



Cohen & Shiloh Literary Agency

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Orly Castel-Bloom

One of the leading voices in contemporary Israeli writing, Orly Castel-Bloom is a celebrated Israeli novelist, feted for her unique post-modern prose.

After studying Film at the Beit Zvi Institute and Tel Aviv University, Castel-Bloom published her first collection of stories in 1987 to critical acclaim and has been a leading voice in Hebrew literature ever since. Castel-Bloom's work has been translated into 14 languages, her creative output encompassing novels, short story collections, and a children's book.

Her numerous awards and accolades include the Tel Aviv Foundation Prize (1990), the Alterman Prize for Innovation (1993), The Neuman Prize (2003), the French WIZO Prize (2005), the Lea Goldberg Prize (2007), and the Rishon Le Zion Prize for Creativity in the Hebrew Language (2016). *An Egyptian Novel* was awarded the Sapir Prize—Israel's premier prize for fiction—in 2015. The jury's citation noted that "in this story, [Castel-Bloom] broadens the canvas of Hebrew literature, in a unique manner setting out a decidedly Israeli story, one which has never been told before." *Biotope*, her most recent novel, has been shortlisted for the 2024 Sapir Prize.

Castel-Bloom has taught at Harvard, UCLA, UC Berkeley, NYU, Oxford, and Cambridge. Presently, she teaches creative writing at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design.

Unbidden Stories

Short Stories

113 pp.

Publisher: Hakibbutz Hameuchad

Year: 2024

Translation rights: World

Audio visual rights: World

Translation: Partial English by Dalya Bilu

Unbidden Stories is Orly Castel-Bloom at her finest. It is a multi-colored and vibrant book, full of momentum and imagination, witty and heartbreakingly funny in its articulation and observations. Castel-Bloom lets herself go wild, writing in her unique style that transcends all boundaries. Castel-Bloom doesn't tell us a story because she has something to say to us or wishes to lead us to jump headfirst into the water and draw conclusions. She does not force a general observation from a specific story or build a thesis around it. Her stories are not intended to declare something, but rather are aimed at acting on us: by confronting us with our behavioral clichés, full of corny phrases, and thoughts that our minds are so used to thinking – they aim to undo our weariness with ourselves, our alienation from ourselves, and lead us to perceive the dizzying absurdities of our everyday existence. Indeed, it seems that despite the "unrealistic" plots, we recognize ourselves and our surroundings in the stories and respond: "Yes, exactly, it's just like that!". How does she do it? How does she tear us away from our habits? The plot or the language progresses by transforming common and predictable situations into alternative situations, which are not too far from the space of our knowledge; The abstract and general are converted into the specific and concrete, and develop according to their inner logic. Thus, for example, when a war breaks out, and everyone wants to feel that they are involved, the situation manifests in a specific and concrete "bulimia" experienced by a woman that drives her to talk incessantly on the walkie-talkie; An obsession unfolds in the tiling of the Kishon and Yarkon rivers with Italian marble; A woman's happiness is transformed into her singing "Horah"; Firm speech is replaced with "I took out a hammer and a rolling pin

and pounded on the table”; And a boy who felt, for the very first time, that he was part of this world became the one who “hears a football game for the first time in his life”. In other instances, things are translated into an approximate equivalent: a woman who is supposed to witness the purification of river water during a drought sees that they “sharpen the water”, and when she longs to satisfy her hunger with a fried fish, it is converted into “she saw a giant fish sunbathing on a bench”. Added to this are dozens of snowballs rolling far and wide in amusing hyperboles, such as someone spitting like a man and “splashing the saliva in an arc straight into the sewer pipes, with the whole thing flowing through even bigger pipes, which connect to a stream that connects to the sea, which connects to ships sailing to Madagascar”. The main ploy used in the Castel-Bloomy texts is the realization of the metaphors and idioms and their transformation from language to reality, as in the story of a woman who thought “that she could take the law into her own hands, embrace it [...] and change its diaper and give it a good bath [...] like a lame wolf cub”. Thus, the plot turns from a smooth and predictable realistic sequence into a collage sparking surreal, colorful and vibrant sparks.

Critical Praise

Each story in this wonderful and original book is a unique lesson in humanity, humor, and self-reflection.
Etgar Keret

It feels as though the reissue of *Unbidden Stories* has arrived at just the right time. After all, the war that forms the backdrop for some of the stories, the desperation, the polarization, the characters' anticipation as they await a turning point, a game-changer that will suddenly alleviate their sense of suffocation - these are all familiar to us. Our place in time leads to a better understanding of the protagonists and the absurd situations, to empathy and bursts of laughter that, strangely enough, suits the book even more than they did when it was originally published in the 1990s... Castel-Bloom's linguistic antics come together with an undeniable logic. They do more than that. They shrink into a tight, fist-like insight. They hit the reader with sobriety, a kind of clarity... She excels at turning the concrete into the abstract, the abstract into the concrete, swapping adjectives for action and action for a rolling cacophony.

Daniella London Dekel, Yedioth Aharonot

Orly Castel-Bloom is well aware that everything is born out of contradiction. Her narrator climbs onto the cathedral of the story, dizzy and horrifyingly sober, she commands us: do not act like readers, do not treat this story as you usually do. Dive into it, head first... *Unbidden stories* transformed Israeli fiction. From then on, you've had to question: how does one write a story after Orly Castel-Bloom? It can be described as a collection full of narrative illustrations of contradictory situations. In each story, the protagonist - for the most part, and not without reason, these are women - encounters something very real and unbearable that does not fit her perception of reality. In each of these situations, the unbearable stems from a contradiction between the character's knowledge - knowledge in the broadest sense - and reality itself... In these stories, which are perhaps the most glowing literary expression of the age in which we live, there is no reality outside the labyrinth.

Rotem Ferger Wagner, Hamusach

Two unforgettable masterpieces by the groundbreaking author Orly Castel-Bloom: From the futuristic, fantastical Tel Aviv in *Dolly City* to meticulous realistic descriptions of the city in *Biotope*!

Biotope

Novel

Publisher: Hakibbutz Hameuchad/Siman Kriah

Year: 2022

233 pp.

Translation rights: World

Audio visual rights: World

Translations: Complete French translation by Rosie Pinhas Delpuech, Partial English translation by Jessica Cohen International Man Booker winner, Complete Spanish translation by Margalit Mendelson.

Books in translation: French: Actes Sud, Arles, 2025

Joseph Schimmel ought to have been a world-class expert in gastronomy in the work of Honoré de Balzac. But after failing to complete his doctoral dissertation, and being fired from his position in the Department of French Studies at Tel Aviv University, he finds himself almost destitute in his sooty Tel Aviv apartment. He makes a meager living from translations for new immigrants from France—clients of Sophie Ha-Ezrachi, a shrewd albino lawyer who built an empire on the backs of Jewish families seeking to settle in the Holy Land. Sophie, who only works at night to protect her skin from the cruel rays of the sun, sends Joseph in her place to meet her clients.

But the cruel rays of the sun are not the only risk for Joseph. One day, once again waiting at the airport for one of Sophie's families, Joseph meets a charming but shady businessman, who turns his world upside down. Joseph Schimmel follows the man—who lost his entire family in the Park Hotel terrorist attack—into an unavoidable collapse.

Biotope is an eco-urban novel that wends its way through the streets of a central Tel Aviv neighborhood. With sharp observations and the precision of a surgeon's scalpel, Castel-Blum analyses the lives of the homeless, the drug addicts, and the permanent residents populating the neighbourhood. The soot of the buses, the unfinished road works, and the daily bustle take on an original and new dimension in her prose.

Orly Castel-Bloom, one of Israel's leading writers, has already taken her place of honor in the canon of Hebrew literature, and is highly regarded around the world. Once again, she demonstrates her mastery of the Hebrew language with her unique inventive style, in a sweeping and brilliant novel that raises topical issues of loneliness, bereavement and morality.

Critical Praise

I read this book a few days after the recent Israel elections, and *Biotope* is a commentary on the outcome. The novel is about owning a home, exploring what it means to “own a home”—a central issue for the Right-wing parties during the election campaign. At the current time, at least, the book takes on an acutely political, even urgent character.

But this is still Orly Castel-Bloom, defiantly rejecting the didactic role of political or social commentator. One shouldn't expect ordered analysis or feigned seriousness from her. Her writing is unruly, precise in its perspective—and also very funny. She wilfully muddles the subjects being addressed, until it becomes impossible to distinguish one from the other. In essence, one cannot mistake her rhetoric...

As we know, a biotope is a space possessing distinct ecological conditions. Because it is limited, it can also be explored... The eponymous biotope of this novel is a specific area—and domain—in the center of Tel Aviv... a tiny, fascinating ecosphere...

Without quite meaning to do so, Castel-Bloom has written an extremely political novel... but *Biotope* is not a melancholic story; it is steeped in empathy, with kindness and humor. It engages with the Israeli obsession with real estate (and real estate prices). In our political climate, it's better to think about this phenomenon through Castel-Bloom's words than through the politicians' speeches or angry op-eds. Her brilliant new novel offers deeper insights than either of them.

Omri Herzog, *Haaretz*

A new book by Orly Castel-Bloom is cause for celebration. In *Biotope*, she scrutinizes, close-up, the Tel Aviv scene (not disconnected at all from what we describe as “the Israeli Experience”). The subject here is home, property, real estate—but also their complete lack: what it means to have a home, in the broadest sense of the word, as against what it means to not have a home, also in the broadest sense... Castel-Bloom’s writing, funny and smart and rich with irony as always, portrays a variety of extremely “Israeli” types...[*Biotope*] provides a lucid account, granular in its detail, of what we do here.

Shiri Lev-Ari, Calcalist

Joseph Schimmel—Francophile and loser, fired from his job as an adjunct lecturer in the university's failing Department of French Culture—is gradually shutting himself off from the world in his real estate achievement: an apartment in the heart of Tel Aviv slap-bang in the middle of an eternal traffic jam. Here he lives, protected by his precious belongings from the sights and smells of the polluted city.

Schimmel’s sole self-imposed task is “to live” with responsibility for the maintenance of the house, and all the contents of the house, which happen to include him. For Schimmel, home is the essence of existence: “What you have in life is what you have at home, the parking lot included.”

Biotope is a brilliant anatomy of the absurdities of “real estate identity,” a distinctly Israeli phenomenon vividly depicted here in the nuanced tones of Castel-Bloom’s poetics. Schimmel, who only leaves his apartment for essential tasks and to walk his adopted sort-of-dachshund, never strays further than nearby London Ministore shopping mall. Still, the countless colorful homeless people that he encounters—the richness of their character sketches a highlight of this book—are more than enough to feed his pedantic observations.

These homeless people, carrying with them mere fragments of a home—all that they own, in fact—become the pinnacle of real estate identity, precisely because they are constantly preoccupied with its negation. Ostensibly opposed to Schimmel, closer inspection suggests that they may in fact be a collection of his metaphors.

All these people enslaved by their properties (or lack thereof)—together with the tenants of the two nearby luxury blocks, who too reveal their own “tower” mentality – allow Castel-Bloom to document a series of clichés depicting the Tel Avivian “biotope”. But the meticulous realism of Castel-Bloom’s descriptions are accompanied by a wink of cheerful and surprising surrealism.

The book’s plot picks up when Schimmel begins to venture further afield, to acclimatize new immigrants from France to Israel; then shifts another gear when his Francophile identity merges with his identity as a landlord, Schimmel inheriting a house in Normandy. His life is soon overtaken by an extraordinary drama of deceptions, deriving from a political climate that gradually expropriates his assets, leaving him unable to connect to himself anymore.

But by the end, the incompetent anti-hero of *Biotope* has become an awe-inspiring character, his vicissitudes touching our hearts. And thanks to him, too, the novel joins the first rank of Castel-Bloom's unforgettable fiction output.

From the back cover: Prof. Menakhem Perry

Dolly City

Novel

Publisher: The New Library

Year: 2007

123 pp.

The novel was published in translation in 9 languages

Translations: English, French, German, Italian translations

and more are available. For details please contact us

Russian: Moscow, Knizhniki, forthcoming

Dolly City is one of the greatest novels in modern Hebrew Literature. A bright, witty novel, which mercilessly deconstructs clichés of motherhood and Israeli culture. The Israeli mother, the Jewish mother, and the relationship with the Land of Israel are all molded together into an empowering, funny, and hauntingly pervasive image.

