

portant if we want to try and form some understanding of the direction the cultural identity of the Jews in Iraq could have taken had the political changes in the Middle East been different. In contrast, the contribution the Iraqi-born Israeli writers, especially Ballas, have made to Hebrew literature may well be viewed as the only alternative to the Western-dominated Hebrew canonical literature and as the “seed” for future developments in which canonical Arabic culture may become accepted as a true participant in the building up of a new Israeli culture. But at the moment that seems rather far off.

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חיים באפו של הנצח, יצירתו של אורי ניסן גנסין (POSTERITY HOOKED: THE TRAVAIL AND ACHIEVEMENT OF URI GNESSIN) [HEBREW]. By Dan Miron. Pp. 631. Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1997. Cloth, \$40.00. Israel, \$82.00.

Uri Nissan Gnessin (1879, Russia—1913, Poland) was one of the most innovative and unique storytellers in the history of modern Hebrew literature. He is the aesthetic herald of the “Stream of Consciousness” style in modern Hebrew literature. What makes Gnessin a further pioneer is the amazing fact that he sculpted his stories and novellas in the “Stream of Consciousness” style independent from the same style that began budding in English (both British and American) literature from the third decade of the current century (Joyce, Woolf), as well as their French predecessor (Proust). In this respect, Gnessin is indeed one of the few artists in the world who already formed and introduced “Stream of Consciousness” literature at the dawn of the twentieth century, prior to its emergence in the poetic arena of English literature.

Gnessin’s stories and novellas (such as *Tzileley hachaim* [*Shadows of Life*, 1904], *Hatzidah* [*Aside*, 1905], *Beinatay'im* [*In the Meantime*, 1906], *Beterem* [*Prior*, 1912], *Etzel* [*Besides*, 1913]) plausibly display the “Stream of Consciousness” style, its very poetically appealing peak and cogently challenging character. On one hand, text is visibly devoid of an external plot that causally evolves and gradually and “logically” leads to a climatic peak, terminating closure. On the other hand, an internal plot, which fastidiously unfolds and reflects the character’s/characters’ (notably the

prevailing protagonist's) latent, cryptic, psychological-emotional mechanism, compensates for and balances the absence. This internal plot simultaneously reacts to realistic occurrences and mind processes through ramiform, intricate and equally tantalizing, clusters of associations, feelings, expressions, thoughts, deliberations, descriptions, and splintering, "stuttering," seemingly hesitant incidents, episodes, and circumstances. The literary technique primarily utilized while practicing "stream of consciousness" is the internal monologue (resembling the soliloquy in drama). Hence, the overall impression evokes a sense of a colorful yet confusing collage, a misty yet lyrical mosaic, both intellectually intriguing and artistically spellbinding, like an impressionistic painting by Pissarro. Thus, Gnessin was not only a messenger of a novel literary route but also a daring herald who bestowed upon modern Hebrew literature a colorfully demanding intricacy that has still not met its aesthetic competition. In short, Gnessin was an aesthetic giant.

Luckily, his singularly spectacular aesthetic heritage recently met Professor Dan Miron, a scholar of a remarkably laudable caliber who successfully does scholastic justice to Gnessin's monumental literary creation. Indeed, Dan Miron himself may display certain reservation regarding the way Gnessin's work is hereby introduced, i.e., primarily focusing upon his work as the most desirable zenith of "stream of consciousness" literature. Dan Miron may rightly argue that such an emphasis regrettably limits and reduces Gnessin's aesthetic versatility and overwhelmingly literary plenty. However, I chose to preambule this review stressing Gnessin's pioneering role in Hebrew "stream of consciousness" literature in order to introduce his work to the reader, who may not be sufficiently acquainted with Gnessin, and to blaze the trail for briefly portraying Dan Miron's amazingly comprehensive and insightful study of Gnessin's *ars poetica* and works of literature.

