

From Feminist Romance to an Anatomy of Freedom: Israeli Women Novelists

IF, AS ARGUED by the feminist scholar Nina Baym, the American woman writer "has entered literary history as the enemy,"¹ the Hebrew woman writer has entered *her* literary history as sister, as bride, as comrade in arms. Already in 1897—an early date for a literature that came of age in that very decade—Eliezer Ben Yehuda, the propagator of spoken Hebrew, openly invited women (and particularly his wife, who happened to be a chemist!) to contribute to his journals. The chivalrous reasoning of his invitation is a precious document, reminding us once more that even with insight and good will one may still be unable to escape the snares of gender essentialism. "Only women," Ben Yehuda argued, "are capable of reviving Hebrew, this old, forgotten, dry and hard language, by permeating it with emotion, tenderness, suppleness and subtlety."² So the door seemed to have been wide open. Yet women were slow to enter. Perhaps they intuitively sensed that double bind of which recent scholarship has made us aware—the fact that Ben Yehuda's benign encouragement was unwittingly circumscribed by his gender bifocals. For although a number of women graced his journals, none of them left her mark on the history of Hebrew literature. No Hebrew male writer could ever have complained, as did the American Hawthorne, according to Baym, "about the 'damned mob of scribbling women' whose writings . . . were diverting the public from his own" (Baym, p. 63). In contrast to the English or French traditions, Hebrew has not developed a line of women novelists, either within or without the canon. For the first century of its modern phase (or even for its first 150 years, depending on the periodization used) Hebrew prose fiction was primarily the domain of male writers, while women generally found their expression in poetry.³ Furthermore, the few women who entered the canon as fiction writers wrote short stories and novellas, mainly in the lyrical-impressionistic mode (for example, Devorah Baron, 1887–1956, and the contemporary writer Amalia Kahana-Carmon).

It is only since the early 1980s that prose fiction by women has emerged as a substantially diverse phenomenon, including traditionally hard-core "male" genres such as the historical novel or the fictional autobiography, and even such a popular genre as the mystery novel.⁴ Unfortunately, most of this literature is not available in English, nor is it adequately represented in scholarship. Ironically, even a recent volume specifically devoted to *Gender and Text in Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literature* (1992) preserves the "old" balance: while both Israeli writers whose essays sign off the collection are prose fiction writers who have "graduated" from short stories to novels (Ruth Almog and Amalia Kahana-Carmon, to whom we shall return), the critical articles themselves are neatly divided between women's poetry and men's prose fiction.⁵ Clearly, there is a problem of reception or legitimization here, and scholarship is lagging behind a changing reality.

There is no doubt, however, that the new literary map drawn by Israeli women novelists deserves our full attention, as it brings into sharp focus a general point of contention that has been raging among scholars since the 1970s: the relationship between postmodern theories and feminist approaches. Zeroing in on "the death of the [Enlightenment] subject" as the major "loss" announced by postmodern thinkers (other "deaths"—those of philosophy and history—are secondary in this argumentation), feminist theorists have embraced or mourned postmodernisms as either "useful" or "damaging" for their project. Although the demarcation line between these two positions may overlap the French/Anglo-American divide (as suggested, for instance, by Alice Jardine's *Gynesis*), recent reviews yield a more complex picture.⁶ While helping feminists question historical and contemporary perceptions of sexual and gender differences, postmodernist critiques of the Enlightenment (pronouncing the "fictiveness" of a "unitary" self and of reason's "truth," among others) seem to threaten and undermine the very foundation of and justification for women's quest for emancipation. For if the self is only a cultural or linguistic inscription to begin with, who is there to be "oppressed" or "liberated" in the first place? Whether or not we go so far as to accept Jane Flax's psychoanalytically based suspicion that this critique is motivated by a *fear* of the "return of the suppressed," by "the [male] need to evade, deny or repress the importance of early childhood experiences, especially mother-child relationships, in the constitution of the self and the culture more generally,"⁷ we at least can share her (and other feminists') frustration at the "accidental" coincidence of this position with the very time in which "women have just begun to remember their selves and to claim an agentic subjectivity available always before only to a few

privileged white men" (ibid., p. 220). It is clear then that this aspect of contemporary thought is problematic for the so-called "equal-rights" or "liberal individualism" strands of feminist consciousness.⁸

Bearing this problem in mind, we should not be surprised by the low profile of *conscious* postmodernism in the work of the writers analyzed in this essay. In as much as they were selected for precisely their grappling with the representation or construction of female "agentic subjectivities" in a society still inhospitable to such a project, their prose understandably reflects a rather careful selection of issues (rather than poetics) from the postmodernist repertory. (In this they differ from the wholesale absorption of postmodernism evident in works written in the same decade by other [mostly male] authors, such as, Grossman, Shamas, Heffner, Hoffman, Shimoni, Yehoshua, and also the younger female author Orly Castel-Bloom.) In addition to the problem of subjectivity and otherness, so crucial to their writing, their themes include, as we shall see, several questions raised by postmodern criticism: the relationship between gender and genre, feminism and nationalism, ideology and canon formation.⁹

In the first place, the generic divergence evidenced, until recently, by the Hebrew corpus is highly significant for the general debate about essentialistic definitions of gender, an issue that I have explored elsewhere and that has been subsequently addressed in *Gender and Text*.¹⁰ However, no less intriguing is the insight this body of work offers into the problematic relationship between national and feminist ideologies as framed by the postmodernist debate over the canon. One of the most troubling questions this material poses to anyone with even the faintest acquaintance with the ideological roots of the modern revival of Hebrew is the following: Why has the "New Hebrew Woman," ostensibly fostered by early Zionism, disappeared on her way to literary representation?¹¹

Modern Hebrew literature, we should remember, was conceived and developed on Russian soil and as such was bound up with nineteenth-century socialism. It had openly propagated—at least in theory—both social and sexual equality for women. However, as recent sociological studies in Israel have shown, not a little was lost in the translation from ideological platform to lived experience. In the view of contemporary scholars, the pre-State Zionist women's movement had not lived up to its own expectations either in the urban settlements or in the kibbutzim.¹² Still, this belated hindsight should not make us lose sight of the ethos (some would say mythos) of equal rights, as it was experienced by both fathers and mothers of the pioneering, founding generation. Nor should it make us belittle the political as well as cultural early "conquests"

made by some of these women, Manya Schohat (1880–1959) and Rachel Katznelson (1885–1983), for example, and, of course, the better known writers Devorah Baron and Rachel (1890–1931).¹³

The force of this ethos, at least in some segments of Israeli society, was still felt in the early decades of the State. Paradoxically, it was precisely this force that made “feminism,” as it came to be known in the United States in the sixties, seem redundant, as if it were something “we have ‘always’ known” (albeit under the title of “the woman question”), a latter-day product of a “Western,” luxury culture that had finally awakened to some of its social(ist?) blind spots. If this paradoxical position does not make sense to us in the 1990s, we may recall that well into the seventies even Simone de Beauvoir similarly refused to label herself as “feminist”—*The Second Sex* of 1949 notwithstanding—believing that the woman question will be solved by the socialist platform.¹⁴ On the other hand, we should not forget that by the sixties, socialism (or social-Zionism) had already lost its broad popular base in Israeli society. The post-World War II immigration from Europe and the Arab countries had more than doubled the population of the young State and drastically changed the country’s demographic and cultural makeup.¹⁵ A large portion of Israeli population has been henceforth unaffiliated with pre-State ideologies. For this community both “old” and “new” feminisms were anathema, a forthright subversion of their traditional (mostly Oriental and/or Orthodox) ways of life. When the pressures of life under constant military siege are added to this complex, it may become clear that, socially speaking, “Western” feminism, as introduced by recent Anglo-American immigrants,¹⁶ could not have had a warm reception in the Israel of the sixties and the seventies, despite a pro-forma adherence to the indigenous, social-Zionist women’s movement.

But what about the literary arena? Here we shall do well to remember that until recently most Hebrew writers were allied—either biographically or politically—with the ethos of the pre-State community, with all its ideological trimmings. Neither the Oriental nor the Orthodox sections of Israeli society was significantly represented in the canon of Hebrew literature. (The contemporary picture is significantly different for the former section, but only slightly for the latter.¹⁷) Yet despite its ideological “baggage,” Israeli literary mainstream (some would say “malestream”¹⁸) seems to be curiously lacking when it comes to fictional representation of women. For the longest time, the “New Hebrew Woman” was destined to remain a rhetorical construct, excluded from works by both male and female authors.

Not surprisingly, her literary debut coincided with the latest wave of prose fiction by women that has swept Israeli literature since the early

1980s. Indeed, it is the belatedness of this debut, its specific literary shape, and its sociocultural implications, that command our attention in the following inquiry.

We will follow this meandering narrative through the mature work of four Israeli fiction writers—Shulamit Lapid, Amalia Kahana-Carmon, Shulamith Hareven, and Ruth Almog; although they all began to publish in the 1960s, it is their more recent novels that hold the key to the belated emergence of their troubled feminisms.

We begin with 1982, the year in which the label “feminist” appeared for the first time on the jacket of an Israeli novel, although not yet in its lexicon. Shulamit Lapid’s historical novel *Gei Oni*¹⁹ (“Gei Oni” being the original name of the Galilean settlement Rosh Pinah) told the story of the 1882 early pioneers—so that labelling its protagonist a “feminist” clearly smacked of anachronism.²⁰ The anachronism seems to have been intended—either by the author herself or by her editor. It made transparent the contemporary relevance of the historical material, directing the reader to see its dramatic unfolding as a displacement of analogous present-day dilemmas. At the heart of the story we find a conflict between Fanya, a Russian-born, fiercely independent young survivor of the Ukrainian pogroms of the 1880s, and the equally fierce Zionist dream that had brought her to the barren hills of the Galilee. It is through this nexus of collective ideology (whether national or socialist or both) and the role of the individual—woman in particular—within it, that the major theme of the novel is introduced and problematized.

Fanya’s critique of “her father’s dream of rebirth [that] has turned into sacred insanity which is now consuming her youthful years, her life” (p. 102), inadvertently brings to the fore a contradiction that might have been inherent in the Zionist enterprise from its inception, but had been rarely made conscious before the 1970s, and especially before the so-called “post-Zionist” scholarship of the last decade: the potential incommensurability between private salvation and communal redemption.²¹ The convoluted manner in which this ideological critique takes on a particularly feminist twist is a complex process, which I have analyzed elsewhere.²² However, since it is the subversion of this very “twist” that is crucial for my argument, let me reiterate here its final stage in the plot.

Despite its pioneering feminist intentions, *Gei Oni* loses its potentially feminist protest, because its narrative closure reinscribes both the communal and the romantic models that its plot has set out to undermine. As Fanya’s husband succumbs to exhaustion and malaria, the reader is ready to embrace Fanya’s *Bildung* throughout the novel, which consists

primarily of a reversal of gender roles, as a necessary training for her ultimate task—the perpetuation of the Zionist pioneering quest. But in an ironic turn, Fanya, although prepared to undertake this role, perceives it as something alien, not her own script:

Shall she sell their home? Driving Yehi'el out of his dream? This home and this land were the purpose of his life. Once again fate has decreed that she realized others' dreams. Has she ever had her own dreams? But perhaps everyone is like this? Perhaps everyone realizes someone else's dream? (p. 256)

Is this a “feminist” protest, lamenting the lot of women in general?²³ Or is this a specific charge against an androcentric Zionist dream? And who is the “everyone” of the final questions: Women? All people? The lines seem to blur here, leaving the reader with a sense of unfocused grievance. What is read throughout the novel as a critique of a male-engendered ideology now takes on an existential turn, possibly hiding behind “the human condition.”

We may be witnessing here an attempt (prevalent in women's life writing, as demonstrated by Carolyn Heilbrun in her 1988 *Writing A Woman's Life*,²⁴) to rationalize away the justified rage against a social system that in the guise of a new ideology has reinscribed traditional double standards toward women. More often than not, Fanya's feelings remain unexpressed. Typically, her frustration and hurt are reported to the reader (“Fanya wanted to scream: And I? And I?, but she kept silent” [p. 176, and cf. 105, 144, 164, 187, 217]), but they always remain confined within the seething turmoil of her narrated inner monologues. When they are actually verbalized, it is only in the framework of private female discourse. Crossing gender boundaries in her occupation and lifestyle, Fanya may have penetrated male praxis, but not its public discourse. The prevailing ideology remains untouched by her feminist critique. In the final analysis, Fanya's “revolutionary” quest for selfhood inscribes itself only as a comment on the margins of an androcentric system.