Dolly, an Israeli doctor trained in Katmandu who lives in the dystopian Dolly City, finds an abandoned baby lying injured in a trash bag as she goes to bury her dog. Tending to his wounds and taking him into her home, she embarks on a deranged, anxiety-ridden journey of motherhood, as she constantly tries to repair and prevent invisible ailments and defects in her son's body.

First published in 1992, *Dolly City* quickly became a landmark of Israeli literature. The novel has been included in the UNESCO Collection of Representative Works; it was nominated in 2007 as one of the ten most important books published since the creation of the State of Israel, and in 2013 was named by Tablet magazine as one of the 101 Great Jewish Books in English translation.

Critical Praise

Dolly City is one of the best, most important works in the New Hebrew Literature. Here is the Tel Aviv of our most nightmarish fantasy, now so much more similar to the view from our windows. Here is the deconstructed myth of motherhood, redesigned and put under the most intelligent microscope to ever examine it. Here is the ultimate connection between a mother's love and love for the motherland, when Dr. Dolly traces the map of Israel on her son's body, because *we need to cut the flesh*: all the anxieties, all the strength of the emotional vortex we call 'love' is here, with a particularly high dosage of inventive language and visuals.

Ariana Melamed, Haaretz

[Castel-Bloom] takes all the fears and aggression of one of the most violent regions on this blue planet, wraps it up in an incredible and unique imaginative plot—in which the protagonist, a sadistic woman who conducts heartless experiments on animals in her home laboratory, finds and saves an infant who becomes the object of her obsession—and the result is literally breathtaking...Castel-Bloom's protagonist is competent and murderously ambitious...With every passing year, it seems the distance between the crazy grotesquerie presented in the book and the harsh reality in which we live is getting shorter and shorter.

Etgar Keret, Tablet

In the days when the word "motherhood" had an aura of sanctity in Hebrew, and every mother was required to report immediately after giving birth a sense of personal fulfillment and unconditional love, Orli Castel Bloom dared to do the unbelievable and write about the abysmal anxiety that accompanies parenthood, about the fine line between sanity and madness this anxiety leads to, and even about the harm we cause our children through seemingly innocent means such as devotion, ideology, and vision. Through the (seemingly) hallucinatory story of Dolly, who adopts a baby she found in a trash bag and devotes herself to his unceasing medical care, Castel-Bloom also touches on the Holocaust, the IDF, Israeli masculinity, Tel Aviv, women, and the stories of the Bible.

Dafna Levi, Israel Hayom

Kafka in Tel Aviv... From the first page, Dolly City establishes itself as a major text, an enterprise of systematic irregularity. It challenges one's senses and one's values, its sharp images putting one's nerves to the test.
(Le Monde)

Castel-Bloom's style... reminds us alternately of Hunter Thompson's new journalism, the hyperboles of Babel, and the fantastic style of Bulgakov. To use a more contemporary jargon: a mixture of punk, rap, and house... The author's professionalism ensures that it does not derail into a stylistic hodgepodge but evolves into a new and fascinating form which proves that literature as a metaphor of life is very much alive.
NRC Handelsblad (Holland)



Julia Fermentto Tzaisler

Julia Fermentto Tzaisler was born in 1984 and raised in Kfar Saba, a suburb of Tel Aviv. She has been heralded by the Israeli press as “a brave new voice” (*Haaretz*), and “if not the voice of her generation, then at least one of its chroniclers” (Prof. Eva Illouz, Hebrew University). *Safari*, her debut novel, was an Israeli bestseller. Her short stories have been translated and published in several languages. A journalist, essayist and critic, Fermentto Tzaisler has a Ph.D. in Jewish American Literature from UC San Diego. Julia Fermentto Tzaisler has been nominated Artistic Director of the prestigious Jerusalem Writers Festival at Mishkenot Sha’ananim.

Black Honey

Novella

46,000 words

Year: Forthcoming

Translation rights: World

Audio Visual rights: World

Translation: Partial English by Yardenne Greenspan and partial German by Gondula Schiffer

Talia Cohen-Kaplan is an Israeli expat living in New York. For over a decade, she has been struggling to complete her PhD in Hebrew literature at NYU. She is married to Daniel, an American-Jewish composer, and they have an 8-year-old daughter. We meet her in the midst of a crisis dealing with the emotional burden of a decade of immigration – as he yearns for her homeland, her language, and longs for the promises of the past. Her marriage is strained, her social ties are flimsy, and her career is stagnant - she feels lonely. Enter Efrat Shor, a mother of three from Tel Aviv, who calls Talia one evening asking her to visit Noam, her husband, who is hospitalized in critical condition, with whom Talia has an unresolved romantic past. The phone call, coming out of the blue, shakes Talia’s life up. She decides to travel to Tel Aviv to visit him, under the guise of a work trip, as she begins to weave a web of lies. Now, all these relationships are unraveling and being re-stitched; marriages, parenthood, homeland, and the unexpected relationship between Talia and Efrat. This is a story of two women and the surprising intersection of their lives.

Critical Praise

A story of life in exile, of longing for one’s homeland, and of taking a chance on love – or not. This novel is worldly-wise on the *Sturm und Drang* of living abroad and what gets left behind, an Israeli echo of Shakespeare, of the advice Polonius gives to his son – ‘to thine own self be true’.

John Irving

“Is it a novel about a love-hate relationship with two different countries or two different men? I would guess both, and that’s what makes “black honey” so erotic, powerful, and thought-provoking”

Eshkol Nevo

Exile

Novella

30,000 Words

Publisher: Achuzat Bayit

Year: Forthcoming in 2025

Translation rights: World

Audio visual rights: World

Rubi Yerushalmi is, or actually was, a filmmaker and high school teacher. After moving from his peripheral hometown of Nahariya to the big city, he became a well-known figure in Tel Aviv's fringe culture. We meet him as he celebrates his 44th birthday alone, on a secluded beach in a faraway country that he fled to after a series of sexual harassment incidents he committed two decades earlier became public. Lonely and terrified, he tries to reconstruct the stories and recall the women he harmed, revealing a bleak and complex picture. The second half of the novel focuses on Romi Heller, a young and beautiful actress who met Rubi at a club and went home with him. Even though what transpired between them that night was not illegal per se, it had a devastating effect on her psyche. The story follows her struggle in the weeks following that night. The novel reaches its climax when Rubi and Romi meet for one small and agonizing moment. Fermentto-Tzaisler's novel examines the boundaries of the 'gray area' in the relationships between men and women in the #MeToo era and sheds light on the psychological and physical implications of such encounters. She portrays the characters of Rubi and Romi with compassion and humanity, refraining from making moral judgments, and unfolds a groundbreaking novel that explores the perspective of a man grappling with the consequences of his actions in the #MeToo era and cancel culture, while also offering a new model for forgiveness and reconciliation.

In most #MeToo novels, the last word is always the woman's, and she is the only victim we are required to identify with, while here we follow - often with strikingly similar vocabulary (which leads to inadvertent empathy) - Rubi's terrible downfall as well. With a clever poetic use of different points of view, the almost symmetrical lingering on each of them, and a similar - while not identical - vocabulary in the description of the crisis, lies a thematic narrative in the depths of the seemingly simple plot. Thus the novel confronts us with culturally and politically complex story under the guise of a simple plot, and compels us to reexamine the contemporary par-for-the-course statements on the relationship between the sexes. Tel Aviv is a prominent character in the novel. Both protagonists move there from small peripheral towns, and both yearn to experience it fully, get absorbed in it and take from it whatever could assist them in constructing a distinct, independent personality and developing their talents. Tel Aviv is portrayed as a bustling Metropolis, dazzling and tangible, but at the same time as a desirable ideal only a chosen few get to touch. The novel allows us to linger in the great crises of the protagonists and thus procure a critical perspective on the values of the big city and how they are manifested. This is especially fascinating because both Rubi and Romi desire something very specific in the city: they treat it as the capital of ideas and creativity, a hub of artistic creation and spiritual growth. but right when they are finally able to reach these goals - a catastrophe befalls both of them. Meaning, the very thing they came for upheaves their lives and thrushes them as far away as possible. Thus, the understated criticism in the novel focuses on Tel Aviv as an essence and on the specific milieu that we - writers, editors, artists, curators and readers (including the readers of this novel) - live in and celebrate.

Critical Praise

In her novel [Kfar Saba 2000], Julia Fermentto sends two teenagers looking for their identity – in a land still searching for its own.

Die Welt

Despite the reader having a good idea where the plot is heading, and possibly because of that, it is hard to put the book down.

Haaretz

A new feminism in Israel, one that we know from “Girls” and “Wetlands”... but with forceful portrayals of sex and nihilism.

Süddeutsche Zeitung

The book’s insights are intriguing and delicate, and its satire convincing [...] her world is addictive, but not pleasant.

Yediot Aharonot



Saleit Shahaf Poleg

Saleit Shahaf Poleg is a writer, editor, and university lecturer. Born in 1977, she spent her childhood in Beer-Sheva, and her adolescence on a Kibbutz and in a Moshav (collective agricultural settlement) in the Jezreel Valley in Northern Israel. Shahaf Poleg has an MA in English Literature and Creative Writing from Bar-Ilan University, and has published short stories in leading Israel and international literary periodicals, in both Hebrew and English. In the summer of 2017, the Harrison NY Jewish Community Center's Short Story Club invited her to host a master class discussing her short stories.

Till it Rains Again, Poleg's debut novel, is an Israeli bestseller, topping the charts for weeks and is highly praised by critics and public.

All The Way from Oklahoma

Short Stories

160 pp.

Publisher: Shtayim

Year: 2024

Translation rights: World

Audio visual rights: World

Translation: partial English translation available

The Pontiac wasn't easy to drive but that's all they had and we took it. I become aware of the expressions on the faces of the drivers who swerve around me. They range from amazement to pity to fury. As one woman overtakes irritably, she turns back to yell, "If you don't know how to drive, go back to fucking Oklahoma!" and I don't even know where Oklahoma is. We're giving the state bad PR. There are days when I know that without Ami's love I won't survive more than twenty minutes, and on other days I shove away that love, ball it up like an unsuccessful draft and don't give it a second thought. But now Ami is in pieces, unconscious, and I have to keep going. We may need a doctor after all.

Four funerals and one grandpa who disappeared and refuses to attend his own funeral; A young mother who runs away from home and embarks on an intergalactic journey of self-discovery; A woman emerging from her old leather suit in a Kafkaesque story; A lively elderly woman in a heroic battle for life and death against a representative of a construction company coveting her home. These and others are the protagonists of the fantastical, wild, poetic, and amusing stories in the new collection by Saleit Shahaf Poleg, *All the Way from Oklahoma*. Saleit Shahaf Poleg burst onto the local literary scene with *Till It Rains Again*, her debut novel that garnered praise from readers and critics alike, and went on to win the Ministry of Culture's Publishing Award for a debut novel. The book became a bestseller in Israel and was published in German (Aufbau) and Italian (Neri Pozza).

Critical Praise

The stories are diverse and revolve mostly around female protagonists, even though the best story is about a man – a grandfather who, while dead, drags his family from cemetery to cemetery in four funerals taking place at different times, as he disappears and refuses to attend his own funeral, as he used to disappear all his life, leaving the grandmother worried and wondering where he is... It is clear that every story is different, and they are all very good. The logos of the stories, their essence, the overarching argument of the oeuvre, isn't

new; Shahaf Poleg walks in familiar paths of the Hebrew-Israeli prose. But the way she treats the material is original, the narratives are surprising, and her rare ability to control the story without it slipping through her fingers and refraining from drab and bland endings is fantastic and very impressive... The collection strives to depict an overall, feminine and feminist portrait of women across Israeli society. And the men? They are always passive, zombie-like, half-conscious at best and half-dead at worst, and if they happen to be alive, they are the subjects of ridicule and wit. The women want to rebel, but end up as bourgeois, her partner always at work or in the military... Shahaf Poleg manipulates the language, but not in a shallow, copywriter fashion but profoundly, in a thought-provoking way... all the stories possess some degree of creeping yet prominent Misandry, as a poetic leitmotiv... but it does not disturb the reader, since it is written with captivating grace... This argumentative side of Shahaf Poleg, manifested in the constant criticism of the opposite sex, doesn't obstruct the stories, but rather enriches them... The stories often reach towards the abstract and the fantastical... (but) Shahaf Poleg knows how to slide into the fantastic with nonchalant elegance.