Miron launches his elucidating critical/interpretative odyssey of Gnessin's *ars poetica* while addressing Gnessin's early cluster of stories collectively entitled *Tzileley hachaim* (*Shadows of Life*). He starts with the story *Se'uda maffseket* ("Fast Breaking Meal"), the most critically neglected among Gnessin's stories, and moves on to *Jenia* and *Ma'asseh beothello* (*Othello's Tale*). While *Jenia* and "Othello's Tale" plausibly display suppressed eroticism, "Fast Breaking Meal" equally exhibits a suppressed desire to terminate one's life. Those two dramatically blatant inclinations tempestuously merge in the novella *Etzel* (*Next To*). Miron also considers another seemingly forgotten story by Gnessin, *Bevet Sava* ("At Grandfather's House"). While this story is evidently different—on a variety of levels—from the stories clustered in *Shadows of Life*, its differ-

ence provides a rewarding opportunity to observe Gnessin's prevailing poetic latitudes and meridians from an innovative, refreshing point of view. The story "*Shmu'el ben Shmu'el*" ("*Samuel Son of Samuel*") is indeed the most "earthy" and unsophisticated (on levels of theme, idea, aesthetic intricacy, language patterns) of Gnessin's stories. Nevertheless, *Samuel Son of Samuel*'s poetic proclivities are far from being alien to those displayed collectively in Gnessin's comprehensive *ars poetica*, primarily the one that prevails in *Shadows of Life*. The following two merits are among Miron's most spectacular scholastic merits. First, he possesses the singular capacity to depict the poetic portrait of the literary works in focus from a panoramically comprehensive perspective while equally demonstrating a plausible capacity to fastidiously consider the tiniest details interwoven in the panoramic portrait. Secondly, Miron impressively unfolds Gnessin's aesthetic evolution while simultaneously following Gnessin's biographically evolving chronicles.

The novella *Hatzidah (Aside)* is indeed a poetically practiced probe of human decline and deterioration processes from both existential and psychological perspectives. This novella marks a Gnessinian zenith, mastering the poetic tool of lyrical realism. Like other Gnessin literary works, *Hatzidah* surrenders a surface of musically soft and enchanting impressionism while its underlying currents consist of a harsh bedrock with sharp intellectual faculties, demanding morality, compelling severity and even menace. In relation to composition, the novella's three parts are sophisticatedly orchestrated; the construction not only yields internally causal and temporal connections but also consists of an intricate network of spatial analogies and parallelisms. The novella *Beinatay'im (In the Meantime)* is traditionally related to *Hatzida (Aside)*. Nonetheless, Miron persuasively traces a variety of rather striking differences while comparing the two novellas. From a spiritual perspective, the leading difference between the two novellas is associated with the prevailing protagonist's attitude toward destiny or fate. *Hatzida* primarily accounts the somber chronicles of the prevailing protagonist becoming lost, both emotionally and spiritually, and leading himself astray while simultaneously engaging himself in a murky, depressing process of decline and degradation. In contrast to him, however, the prevailing protagonist in *Beinatay'im* is fully aware of his fate, in the most self-chastising, agonizing and painful fashion. Following Camus' existential terminology, *Hatzida's* protagonist displays "classical sensitivity" testing his performances in "life's paths" in light of moral ideals and values. *Beinatay'im's* protagonist displays "modern sensitivity" (like Dostoevsky's characters) testing his performances in "life's paths" in light

of the question whether life itself carries or possesses any meaning whatsoever.

The novella *Beterem* (*Prior, Before*) seems an autobiographical story *per se*. However, Miron persuasively argues that critically observing this novella only through an autobiographical perspective is “doomed” for much aesthetic injustice. Accordingly, the novella’s autobiographical bedrock operates in capacity of an Archemedian launching pad, like a springboard from which the work embarks on its own fictionally aesthetic independence while earning singularly artistic substance. On one hand, *Beterem* echoes Gnessin’s most prominent topic and trend of ideas: life is losing its worthy meaning declining into a somber, depressing process of gloomy degradation, demotion, and deterioration. On the other hand, these topics and ideas in *Beterem* reach an outstandingly novel dimension through the prevailing protagonist’s characterization. Accordingly, unlike other Gnessin characters, *Beterem*’s protagonist consciously accepts and equally internalizes the notion that life is nothing but a dull, indifferent sequence disarmed of meaning and devoid of redemption.