We should not be surprised, then, that the author does not give her heroine the chance to try to make it on her own. On the last page, the heroine's “euphoric text” prevails, promising a romantic betrothal beyond the boundaries of the book.²⁵ Sasha, an old acquaintance, himself a survivor of the Ukrainian pogroms, reappears and asks permission “to help and be helped” (a phrase clearly reminiscent of the Zionist quest “to build and be rebuilt”). With this new beginning, the novel reverts to its two original models: the communal-historical and the romantic. Subjective experience is embedded again in Jewish collectivity, symbolized throughout the story by the legendary Phoenix (“This is what we Jews

act. Starting all over again. Again. And again. And again." [p. 266]), only to be taken over by an old/new romance closure:

... "I need you, Fanya! Will you allow me to help you?" Fanya looked at him wondering. Then she thought that if he hugged her, her head would barely reach his shoulder. And then her eyes filled with tears. (p. 266)

One need not be a devotee of Harlequin romances to recognize the style. The "New Hebrew Woman," to the extent that she is constructed in this text, collapses back into a romance figure. As such, this popular novel, Lapid's first (she was born in 1934), may serve as the most extreme example of what I call "the feminist romance." Through this hybrid form a "compromise formation" is worked out between feminist aspirations for masculinist autonomy—the very Enlightenment ideal pronounced "fictive" by some and labelled "individualist" by others²⁶—and stereotyped feminine patterns of psychological dependency, generally expressed in the form of a romantic attachment. My emphasis here is on "stereotyped," since these narratives rarely question this received dichotomy, nor the hierarchical value judgment it implies.²⁷ There is nothing new or particularly Israeli about this conflict, of course, except for the specific novelistic form it takes. Although these narratives are cast in the genre of the *historical* novel, they can be read as "masked autobiographies" because they displace and mask the feminist concerns of their *contemporary* authors.²⁸ More important, they also share an unarticulated doubt—usually evidenced only in their plot structures—concerning the limits of the feminist project. Conceived purely in terms of Enlightenment-style emancipation, this project is generally represented here as an attempt to synthesize (rather than deconstruct) the two sides of the coin of gender difference. The heroines of these narratives try to bridge the two terms of the by now familiar binary opposition—to be individualist yet relational (Offen), autonomous yet interdependent (Johnson), separate yet bonded (Flax), or, in Freud's popular definition, to be able to work as well as to love.²⁹ The problem, however, is that in the final analysis they experience this binarism more as a dichotomy than as an equilibrium.

What I am arguing then is that a close reading of the deep structure of these narratives may reveal their authors' (perhaps unconscious) distrust of their heroines' ability to live up to the "work and love" ideal of classical feminism, particularly as it developed here in the 1960s and 1970s. As we shall see, the treatment of this difficulty differs from novel to novel in two respects: in the understanding of its "source" (whether it is internal, that is, conceptually or psychologically gender-specific, or external,

that is, sociocultural and circumstantial), and in the degree to which the conflict is finally perceived as resolvable or at least negotiable. As such, these narratives address a question that is crucial to the debate over gender identity and sexual difference. The perceptions they offer vary, as do the limits and boundaries they envision for feminist emancipation.

Shulamit Lapid herself has "resolved" the ambiguity of her first novel by shifting from the "canonic" historical narrative and the female euphoric text (the romantic betrothal plot), to a different genre—the spinster detective story. In a series of popular mystery novels,³⁰ all set in a contemporary provincial town, she has constructed a "New Israeli Woman," a lower-middle-class journalist whose first priority is work, and for whom love is divorced from matrimony. Thirty-some years old and single, this protagonist, who is proud of her work ethic and her "professionalism," is not a descendent of the "New Hebrew Woman" of the Zionist revolution (Fanya and her like); rather, she is a throwback to the turn-of-the-century spinster detective of English literature.³¹ In Lapid's version of this genre, masculine autonomy is appropriated without any equivocation, accompanied by a new (male-modeled) kind of romance (no strings attached), that makes its appearance—once again—only at the close of the story.

It is hard to determine whether the simplicity with which sexual difference is overcome in these plots is an indicator of naive conceptualization, or of a projection of a collective fantasy (given the noncanonic nature of the genre on one hand, and the totally unautobiographic characterization of the heroine, on the other³²). Whatever the case, it is clear that the feminist romance produced here is a mirror image of its masculinist counterpart. While the sociocultural antagonism it may encounter is given cursory attention, any possible complication by psychosexual difference is blissfully ignored.

The same goes for some of Lapid's later short stories in which romance is replaced by aggression. A straightforward reversal of roles in a violent rape scene, for example, is the subject of "Neḥitat 'oness" (forced landing; published in English as "The Bed," but better rendered as "Forced Entry").³³ The painful experience of what I would call "counter rape" is focalized through the eyes of the victim—a young man whose bewildered incomprehension is utterly ignored by his female attacker. Again, gender difference is here turned upside-down, with the female grotesquely donning the dark face of masculine subjectivity, aggression.

A more sophisticated treatment of these issues belongs to Amalia Kahana-Carmon (b. 1926), one of Israel's leading prose fiction writers

and the winner of several prestigious literary prizes. Known for her outspoken feminist critique of Israeli literature and Jewish culture (which, proclaimed in her lectures and essays, has gained momentum, predictably, only since the mid-1980s³⁴), her fiction, published since 1956, is nevertheless the most interesting manifestation of the conflicts underlying the "feminist romance."

To begin with, most of her oeuvre—a collection of stories (1966), two novels (1971, 1992), a monodrama (1976), and two "tryphtichs" (three novellas, 1977, 1984)—thematizes women's marginalization in an androcentric society on a scope and in a style unrivalled in Hebrew literature. This line of writing is precisely what literary theory (particularly on the Anglo-American side) has come to expect of the "first stage" of feminist literature—a subversive exposition of overt and covert biases that lurk in the representation of women in a male-dominated system.³⁵ Kahana-Carmon's writing, however, is more complex. Her lyrical stories and novels, mostly focalized through the perception of a female protagonist, are generally structured around a moment of a cross-gender epiphany, of a mutual enchantment. Yet the potential romance is always checked, leaving her protagonists with little more than a sense of missed opportunity.³⁶ Moreover, in most cases they accept their "fallen" reality with a resignation that paradoxically places them too close to traditional gender essentialism. To further complicate matters, a dense network of analogies and figurative connectives (particularly in the longer works) universalize the major themes, thereby undercutting or at least problematizing their female or feminist specificity. (She even goes as far as simply reversing the stereotypes, constructing, in "Sham ḥadar haḥada-shot" (1977), a male protagonist whose dream of work and love is frustrated by a goal-oriented (American!) young scientist . . .) It is this very ambiguity, I would argue, that has contributed to a certain miscommunication between the author and her Israeli readership.

One of Kahana-Carmon's major complaints in her 1980s essays is that the warm reception of her work hinged on its artistic excellence rather than on its "substance." Claiming that this standard is never applied to male writers (in actuality, a claim not easily supported by fact), she has persistently rejected its terms:

This reader will react to the *tools* of the woman writer as if they were objects ("every sentence of hers is a pearl"); he will not respond to the *substance*, contained in her words, that created the need for these tools in the first place and then shaped their *form*. Indeed, this *content* is hidden from his eyes . . . much as you and I, unfortunately, cannot enjoy the highly perfected song of the bats in flight . . .

If so, the problem for the woman writer, apparently, inheres in the *subject*

matter about which she attempts to speak. In the world of Hebrew fiction, such *material* has low visibility.³⁷ (Emphasis added)

Ironically, her use of the "classical" distinction between "tools" and "substance" or "content" echoes the Platonic dualism of "form" and "matter" that has been recently shown to be heavily implicated in gender symbolism³⁸—except that Kahana-Carmon's complaint involves this symbolism in a gender reversal of which she may not be aware. As the philosophic tradition would have it, "form" is the privileged term, "naturally" associated with maleness, while "debased" matter (or "body") is the realm of the female. The deconstruction of this essentialist dichotomy, by one reversal or another (either associating femaleness with "form" or privileging "matter" and "substance") is of course the dream of any feminist, Anglo-American or French (respectively). But Kahana-Carmon the polemicist is blind—as so often is the case³⁹—to options created by Kahana-Carmon the artist. Does her charge that (male) readers "see" only the form of her art because its "matter"—female inwardness—is invisible to them (namely, unrepresentable) reject the terms of "gynesis," the French idealization of female attributes traditionally viewed as negative (otherness, lack, even absence), or does it approve of it?⁴⁰ Does her clamoring for cross-gender legitimization of her highly feminine "subjects" (the pun intended) position her on the side of Virginia Woolf's androgyny (otherwise named similarity, universality, equality, or Enlightenment-based liberal feminism), or on the side of [French] "sexual difference" feminism?⁴¹ Does she deplore her heroines' exclusion from male-made history? Does she privilege their otherness? Or perhaps she espouses Kristeva's "third generation" ideology whose task is, among the rest, "the de-dramatization of the 'fight to the death' between rival groups and thus between the sexes"?⁴²

As we shall see, this ambivalence is not accidental. On the contrary: it is deeply rooted in the paradoxes animating Kahana-Carmon's fiction. For the fact is that any reader, male or female, initiated into her artistic world—the early fiction in particular—cannot but be struck by the impact of her unconventional, innovative style. Her idiosyncratic use of Hebrew syntax and semantics, of colloquialism and scriptural allusion, and her unique manipulation of narrative and textual expectations—all these are too powerful to be ignored. To treat this aspect of her artistic achievement as just "tools" is obviously a misjudgment, an outdated separation between art and artifice. Yet to consider it an Israeli version of *l'écriture féminine* has its problems as well. For on the continent, where the concept originated, it has been propagated as a logical conclusion of sexual *difference*, a position much too unambiguous to accommodate

the special blend of Kahana-Carmon "feminism."⁴³ So why doth the lady protest so much?

The answer may lie precisely in the effect her "tools" have on the perception of her "substance." In fact, the artistry she has invested in the evocation of the female condition is so powerful that the line between grievance and glorification tends to blur.⁴⁴ It is not always clear, for example, whether woman's private sphere, her inwardness, is her prison or her mansion; whether feminine "passivity" is viewed as a social evil, imposed by patriarchal pressures, or as a deliberate choice, an intentional withdrawal from public action (thereby clearing a path for female creativity); and, finally, whether the penchant of her heroines for the "dysphoric" plot, for dependent, unrequited love attachments, is to be censured as a disruption of their capacity for masculinist work and autonomy, or lauded as a unique, gender-specific endowment, a sort of existential "transcendence."

Kahana-Carmon's "feminist romance" seems then to be torn among several contradictory demands. Her desire to represent an authentic female subjectivity, which she understands exclusively in terms of oppression and passivity, is undercut by two opposing forces: the temptation to idealize or even essentialize sexual difference; and the yearning for universal, cross-gender equality, for an ostensible state of grace before the fall.⁴⁵

It is in the latter, of course, that the "New Hebrew Woman" is to be expected. But she is not readily available in Kahana-Carmon's canon. She inheres in her protagonists' imagination, partly fantasy, partly a memory trace. As an actual reality she is limited to a single time-period—to the 1948 War of Independence or rather the preceding year at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, as, for example, in her very first story, "The Whirling Sword" (1956), and in her first novel, *And Moon in the Valley of Ayalon* (1971).⁴⁶ Like so many women fighters of World War II (such as the British heroine of David Hare's play *Plenty* [1978]), the "morning after" is perceived as a fall from the grace of equality and autonomy experienced in the war years. The post-war protagonist is often conceptualized as an impoverished version of her former self, a frustrated housewife who has lost her capacity for work and even for love.⁴⁷ Though she is fully aware of her dependency and depletion, she is unable to act, or, at best, she sublimates the loss by the celebration of female inward subjectivity.

Aware of the danger of essentialism courting this strategy of survival, Kahana-Carmon has finally made an effort to break away from the confines of her own making and construct a female subject liberated from the yoke of passivity and dependent attachment. Predictably,

this experiment coincided with the publication, in 1984, of the first in a series of programmatic essays, "To Be a Woman Writer," a kind of an Israeli feminist manifesto.⁴⁸ Just as predictably, it took the form of a quasi-historical novel, ostensibly for "young adults" (that is, another noncanonic genre). Like Shulamit Lapid in *Gei Oni*, Kahana-Carmon felt compelled to transpose her protagonist into the past—in her case all the way back to seventeenth-century Europe—in order to both subjugate her to and emancipate her from the yoke of Jewish/feminine victimhood. And as if such chronotopical displacement would not suffice, she further distanced both herself and the reader from the issue at hand by embedding it within a general paradigm of "otherness." In fact, her novella "The Bridge of the Green Duck"⁴⁹ is a typical post-modernist inquiry into essentialism, challenging all major categories of "difference"—gender, class, and race.

The author herself characterized the book as "a breakthrough . . . a different direction, a different approach," comparing its role to that of "The Ladies of Avignon" in Picasso's artistic development. Here, she argued, "my characters try, for the first time, to do something about their reality;" they try to get out of "their stoic inaction."⁵⁰ Whether or not this is indeed a meaningful turning point is a question to which we shall return. But first let us explore the broader implications of the captivity narrative of this story.

As we shall see, "The Bridge of the Green Duck" is not only the story of a woman's life in exile and captivity within the heavily androcentric society of seventeenth-century Europe; it is also an experiment in entering the subjectivity of the other. My contention is that the young protagonist's immature infatuation with her captor-lover should be read not only as an exercise in popular Freudian psychology (the mechanism of identification with the aggressor⁵¹), but also as a literary probing of the philosophical question of difference, effectively deconstructing the binary opposition of self and other.⁵²

The opening of the novel unexpectedly plunges us into the as yet unnamed narrator's inner monologue, describing the mysterious "they" of the first sentence: "Not on the road they were galloping." A quick external glance invites the reader to admire their energy, laughter, and self-confidence; the latter is amplified by the narrator's observation that "they" have never lost their awareness that they belonged to "a closed, superior caste, one that 'passes over armed before the camps,' 'people who dwell alone,' a sect of pioneers who clear the way" (p. 61). In Hebrew, the biblical resonance of *over(et) lifnei hamahaneh* and *am levadad yishkon* is inescapable. It marshals a host of allusions to the status of a chosen people and its sense of uniqueness and vocation (see especially

Numbers 22 and 32). When the reader realizes—a few pages into the narrative—that this all too familiar description is attributed here to the “other”; and that the gentile (and of course male) dark horsemen are in fact the enemy, the captors of the (then twelve-year-old) narrator—it is too late. A miracle of sorts has already taken place: By providing a new signified for the biblical signifiers, the text has triggered a process of identification/projection, thereby assisting the reader in imagining the other subjectively. The “preconceived judgment,” the image we usually have of the other (particularly of a different gender, nationality, or class, as illustrated in this story⁵³) has been partially or temporarily bracketed so that self and other may exchange places, at least for a short while.