Ran Yagil, *Globes*

Shahaf Poleg's stories tend to be sharp, precise and to the point. Some of them are based on situations she derives from reality – and then manipulates, distorts, rearranges and takes to the extreme height of absurdity – and the best among them hit the reader like a slap of a wet towel to the face. One of the stories, *Betty's Train Wreck*, deals with an elderly woman who leads a heroic battle against the representative of a construction company that wants to appropriate her property and build residential towers over it, and ends in an outburst of violence that may or may not have ever happened. In another story, *Just One More Time*, a woman follows her ex and his new partner with a determination not unlike that of the stalker from Netflix's *Baby Reindeer*. *Everyone Wants Me Dead* is, as its name suggests, a display of paranoia that echoes the events of October 7th.

Ronen Tal, *Ha'aretz*

Here she is at it again Shahaf Poleg – back winking at us, like the protagonist of one of the stories who, even though no one is actually trying to eliminate her, trying to console her son during a missile attack, as he asks, ““Why is everyone trying to kill us?” while avoiding a hug (but any of her readers open to it to won't miss the narrator's hug). “Sweetie, don't take it so personally,” she whispers to him. It's funny, but it's clear to her that this war simply cannot be taken impersonally. Or not to take it too seriously, as Shahaf Poleg asks us to do most of the time between the lines. It is possible, and even recommended, to laugh in the face of death, as some of the characters in the stories do... How wonderful it is to discover that death doesn't really change the order of things... Shahaf Poleg's protagonists interact with death, but most of them harbor a great passion for life, and some are hungry for change. Like in the story *Lizard Tongue*, named after an unwanted kiss initiated by a particularly dubious brother-in-law, they even launch the *Theater of Life*, which is nothing but a morbid and absurd show that wizzes around a cemetery on a mobility scooter... Shahaf Poleg has sympathy for people who try their hardest and insist and get excited and despair in every Israeli city... Israelis whom everyone is trying to eliminate, and even the routine of everyday life may kill, but before that happens, they will eliminate everyone else themselves... Death is funny, so we laugh.

Yaron Fried, *Ma'ariv*

The small, petty calculations that we all constantly make, are made sharper and clearer by Shahaf Poleg. She deconstructs love, and does so many times over throughout this excellent collection, at different points in time, in different contexts, with an unfamiliar perspective... Poleg's boundless imagination is wild and exciting; existence is a theater of death filled with dark humor. With malicious madness, she scorches moments of insanity and terror, creating cracks in the fabric of her protagonists' lives, turning them into cruel, swallowing sinkholes. Threads of fate and karma stretch across time, change lives, determinedly cutting through the flesh. Everything seems friendly and polite, but in fact, it's destructive and deceptive... But for Saleit Shahaf Poleg, in every defeat there is a victory, and in every victory there is a bit of defeat.

Ran Bin Nun, *Yedioth Aharonot*

Till it Rains Again

Novel

Publisher: Shtaim, Publishing house

Year: 2021

235 pp.

Translation rights: World

Audio visual rights: World

Translation: Partial English and long synopsis

German rights sold (Aufbau, Berlin)

Italian rights sold (Neri Pozza, Milan)

Winner of the Ministry of Culture award for debut book 2021

Yaeli Shteinman returns to the village that she had promised never to set foot in again. She is carrying her unborn child, its future already overshadowed by uncertainty and fear. Gali, her sister, has returned from Canada. She is to be wed, she thinks, under the grapefruit tree in the backyard of the family home; but the groom is not showing up.

It has been twelve years since it last rained, twelve years since the family secret was exposed. Now, the past is threatening to haunt them once again.

In a valley defined by strife, in one of the first of Israel's revered collective agricultural settlements, three generations of Yael's family must face the consequences of the secret locked up in their attic for decades—and other secrets, even more terrifying, passed like a heirloom from generation to generation. As the family drama unfolds, the villagers struggle with the rain that refuses to fall. Farmers clash over the little water left, even as their crops are superseded, slowly but surely, by soulless real estate.

In *Till it Rains Again*, Saleit Shahaf Poleg details with humor and irony, but also with compassion, a portrait of what remains of the great Zionist settlement dream; a story played out by some of the most colorful and unforgettable characters of contemporary Israeli literature.

Critical Praise

Poleg tells the story of the history and ideals of the Zionist settlement dream over generations in a polyphonic, witty and energetic manner.

Litprom, Best World Literature of 2023 List

Saleit Shahaf Poleg's debut is nothing short of a great Israeli generational and social novel.

Elle

A mature and sophisticated novel... superbly crafted in terms of plot and structure, its gaze and its voices, its universe and its characters... an impressive debut by a writer who enters the arena of Hebrew fiction with a confidence, offering the readers a multidimensional artistic and emotional experience.

Haaretz

Excellent constructed from beginning to end... Shahaf Poleg succeeds in creating a multi-generational mythology of authentic Israelis, rooted and replete with Zionist ideals, slowly being abandoned through a despairing process that one cannot tear one's gaze away from... Shahaf Poleg's [book] has a rich and sophisticated plot full of revelations... a book with rhythm, fun to read.

Yediot Aharonot



Orna Landau

Orna Landau is an Israeli author, book editor and publisher. Her previous books, for both adults and children, some of which were translated into other languages, enjoyed critical acclaim and became bestsellers. *Last Stop Paradise* - written and published less than eight months after the October 7th attack, while the war continues to be waged and the same government remains in power - became a topic of conversation, controversy and inspiration.

Last Stop: Paradise

Novel

255 pp.

Publisher: Shtayim

Year: 2024

Translation rights: World

Audio visual rights: World

Translation: Partial English and long synopsis available

"Why are you doing this?," she hears Jonathan's voice, and he is irritated. "Because someone has to," she replied. Those were still the days after [the tragedy], and the construction of the wall had just begun. On the TV news, experts debated the danger, but men and women appeared on talk show panels and spoke of a new-old region that needed to be redeemed and settled, and praised the pristine beauty, and the land crying out for farmers. She and Jonathan sat in their living room, and she said to him, "Look, it's just like the old days! They even speak differently. Who says 'redeeming the land' or 'crying out' any more" And he said, "You pay too much attention to words."

After the calamity later known as "what happened", Shira, a somewhat famous writer, decides that if she stays home, sitting in front of the television, she will surely explode from anger and hate. So she gets into her car and drives south, where people like her, nostalgic dreamers, come to make the desert bloom, cultivate and revive the forsaken land as well as themselves, and under the shadow of a great wall, start everything anew. As always, they come with the best intentions. But where will they lead them this time?

Last Stop: Paradise, a book written in a frenzy after the Hamas invasion of Israel on October 7th, is a powerful tale of love and loss, longing and despair, and the remnants of hope. Original and poignant, it re-examines Zionism's somewhat naïve myths and heroes, effortlessly floating in time and space, to tell a tale that is at once very specific and even intimate, and yet truly universal.

Critical Praise

Orna Landau's book *Last Stop: Paradise* deals with the painful reality of war, and offers much more than a lament or a political vision; It is a work that touches, in clever and inventive ways, the heart of our existence after "what happened", and flows naturally between genres and mixes times and spaces, reality, fantasy and legend... "On the day the wild drones came upon them, and then the thunder bombs, followed by the all-consuming fire, and everything that happened and earned the name 'what happened', she stopped writing." Sometime after the end of the war, the heroine Shira, who lost her son in the war, her daughter and perhaps her husband - decides to rebel. To maintain her sanity, and not to be swept away into the peace offered by the "protective government" with the "protective leader"... The solution that Shira finds to escape the emptiness

of chaos is a renewed fulfillment of the pioneer Zionist vision and its values: working the land, the collective, settlement of the border areas. She moves to the southern district of Kalaniot, to the settlement of Paradise, located near what is called “the wall”. After the war ended, “there is nothing” behind the wall, as the leader said (if so, why is a wall necessary?), maybe only jackals and rats and alligators, howls (of children? weapons? owls?) maybe even demons. No one knows what is or isn’t beyond it, because the wall is a symbol of separation not only between populations (us and them. The Gazans?), but between the “sane” reality and some repressed, hideous and infected thing... Beyond the impressive stitching of political reality, the book’s charming quality is the elusiveness and fluidity between times and places, between reality and fantasy, which gradually transform each other, gradually blur. The Israeli past, present and future thus become a continuum, in which the ideal and the prose, the disasters and the redemptions are used in a distinctive mixture, in a way that does not lead to firm conclusions; On the contrary, the wild combinations are what give the book its uniqueness as a multi-layered work, and at the same time flowing and readable.

Prof. Hana Hertzog, Israel Hayom

Following a national disaster, the nature of which remains unclear until the end of the novel, Shira decides to leave her home and husband in Tel Aviv and move to the Kalaniot District. In this district, located on the outskirts of the country, there are three settlements... Shira’s desired destination is the settlement called Paradise. Paradise is a kind of kibbutz or community where a group of older individuals try to revive the early days of Zionism as they once were... Shira parks her car in the Paradise parking lot, deposits her phone at the reception, and joins the group. She wakes up early every morning to work alongside everyone else, occasionally dances at the lively evening dances where these new pioneers find solace, converses with Aharon David, the spiritual leader of the group whose words she drinks thirstily. She befriends some members of the group and is wary of others. Will Shira be able to ease her pain? The memory of the national disaster? The memory of the personal disaster that befell her and is related to the fate of her son Uri (the exact nature of which remains unclear almost until the end)? Will the new pioneers succeed in recreating the early days of Zionism? Its enthusiasm? Its faith? Its defiance?... As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that something has indeed happened in the novel’s reality, something similar to what happened on October 7th. As a result, a wall was erected between us and the other side (although no one knows exactly what happened on the other side until the end). The leader tightened his grip on the people and placed all responsibility for the disaster on the military. Somehow, those who joined the group yearn for renewal through agricultural work, yet exactly how they will be able to achieve this goal, remains unclear... One thing, though, is clear: the novel was written out of deep concern and care for Israeli society. We are in a time of crisis, and everyone who loves and is tied to Jewish-Israeli civilization is called to action... In a quarrel between Shira and her husband Jonathan, Jonathan argues that “all that ‘Zionism once more,’” as he called the renewed settlement in the Kalaniot District... seems outdated and ridiculous to him. “You can’t restart Zionism any more than you can be a virgin again,” he says. In this argument, in which Jonathan loses hope and contemplates emigration, I side with Shira... The desire for a home does not have a statute of limitations. That is, the desire for a society, a language, a culture, and a piece of land where you feel at home. In the epilogue, Landau discusses the urgency with which the book was written following the events of October 7th... It offers important testimony to both the deep fracture we are currently experiencing and to the fact that people who care about the future of Israeli society are considering radical ideas for healing it.

Eric Glesner, Yedioth Aharonot

This is the first Israeli novel to address October 7th, which is referred to in the novel (either directly or as a very similar disaster) as “what happened.” In the story, the State of Israel “still exists, at least partially, despite what happened”... Shira, who is a writer, and Orna Landau, who is the author of this novel, draw on significant influences to sharpen the message. For example, Brecht... Brecht may be speaking about something that happened in another place, at another time, but the connection to the here and now in Israel is clear... Even without Landau revealing in the acknowledgments that “I realized that I would not find redemption unless

I could, out of the hatred and anger, the despair and mourning, build something new” – it is unquestionably clear that this book comes from the depths of those burning emotions and that unfathomable wound... Readers are required to decide whether the new paradise, depicted in vivid colors with a wall at its heart, is a dystopia or a utopia. And whether hope is lost, or the opposite is true. Assuming that all answers are correct makes the story both beautiful and heartening... The impossible yet inevitable duality of existence, both before and especially after “what happened”. And since Sartre is also invited to the party, and Shira recalls that hell is other people, perhaps this is the duality of existence itself, wherever it may be... This book is one enormous immense scream, which remains a scream even when whispered or implied, and even in the poetic moments that some characters deem unnecessary... The sense of urgency in the story propels and guides it well through bold paths that lead to a satisfying ending, in the non-ingratiating sense of the word, amid all the difficulties and obstacles surrounding it... Landau’s literary scream... is important and necessary, so long as Israel continues to exist.

Yaron Fried, Ma’ariv

Shira, the protagonist of Orna Landau’s novel, is a true heroine: in a reality of total despair, she carries a solitary flag of hope, driven by an almost desperate determination to do everything possible to transform her hatred and anger into something else, and to be reborn as a person with purpose, meaning, and a future... Landau conveys this terrifying sequence of events in an informative, simple, almost indifferent language, a tone that heightens the atmosphere of dread that pervades the novel. One of her notable stylistic choices is to begin many chapters with the same sentence: “Fields lie far and wide, from horizon to edge”, the opening line of the song *The Wheat Grows Again*. The recurring line is read differently each time - with wonder, hope, and later boredom, sadness, and emptiness - and it develops into some kind of background music for the book.

