

American Literature and Israeli Culture: The Case of the Canaanites

IN THE SPRING OF 1988, Israeli television dedicated its monthly literary magazine to a roundtable discussion of the writings of Mark Twain, following the 1987 publication of a new Hebrew translation of two of Twain's oeuvres—*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.¹ The focus of the program was solely on Twain himself—his life, his characters, his humor, his world-view—whereas the name of Aharon Amir, the translator of these books, was mentioned only in passing. Nothing was really said about the translator or the nature of this new translation, and nobody even raised a question about the policy of translation; such as, why Amir had taken it upon himself to translate these two novels about boyhood life on the Mississippi in the mid-nineteenth century, which had already been published in Hebrew several times. The answer to this question lies in the understanding of the ideological and political affiliation of Amir—poet, writer, eminent editor, and indisputably one of Israel's leading translators.

Aharon Amir was a founding father of the “Canaanites,” a group of Israeli writers and intellectuals who emerged in the early 1940s and aroused much public interest and controversy during the mid-1950s. This group—which has been treated in *Homeland or Holy Land?*, a study by James S. Diamond²—presented a serious ideological challenge to the Jewish and Zionist establishment of the time. The Canaanites argued that modern immigration to Palestine, which was mainly Jewish, was creating a new national entity which was totally disconnected from its Jewish origin and from Jewish tradition. The Canaanites expected this new nation of Israeli natives (whom they preferred to call “Hebrews”) to become the avant-garde, the melting pot of all the ethnic groups in the “West-Semitic world,”³ creating a massive, homogeneous Middle-Eastern nation similar to that of the ancient Hebrews who had been the dominant national, cultural and

political force in the region in biblical times. The idea behind this Canaanite philosophy was not only to disconnect native Israelis from the burden of Jewish religiosity and tradition and allow them to cultivate a regional identity, but actually to revolutionize the former “Land of Canaan” (hence the epithet “Canaanites”) by forming a new polity for all the ethnically diverse inhabitants of the area. As suggested in many of the Canaanite writings—including the poetry—the use of military force was considered to be an entirely legitimate means for conquering the wastelands of the region and establishing a new and open society in which immigrants from all over the world—not just exclusively Jews—would find their place.

Now, what does all this have to do with America, let alone American literature? In his 1944 manifesto, the founder and ideologist of the Canaanites, the poet Yonatan Ratosh (1909–1989), stated: “A hundred years ago—or a hundred and fifty years ago—only a small number of the ancestors of today’s Americans were actually Americans. Many of them were still in Europe, each in his own country, children of many different nations.”⁴ Yet these people who emigrated to America were destined to give birth to what Ratosh called “fully-fledged Americans,” because, according to his theory, a person cannot belong to two different nations at one and the same time; the affiliation with one nation (into which he assimilates) excludes his affiliation with the other nation (to which he originally belonged). In other words, the emergence of a distinct American nation out of the multitude of immigrants who reached American shores served, for Ratosh and his fellow Canaanites, as an historical model to be emulated in the Middle East. Ratosh was therefore highly critical when he spoke of the Zionist refusal to accept this basic fact of life by regarding as Jews even the descendants of Jewish immigrants to Palestine, thus ignoring their participation in an irreversible process of assimilating into the new Hebrew nation. Referring elsewhere in the manifesto to the analogy between American history and modern Palestine, Ratosh argued that the new Hebrew nation had one real advantage over the American nation:

In spite of being a new nation emerging in a country of immigration, we [the Hebrews] are identified with an ancient, proud and highly civilized nation, the product of the first civilized world: we are identified with the ancient Hebrews, in whose country we live and whose language we speak and whose full and legitimate heirs we are.⁵

He saw the American nation, on the other hand, as a product of the modern age that had no historical tradition to which to refer. As Diamond observes:

“Unlike other nations that have no history or symbols they can call their own (for example, Americans cannot really relate to Native American culture), the new Hebrews have a ready-made past.”⁶