Yet this is only the beginning. By the end of the narrative, the same biblical allusion is repeated (pp. 175–76), this time appropriated by the still unnamed narrator, to describe both her own state of mind and that of her recently acquired friend who is (surprise! surprise!) . . . a *black* ex-captive. What has been earlier perceived then as the domain of the elect, the chosen other (the male, European, gentile conqueror) is now triumphantly attributed to a new signified—the self-awareness of the formerly subjugated Jewish female (*Judea Capta?*) and the formerly enslaved black, whose Hebrew name, Eved Hakushi, smacks of heavy allegorism.⁵⁴ With this reversal a whole range of boundaries is subverted and crossed over—race, class and gender—so that the marginalized other is allowed the privilege of her or his own subjectivity, expressed in precisely the same figurative language as that of the oppressor. It is this newly achieved self-awareness that enables the narrator to appropriate her first name, the sacrosanct hallmark of the construction of subjectivity. (That this name is accompanied by her patronymic [“Clara, the daughter of Avigdor the merchant,” p. 179], is, however, an ironic undermining of this very construction.)

But all this is of course more easily said than done, even in fictional terms. Perhaps predictably, Kahana-Carmon does not accompany her liberated heroine into her new state of being. Although she imagines Clara’s psychological growth as wholly determined by object-relations with *male* models (Clara’s ambivalence towards her mother, whom she has lost in her childhood, and whom she mostly experiences as remote and cold, is another complex issue to be explored elsewhere⁵⁵), she lets her achieve autonomy—that cherished accomplishment traditionally attributed to masculine identity—only on the last page of the novel. It is only in this last moment of the narrative that Clara finally attempts to shake off her neurotic attachment to the father figures of her life—her own father, Avigdor; Rabbi Zefania (whose name connotes both an enigma and a conscience, *matzpun*); her captor-lover (whose

name, Peter, particularly in its Hebrew pronunciation, nicely puns on "patron"⁵⁶); and her friend, the black ex-captive.

From a psychological perspective, Clara's life story is the unfolding of an inner conflict between an all-devouring urge for transference love/dependency and a conscious struggle against it. The obsessive character of her need becomes particularly transparent in the last part of the plot, when, after successfully releasing herself not only from her physical bondage but also from an emotional attachment to her captor (saying "no" to the fleeing Peter who asks her to accompany him as a friend and partner, pp. 140-43), she is all but ready to repeat the same pattern in her relationship with a new authority figure, the liberated slave Eved Hakushi. The encounter between these two "others" (chap. 8), oddly neglected by the scholarship, is a masterfully rendered drama, bristling with metaphoric references to key chapters in the philosophical literature on subjectivity and otherness. To do full justice to its intricacy, a more detailed contextualization is called for (see my *Beyond the Feminist Romance*). What follows is therefore a running commentary briefly tracing the route of this fascinating transformation.

The slave-turned-master (*pace* Hegel), although engaged by Clara as a handyman, teaches her a lesson in existential transcendence. To her horrified observation of his otherness ("The man is black all over. Black and different . . . 'How terrible,' I murmured"), he calmly responds by equating his race subjectivity with her gender subjectivity ("Are you a man in a woman's body? You are not. Is this such a misfortune? Why a misfortune? With you, with me, it is the same thing, more or less" [p. 164]). This lesson allows Clara to engage in a dialogue that surreptitiously "bridges" the differences between them, finally leading them to the symbolic "bridge of the Green Duck" of the novel's title (p. 175), the very location where epiphanic moments in the relationship with her father and Peter took place. But before reaching this stage, a whole comedy of errors is enacted, the core of which is not the issue of race or class difference (this difference seems to have been neutralized with relative ease⁵⁷), but rather that of sexual difference. While the code of the social "communion," typically negotiated via a shared meal, is automatically recognized by both parties ("'Forgive my eating with my hands,' said [Eved], tearing the bread with his teeth. 'Forgive my eating with knife and fork,' said I somberly, tearing the bread with my fingers . . ." [p. 171]), the code of emotional communion is not. Thus the description of the embrace (initiated by Eved) is represented through Clara's consciousness as a veritable web of erotic and incestual allusions ("he opened my father's coat which he was wearing and wrapped me within it, [. . .] then clasped me to his chest, pushing me against the wall"

[p. 171]), only to be interpreted by Eved himself as an act of brotherly love ("‘Why do you hug me?’—‘I am your brother.’—‘My brother?’ I said with a jolt. I lifted my face to him *shaken*" [p. 172; emphasis added]). Why is Clara shaken, perhaps even shocked (*nir'eshet*, repeated twice)? Was she wrong? Has she misread the code of intimacy? Or was it Eved's ambivalence that interfered in the production of meaning?

The answer is not immediately forthcoming. For a while, Clara's agitation is replaced by an exploration of the new sense of familial bonding, a process that culminates in the privileged self-consciousness we quoted above (p. 176). Yet this moment of mutual recognition does not last long. In a typical Sartrean fashion, Clara immediately lapses into "othering" her "brother." Asking him to cut off a branch of a prickly bush because "You do not get scratched," she deservedly receives a Shylock-like reproach ("Don't we scratch? Won't we scratch?"), against which she defends herself by explaining, "Not because of your color . . . because of your strength" (p. 176). With this, the terms of the argument have shifted. Admitting to her ostensible weakness, Clara has forfeited her transcendence. Her clinging attachment to the "strong sex" is interpreted by Eved as an absolutely abhorring "search for power" (p. 179). The next stage in their encounter is therefore marked by a Sartrean duel of gazes, precisely like the one that had earlier underlined Clara's entrapment by the predatory arrogance of her captors ("His piercing eye fixed on my piercing eye" [pp. 179, 180; cf., pp. 117, 119, 153]). From here there is but a short step to her full recapitulation. Giving up the opportunity to rejoin the Jewish community from which she was kidnapped as a child, she chooses to follow Eved, her new "br/other." Acknowledging the audacity of her choice ("I have crossed a covert boundary. Now I am clearly beyond the pale . . . like the young Moses I am, who between gold and coals has chosen the coals" [pp. 181–82]), she is nevertheless unaware of the existential meaning of her move. Her inward plea ("Where are you, Eved Hakushi, my heart kept hoping. Would's't I found you, that I might return home with you" [p. 182]) ironically dramatizes de Beauvoir's analysis of women's complicity in their own subjugation.⁵⁸ Yet here is where Kahana-Carmon parts with her philosophical models.

In an unexpected move, the ex-captive refuses to fulfill the role of the master. In contrast to Peter, the young captor-lover who has taken advantage of Clara's dependency (and in the end fell in love with her himself), Eved Hakushi is older and wiser. His recently gained freedom, both social and emotional, is his most cherished possession (but also the source of his ambivalence). It is only through his rejection of Clara's "advances," that his lesson in freedom/autonomy/independence is finally internalized by her (chap. 9). In the last episode Clara "de-

clares" her maturation and self-reliance by demanding (and receiving) the key of a case of merchandise. Although the (Freudian) sexual symbolism is transparent, it does not exhaust the whole drama. For when Eved removes the key from "her father's coat pocket" (p. 191), which he is wearing (and which she had given him), the Lacanian symbolism becomes quite apparent. While Eved's role as substitute father is over, the protagonist herself moves into the paternal position. The case's key is in fact her key to the very trade that Jewish folklore, via the celebrated lullaby, foretells for the (male) baby—commerce in "raisins and almonds" (dried fruit, in the language of the narrative).⁵⁹

"I am staying. To find out. Here, at this place, tomorrow. Concerning trade in dried fruit at our place. Also to buy goods for myself. This is what I came here for," I said, "after all, this was the plan."

Eved Hakushi shrugged his shoulders. But when I turned away he stopped me, laughing:

"How do you plan," he said, "to find a place for the night by yourself, a woman alone, in this city."

"We'll see."

"And how do you plan, tell me, one woman alone, to confront all this city's great dried fruit merchants."

"We'll see."

"You have no idea what you are talking about."

"We'll see."

"And how do you plan to draft a porter tomorrow, tell me."

"We'll see."

"We'll see," he repeated after me, with jeering eyes. (pp. 191–92)

The contrast between this closing dialogue and the closure of Lapid's *Gei Oni* could not be any greater. With her insistent declaration of independence, Clara seems resolved to flee the feminist romance, giving up love for the sake of work. Yet the wry irony underlying this final scene cannot be mistaken. Even her own mentor doubts the viability of her newly acquired autonomy. Once again, we are faced with the ubiquitous double standard—except that this author, unlike her predecessor, ironically acknowledges its subversive power. It would seem that although she has taken this heroine a step further toward masculinist autonomy, Amalia Kahana-Carmon too, like Shulamit Lapid before her, could hardly envision a feasible reality for her "New Hebrew Woman." Framed by the anaphoric repetition "We'll see," this reality is still only a promised land, beckoning the heroine beyond the closure of the text.⁶⁰

What remains unanswered is the question concerning the source of this deferment. Is emancipation just an act of self will, or is it subject to internal and/or external obstacles? Stripped of all former dependent relationships with male figures, would not a typical Kahana-Carmon

character find herself at a loss? And would not the dominant social power deny her the "privilege" it had granted to her black friend? More importantly, is it a privilege? Should she/Can she forego love for the sake of work? Questions abound. But satisfactory answers are not readily available. And it was probably this ambiguity, wrapped in a thick layer of allegorism, that perplexed the readers of "The Bridge of the Green Duck." Their waning enthusiasm might have echoed the author's own quandary, contributing to a long hiatus in which programmatic essays took the place of creative writing.

Only in her latest novel, *With Her on Her Way Home*, published almost a decade later (1992), has the fog somewhat dissipated. Foregoing the historic-allegorical displacement, Kahana-Carmon has courageously woven a contemporary story of romance and artistic creativity (a nice substitute for "work"), matrimony, and divorce. Working much closer to home, autobiographically speaking, she boldly paints the ups and downs of two decades in the life and loves of a (fictionally) famous Israeli . . . theater actress. A passing allusion to Kathryn Hepburn, "A Lioness in Winter," conveys both her celebrity status and the pathos of its decline. Me'ira Heller, whose name is in fact a Hebrew rendition of Clara, seems to pick up where Clara has left off. She actually manages to have a successful career, be a mother, and—at the crucial moment of approaching midlife—find the love of her life. Mossik, her lover and the narrator of this love story, is (rather predictably) an Israeli synthesis of Clara's two "loves": The irresistible attraction of his *bon physique*, countless reiterated throughout the dialogue, is reminiscent of Peter's predatory hold on Clara.⁶¹ Unlike Peter, however, he is not "white"; he is a "dark Adonis," resembling "a giant from the N.B.A." (pp. 49, 115), whose "silky brown" skin, associated with "perhaps" some "Ethiopian genes" or "negroid blood" (pp. 49, 115), clearly aligns him with Eved Hakushi. Except that here this "racial" otherness is not a cause for alarm but for adoration. In a deconstructionist move, Me'ira mockingly declares herself a "racist" because she cannot see herself with "anyone who is not an 'oriental' Israeli" (*me'edot hamizrah*). This mock-racism says it all: *With Her on Her Way Home* is, on some level, a contemporary "realization" of the allegorical bond between the "others" essayed in "The Bridge of the Green Duck." Two internal Israeli others, a "white" female (Heller) and a *mizrahi* male, a representative of *Isra'el hashnua*, overcome their marginalization by entering into a singular relationship, one that is blithely labelled, once and again, "our infamous bond [*'ahva*, literally brotherhood]" (pp. 36, 48, 73, and passim).⁶² Unlike in the earlier story, however, here this "brotherly bond" does not function as a defense, blocking the erotic attraction palpable in Clara and Eved's embrace scene, but rather as an

encouragement. Implying cross-gender equality, it is in fact a modern version of the common topos of the lover as a soul-mate or twin, which resonates Aristophanes' androgynites or the biblical *'ezer kenegdo*⁶³) In a sense, it is the very condition on which this joyful erotic love is founded. The exquisite portrayal of this unconventional love—spanning twenty years and two lengthy cross-continental break-ups—is one of the most authentic in the author's oeuvre and unprecedented in Hebrew fiction. We could not do justice here to its nuanced stylization, intricate structure, and psychological insights, nor to the rich web of intertextuality that links it to the rest of Kahana-Carmon's work (and to the canon of Hebrew poetry as well).⁶⁴ Suffice it to say, for the purposes of our immediate argument, that on the surface, this singular love seems to offer an antidote to the "feminist romance," constructing its own version of "The New Hebrew Woman."