Tsilil Avraham, Ha’aretz

A marvelous book of powerful prose. Landau has succeeded in capturing the spirit of the times in Israel after October 7th, with captivating characters with philosophical depth. Weeks have elapsed since I read it, and the book remains with me.

Sahrah Blau, author and journalist



Yoram Rosner

Born in Israel (1961), Yoram Rosner practiced electrical engineering until discovering that he was more interested in people than electrons. He turned his professional life around, running a well-known user experience design agency while writing novellas and novels. *Weltmeister* is his first published work.

Weltmeister

Novel

Publisher: Kinneret, Zmorah-Bitan, Dvir

Year: 2023

382 pp.

Translation rights: World

Translations: Partial English translation available

Climate change sparks a catastrophic heat wave in Israel, fostering political and social unrest in numerous cut-off towns.

Fires engulf the small town where young professor Dan Gidron lives with his wife, Eleanor. Dan is a stern man of few words, the son of a war hero (or, as some would say, war criminal), and Eleanor is a sharp-witted TV personality. Trapped with them in the same house is Dan's assistant, a gentle young man who is hopelessly in love with Eleanor.

As flames approach the town's houses, the terrified residents split into two camps: those who demand to be evacuated and those who are determined to stay. Dan hopes to unite everyone under his leadership but is challenged by a charismatic and violent resident. This thug humiliates him in public and takes over the town with the aggression, divisiveness, and incitement that only utter chaos can cause.

Dan's facade of masculinity cracks when confronted with this blatant cruelty, while his indecisive assistant gets the chance to be a hero in his own right.

Critical Praise

In his debut novel, Yoram Rosner succeeds in describing the protagonists' sense of helplessness, the collapse of the social order, the point when the intense heat outside starts to seep in - and leads to a complete fusion between reality and delusion. And as the temperatures rise, the writing itself becomes wild, sometimes grotesque... Through these three representations of masculinity raise a discussion on the question of "toxic masculinity" and the toll it takes, both on the environment and on the men themselves... This is a mature and powerful book, which combines concrete descriptions with episodes of stream of consciousness and a unique use of language. The intense emotional impression it leaves, and the dilemmas it raises, are expected to accompany the readers for a long time

Eyal Hayut-Mann, Israel Hayom

Rosner's novel is on fire, and the reader, mesmerized by the fire, unwittingly gets closer to it with every page he turns in this exciting book.

From the back cover: Oded Volkstein

Like a self-fulfilling prophecy, Yoram Rosner describes in an original and surprising new novel how a calm situation transforms in an instant and burns everything, and how out of a heated climate arise tyrannical leaders... The climate change is present in the book. Everyone sweats all the time, and the air conditioners and fans don't always help. In such an extreme situation, extreme phenomena also develop...Another central theme in Rosner's novel is masculinity. There are three types of masculinity here: on one end of the scale the bookish student Asaf, out of a job and single; at the other end the emotionally disabled, serious professor, while the one who breaks the scale is the masculine and violent Stud. Only towards the end of the novel is it possible to understand who the "real" man actually is.

Shiri Lev-Ari, Calcalist



Shachar Magen

Shachar Magen is an Israeli author, screenwriter, and director. After graduating from the Tel Aviv University School of Film and Television, he worked as the editor of Ynet's culture section. His first novel, *Black Slaughter*, was published in 2006 and nominated for the prestigious Sapir Prize. He is the director of the documentary films *The Mother of the Gevatron*, *Life Stories*, and *Strange Death*. Magen is the creator and main screenwriter of the drama series *Exposes* and *The Prime Minister's Children*, and a screenwriter for Hagai Levy's series *The Accursed*.

In 2014, Magen's *Sirens*, a three-season thriller, was released. In 2020, his series *The Possessions*, a French-Israeli collaboration, was first aired on Canal Plus and Yes TV. The series was co-written with Valeire Zanatti, directed by BAFTA-nominated Thomas Vincent (*Bodyguard*), and shot in French, Hebrew, and English. It was dubbed best TV series by Syndicat Francais in 2020 and aired on HBO Max. Magen's second novel, *Land of the Monasteries*, was published in 2023 and is currently being adapted into a television series. Magen has been selected by the Goethe- Institute Israel and the Brandenburg Ministry of Culture for a three month residency fellowship at Schloss Wiepersdorf, in Fall 2024.

Land of the Monasteries

Novel

Publisher: Achuzat Bayit

Year: 2023

333 pp.

Translations: Partial English translation available

Adaptation into a TV series: to be screened in Fall 2024 - a Hot and Paramount co-production

In a quiet town by the Dead Sea, a man dies in a seemingly accidental mine explosion. But when similar deaths accumulate, Tze'ella, a local woman, concludes that they cannot be coincidental.

Tze'ella is a forty-six-year-old single woman living in the town. She becomes increasingly enmeshed in her own private investigation and develops a wild theory that loneliness caused the deaths, until she herself disappears.

Tze'ella's sister, Netta, is determined to find her. The deputy commander at a women's prison, a city dweller, and a mother of two, she is the opposite of Tze'ella's dreamy reclusiveness. The more pragmatic sister, she has her own ideas about what is at the heart of the mystery. But the more Netta learns about the life led by her missing sister and the strange practices of her hometown, the more menacing it becomes.

Set in the mysterious Land of the Monasteries, where the Bible says the prophet Elijah ascended to heaven and John baptized Jesus, the novel is an exploration of loneliness—a taboo in contemporary Israeli society. Through suspenseful storytelling, loneliness emerges as a rich and even beautiful feeling that operates powerfully in the relationship of the two sisters.

Critical Praise

An E-vrit website bestseller

The stirring, powerful ending of *The Land of the Monasteries* is a literary achievement . . . an unexpected and even outrageous ending—yet it leaves you with the feeling the story could not have ended otherwise . . . an unforgettable peak.

Omri Herzog, Haaretz

A sophisticated literary creation and the ability to handle a thick web of characters, giving each one its unique and complex role in the story.

Ron Dahan, Yedioth Aharonoth

This is a very intelligent book, moving and readable . . . it deserves be longlisted and shortlisted for literary prizes.

Udi Ben Saadya, Walla

With his stirring and thought-provoking writing, Magen takes the reader into mystery that becomes gradually resolved—or entangled.

Smadar Shiloni, Ynet

A delightful suspense book that is also a philosophical meditation.

Maya Levin, LaIsha



Galit Dahan Carlibach

Galit Dahan Carlibach was born and raised in Sderot, Ashdod, and Jerusalem. She has published three novels and two YA books. Her poems and stories are regularly published in local and international journals. Her literary achievements have been highly praised over the years: the ACUM Prize 2013, the Prime Minister Prize for Hebrew Writers 2014, a scholarship for the International Writing Program in Shanghai, the Fulbright Foundation Scholarship for the International Program in Iowa, and the Pardes Scholarship by the Israeli National Library for Young Writers. Her book *The End of Alice* (Zmora Bitan) was longlisted for the 2017 Sapir Prize. Galit Dahan Carlibach has been selected by the Goethe-Institute Israel and the Brandenburg Ministry of Culture for a three

month residency fellowship at Schloss Wiepersdorf, in Fall 2024.

Under the Sign of Orphan

Novel

Publisher: Achuzat Bayit

Year: 2023

258 pp.

Translation Rights: World

Audio visual rights: World

German rights sold (Kein und Aber, Zurich, 2025)

Translations: Complete German translation by Ruth Achlama, partial English and long synopsis available

Under the Sign of Orphan is about a redheaded girl and a mysterious crime. It tells the story of Avital Ohayon, an orphan with a love of books — particularly books about orphaned boys and girls. Avital was raised by hard-up and hard-hearted grandparents in Lifta, a quaint Arab village on the outskirts of Jerusalem. She drifts through Jerusalem's streets and its social margins and wanders from the lights of the city center through slums and unsavory jobs into an abbey in the Old City. Avital, a redhead whose beauty captivates men, searches constantly for the father she never knew. When a former Mossad agent, Ahituv Porat, suddenly takes her under his wing, Avital's life seems about to change, and – just like in the stories she loves to read – she stands on the verge of discovering her father's identity.

But life in Jerusalem in the early 2000s refuses to resemble a glittering myth. Despite the luxury and the security that Ahituv showers on Avital as she becomes part of his family, his motivations are mysterious and his reason for taking an interest in her remains a mystery. Ahituv's family is powerful and established, the offspring of Israel's heroes and titans: the kind of family Avital wishes she had. But the primal crime — linked to questions surrounding Avital's birth and her mother — comes to the surface, changes the balance of power, and reveals the Porat family's true face. Where will Avital's destiny lead her next?

Avital is an unforgettable heroine. The tale of her life, from her birth to her emergence as a woman, reminds us of the famous orphans of classic literature. The plot swivels repeatedly: We worry for the heroine while also admiring her strength, and we hope that the unprincipled and hypocritical characters will be punished. Dahan Carlibach's writing is bold, shifting between wild imagination and sharp cinematic insights into reality. Avital's engrossing story sinks deep into our hearts; with each sentence we sense her pain. This is a suspenseful, heartbreaking, and romantic book that is impossible to put down.

Critical Praise

Orphanhood is a recurring theme in Galit Dahan Carlbach's books. The fact that in this novel she again succeeds in saying something new about it proves that she is a gifted writer.

Tamar Mishmar, Yedioth Ahronoth

A novel full of twists, with a mystery at its center solved in unexpected fashion... Dahan Carlbach has written a riotous and unpredictable novel.

Omri Hertzog, Haaretz

A well-written novel with a truly brilliant, rich, and authentically portrayed world... highly recommended

Yaron Avituv, Makor Rishon

Her best book, starting 2023 with this book was an unsettling experience for me... a must-read, the writing is singular.

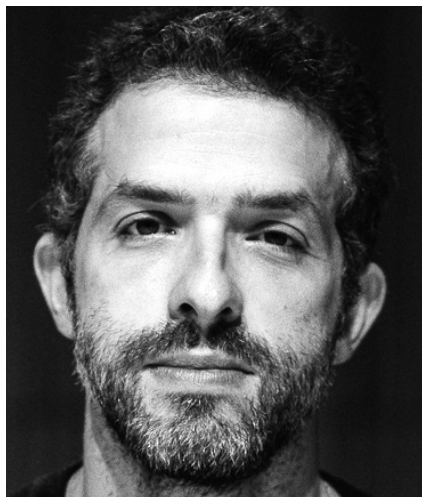
Shay Amit, Channel 14

It is such a pleasure to read a book so intricately made, where each particle connects to another in the bigger picture... add to that a suspenseful plot and you have Galit Dahan Carlbach's new novel.

Maya Mizrahi, Epoch

It's poignant, it's gloriously beautiful, and I wholeheartedly recommend it.

Iris Ganor, Blogger



Omer Meir Wellber

Omer Meir Wellber (b. 1981) is one of Israel's leading conductors of operatic and orchestral repertoire. Music Director of the Teatro Massimo Palermo and Artistic Director of the Toscanini Festival, he has since 2009 served as Music Director of Israel's Ra'anana Symphonette Orchestra. Wellber is also the incoming Music Director of the Volksoper Wien. He has worked with some of the world's most prestigious orchestras and is a regular guest conductor at the Israeli Opera.

A long-standing association with the Semperoper Dresden culminated in Wellber's appointment as Principal Guest Conductor between 2018 and 2022. Chief Conductor of the BBC Philharmonic between 2019 and 2022, Wellber gave his inaugural concert at the BBC Proms in July 2019. Other career highlights include serving as Music Director at the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia in Valencia between 2010 and 2014, and assisting Daniel Barenboim at the Berliner Staatsoper Unter den Linden and Milan's Teatro alla Scala between 2008 and 2010.

Wellber is a Goodwill Ambassador for Save a Child's Heart, an Israeli-based NGO that provides critical cardiac medical support. He works with various institutions on a range of music outreach programs and is a passionate champion of the emerging generation of Israeli conductors.

The Absences of Haim Birkner (Die vier Ohnmachten des Chaim Birkner), Wellber's first novel, was published by Germany's Berlin Verlag in 2019, and by Sellerio Editore in Italy in 2021 (Storia vera e non vera di Chaim Birker). The French translation has been published in September 2022 by Éditions du Sous-Sol/Le Seuil. *Die Angst, das Risiko und die Liebe - Momente mit Mozart*, which explores the emotional context of the three Mozart/Da Ponte operas, was published in Germany in the spring of 2017.

