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## Comparative (and General) Literature in Israel: A Dynamic Pluralism

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Three major factors have contributed decisively to the establishment and continuing flourishing of comparative literature (henceforth abbreviated CL) studies in Israel. First, Israel is a country of immigrants, the major part of its population comes from different linguistic, literary and cultural backgrounds. True, the Zionist ideology of many emigrants, especially during the first half of this century, encouraged people to leave the language, literature and culture of their former home behind in order to integrate in their new country and to contribute to the formation of a Hebrew culture. Still, they carried with them the educational and cultural heritage that had shaped their literary horizons and tastes, and often they continued to read (sometimes also to write) in their old language. This factor has sometimes influenced the specific direction, shape and characteristics of CL studies in Israel, depending on the intellectual background of the immigrant scholar. Thus, for instance, the fact that some scholars came from Russia made the works of Russian formalism familiar to students of CL in Israel, even before they were translated and introduced into the West via French structuralism during the sixties and seventies.

A second important factor that may explain the appeal of CL studies for scholars and students in Israel is related to the fact that during many centuries Hebrew literature itself was in close contact with other literatures, those of the dominant societies and cultures in which Jews lived. This historical condition encouraged, even compelled, scholars of Hebrew literature to use, openly or tacitly, the methods, perspectives and concepts of CL studies. Thus, the field of Hebrew literature was tangential on comparative work, especially in discussions of periods like the "golden era" in medieval Spain in which Hebrew writing took its models, notably its poetic forms, from Arab literature and poetry; or of various phases in modern Hebrew literature – the *haskala* (enlightenment) literature of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with its close relations to German *Aufklärung*; or of some currents in modern Hebrew literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and its intimate relations with Russian and central European literatures. Discussions about the relationships between modern Hebrew literature and European litera-

ture may take the form of pointing to actual contacts as well as examining similar patterns and themes (e.g., the comparative analysis by Barzel 1972 of Kafka and S. Y. Agnon, the Hebrew modern writer and Nobel laureate). In addition to studies devoted to examine the intricate relations between Hebrew and European literatures, there is also an interest among scholars in Israel in "Jewish Literature" – written in different languages, expressing a Jewish "theme" or "problems" – a concept transcending the boundaries of one specific national literature (see, for example, Shaked 1986).

Finally, despite the long and rich history of Hebrew literature, and the dynamic and diverse nature of contemporary Israeli writing, Israel is a relatively small country, whose language, Hebrew, is spoken and read by a limited population (about six million Israelis plus some tens of thousands of Israelis and Jews abroad capable of reading contemporary Hebrew), and hence, in order to fulfil its heterogeneous cultural needs, it is dependent on close and multi-layered connections with bigger, more established literatures. In that respect, the academic discipline of CL studies with its orientation toward literatures and literary research abroad, mainly but not exclusively in the Western world, functions as part of a larger cultural need to enrich, vitalize and enlarge the literary "repertoire" of a small country. Consequently, it is not surprising to find that some professors of CL studies are also translators or editors or readers of foreign literature in publishing houses, responsible for the introduction of classic as well as contemporary world literature (and also theory and criticism) to the Israeli reader.

To understand the background of CL studies in Israel, one may add that although the major part of literary studies curricula at secondary schools consists of Hebrew literature texts, one can also find literary works of the Western "canon" as part of that curricula. Thus, for example, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* are well known to many graduates of the Israeli high-school system. This fact, in turn, encourages students studying literature to enroll in CL departments, or at least to take some elective courses offered by CL and General Literature departments. These texts of world literature are taught in translation, and the tendency to use translated texts is not restricted to the school level; even in CL departments, especially in undergraduate studies, most texts are read in Hebrew or English translations – even when a "second foreign language" (in addition to English) is required to attain a degree.