Structured *in opposition* to marital bliss, the dynamics of this plot seemingly explode the captivity narrative of female dependency and gender inequality. Its earlier stages, at least, effect a synthesis between work and love, enhanced by a strong dose of *jouissance*, in the best French tradition (both critical and otherwise). The liberating power of shared intimacy ("the poetics of the body" [p. 43]), both physical and spiritual, is explored here with all its playfulness and humor,⁶⁵ but with all its pathos as well. For this idealized brotherly-erotic bond (not to be confused with incestuous love) is undermined by its very catalyst—the human body. And although the "betrayal of the body" is a lament of old standing ("The body is the cause of love," says Yehuda Amichai, "Later, the fortress guarding it,/Later, the prison of love"⁶⁶ and cf. Diotima's speech in Plato's *Symposium*), here it has a special poignancy. "Twenty years" is not only the duration of this romance; it is also (roughly) the age difference between the lovers—although not the one we would expect. So that when Mossik has finally outgrown his adolescent fear of co-dependency ("my rebellion without cause against you is over, like measles and whooping cough" [p. 52]); when after seven years of absence he is ready to acknowledge the mutuality of their attachment ("This story of ours, it is only now beginning. We are invincible" [p. 51])—it is precisely then that Me'ira reaches the "eclipse of her light" (in Hebrew the play on her name is quite clear; p. 276), entering a stage of parting, of farewell, of the "body's swan song" (p. 43). "Twenty years later," says Leah Goldberg, in a poem that may be declared the semiotic subtext of this novel, "Emotions are not like old wine:/They do not become more perfect, nor more sublime."⁶⁷ Time, "all that has happened in the world," is clearly the culprit in this poem (published in 1955!). Four decades later, Kahana-Carmon is able to cut closer to the bone: It is not (or at

least not only) what happened in the world, she seems to be saying, but what happened with us, in our bodies (and souls), that makes the river of Time so menacing.

Yet in this particular case, it is not only the truism of the transitory nature of love (and life) and the decline of the body that is at stake. What Me'ira is concerned about is the violation of the equilibrium (*'anahnu ke-var lo' kohot shavim*, p. 276) which their relationship had enjoyed earlier. With the realization that this condition is gone, reached late in the story and in the narration, Me'ira is struggling with her own verdict to give up the relationship despite her continued attraction to Mossik's *bon physique* (p. 295). At the close of the novel Me'ira paradoxically finds herself at a crossroad not that different from Clara's, *mutatis mutandis*: She has to choose between the unhappiness of dependent love and the unhappiness of lonely aging. In fact, it is the obsessive evocation of her coming to terms with the latter that renders this narrative both powerful and exasperating. For this is a grim prospect for a relationship that had been earlier experienced by both parties as the rarified flight of the Condor over the Andes (pp. 51–52) or the discovery of Africa, the uncharted continent (pp. 49, 74, and *passim*⁶⁸). Yet, although the question of "what went wrong?" is always at the heart of Me'ira's reflections, she never questions the nature of her glorious past, the ostensible equilibrium now lost. It is left to the attentive reader to ask: What's wrong with this picture?

We can begin by reconsidering the nature of the "infamous equilibrium." The fact is that despite the idealization, the two parties were never on an equal footing. At the time of their fateful meeting—which occupies the middle section, the longest of three that make up the narrative (pp. 79–219)—Me'ira Heller was at the peak of her career, while Mossik was young and socially uninitiated, a kind of an Israeli Rastigniac (see Balsac's *Père Goriot*), groping his way in the metropolis. But it was precisely this reverse hierarchy that enabled Me'ira to feel equal in some way to Mossik. Theirs was the bond of the weak, producing a false sense of egalitarianism. As long as his low social status compensated for her basic "feminine weakness" (the need for dependency and the worshipping of masculine "strength," which are the same for the immature and disadvantaged Clara and the celebrity of the Tel Aviv stage), the illusion of equilibrium could hold forth. But this illusion eventually gives way to "sexual difference": While social realities change, psychological structures do not. Even in this best of all possible relationships, Kahana-Carmon is unable (or unwilling?) to imagine a truly non-hierarchical male-female interaction. In the final analysis, the change of scenery has not affected the fundamental dynamics of her "feminist romance."

When all is said and done, her latest protagonist is the victim of gender essentialism just like her predecessors, despite the clamoring for cross-gender equality. Once again, Kahana-Carmon has carved out the most touching, insightful, and compelling dramatization—not of “The New Hebrew Woman” (namely, feminist liberation), but of sexual difference and female otherness.

We have to look elsewhere then for more accomplished attempts by Israeli novelists to go beyond the feminist romance. The first is paradoxically Shulamith Hareven (b. 1930), who already in her first novel, *A City of Many Days*⁶⁹ (published in 1972 after several collections of poetry [1962, 1969] and short stories [1966, 1970]), problematized the essentialistic approaches inherent in Israeli culture. Inspired by Virginia Woolf’s much debated “androgyny,” Hareven astutely deconstructs received dichotomies of gender roles.⁷⁰ In a way, she turns the idealistic options of cross-gender position choices recommended by the French “non-feminist” Julia Kristeva⁷¹ into a realistic literary convention; and like the latter, she declares herself a non- or “selective” feminist. Moreover, Hareven is notorious for her (extratextual) rejection of the category of women writers altogether, and for her belief in the separation of art and life. It should come as no surprise, then, that her “New Hebrew Woman” is refreshingly different from childhood on, carrying this difference through her romantic, marital, and maternal relationships. In her “feminist romance,” work, love, and even motherhood (as implied by the protagonist’s name, Sarah) seem to mingle peacefully.

This is no Cinderella story, however. In a typical Israeli fashion, war intervenes; or, as Hareven puts it, the power of history, embodied in the City, Jerusalem, circumscribes human action, subsuming both anguish and pleasure under its impersonal workings: “The city abides no one’s decision about who they are. She decides for them, she makes them, with the pressure of stones and infinite time” (p. 121/129). It is against this setting that the myth of androgyny collapses. The pressure of World War II, of the historical contingencies, creates, Hareven tells us, the group self, the notorious “first person plural” of Israeli society. Subjectivity, female or otherwise, is suspended when the cannons are roaring. Consequently, the romance, feminist or not, is not even an option for this protagonist. In fact, it is precisely the rekindled romance of her youth that has to give way under the pressure of the war. Thus in her last interior monologue the protagonist positions herself as a mother, one whom others recognize (*makirim ’oti*) as “having three sons and very little time.”

Unwittingly, Hareven offers here a Lacanian insight: Reflected in the gaze of others, the subject of necessity perceives herself as an object ("me," *le moi*).⁷² But does this mean that the subject is *in principle* alienated from her/his own selfhood, as Lacan would have it? Not quite. For unlike Lacan (and unlike the Judaic postbiblical tradition, one may add⁷³) Hareven optimistically harbors a circumstantial rather than ontological "explanation" of the structure she has created. The celebration of the self, any self, is temporarily compromised under the historical circumstances dramatized in this novel. The sociopolitical conditions that have given rise to the ideology of "we," the "stupid plural" as one of her characters calls it (p. 182/197), have also dictated the suppression of the feminist quest. In this, Hareven had novelistically anticipated what political scientists have later concluded ("Gender Equality? Not in a War Zone!" is the succinct title of a 1989 essay by Naomi Chazan⁷⁴). Yet the acceptance of this inevitability does not undermine her belief that the objectivization of the subject is historically, not universally or essentially, determined. And if the female subject of her narrative cannot be privileged with full subjectivity, she is allowed the empowerment of existential transcendence: Stretching from Genesis to eternity, it is the big *female* "other," Jerusalem, that offers a moment of ecstasy, of metonymic submersion:

Now this is me, she told herself, now this is me . . . with this feeling of great peace [reconciliation] . . . Now this is me in this moment of hers . . . A place to touch the sky: now it is close. To breathe in mountain-and-light. Now. (p. 189)

The uniqueness (among Israeli writers) of Hareven's position on gender essentialism, is paralleled by the splendid isolation of her heroine among Israeli female protagonists. In no other novel had the gap between lofty ideals (both authorial and Zionist, both intratextual and contextual) and the limitations of reality been so sensitively (but also ambivalently) dramatized. In some sense, this novel was ahead of its time. In the early seventies the horizon of expectations was not yet ripe for a literary discussion of the tension between nationalism and feminism, even in this moderate, selective form. Female victimization was convincingly evoked by the early work of Kahana-Carmon, but it would take her, as we have seen, more than a decade to get to a stage of protest and action; and even then she would stop, as I have argued above, on the brink of masculinist autonomy. In poetry, one could hear some revolutionary tones in Yona Wallach's verse, but not too many were willing to listen. No wonder, then, that *A City of Many Days* was received as another nostalgic tale about Jerusalem, "lacking," in the words of a leading Israeli scholar, "highly significant themes and conceptual contents."⁷⁵ That the issues

of female subjectivity and cross-gender equality, as well as their conflict with the historical constraints, are central to the novel—this passed totally unnoticed. It goes without saying that the potential critique of Zionist ideology implied by this material was not even surmised.

A whole decade had passed before the next attempts materialized, and this not without the impact of the Yom Kippur War (1973) and its aftermath: the protest movements, in which women were taking an active role; Knesset member Shulamit Aloni's treatise on women's deplorable status within the legal system (*Women as Human Beings*, 1973); British-Israeli psychologist Lesley Hazelton's demythologizing of "The Realities behind the Myth" (*Israeli Women*, 1977); and the first report of a Knesset commission on the status of women (1978).⁷⁶ The same years also saw the republication of Sara Azaryahu's 1947 *Chapters in the History of the Suffragist Movement in Palestine, 1900–1947*, prefaced by Marsha Friedman, the American lawyer whose unsuccessful attempt to import American feminism into Israel (and into the Knesset) would come to fruition only by the late eighties.

By the mid-1980s, the missing "New Hebrew Woman" began to show small signs of coming back to life. *Nogah*, the first feminist Israeli journal, was established in 1980. In 1982 sociologist Dafna Izraeli published *The Double Bind*, her analysis of the catch-22 of Israeli women. Israel Women's Network (IWN), spearheaded by Professor Alice Shalvi (another Anglo-American import) was organized in 1984, "combating a climate of opinion in which feminism was considered irrelevant because Israel was perceived as having already achieved equality between the sexes!"⁷⁷

This paradoxical "climate" can be detected in the literary arena too: on the one hand, the older generation's struggle against the "feminist romance" as we have seen in the novels by Lapid, Kahana-Carmon, and (earlier) Hareven;⁷⁸ and on the other, prose fiction by an unprecedented number of younger women—particularly towards the end of the decade—who mostly follow the lead of the early Kahana-Carmon, rather than the novels of the eighties.⁷⁹ Hareven's anti-essentialistic androgyny has been all but forgotten until the nineties,⁸⁰ and for a good reason: Just like her early heroine (1972), Hareven herself let the historical momentum take over her creative production. Throughout the eighties, her short stories (1980), masterful essays (1981), and allegorical novellas (1984, 1988) were mostly preoccupied with the examination of the political and social fabric of Jewish/Israeli culture, generally from the perspective of an outsider. Women, to the extent that they figure in these works, function as the outsider too, indistinguishable from most of their male counterparts. Hareven seems to have made good, then, of her principled objection to "gender specific" thematics and style; in her

later work (except for a few stories in the collection *Loneliness*, 1980) the woman question is subsumed—in a typical Israeli fashion—by the concerns of the collective.⁸¹

Against this background, we should be able to appreciate the publication, in 1987, of Ruth Almog's ambitious novel *Shorshei avir* (Dangling roots), which constitutes the boldest departure from the feminist romance in Israeli literature.⁸² A prolific writer of short stories (1969, 1975, 1986, 1993) and novels (1971, 1980, 1982),⁸³ Almog (b. 1936) justifiably won the hearts of both critics and readers with this complex, prize-winning narrative. Structured in two dissimilar parts, ranging from turn-of-the-century Palestine to 1960s Europe, this novel offers a critique not only of her predecessors' optimistic androgyny or masculinist liberation, but perhaps also of some of the master narratives of Enlightenment-based liberal feminism in general.

Interestingly, this critique is implicit rather than explicit. For on the surface, *Dangling Roots* is a typically "masculine (virile), political novel" as the author herself suggested in an interview: "I was trying to engage large, important themes . . . I was inspired by a woman who impressed me with her courage—a feisty woman, diametrically opposed to the passive women I have treated so far."⁸⁴ This "transition" rings a familiar tone—a few years earlier Kahana-Carmon declared a similar turning away from passive characters to active ones. Following in her footsteps, Almog was determined to counteract what she saw as the Israeli marginalization of women's experience ("In Israel, if you do not write about national issues and you do not have a sociopolitical message—you [f.] do not exist!" [ibid.]). But here the resemblance ends. For unlike her predecessors, Almog has woven together two novelistic modalities hitherto employed mostly by *male* Israeli writers: the fictional autobiography and the historical novel.⁸⁵ Book I of the novel, "Madness Is the Wisdom of the Individuum" (pp. 7–160), is a dialogic narrative, in which the two modalities alternate antiphonally chapter by chapter. In one, Mira Gutman, a conventionally autobiographic narrator, recounts her atypical life story in a typical *moshava* in the early years of the State. (Notice the here and now of this strand of the story line.) In the other, she attempts to piece together, somewhat frantically and chaotically, the life story of her maternal great grandfather, Lavdovi (or perhaps Levadovi, "Mr. Lonely"?), an eccentric Zionist of the First Aliyah. Her involvement with this father-figure is not historical in the strict sense of the word. It is psychological and ideological, displacing contemporary concerns that reached their peak in the wake of the 1982 Lebanon War

(Jewish-Arab relations and general attitudes towards power) to the historical events. Yet it is this strand of the narrative that contains the seeds of the "political masculine" novel that would come to fruition in Book II of the novel, "Anatomy of Freedom" (pp. 161–359).

Almog allowed her heroine, then, both the closed intimacy of stereotypical female *Bildung* and the ostensibly open horizons of the male hero's quest. Furthermore, more than any Israeli woman writer before her, she fully developed both the psychological and the sociopolitical matrices of her protagonist, making her the first Israeli heroine to narrate a complete life-span—from childhood in a small town (modelled on Zichron Ya'akov), through urban adolescence in Jerusalem, to an allegedly autonomous adulthood abroad. Thematically and generically, *Dangling Roots* comes as close as possible to the "malestream" of the Hebrew literary canon; a fact that has no doubt contributed to the warm reception it received from the literary establishment and the reading audience alike.