Forgiving Cain

Novel

Year: Forthcoming

Translation rights: World

Audio visual rights: World

In a closed Soviet town in the late 1980s, two classmates play a cruel game that ends in disaster when one of them, who is disabled, falls into a freezing river and dies. When knowledge of the gruesome event reaches his townsfolk, the life of the killing boy, Arthur, is changed forever. He is sent to a corrective facility and two years later his family is forced to leave the country. They decide to immigrate to Israel, where years later Arthur becomes a famous actor in Tel Aviv. As the rehearsals of Shakespeare's *Richard the third* intensify Arthur suffers from violent rages that he is unable to control but that would lead him eventually to find his forgiveness.



Michal Ben-Naftali

A renowned awarded writer, outstanding scholar, translator, essayist, and literary editor, Michal Ben-Naftali was born in Tel Aviv in 1963. She studied history and philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and received her PhD in contemporary French philosophy from the University of Oxford.

Between 2006 and 2014, Ben-Naftali edited “The French” series for Hakibbutz Hameuchad publishing house, and presently edits a contemporary Israeli literature series for Afik Publishing. She also teaches literature and creative writing, at Tel Aviv University and Ben-Gurion University.

Ben-Naftali has published novella collections, memoirs, a novel, short stories, and collections of literary essays, as well as numerous articles on literature, philosophy, and art for publications in Israel and abroad. She lived in Paris for several years; her translations from French to Hebrew include works by Jacques Derrida, André Breton, Marina Tsvetaeva, Maurice Blanchot, Julia Kristeva, Esther Orner, Annie Ernaux, Didier Eribon and Michelle Debords. In 2008, Ben-Naftali was awarded a scholarship for translators from the French Ministry of Culture, and in 2013 was writer-in-residence at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies. Prizes for her literary work include the *Haaretz* prize for Best Literary Essay of the Year (2008). Her novel, *The Teacher*, won the 2016 Sapir Prize, and the 2019 Adei Wizo Prize in Italy. In 2018, she was appointed Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres by France’s Minister of Culture, for her contribution to the enrichment of the French cultural inheritance. Her book, *A Dress of Fire*, was shortlisted for the 2019 Sapir Prize and published in French by Actes Sud, Arles, and in English by Open Letter, Rochester, USA.

For Michal Ben Naftali’s previous publications please check our complete catalogue.

The Anarchists

Novel

Publisher: Pardes

Year: 2023

210 pp.

Translation rights: World

Audio visual rights: World

Translation: Complete English translation by Gabriel Levin available

After teaching as an adjunct at Tel Aviv University for twenty years, Yael loses her job. Lonely and unemployed, she decides to organize a reading group unlike any other. The six women in her group begin engaging in secret anarchist activity inspired by Tzipora Perlman, the mysterious right-hand woman of Jewish-American anarchist Emma Goldman, whose journal came into Yael’s possession under suspicious circumstances.

The Anarchists moves across different periods in Yael’s life in a pendulum swing of times and perspectives, depicting each milestone with astounding clarity—milestones that are also existential crossroads of the Israeli experience: her military service in the far north, studying at a seminary for the newly religious in Jerusalem, and her academic life in Tel Aviv. Yael’s captivating story is weaved throughout with versatile and fascinating portraits of the reading group participants and historical figures, each mirroring Yael’s experiences.

The novel falls like a ripe fruit into the circumstances of our present time. Questions of identity and the comforts of belonging become more urgent than ever, until at times the book seems to suggest that the only

means of authentic survival is literature itself, or in the words of a poet Yael invites to speak at her military base: “an open flower whose petals never close.”

Critical Praise

Michal Ben-Naftali masterfully weaves an intricate plot that contains mystery and suspense, a little bit of humor, and a lot of beauty.

Tamar Mishmar, Yedioth Aharonoth

In its fierce perspective, tender language, parting from familiar paradigms, and refusal to please, *The Anarchists* follows its protagonists' resistance performance: a public aesthetic action that does not submit to rational and utilitarian edicts, resists interpretation and leaves its witnesses to wonder at its meaning.

Yoana Gonen, Haaretz

The Anarchists is an elusive book that requires patience and does not coddle idle readers—it has long and restless paragraphs, twists and coincidences weaved with the charmed and threatening elements of fairy tale, and reflective musings that seem to repeat themselves in a spiral movement insisting on accuracy, on touching the wild root, on exposing the raw wound—and it is a worthwhile effort, even if it does not lead to salvation. It is a poignant, breathless creation.

Jacob Goldberg, Mako

As in her previous books, Ben-Naftali offers us not the dramatic rebellion, but the minor one. Her anarchism is a desire for undoing that is not the already-doomed desire to undo the social order, but to undo the integrity of the spirit, of temporal progression, of the stable boundaries between one woman and another, of the presumption to clearly know the soul.

Orit Neumeier Potashnik, HaMussach Literary Magazine

An enigmatic, fascinating, reluctant leader in which everything comes together—feminism, queer culture, and anarchy. Michal Ben-Naftali once more created an iconic character of a mentor for life, and perhaps even beyond.

Editor's Choice, E-vrit



Tamar Weiss-Gabbay

A writer, editor, and screenwriter, Tamar Weiss-Gabbay writes for both adults and children. Co-founder and editor of the leading Israeli literary journal HaMussach, her novella *The Weather Woman* received the prestigious Brenner Literary Prize, 2022. In 2024 it has been published in Italian by Giuntia and was met with rave reviews. The novella is now being adapted into a television series by HSCC.

Her picture book *Tali Under Table* (Kinneret Zmora, 2020) was the Winner of the prestigious Dvora Omer award (2021), her book *The Thank You Tomatoes* was shortlisted for the Jewish Children's Book Award (2022) and her picture book *Just an Empty Field* (Kinneret Zmora, 2022) was

shortlisted for the Sasa Settone award (2024).

Her children's books *Tali Under the Table* and *Just an Empty Field* were both selections of the PJ Program, with 120,000 copies distributed in kindergartens and preschool facilities across Israel. The PJ Program published special limited editions of both books in Spanish and Portuguese. Her Children's book *Kidstory - A Million and a Half Years of Kids' History* (Kinneret Zmora, 2024) was published in German by Fischer Verlag.

Weiss-Gabbay has initiated a number of literary-social projects, including The Israeli Women Writers' Forum, The Street Libraries in Jerusalem, Two: A Bilingual Project for Arabic and Hebrew Contemporary Literature, and others.

The Weather Woman

Novella

Publisher: Locus Books

Year: 2022

91 pp.

Translation rights: World

Audio visual rights: In adaption into a television series by HSCC

Translation: Complete English translation by Jessica Cohen, Man Booker International prize winner

Partial German by Anne Birkenhauer, complete Spanish translation by Margalit Mmendelson.

Italian rights sold (Giuntina, 2023)

The first part of the novella The Weather Woman was translated into English by Jessica Cohen, and published by Two Lines Press in the anthology Elemental in March 2021. It has since been developed into a TV script.

An isolated town, perched on a cliff overlooking a canyon in the middle of a desert. Changing weather patterns and worsening floods mean imminent peril for the town and all its residents.

The novella follows the fate of three protagonists: a charismatic teacher, who stands bravely against the forces of nature; his daughter, the local weather woman, whose prognosis for the town's survival is bleak and counsels abandonment; and her niece, slow and unambitious, sent to live in the town to attend a special education program, a final chance to set herself right.

Basking in her aunt's status as the saviour of the town after predicting the deadly floods, the girl tries hard to make the best of the opportunity she's been given. Beneath the surface though, charged emotions are threatening to pull the family apart. Seeking to impose his authority on the forces of nature, the father initiates construction of a giant pipeline to divert the flow of the next flood, into the canyon below.

The weather woman fears the arrogance of her father and his followers. Their belief, that they can bend nature to their will, can only end in hubris and loss, she fears. And so, the battle lines are drawn...

In *The Weather Woman*, Weiss-Gabbay personifies the all-too-real extreme manifestations of nature as characters in her fiction, channeling them into a complex and engaging relationship with her human heroes and villains. *The Weather Woman* is a sweeping, topical story, with unforgettable protagonists who will work their way into the reader's heart and mind.

Critical Praise

A must-read reflection on our relationship with nature, on the infinite and controversial attempt to tame it using culture.

(Marco Filoni, *Venerdi*)

The second chapter is truly dizzying and daring... A man who asks for help becomes a man who calls for his mother, then a man who is no longer a man but a form of life, and an elementary form at that. A journey backwards. And a mystery: that of an end which - perhaps - will resemble a beginning.

(Marco Archetti, *Il Foglio*)

It's hard to think of a more "political" text... than the novel *The Meteorologist* by Israeli writer and screenwriter Tamar Weiss Gabbay... In this microcosm... Weiss Gabbay precipitates worries which only apparently concern man's relationship with nature, but that in fact question the meaning of existence itself and our perception of ourselves as part of an interconnected, multiple, plural space... with extreme grace and equal determination, along with the irreducible capacity of narrative to question the world as we know it, the novel helps us imagine it together with the others.

Tamar says: "This is why nature is not just rocks, floods and gazelles: it is everything, perhaps it's the only thing. And it includes ourselves, even if we try to deny it. Then try to find your place in nature, in your habitat, among all animals and elements (including other human beings) around you, means trying to understand your place in the world - and this is truly an internal position. And all this affects you too when you sit in front of your computer on the third floor of a building in a busy city, far away from what is considered «nature»"... Above all, I wanted to free [the protagonists] from many other roles; giving them a name would have forced them to identify with a specific nation, culture, history and perhaps even a religion. I tried to peel all these layers off the story to thus represent the characters: humans and other animals who share a space and take on roles with each other... Consciously or unconsciously I was inspired by some events I witnessed or of that I heard about. One is the Tzafit River disaster, in which in 2018 ten young people were killed in a flash flood when their teachers urged them to take unnecessary risks. Then there is the story of Yohana, a gazelle that entered my heart: once freed it never found its place neither in the pack, nor among humans. All her life she was torn between her identities. As I think happens to all of us... Naturally, as a young author raised in the canon of men's literature, I wanted to put my story ahead of that famous (and beautiful) by Hemingway and say: here's how I tell it. Each of the three characters brings with it something that belongs to me, I see myself in each of them and I don't consider them "good" or "bad". But I put a young girl at odds with the old man catching a fish (and in contrast with Hemingway, who was himself a hunter) because I believe that young women may have new stories from bring into this world... In fact, [the meteorologist] thinks we are already leaving. Whether we like it or not, we are part of a network and we are very dependent and fragile, and it is difficult to draw the lines between that what is "us" and what is not "us". This applies to both the germs in our body and for those of our neighbors. It is an illusion to be separated from what surrounds us, to manage it and use it only for our needs. Even if we succeed for a short time, in the long term our well-being depends on the well-being of others. Of all creatures... I think you can read it even as relating to the history of Israel. After all, I think that in my country the approach towards nature is also affected from History and its different phases. When your connection with the earth, with your physical habitat, is questioned again and again, you struggle to find answers to these questions

and to demonstrate your connection to that place. Sometimes you can't afford to have doubts. You can't always ask yourself: which one is the form of my relationship with the place itself? Is it a relationship of property? Does being tied to a place mean modifying it for our needs? Growing fruits in the desert? Travel anywhere and at any time, despite difficulties and problems? Can we live in it without owning it? Can we only be another part of our habitat, one of the others? Can we share it? Will it still be our habitat if won't we control it?... This is a terrible time. But when it comes to authors, I hear many say that they find their words have lost meaning and I'm still looking for a new language. This reminds me of the old story of Etgar Keret, where says that when someone has an asthma attack, every word that he can say it matters more than usual - in moments like these it is there a huge difference if you say «I love you» instead of "Ambulance!". So I hope that more and more people here are able to say and write something more than «Ambulance!». But as long as we all bury our dead, worry about young women kidnapped and for children dying of starvation, and have to care for thousands of displaced people both a Gaza than Israel, I understand that it's hard to expect... May there be enough pain for everyone today. We can recognize our horrible suffering and yet want the suffering of others to end. This is how I feel: my heart and the my mind goes to all those who suffer. I cry together with my relatives and friends for their terrible losses, and I can't stop thinking about what Palestinian families are experiencing. You can't fix an evil with another evil, and this applies to both parties. I am very concerned about the many opinions that seem unable to support an overall approach that treat everyone equally... Maybe we really need a leader like my weather woman, someone who can see all the creatures they share the same living space and desire to truly act for the good of them all. But we also need a leader that has more faith in the future than the weather woman, who doesn't see a way to solve the problem she is facing. If you think about it, this leader it should look more like the girl trying to save a gazelle even if she is told that this action is useless.

