the ongoing Israeli state of emergency, the poets of the “Generation of the State,” whose central figure was Natan Zach, created poetry that contributed to the creation of the sovereign subject of the State of Israel, a sovereign subject

whose foundations were already established in the literature of resurrection at the beginning of the twentieth century—as in the poetry of Bialik, for example, which was a starting point for Biton,<sup>17</sup> or in the fiction of Micha Josef Berdichevsky. This literature established the sovereign Zionist subject within the framework of its attempt to cope with the disastrous, emergency situation of the Jews of the Eastern European Diaspora, and it was the Zionist response to the pogroms and persecution: the auto-emancipation of the Jewish subject. This called for a sovereign solution of Jewish command and resistance in the face of the violent pogroms: from the Jewish self-defense that arose in the wake of Bialik's poem "In the City of Slaughter," which deals with the 1903 Kishinev pogrom, to the establishment of the Zionist solution of self-rule and Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel, which like all states was established in the wake of the violence of war.<sup>18</sup>

The sovereign, as mentioned, determines the identity of the exceptional. The identity of the anomalous Palestinian is entirely clear. Despite the supposed universality of the state, he is rendered anomalous or excluded as a citizen; even as a non-citizen he is rendered inferior. Regarding the state's attitude toward Mizrahi Jews, the picture is more complex. As opposed to the judicial, homogeneous, and unified image of a sovereign body acting on individuals as right-holding subjects, Foucault suggests that we speak of the power struggle as the struggle between subjects that determines the political relationship between them. This analysis will not discuss sovereignty based on the triangle consisting of the subject, the law, and the unified sovereign power of the state; its starting point will not merely be the judicial source of sovereignty, or the fact of the existence of the sovereign subject, but rather the concrete power relations that describe the sovereign subject in terms of a multiplicity of subjugations.<sup>19</sup> This position enables us to view Israeli sovereignty not as a state-based unity but rather as a mechanism of power that creates a subject whose actions are divided. That is, on the one hand, the state signifies the Mizrahi Jews—the Jewish Arabs—as Arabs, and thus treats them as anomalies, that is—enemies of the State of Israel. But on the other hand, the fact that they are Jews prevents them from being entirely abnormalized out of Israeli sovereignty. In this way the state turns them into divided subjects, and the only way to bridge their division is by turning them into Mizrahi Jews whose Arabness must be denied and whose Jewishness must be emphasized.

This partial abnormalization, which creates a divided subject, is made possible by the power of the theological aspect of the establishment of sovereignty and its sovereign subject. "All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts."<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the sovereign that declares a state

of emergency is analogous to God, and his authority is in fact based on political theology.<sup>21</sup> The State of Israel, as a state that is “Jewish and democratic,” is based on the principle of theological Jewish justification that is at the base of Zionism<sup>22</sup> and stands in opposition to the pretensions of the state to act as a democracy that is supposed to treat Jews and Arabs as equals.

The Israeli sovereign rulers’ Jewish theological politics acts on two levels. On the one hand, it defines the Arab-Jew as exceptional because of his Arabness; on the other hand, it cannot define the Mizrahi as abnormal, due to his Jewishness. The practical political result of the conflict is that the Jewish state concerned itself, and still concerns itself to this day, with the de-Arabization of the Mizrahi, the Arab-Jew, while enjoying the cooperation in this process of the Mizrahi Jews themselves. “Yet the bond of the immigrants to their Arab past could not be fully erased. Though it was denied by both the immigrants themselves and by the veteran Israeli public, this bond continued to signify the Oriental as a ‘symbolic archetype’ that signifies the dividing line between the Jewish nation and the surrounding Arabs.”<sup>23</sup> This duality of the position of the State of Israel causes it to behave in contradictory ways regarding the presence of Arabness (in order to abnormalize the enemy) and its erasure (in order to allow for the theological inclusion of the Mizrahi as a Jew); this led to what Yehouda Shenhav terms the “religiousizing” of the Mizrahi, which replicates the ethnic division in Israeliness.<sup>24</sup>

(2)

The sovereign subject of the poetry of the “Generation of the State” presents and justifies itself as a universal subject, and this represses both ethnic and other voices.<sup>25</sup> As Hamutal Tzamir has shown, Natan Zach’s poetry structures the opposition between the national and the personal “in order to create a new subject, the Israeli, who defines himself through a **new relationship with the national space**: the individuality and the universality of this subject are based on repression of the specific national space, thus enabling the appearance of obviously belonging to it, as if obvious, and therefore not signified at all, other than in the tracks it leaves behind (whose internal contradictions are only a part of them).”<sup>26</sup> This subject is created as a native—despite the biographical fact that Zach was born in Berlin in 1930—and his presence in Israeli territory is presented as natural and secular, since it apparently does not rest on religious motives. By appearing in Israeli space as such—that is, native and secular—the subject is also justified.

But because there is no neutral subject—we will always be the enemy of someone and all subjects are polemical—and because in actuality the truth of

the universal subject will always be part of a power relation that transforms itself into something decentralized and devoid of universal unity,<sup>27</sup> there is a struggle between the “Generation of the State” poetry’s native universal subject and the immigrant subject, whose presence in the Israeli space cannot be taken for granted. The result of this conflict is that the Mizrahi immigrant to Israel, the one who testifies about his immigration trauma, is classified in the Israeli canon as having a marginal and inferior status. He cannot be included in the hegemony of the Ashkenazi male secular brotherhood whose native rootedness in Israeli territory is presented as a given, distinguishing itself through its social status, theology (by its level of religiosity), and ethnicity from the immigrants who came to Israel after the establishment of the state.<sup>28</sup>

Yet Biton’s poetry as “ethnic poetry,” which developed as “the poetics of immigration” and “the poetics of Diaspora,”<sup>29</sup> testifies to the trauma of Mizrahi immigration as it encounters the Ashkenazi and apparently secular sovereignty, which in turn is also founded on traumatic violence. The fact that the hegemonic Ashkenazi subject is decentralized, fragile, and polemical stems from the fact that the trauma of the Israeli sovereign is two-sided. On the one hand, there is obviously the trauma of the Holocaust, which the state invokes—as it did following the Eichmann trial in 1961—and which it wanted to redeem and rehabilitate by positioning the establishment of the State of Israel as a solution and a means of redemption of the trauma through the “Holocaust to resurrection” narrative. On the other hand, there is the trauma of the ’48 war, which includes the trauma of the Jewish war victim and—along with, and mainly in opposition to it—the trauma of the Palestinian victims of the Nakba. In addition there is the trauma of the abuser, the Jewish Israeli as responsible for the events of the Nakba, which the state works to deny.