At the same time, however, the novel sports some highly "feminine" features. Most significantly, Mira is the first Israeli female protagonist to be endowed with a mother who cuts an impressive figure, crucial to the shaping of her daughter's life. In this she is indeed fundamentally different from Almog's earlier (and later!) heroines who as a rule suffer from a "father fixation," without the benefit of a viable maternal role model (most notoriously, the collection *Nashim* [Women], which appeared shortly before the novel, in 1986). This shift to mother-daughter relations deserves our attention not only because of its novelty (it has subsequently been discovered by younger Israeli writers⁸⁶), but because it makes Almog's take on feminism so complex and, in the final analysis, also subversive. If we recall that it was precisely this psychological nexus that has been unearthed from Freudian unknowability by feminists on both sides of the Atlantic (to different ends, to be sure), the significance of its belated entry into the discourse of Hebrew feminism may surface.⁸⁷ Curiously, however, none of the reviews of *Dangling Roots* even mention this feminist connection.⁸⁸ Apparently, Almog succeeded in her ploy: Her novel was perused for all the "serious," namely, politically relevant issues it explored, as well as for the psychological implications of the symbiotic co-dependency of its two heroines, but not, as far as I know, for the potential questioning of feminism it harbors. In what follows, we will reverse this procedure: Relegating to another occasion the rich stylistic and ideational tapestry that comprises the novel,⁸⁹ we are about to claim *Dangling Roots* as the last Israeli variation on the theme of the "feminist romance."

To begin with, Mira's mother, Ruhama,⁹⁰ is portrayed as a stereotypically feminine charmer, covering almost every cliché in the book: She

is attractive, sensuous, artistic, imaginative, in tune with nature (and with her own sexuality), communicative when she feels like it and enigmatically distant when she does not, and, most importantly, an expert inventor of stories. At the same time, however, she is a woman alone, an outsider living on the outskirts of the small town. Independent by default (she was left by her estranged husband to run the estate by herself), she is hopelessly self-centered and capricious, hysterical, and suicidal (as her name unobtrusively implies). Living in a fantasy world and always on the brink of emotional breakdown, she is heavily dependent on Mira, who, in a reversal of roles, loyally "mothers" her with all the ambivalence that such family dynamics of necessity entails. This unhappy woman, in short, could have readily been another "madwoman in the attic,"⁹¹ had this not been a 1980s novel whose first part carries the enigmatic title "Madness is *the Wisdom of the Individuum*" (emphasis added).

That the "exoneration" of madness is at least one of the psychological questions with which this book grapples, is no doubt clear. The title of Book I, as well as several of its major themes, clearly smack of R. D. Laing's idealization of schizophrenic "madness," from *The Divided Self* (1960) through *The Politics of Experience* (1967). We may recall that these theories enjoyed quite a vogue among left-wing ideologues of the 1960s—precisely the time frame of Book II of our novel and the ostensible "moment of writing" of its autobiographic narrator. If we add to this Almog's general fascination (both textual and extratextual) with the "thin line" between sanity and insanity, and particularly her equivocation over the question of whether or not an escape into madness is a matter of free choice, a conscious rebellion against the social order,⁹² the deep structure of the novel would begin to emerge. The legacy of madness, woven together by the two narrative strands of Book I (both Mira's mother and her great-grandfather), may have been inspired by Laing and Esterson's *Families of Schizophrenics*.⁹³ Although not schizophrenic in the clinical sense, Mira's family bears some features typical of Laing's case histories: the centrality of the mother-daughter relations (accompanied by an "absent father"), as well as "the feminine predicament" of "leaving home and letting go."⁹⁴ Yet Almog's treatment of this paradigm takes another route. While Book I both foregrounds and problematizes a Laingian idealization of individual madness (namely, the "wisdom" of this ostensible personal freedom), Book II offers a merciless analysis of the other side of the coin—the use and (aggressive) misuse, both personal and political, of the philosophies of freedom and of existential choice.

Bearing in mind this nexus of madness and freedom under question, we may better understand the significance of Lavdovi's act of self-

mutilation or Ruhama's symbolic castration of her daughter (her furious cutting of Mira's beautiful long hair). On another level, it may explain Mira's tolerance of her mother's other deviances, the playful as well as the grievous (her attempted suicides). Still, one is hard put to accept Mira's total acceptance of her mother's rationalization for her symptomatic flights into fantasy:

Mom told me once, and I have never forgotten it: "What did God give humans imagination for, if not to invent things. I am telling you, to invent stories is the most marvelous thing there is. Fantasy knows no limit. One can even invent a life for oneself."

. . . And when Dr. Shapira would reprimand her for fibbing, she would say: "This is no fib. It is fanciful and amusing. After all, life is so gray. Nothing interesting ever happens here. Ever. So I tell stories and make life more exciting. And you know what? Sometimes such a story even becomes true." (p. 75)

"Nothing interesting ever happens here"—could this description be out of an Israeli novel? Is this a valid assessment of life in a country as volatile as Israel? Wouldn't it require a greater measure of the suspension of disbelief normally expected of the reader? I suspect it would, particularly if the reader is preconditioned by the androcentric canon of Hebrew literature, notorious for its preoccupation with the always urgent issues of the public arena. But this is, of course, precisely Almog's point. In order to have her younger protagonist experience both the pleasure and the pain of the "real" world, she must make her break away from the "private sphere"—the prison-house of female experience—in which, presumably, "life is so gray."⁹⁵ For although her mother's strategy of self-invention, the age-old Scheherazade foible of spinning stories, is approved by the protagonist as an act of personal freedom ("I did not care. Like Mom, I believed that anyone had the privilege to invent his or her life any way they wished"), it will not serve as her role model. Mira is not going to stay home and amuse the neighbors with potentially self-fulfilling stories; she will actively make one of these stories come true.

That the model she chooses is typically androcentric should come as no surprise: This may be one more link in a tradition we have been unearthing in recent Israeli literature—the Enlightenment masculine-modeled feminist strategy of self-invention. What is less predictable is Mira's attitude to this model. For although Mira—like Clara, Kahana-Carmon's seventeenth-century heroine—fashions her life in the image of several father figures (Lavdovi, her half-imagined great-grandfather; Alexandroni [her mother's lifelong admirer]⁹⁶, her own father, and, later, also her lover/husband Jacques Berliavsky), she does not do this out of blind admiration. If her penetrating critique of her own father is any measure, she is fully cognizant of the true dimensions of his [mas-

culinist] world. Indeed, it is this insight that makes Mira's evolution so psychologically interesting. On the face of it, Almog seems to offer a "feminist" corrective to the Laingian predicament, reinscribing the absent father into Mira's life. This psychoanalytic "missing third term"⁹⁷ is supposed to help her over the hurdle of the claustrophobic (if not schizophrenic) feminine symbiosis with her mother, and move her into the world of political action and masculinist freedom. And so it does. But at what price?

[Mira] told herself that her father was a man who looked into a small mirror all his life, but there was nothing one could do about this, because he was unable to be any different, he was simply not capable of looking into a bigger mirror, because such a mirror did not exist for him, at least not in his reality. There, in his world, only two options existed: either a tiny mirror, or a magnified picture, namely: national concerns. [. . .] But this was not all . . . Not only was his mirror small, it was also always positioned in the same right angle and it would never dawn on him that it was possible, really possible, and sometimes even greatly needed, to position the mirror diagonally, for example, perhaps in a 45 degree angle, or 135 degree or even 180 . . . True, the portrait reflected in the mirror might be slightly cut off, at the chin or the forehead, but instead some other views might be reflected in the free areas along it. Yes, yes, Mira told herself, Mira's Dad is an onlooker, merely an onlooker, not an insightful observer. This is how his eyes are built, that's all. This is why, Mira thought, his opinions are so predetermined and unequivocal, and this is why he is preoccupied only with issues external to him. (pp. 133-34)

The apologetic tone of this inner monologue is unmistakable. Mira is clearly caught between an Oedipal idealization of her father and a ruthless adolescent observation of his dogmatism and self-centeredness.⁹⁸ She therefore uses the mirror metaphor defensively, protecting herself from fully comprehending the brunt of her own accusation. Moreover, this is the first time that the "autobiographic" narrative voice splits itself into first and third persons, being itself conscious of the defensive function of this specific technique:⁹⁹

Yes, with all this turbulence of fear, rage, and insult, also came elucidation. And I told myself that at times I stopped being me and that Mira particularly stopped being me when she was thinking about her father, that father of Mira . . . Mira wanted to protect him for me, she wanted to protect him from me, because it was important to keep him away, safe from my harsh disappointment, from my hurt. It was important to keep him for herself in some way, because she did not want to lose him completely and she was afraid of me, because I exposed and befouled him. (p. 133)

Fettered by one of the oldest psychological taboos, Mira is unable to integrate her father's betrayal—his refusal to help her get rid of an unwanted pregnancy. Her solution to the conflict is ingenious: Instead of

splitting off the "bad" father, she externalizes her own forgiving, rationalizing self, while "internally regressing into her 'deviant' thinking," which she uses as "a dam against the rage he would arouse in me" (p. 134). It is here, in this crucial event, that the protagonist of *Dangling Roots* emerges as a postmodernist (Lacanian) split subject. Yet this split is doubly motivated, as it bears the unmistakable stamp of the modern *female* condition. For Mira, an integrated self is unrealizable not only because of the universally endemic gulf between one's authentic perceptions and those approved by the "Symbolic Order," but also because of her very personal impossible choice between the Scylla of Mom's rich but totally vicarious fantasy life and the Charybdis of Dad's active but narrow-minded public life.

Indeed, it is this tragic conflict that is dramatized by the break in the hitherto smooth flow of Mira's first-person retrospection: From now until the end of the Book I, her strand of the narration shuttles between first and third persons, indecisively moving from the ostensibly authentic but private "I" to the "other," more public "Mira" who is perhaps better socialized but also more repressed and alienated from her "true" self. That this splitting originates in the mock mirror-stage scene attributed to the father is of course part of an inescapable irony—trying to escape one kind of vicarious life, Mira unwittingly undertakes another. And although the last word is given to the narrating "I," its actual actions speak louder than its discourse: "I then crossed the street. There, on the other side, Dad was already waiting for me. Together we entered the port and boarded the ship" (p. 160). The choice is made; the Rubicon crossed. The protagonist has left behind mother, home, hometown, and homeland. Now she is on her way to join the sound and fury of her father's world, that other world of which she used to be so critical. Unlike her mother, she is going to invent a life, not a story of a life. But will she escape the typical female lot, shared by her mother as well, of living vicariously? Will she emerge as the first "New Hebrew Woman" to sidestep the trap of the feminist romance? Will she, in short, live up to the "work and love" agenda of feminist expectations?

Ruth Almog's answer seems ambiguous. Yes, she allows her protagonist the freedom of choice (Book II is entitled "Anatomy of Freedom") and sends her off to Italy to study medicine. True, she releases her from the prison-house of the female private sphere, where "nothing interesting ever happens," and plunges her into the "colorful" world of international journalism and left-wing politics (this is Europe of the 1960s, the student revolts, and the Russian invasion of Prague). At the same time, she immerses her in the discourse on freedom, both personal and political, of that generation (behaviorism vs. existentialism, Freudian-

ism vs. Marxism, Marcuse vs. Fromm, possessiveness vs. ego boundaries, authenticity vs. power relations), only to find out their blind alleys (pp. 176, 182, 190–96ff., 237ff.). She also involves her in one of the most intriguing love affairs of Hebrew literature, enabling her to conduct a dialogic discourse on love and female desire, while testing first-hand the practical in/validity of the rhetorics of freedom. The eccentric, unpredictable, and finally also unreliable Professor Jacques Berliavsky is one of the most exasperating, finely drawn character portraits in Israeli fiction. Yet one should not miss the irony implied by the title of Part A of Book II, “Freedom According to Jacques,” pp. 163–266.¹⁰⁰

This version of the “New Hebrew Woman” has definitely got a fair share of work and love. But they do not dwell happily together. Nor do the protagonists. In a twist that might be unexpected in the heroine’s “euphoric text” but is quite predictable for the sober realism of this novel, Mira’s “total, absolute love” (p. 189ff.) founders on the rocks of marriage (p. 218ff.). And although the reason for its foundering is overdetermined (her dependency, the vacuousness of his “freedom”), it clearly takes Mira one step further in the deconstruction—which began with her critique of her father—of the masculine ideal. The hard lesson of her exercise in “freedom according to Jacques” is that “love and work” elude not only aspiring young females, they are rare in the male world as well. Other differences notwithstanding, Jacques’ “balance sheet” turns out to be just as warped as her father’s. From this perspective, it is not Mira who has failed the test of the “masculine, political” plot, rather, it is the ideal that has failed her.

Nevertheless, she is denied a continuous voice, an uninterrupted line of discourse. Although Mira remains the central consciousness through which Book II is focalized, she loses her own voice. As we meet her again in Book II, she is presented to us mostly through third person narration, with several exceptions: her brief homecomings (for her wedding and for her mother’s funeral; pp. 207–222, 298–317), her traumatic fantasy, evoking the “primary neurosis” of her childhood—her jealousy of her beautiful mother (pp. 258–59), and her final long letter to her father (p. 333ff.).