### *A Short History*

There are two important landmarks in the history of CL studies in Israeli universities. The first was the founding in 1960 of the first institutionalized independent CL program in an Israeli university at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, after elective courses on world literature had been offered there for almost a decade. The central figure in teaching, first the popular courses and later in the academic program, at first aimed at the M.A. level, was Leah Goldberg, who was known, first and foremost, as a gifted and acclaimed poet. The program enabled students who had received their first degree in different national literatures to pursue their interests in more than one literature and/or in some general aspects of literary studies. Leah Goldberg was born and grew up in Russia, received her higher education during the early thirties in Germany, and emigrated to Israel in 1935. Her major area of interest was poetry, and she wrote a brief introductory book to the study of poetry (Goldberg 1966), but she was also interested in the art of prose (Goldberg 1963), and wrote some studies on modern Russian writers. In addition, it is important to note her continuing work and achievements as a translator, both of prose (e.g., Tolstoy's *War and Peace*) and of poetry (e.g., modern Russia poetry; a selection from French and Italian poets, notably Petrarch). In fact, in her activities as a translator, Goldberg represents striking and characteristic phenomenon of comparatists in Israel. Shimon Sandbank, who was first an assistant and later a professor and chair of the CL department at the Hebrew University for many years, after it became a department offering a B.A. degree in 1980, is also a well-known translator (particularly from English and German literature, including works by Chaucer, Shakespeare, Kafka, Celan), who has won the Israel Prize for his work.

The second noteworthy moment in the history of CL studies in Israel is the founding of the department of Poetics and CL at Tel Aviv University (its Hebrew title reads: Theory of General Literature/General Theory of Literature) during the late sixties. The central figure in the founding of that department was Benjamin Harshav (Hrushovsky), who was joined by a few young scholars, graduate students and junior faculty from the departments of Hebrew, English and CL of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In addition to establishing a CL department, Harshav also founded a scholarly journal in Hebrew, *Hasifrut/Literature*, dedicated to the publishing and promoting of theoretical and historical discussions of

literature, with a strong comparatist element. Harshav also initiated two international scholarly journals in English, first *Poetics and Theory of Literature (PTL)* and later *Poetics Today* (see also next section). The establishment of the Poetics and CL department at Tel Aviv University, together with the activity associated with the above scholarly journals, promoted an academic and sometimes even a vehement public discussion of issues related to the theory of literature. A recurring theme in those debates was a protest against what was described as an erroneous application of scientific terminology to an inherently humanistic field that would seem to shun such an approach.

The appeal and prestige (although sometimes controversial) gained by CL studies during the seventies, with its special combination of theoretical and comparative perspectives, seem to have encouraged the other three Israeli universities – Haifa, Bar-Ilan and Ben-Gurion (the other two major academic institutions, the Technion in Haifa and the Weizman Institute in Rehovot, devoted to research in exact and life science, never had any comprehensive humanities studies) – to offer different types of CL programs during the seventies and eighties. Bar-Ilan University in fact already had a department, since the mid-fifties, chaired by the influential critic Baruch Kurtzweil, that combined Hebrew and World literature studies. The two parts of this department were gradually separated after the death of Baruch Kurtzweil in 1972, till the CL part became an independent department in 1976. At Haifa University the department of Hebrew and CL began to offer a full CL program on early eighties, and at Ben-Gurion University, the youngest Israeli university, students can study in a CL program as part of the institution offering foreign languages and literatures studies.

#### *The Institutional Situation (Programs, Journals, etc.)*

Nowadays, CL studies in Israel have a strong hold in the four major universities: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv University have independent CL departments, providing programs towards the first degree, the B.A., usually in conjunction with another department (or “Major”) and also for graduate students, pursuing their studies toward the M.A. or Ph.D.; Haifa University has a CL department, conjoined with Hebrew literature; and Ben Gurion University of the Negev has a CL program.