(Guido Caldiron, *Il Manifesto*)

The story takes place in a desert... but while the desert is the backdrop to the story, it matters little which desert it is. The desert is a bit like the ocean: a space so large and absolute that it sucks every other place into itself, that it becomes like the synthesis of every other place, even internal and not just geographical... And in all this, which happens far beyond the contribution of each individual life, an author like Tamar Weiss Gabbay knows how to weave her story, knows how to place the embryo of her idea and embody it inside a desert as in a womb, so that it utters one's cry... *The Meteorologist* is indeed a woman outside the box, an adventurer at the service of nature and man, who was the first to achieve something that no one would have ever expected in that remote desert... And by a woman, no less! The heroic exaltation of this femininity devoted to an hermitage dedicated to the desert constitutes the moral interweaving of the whole story... A heroine returned to the town to save it, with all the messianic impulses attached to such a powerful description... The intrinsic poetics of the text supports the emphasis of this only apparently meteorological mission, transforming every prediction into an oracle, grasping vague signs in the sky without destiny, however, being able to remain grasped by it... The whole book revolves around the unknown ethics of expectations, those that come from outside voices and those that arise - much more pressing - from within the soul. The meteorologist experiences the daily anguish arising when her predictions do not come true: a Cassandra in reverse, where the problem is not that she is not believed, but that she does not believe herself, or that she believes too much in the value of what others would like to believe, in their expectations... There are, of course, also readers' expectations. At the beginning they are all focused on the book, and its 95 pages which could be all or nothing; in the end each reader turns them on himself, because those 95 pages worked, and well too. Leaving within us, perhaps, the space of a providential desert, of a remote sound of breaking waters, and of a distant East wind which we do not know whether it brings rain or drought, and which perhaps is our very soul.

(Nuccio Puglisi, *Lucia Libri*)

The challenge that *The Meteorologist* faces is to remind us that the presence of us human beings on Earth, with our organization, the mania for measuring, sheltering, leveling streets and fields, domesticating, mapping - is not necessarily well-liked. That our entire existence is, in reality, a continuous concession

by the soil that hosts us... That our entire existence is actually a continuous concession from the soil that hosts us... In the book "natural life and interior life mix in a game of alliances, references and symbiosis. In some respects the novel is very reminiscent of another beautiful and poetic recent one, *Pain is a Thing with Feathers* (Max Porter). Because animals and nature are not only what is other than us, the foreign body that tells us the simplest and purest aspect of our existence, but they are also symbols and metaphors to signify what we sense but cannot explain: life.

(Francesca Coraglia, *Il Librario*)

The Meteorologist is a magical book. Of the world from which she comes, i.e. the screenplay, the author borrowed both the ease of language and the respect for time, and dictated, in this case, by a prose that is heated yet expertly kept at bay. Especially when the first disagreements start between the meteorologist and her neighbours, because "people only hear what they want to hear". .. Suddenly, the meteorologist understands that "her whole body was not suited to that place, it didn't feel like her own, it did not recognize the winds, the clouds, the animals" and it is from this point in the story onwards that the novel becomes a tale of the double. The protagonist, in short, is a woman who left without ever actually leaving and, returning home, realizes that home means everything and nothing. It might seem like a tongue twister, but in reality it's everyone's condition; we all wander around the world in search of ourselves and, in doing so, only create our own double... the leitmotif of the entire story is precisely the sense of challenge: expectations versus reality, man against nature, stray dogs against gazelles but, above all, a sort of all against all which becomes a boxing match with oneself. It has to be said that, despite the nuances of the plot are at times distressing, Tamar Weiss Gabbay manages to keep the reader on the razor's edge thanks to a calibrated prose... Earth and the human beings who inhabit it, occupiers and occupied, nature and carelessness, in short, are the true protagonists; above all that nature which warns us, even brutally, that we are all, everyone, immigrants and guests. If it doesn't suit us, the narrator tells us, we should go back to where we came from.

(Maurizio Fiorino, *La Repubblica*)

The book describes a dystopian but contemporary, very current world in which the climate represents a sort of obsession for the inhabitants of the city, their greatest fear, to the point of rejecting dire predictions of imminent disasters, deluding oneself into thinking we are able to influence nature through weather forecasts. Weiss Gabbay's story is striking, and not so much for the indisputable relevance of the topic, as for the intelligent and original way in which it is approached. The author, who also writes texts for children, takes the reader by the hand and leads him page after page, leading him to open his eyes, building an exemplary allegory on the complex relationship between man and nature. It is (explicitly) not a book about the climate crisis, the concept itself is never mentioned in the novel, and it's not even clear whether the protagonists, in their imaginary world, are aware of the depth of the crisis and its consequences, yet the plot and characters are immersed and influenced by it. And it is not even an environmentalist manifesto, but simply a story with a tight and precise rhythm, where the author abstains from sermons and moral, alluding, however, to the need for a profound change in individual and collective perspective in order to face the ongoing crisis. This short novel offers readers a vibrant snapshot of one of the greatest contemporary concerns; with an original narrative choice, it stages the danger of man's defeat in struggle with nature but also with himself; proposes a Greek tragedy ending but also a (possible) catharsis, the idea of a possible future to a new relationship between man and nature.

(Francesca Santolini, *La Stampa*)

three generations (toledot) who demonstrate the difficulty of responding to other people's expectations and question us readers on the most complex themes of life, death, decline and rebirth... In the book the natural and interior lives of the protagonists compete for the narrative space "in a game of alliances, references and symbiosis". But, in the writer's opinion, nature, who hosts and tolerates the presence of man, not always respectful of his rhythms, is the true protagonist of an agile and fast novel which however requires a slow and concentrated reading... "*The Meteorologist*" is a novel that surprises, excites, overwhelms and gives us,

with a prose with a calibrated rhythm, imbued with nuances that are sometimes imaginative and sometimes disturbing, a powerful reflection on our relationship with Nature that we would like to tame to the needs of ephemeral profits. A must-read book to remind us that "our existence is, in reality, a continuous concession by the soil that hosts us" and that, making use of the tools of culture, we must learn to respect and love it for our own survival.

(Georgia Greco, *informazione corretta*)

How much time is contained in a few hours? All. And this is what Tamar Weiss-Gabbay delivers to us with her *The Meteorologist*. Time is measured, analysed, evaluated, convoluted, unfolded, predicted, recalled, photographed in snapshots that change and distort before our eyes like color dripping onto a canvas. In every fragment of the book there is hidden, intertwined on itself in the space of a few hours, all the time that the protagonists have lived, live and will live and it is the writer's ability to let these intertwined threads emerge without confusing the reader and, indeed, making each interconnection that is revealed clarifying for the text as a whole. The line of the present is grafted with references to the past and glances at the future thanks to which the experiences of the characters merge and confuse each other, mirroring each other in a continuous exchange of details used to intertwine the identities of each one in a single collective experience that merges the natural with the artificial, the human being with everything that surrounds him, literature and lived life, physiological time with that of memory... The world of *The Weather Woman*, in fact, does not know the nominal, but it is not missed. None of the characters are marked by a proper name, the only words used to draw the figures that move between the pages are functional and have to do with the actions they carry out or with the relationships they form with others which therefore give them the role, the position, that they occupy in the moving puzzle that is gradually forming, tile after tile. She is the woman of the time, of her time, who can know and spread the future one step away from everyone else. An almost prophetic figure in some ways... A modern Cassandra, who lends her mouth to the forces of nature, fatally forced to remain silent or lie to be believed, not in control of her predictions of which she cannot be completely certain, but for which she must carry the responsibility with her. Or as a sort of Christological figure who sacrifices herself at the end of her literary story for having embodied, in some way, the spirit of the times of her era ... Each of these parts dialogues with the others in many different ways starting from the fact that they are three different generations who consequently embody three different ways of perceiving and relating to the world, time, space and the environment that surrounds them: Tamar Weiss-Gabbay skillfully uses all the imaginative methods that a literary composition makes available to intertwine the inside with the outside, the past with the present and the future, to confuse the natural kingdoms into which the world is conventionally and anthropocentrically divided, to flow constantly, with the same oscillatory movement with which the tide moves, from literature to life and vice versa.

(Luna Piccioni, *Fata Morgana*)

Then came *The Weather Woman*—a clever and agile Israeli novella, embroidering an exemplary allegory about the complex relationship between man and nature. This is not a book about the climate crisis; the concept itself is not mentioned in the novel, the characters do not deal with global warming, and it is not even clear that in their fictional world there is awareness of the depth of the crisis and its far-reaching consequences. This is not an environmental manifesto, but simply excellent prose, in part because it deals with the environment without making abrasive statements about it. *The Weather Woman* is a powerful book in part because the climate-environmental issue is not pushed forward; the plot, and the characters are simply steeped in it and organically influenced by it...

Every sentence in the book is symbolic, denoting something else besides. Everything is loaded with meaning beyond the plot and the words themselves; everything says something about the power balance at the core of the book, which makes reading it a kind of layered and enigmatic game. Reading *The Weather Woman* requires vigilance, but is also able to generate pleasure and curiosity. Everything in this novella is tight and precise. There are no unnecessary words, no overflowing descriptions. Weiss Gabbay sculpts with Hebrew as if with damp clay, and also places in the story references to other works—to films, belles lettres, the Bible—

some implicit and some direct. 'The relationship between man and nature' is a big, pretentious theme, but the novella itself is modest, and avoids preaching as is the way of good works of art. The change will take place through the heart... It evokes a sense of a one-time event. The Weatherwoman is a timeless and clever parable, one that deserves to become a significant landmark, in both the environmental and the cultural sense.

Haaretz, September 2022

This journey should begin with a travel warning: while small in size, The Weather Woman is powerful in its literary dimensions [...] Its ninety pages present an engrossing, original, and concise plot that lingers on after its last page.

Gilit Chomsky, Makor Rishon

It's a surprise and a pleasure to come across such a book, that wanders away from the magnet of Tel Aviv and all the bourgeoisie troubles; with a plot that unfolds in a rock-carved canyon, rather than in a big shopping mall; with deers, eagles, and wild dogs supporting characters, set against mountains and changing seasons.

Maya Becker, Haaretz

Weiss-Gabbay's writing maintains a sensible edge, even as it strives toward an optimistic and peaceful vision in its allusions to a fascinating intellectual-literary proposition: that changing our relationship with nature may bring with it a literary change—not only in the way we read our classics, but in the composition of all masterpieces of the future.

Keren Dotan, Israel Hayom



Ilana Rudashevski

Ilana Rudashevski is an Israeli author, architect, and urban planner. *Taska*, her debut novel, was a critical and commercial success in Israel, receiving glowing praise in the local media. Her short stories have been published in various Hebrew literary magazines, winning a number of literary honors, including first place in Haaretz's prestigious short story contest.

Rudashevski lives in Jerusalem with her family.

Taska

Novel

Publisher: Shtaim

Year: 2022

255 pp.

Translation rights: World

Audio visual rights: World

Translation: Partial English

Taska is an untranslatable Russian word that captures a sense of inexplicable melancholy, longing, and nostalgia. This elusive feeling is at the heart of Ilana Rudashevski's debut novel—an instant bestseller that received enthusiastic responses from readers and critics alike. Following an immigrant family from the Soviet Union to Israel, *Taska* relates a migration story that is witty, poignant, and entirely new.

In the early 1970s, Max and Sophie leave behind their beautiful home and loved ones and immigrate to Israel with their two daughters. They know that they may never see their family and friends again, but are nevertheless driven by a persistent urge—part ideology, part survival instinct. Once in Israel, they settle in a utopian tiny community on the Egyptian border—only to be uprooted again when the Sinai Peninsula reverts to Egyptian control.

Present-day Israel. Sophie is dead; her elder daughter Elka, an urban planner in Jerusalem, is caught up in a bribery scandal. Even though she has lived in Israel since her childhood, the affair confronts her with cultural rifts that have been running beneath the surface all the while. At once earnest and ironic, nostalgic and disillusioned, Elka traces her family's story—and the sense of indistinct longing that is inseparable from immigrant life.

Critical Praise

Written with charismatic skill uncommon in debuts, diving into [Taska] is emotionally and conceptually rewarding.