It is on the pages of the latter that the autobiographic quest for self-knowledge finally materializes. And it is here that the protagonist discovers the paradoxical truth about the “otherness” of her self. For although successfully disengaged from her mother’s vicarious life, Mira has not really come into her own. To her surprise and perhaps horror she learns that in all her love (“object”) choices she has unconsciously recapitulated the structure of her relationship with her father, thereby “ensuring” their failure. Furthermore, her ideological positions are con-

stantly referred to as "borrowed," "recited," "cheap recipe," and so on. In the final analysis, it was not her own life that Mira has invented. Although in a different fashion, her self turns out to be no less vicarious than her mother's; and her "freedom"—both political and psychological—seems nothing more than spurious. The road to freedom, Mira finds out, leads through a history of male violence and aggression, terror and rape (which she experiences first-hand). Fraternity is taken over by fratricide, equality by oppression. It is therefore not surprising that the charming autobiographic "I" of Book I has almost no place in the harsh world of Book II. By the inner logic of this novel, autobiographic introspection and political or other "malestream" activism are mutually exclusive.

Dangling Roots both continues and transcends two novelistic trends recently developed by Israeli women: the "feminist romance" and the "masked autobiography." Without these antecedents, the specific features of this novel in their particular combination would have been unthinkable. At the same time, however, Almog deserves credit for the steps she took to transform these models both structurally and thematically. Unlike her predecessors, she is far from idealizing the masculinist construction of the female self; neither does she trust compromises of either Virginia Woolf's androgyny or Julia Kristeva's "third generation" women, to which some of her peers subscribe; nor does she find consolation in the apotheosis of sexual difference argued by Irigaray and Cixous and ambivalently practiced by Kahana-Carmon.

Hers is the sober observation of the specific, intensely personal, psychological matrix of a female subject (filtered in this novel through the prism of various psychoanalytic models), and the no less intense and painful political contingencies imposed upon it. Her protagonist stands alone in Israeli fiction in her endeavor to actually carry out, here and now, "classical" feminist expectations. But at the same time, the outcome of Mira's "education" undoes or deconstructs the very ideal it has set out to achieve. Almog's venture, the inscription of a female protagonist into "a masculine, political novel" (her own wording) has turned out to be its own best refutation. That this endeavor takes place in exile, outside of the borders of Israel, is of course part of the critique implied in the structure of this novel. Yet the critique is double-pronged, for this "portrait of the feminist as a young woman" crashes against the unyielding realities of both the protagonist's internal (psychological) and external (sociopolitical) worlds. In the final analysis, the source of discontent in this novel is not easily determined (or perhaps it is overdetermined?):

Is the inhospitality of Israeli culture to blame for the exile, if not disappearance of the "New Hebrew Woman," as repeatedly argued—extra-textually—by Ruth Almog herself¹⁰¹ (as by Kahana-Carmon before her)? Or is Western feminism itself under scrutiny here, exposing the naïveté and risky optimism of some of its basic propositions?

Almog's answer to these questions is imbedded in her narrative, of course, by means of plot, discourse, and closure. Although at the end of her sad story, Mira is still in exile, smarting from her psychological and ideological wounds, her final actions harbor a glimpse of hope: Lifting the lid of repression off her childhood traumas, she is finally ready to embrace the "madness" of her maternal heritage which she has attempted to suppress throughout Book II (p. 335ff.). Replacing her mother's oral storytelling with the autobiographer's pen, she is about to find her authenticity in (creative?) writing, not in political action. Given the limitations of our condition, Almog seems to be saying, creativity is the only true freedom, one that transcends gender, class, and national divisions. "Artistic imagination fashions the unconscious memory of failed emancipation, of a betrayed promise," Mira finds in one of Jacques' books, followed by a quote from Adorno, that "Messiah" so "often quoted by her German friends: 'In the absence of freedom art can preserve the spirit of freedom only by negating non-freedom' . . . Mira grimaces and closes the book. The words sound hollow. She, at least, does not understand them" (ibid.).

Mira may not understand; but her imagination does. "Jacques hates disorder, she thinks, for him everything has to be in place. Only within order he feels free . . . only within order . . . only within order . . . How? How?" (p. 356). Needless to say, she does not find out how. Rather than decoding the secret of the obsessional scientist's "Symbolic Order," she gives in to the rhythms, sounds, and fragrances of her near and distant memories. In a tapestry of free associations her imagination shuttles back and forth between past and present, the real and the imaginary, finally replicating the very language that was earlier used to represent her mother's unique bond with nature. With this, Ruhama's madness is not only internalized, it is also redeemed. The Freudian (Greek) connotation of her name (*rehem*, womb, *hystera*) gives way to its biblical (Hebrew) meaning (*rahamim*, compassion, love). Exhibiting the cadences of Freudian primary processes, of Lacanian pre-Oedipal Imaginary, or of Kristeva's maternal Semiotic, these final pages hold the promise for artistic sublimation. We are not sure whether Mira will return from her exile ("I do not want to walk in the footsteps of my maternal great-grandfather . . . and be called a madwoman" [p. 358]), or whether she will fare better in her future love choices, but we feel confident that she

may be able to "befriend" her legacy of madness and contain it within the "chaos" of artistic creativity.¹⁰²

A few years ago, in an article discussing some of the predecessors of *Dangling Roots*, I asked why none of the Israeli women writers of the seventies and eighties could imagine a protagonist with the same artistic freedom they themselves enjoyed, why none of the "masked autobiographies" I analyzed were in fact a "portrait of the artist as a young woman."¹⁰³ Ruth Almog's novel finally does precisely that. And just like her male peers,¹⁰⁴ she does not shy from baring some very personal wounds that have engendered (pun intended) her artistic mending. She thus brings our search for literary constructions of the "New Hebrew Woman" to an appropriate close. From the perspective of the post-Zionist 1990s, this is one more *grand récit* whose time is over. Younger (and not so young) women writers who emerged towards the end of the last decade either bypass this model of feminist narrative or parody it altogether (as in, Castel-Bloom's *Dolly City*, 1992). In recent publications devoted to women (the journal *Politika* of July 1989; *Feminine Presence*, a catalogue of an exhibit of Israeli Women Artists at Tel Aviv Museum, 1990; *Zeman Hanashim* [Women's Time], an issue of the historical quarterly *Zemanin* [Winter 1993]), the Enlightenment metanarrative is often eclipsed by postmodernist or Continental models. Although Israel is still far from being a haven for feminism, there is a new androgynous consciousness and even a few male feminists (see *Ani feminist*, by Kobi Niv, 1990). Veteran male writers have announced their fascination with the literary construction of women, but could not avoid killing off their female protagonists while so doing (Oz in *Lada'at 'ishah* [To Know a Woman], 1989; Yehoshua in *Molkho* [Five Seasons], 1987). Even so, the Oedipal masterplot is put under scrutiny, giving way to other narratives, the maternal in particular (*'Ima yesh rak 'aheret* by Devorah Repled-Zilberstein, 1994). Other plots explore female desire (Katzir) or construct fractured, postmodernist, or postcolonial subjectivities (Dolan; Matalon). As this essay goes to print, postmodernist-feminist criticism has marked its presence by a heated exchange (pulling no punches in a manner that should disclaim any argument for sexual difference) carried out on the pages of *Teoria u-wikoret* (Theory and Criticism: An Israeli Forum).¹⁰⁵ Apparently, a kaleidoscopic portrait of new Israeli women—artists, critics, political activists—is slowly emerging, no doubt fashioning new modalities of feminist consciousness for the coming century.

Notes

1. Nina Baym, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors," in *The New Feminist Criticism*, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon, 1985), p. 68.

2. Quoted by Yaffa Berlovitz, "The Literature of the Early Pioneer Women" (in Hebrew), *Proza* 66-67, (July 1983): 31-33.

3. Even as poets, women entered the mainstream only in the 1920s. On the problematics of this late entry, see Dan Miron, *Imahot meyasdot, ahayot horgot* (Founding mothers, stepsisters) (Tel Aviv, 1989, 1990); for a partial English rendition, see his "Why Was There No Women's Poetry in Hebrew Before 1920?" in *Gender and Text in Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literature*, ed. Naomi B. Sokoloff, Anne Lapidus Lerner, and Anita Norich (New York: JTS, 1992), pp. 65-94. For a rejoinder see Michael Gluzman, "The Exclusion of Women from Hebrew Literary History," *Prooftexts* 11:3 (1991): 259-278.

4. See my articles "Historical Novels or Masked Autobiographies?" *Siman Kri'ah* 19 (1985): 208-213; "Gender In/Difference in Contemporary Hebrew Fictional Autobiography," *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (1988): 189-209; and "Ideology and Self-Representation of Women in Israeli Literature," in *Redefining Autobiography in Twentieth Century Women's Fiction*, ed. Colette Hall and Janice Morgan (New York: Garland, 1991) pp. 281-301.

The new territory covered by women writers is represented in English by Batya Gur's (b. 1947) mystery novels, published since the early 1990s, e.g., *Murder on Saturday Morning*, trans. Dalya Bilu (New York: HarperCollins, 1994).

5. The only exception is Hamutal Bar Yosef's article on Bialik's poetry; see *Gender and Text*, pp. 145-170. Similarly, Esther Fuchs' pioneering study, *Israeli Mythogynies*, treats only one woman writer despite the generalized claim of its subtitle, *Women in Contemporary Hebrew Fiction* (New York: SUNY Press, 1987).

Nor is the situation much different in Hebrew. As this article goes to press, *Hakol ha'aher* (The Other Voice), the first ever volume of prose fiction by Israeli women, has made its appearance (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad/Siman Kri'ah 1994, ed. Lily Rattok). The significance of this collection notwithstanding, once more it foregrounds women's short stories while relegating their long fiction to comments in the accompanying editorial essay (pp. 261-349). While this choice is of course technically unavoidable, it adds to the particular slant of this selection—the focus on the difference underlining the female experience, particularly as it is highlighted by the biological life cycle and the traditional gender roles. I would argue, however, that this wholesale acceptance of the politics of sexual difference eclipses some of the more interesting rewritings of Western feminism produced by Israeli novelists in the last two decades, an aspect rarely touched in this volume.

An English version of this collection, *Ribcage: A Hadassah Anthology* (ed. Carol Diamant and Lily Rattok, 1994), includes a different selection, probably dictated by the availability of translations, plus a partial rendition of Rattok's introduction (pp. xvi-xxxiv). Both volumes, however, conspicuously ignore feminist and gender-oriented criticism of Israeli prose fiction written on this side of the Atlantic for the last decade.

6. "Gynesis" was first presented in *Diacritics* (Summer, 1982): 54-65, and

later published as *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985).

For a fuller history of "feminism" as a historically changing concept and movement, see Karen Offen, "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach," *Signs* 14, no. 1 (Autumn 1988): 119-157; this review is particularly helpful in understanding the earlier roots of European and French feminism as isomorphic with earlier Zionist "feminism."

The debate over the feminism/postmodernism nexus within the American camp is evident in the exchange between Daryl McGowan Tress and Jane Flax in the same issue of *Signs*, pp. 196-203. Although criticized for siding with post-modern deconstruction of subjectivity, Flax's later wide-ranging probing of this issue, *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), clearly spells out the "unusefulness" of this practice for "feminist emancipation" (see esp. her "No Conclusion," pp. 225, 230, and passim. For a different perspective on this question, see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

More generally on this problem, see *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda J. Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1985), and *Feminism and Postmodernism*, ed. Margaret Ferguson and Jennifer Wicke (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994).

7. *Thinking Fragments*, p. 232. In fact, Flax translates Luce Irigaray's Continental (that is, philosophical and metaphorical) indictment into the Anglo-American language of Object Relations theory, and extends it to the texts of contemporary writers (Irigaray stops with Freud). See also her distinction between the notion of the "unitary" self and a "core" self, p. 210ff.

The difficulty of giving up the notion of a "core" self is not unique to feminist theories. See most recently Gabriele Schwab, "The Insistence of the Subject," in *Subjects without Selves* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 1-22.

8. Julia Kristeva seems to accept this death sentence with impunity, suggesting different strategies of action for "women" (not "feminists") of the "third generation," a generation for whom "identity" is relegated to metaphysics . . . But, of course, she is criticized for abandoning feminism altogether. See her "Women's Time" (1979), in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 187-213.

9. Scholarship has not paid attention to this phenomenon yet; the only work of which I am aware is David Gurevitch's "Feminism and Postmodernism", *Alpayim* 7, 1992, pp. 27-58 (in Hebrew), whose heroines are Grace Paley, Cindy Sherman, and the late Israeli poet Yona Wallach. In his "Postmodernism in Israeli Literature" (*MHL* 15, Fall/Winter 1995, pp. 10-13), he treats, on the other hand, also the young Orly Castel-Bloom, without so much as mentioning her gender-specific themes. Conversely, the radio-symposium on this theme, conducted by Avraham Balaban and published in the same issue (pp. 3-5), sorely misses central foci of recent postmodernist discourse, some of which are explored in the present study. Similarly, his recent book on postmodernism in Israeli fiction (*Hagal ha'aher*, Jerusalem, 1996) treats male writers only.

10. See my "Gender In/Difference" (1988) and "Ideology and Self-Representation" (1991). Cf. *Gender and Text*, Anita Norich's Introduction. A further discussion of gender essentialism in the Jewish tradition is developed in my

"'And Rebecca Loved Jacob,' But Freud Did Not," in *Freud and Forbidden Knowledge*, ed. Peter Rudnytsky and Ellen Handler Spitz (New York: NYU Press 1994), pp. 7-35. Cf. Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) and Elliot Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

For the general question of gender essentialism, see Flax, *Thinking Fragments*; Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking* (New York: Routledge 1992); Butler, *Gender Trouble*.

