New Books from Israel • Fall 2016
NEW BOOKS FROM ISRAEL
Fall 2016

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For a complete list of publications for each author, see our website: www.ithl.org.il
Ronit Matalon was born in Israel in 1959 to a family of Egyptian-Jewish descent. She studied literature and philosophy at Tel Aviv University. Matalon has worked as a journalist for Israel TV and for the daily Haaretz, covering Gaza and the West Bank during the First Intifada. At present, she is senior lecturer in Hebrew and comparative literature at Haifa University and teaches creative writing there as well as at the Sam Spiegel Film School, Jerusalem. Two of her novels have been bestsellers in Israel.

Matalon has received the Prime Minister’s Prize (1994), the prestigious Bernstein Prize (2009), the Neuman Prize (2010), the Prix Alberto-Benveniste (France, 2013) and the EMET Prize (2016). In 2010, she received an Honorary Doctorate from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Her books have been translated to English (Metropolitan, NY; Fitzhenry & Whiteside, Canada), French (Stock; Actes Sud), German (Rowohlt; Luchterhand), Italian (Atmosphere Libri), Dutch (Ambo) and Turkish (Yapi Kredi).

And the Bride Closed the Door

a novella
Jerusalem, Keter, 2016. 130 pp.

On the day of her wedding, Margie, a young bride, shuts herself up in her mother's bedroom and refuses to get married. Her family gathers at the locked door, not knowing what to do. Her mother, Nadia, has lost a younger daughter in circumstances that are not clear. Her grandmother, who is hard of hearing, seems to understand her better than anyone. Ilan, a cousin who likes to wear women's clothes and jewelry, clings to his grandmother like a little boy. And then there is Matti, the despairing groom, trying to decipher his beloved's silence and understand why she refuses to marry him. The problem is not solved by the arrival of the groom's parents and a psychologist who specializes in brides that change their mind.

The harder they all try to reach defiant Margie, including bringing a high ladder belonging to the Palestinian Authority Power Company, the more Matti empathizes with her, and the more convinced he is that her refusal should be respected. But does this mean that she doesn’t love him? Perhaps she is actually rejecting social and family demands, a one-woman rebellion against the role that the world expects her to play.

A thought-provoking and enjoyable novella that will stay with the reader long after s/he has finished reading it.

First reviews:
Matalon possesses an extraordinary ability to convey the characters’ emotions down to the most subtle nuances...This is one of her best books.

Israel Hayom
Matalon...is going from strength to strength as one of our most prominent and influential writers.

Yedioth Ahronoth

PHOTO © IRIS NESHER
Emuna Elon

House on Endless Waters

a novel

Joel Bloom is a successful Israeli writer whose books have been widely translated. At his agent’s invitation, he flies to Amsterdam to celebrate the publication of his third book in Dutch. Although born in Holland, he has never been back before because of a promise made to his late mother Sonia, a Holocaust survivor. Indeed, it was there that she lost her husband, parents and siblings. Only she, her daughter Netty and her baby son Joel survived.

In Amsterdam, Joel and his wife visit the Jewish museum. And there, in an old movie on Jewish life before the Holocaust, he spots his mother holding a baby. But he is sure that the fair-haired child who looks like Sonia is not himself. Did he have a brother? And if so, what became of him? Why did they hide it all? When he gets back home, his sister tells him—for the first time—the story of his life, and he is in turmoil. So he returns to Amsterdam to try and solve the mystery of the baby who disappeared and to trace his own identity. He is also determined to write his best book yet—a novel about his mother, her family, her friends, and the leaders of the Amsterdam Jewish community who collaborated with the Nazis. Thus, the tale of Joel’s trip to present-day Amsterdam is bound up with the past and the story of the Jews who believed that “it couldn’t happen here.”

Elon’s novel is a powerful human drama. It brings out moral dilemmas, courageous decisions and reads like a psychological-detective thriller.

PARTIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE

I read this book with excitement and wonder. Touching and fascinating.

Author Amos Oz

The beauty of this book lies in its delicacy, and creates real catharsis...Beautiful and moving.