Similar rhetoric was often echoed by Ratosh’s devoted follower, Aharon Amir, particularly in some of his essays written under the impact of the Israeli victory in the Six-Day War. This war was regarded by the Canaanites as creating a unique opportunity to implement, even by force, the idea of the melting pot, thus forming a new Hebrew nation consisting of both Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, as well as other minorities located in what they perceived as Greater Israel. Declared Amir: “We should not turn away from the apparent vision which awaits us. It is the vision of a New America emerging in this part of the world: the cradle of man and gods and the origin of culture and faith in ancient times, a melting pot for a great nation in days to come.”⁷ In practical terms, this meant the creation of a new Israel, which, like the United States, would be open to many kinds of immigrants, unified by one language and one educational system, in which all members of society—Jews and non-Jews, religious and non-religious alike—would be treated as equals. This was also the Canaanite solution to the immense demographic problems facing Israel in the aftermath of the war.⁸ Some of these ideas were reiterated by Amir in a symposium that took place in the winter of 1974, in which he vehemently advocated population growth as a necessary step toward Israel’s development:

I think that, at some point, we shall have to be ready, both ideologically and emotionally, to turn Israel into an open society, totally open, a society that absorbs immigration not necessarily from Jewish resources . . . If we don’t take this step, what’s going to happen to us is the same as would have happened to America if it had decided, 150 years ago, to accept only Anglo-Saxons and Protestants. It is easy to assume that by now it would have not a population of 220 million people, but a population of 60 million people, and it is not too hard to imagine that with such demographic strength, the United States would have had to face repeated attempts by foreign powers to take their own initiatives in the area between the Atlantic and the Pacific. However, there is no doubt that, with such limitations, the United States would never have survived and reached such levels of achievement.⁹

This political attitude had its equivalent in the literary theory cultivated by the Canaanites. In 1950, Yonatan Ratosh published his first literary manifesto,¹⁰ in which he argued that the Jews, being a polyglot people, had produced a literature written in a Babel of languages: Russian, German,

English, French, Arabic, and, of course, Yiddish and Hebrew. Yet, from his point of view, there is a substantial difference between Jewish literature, written in Hebrew by Jews in the Diaspora (who didn't speak the language), and Hebrew literature, created in Israel by a people for whom Hebrew was the vernacular in which they expressed the whole gamut of their collective and individual experience. Here, as in his political and ideological writings, Ratosh was keenly aware of what he considered to be the American precedent: the creation of a new American nation on a new territory, which generated the creation of a new culture and literature, totally disconnected from existing traditions. The cultural and literary model to be followed by the Israelis was, therefore, that of the new nations which had evolved in the modern world (Ratosh even mentions Australia), and in particular "the various peoples of America in the period of their development and formation . . ." Although he did not say it explicitly, Ratosh was referring to what he saw as the emancipation of American literature from the bondage of English (or rather British) literature—in spite of the common language. This model was to set an example for Israeli literature in breaking free from the bondage of Jewish literature written in the Hebrew language.¹¹

Ratosh's ideological commitment to America and its literature—reflected so eloquently in his two manifestos—found expression in his prolific translation of American fiction and non-fiction into Hebrew. An early example¹² is a book called *The Democrat of the Revolution: Thomas Jefferson*, consisting of a biography by Hendrik W. van Loon, and a selection of Jefferson's own writings. Beside this work, which is indicative of Ratosh's interest in the emergence of American society and statehood, his list of translations includes a critical study on the fiction of Mark Twain (*The Boy of the Mississippi* by Isabelle Proudfit), written in 1946, and two popular books on American history, completed in the 1960s: one is a short French work, *Histoire des Etats Unis*, by Rene Remond, published in the framework of the series "*Que sais-je?*" produced by the *Presses Universitaires de France*. The other is *United States of America* by F. G. Alleston Cook. It is followed by a body of translations of American novelists ranging from Jack London, Richard Wright and John Steinbeck, to Theodore Dreiser, Herman Wouk and Howard Fast. Admittedly Ratosh did most of his translations to earn his bread (thus his choice was generally dictated by the policy of his publisher and the demands of the market; for example, Dreiser or Wouk); yet one cannot ignore the fact that his absorption with literature of and about America is inextricably linked to the Canaanite ethos.