Omri Herzog, Haaretz

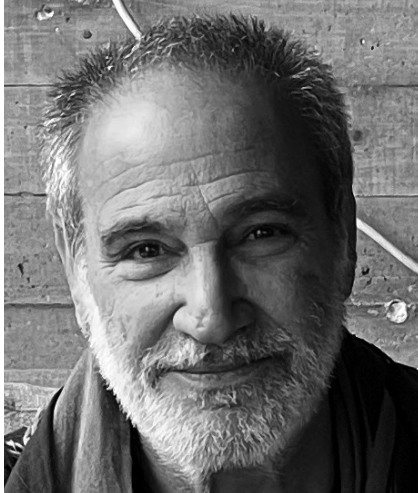
Composed with confidence, with a humor typical of modern Russian literature, [Taska] moves elegantly between times and continents.

Shiri Lev-Ari, Calcalist

Rudashevski moves between life and death, past and present, childhood and old age, hallucination and hard-core reality (a misconduct affair), with the skill and grace of a sophisticated author.

Yaron Fried, Maariv

N o n - F i c t i o n



Sharon Rotbard

Sharon Rotbard (b. 1959) is a Tel Aviv-based architect, author, activist, educator, editor, and co-founder of Babel Press. He is currently serving as Senior Lecturer at the School of Architecture of the Bezalel Academy, Jerusalem.

Among his books: *The Refuseniks' Trials* (Hebrew, 2004), *White City, Black City: Architecture and War in Tel Aviv and Jaffa* (Hebrew, 2005; English edition 2015), *Avraham Yasky: A Concrete Architecture* (Hebrew, 2007); *Neither in Jaffa, Nor in Tel Aviv* (Hebrew, 2009), *The War of Streets and Houses and other Texts about the City* (Hebrew, 2021).

White City, Black City

Non-fiction

Publisher: Babel

Year: 2005

352 pp.

Translation rights available: World excluding Polish

Audio visual rights: World

Translations available: English, Russian, Polish

Rights sold: English UK (London, Pluto Press, 2015, 2025), English US (Cambridge MA, The MIT Press, 2018), Russian: Moscow (Ad Marginem Press, 2017), Polish: (Warsaw, Wydawnictwo Filtry, 2022)

This is the story of two cities, historical Jaffa and modern-day Tel Aviv. Tel Aviv is the 'White City,' said to have risen from the sands of the desert, acclaimed worldwide for its Bauhaus-inspired modernist architectural heritage. Jaffa is the 'Black City,' the Palestinian city that was largely obliterated to make way for the new European-style architecture that dominated newly formed Israel. Israeli writer and architect Sharon Rotbard offers a rare insight into the politics that underpin the narrative of the White City, and how architecture has been used as a political tool. Both a gripping narrative history and a unique architectural record, this deeply moving book shows how any city in the world is built not only of stones and concrete but also of stories and histories – victors and losers, predator and prey. In this way, the legend of the Black City and the White City, architecture and war, is our story too.

Critical Praise

Landmark book.

The Architect's Newspaper

White City, Black City still reads like a fresh and necessary corrective – in parts like a slap in the face – mostly due to the fluent urgency of Rotbard's prose...One can only read Tel Aviv-Jaffa's streets with more open eyes..., with a more sober a tread, with Rotbard's book in hand.

Barbara Mann, Quest, Issues in Contemporary Jewish History

"This book by an Israeli architect and historian focuses on the construction of Tel Aviv's 'Bauhaus Style' city centre in the 1930s, for which it was awarded UNESCO World Heritage Status. Rotbard reads these mostly

speculative white-walled apartment blocks (almost never by actual Bauhaus-trained designers) as a reaction against colonial architecture which ended up being the most colonial city building project imaginable, designed to circumvent, then to consume and subjugate the adjacent Palestinian city of Jaffa. This often ugly story is told with tact, subtlety and through some particularly seductive images of this Weissenhof-on-Levant.

Owen Hatherley, *The Architectural Review*

Challenging modern architecture from another direction was Sharon Rotbard's *White City, Black City* (Pluto), in which the much-admired "Bauhaus"-style houses of Tel Aviv are attacked as agents of the colonisation and impoverishment of the Arab city of Jaffa. These works of progressive European intelligence, he argues, are actually instruments of conquest. Taken together, Rotbard and Hatherley show the relationship of buildings to politics to be a slippery but nonetheless vital aspect of architecture.

Rowan Moore, *The Guardian*

"a responsible, sharp, critical project, in which Rotbard reads the Zionist representations of Tel Aviv... written with a political and esthetical responsibility: not only in relation to his discoveries, but also in relation to the censored political story of the Tel Avivian landscape, that its false signs are freedom, secularism and progress. Rotbard demonstrates how the cultural imagination marks its narrative on the place, and more important from this, he draws a straight line between the fiction of 'the flourishing of wilderness' and the actual contemporary violence that is supported upon it.

Omri Herzog, *Ha'aretz*



The Violence of Architecture in Israel

Nonfiction

80,000 words

Year: Forthcoming

Translation rights: World

Audio visual rights: World

Translations: English and Hebrew available

Although many architects may agree with Martin Buber's assertion that "Architecture is nothing but the humanization of space," architecture often displays, expresses, and perpetuates violence. This is especially evident in Israel, where architecture has been systematically instrumentalized and even weaponized to create new political realities on the ground. In Israel, architecture is a continuation of politics by other means. Since its fictional inception in Herzl's 1902 novel *Altneuland*, Zionism has consistently presented itself as a grand building project. "Building the Land" has been one of Zionism's principal directives. "We came to this land to build it and to be built in it!", sang Herzl's readers as they arrived in Jaffa, hoping to contribute to the building of a new national home for the Jewish people.

The mainstream historiography of Israeli "Adrichalut" (the Hebrew word for "architecture") has shaped a narrative that aims to unify the various Israeli-built artifacts into a cohesive story composed of a few carefully selected moments that align with Western architectural history and timeline: from the pre-modern Mandatory architecture of the 1920s, through Tel Aviv's White City in the 1930s, to the Brutalist architecture of the 1950s and 1960s, or to the post-modern architecture of the 1980s. However, to fully appreciate this de-contextualized narrative, one must set aside not only historical texts but also current events. This narrative avoids its darker counterpart: inherent in the vast project of "Building the Land" is the destruction of that same land, the massive displacement and eviction of populations, land expropriations, planned discrimination and institutionalized criminalization of non-Jewish constructions as well as the ongoing demolition of homes, villages, and

cities. More critically, this narrative implies a tacit understanding: architecture in Israel is a privilege reserved for Jews only. This is a new political history of architecture in Israel/Palestine, told from within, in the first person, that is primarily addressed to my Palestinian students.

Critical Praise

(On *White City, Black City*): Landmark book.

The Architect's Newspaper

White City, Black City still reads like a fresh and necessary corrective – in parts like a slap in the face – mostly due to the fluent urgency of Rotbard's prose... One can only read Tel Aviv-Jaffa's streets with more open eyes... and a more sober tread, with Rotbard's book in hand.

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A responsible, sharp, critical project, in which Rotbard reads the Zionist representations of Tel Aviv... written with a political and esthetic responsibility: not only in relation to his discoveries, but also in relation to the censored political story of the Tel Avivian landscape, with its false signs of freedom, secularism and progress. Rotbard demonstrates how the cultural imagination makes its narrative mark on the place, and more importantly, draws a straight line between the fiction of 'the flourishing of wilderness' and the actual contemporary violence that it supports.

Omri Herzog, *Ha'aretz*



Tamar Berger

Tamar Berger (b. 1957) is an Israeli writer and architect. She has published four books and dozens of essays, many of them focusing on topical aspects of Israeli society and culture. Berger is also a senior lecturer at the *Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design*. Berger's essay writing is both narrative and documentary, phenomenological and conceptual, and has a loyal readership in Israel. Two of her books were adapted into plays and one served as the thematic backbone of a recent documentary. Berger's first book, *Dionysus at the Center* (Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1998) is a cultural, political and familial archeology of the site of a mall in the center of Tel Aviv, a history that encapsulates to a great extent the Zionist-Palestinian story. *Dionysus at the Center* was adapted into a

play and staged by the Ruth Kanner Theatre Group (2004). It also serves as the thematic backbone of the documentary *The Centre* (producers and directors: Kobi Faraj and Morris Benmayor, 2023). Berger's second book, *In the Space between World and Play* (Resling 2008), combines a series of essays illuminating, from varied angles and points of view, various manifestations of the model – actual and conceptual – in Israeli culture, also discussing them in their larger contexts. *Autotopia, Suburban In-between Space in Israel* (Hakibbutz Hameuchad 2015) describes the major spatial phenomenon of the past few decades in Israel: the process of suburbanization that is creating a new post-urban landscape. The book follows typical road-trips in the suburban space, that are heavily dependent on the car, describing and analyzing the localities it creates and also discussing its general social, cultural and political aspects. Berger's most recent book, *Aside: Residual Spaces in Israel* (Hakibbutz Hameuchad 2022) is a cross-section of Israel's phenomena of residuality, both social and physical. Using terms such as dis-order, marginality, ruin, periphery and others, the book leads its readers from landfills to unrecognized Bedouin villages, detention centers, industrial ruins, impoverished neighborhoods, drosscapes, archeological sites and Palestinian ruins, eventually leading to the gradual ruination of the aging (female) body.

Aside: Residual Scapes in Israel

Literary Nonfiction

231 pp.

Publisher: Hakibbutz Hameuchad

Year: 2022

Translation rights: World

Audio visual rights: World

Translation: Complete English translation by Michal Sapir available

Tamar Berger (author of *Dionysus at the Center*, *In the Space between World and Play* and *Autotopia, Suburban In-between Space in Israel*) wanders through the remnants of the Israeli landscape, both social and material, exploring the places and people that have been marginalized or distanced: waste sites, peripheral settlements, prisons, ruins, and finally the aging body. In her personal essayistic documentary style, she describes the places she observes, introduces the men and women she encounters – whose presence is often powerful – and analyzes the phenomena she describes within their broader conceptual contexts. Berger's essayist documentary writing and rich literary style, integrating description and analysis, the concrete and the general, make *Aside, Residual Scapes in Israel* a unique reading experience, sweeping and intriguing at one and the same time. The book won great critical acclaim in the Israeli media. *Aside, Residual Scapes in Israel* was adapted into a theatre piece and staged by the Ruth Kanner Theatre Group (2023)

"The City Beach", in Kibbutz Ha'on, Sea of Galilee. The rain is getting stronger. There is no one at the site. The old high-water mark, marked by stones, is now a meter or two above the water level, and the pier stretches across dry land.

Carefully marked parking lots, umbrellas along the waterline, white tent cubes with fringed awnings, caravans securely placed on a sandy lot, a large central tent, shelters and seating areas, and patches of grass. Everything is set up for hosting. Suddenly, a loud voice booms from a cabin at the edge of the compound: 'Come have some coffee!' Menachem the Great, overflowing in a white plastic chair in front of a white plastic table, greets us without moving from his spot. Rafi, standing beside him, is sent to put toilet paper in the showers and water on the gas. Menachem talks. He's from Poriya and runs the site. 'Come, it's cheap and informal.' His father was a career soldier, and he's a collector. He points to his vintage collections: radios, a fan, an alarm clock, a rifle, a Primus stove, a whistling kettle, a wooden saltshaker, glass jars, and sends us to see the fire truck standing outside, a trophy from Syria. The rain is now pounding fiercely on the cabin roof. A large black jeep approaches. A man in his fifties steps out. 'A shell-shocked veteran from the First Lebanon War', he declares at the entrance and comes in, 'hospitalized with all sorts of pills at Tel Hashomer hospital, got out to open up'. And falls silent. Everyone is silent. Then he rolls a cigarette and goes out to smoke in the downpour.

Critical Praise

Tamar Berger's new book is a reminder of the power of theory to change the way we view the world. Berger takes her readers on a journey to what is shoved into the backyard of the social order or discarded there; a journey through spaces, sites, and to the people we turn into 'trash'. Berger's journey begins with a reading of Bialik's story *Behind the Fence* - much of which takes place in a fenced-in no-man's-land - and then moves from fiction to a very real Israeli space, to the backyards of Tel Aviv buildings, to the sites where our trash is sorted and buried, to the people and communities living nearby, to sites of isolation and imprisonment. It ends in nursing homes and with a reflection on the final burial site - the cemetery. Over the course of Berger's journey, a completely new map of Israel emerges; not the familiar map of historical sites, nor the current map of restaurants or entertainment venues, but a map of exclusion and marginalization, revealing the connections between what Israeli society turns into trash and the people it pushes to the margins.