Although there is at present no scholarly journal whose title contains the term “comparative literature”, there are a few journals that publish articles and essays on CL topics (broadly defined), and some of these are also institutionally affiliated with academic departments of CL. *Hasifrut/Literature* of Tel Aviv University (first published during 1968-1978; then renewed during 1984-1986) played a major role in promoting and publishing some seminal studies in CL and in the theory of literature from its establishment in the late sixties till the final issues in the mid eighties. The journal was closely connected to the department of Poetics and CL at Tel Aviv University (some of its faculty served as members of the editorial board). Some essays which first appeared in *Hasifrut/Literature* were translated and published in the international journal whose editorial board is also situated at Tel Aviv University – *Poetics Today* (still extant), first edited by Benjamin Harshav and later by Itamar Even-Zohar and Meir Sternberg.

At the Hebrew University, a scholarly journal appeared from 1975 to 1991, with an international editorial board, publishing essays on “foreign” and CL, as part of the Institute of Languages and Literatures. It was entitled *Hebrew University Studies of Literature and the Arts (HSLA)*, most issues being in English but also a few in French. It first appeared under the title *Hebrew University Studies in Literature* (1978-1982) and when art topics were added it became *HSLA*. In addition, the Hebrew academic journal *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature* (since 1981), devoted to the study of Hebrew literature and issued by the Institute of Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University, also publishes work with strong comparative and theoretical aspects. In 1997 the Hebrew University also began to publish a scholarly journal intended for an audience wider than the regular academic community, *Et Hada'at*, presenting new findings in Jewish studies, but also open to work with comparative elements.

At Haifa University, a scholarly journal in Hebrew, entitled *Dapim le-mechkar besifrut (Papers in Literary Research)*, affiliated to the department of Hebrew and CL, has appeared regularly since 1984. It publishes a variety of articles and essays, and usually has a section devoted to theoretical and comparative questions, in addition to articles on Hebrew literature.

Since 1970, Bar-Ilan University has been responsible, for the scholarly Hebrew journal *Bikoret u-farshanut (Criticism and Interpretation)*, publishing articles and essays mainly on Hebrew literature but also on

comparative and theoretical matters.

In addition to these scholarly journals, formally affiliated with academic departments and published by a university press, there are a few semi-academic journals, publishing essays, some of high scholarly standard, on the theory of literature and on CL: *Teoria u-bikoret (Theory and Criticism)*, edited by Adi Offir, published by the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem since 1991, has some academic scholars on the board, and promotes especially essays written from post-structuralist and post-modern perspectives; *Achshav (Now)*, a literary journal edited since 1959 by Gabriel Moked, publishes both literature (poetry, stories, etc.) and theoretical and critical work. Some articles appearing in that journal reflected the influence of "New Criticism" on Israeli critics and scholars during the fifties and sixties; Menakhem Perry, a central figure in the department of Poetics and CL at Tel Aviv University and for many years its chair, was also the founder of a journal in Hebrew, *Siman Kri'a (Exclamation Mark)* (1972-1991), which published literary work together with criticism and some scholarly essays on literary theory and comparative issues; *Alpayim (Two Thousand)*, appearing since 1989, includes essays on social and cultural affairs, together with articles on literary matters with theoretical and comparative aspects; *Moznayim (Scales)*, the official journal of the association of Hebrew writers in Israel, while devoted first and foremost to publishing literary works also accepts critical essays, sometimes with strong comparative elements (e.g., its February 2000 issue is devoted to the tradition of sonnet writing – both in Hebrew and in Western literature). *Alei-Siah (About Discourse/Leaves of Bush)*, initially published by the Kibbutzim Association in Israel, contains a mixture of *belles-lettres* and critical and scholarly work, reminding us that the Kibbutzim movement also has a cultural dimension.

Thus, if you are a CL scholar in Israel, and have written something worth publishing, chances are that you will find an appropriate place for it; if you are a reader, interested in articles and essays on comparative and theoretical issues, you can browse in a few journals, some of which are not officially designed for CL studies, in order to find what you are looking for. And most probably you will find it.