Of particular interest to our discussion is Yonatan Ratosh's translation

of the Eugene O'Neill play, *A Touch of the Poet*, which was performed by the Habimah National Theatre in 1959, just one year after the posthumous publication of this play in the United States. The entirely plausible claim that Ratosh did the job only in order to make a living is belied by the short essay he wrote about it in the program prepared by Habimah. Ratosh's reading of the play is most revealing. Here are some of his comments:

In *A Touch of the Poet*, all the personal desires, all the complications, all the human weaknesses still in a turmoil, are placed in the framework of a much larger problem, which is very American—perhaps the major American problem—and that is the reason why it is very much a human problem, and above all perhaps an Israeli problem. I will speak in Israeli terms: we enter here the world of a transit camp [Ratosh uses the Hebrew word *Ma'abara*—the term for the transit camps that were established to absorb mass immigration in the 1950s]—a transit camp that is not Yemenite, or Polish, or Persian [some of the major waves of immigration to Israel in that decade]. This is an Irish transit camp in a new land, it is America of hundred years ago . . .

It is the story of a girl, Sarah, daughter of the transit camp, educated in this land from early childhood: it is the story of her emancipation from her father's house, and her friendship with a native-born youth—a means of escape from the poor, uprooted world of immigrants, in order to enter the real world, the world of the land on whose threshold she had grown up, and to be accepted there, to become rooted in her land.

. . . But Sarah . . . who is so realistic in spite of the burning blush of her young love, is ready for everything. As a daughter of the new land, though of Irish origin, she knows deep in her heart that she will not escape her destiny through marriage, nor her familial intricacies—or the pride inherited by her father, the revolt against her servile mother, the blood of her grandfather which is still in her veins. O'Neill's protagonist, and her children after her, will not escape from the destiny of the O'Neillian man, but they will carry it in their real land, in the framework of the real life of a new people in a new world with its new and concrete values. All of them will become a part of this land, no longer uprooted, degraded, and extinguished like her father, like his house. So here we have a play which is gloomy and destructive, but nonetheless it is complete and it has a good ending.¹³

The politics of this interpretation is clear enough: *A Touch of the Poet*, as far as Ratosh was concerned, is not just an American family drama, but an illuminating literary document from which one can easily draw a moral as to the relevance of the American experience to the Israeli condition. Ratosh's

biographer, the Israeli historian Yehoshua Porat, has observed that Ratosh presented *A Touch of the Poet* as if O'Neill himself had read his 1944 ideological manifesto, or at least as if the playwright shared its major premise.¹⁴

It was in this context that Aharon Amir, fervent advocate of the Canaanite movement, applied himself to translating American literature into Hebrew. In his "Biographia Literaria" (1978), Amir refers to his interest in American literature already in his early days as a student at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, when he read Jack London, Walt Whitman, Longfellow, Poe, and Emerson.¹⁵ Though for Amir, as for Ratosh, translation was a way of making a living, clearly large parts of his versatile work in this field, including some of his translations from other languages, express both his political and his literary credo. The list includes works by major nineteenth-century writers: Herman Melville's epic *Moby Dick*,¹⁶ two novels by Twain, four volumes of stories by Edgar Allan Poe,¹⁷ and two collections of short stories by the master of the genre, O. Henry. Still more varied is his list of translations of twentieth-century American fiction: two works by Sherwood Anderson (including *Winesburg, Ohio*), *Look Homeward, Angel* and *On Time and the River* by Thomas Wolfe, *Requiem for a Nun* and *Flags and Dust* by William Faulkner, and works by Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, Henry Miller and Howard Fast. Amir has been highly active in translating contemporary writers too—John Updike, Bernard Malamud, Herbert Gold, Saul Bellow (*The Adventures of Augie March*), Philip Roth, E. L. Doctorow, and even Toni Morrison.