The meeting of the trauma of the Oriental immigrant, the Arab-Jew, with the double trauma of Israeli sovereignty is extremely complex. On the one hand, this immigrant feels alienated from the depictions of the trauma of the Holocaust, whose representation, though it did much harm to the Jewish population of Arab countries, is almost totally controlled by the Ashkenazi hegemony. Apparently it is not *his* trauma, and so he recoils from it, and even refrains from being included in Israeli sovereignty on the basis of the trauma of the Holocaust. On the other hand, if we return to the theological infrastructure of Israeli sovereignty, the Mizrahi sees himself, as a Jew, as a natural candidate for equal partnership in Jewish sovereignty. In this sense the trauma of the Holocaust is his, and this also applies to the Jewish trauma of the 1948 war in which, as an immigrant, he did not take part; yet, as a Jewish Israeli, it is also his. In much the same way, the position of the Mizrahi

immigrant regarding the trauma of the Nakba is two-sided. On the one hand, as a Jew he takes on the role of an abuser who copes with, and usually denies, his trauma. On the other hand, as an Arab-Jew—that is, someone who is both Arab and Jew—he identifies with the Palestinian victims, though this too is denied together with his participation in the de-Arabization that is enacted on him by the state.

(3)

This dynamic of both invocation and denial of the trauma of Israeli sovereignty poses an extremely complex challenge to Erez Biton's immigration trauma. In contrast to Biton's testimony regarding this trauma, the double-sided trauma of Israeli sovereignty forces him to forge a unique path so that his testimony will be heard. This duality developed in the fiction written by the "Generation of the State" and transformed it into the literature of the majority as a national posttraumatic minority<sup>30</sup> that would like to, but cannot, repress or redeem the trauma of violence that lies at the foundation of the creation of the state (for example, in A.B. Yehoshua's "Facing the Forests"). This literature created the universal Israeli sovereignty as non-sovereign Jewish Diaspora literature. This is how ethnic, particularistic Ashkenazi literature was written in the 1960s; it presented itself as universal literature—colorless and transparent—that replicates the paradox of universal particularistic sovereignty by means of aesthetics, and develops color-blindness that blocks, or at least treats with suspicion, any possibility of giving voice to the Mizrahi immigrant, whose color is not white and so cannot be considered universally transparent.

By writing "minor" works of literature—which is, as we know, literature that the minority creates in the language of the majority<sup>31</sup>—the sovereign native Israeli writer, who himself is in a posttraumatic state, reveals his anxiety regarding the immigrants. Though seeking to rule over and exclude them, he was forced to invoke them in order to demonstrate and display his own position of power. Thus, in order for his testimony to be accepted, Biton needed to crack the walls that had been erected by the ruling universal subject of Israeli sovereignty to guard the stability of his (the subject's) identity against the testimony of the Mizrahi immigrant's trauma of immigration. These walls, which did not leave room for the Mizrahi immigrants—whose Arabness the Mizrahi immigrants themselves wanted to erase—did not allow the testimony about his trauma to be heard. They did not allow the testimony of anyone who could not speak from the position of a native, whose claim on national territory was evident, to be heard. They did not allow anyone whose trauma did not achieve the level of Holocaust trauma to be heard, because according to them Holocaust trauma was the only type of trauma that was



a candidate for swift rehabilitation and redemption, one that could move from the Shoah to universal Israeli redemption.

In order for Biton to penetrate the walls that were raised against him, he needed the repressed trauma of the sovereign subject to come to the surface of Israeli discourse and challenge its hegemony and, as a result, to change the rigid exclusion caused by this hegemony. A change in the rules of discourse in Israeli Hebrew poetry came about in the second half of the 1960s and the early 1970s when poets such as Meir Wieseltier, Yona Wallach, Dalia Herz, and Yair Horowitz challenged Natan Zach's hegemony over Hebrew poetry, by invoking in their own poetry those who were sidelined by Zach.<sup>32</sup> In a 1980 article, Meir Wieseltier attacked Zach's poetry for its insufficiency and lack of concreteness, primarily criticizing its ironic stance as a position devoid of moral obligation. Wieseltier defined Zach's "I" in *Shirim shonim* [Various poems, 1960] as "an elusive 'I,' retreating and disguised."<sup>33</sup> In this way Wieseltier challenged the sovereign subject posed by Zach in the heart of the literature of the "Generation of the State." In other words, Wieseltier challenged the authority of the Israeli sovereignty established in Israel in the 1950s and 1960s. First and foremost he challenged its autonomous abstract universalism, a universalism that confirmed Israeli sovereignty and blurred the conflict between theology and democracy. This conflict offered a concrete and committed moral expression that foregrounded the contentiousness of an Israeli subject that gives expression to the traumatic foundations of Israeli sovereignty. The contentiousness of the new subject challenged the way in which existence in Israeli territory was taken for granted in Zach's poetry—which repressed the trauma that was bound up in it—and so gave legitimacy to the voice of the immigrant, who upon arriving in the territory entered into a traumatic meeting with it. Zach's irony, which repressed the trauma of Israeli sovereignty, was exchanged for moral protest; this, toward the end of the 1970s, made the political statement of the polemical subject who expressed his trauma legitimate in the field of Hebrew literature. In this sense Natan Zach's 1979 publication of *Tzfonit mizrahit* [Northeasterly] is an act of joining the shift initiated by Wieseltier in the late 1960s, and especially in the early 1970s with the publication of his book *Kach* [Take] in 1973.