### Issues and Methods

All in all, CL studies in Israel are of a dynamic and pluralistic nature

that can be discussed under three major heads: (1) courses and research projects in *poetics* that go beyond the boundaries of one specific language or literature (study of narrative technique, metaphorical language in poetry, evolution of genres, etc.); (2) "traditional" CL studies examining the contacts and influences of specific literatures (including those between Hebrew and other literatures); (3) introduction to and discussions of a diversity of contemporary schools and perspectives, including ideologically oriented perspectives such as feminism, neo-historicism and cultural studies, or the use of concepts and methods taken from psychoanalytic thinking (e.g., the anthology edited by Rimmon-Kenan 1987; the analysis of Agnon's fiction using psychoanalytical tools by Ben-Dov 1993), semiology, cognitive psychology and empirical aesthetics – to name but the most popular in that heterogeneous field.

There are certain recurring tensions too that characterize comparative studies in Israel, both within the discipline and in relation to neighboring departments and programs. The relationship between Hebrew literature studies and CL studies is often fruitful and productive: studies in the former use methods and concepts developed in the latter and sometimes scholars from CL departments (notably at Tel Aviv University) conduct their research in Hebrew literature or illustrate their theoretical statements with Hebrew literary texts. To a certain extent departments of Hebrew and CL opt for the same body of students and thus there is sometimes a certain level of competition and rivalry in addition to fruitful collaboration.

As for studies within the field of CL, tensions (evident in many Western countries today) exist between "conservative" CL studies, including what is described above under the first two groups (i.e., poetics and traditional CL studies), treating literature in terms of poetics, devices, schools, periods, genres, etc. as opposed to part of the third group, notably the ideologically motivated contemporary schools: feminism, neo-historicism, cultural studies and the like. The "conservative" emphasis established itself as the "main road" of CL studies during the seventies, with the influential department of Poetics and CL at Tel Aviv University at the center (see the "Short History" section above).

The leading achievements of CL studies and research in Israel during the past four decades or so can be described under a few headings: (a) studies in the poetics of fiction; (b) the special place held by the Bible in Israeli CL studies; (c) studies in historical poetics; (d) translation studies;

(e) intertextuality; (f) poetic language.

### *The Poetics of Fiction*

Comparatists in Israel have studied the art of the novel since the fifties (e.g., Kurtzweil 1953; Goldberg 1963), and during the past three decades, a few scholars, especially at Tel Aviv University and the Hebrew University have directed their research into areas of the poetics of fiction or narratology. These studies synthesized the insights of the Russian formalists (notably Shklovsky's pioneering work on the art of the novel), French structuralists (Barthes, Bremond, Genette), and discussions of the novel within the tradition of English criticism (James, Forster et al). The outcome was a series of articles and papers (e.g., Golomb 1968; Perry 1979a, 1979b; Perry and Sternberg 1986 (originally published in Hebrew in 1968); the linguistically oriented Reinhart 1980; Ron 1981, 1987; Shen 1989; Yacobi 1981), special issues of *Poetics Today* and books (Sternberg 1978; Rimmon-Kenan 1977; 1983; Zoran 1997) containing some valuable contributions to the discussion of concepts such as "the combined discourse" (known in English criticism as free indirect style and in French narratology as *style indirect libre*), gaps and gap-filling activity as a vital part of the reading process (the works of Perry and Sternberg), an in depth scrutiny of concepts such as "exposition," "omniscient narrator" and the opposition of *fabula* and *sujet*, research on character in literature (Ewen 1980; Hochman 1985) and on phenomenology of reading (Brinker 1980). Discussions of the poetics of fiction have often expressed the dynamic nature of literature. Thus, we can find in these discussions emphasis on concepts such as "the text continuum," "the reading process," "the dynamics of constructing a character/plot," etc. (Hrushovsky; Ben-Porat and Hrushovsky).