Amidst this impressive output, of special significance is the presence of Herman Melville and Mark Twain, whose writings may be perceived as a perfect example of the way in which the experience of confronting "the new world" is materialized in fictional form, particularly by two major nineteenth-century classics. In this context, the choice of Thomas Wolfe for translation makes sense too: in an interview, a few years ago, Amir confirmed that this particular translation of his was done "with great passion and with a lot of excitement, and, in a certain respect, at my own initiative . . ."¹⁸ (This comment may provide us with a general indication as to the personal/ideological involvement of the "professional" translator in the course of his own work.) The choice of Sherwood Anderson or Faulkner also appears far from incidental as both writers—in their "provincial" attitude—reflect some distinctive features of American life, as it is lived in various parts of the country. So does Saul Bellow in his *Adventures of Augie March*.

Aaron Amir's American connection is further reflected in the few but significant translations of popular books on American history and culture.

In 1951, Israel's third year of statehood, Amir published a Hebrew translation of *USA: The Permanent Revolution*, a textbook on American history prepared by the editors of *Fortune* magazine. Later, during the 1960s, Amir translated the *United States* volume in the World Library, produced by Time-Life International. Interestingly enough, the Hebrew versions of the "China" and "Brazil" volumes in the series were done by other translators. Amir is also responsible for the Hebrew translation of a small French booklet, *La Littérature Américaine*, written by Jacques-Fernand Cahen, which is an everyman's guide to the complexities of American literature.

The imprint of America and American culture can be easily seen in the two major periodicals affiliated with the Canaanites—*Alef* and *Keshet*. Of particular importance is the first issue of *Alef*, a short-lived periodical for "literature, politics, and social affairs," which appeared in 1949 soon after Israel gained its independence. An extended passage from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (in Hebrew translation) was printed on the opening page of this issue, in the neighborhood of various statements and citations which were meant to express the Canaanite credo:

A nation announcing itself,
I myself make the only growth by which I can be appreciated,
I reject none, accept all, then reproduce all in my own forms.

A breed whose proof is in time and deeds,
What we are we are, nativity is answer enough to objections,
We wield ourselves as a weapon is wielded.
We are powerful and tremendous in ourselves,
We are executive in ourselves, we are sufficient in the variety of our selves,

We are the most beautiful to ourselves and in ourselves,
We stand self-pois'd in the middle, branching thence over the world,

From Missouri, Nebraska, or Kansas, laughing attacks to scorn.

Nothing is sinful to us outside ourselves,
Whatever appears, whatever does not appear, we are beautiful or sinful in ourselves only.
(O Mother - O Sister dear!
If we are lost,
No victor else has destroy'd us,
It is by ourselves we go down to eternal night.)¹⁹

The choice of Whitman is not surprising: already in the 1920s Whitman had become a source of inspiration for Israeli poets searching for a literary mode to express their experience as pioneers in the new land. For the Canaanites, with their particular affinity for American literature, Whitman was manifestly the bard of the New America, the one poet “from whom we could learn a lot,” as Yonatan Ratosh once declared.²⁰ Yet, apart from general interest in Whitman, this very passage (composed in another country decades earlier) expressed most accurately the Canaanite consciousness, their deep sense of involvement in an historical process of forming a new and powerful nation in a new and uncharted territory, their ideal of an open society (“I reject none”) and, above all, their cult of “nativity.” This analogy between Whitman and the Canaanites is also implied by the juxtaposition of these stanzas in *Alef* with the short and highly-poeticized manifesto of this periodical (and the Canaanites it represented), which ends with:

For we are the forces of tomorrow in the land of the Hebrews. For we are the carriers of the day to come. For this land is a land that generates people like us, it is a land that generates the Hebrews.

And in order that we shall do things that are our duty and destiny, we have first to think our own thoughts, to look with our own eyes, not through the spectacles of someone else, and to feel in our own way.

And in that no one else could help us. In that we must start only by ourselves.
And in that we ought to start today.
And in that we ought to start.
We start from *Alef*.²¹

Another significant text chosen by the editors of *Alef* from the vast body of American literature is Thomas Wolfe’s *The Story of a Novel*. This short text, which describes Wolfe’s own struggle to become a writer, includes some references to the particular problems he faced, not only as an individual but as an American artist who tries to shape his art in the context of the emerging literature of America. This caught the attention of the “Canaanites,” who could find in some of Wolfe’s words an expression of their own poetics:

... I am speaking as I have tried to speak from first to last in the concrete terms of the artist’s actual experience, of the nature of the physical task before him. It seems to me that the task is one whose physical proportions are vaster and

more difficult here than in any other nation on the earth. It is not merely that in the cultures of Europe and of the Orient the American artist can find no antecedent scheme, no structural plan, no body of tradition that can give his own work the validity and truth that it must have. It is not merely that he must somehow make a new tradition for himself, derived from his own life and from the enormous space and energy of American life, the structure of his own design; it is not merely that he is confronted by these problems; it is even more that this, that the labor of a complete and whole articulation, the discovery of an entire universe and of a complete language, is the task that lies before him.²²

The American presence is still more tangible in *Keshet*, edited by Aharon Amir, which was one of Israel's most influential literary periodicals for almost two decades. Beside sporadic translations of writers like Henry Miller, Herbert Gold, John Updike, and Sylvia Plath, *Keshet* encouraged the publication of essays on American history and culture. Historian Yehoshua Arieli has contributed several articles to *Keshet*, beginning with the essay "Abraham Lincoln—the Myth of Democracy,"²³ whereas S. J. Kahn, also of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, wrote on "William Carlos Williams and the Whitman Tradition."²⁴ *Keshet* also celebrated the American Bicentennial by dedicating a large section of one of its issues to the theme of the history of America's relationship to Palestine and the Middle East. This section included, among other things, an article entitled, "The Safe Shores of New Canaan," which dealt with the idea of Jerusalem in American literature, between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries. For the Canaanites, the point of this study might have been, once again, the existence of a common myth shared both by the young "Hebrews," and the Americans of previous generations, illuminated this time from a totally new perspective.²⁵

The most significant expression of this trend, however, was a special edition of *Keshet*, dedicated to "Highlights of the American Experience." Its cover showing a picture of a cowboy on horseback, both rider and horse decorated with stars and stripes, this 196-page issue was published in September 1971, four years after the Six-Day War, and in the midst of a period in which the public debate over Israel's future was at its peak. It includes a selection of essays and documents, not *belles lettres*, presenting various facets of American history and tradition that were thought to be of relevance to Israeli society. The opening essay of this issue, "The Shock of Familiarity," written by the editor, Aharon Amir, reveals beyond doubt the *raison d'être* of this anthology: "The simple idea [behind the issue] concerns the existence of an analogy between the historical experience of the new American nation,

and the process of the formation of a new nation in this land [i.e., Israel], a process which is still going on, or rather, is still at its very beginning.” As he goes on to mention specific similarities between America and Israel—immigration, the pioneering drive, the search for a collective identity, the conquering and settling of new territories, the bloody struggle for national unity—Amir drew the conclusion that no self-aware Israeli citizen, particularly after the 1967 war, could ignore the obvious affinity between the two nations. This realization—he declared—“may help us to see, to understand and to know our own self and it may also serve us as a source of encouragement and inspiration in the course of the dialogue which we are expected to conduct . . . with America, with the world around us, with history—and with our own future.”

The texts in *Keshet* actually substantiate the main concepts suggested by Amir in his introductory essay. Most of them focus on the formation of American society and the United States of America, with emphasis on the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, and the political, juridical, and moral issues that informed the period in question. Side-by-side with Frederic Jackson Turner’s historical lecture (1893) on the American conquest of the West, an excerpt from the inaugural address by President James K. Polk during the annexation of Texas, or a section from Robert Bird’s guide to America written in the early nineteenth century, one finds contemporary writings on historical issues: Oscar Handlin’s treatment of immigration (from *The Uprooted*), Paul H. Buck’s discussion on the shaping of the Union in the second half of the nineteenth century, and Paul W. Gates’s article on American agrarian history. Attention is also paid to literature and art, with S. J. Kahn’s article on “Time and End in American Literature,” and the transcript of a lecture at the Hebrew University by painter Irvin Kriesberg on the making of American art, which echoes—as mentioned in the editor’s note—some similar problems which have troubled writers, artists and critics of this land [i.e., Israel].” Yet the most illuminating item in this issue is a passage from “Letters from an American Farmer,” written in 1782 by the French essayist Michelle-Guillhaume Jean de Crevecoeur, who emigrated to America as a young man, became a naturalized citizen in 1764, and ended up as a farmer in Orange County, New York. The portrayal of the new American man as presented by this writer can be read, and was probably meant by Amir to be read, as a metaphor for “the new Hebrew” who was expected to emerge in the land of Israel:

What then is the American, this new man? He is either a European, or the descendant of a European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you

will find in no other country. I could point out to you a family whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a Frenchwoman, and whose four sons have four wives of different nations. He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great Alma Mater. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world.²⁶

It is therefore not surprising that Aharon Amir—in his capacity as a poet, not as a translator—went even further by making a serious attempt to adopt the American model in his own imaginative writing. The model chosen by him was, of course, Walt Whitman—the arch-American poet he had admired since his early days at college, and to whom his mentor, Yonatan Ratosh, had referred as the paradigm for the new Israeli literature. The appropriate occasion for writing *à la* Whitman occurred in the autumn of 1947, following the United Nations General Assembly decision on the partition of Palestine—a decision that led, within a few months, to the establishment of the State of Israel. In the face of these tumultuous events, Amir came out with a long visionary poem entitled *Shirat eretz ha'ivrim* [The Song of the Land of the Hebrews], which predicted (through the image of the dawn of a new day) that the Israeli melting pot would give birth to a new and powerful nation, free from any bondage to the past—a nation which would spread over the vast, open spaces of the region, reviving, in the process of its creation, the values as well as the glory of ancient times:

. . . A day of blood-mixture and melding of races, unknown yet in my land. A day of cities and villages and a suburb and a town with an endless number of people. A day of fifty million people in my spacious land. A day of light from one horizon to another.

I see it coming.²⁷

The American poet is present in the overall composition and in every line: “The Song of the Land of the Hebrews” is written in long, prose-like Whitmanesque lines, with the first-person speaker using the kind of ecstatic voice which is so notable in *Leaves of Grass*. The overall theme of the work—the birth of a new people in a new land—echoes the Whitman poem. Amir

follows Whitman in using techniques such as repetition or, even more, the vast catalogues of data which are expected to evoke the variety and diversity of the unified whole they both describe. Above all, there is the patriotic aura which very much defines the ideological unity of the work—Whitman’s passion for America transformed into Amir’s passion for the new state. Whitman’s influence can also be felt in the concluding chapters of a highly poeticized essay entitled *Manginot ivriyot* [Hebrew Melodies], another product of the post-1967 period. In it, Amir chooses to present his grand vision of the new nation spreading into the vast territories recently gained by using, once again, the rich reservoir of themes, images, and rhythmic patterns offered by the American poet.²⁸

One would assume that most American critics would beg to differ with the tendency of the Canaanites to interpret American literature as totally disconnected from the great tradition of English literature. Advocates of multiculturalism may observe with certain suspicion the way in which both Ratosh and Amir spoke of a newborn, homogenous American culture as a model for the new Israeli nation. From an Israeli point of view, it is common to declare that Canaanism is passé, and that, even in its heyday, it was no more than a marginal group. However, while speaking of “The Americanization of Israeli Culture,” it seems to be more than necessary to take into consideration the tremendous intellectual engagement of members of this group in the American legacy and in American literature, and to offer them due credit for their substantial contribution in introducing American texts into Israeli discourse. From this point of view, the case of the Canaanites can certainly be seen as indispensable for a full understanding of the diverse and rather complex cultural relationship between Israel and the United States.

NOTES

1. Israeli television archive, 4454/88. Twain’s novels appeared in *Sifriat Ma’ariv* [Hebrew].

2. James S. Diamond, *Homeland or Holy Land? The Canaanite Critique of Israel* (Bloomington, IN, 1986). See also Jacob Shavit, *The New Hebrew Nation: A Study in Israeli Heresy and Fantasy* (London, 1987).

3. Apparently the territory the Canaanites first had in mind included the original Mandatory Palestine (Israel and Jordan of today), Lebanon, and parts of Syria.

4. Yonatan Ratosh, *Reshit Hayamim* [The Beginning of Days] (Tel-Aviv, 1982) 181–2 [Hebrew]. This is a posthumous publication of essays and political manifestos written over three decades.