The fact is that the 1966 publication of Zach's *Kol ha-halav ve ha-dvash* [All the milk and honey], together with the appearance of the poets who came after him, made it "impossible not to criticize the 'obvious' sense of belonging to the place and to expose the violent mechanisms of repression that were bound up with it."<sup>34</sup> These mechanisms were used in an effort to redeem the trauma of Israeli sovereignty's violence, and made it possible to listen to the ethnic Diaspora voices of those who

didn't agree to erase or redeem their immigration trauma through the universality of Israeliness. Proof of this change in the field of Hebrew poetry can also be seen in the intensive intertextual response of Mizrahi poetry to the poetry of Meir Wieseltier and Yona Wallach; as has been shown by Ketzia Elon, this response was both conducted in and marked by genderized and ethnic language.<sup>35</sup> The legitimacy bestowed upon immigrant poetry in Hebrew literary discourse was therefore the result of processes and changes in the field of poetry. These changes created from within and made possible the immigrant subject as a legitimate entity who is in no way subject to the sovereignty of the Jewish national state in all its glory and repression. This process gained momentum from the fact that with the "recovery, relatively speaking, of a very small group of first- and second-generation Oriental intellectuals in the middle of the 1970s, we witnessed the appearance of Oriental literary artists, for example Sami Michael, Erez Biton, Gabriel Ben-Simhon, Jacqueline Kahanov, Lev Hakak, Yitzhak Bar-Moshe, Yitzhak Gormezano Goren, and Shimon Ballas, who published as early as the 1960s."<sup>36</sup>

An essential role in this development was played by the Eked Publishing House, owned and operated by the poet and story-teller Itamar Yaoz-Kest, which provided a place for the ethnic voices of immigrants, both Mizrahi and Ashkenazi, who felt foreign and estranged from the center of the native universalistic canon. This canon allowed the writers and poets of Eked only partial, if any, entry. And indeed, even before the 1976 publication of Biton's first book of poems, *Minha Marokait*, Eked published, in 1970, *Sipurim Palestinim* [Palestinian stories], a collection of Arabic literature edited and translated by Shimon Ballas, a Mizrahi Jew; in 1972 Eked published *Lo rash me'od* [Not very poor], a collection of poems by Shalom Katav, an immigrant from Iraq; and in 1977 it put out a collection entitled *Mamashut kefula* [Double reality] that included works by Shimon Ballas, Reuven Ben-Yosef, Yaakov Besser, and Itamar Yaoz-Kest. In 1979 Itamar Yaoz-Kest published his book *Le havayat ha-dushorshiut be-sifrut ha-Yisraelit* [To the experience of dual-rootedness in Israeli literature] in which he called for a widening of the structure of Israeli identity to include the roots of Jewish Diaspora existence, both the Eastern European and the Arabic, and the granting of equal status to the variety of immigrant literary identities.

In actuality, literary practices like those of Eked challenged and weakened Israeli sovereignty by deviating from the ideal model of the national state sovereignty as determined in the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, a model that found expression in the works of thinkers like Thomas Hobbes, Jean Bodin, and Carl Schmitt. This sovereignty was characterized by an absolute and eternal superiority and by decisionism—that is, subjection to the law that enables the declaration of a state of

emergency in a clearly defined area of jurisdiction and territorial control that is both absolute and total (there is no such thing as partial sovereignty), and the absence of the possibility of allocating it to another body without canceling it. However, transnational and postnational trends associated with the movement of identities, ideas, violence, wealth, and political/religious loyalty undermined the totality of these characteristics and the absolute authority of the sovereign national state as secular and color-/gender-blind, in which the autonomy of its subjects is threatened by external and internal forces that penetrate it and weaken its sovereignty.<sup>37</sup>

(4)

In Biton's poem "Mashehu al ruach tzazit," the witness to the trauma wants to be heard by the hegemony of the sovereignty that he imagines to be Israeli. In this poem Biton gives clear expression to his vision of an Israeliness in which the Mizrahi trauma will be accepted and recognized by the hegemony and in which the participation of Mizrahi Jews as equal members holding equal rights in Israeliness will be allowed. On the one hand, he describes the Mizrahi Jews as the objects of Ashkenazi anger to the extent that they have become sickening:

We were sickening to you  
our blows hard and strange.<sup>38</sup>

But on the other hand, Biton awaits the moment when the Mizrahi Jew's sigh will no longer be foreign to Israeliness. In this he reveals his midpoint position, like that of other immigrant writers who emphasize their foreignness by testifying about their immigration trauma without giving up the hope that eventually Israeliness will include them and not see them as foreigners:

For how is it possible that in a place where the pouring sun sighs with mourning  
even in the hearts of dogs  
In a place where the pouring sun cast us over all the crosses  
Our sigh will not be foreign,  
Our sigh will not be irrelevant,  
And you repel us with a piece of straw  
you ask us to limit our weeping  
to delicate insinuations<sup>39</sup>

This position of Biton's from 1976 must be understood in light of the fact that the protests that came in the wake of the 1973 war, and which developed in reaction to the nationalist euphoria and occupation that followed the 1967 war, sought to

return the State of Israel to what was seen then as the good old days before 1967. Likewise, the protests against the First Lebanon War in 1982 presented the political and moral deterioration of the war as deviating from the worthy and just Zionist path to which Israel must return. The split was always presented as repairable, and it made apparent in Israeli discourse the hope for the realization of a heartwarming utopia of beautiful “Israeliness,” homogeneous and just, which saw in the Black Panthers protest movement in 1971 a “not nice,” atypical occurrence as the Prime Minister Golda Meir called it. In spite of this, by the later 1970s—with the political turnover of 1977, the breakthrough of the popularity of Mizrahi music tapes, and the establishment of the movement for Mizrahi protest<sup>40</sup>—a process developed, further evolving during the second half of the 1980s, that gave rise to a critical discourse. This discourse, already heralded in Israeli poetry at the end of the 1960s, saw in “Israeliness” an oppressive force that eliminates a multiplicity and variety of voices.

But how is it possible to settle the contradiction between the vision of Israeliness and the Mizrahi trauma, a trauma that is founded on the demand that the Oriental Arab-Jew cast off his Arab identity, which in Israel is seen as the identity of the enemy? How can the wounding and rupture-causing immigration of Jews from Islamic lands to the State of Israel develop into an Israeli utopia that will hear the immigrant’s testimony and heal the wounds? How can the Arab-Jew seek universal Israeliness without it erasing the variety of his ethnic, particular identities, in favor of an Israeli identity that contains them? How can the Oriental immigration trauma not only connect with Israeliness but also stand in opposition to it while preserving its own uniqueness?