Haaretz

I read it with bated breath...A complex work of art...A masterpiece.

Makor Rishon

Magical and marvelously written...Run and buy it.

MK Shelly Yachimovich
Ilana Hammerman

A Woman on Her Own

a memoir
Tel Aviv, Achuzat Bayit, 2016. 301 pp.

A woman travels alone and meets Palestinian villagers. She talks to parents who want to fulfil their children’s dream of going to the seaside for the first time. She joins in visits to relatives in prison, and gets pushed around at checkpoints together with people wanting to enter Israel to find work. Sometimes she is also called on to act—for a man who needs work and asks her to smuggle him in the trunk of her car; for a prisoner who asks her to buy him a pair of glasses; or for Palestinian children whom she takes—in defiance of Israeli law—on a trip to the zoo. And she also writes about interesting conversations with men imprisoned for a long time without indictment, who talk to her about peace.

This is an extraordinary human document: a collection of pieces written over some thirty years during which Hammerman traveled all over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, meeting people, assisting some of them, lending a sympathetic ear to others.

Her starting point is personal. After her husband and her sister died one after the other, Hammerman traveled to the end of the world: New Zealand. And there she found the key to her freedom—the ability to move from place to place without regard for internal or external boundaries. With this, she found joie de vivre and a resolution—she would travel around the West Bank, meet women, men and children, listen to their dreams and document their lives under occupation. An enthralling document.

PARTIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE

Vibrant, personal, and relevant…
It is not the storyteller who shouts, but the story that cries out without raising its voice.
Maariv

Moving, compelling, painful but…also inspires hope.
Walla

A spirit of grace and courage blows through these stories.
Haaretz

Hammerman has unusual courage and abundant humanity.
Channel 10 TV
Scorpion Dance [Promenade à Deux]

a novel

Orion Herman was born in Jerusalem in 1967, after his father fell in the Six-Day War. The house that he grew up in had belonged to an Arab man who fled during the War of Independence, leaving behind an Arabic-speaking parrot. Two women raised Orion: his mother Aviva, who was found in a Polish convent after World War II and came to Israel as a child without identity, and his grandmother Johanna who came from Germany with little Ulrich, Orion’s father, after the founding of the State of Israel. But who was Johanna? And was Ulrich really her son? Orion will find the answers only when he grows up. To him, Johanna remains a cherished and admired grandmother; others saw her as a noble woman, a dedicated midwife saturated in German culture, who had sworn never to set foot on German soil again.

After Johanna dies, Orion leaves his childhood home and moves into a new house with the parrot. He becomes a librarian at the National Library and travels around the country in a beaten up, gaily painted ice cream van that serves as a mobile library of books that the Nazis used to burn. He also changes women like socks, until he meets his one-and-only Christina Anna, a German-Christian woman with a voice like flowing chocolate. Orion falls in love with her, and when she returns to her homeland he follows her to get her back.

Shifra Horn’s novel is a colorful journey filled with the sounds and sights of Jerusalem and its intriguing characters, a journey that shifts from passionate remembrance of the past to the need to forget it.

Published in Italian (Fazi).

ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE

It speaks intensely to all. And many will cry.
La Stampa
An enchanting and poetic novel...A very intense journey.
Leggere a Colori
A superb book, all contradictions and contrasts...Profound enchantment.
Haaretz
Magnificent, breathtaking...I wanted it to go on forever.
Mynet Jerusalem
Yitzhak Livni

The Substance of Life: Fragments

a novel

Each of the 29 short chapters in this unique book is a narrative in its own right: short story, parable, word-picture, discrete memory, confession. Together, they form a whole that eludes easy classification—apparently autobiographical although largely fictionalized. It also reads like a series of posts in a personal blog that was never actually uploaded to the Internet. In meticulous, deceptively matter-of-fact yet insightful language, Livni captures individual episodes and moments of being: the ordinary takes on an extraordinary light, the daily becomes wondrous. Life in its little variations, tiny surprises, ugly gruesomeness and heartbreaking glory is magically transformed into powerful, exquisitely beautiful literature.