5. *Ibid.*, 185.
6. Diamond, *Homeland or Holy Land?*, 62.
7. Aharon Amir, in Aharon Ben-Ami (ed), *Ha-Kol: Gevulot Hashalom shel Eretz Israel* [Ha-kol: the Peace Frontiers of Israel] (Tel-Aviv, 1967) 195 [Hebrew].
8. James S. Diamond, *Homeland or Holy Land?*, 93.
9. *Keshet*, XVI(2) (1974) 29 [Hebrew].
10. Yonatan Ratosh, *Sifrut yehudit balashon ha'ivrit* [Jewish Literature in the Hebrew Language] (Tel-Aviv, 1981) 37–42 [Hebrew]. This book was also published posthumously. The reference here is to an essay written in 1950.
11. In his essay, Ratosh also praised a Norwegian novel which dramatized the cultural assimilation of Norwegian newcomers to the U.S. to the point of forgetfulness of their collective past. It is Johan Bojer's *Vor Egen Stamme* [The Emigrants], 1924 [Norwegian], which he read in the Hebrew translation of D. Kimche published in Tel-Aviv in 1932.
12. The Library of American Civilization was an organization that endorsed the publication in Hebrew of texts related to American history, culture, and politics. It was initiated by pro-American, right-wing Israelis who were critical of the Soviet cultural orientation of the Israeli left.
13. Ratosh, *Sifrut yehudit balashon ha'ivrit*, 200–202.
14. Yehoshua Porat, *Shelah ve'et beyado: Hayav shel Yonatan Ratosh* [The Life of Uriel Shelah (Yonatan Ratosh)] (Tel-Aviv, 1989) 290–291. “Yonatan Ratosh” is the pseudonym of Uriel Shelah [Hebrew].
15. Aharon Amir, *Proza* [Prose] (Tel-Aviv, 1989) 46 [Hebrew].
16. In 1969, Amir published a short Hebrew version of this novel that was aimed at a younger audience. A complete translation of Melville's epic in two volumes appeared in 1981, with an afterward by Zefira Porat, one of Israel's leading experts on American literature. *Moby Dick* was first translated into Hebrew in full by Eliyahu Bortniker in 1942.
17. A collection of stories by Poe was actually Amir's first project in translating American literature into Hebrew. The book was published in 1947. Since then he has translated American texts almost without interruption.
18. See article by Avner Holzman, in Nurit Gertz (ed), *Hakevuza hakena'anit—Sifrut ve'idiologia—Asufa* [The Canaanite Group: Literature and Ideology: An Anthology] (Tel-Aviv, 1986) 160 [Hebrew].
19. Walt Whitman, in F. Bradley (ed) *Leaves of Grass and Selected Prose* (New York, 1949) 282–3.
20. Ratosh, *Sifrut yehudit balashon ha'ivrit*, 40.
21. *Alef*, the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet, was chosen as the name of this periodical. In its ancient Hebrew form, it served as the Canaanite symbol.
22. *Alef*, January 1950. The quotation (rendered of course in Hebrew) is from Thomas Wolfe, *The Story of a Novel* (New York, 1936) 92. It is interesting to note that the passage from Wolfe was put in a framed column, entitled “The Literature of a New Nation.”

23. *Keshet*, XI(5) (1959) 148–61 [Hebrew]. Yehoshua Arieli is the author of *Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology* (Cambridge, UK, 1964).

24. *Ibid.*, 98–114 .

25. This article was written by Miriam Baker and Ruth Miller of the State University of New York, Stony Brook. See *Keshet*, XVII(4) (1976) 124–35.

26. J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, “What is an American?” in *Letters from an American Farmer* (New York, 1957) 39. (The book was published under Crevecoeur’s English name.)

27. Amir’s poem is included in his book *Heres* [Clay] (Tel-Aviv, 1984) 72–6 [Hebrew].

28. Aharon Amir, *Mit ‘aney tsad* [Selected Articles] (Tel-Aviv, 1991) 189 [Hebrew]. *Manginot ivriyot* was first published on 30 May 1970.