Biton expressed this dilemma, which troubled him as he wrote the poems of *Minha Marokait*, in these words:

Around 1974, two forces struggled within me in terrible conflict. One, Israeliness, wanted to be pleasant, an insider, belonging, Tel Avivian, but with the terrible price of giving up the second force which had in it something disturbing, real, penetrating, connected to immeasurable atavistic foundations which were hidden and didn’t dare show their faces.

In the same year elements that were inside me started to crystallize, elements which came from the Atlas mountains, from the deserts of that place, over hundreds of generations. A sort of attempt to rehabilitate those rejected and repressed elements, which we were in fact ashamed of in that generation.<sup>41</sup>

This is the exact dilemma faced by Biton in his first book, and which he confronts in his poems.<sup>42</sup> But this question becomes even more complex if we remember

that here the trauma of the immigrating subject meets the sovereign subject, who has his own trauma. It seems that the discursive possibility that opened for Biton, as it did for other immigrant poets in the 1970s, can be characterized as the meeting between different traumas, meaning the beginning of a dialogue and a mutual ability to listen to testimonies about the trauma. We have then before us the beginnings of a phenomenon of discourse that Michael Rothberg terms “multidirectional memory.” Instead of a model of collective memories engaged in a zero-sum competition as to who endured the worse trauma, Rothberg presents a model for the coexistence of traumas that meet in the public space: a model that is free of the memory of trauma as the exclusive creator of national identity and that engages in intercultural negotiations that include different identities. The existence of multidirectional memories deviates from the ruling national/ethnic framework and clears the way, through the suggestion of Nancy Fraser, to move beyond the framing of one homogeneous identity on which the national sovereign state was established.<sup>43</sup> In the wake of changes in the field of Hebrew poetry and Israeli discourse that began to bring to the surface the memory of the trauma of native Israeli sovereignty, which until then had developed as the literature of the majority writing as if it were a national minority, the resistance to hearing and making a legitimate space for the immigrant’s memory of trauma weakened. This happened especially with the Mizrahi immigrant, and the existence of multidirectional memory began to be possible. This weakened the homogeneous, exclusive power—as well as the mechanisms of exclusion—of the hegemonic identity that lies at the foundations of the Israeli national sovereign state.

In this way, on the one hand, Biton’s speech in his poem “Mashehu al ruach tzazit” is full of the rhetorical power of a direct appeal to “you,” an appeal that is repeated again and again and emphasizes the sharp opposition between “us,” the Mizrahi Jews, and “you,” the Ashkenazim. On the other hand, from the perspective of the merge into Israeliness, Biton understands that the chance that the Mizrahi trauma will be recognized has indeed opened up, but its resolution remains remote. All he asks is to be left alone to his sighs, and the sole solution he suggests at the moment is the creation of a literary and ruptured posttraumatic discourse of “fragmented rhymes”:

You, who shook us in the cradle  
 you who threw us through all the ruins  
 at least do this  
 leave us to our sighs  
 we are fragments of rhymes.<sup>44</sup>

And indeed, as a position that challenges those of his Ashkenazi readers who are looking for the appearance of the redemption of trauma while they continue to exclude him from the utopian Israeliness for which he still yearns, Erez Biton develops lyrical, broken, and fragmented language that tries to give representation to the unrepresentable. In doing so he rises to the challenge posed by Meir Wieseltier to Hebrew poetry, a challenge in which Wieseltier presented the poems of Avot Yeshurun as poetry that taught him to deny the “natural” and take for granted the language of the hegemonic literary writing that presented itself as “normal”:

He helped me to perceive the hypocrisy in the normalness of literature here. That is, the fact that the behavior of Israeli literature, as if it is “normal” literature, is nothing but hypocrisy, and one must beware of it. The negation of normalcy also includes language. He helped to convince me that it is impossible (or useless) to make poetry in standard Hebrew as it was used in the existing Hebrew literature. Everyone must find his own way to “damage” the language, to “break it” and in doing so to save it from itself.<sup>45</sup>

(5)

The torn subject of the speaker in Biton’s poetry tries to establish himself precisely in the position of transition between Morocco and Israel. This position of transition is shaped by the hyphenated identity of the Arab-Jew, and it is anchored in a traumatic breach. On the one hand Biton emphasizes the connection between the two—Jew and Arab—both in the poem “Hatuna Marokait” [Moroccan wedding] in which he writes “Arabs and Jews, we will come”<sup>46</sup> and in the poem “Avanim shehorot” [Black stones], when he distinguishes himself from the fate of Ashkenazi Jews in anti-Semitic Europe, identifying himself as part of the world of the Orient where French and Arab culture mix:

I’m not the Yid they say is drinking blood in Syria  
I didn’t poison wells in Europe!!  
I protest and repeat:  
I gaze toward  
Paris’s mottled ewes,  
Jean Paul Sartre,  
the silver ring on the little finger  
of Sihan Dahud like the Alley of White Roses in Ramla.<sup>47</sup>

On the other hand, the reaction to the trauma of immigration can be seen in the separation from Arabness. One must remember that the hyphen in Arab-Jew has a double effect, it both connects and separates, so that Biton's reaction to the demand to cut himself off from Arabness not only identifies the Jew with the Arab, but that very same hyphen must also, in order to connect with Israeliness, separate him from Arabness.