### *The Bible and Its Place in CL Studies in Israel*

In some discussions of poetics of fiction, the prime artistic textual source referred to has been the Bible. Thus, for instance, the discussion of the complex process of literary gap-filling was illustrated by Perry and Sternberg (Perry and Sternberg 1986 [1968]) in a detailed analysis of the story of King David and Bat-Sheba. Note that when the article was published in 1968, a virulent debate arose: some biblical scholars felt that it

was inappropriate to apply concepts of poetics, relevant perhaps to the analysis of Western fictional works, to the Bible. The debate helped to crystallize certain concepts in the poetics of fiction and to get students and readers to accept that the biblical text is not the "monopoly" of biblical scholars, let alone orthodox Jews, and can be read and analyzed as any other great and powerful literary text. Sternberg, who first published a study of certain aspects of the poetics of fiction (Sternberg 1978), later developed some of these concepts and applied them, in addition to others, to the biblical text in his *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (1985). In this book notions such as "narrative gaps," "rhetorical devices" of the narrator and the like are thoroughly examined and illustrated, with great attention paid to textual detail, through biblical accounts such as the rape of Dina, and stories of the patriarchs and judges. These discussions also intermittently make reference (in a "comparatist spirit") to well known works of the Western literary "canon" in order to demonstrate that some of the narratorial strategies chosen are not peculiar to modern novels and can be found both in Henry James and in the story of David and Bath-Sheba. Thanks to the combination of a keen use of conceptual critical tools together with their sensitive application to the Bible and to Western literature, Sternberg won the Israel Prize for the study of general literature in 1996.

In addition to the fact that some theoretical discussions in the poetics of fiction have been closely related to examination of the biblical text, one can find the Bible in at least two more areas of comparative literary studies in Israel. First, the text may be used to illustrate contemporary developments in literary and cultural studies. Thus, for instance, Pardes has applied a feminist reading to the Bible, resulting in her *Countertradition in the Bible* (1992) in which she underlines the importance of some women characters (e.g., Miriam, Moses' sister) and presents a feminist perspective on other biblical stories, claiming that subversive feminist comments can be found in undercurrents of the text. Lately, Pardes has also addressed the Bible as part of her discussion, influenced by neo-historicism, of the beginnings of the concept of the birth of a nation (Pardes 2000), offering a detailed reading of the story of Exodus to show how specific metaphorical language makes us construct an analogy between the birth and growing up of a human being and that of the constructed "nation" of ancient Israel.

In addition to serving as the "arena" for discussing and testing certain contemporary critical perspectives and schools, the biblical text has also

attracted comparatists as a source of inspiration for post-biblical writers and artists. Thus, for example, Harold Fisch of Bar-Ilan University, in addition to being a distinguished Milton scholar (evident in Fisch 1999), has also written on the impact of the Bible on authors of different times and places (Fisch 1988; 1998; 1999). Fisch has recently won the Israel Prize for his achievements in the study and research of general literature, a prize held jointly with William Dalesky, a well-known Hebrew University scholar of English literature. To this vein where comparatists meet the biblical text, one can also add the book-length study by Fishelov of the Hebrew University on the transformations of the biblical figure of Samson in literature, art and culture (Fishelov 2000). The Bible has also attracted some literary and philosophical thoughts, coming from a comparatist from the Hebrew University, examining the charged concepts of Eros and the law (Moses 1999).

#### *Studies in Historical Poetics*

The emphasis on the dynamic nature of the literary phenomenon can be found not only in the realm of the individual literary work and its reading, but also on the larger scale of historical or diachronic dimensions. Thus, a few scholars, notably Even-Zohar of Tel Aviv University have focused on the complex dynamic nature of the literary system. Even-Zohar offers a comprehensive theory of the literary system, entitled "polysystem theory" (Even-Zohar 1990) in which he emphasizes the dynamic interrelationship of different domains of the literary system at a given point in time (synchrony) as well as in its evolution in their evolution in time (diachrony). His analysis recognizes the complex relationship between "canonic" and "non-canonic" literature (including popular and children's literature – see Shavit's studies on the latter), between "primary" and "secondary" modes of literary creation and the role a translated literature plays in a given literary system and its changes. These studies in historical poetics were in great part inspired by the Russian formalists, particularly figures like Jurji Tynjanov and Roman Jakobson. Even-Zohar's works draw their examples from diverse literary traditions including Hebrew literature with its complex historical changes.