It begins:

“A donkey lay at the side of the road with a broken back, maybe hit by a vehicle or carrying a too-heavy load. It was on King George Street near our home, a sweltering afternoon during summer vacation. The stores were closed, there was little traffic. We’d finished lunch, mother and father were taking a nap. I went downstairs to sit on the concrete wall facing the scorching street, and swung my short-trousered legs against the shady, rough concrete, letting gusts of hot khamsin air dry the sweat off my face just as it surfaced. I enjoyed the fusion of smooth and tickle, the pleasant scratch of concrete on my legs. I lifted my half-closed eyes to the street, letting the rays of bright light seep in. And then I saw the donkey.”

PARTIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE

Reading this book gave me genuine satisfaction and pleasure. The substance [of Livni’s] life is the best of its kind.  
Former President Shimon Peres

A literary miracle…A masterpiece…Breathtaking.

Haaretz

Full of beauty, power, insight and subtlety…Superb!

Yedioth Ahronoth

A very special book…Marvelous alchemy of the art of writing.

Makor Rishon
Ilai Rowner was born at Kibbutz Yakum in 1979 to parents of Argentinean origin. From 2001 to 2008 he lived in Paris and studied French literature. In 2012, he received his PhD from the University of Paris VII-Diderot and Bar-Ilan University, Israel. He is currently a lecturer in the department of French studies at Tel Aviv University and teaches at the Herzliya Hebrew Gymnasium. A literary scholar and writer, he also translates French literature to Hebrew.

Rowner won the Haaretz Short Story Competition in 2001. His first novel, Deserter, received wide critical acclaim and earned him both the Ministry of Culture Prize for Debut Book and the Ministry of Culture Prize for Debut Authors (2015). Deserter was also shortlisted for the Sapir Prize (2016).

Deserter

A vshalom, a young Israeli doing his military service, goes AWOL, destroys his uniform and hides out in an retirement home in Jerusalem. He feels burnt out, trapped, and the memory of a violent clash with Palestinians in Hebron leaves him no rest. As he sees it, it’s not only his problem—there’s something gnawing away at Israeli society in general, as if some disease were spreading beneath the surface. And he knows that he will have to choose: either to stay and accept it, or leave the country and start again elsewhere. So he flees to Paris to get away, and also to write a book. He rents a studio apartment, registers at the university, looks for a job and even meets a German girl, a foreigner like him. But it all doesn’t help—he sinks into loneliness and despair, because the bleeding Israeli wound and his traumatic experience remain with him. He also sees no point in writing. Can literature still be written? Can it bring salvation? In the end, when again he reaches the end of the road, he manages to free himself, spread his wings and soar. But it may be too late.

Rowner’s powerful, unsettling novel is written as a feverish monologue, filled with candor and chaos and read with bated breath. And although it takes place in a European city, it is an Israeli book in the fullest sense of the word.

PARTIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE

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Anat Mashiach was born in Tel Aviv in 1960 and lives in Kibbutz Tze’elim in the Western Negev. She holds a BA in theater and acting from the Kibbutzim College of Education, and a diploma in phototherapy studies. She is also a graduate of the creative writing course at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

Mashiach's debut novel, Fyorela, received a grant from the Yizhak Lev and Rachel Goldberg Foundation.

**Fyorela**

a novel
Tel Aviv, Am Oved, 2016. 292 pp.

Thirteen-year-old Fyorela is the daughter of immigrants from North Africa who have settled in a small neighborhood in Tel Aviv. It is 1948: Fyorela is turning into a woman; it is also the year that the British leave Palestine and the State of Israel is established. But her parents have not yet grown roots in their new homeland and they cling to the customs, language and culture of the country they left behind. Fyorela is torn between the two worlds. Home and family are refracted through her wise, beloved grandmother who is full of stories but still mourns her life in North Africa and her language, Arabic. The children, school and the Hebrew language reflect the new Israel. Gifted Fyorela, an avid reader and excellent student, has to suffer the condescension, racism and teasing of her Ashkenazi classmates. But all this does not break her spirit: despite the humiliation and loneliness, she is determined to grow roots, look forward and try new experiences. Towards the end of the year, she at last finds a friend, an outsider like herself, who is daring, high-spirited and uninhibited; she also falls in love with a native Israeli, discovers sexuality and finds the joy of writing stories.