Biton's method of simultaneously enabling the connection and the separation of the hyphen in the term Arab-Jew is to choose, along with his defiant language, an additional solution. In addition to the crude accusations, he suggests another posttraumatic response. The gist of this response is to recommend that the Mizrahi choose the strategy of "pretending." He suggests turning the Mizrahi's failure to penetrate the walls of the poetry of Israeli sovereignty—which according to Biton are prestructured by the attempt to uphold a coherent and stable identity—into a position of advantage based on imposture. For example, in the poem "Pgisha" [Meeting] he tells of his efforts to don a mask for a meeting, perhaps with a woman. He measures the human warmth that pervades the meeting from a position of scientific distance, in degrees Celsius, and he interprets his attempt to appeal to others as related to his normal behavior when wearing the mask that conceals the inner rupture:

Hand in hand  
 30 degrees Celsius at the most  
 And already the blood pressure is especially high.  
 You burrow through the polite words  
 And for some reason it seems to you that you will never meet again.  
 You almost forget that even tomorrow  
 on a bus or in a store  
 you smile anyway,  
 you want to gain time  
 maybe a joke  
 maybe a good story  
 for you prepared and polished everything  
 and the tones  
 and the fingers in the right places<sup>48</sup>

The advice to "pretend" by wearing a mask is a suggestion for coping with posttraumatic effects. But Biton—like Frantz Fanon, who wrote about the white mask of the black man who seeks, without success, to use it to sever himself from

his black identity<sup>49</sup>—also speaks of the price, the inner rupture that is involved in wearing the mask:

And nevertheless, this pressure in the chest  
 and nevertheless, this sweat on the face  
 and afterwards, at a distance you repeat by heart without mistakes  
 what you should have said this morning  
 and you break it down like small change  
 and you pay yourself a high price.<sup>50</sup>

The metaphor of payment, which appears at the end of the poem, reveals the dialectic nature of wearing a mask. However, the preparation of the mask requires exact precision of detail in order for it to succeed in fulfilling its task. Yet this precision of detail implies breaking the act down into “small change”; that is, it involves paying an expensive price “to yourself” for your complete identity, and the precise and detailed mask results in a breakdown of the whole—to the point where all that is left in your hands is the small change, the coins that remain from the payment you made.

The strategy of the mask is therefore a means of subversive imitation suggested by Biton in order to process the trauma of immigration without “redeeming” it through the fetishization<sup>51</sup> or hasty *aestheticization* that would enable its entry into the hegemonic Ashkenazi canon through its repression. The basic speech act in many of Biton’s poems is in fact an instruction manual for the Mizrahi, a sort of bestowing of a “Moroccan gift,” as in the title of the poem, that instructs how to develop a resistance to the Ashkenazi hegemony. This can be achieved through what Homi Bhabha terms “colonial mimicry,”<sup>52</sup> a technique by which the oppressed imitates the oppressor while preserving his own selfhood. He wants to be like him—that is, to transform himself and become like the oppressor, and in this way win his recognition. However, the oppressed simultaneously desires to be a distinct subject: to be a subject that is almost identical, but not completely so.

In actuality, Biton remains the Moroccan immigrant in a state of constant exile that leads him to behave like a mimic. Edward Said wrote about this phenomenon:

The exile therefore exists in a median state, neither completely at one with the new setting nor fully disencumbered of the old, beset with half-involvements and half-detachments, nostalgic and sentimental on one level, an adept mimic or a secret outcast on another. Being skilled at survival becomes the main imperative, with the



danger of getting too comfortable and secure constituting a threat that is constantly to be guarded against.<sup>53</sup>

This slipping beyond the “other,” this surplus, which is an essential part of the process of this mimicry, is what creates the effect of criticism; as Homi Bhabha has stated, “mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal.”<sup>54</sup> That is, Biton recommends that his reader, you, the Mizrahi, be like the Ashkenazi, but not entirely like him, and in this way you will undermine his subject and his authority. The act of rejection provides the time needed to cope with the trauma. According to Biton, knowing that the process of gaining acceptance will take a long time becomes an advantage that makes it possible to cope with the trauma of immigration without redeeming it through the hurried mechanism of “From Holocaust to Resurrection” employed by the Ashkenazi Zionist sovereignty. In other words, the oppressed mimics the oppressor—but not fully: He relies on his own eroded subjectivity in order to subvert the illusion of the stability of the oppressor’s subject, and in this way he also resists that authority. The ambivalence of mimicry not only ruptures the discourse but also undergoes a transformation to general uncertainty, which fixes the colonialist subject—the sovereign and the oppressor—as a mere partial presence.<sup>55</sup> The mimicry undermines him and does not allow him to be the agent of authority—that is, to be the worthy and ruling sovereign subject.

And indeed, the main theme presented by the speaker in Biton’s poems is that of pretense through use of a mask that enables the use of the Mizrahi stereotype as a Mizrahi tool of resistance. That is, instead of engaging in an all-out war against the Mizrahi stereotype, Biton suggests making use of it in order to deconstruct the stereotypical perspective that the oppressors utilize against the oppressed. This can be seen in “Shir kniya be-Dizengoff” [A poem for shopping on Dizengoff Street], where Biton describes the conduct of a Mizrahi in the city of Tel Aviv:

I bought a store on Dizengoff  
to put down roots  
to buy a root  
to find a seat at Roval’s  
but  
the people at Roval’s  
I ask myself  
Who are the people at Roval’s  
What is it about the people at Roval’s  
What’s with the people at Roval’s

I don't approach the people at Roval's  
 When the people at Roval's approach me  
 I pull out language  
 clean words,  
 yes sir,  
 please sir,  
 very current Hebrew  
 and the houses that are standing here over me  
 standing tall over me here  
 and the open openings here  
 are impenetrable to me here.<sup>56</sup>

The mimicry of “current” Hebrew that Biton recommends puts not only the authority that establishes identity—including that of the mimic, the imitator—in doubt but also the authority of the oppressor he is imitating. Mimicry exposes the mechanisms of invention of the native source of “current Hebrew” adopted by the immigrant, which undermines the hegemonic authority of the native by presenting him as the product of a construction and not as absolute and natural truth.