Dror Mishani, Ha'aretz

It is that same attraction to the marginal, the peripheral, to the power dynamics within Israeli society, that has guided Berger in her previous books... Here, Berger sets out on a journey across Israel, exploring the landscapes of the remnants, a journey where "every cracked stone wall", every "decomposing green plastic sheet" and every "rat carcass" carries a much larger story - social, political, economic, historical, architectural, aesthetic. The choice to conclude the book with a beautiful chapter on the aging body, and especially the aging female body, as a site of marginalization, of shame and degradation, is intriguing. "And against the plundering and destruction of the body's collapse stands the factory of repair", Berger writes, hinting that, like the factories in Haifa Bay, the skin and graying hair are also a political issue.

Maya Beker, Ha'aretz

This book is of critical importance in the local academic space where so few dare to delve into the margins of society, certainly not as impressively as Berger has done here. The text is beautifully written, in rich Hebrew that turns even didactic statements and dry data into pure poetry... *Aside* offers a thorough examination of the darker corners of Israeli life that are obscured from view and from the heart - digging into our trash, unrecognized villages, neglected industrial areas, ruins (mostly of silenced Muslim history), and almost everything that is intentionally hidden... Berger's virtuosic, elastic and varied language, her immense wisdom and ability to delve deeply into topics while casually referencing facts and data, alongside the seamlessly presented multidisciplinary approach, the breadth of cultural scope, and her unique perspective on the physical and mental periphery - all of these could have created one of the most beautiful prose works written in Hebrew; One that deserves to stand alongside Agnon, Bialik, and Uri Nissan Gnessin - three writers Berger mentions in her book as she skillfully analyzes their texts... Bright conceptual diamonds, like the final chapter - the most beautiful chapter in the book, perhaps because it deals with the human body rather than geographic space, and perhaps because it is the most personal subject in the book, as Berger describes her own body, with the signs of time clearly evident on it.

Neta Ahitov, Ha'aretz

Dionysus at the Center

Literary Nonfiction

240 pp.

Publisher: Hakibbutz Hameuchad

Year: 2009

Translation rights: World

Audio visual rights: World

Translations: French translation by Rosie Pinhas-Delpuech (Actes Sud, 2009); Partial English available

Dionysus at the Center unravels the intricate story of Tel Aviv's Dizengoff Center mall, from the days of the Jaffa-based Hinnawi family who owned the land, through the Nordia shack neighborhood and the controversy over the evacuation of its residents, to the construction of the current shopping center initiated by Aryeh Pilz, and up to the horrific Purim bombing in 1996. Through her captivating literary writing, Tamar Berger weaves a delicate tapestry of critical observations on the Center's story. As we follow its history, she reveals the political, economic, architectural, and literary aspects of the complex archaeology of the site, which serves as an exemplary intersection of Israeli urban culture and life in Israel in general.

Critical Praise

Tamar Berger's work is worth stopping to consider. It lies at the intersection of different fields and sciences. Let's start by saying that it is an archaeology of memory... Today, [Tel Aviv] is "the bubble," the city in a state of effervescence and light, the exact opposite of the somber Jerusalem, overrun by fanatics and obscurantists. The cliché isn't entirely false, but the writer doesn't engage in a glorification of the city. Yes, "writer" seems the appropriate term to describe the author who, in presenting her book, highlights its poetic dimension: knowing that it's above all a story of human beings - their houses, their objects, their memories, their dreams, their current disappearance - it will be told through names. The author draws from Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin to account for the metamorphoses of a piece of land, and by extension, the entire city. *Le Spleen de Paris* and the famous *Arcades Project*, Benjamin's reflections on the flâneur or the prostitute, the references to the transformations of Paris initiated by Haussmann, serve as her guide. There's nothing new under the sun, especially not the scorching sun that crushes the White City... One could say that the story of Dizengoff Square is that of the defeated: those who sold land for nothing, land which has since increased in value tenfold, those who lived there in poor, even disgraceful conditions before being evicted, those who haunt the shopping center, its basements, its floors, fugitive children and homeless people, Palestinian clandestine working illegally in the city, and prostitutes who are never seen except when the police find and chase them away. It is also a Balzacian story, a tale of ambitious and victorious individuals, businessmen and cunning schemers, hiding behind a form of insignificance, living in ordinary apartments, without seeking splendor or ostentation to never expose themselves to criticism or arouse curiosity. Tamar Berger tells all this in nearly 350 fascinating and always enlightening pages, without ever letting anger or indignation show.

Norbert Czarni, *La Quinzaine Littéraire*

In telling us the history of this district in the cultural and economic capital of the country, Tamar Berger deciphers with us the palimpsest that every city fundamentally is. However, telling the story of the heart of Tel Aviv is also telling the story of the construction of the State of Israel, or rather questioning the conditions under which it was built. What was covered up and replaced in the process?

Natalie Levisalles, *Liberacion*

Here is an example, the first of its kind in Israeli literature: a genealogy of a site, written in the form of a panoramic continuum of personal observations, emerging out of historical, political and social insights which could be called neo-Marxist... and one happy idiosyncratic dream in the epilogue... certainly not just for academic consumption, but forming, surprisingly, an overwhelming, fascinating and wonderfully readable patchwork.

Ha'ir

Dionysus at the Centre is a new and fascinating kind of Israeli literature/fiction. Its language is very clear, its standpoint (and assumptions) well-reasoned and its philosophical ambition will not prevent those who are not versed in this philosophy from reading it.

Tarbut Ma'ariv

This complex framework creates new insights and surprising angles that could not be achieved through regular historical writing nor through the conventional form of the novel. Citing Walter Benjamin, sharing the belief that “nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history”, Berger turns to the denied and repressed elements, out of empathy for the characters, integrating themes that are usually studied separately.

Ha'aretz

This is the way to build the story of a real place, with actual people who are not elegant illustrations of historical generalizations. There are few books that try to tie the “small” history, the everyday experience of ordinary people, with the “big” history, which is made of “historic moments”, through a radical perspective. It is radical in the Israeli context, since it refrains from the usual reduction of the history of a place to that of our place, our community.

Ha'aretz

T h r i l l e r s

Nilly Assia



Nilly Assia is an author, a lecturer and a marketing executive with twenty years' experience in the high-tech industry. A mother of four, she loves art and live rock concerts, and is addicted to detective books. *The Aya File*, *The Odeski File* and *The Double Files* are the first books in her suspense series featuring police officer Liora Dgani. Both are Israeli bestsellers; *The Odeski File* is the most popular title on Storytel, a leading audiobook platform in Israel.

Bestselling Suspense series

The Double Files

Novel (thriller)

Publisher: Shtaim

Year: 2024

Translation rights: World

Audio Visual rights: World

Liora Dgani is four months pregnant when a new murder case lands on her desk—the corpse of a wealthy contractor, rumored to be mixed up with the gambling industry in southern Israel, is found tossed in Ben Shemen Forest.

Meanwhile, Liora's ex-partner and lover, Gur Ben Dov, had fled to the south two months earlier to avoid her.

Solving the murders of bodies found in central Israel is Lior's responsibility. Exposing gangs running illegal gambling businesses down south is Gur's. So is, though he doesn't know it yet, the fetus in Liora's womb.

Now, inadvertently, Liora and Gur will meet and discover what led to the contractor's murder, who stands behind the illegal gambling operation, and how far they are willing to go for each other.

The Odeski File

Novel (thriller)

Publisher: Shtaim

Year: 2022

285 pp.

Translation rights: World

Audio Visual rights: World (option on the first novel in the series, see above)

Translation: English translation by Gilah Kahn

Police Detective Liora Dgani thought she was going to get a promotion, but instead, she got an unwelcome new boss. No one remembers the files she slaved over to decipher; while her erstwhile commander vacations in Sri Lanka, the promises he gave her are all drifting away in the wind. Liora wants to get up and walk out, but how can she? After all, someone has left a body in a bordeaux-colored suitcase in the parking lot of a shopping center, right next to the grocery store. Armed with black boots, a battered car, terrible eating habits, and excellent intuitions, Liora Dgani tries to find out who is responsible for the murder of Lena Odeski, an immigrant care worker for the elderly. However, it quickly becomes clear that nothing is as it seems. This immigrant worker had not been taking care of the elderly for some time; the neighborhood may be quiet, but it is certainly not sleepy. All this aside: might it be that Liora's commander, who always wanted the best for her, has betrayed her this time, and perhaps not only her? Or that her best friend has been disloyal to her, and not only her? And that perhaps the story with Gur, the muscular officer in Investigations who did nothing but good for her, isn't actually good for her at all? Her ex-boyfriend returning to the country after three years abroad, Liora Dgani intuitively, probably isn't very good either.

The country is hardly functioning, and the sanitation department is on strike. Amidst all this garbage, Liora Dgani, the toughest but also the most humane detective in Israel, is searching for a lead. The Odeski File is the second book in the Liora Dgani investigation series by Nilly Assia.

Critical Praise

It's a great exposition, following the tropes of the classic male detective: broken hearted (twice), a staple in detective literature; heavy drinking is a necessary element for shaping her character; so too the loneliness that defies any cure, interactions with the secondary characters only reinforcing it. The solution to the mystery, therefore, cannot not deliver the heroine from her anguish but rather intensifies them; what at first seems like the possibility of redemption turns out to be merely a step in the wrong direction. This is, then, our heroine—lonely, a drinker, broken-hearted: equipped with these qualities, she sets out on her way... *The Odeski File* is an elegant and interesting thriller which, thanks to the author's familiarity with Israeli society and her ability to reflect what is happening in it, is about much more than merely solving a mystery. The way Assia shines a flashlight into this dark corner puts the things that happen in it on the agenda, even if only for a moment.

Haaretz

The Odeski File, by Nilly Assia, is not just a detective story. It is a real reflection of life today in Israel. This makes the book much more realistic; the reader can easily identify with the plot details, along with its twists and turns. From this point of view, it is great to be able to say that this is a very Israeli detective book, and a very pleasant read.

Assaf Golan, Israel Hayom

The Odeski File is not the name of the new Versace bag; it is the title of another suspense book featuring Liora, the police detective who proves us that not only men get addicted to work or struggle with commitment issue. This time, Liora is annoyed because she didn't get the long waited promotion she thought was in her pocket. Still, she can't say no when told that the body of an immigrant worker has been found in a suitcase set next to the grocery store in Tel Aviv. An interesting, enjoyable, and readable book, providing along the way an answer to that age-old question, "What is an Israeli in your eyes?"

Mako N12

Nilly Assia has done it again. *The Odeski File* does not convey a message; it is an excellent book, full stop. Assia has created a wonderful, rounded, intriguing, and human characters, embedded in an intriguing and suspenseful plot. Above this, she does not make assumptions, not for the characters and not for me, as a reader wanting something specific for Liora. The insights had to wait until I finished the book.

Sarit Plain, Vocabular

The Aya File

Novel (thriller)

Publisher: Kinneret, Zmora, Dvir

Year: 2019

269 pp.

Translation rights: World

Audio Visual rights: Under option by Eight Productions

Translation: Complete English translation by Yaron Regev and Gilah Kahn

Sixteen-year-old Aya vanishes from her home in north Tel Aviv one morning. Runaway? Kidnap? Where are you, Aya? The investigation case lands on the desk of Police Detective Liora Dgani. Liora, addicted to work and cigarettes, loves black boots and misses her grandmother dearly. She has cracked some complicated cases in her career; Liora's interrogation methods, a combination of excellent intuition and an obsessive fondness for detail, have often triumphed despite the odds. Now, she has a series of suspects to investigate; the secrets of adolescents to decipher; a dinner at her parents' house that she cannot wriggle out of; and an investigations officer whose rippling dorsal muscles do strange things to her. Amidst all this, Aya's fateful day takes over Liora, sucking her into a whirlpool of the personal and the professional that she cannot control. The Aya File is a rhythmic and sweeping detective novel, its protagonists trying their best to rise above their circumstances but repeatedly exposed in all their human vulnerability

Critical Praise

The Aya File, the enjoyable debut novel by Nilly Assia, is easy to read; it mostly travels on uncommon territory thanks to its heroine, a brilliant police investigator, a lone wolf focusing on professional advancement and casting ambitious eyes on promotion to Chief Superintendent.

Gili Izikovitch, Haaretz Galleria Cultural Supplement

The work The Aya File, Nilly Assia's sympathetic debut book, is a detective novel placing at its center the image of Police Detective Liora Dgani. Assia knows how to create a light and diverting thriller; it seems that its key inspiration is the TV series 'Law and Order' and its likes.

Omri Herzog, Haaretz

The depth of the research into the police carried out by the author Nilly Assia for 'The Aya File' is certainly evident; one can easily imagine such a police detective in our Israeli reality.

Assaf Golan, Israel Hayom