Fyorela’s family still see her as their “spoiled little chick,” but the young girl now leaves behind her childhood and the difficulty of fitting in. Brimming with self-confidence, she is determined to set out on an independent path.

**Fyorela** touched my heart in a way that I haven’t experienced for a long time. I feel like hugging her.

**La’Isha**
Quality, unique writing.

**Hitrashmut**
One of the most beautiful books I have read recently... Hurry to read Fyorela.

Literary blog
Yael Tevet Klagsbald was born in Tel Aviv in 1955, and now lives in Kfar Shmaryahu. She studied law at Tel Aviv University and worked as a fashion journalist and editor for the daily Haaretz. Later she wrote a column as well as articles on various issues for Maariv. These days, she holds creative writing workshops for women prisoners in Neve Tirtza Prison.

Yael Tevet Klagsbald has written lyrics, some of which have become hits in Israel, and two novels. The Bullet [Flying Tiger], her second novel, is a bestseller and is being made into a TV series.

**The Bullet [Flying Tiger]**

a novel
Tel Aviv, Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, 2013. 318 pp.

Miki Milo used to have an ordinary, organized life: two talented children, a successful husband, a pleasant job and a nice home. Until she got a phone call: her son, a high-school student, had accidentally shot and killed a friend with his father's gun. The tragedy shatters Miki's world and she feels everything that she has built collapsing. The neighbors in their small village are all talking, the media hound the family, good friends turn their backs, and even her husband disagrees about how to handle the situation. Miki has to get a hold of herself, look squarely at the conflicts and lies in her life, and battle for her home. Not easy, because she must change—the immaculate house cat with perfect nails must turn into a tigress baring her claws to defend all that is dear to her.

With consummate skill and unerring subtlety, Tevet Klagsbald opens a contemporary Israeli Pandora’s box, giving us a close-up of a seemingly model family when tragedy hits. Most fascinating is Miki, who finds the inner strength to battle and insist on her rights without relying on others. The Bullet is an engrossing novel that draws in the reader from the very first page.

**PARTIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE**

It captivated me from the beginning...A bestseller. Haaretz
Go and get it...You won’t be able to put it down. Maariv
A compelling book...that will intrigue its readers...Clever, surprising. Mako
It sweeps the reader into a dramatic whirlpool of events. Olam Ha’Isha
A gripping, wonderful book...Very powerful. Kol Israel Radio 2

**CLICK HERE FOR A COMPLETE LISTING ON THE ITHL WEBSITE.**
Dror Burstein

Mud

a novel

The hero of Burstein’s sixth novel is the prophet Jeremiah, a young poet who starts predicting a catastrophe. In the Jerusalem streets where he wanders, the citizens travel on the light-rail train and talk on cell phones, but the Temple is standing, King Jehoiakim lives in an ugly palace, and Jeremiah’s words demoralize the people. He warns that Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian army is going to surround the corrupted city, destroy it and send its population into exile. But no one listens, even when Babylonian helicopters and tanks are on the city outskirts. Jehoiakim then commits suicide and his crown passes to his son Jehoiachin, a talented pianist who is tricked into giving up his musical career in Vienna and flying back home. But his reign is short and his uncle, Zedekiah, takes power. Zedekiah is a successful poet who sports tattoos and whose poems appear in prestigious journals. He is also a childhood friend of Jeremiah’s. But now that he is king, Zedekiah sees Jeremiah as a traitor and orders him to be thrown into a pit of mud. Fortunately, a pack of dogs, headed by a talking dog, saves the tormented prophet from drowning.

Mud is a complex, brilliant and daring novel. Partly an attempt to rewrite the story of Jeremiah in modern dress, it may also be a chilling prophesy for contemporary Jerusalem. It invites the reader to re-assess the relevance of the biblical text today and to view the cyclical nature of history.

Burstein has succeeded. The last chapters are truly hair-raising; they can be read over and over without losing their power.