Bhabha claims, following Lacan, that mimicry is like camouflage and that it is not a question of harmonization with the background but a positioning against a leopard-print background.<sup>57</sup> In other words, it is not a harmonization of oppression through the erasure of the difference between oppressor and oppressed but rather a type of compatibility that is distinguished from the presence of both by way of their partial presentation through metonymy.<sup>58</sup>

Indeed, Biton creates his politics of identities when he presents two metonymies in the poem that represent a similarity based on proximity: The first—that of his identity—is the store that he, the Mizrahi, has bought on Dizengoff Street; the second is the Café Roval which—even though it belongs to Ashkenazim and in spite of the houses that surround it and tower over him—he wants to penetrate by means of his current Hebrew, transforming it into a fusion of Mizrahiness and Ashkenaziness. These metonymies—the Mizrahi place on Dizengoff (the store) that is like an Ashkenazi place, but not entirely, and the place that is Ashkenazi (Café Roval), but not entirely, because it is also Mizrahi—threaten the authority of both the oppressed and the oppressor because they create the effect of “conflictual identity” in a power struggle, which ultimately has no essence behind it.<sup>59</sup>

In this way Biton clearly undermines the validity of pure, transcendent Israeliness, even if he does not abandon the desire to join it. Homi Bhabha claimed

that the figure of mimicry subverts what Benedict Anderson described as internal compatibility between the empire and the nation. Bhabha, as opposed to Anderson, claims that mimicry turns signs of race and cultural superiority into a problem—that is, into artificial identities—which denies the nation its natural status. This applies in relation to both nationality and ethnicity; because the realization of the desire to appear authentic by way of mimicry is ultimately an ironic representation of a partial representation bestowing an identity that denies what appears to be a fixed essence.<sup>60</sup>

Actually, Biton positions himself at a midpoint that belongs to both the oppressor and the oppressed. He is both similar to and different from them both. He is in a hybrid place between East and West in which he feels content. For example, he takes up this midpoint position in his poem entitled “Ken ha-zipor” [The bird’s nest], which pays homage to Bialik’s “Ken la-zipor” [Bird’s nest], even as he revises it in the language of a local Oriental:

Little nests in high treetops passionately encircling  
sometimes wagtails,  
sometimes just the wail of jackals,  
never an eagle,  
and when the birds from Europe arrive I’m not arrogant,  
I know that on a clear day  
they’ll land to break their hunger in Egypt,  
I am merely a way station,  
And only this is happiness.<sup>61</sup>

Similarly, Biton ends the poem “Divrei reka rishonim” [Preliminary remarks] by positioning himself at the midpoint between East and West:

I, I  
who distanced myself  
far into my heart  
so that when everyone was sleeping  
I would repeat  
far into my heart  
little Bach masses  
in Jewish  
Moroccan.<sup>62</sup>

The result of Biton's undermining the stability of identity politics by way of this non-binary midpoint position, which lies between oppressor and oppressed and between East and West, is the return of the power of action to the oppressed. In this way he overcomes his appropriation as an oppressed object, powerless and lacking motivation, and takes back control of the representation of his trauma: he processes it without erasing it. In this way the poem "Shir na'ar shulayim ve-ovedet sozialit" [Poem for a deprived youth and a social worker] distorts the power relations between the oppressed and a representative of the authorities. The plea to the social worker is that of the youth who appears in the poem as an active spokesman speaking to her at eye level. By the end of the poem, the power relations have been overturned:

Now I'm even smarter than you,  
 little European bird,  
 in the Middle East,  
 you are my Solweig.<sup>63</sup>

This is the state of things in Biton's renowned poem "Shir Zohara Alfasia" [A poem about Zohara Alfasia] about "A singer in the court of Mohamed V in Rabat, Morocco."<sup>64</sup> Following a description of the misery of the singer's life in

Ashkelon, in Antiquities 3, beside the welfare office  
 the scent of the remnants of sardine tins on the teetering three-legged table<sup>65</sup>

the poet gives her a voice, which overturns the situation and rescues her from her status as an oppressed object:

And when she says:  
 Mohamed V is the apple of our eyes  
 You don't understand at first  
 Zohara Alfasia has a hoarse voice  
 a clear heart and eyes that are content from love.  
 Zohara Alfasia.<sup>66</sup>

Zohara Alfasia's ability to act in processing the trauma of immigration of the Arab-Jew is apparent in the language. Biton quotes her words—which are spoken in Arabic—in Hebrew, and in doing so emphasizes her Arab identity in a Hebrew poem about an Arab-Jew who rebels and highlights the traumatic rejection of her Arabness. Biton makes the Arabic present in the Hebrew in the line "Mohamed V is the apple of our eyes," which is in fact a loan translation (a calque) of "Mohamed al hamas suad ayouni."<sup>67</sup> A similar example of making the Jewish-Arab culture present

in Arabic can be seen when Biton writes “Piyut Marokai” [A Moroccan liturgical hymn], which according to him was written “in the spirit of the Moroccan hymns that absorbed the unique melody of Spain and are chanted in a traditional Moroccan-Jewish tune.”<sup>68</sup> The poem “Simha ba-mellah” [Joy in the mellah], however, is mostly written in Moroccan Arabic with a corresponding Hebrew translation.<sup>69</sup>

Erez Biton rewrites the Mizrahi stereotype, and in doing so he undermines not only his own self-integration but also the integration of the identity of the oppressor who uses the stereotype to undermine the oppressed. Biton, who recommends imitating the Ashkenazi, actually also imitates the Oriental and in doing so reveals the imitative structure of his poetry; in this way he emphasizes the lack of a stable source for and the contingency of all the ethnic identities in Israel. Through mimicry he transforms the fetish of the trauma—for example, the sardine tins and Zohara Alfasia’s teetering chair—into the starting point of the internal division of the traumatic subject, because the fetish is also a partial representation, simultaneously identical and different, that imitates authority and undermines it. The stereotype of the Mizrahi is in fact a contradictory articulation—one that is not only the effect of negating the difference relative to the “other” (that is, it is identical to the “I”) but also one that develops an alienation from the “civil” discourse of the “other” (that is, it differs from the “I”). In this way the degrading and oppressive stereotype loses its status as a representative authority.<sup>70</sup>

It is precisely from his position as a Mizrahi that Biton represents the Mizrahi—that is himself—in a stereotypical manner regarding his contact with the Ashkenazi; in doing so—using the Mizrahi stereotype that he, the Mizrahi himself, has created—he splits the stereotype into contradictions and disrupts patterns of Israeli cultural communication that always leave the Mizrahi at the fringes of the oppressed.