11. "The New Hebrew Woman" is my own genderized version of "The New Hebrew Man" of Zionist ideology. The latter has been recently introduced and interpreted for the English reader in Benjamin Harshav's *Language in Time of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

12. Findings on this issue have been published in Hebrew since the early 1980s. For an overview in English, see Deborah S. Bernstein, ed., *Pioneers and Homemakers: Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel* (New York: SUNY Press, 1992). Of special interest to our topic are the essays by Yaffa Berlovitz, Dafna Israeli, and the editor. Cf. Barbara Swirski and Marilyn P. Safir, eds., *Calling the Equality Bluff: Women in Israel* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1993).

13. Manya Schohat's biography, *Before Golda*, told by Rachel Yanait Ben-Zvi, is available in English, translated by Sandra Shurin (New York: Biblio Press, 1988). See also Shulamit Reinharz, in Bernstein, *Pioneers and Homemakers*, pp. 95-118. On Rachel Katznelson, see Miron, *Imahot meyasdot, ahayot horgot*, pp. 249-272, and Harshav, *Language in Time of Revolution*, pp. 183-194.

14. See Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 1985), p. 91. Cf. Andrea Nye, *Feminist Theory and the Philosophies of Man* (New York, Routledge, 1988), ch. 4, esp. p. 82 ff. See also Moi in *Feminism and Postmodernism*, pp. 86-102. According to Offen ("Defining Feminism," p. 149), "Beauvoir's arguments were received with greater enthusiasm in English-speaking countries than in her own," apparently because of the socio-national legacy of French feminism. Her anchoring of this legacy in "France's seemingly perilous demographic position" from the early twentieth century on (p. 147) brings home the analogy to the Israeli context.

15. See Yonatan Shapiro, *Elit lelo manshichim* (An elite without successors), (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim 1984).

16. E.g., Marsha Friedman, who finally gave up and returned to the United States. Lesley Hazleton's *Israeli Women: The Reality Behind the Myth* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1977) is a good illustration of the gulf between the Israeli (female) self-image and the way it was perceived by Western (feminist) eyes.

17. See my "The 'Other Within' in Israeli Fiction," *Middle East Review* 22, no. 1 (Fall 1991): 47-53.

18. See Mary O'Brien, *The Politics of Reproduction* (New York: Routledge, 1980), p. 235 and passim.

19. Shulamit Lapid, *Gei Oni* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1982). Like most of the novels discussed in this essay, this novel is not available in English. Translations are mine.

20. Although Offen traces the term to late nineteenth century Europe, she does not find it in Russian—the background of this novel—before 1898.

21. I explore this issue in my essays, "Zionism—Neurosis or Cure? The 'Historical' drama of Y. Sobol," *Prooftexts* 7, no. 2 (May 1987): 145-62, and "Back

to Vienna: Zionism on the Literary Couch," in *Vision Confronts Reality*, ed. R. Kozodoy, D. Sidorsky, and K. Sultanik (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1989), pp. 310-325.

22. See "Feminism Under Siege," *Prooftexts* 10, no. 3 (September 1990): 493-514.

23. The language clearly echoes de Beauvoir's charge that women "still dream through the dreams of men" (*The Second Sex* [New York: Penguin, 1974], p. 161).

24. Carolyn G. Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life* (New York: Norton, 1988).

25. See Nancy Miller, *The Heroine's Text* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

26. See Offen, "Defining Feminism," p. 134ff.

27. A helpful "corrective" of the received binarism of male independence and female dependence has been recently suggested by Miriam M. Johnson in her *Strong Mothers, Weak Wives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). Distinguishing between "dependency" and "interdependence" or between "dependent" and "relational" (or "expressive"), she argues that, "Whereas a woman's relational needs get defined as her 'dependency,' men may disguise their dependency needs because they are being met everyday by women . . . women are financially dependent on men, but this dependence must not be confused with psychological dependency" (p. 46).

The literature on the psychology of gender difference is too vast to be enumerated here. The debate over the complicity of philosophy and psychoanalysis in the valorization of gender stereotypes, opened by Luce Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. G. Gill (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985) is still raging. Cf. Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). Later writings emphasize the politics of gender identity, as in the works of Flax and Butler. Cf. Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

28. For a detailed analysis of this displacement, see my essays "Feminism Under Siege," *Prooftexts*, 1990, and "Ideology and Self-Representation."

29. "The communal life of human beings had, therefore, a two-fold foundation: the compulsion to work, which was created by external necessity, and the power of love," Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1962) p. 48. Despite the inclusive language ("human beings") Freud's gender essentialism reasserts itself as the sentence continues, positing two different love objects for the two sexes: "[the power of love] made the man unwilling to be deprived of his sexual object—the woman—and made the woman unwilling to be deprived of that part of herself which had been separated off from her—her child."

Viewed from this perspective, it could be claimed that one of the aims of the feminist revolution (at least in its "Enlightenment" phase) was an erasure of a "double" sexual difference. Happiness was to be achieved by a "Freudian" equilibrium between work and (erotic rather than maternal) love.

30. *Mekomon* (Local paper), 1989; *Pitayon* (The bait), 1991; *Hatachshit* (The jewel), 1992.

31. On the English tradition of spinster detectives, see Susan Katz, "Singleness of Heart: Spinsterhood in Victorian Culture" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1988), ch. 5: "The Intriguing Heroism of the Spinster-Sleuth." On the inter-

section between this genre and feminist scholarship, see the life work of Carolyn Heilbrun, alias Amanda Cross, author of amateur sleuth Kate Fansler, Ph.D.

32. Shulamit Lapid herself is a happily married mother and the former Chair of the Israeli Writers Association.

33. In the collection *Happy Spiders (Akavishim semehim)*, 1990; an English translation appeared in *Lilith* (Summer 1989). It should be noted that Lapid's earlier stories (1969, 1974, 1979) rarely touch on feminist protest.

34. For an annotated bibliography and a sample essay in English, see *Gender and Text*. On her earlier work, see Gershon Shaked, *Gal hadash basifrut ha'ivrit* (A new wave in Hebrew literature) (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim 1971), pp. 168-179; Avraham Balaban, *Hakadosh vehadrakon* (The saint and the dragon) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad 1979); Lily Rattok, *Amalia Kahana-Carmon: Monograph* (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim 1986); Esther Fuchs, *Israeli Mythogynies* and her essays in *Signs and Prooftexts* (1988).

35. See Jonathan Culler, "Reading as a Woman," *On Deconstruction* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 43-64, and Showalter, *The New French Criticism*, 1985.

36. See on this point Shaked, *Gal hadash*; Balaban, *Hakadosh vehadrakon*; and Rattok, *Amalia Kahana-Carmon*.

37. "The Song of the Bats in Flight," originally published in *Moznaim* (Nov.-Dec. 1989): 3-7. I quote from Naomi Sokoloff's translation in *Gender and Text*, p. 236 and passim. It should be noted that all the different synonyms used in the translation in opposition to "tools" or "form" represent a single Hebrew term, *tochen* (or *techanim*).

38. See Irigaray; Lloyd; Fuss; Butler; Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*.

39. Most notoriously, the disparity between A. B. Yehoshua's political polemics and his much more sophisticated novelistic representations of these issues. See on this point my "Back to Vienna," and "Back to Genesis: Towards the Repressed and Beyond," in *Bakivun hanegdi: Critical Essays on "Mr. Mani,"* ed. Nitza Ben-Dov (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad 1995; in Hebrew).

40. See Jardine; Moi; Flax.

41. See Johnson's succinct summary in *Strong Mothers, Weak Wives*, p. 16ff. The overlapping of the tactical dichotomy (equal rights vs. sexual difference) with the geographical one (Anglo-American vs. French) is commonplace. Even constructions of *The Female Body in Western Culture* (ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985]) are neatly organized around this principle as evident in the "prooftexts" used by the editor in her opening essay, "(Re)Writing the Body: The Politics and Poetics of Female Eroticism" (pp. 7-29).

42. Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time" (1979), in *The Kristeva Reader*, p. 209 and passim.

43. The pro and con arguments concerning "feminine writing" have been raised and summarized by Moi. See also Jardine and Ann Rosalind Jones, "Writing the Body," *Feminist Studies* 7, no. 2 (Summer 1981): 247-63.

Whether or not this concept, and especially the feminist ideology it implies, is applicable to Kahana-Carmon is an issue that requires further discussion (see my forthcoming *Beyond the Feminist Romance*). Suffice it to say that while Kahana-Carmon's style has been often cited as "feminine," it has also been recognized as the heir of the impressionism of U. N. Gnessin (1879-1913) and S. Yizhar (b. 1915), two major male writers of Hebrew prose. The question then is: Is there anything inherently (that is, essentially) feminine about this style, or is it iden-

tified as such because a woman happened to fashion it? Another option is to adopt Julia Kristeva's notion of a supra-gender "feminine" (which she ironically applies mostly to male writers), which indeed would include all three writers; a position that seems to me no less "essentialistic," despite (or perhaps because of) its "metaphysical" position.

44. Aptly analyzed by Fuchs, *Israeli Mythologies*, p. 101 and passim, and in her "Amalia Kahana-Carmon's *And Moon in the Valley of Ajalon: A Feminist Reading*," *Prooftexts* 8 (1988): 129-141.

As can be expected, stylistic analyses of Kahana-Carmon abound, not always, however, with an eye to its feminist function.

45. For her simultaneous denial and affirmation of the role of gender (as well as other existential parameters—origin, class, income, political conviction) in the novelist's art, see *Veyare'ach be'emek 'ayalon* (*And moon in the valley of ayalon*), (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad, 1971), p. 199.

46. See *Veyare'ach be'emek 'ayalon*, ch. 3-4. Cf. "The House with the Blue-Painted Stairs," in *Bikhfifa 'ahat* (*Under one roof, stories*) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad, 1966), pp. 83-91.

47. Cf. Balaban, *Hakadosh vehadrakon*, p. 54 and passim.

48. "Lihyot 'Ishah Soferet," *Yediot aharonot* (13 April 1984): 20-21. Other programmatic essays followed in 1985, 1989. As we shall see, 1984 was a good year for feminist activities in Israel.

49. In *Up on Montifer* (*Lema'la bemonifer*) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad 1984), pp. 59-192. The "triptych" includes two additional stories that construct more contemporary (yet less explicit) "correctives" of Kahana-Carmon's earlier characters. All translations are mine.

50. "Hasisma hanechona" (The correct slogan), an interview with Orly Lubin, *Ha'aretz* (9 March 1984). As is her wont, the author accompanied the publication of the book with a detailed commentary, also published that year, "Hineh hasefer," *Moznaim* 68, nos. 5-6 (1984): 12-18. Although this essay contains fascinating clues to some structural problems in the narrative, it will take us too far afield to deal with it here. The same goes for the novel's rich allusive language and its intertextual ties with the Hebrew canon (i.e., Bialik, Agnon, Alterman, Rahel, Dalia Rabikowitz).

51. See Rattok, *Amalia Kahana-Carmon*.

52. I place this probing in a wider socioliterary context in my "The 'Other Within' in Israeli Fiction."

53. See especially p. 116: "Gentiles and Jews, they are like men and women, my father always said . . . Only because of preconceived judgments. Of each side: about oneself; about the other, too . . . Each side has its own picture . . . its image of the other. Therefore, when addressing someone from the other side, to the image and not to the person one would speak."

54. The allusion is to Jeremiah (38:7-12 and 39:16), where *eved-melech hakushi* saves the prophet from the pit (38) and then is rewarded by God (39). It is the only biblical reference in which a *kushi* ("Ethiopian" in the Bible, but used in modern Hebrew to signify "a black") is identified as a royal servant or slave (*'eved*). By omitting the "king" (*melech*) from the title and using it as a proper name, the author not only invokes modern black slavery but also points to its allegorical function.

55. See my forthcoming *Beyond the Feminist Romance*.

56. After her last, liberating encounter with Peter, Clara states twice: *'Ish 'eino patron li 'od* (No one is my patron anymore), pp. 154, 158.

57. See the move from Eved Hakushi's friendly kiss on Clara's cheek (p. 165) to her observation, "Eved Hakushi does not obey my orders. He is just intent on stepping behind me as a walking-tower" (p. 167), on to the reversal in which he leads the way through the dangerous streets ("where a woman cannot walk alone," p. 170) and Clara "silently admits: now it is I who step behind him" (p. 171).

58. *The Second Sex*, pp. xxiv-xxv. See Lloyd's analysis in *The Man of Reason*, ch. 6.

59. See Avrum Goldfaden's version of "Rozinkes un mandlen" in his play *Shulamith*. This "matrix" is acknowledged earlier on in the narrative: "With commerce in raisins it began. And in time, to the commerce in figs and all kinds of dried fruit it evolved" (p. 111).

60. Like the repetition of so many shorter motifs and figurative coins, this verbal duel is a stylized intensification of an earlier one, the parting duel between Clara and Peter (pp. 143-44).

61. Amalia Kahana-Carmon, *Liviti otah baderech leveita* (With her on her way home) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad, 1992), pp. 71, 276, and passim. This novel comes closer than any of the author's earlier works to "writing the body," French style.

62. Again, a biblical subtext is instrumental in creating this concept: *Ha'ahva hayedu'a leshimta* is a contemporary transformation of Abraham's peace offering to Lot in Genesis 13:8, *Halo' 'anashim 'ahim 'anahnu* ("for we be brethren" [King James], or "for we are close kinsmen" [New English Bible], which is cited early on in the narrative (p. 36) as the basis of the relationship. The frequent use of the allusion tends to obliterate two ironic moves that operate in the transformation of the subtext: First, for Abraham and Lot this statement of fact introduces the proposal of a peaceful solution for a sibling rivalry (parting or separate co-existence rather than cooperation)—perhaps an ironic foreshadowing of the denouement of our plot. Secondly, it assumes two *male* siblings, which is precisely what the "translation" into the contemporary idiom *'ahva* seems to undo. Generally translated as "brotherhood," this nongenderized abstract noun carries a strong connotation of egalitarian friendship (as in the slogan of the French Revolution), for which English does not offer any satisfactory equivalent. My translation, "brotherly bond," is meant to preserve the root of the noun, both grammatically ('.h.h.) and intertextually (the "brethren" of the Genesis allusion), as well as its modern, nongenderized connotation; it fails, however to capture the homophonic pun on the word *'ahava*, "love" proper.