Haaretz

A brilliant book...The plot is poignant, but also satirical...An outstanding novel.

Makor Rishon

Magnificent...Burstein has woven all the ages of the nation into one clamorous carpet... A great work of art.

Maariv

Burstein remains one of the most interesting and important writers in Israel today.

Israel Hayom

Dror Burstein was born in 1970 in Netanya, Israel, and lives in Tel Aviv. He first became a fully qualified lawyer, then he left the legal field and started studying literature. He received a PhD in Hebrew literature from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2001 and now teaches at Tel Aviv University. A literary editor and curator of exhibitions, Burstein writes literary and art reviews for the Hebrew press and has also edited programs for Israel Radio’s music station. Since 2011 he is editor of the poetry journal Helikon. Burstein has been awarded the Jerusalem Prize for Literature (1997), the Ministry of Science and Culture Prize for Poetry (2002), the Bernstein Prize for his novel, Avner Brenner (2005), the Prime Minister’s Prize (2006) and the Goldberg Prize for Sun’s Sister (2014).

Burstein’s novels have been published in French (Actes Sud, Arles), English (Dalkey Archive, USA), German (Wallstein), Italian (Riuniti) and Turkish (Dedalus).
Leona was born in Africa, where her father was working. She was loved and happy in her sunlit world. Because there was nobody to keep her occupied, she read avidly from an early age. Books raised her, and their heroes were her friends and role models for coping with life. But then things went wrong. One day, she had to leave Africa, travel with her grandmother to Israel and begin an unexpected life. Her experiences cut stormily across social groups, beginning on a kibbutz, continuing in an ultra-Orthodox community and later in the bohemian student milieu of Jerusalem. She gradually grows into an attractive teenager and then a woman who encounters love. On the way, she meets a variety of characters, whom she loves or dislikes, and in order to cope she recalls the heroes in her books, striving to do the right and moral thing.

*I Am Leona* is a tumultuous novel, inspired by the picaresque novels of the 19th century. Since Leona’s unique language draws on the books she has been reading since childhood, she often sounds as if she herself had just emerged from their pages. A courageous and inspiring young person, she faces many problems without giving up on the search for the good in human beings.

**PARTIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION IN PROGRESS**

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**Gail Hareven** was born in Jerusalem in 1959. She studied behavioral sciences at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and Talmud and Jewish philosophy at the Shalom Hartman Institute. Hareven has written widely on politics and feminist issues; she has been a columnist for *Maariv*, Hadashot, the *Jerusalem Report* and *Lady Globes*, and writes book reviews. At present, Hareven teaches feminist theory, leads writing workshops, and lectures on socio-cultural topics. In 2006, she was visiting professor at the University of Illinois. Hareven has published fiction, non-fiction, children’s books and four plays, all of which have been staged. For her novel, *The Confessions of Noa Weber (My True Love)*, Hareven received the prestigious Sapir Prize (2002) and the Best Translated Novel Award (USA, 2010). In 2013 she was awarded the Prime Minister’s Prize.

Hareven’s novels have been published abroad in English (Melville, NY; Open Letter, USA) and Italian (Giuntina, Florence).

**CLICK HERE FOR A COMPLETE LISTING ON THE ITHL WEBSITE.**

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Full of charm...Leona captures the reader’s heart.

Haaretz

A captivating, enthralling book.

Makor Rishon

Hareven gives the reader long hours of enjoyment.

Yedioth Ahronoth

One of the finest books in recent years.

La’Isha

Hareven’s new book has an unforgettable heroine.

Israel Hayom
Noga Albalach

Sealand

a novel
Tel Aviv, Am Oved, 2015. 166 pp.

Galia, a young teacher, and Natan, a retired bank clerk, live in the same apartment building. But their little world is turned upside down when a Bulgarian migrant worker, fleeing his employer, enters their building. Confronting the harsh rules of the global village and its absurd immorality, the two neighbors come up with a plan to smuggle the Bulgarian worker out of the country.

