

stylistic innovation nor increased literary sophistication finds voice in their works. The development and growing domination of the lowbrow popular literature their work represents reflects the change in cultural standards promoted by the urban weeklies and *Hadashot*. It, rather than Hebrew literary postmodernism, constitutes a serious threat to Israel's cultural and political future. Those interested in contemporary trends in Israeli culture may enjoy Peleg's thought-provoking work, but are advised to read it in conjunction with the more nuanced and cautious arguments of scholars such as Avner Holtzman, Yigal Schwartz, and Hanan Hever, to best understand current literary developments.¹

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Note

1. Avner Holtzman, *Mapat drakhim: sipporet ivrit cayom* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz hameuhad, 2005), 12–48; Yigal Schwartz, "Hasipporet haivrit: haidan sheaharei," *Efes Shtayim* 3 (1995): 7–15; Hanan Hever, *Sifrut shenikhtevet mikan: kitzur hasifrut hayisre'elit* (Tel Aviv: Yedi'ot Aharonot, 1999) [all in Hebrew].

Orit Rosin, *Duty and Love: Individualism and Collectivism in 1950s Israel* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2008), pp. 357 [in Hebrew].

The veteran men and women of the early state years encountered a somewhat humiliating dilemma. On the one hand, as devoted Zionists, they were aware of the need to sacrifice in order to help absorb the newly arrived immigrants. On the other hand, they felt that after years of struggle and war they had already contributed mightily to the endeavor and should now be allowed to tend to their private needs and desires. Furthermore, the new immigrants did not always accord with what the veterans expected. An example is the newcomers' codes of cleanness and hygiene, which did not meet the veterans' standards either because of the harsh situation in the transit camps or due to different cultural backgrounds. As Orit Rosin shows in her thoughtful book, the burden of loving them was not an easy task, regardless of ideological imperatives.

Rosin offers an alternative history of the crucial era of the establishment of the Israeli state. The heroes of her book are not the charismatic leaders of the new state, yet they are also not the disenfranchised others who find a prominent place in the writings of new historians and critical sociologists. Rosin follows the path of social historians, concentrating on the everyday dilemmas of regular people, mostly middle-class, trying to create a life for themselves under the imposing shadow of the grand national events taking place. Her work is, therefore, an important

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corrective to the established historical accounts of the era and joins pioneering works, such as those by Deborah Bernstein and Tammi Razi among others, who concentrated on Tel Aviv, as well as a volume published on the civilian life during the 1948 War.¹ The emergence of a body of research dealing with everyday life in the Yishuv period and in Israel is an important and timely development in Israeli historiography.

Rosin ties her alternative history to the basic transformation that Israeli society underwent in its early days from collectivist to individualist values, and tries to decipher the mechanisms and agents within the emerging civil societies that enabled that move. Her research deals, therefore, with the interaction between the opinionated civilians and the state. Because the veteran citizens were ideologically committed to the national goals, the discussion needs to be rich, nuanced, and full of ironies, contradictions, and paradoxes. Rosin's careful analysis deftly rises to the challenge.

The period of "Austerity" (in Hebrew: Tzena), roughly 1949 to the early 1950s, gives Rosin an opportunity for an extended case study analysis that exemplifies her approach to the changing relations between collectivist and individualist approaches. Israeli middle-class housewives were more than eager to respond to the national imperative and assist in the absorption of immigrants, even at the expense of denying food to their own families, and requiring sacrifice foremost from themselves. Rosin shows the coping strategies of the concerned women, whose numbers suffered attrition through months of hardship, which gradually led to protest and change. In an impressive act of assertiveness, never repeated since, women became a political force to be reckoned with, changing governmental policies and redefining the lines between citizens and their state.

In the best tradition of social history, Rosin examines newspapers, popular journals, court decisions, election results, and various other qualitative data to supply a rich expression of the period's collective mentality. Admittedly, her research is focused on the quite articulate veteran middle class, leaving those who were outside the public discourse of the time, those who most critical scholars concentrate on—the Mizrahi immigrants and the Arabs—voiceless, or rather spoken for by the more established citizens of the state. However, as research has lately focused on these groups, it is high time to concentrate on the hegemonic middle class, mainly Ashkenazi, veterans whose importance in forging the path between individualism and collectivism should not be underestimated.

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Note

1. Deborah Bernstein, *Women in the Margins: Gender and Nationalism in Mandatory Tel Aviv* (Jerusalem: Yitzhak Ben-Zvi Publication, 2008); Tammi Razi, *For-*

saken Children: The Backyard of Mandate Tel-Aviv (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 2009); Mordechy Bar-On and Meir Hazan, eds., *Citizens at War* (Jerusalem: Titzhak Ben-Zvi Publication, 2010) [all in Hebrew].

Nita Schechet, *Disenthralling Ourselves: Rhetoric of Revenge and Reconciliation in Contemporary Israel* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009), pp. 163, \$43.50 (cloth).

The reflexive engagement with memory and history has burgeoned in the last few decades. Among professional academics and within the public sphere, historiography and collective memory have become objects of intensified inquiry and debate, and their political undercurrents and relevance for the present have come to the fore. Debates over history (i.e., over what happened) have to a large extent shifted towards second-order debates over historiography (i.e., over whose history is represented and how). In Israel this shift crystallized around the historians debate, a sprawling public discussion that took place in multiple venues throughout much of the 1990s. Nita Schechet's excellent new book is both an emblem of the social phenomenon of reflexive historiography and an attempt to reflect on this very reflexivity.

Her inquiry of the sociology of historiography and memory is organized around two key themes that characterize the collective memory of communal conflicts: revenge and reconciliation. Revenge and reconciliation are closely linked: both are reactions to injury and trauma experienced in the past; both posit ego ("us") vis-à-vis the other ("them"); and both are not merely contemplative but suggest a course of action. It is precisely this affinity that begs the question that lies at the heart of this book: how can rhetoric of revenge (presumed to be more immediate and automatic, even primordial and certainly more engrained in the collective memory of victims) turn into rhetoric of reconciliation, which will in turn break the cycle of violence? This question is set in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which features one of the most persistent cycles of violence and revenge in the twenty-first century.

Through intimate readings of both canonical Western texts (Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*) and contemporary Israeli and Palestinian texts (such as Juliano Mer Khamis's film *Arna's Children*, Yaron Ezrahi's *Rubber Bullets*, and Emile Habiby's *The Opsimist* [in Hebrew]), Schechet sets out to decipher how rhetoric of revenge can turn into rhetoric of reconciliation, how "vindictiveness," which seeks to collect a debt of blood and humiliation, is molded into "vindicativeness," which merely seeks recognition in the suffering of the past) (28). The answer—elegant and theoretically founded—is insightful and straightforward, in theory if not in practice. Schechet calls for a reconstruction not of memories past, but of the way

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