63. Literally, "counter help"; the complementarity implied by Genesis 2:18 is better rendered by "counterpart" than by "helpmeet." I elaborate on this point in my essay "And Rebecca Loved Jacob."

64. Bialik, Rahel, and Leah Goldberg are just a few that come to mind; they are joined by "citations" of works of art, music, and other literary traditions, thereby bringing this novel into the orbit of postmodernist poetics.

65. For the effect of marital "playfulness" and sibling (rather than Oedipal) dynamics on the construction of gender that is at the heart of biblical "patriarchy," see my essay "And Rebecca Loved Jacob."

66. *Yehuda Amichai: A Life of Poetry 1948-1994*, trans. Benjamin and Barbara Harshav (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), p. 371.

67. "Aharei 'Esrin Shana," *Mukdam u'meuhar: Shirim* (Collected Poems), (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim, no date), p. 184. Translation mine.

68. Although both the novel and Kahana-Carmon's commentary ("How

Does the Elephant Imagine Itself?" *Massa' [Davar]*, 23 April 1992) insist on the vitalizing element of discovery in the metaphoric use of "Africa" ("the utopist yearning to dig into yourself as if into another country, a country of mystery; a mystery of power, of magic, that is inside you . . . but about which you somehow were not aware"), one cannot avoid the association—very appropriate here, in my mind—with Freud's "dark continent," the female psyche. It would seem that Kahana-Carmon transforms Freud's negative "unknowability" of the female in the same way as Julia Kristeva has transformed Lacan's (and Derrida's) woman's "otherness" and absence into the semiotic locus of creativity; see *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. A. Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984). I develop this analogy in my forthcoming *Beyond the Feminist Romance*.

69. Shulamith Hareven, *Tr yamim rabim* (A city of many days) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1972). The English translation, by Hillel Halkin, has been recently re-issued by Mercury House (San Francisco), 1993. References are to the Hebrew and English editions, respectively. In contrast to other Israeli women writers, most of Hareven's fiction is available in English. *Twilight and Other Stories* was published by the same house in 1992.

70. I have demonstrated this process in detail in my 1990 essay, "Feminism under Siege." For Virginia Woolf's traces in Israeli feminism, see my chapter "A Woolf of Her Own" in my forthcoming *Beyond the Feminist Romance*. In Hebrew, see my forthcoming "Androgeniut bematzor," *Siman Kri'ah* 23.

71. See Moi, *Sexual/Textual*, and p. 164 passim; Paul Smith, "Julia Kristeva et al.; or, Take Three or More," *Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Richard Feldstein and Judith Roof (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 84–104.

72. Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits* (1936), trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1977), pp. 1–7.

73. See Boyarin, *Carnal Knowledge*, and my "And Rebecca Loved Jacob."

74. In *Israeli Democracy* (Summer 1989): 3–7.

75. Gershon Shaked, *Gal 'ahar gal* (Wave after wave in Hebrew narrative fiction) (Jerusalem: Keter, 1985), p. 23.

76. See Dafna Sharfman, "The Status of Women in Israel—Facts and Myths," *Israeli Democracy* (Summer 1989): 12–14.

77. Alice Shalvi, in *Networking for Women* 8, no. 1 (January 1995), p. 6.

78. A glaring exception to this rule was the publication, also in 1984, of *Hako'ah ha'aher* (The other power), by veteran writer Yehudit Hendel. After a long hiatus (her early books appeared in 1955 and 1969), she reclaimed her writing career with this paean to her deceased husband, the artist Zvi Meirovitz. Interestingly, her next collection, *Kesef katan* (Small change) (1988), shows a selective treatment of feminist issues. In her later books she explores other explosive issues such as national bereavement and mourning (1991) and post-Holocaust Poland (1987).

79. One such "disciple" who does stand out as having carved her own voice is Savyon Liebrecht (b. 1948), especially in her latest collection of short stories, *Sinit 'ani medaberet 'eleicha* (1992; earlier collections 1986, 1988).

Among the younger group that made its appearance in that decade the most audacious and innovative by far is Orly Castel-Bloom (b. 1960) who has already left her mark on Israeli prose fiction (1987, 1989, 1990, 1992, 1993). Less prolific but nevertheless deserving attention are Dorit Peleg, Judith Katzir (b. 1963), Leah Eini (b. 1962), and Ronit Matalon (b. 1960). Only Katzir's *Closing the Sea* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1992) is available in English. Trans. Barbara Harshav.

80. Androgyny is explored, interestingly enough, by several veteran writers, both male and female, whose earlier concerns lay elsewhere: children's storyteller Nurit Zarhi, mystery writer Batya Gur, scriptwriter and postmodern novelist Avraham Heffner.

81. A third allegorical novella, *After Childhood* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1994) a sequel to the two "biblical" stories, "The Miracle Hater" (in English, 1983) and "Prophet" (in English, 1990), features a heroine who is in conflict with the "patriarchal" establishment—a resurgence of the conflict underlying *A City of Many Days*.

82. Jerusalem: Keter, 1987. All translations are mine. Portions of the following analysis were presented in a number of lectures between March 1991 (at Yale) and May 1993 (at Brandeis).

83. Her only novel to be published in English, *Death in the Rain* (1982; 1993), is analyzed by Risa Domb, *Home Thoughts from Abroad: Distant Visions of Israel in Contemporary Hebrew Fiction* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1995), pp. 62–78. Almog's preoccupation with European culture, central to this novel as well as to her earlier *Don't Hurry the Journey* (1971), is crucial for *Dangling Roots* as well. Also available in English is her feminist critique of Israeli culture; see "On Being a Writer," *Gender and Text*, pp. 227–234.

84. Leah Fuchs, "An Interview with Ruth Almog," *Hadoar* (13 January 1989), pp. 14–15. In other interviews, Almog revealed the identity of her model: the late Livia Rokah, the daughter of the mayor of Tel Aviv, who in the sixties was a left-wing activist in Italy, married there, and stayed in exile until her premature death by her own hand.

85. On the fictional autobiography in Israel, see my "Gender In/Difference."

86. Most notoriously, Gur's recent *Afterbirth* (1994); but see also Dorit Zilberman's *Woman inside Woman* (1991), Ilana Bernstein's *Provision* (1991), Yehudit Katzir's *Matis Has the Sun in His Belly* (1994) and Repled-Zilberstein's *Mrs. Reader is Not the Mother* (1994) and some short stories by Savion Liebrecht, Hana Bat-Shahar, Shulamit Gilboa, and Ofra Ofer.

87. The general shift from the Oedipal to the pre-Oedipal in psychoanalytic theory, typical of the Object Relations school, foregrounds the role of mothering in general and "corrects" Freud's untested theories about female psychology in particular. The psychosociological implications of this shift were argued by Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), who claims that the symbiotic identification of a daughter with her [same-sex] mother is one of the reasons for the female's capacity for empathy and hence for the *difference* of the female ego—its less firm boundaries and its more relational attitude to the external world. Similarly, Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray attribute the fluidity of the female psyche to the fact that the girl retains much of her initial bonding with the mother. Unlike Chodorow, however, they use this "sexual difference" for a deconstruction of the heterosexual paradigm, much like Adrienne Rich on this side of the Atlantic, who moved from an emphasis on motherhood and daughtering (in *Of Woman Born* [New York: Norton, 1976]) to a "lesbian continuum" in "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs* 5 (1980): 631–60.

For scholarship on the literary representation of this paradigm see *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature*, ed. Cathy N. Davidson and E. M. Broner (New York: Ungar, 1980), and Marianne Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989). Recent reevaluations include Johnson, *Strong Mothers*, and *Daughtering*

and *Mothering: Female Subjectivity Reanalysed*, ed. Janneke van Mens-Verhulst et al. (New York: Routledge, 1993).

88. The literature on Almog consists mainly of short book reviews and interviews, but no extensive study has yet been written about her work.

89. See my forthcoming *Beyond the Feminist Romance*, ch. 7.

90. Translated as "the loved one" (but literally, 'the object of compassion/mercy'), the name derives from Hosea, where *Lo'ruhana* (i.e., 'the unloved one'), the allegorical daughter of the prophet's wanton wife (1:6) is promised redemption by being renamed *Ruhama* (2:2). The etymology of the name, however, is *r.h.m.*, from which Hebrew derives also *reham*, womb, the Greek *hysteria* . . . The semantic field of this name thus brings together several themes developed in the personality of the mother: female sexuality and hysteria, compassion and "redemption."

91. The reference, of course, is to Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), which deals with nineteenth century "mad" heroines. Feminist scholarship on this heavily loaded issue of women and madness ranges from Phyllis Chesler's book (Doubleday, 1972) through Shoshana Felman's 1975 essay by this name, in *Diacritics* (Winter 1975): 2-10, to Marilyn Yalon's *Maternity, Mortality and the Literature of Madness* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1993). Within this general theme, hysteria holds a special position ever since its "discovery" by the nineteenth century medical establishment. Its Freudian career and its post-Freudian reevaluation by Foucault, Lacan, and French feminism (esp. Cixous in her *Portrait of Dora*, 1975) is well known and need not be documented here. A most useful summary is *Hysteria Beyond Freud* by Sander Gilman et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). See esp. Elaine Showalter's "Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender" (pp. 268-344) for a different position on this issue (pp. 327, 333, 334). However, the theory of madness most relevant to our text is, as we shall see, R. D. Laing's. Romantically interpreting madness as existential freedom, this approach, developed in the stormy 1960s, was absorbed into the revolutionary discourse of that period.

92. Plato's praise of madness, "the gift of God" (Phaedrus), is used as the epigraph of her book *The Stranger and the Enemy* (1980). To the question if one can choose insanity, Almog answers: "I don't know. I once thought it was possible, but today I do not know. I once even thought one can consciously choose insanity. But new scientific findings undermine this supposition." See an interview with Ora Zarnitzky, "Shehikah" (Erosion), *Devar hashavu'a* (4 December 1987).

93. London: Tavistock, 1964.

94. For an exposition of the evolution of Laing's theories and a critique of their implication for female psychology and feminist ideology, see Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (New York: Vintage, 1974), pp. 227-73.

95. Almog herself reacted in a similar vein to the question "Why don't you write about your daily experience?" in an interview conducted after the publication of her earlier novel, *Death in the Rain*, 1982: "To write about this? Never. This is what I want to escape from. My real life takes place elsewhere . . . when I begin to travel, in my imagination." (Interview with Avraham Balaban, *Yediot aharonot*, 1982, no date).

96. Mira's later attempt to consummate Alexandroni's attachment to her mother through his devotion to her resonates with shades of Agnon's *Bidmi yameiha* (At the prime of her life). In both cases the older lover is the bearer of knowledge, of the symbolic order (signified here by his name, evoking Alexan-

dria, the ancestral site of wisdom). Berliavsky also belongs to her parents' generation, an incestual choice that exacerbates her jealousy of her mother.

97. Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, p. 285ff.

98. Seriously motivated as this passage may be, one cannot avoid its tragicomic effect on a reader versed in contemporary psychoanalytic discourse: This paternal figure seems to be stuck forever in an unfinished infantile mirror-stage, a travesty of Lacan's great symbol of the birth of the human 'split' ego.

99. The self-consciousness of the protagonists, here and elsewhere in the novel, is in fact one of the weaknesses of this novel. Whether in dialogues or inner monologues, the characters are often (particularly in Book II) too transparent to themselves and to the reader, as if the author had very little trust in her readers' ability to infer and generalize.

100. In addition to reverberations of John Irving's *The World According to Garp*, 1976, "Jacques" invokes the name of Jean Jacques Rousseau, the father of the romantic philosophies of freedom, the source of "liberté, égalité," etc. *Mutatis mutandis*, it also brings to mind the other two 'Jacques' of the 1960s, Lacan and Derrida.

101. In English, see her essay in *Gender and Text*.

102. It is hard to determine whether Almog sides with Juliet Mitchell who claims (*pace* Cixous) that "the woman novelist must be an hysteric, for hysteria is simultaneously what a woman can do to be feminine and refuse femininity, within practical discourses" (*Woman: The Longest Revolution* [London: Virago 1984], p. 288ff.), or with Elaine Showalter's counter-argument that "female hysteria seemed to be on the wane, as feminism was on the rise" and that "the despised hysterics of yesteryear have been replaced by the feminist radicals of today" (*Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender*, pp. 327, 334). Significantly, Almog's latest book is entitled *Tikun omanuti* (Invisible [lit. Artistic] mending), 1993. In it she artistically "mends" the life stories of a variety of characters who are socially marginal without necessarily being mad and/or female.

103. See my "Feminism under Siege."

104. Oz, Bartov, and Shahar. And see my "Gender In/Difference."

105. In vol. 5 (1994), under the title *Viku'ah: sifrut nashim* (Women's literature: A debate), pp. 165-182, Lily Rattok, Orly Lubin, and Rivka Feldhai acrimoniously argue over Kristevan and other subversive readings of Kahana-Carmon's early stories, while each of them forcefully holds onto a hegemonic position within the critical discourse.