Biton exposes the mechanism behind the use of stereotypes through an identification ceremony in his poem “Misdar zehou” [Identification lineup]. In order to oppress the Mizrahi, the Ashkenazi needs the Mizrahi to recognize him:

They will stand over me as in an identification lineup  
 identification  
 and I will have to raise my head from the pillow  
 in order to recognize  
 to recognize  
 they will try to appease me with the eyes of children  
 children  
 and then I will remember my awkward chuckles  
 awkward.<sup>71</sup>

This need of the oppressor to win the recognition of the oppressed opens the way toward an act of resistance:

At that hour  
 the line of the horizon will brighten  
 like the cloud of a thin smile  
 then I will turn my face to the wall  
     the wall  
 and I will not recognize  
 and I will not recognize.<sup>72</sup>

He immediately reports the reaction that the Mizrahi's resistance will encounter: "They'll think that I'm pretending in order to anger them."<sup>73</sup> Yet Biton is not content with his recommendation of mimicry; he also bravely points out the price that the mimic will pay. In order to perform his subversive act the mimic suspends the existence of essence—that is, a stable sense of the ego and its distress—and so Biton writes,

At that hour  
 what will they find in me.<sup>74</sup>

Biton's mimicry does not aim to nullify Israeliness, yet it does not accept it as a sealed doctrine. He moves toward it while aware of its heterogeneous aspects—aspects that should, in the future and following long and complex soul-searching, blend into comprehensive, all-inclusive Israeliness. Erez Biton examines this movement toward Israeliness by way of genealogy, not history. That is, he is not looking for the existence of a historical spectrum in the passage of immigration trauma, moving from generation to generation until achieving redemption through a transcendent synthesis of Israeliness. Rather than this historical position, Erez Biton's genealogical path to Israeliness is checkered with obstacles and posttraumatic ruptures whose genesis stems from a divided and unstable source, which simultaneously includes a connective severing—that is, both an association and a disassociation from the encompassing identity of "Arab-Jew."

Therefore, what Biton is in fact suggesting is not a history of the trauma but rather a genealogy in the sense described by Nietzsche and Foucault—without one clear source and without one clear objective. The path of genealogy toward Israeliness does not subjugate or rush to process, to its own advantage, every trauma included in Israeliness. Upon the foundation of Jewish-Arab identity, which causes a dissociative representation of the "Israeli subject," various methods and means of

subjugation arrange themselves. Instead of the combined strength of a pluralistic wealth of identities, we have before us a genealogical meaning that doesn't create one single, essential identity by which Israeliness controls all of the identities included in it; rather, it creates identities that are a result of conflicts and adjustments, some of which act against each other.

This suggests that the genealogical model, which Biton recommends in order to cope with the trauma that resulted from the meeting of Jewish-Arab identity with the State of Israel, is not one of redeeming, historical processing that is bound up with repression, blindness, and the harnessing of the trauma to one clear objective. The distinction made by LaCapra between loss and absence leads him to support a non-messianic view, which Biton develops with relation to Israeliness. Paradise does not exist, writes LaCapra, "and one must therefore turn to other, nonredemptive options in personal, social, and political life—options other than an evacuated past and a vacuous or blank, yet somehow redemptive, future."<sup>75</sup> The starting point drawn by LaCapra enables an open model of valid mourning that, although it processes the trauma related to Israeliness, it does so without erasing and completely repressing its component of Arab identity.

The mechanism for processing trauma that Biton's poetry puts into action is amazingly similar to what Dominick LaCapra terms "empathic unsettlement." According to him this is "a tense interplay between critical, necessarily objectifying reconstruction," which Biton interprets as a successful assimilation of the immigration experience into Israeliness, "and an affective response to the voices of the victim," which Biton interprets as an emotional identification with the acting out of immigration trauma.<sup>76</sup> It is exactly this empathic unsettlement that Biton creates in his poems by means of mimicry—that same imitative pretending that uses a mask to undermine the separateness of the two identities of the oppressed. On the one hand, it is identity that gives space to the chaos of the trauma; on the other hand, it is identity that strives for correction and will come with the mergence into sovereign Israeliness. It seems that only a destabilized and fluid identity of the oppressed Arab-Jew—which stems from the conflictual combination of the contradiction enacted by the Mizrahi between Jewishness and Arabness and the identity that he creates out of the two—can cope with the ambivalence of the oppressor with regard to the oppressed; it is also that which can resist it. As Biton himself expresses it in his poem "Taktzir siha" [A summary of a conversation], in which he begins by asking, "What is it to be authentic: me, my name isn't Zohar, its Zaish" (Zaish is a Moroccan name), he concludes, "and it isn't, it isn't, / – and this confusion gives rise to a different language until the gums burst, [...] and I fall between the slang / lost in the medley."<sup>77</sup>

It is in this way, through the mimicry of empathic unsettlement, that Biton recommends coping with the difficulty of representing the trauma constructed by the testifier, which, as Dori Laub has written, the listener makes possible:

The trauma—as a known event and not simply as an overwhelming shock—has not been truly witnessed yet, not been taken cognizance of. The emergence of the narrative which is being listened to—and heard—is, therefore, the process and the place wherein the cognizance, the “knowing” of the event is given birth to. The listener, therefore, is a party to the creation of knowledge *de novo*.<sup>78</sup>

However, in contrast to Laub’s ideas, the listener is not a blank slate but instead comes with preconceived characteristics of identity. In the case of Erez Biton the preferred addressee is in fact Ashkenazi. Although, as was said, his poems are a recipe for Mizrahi resistance, the obvious addressee for many of them is the Ashkenazi. It is Erez Biton’s listener who makes his testimony possible, and his use of mimicry structures creates a reciprocal relationship between the testifier and the one who listens to the testimony. It is because of the mimicry he recommends that Erez Biton succeeds in dictating the terms of the testimony while not allowing the Ashkenazi listener to fix the Oriental speaker as a stereotype in a way that would clearly allow him to control and direct him. Through the stereotypical representation of the Mizrahi, created by the Oriental, the show of Oriental mimicry undermines the stereotype of the Mizrahi as it was created by the Ashkenazi. In this way, considering the impossibility of basing its representation on a stable source, it paves the way for the representation of Mizrahi trauma.