An interest in historical poetics can also be found in Fishelov's works on literary genres (Fishelov 1993). The realization that literary genres are not only, or even not primarily classificatory labels but rather are vital

forces in literary life, raising expectations on the part of writers and readers alike, and that these set of norms and expectations in their turn traverse historical periods and are in a way the framework in which tradition and innovation are expressed – is at the heart of his studies. In fact, he argues that the study of literary genre, whether dramatic comedy or the sonnet, the novel or epic poetry, has to take into account the dialectic of dynamic and static elements and configurations. The interest in the historical dimension of literature and can also be found in studies of the literary movement or current of Decadence, conducted by the Ben-Gurion scholar Bar-Yosef (Bar-Yosef 1994).

#### *Translation Studies*

In addition to the fact that because of their knowledge of diverse languages, some comparatists in Israel are practically involved in literary translation, directly (as translators) or indirectly (as editors in a publishing house, critics), academic studies of translation have also emerged as part of CL scholarship. At Tel Aviv University it was Toury, a student of Even-Zohar, who contributed to the establishment of translation studies, as part of the Poetics and CL department and later as part of the cultural studies program offered at the school for cultural studies. Toury has published work on translation theory (Toury 1995), and is now the editor of *Target*, an international journal devoted to translation research. Again, it seems that the particular Israeli situation – namely, modern Hebrew literature as a relatively young literature with a need for diverse translated writings to fulfil heterogeneous readers' needs – has encouraged comparatists to investigate the dynamics of literary translation, and in discussing that dynamics a strong emphasis is given to the needs of the Target literature (as opposed to the Source literature), and the functions it fulfils – dictating the nature and the norms of the process of translation.

#### *Intertextuality*

The fact that some comparatists in Israel have focused on questions related to inter-textual relationships is not accidental: the shadow of the Jewish textual heritage, notably the Bible (see the above discussion), hovering over modern Hebrew literature has contributed to heighten scholars' awareness of the decisive role previous texts have in shaping, model-

ing and enriching the composition and the significance of modern texts. One such scholar is Ben-Porat of Tel Aviv University who has devoted much effort to elucidate the structure and effect of intertextual relationships such as literary allusion, parody, and the like (Ben-Porat 1979, 1985). The interest in intertextual relationship can also be found in Fishelov – especially those works that deal with literary genres and the relations between works pertaining to the same generic tradition (e.g., the distinction, offered in Fishelov 1993, between primary and secondary kinds of generic creativity). From a different angle, Fishelov's book on the transformations of the biblical figure of Samson (Fishelov 2000) can also be described as dealing with intertextual relationship. The interest in the complex transformations of literary motives can also be found in Sandbank's tracing of Kafka's works in modern literature (Sandbank 1989).

In addition to the above fields, one should also highlight some works in the field of poetic language. A few comparatists have shown interest in poetry, first among them being Harshav at Tel Aviv University and Sandbank at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In addition to contributing some seminal works in Hebrew prosody, Harshav wrote an important article on metaphor (Harshav 1984), arguing that we should broaden our perspective on the phenomenon, which is not restricted necessarily to a short linguistic phrase but should rather be viewed as a principle connecting diverse semantic units dispersed in the poetic text. Interesting theoretical work on figurative language with implications on the poetic language of certain Hebrew poets has been done by scholars involved in cognitive poetics (Tsur 1992a; Shen 1997. Shen also edited special issue of *Poetics Today*, devoted to aspects of metaphor comprehension). There is also a book length study of one specific poetic trope, namely simile (Fishelov 1996), containing a discussion, in a comparatist manner, of poets of different periods, languages and cultures. In Sandbank's comparatist studies of poetry (Sandbank 1976) one may find a less ambitiously theoretical attitude. His goals are mainly to explore, in a more "traditional" comparative perspective, the relationship between major poets and schools of poetry in Europe and some representatives of modern Hebrew poetry. Thus, for example, poets like Rilke, Auden and Amichai are compared, and their use of poetic devices as well as their *Weltanschauung* are illuminated. The sound patterns of poetic language has also attracted Israeli comparatists, resulting in works such as Harshav's mapping of different types of relations between sound and meaning in

poetry (Harshav 1980) and with Tsur's detailed book length study of similar phenomena (Tsur 1992b).