In the background, Galia starts a romantic relationship with Michael, who has unusual views on education. He introduces Galia to Sealand, a micro-nation situated on a military offshore platform, 12 kilometers off the eastern coast of England—a metaphor for a quiet rebellion, and the creation of one’s own rules within the law. Michael also tells Galia about his wish to set up a personal video channel, where he can broadcast 24/7 as an artistic statement. Galia encourages this idea, which stimulates the young couple and plays an interesting role in their relationship.

Sealand is an intimate story about seemingly ordinary people who lead subversive lives. The meeting between the four characters leads each one to examine the limits of his or her personal space and those of law and sovereignty.

PARTIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE

Noga Albalach was born in Petah Tikva, Israel, in 1971 and now lives in Tel Aviv. She received an MA in economics from Tel Aviv University and worked for several years as an equity analyst. In 2005, she left this field and started studying literature. She received an MA in literature from Tel Aviv University and now works as a literary editor. Albalach has published a novel, collections of short stories and novellas as well as books for children. She has been awarded the Ministry of Culture Prize for Debut Literature (2011) and the Prime Minister’s Prize (2016).

A daring writer...original and full of vitality.  
Prime Minister’s Prize, 2015

A unique voice...She leads her quiet protagonists down a daringly subversive path.  
Haaretz

A wonderful novel.  
Ynet

Albalach is a great composer. She knows...when to speak and when to remain silent.  
Makor Rishon

Photo © Tal Blicchi
An Ocean Between Us

a biographical novel
Tel Aviv, Dvir, 2015. 288 pp.

Rachel and Michael met and fell in love in Toulouse in 1913, just before World War I. Rachel had come from Palestine to study agronomy; Michael, from Russia, was studying electrical engineering. But historical events, revolutionary ideology and their inhibitions kept them apart. In 1915, Rachel traveled back to Russia, the land of her birth. But when the war was over she returned to Palestine and became a celebrated poet. Michael went back to Russia and led an undistinguished life. They never met again, but his love for Rachel endured, preserved in the 29 letters that he wrote to her. These letters and Gertz’s in-depth research are the keystone to this fascinating literary and historical drama, centering around a couple seen in Israel as the heroes of a lost generation—their dreams were too great and ended in disillusion.

Rachel later became a famous poet and a cultural heroine. Her poetry as well as her brief life—cut short by tuberculosis—were widely mythologized. Michael did not become a revolutionary, he just tried to survive. He worked as a teacher in the shadow of historic events, and wrote textbooks on electricity that reflected the Communist Party line. He gave up his love as well as his desire to change the world, preferring to leave his relationship with Rachel as a dream.

Gertz weaves a captivating story of frustrated love, with all its twists and turns in France, Russia and Palestine.

PARTIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE

So exquisite it moved me to tears.
Author Amos Oz
Superb...A rare book...A riveting historical-literary drama...A painful and captivating love story.
Haaretz
One of the loveliest and most profound love stories ever written here.
Yedioth Ahronoth
A mature and original work...complex and convincing.
Maariv
A gripping human and historical account...Superb writing.
Mako

Nurith Gertz

Nurith Gertz was born in Israel in 1940. She is professor emeritus of literature and film at the Open University, has served as section head in the film and television department at Tel Aviv University, and is currently head of the culture and production department at Sapir College. She has also taught abroad at UC Berkeley, Brandeis University and University of Paris-VIII. Gertz has published numerous academic studies as well as three works of biographical fiction. The second, Unrepentant, was selected one of the 10 Best Books in 2008. Gertz has received the Brenner Prize (2009) and the Book Publishers’ Association Gold Award (2010).
Sara Aharoni

Mrs. Rothschild’s Love

a historical novel
Tel Aviv, Yedioth Ahronoth, 2015. 428 pp.

Everyone knows about the Rothschilds, possibly the most famous Jewish family ever. For Jews themselves, the name has become synonymous with ‘wealthy philanthropist’. In her historical novel, based on extensive research, Sara Aharoni writes about the founding father of the dynasty, Mayer Amschel Rothschild, who was active in Germany in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. But it is his wife, Gutle, who is the narrator and heroine of the book. Gutle keeps a secret diary in which she reveals her emotions, thoughts and secret desires. She and her beloved Mayer Amschel were both born in the Jewish ghetto of Frankfurt-am-Main and they married when she was 17 years old. Mayer was a bold, creative man who fought against the restrictions imposed on Jews and strove to achieve equal rights for them. He was also enormously successful in his banking business, which came to play a central role in Europe’s commercial life. Mayer and Gutle passed on their work ethic and devotion to their children, who settled in the great capitals of Europe and established a network of financial institutions.