#### Notes

- 1 Translated from the Hebrew by Janice Weizman
- 2 Ketzia Elon, *Efsharut shlishit le-shira, iyunim be-poetica Mizrahit* [A third possibility for poetry: Readings in Oriental poetics] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 2011), 14–17.
- 3 Sami Shalom Chetrit quoted in Ketzia Elon, *Devarim shene'emru be-erev lichvod 30 shana le-hotza'at Minha Marokait* [Remarks made at an evening in honor of the 30th anniversary of the publication of *A Moroccan Gift*] (2011), 15–16. <http://www.kedma.co.il>.
- 4 Erez Biton, *Minha Marokait* [A Moroccan gift] (Tel Aviv: Akad Publishing, 1976), 3.
- 5 Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).
- 6 Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 12–13.



- 7 Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 153.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 142.
- 9 Bennett, *Empathic Vision*, 3–4.
- 10 Erez Biton, “Beit ha-psanterim” [House of the pianos], *Ha-kivun Mizrach* 12 (Summer, 2006): 10.
- 11 Biton, *Minha Marokait*, 14.
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 Carl Schmitt, *Political Theory: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George D. Schwab (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005).
- 14 Michel Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*”: *Lectures at the College De France, 1975–1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 43.
- 15 Hamutal Tzamir, *Be-shem ha-nof: Leumiut, migdar ve-subyektivitut ba-shira ha-Yisraelit be-shnot ha-hamishim ve-hashishim* [In the name of the land: Nationalism, gender, and subjectivity in Israeli poetry in the 1950s–1960s] (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 2006), 30. See also Shimrit Peled, *The Israeli Sovereign: The Novel and the Discourse 1967–1973* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, forthcoming).
- 16 *Ibid.*, 32–34.
- 17 Biton, “Beit ha-psanterim,” 12.
- 18 Foucault, *Society Must*, 50.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 43–46.
- 20 Schmitt, *Political Theory*, 36.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 5–15.
- 22 Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, “Ha-shiva el ha-historia shel ha-geulah–o: Mahi ‘ha-historia’ she aleha mitbatzaat ‘ha-shiva,’ be-bitui ‘ha-shiva el ha-historia?’” [The return to the history of redemption – or: What is ‘the history’ on which ‘the return’ is enacted, in the term ‘the return to history?’] in *Ha-Tzioniot ve-habazara le-historia: ha-aracha me-hadash*, ed. Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt and Moshe Lissak (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, 1999), 249–277.
- 23 Yehouda Shenhav, *Ha-Yehudim ha-Aravim: leumiut, dat, ve-etniut* [The Arab-Jews: Nationalism, religion, and ethnicity] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishing, 2003), 152–153.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 18–19.
- 25 Hannan Hever, *Sifrut shenichtevet mikan: Kitzur ha-sifrut ha-Yisraelit* [Literature written from here: A short history of Israeli literature] (Tel Aviv: Sifrei Chemed, Yediot Ahronot, 1999), 55–56.
- 26 Tzamir, *Be-shem ha-nof*, 21. Bold type appears in the original text.
- 27 Foucault, *Society Must*, 51–54.
- 28 Tzamir, *Be-shem ha-nof*, 41–42, 58, 65.

- 29 Chaviva Pediah, "Erez Biton: Pianuach poetica shel hagira" [Erez Biton: Solving the poetics of immigration], *Hakivun Mizrach* 12 (Summer, 2006): 19.
- 30 Hannan Hever, *Ha-sipur ve-ha-leom* [The narrative and the nation] (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2007).
- 31 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dona Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).
- 32 Tzami, *Be-shem ha-nof*, 88.
- 33 Meir Wieseltier, "Chatach aroch be-shirato shel Natan Zach" [A long cut in the poetry of Natan Zach], *Siman Kriya* 10 (January 1980): 417.
- 34 Tzami, *Be-shem ha-nof*, 89.
- 35 Elon, *Efsharut sblishit*, 142–147.
- 36 Sami Shalom Chetrit, *Ha-m'avak ha-Mizrabi be-Yisrael, 1948–2003* [The Oriental struggle in Israel, 1948–2003] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishing, 2004), 181.
- 37 Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2010), 22, 26, 53, 119; Yehouda Shenhav, *Beyond the Two-State Solution: A Jewish Political Essay* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012), 149–153.
- 38 Biton, *Minha Marokait*, 14.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Elon, *Efsharut sblishit*, 14.
- 41 Erez Biton, "Milim al Rabi David Buzaglo" [Words about Rabbi David Buzaglo], *Ha-kivun Mizrach* 12 (Summer, 2006): 34.
- 42 See also Chetrit, in Elon, *Devarim shene'emru*, 16.
- 43 Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 2–3, 17–19.
- 44 Biton, *Minha Marokait*, 15.
- 45 Meir Wieseltier, "Dibur al Avot, mitoch: Shlosa mabatim me-karov," in *Eich nikra Avot Yeshurun* [How shall we call Avot Yeshurun], ed. Lilach Lachman (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing, 2011), 219–220.
- 46 Biton, *Minha Marokait*, 36.
- 47 Ibid., 16.
- 48 Ibid., 6.
- 49 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1986).
- 50 Biton, *Minha Marokait*, 6.
- 51 Eric Santner, "History beyond the Pleasure Principle: Some Thoughts on Representation of Trauma" in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution,"* ed. Saul Friedlander (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 143–154.
- 52 Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), 121–131.

- 53 Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (London: Vintage Books, 1996), 49.
- 54 Bhabha, "Of Mimicry," 86.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Biton, *Minha Marokait*, 42.
- 57 Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Vintage, 1998), 99.
- 58 Bhabha, "Of Mimicry," 90.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Ibid., 87–89.
- 61 Biton, *Minha Marokait*, 26.
- 62 Ibid., 28.
- 63 Ibid., 30.
- 64 Ibid., 29.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 Pediah, "Erez Biton: Pianuach," 22.
- 68 Biton, *Minha Marokait*, 31.
- 69 Ibid., 32–33.
- 70 Bhabha, "Of Mimicry," 91–92.
- 71 Biton, *Minha Marokait*, 18.
- 72 Ibid., 19.
- 73 Ibid.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 LaCapra, *Writing History*, 57.
- 76 Ibid., 109.
- 77 Biton, *Minha Marokait*, 64.
- 78 Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (London: Routledge, 1992), 57.