### *The Past Twenty Years: Polyphony*

Whereas the older generation of scholars fully possessed at least one second language in which s/he conducted research, nowadays in Israel there is a younger generation whose native tongue is Hebrew and who have had to acquire foreign languages "the hard way" – through studying in Israel as well as abroad. It is not surprising to find that among this young generation, English is the language commonly used, reflecting the fact that this is the second language taught at Israeli schools. Another significant sociological fact about CL studies in Israel is that many of the younger scholars have conducted their graduate or post-graduate work in the United States. Thus, for example, Ziva Ben-Porat of Tel Aviv University, David Fishelov and Ilana Pardes of the Hebrew University and Nitsa Ben-Dov of Haifa University all completed their Ph.D. at University of California, Berkeley; The fact that these four studied with Robert Alter, the distinguished Berkeley scholar who specializes in both biblical and CL studies, may have contributed to the scope of their intellectual interests and research projects, including the analysis of the biblical text from a literary and comparative perspective and perhaps also to their awareness of the role of intertextual relationship in the realization of the literary text; Hanan Hever of Tel Aviv University did his post-doctoral studies with some neo-Marxist scholars at University of California, Berkeley, following his interest in the intimate relations between literature, culture and society (see Hever 1994, 1999); Yeshayahu Shen of Tel Aviv University also spent his post-doctoral at University of California, Berkeley, but at affiliating himself with scholars working in the field of cognitive psychology (resulting in works such as Shen 1997); Moshe Ron of the Hebrew University conducted his graduate studies at Yale, where he met, and later introduced in Israel, the then new Deconstructionist school of criticism; Orly Lubin of Tel Aviv University completed her Ph.D. at New York University during the eighties, where she encountered contemporary feminist, social-critical perspectives on literature – and her students at Tel Aviv University could later benefit from these intellectual influences.

These biographical facts have academic consequences: the closest con-



nections of most comparatists in Israel are with United States colleagues, and what is even more important: during the past twenty years or so certain developments in the field have reflected currents, dilemmas and even the bewilderment that characterize CL studies in the United States (for a survey of the latter, see Gillespie). Thus, for instance, the introduction of feminist studies, deconstructionist criticism, cultural studies, neo-historicism and some versions of post-colonial studies seem to be a direct outcome of the close relation with the United States. The change in the field can also be seen in the shifting emphasis from a formalist and structuralist orientation into a more thematic and ideologically charged perspectives: A. B. Yehoshua, for example, a well-known Israeli novelist who teaches CL at Haifa University, has published a book in 1998, examining the relation between literature and morality. This change is also evident with some comparatists who had made their initial steps as devoted formalist. Thus, for example, Ben-Porat has studied the representation of the autumn in literature (Ben-Porat 1986) and Sternberg, in his latest book (1998), unlike his early, formalist-oriented book (1978), makes some ideologically charged statements about the formation of national identity in a multi-lingual, multi-cultural situation.

One should also mention certain trends that sometimes stand in direct opposition to the ideologically-oriented schools, namely, empirical and cognitive studies of literature. There are a few scholars at Tel Aviv University and at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Shen, Tsur, Fishelov) who participate in these currents, which are sometimes perceived as the heirs of the formalist school in international organizations such as IGEL, the international association of empirical studies of literature, which has a strong European constituency (notably in Germany) or PALA, the international association of poetics and linguistics, with a stronghold in England. Needless to say, many individual scholars (e.g., Stephan Moses and Betty Rojtmann of the Hebrew University, Ruth Amossy of Tel Aviv University) have personal contacts with French comparatists and theorists of literature. Thus, a pluralistic spirit can be found in Israel's CL studies not only in issues and methods, but also on the level of international contacts.

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