The novella *Etzel* (*Besides, Next To*) undoubtedly marks a new vertex in Gnessin’s literary work. However, unlike other critics, Miron emphasizes that this novella not only echoes Gnessin’s previous works of literature but also demonstrates novel, innovative evolvments not introduced in Gnessin’s works prior to *Etzel*’s composition and publication. Accordingly, Gnessin utilizes *Etzel*’s chronicles, characters, and intricate poetic fabric to revive, ignite, and kindle the experience of love as a physical, tangible, and principle demonstration of life itself, as the very worthy and desirable essence of life itself. Thus, love as the authenticity test of human existence is the prime focus of interest in *Etzel*. The second focus, however, is the profound feeling of forthcoming extermination, of anticipated deadly culmination. While Gnessin’s previous literary works associates death with a moral context (a penalty for the iniquity of inauthentic human existence, as well as a forced resolution redeemed from the threatening and confusing thickness of life), *Etzel* portrays death as a vigorously vivid experience, both dynamic and voluptuous, like love and sexual lust. Although Gnessin’s poetic/ideological “raw materials” are neither dismissed nor changed in *Etzel*, they exhibit new substances and reciprocal interactions. Accordingly, what used to be relatively secondary, or even marginal in previous works, had turned prominent in *Etzel*; and what used to be a justification, had been converted into solid reality that calls for no justifications whatsoever.

The third part of Miron’s “long, remarkably worthy journey into Gnessin’s literary night” is dedicated to Gnessin’s “earthy” stories. The story *Baganim* (“In the Gardens”) seems like a fragment from *Beterem* de-

veloped into a complete, independent literary piece. Apparently it is the only story by Gnessin that cultivates a structure which culminates a sharp, definite conclusion. Through this story, Gnessin sarcastically responds to the “ritual” inclination—upon the part of Hebrew and Yiddish literature at the dawn of the current century—to cultivate and “worship” the image of the “healthy” Jew whose instincts are sensual and even fervently lustful. Gnessin’s story *Hak’tatah* (“*The Quarrel*”—the last one published while Gnessin was still alive) possesses evident levels of comic and even farce. In these stories, Gnessin “migrates” from his previously nurtured poetic realms of subtle yet complicated intellectual friends and complex emotionality (associated with the intelligentsia of upper urban middle class) to themes and characters part of the “earthy,” lower, rustic class and engaged with physical proclivities, “primitive” dialogues and even violence. Although those elements populate Gnessin’s “intellectual,” literary works, they are dramatically more evident and of more prominence in his “earthy” literary works.

Miron’s fourth part is devoted to the role of literary context (allusions to European literature, analogies that reflect works by Shakespeare, Dostoevsky and Homer, quotations associated with music and visual arts) in Gnessin’s works, while the fifth, concluding part focuses upon anagogic aspects traced in Gnessin. Hence, Gnessin, the august master of Hebrew literature, has found the most exceptionally worthy critical response plentifully offered by Professor Dan Miron’s superb study.

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CATALOGUE OF THE HEBREW MANUSCRIPTS IN THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY: SUPPLEMENT OF ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA TO VOL. 1 (A. NEUBAUER’S CATALOGUE). Compiled under the direction of Malachi BeitArié, edited by R. A. May. Pp. xxxi + 19 Plates of Illustrations + 595. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. Cloth, \$98.00.

Oxford University houses the Bodleian Library and the libraries of several colleges and halls that form the University. Founded *circa* 1320, the Bodleian was destroyed during the reformation and rebuilt in 1598. Its collection of Hebrew manuscripts (including material in languages written