Despite their wealth, their closeness to rulers and the emancipation granted to the Jews, Mayer and Gutle never left the ghetto. Gutle’s great love for her husband, the ten children she bore and raised, her choice to live modestly, the tragedies and joys of her life—are all masterfully woven into a sweeping and emotion-filled novel. Aharoni’s book brings to life an engrossing period in the history of European Jewry at the time of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars.

PARTIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE

This lovely story transforms the myth into something living and human...An unmistakable literary talent.

Author Abraham B. Yehoshua

Readers will find interest and enjoyment in Aharoni’s new novel.

Author Amos Oz

A bestseller that has burst ahead...on all the lists...Its magic secret is...its peek behind the scenes.

Haaretz

A sweeping and exciting book.

Yekum Tarbut
Eli Shmueli

MarginsMan

a novel

Joshua works at a postal distribution center and lives in the basement of a housing project on the edge of West Jerusalem. A young man without means, he has never been with a woman, and his world is confined to crowded city buses, grimy sidewalks and foul pubs where he seeks intimacy. What drives him is his craving for love and human affection, but it only leads to one defeat after the other.

MarginsMan is about the loneliness of the outcast, the little individual, and his attempts to find companionship, particularly with women. It is also about the tyranny of desire, and man’s vulnerability when he needs tenderness. A unique blend of the individual and the city he lives in, the book is also about Jerusalem, where Joshua follows his own Via Dolorosa—not Jerusalem shrouded in the aura of history and holiness, but the mundane reality of the people living in it. Shmueli’s Jerusalem is dusty, wretched, full of uninspired lives and bland human beings whose only purpose is to get through life.

PARTIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE

Eli Shmueli was born in Jerusalem in 1977 and still lives there today. Over the years, he has worked at numerous low-paying jobs, usually via employment agencies. They exposed him to the human frailty and weakness which have become the focus of his writing. At age 24, he registered at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and received a BA in psychobiology and a MA in neurobiology, simultaneously working at psychiatric institutions, construction sites, and as a porter, among other jobs. Later, he studied metaphysics and spent two more years studying towards a PhD in psychology, not completed.

MarginsMan, Shmueli’s first novel, is based on his experiences as a zip codes clerk at a postal distribution center. It received the Ministry of Culture Prize for Debut Novel (2015). Shmueli also writes poetry and publishes political commentary in the daily Haaretz and in Palestinian-Israeli magazines.

A searing and powerful book. This is literature, alive and outspoken and painful.

Yedioth Ahronoth

An Orwellian novel, something of a Down and Out in Jerusalem. Shmueli has a keen eye for depicting human foibles, and for shaping Bukowskian characters.... A unique poetic voice.

Makor Rishon

A moving novel...Our bestseller...Shmueli’s poetics cast a spell on the reader.

Ynet

A breathtaking book.

La’Isha
Avram Kantor was born in 1950 in Haifa and grew up on Kibbutz Mizra, of which he is still a member. He studied Hebrew and general literature at Haifa University, then German at the University of Konstanz in Germany, where he also completed advanced studies in publishing. After a number of years as editor of the fiction department at Sifriat Poalim Publishers, he became its editor-in-chief and CEO. Since its merger with Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishers, he has been deputy-CEO. He is also a translator from English and German to Hebrew.

Kantor has published novels, collections of stories and two books for children, one of which has been adapted and staged. Kantor was awarded the Ze’ev Prize in 1995.

Two of Kantor’s novels have been published in German (Carl Hanser).

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Let There Be Light

A vinoam came home from the war wounded in both body and mind. He witnessed the horrific death of a friend in combat, and this traumatic event does not leave him. He wants to erase it from his mind, but he keeps going back to it. A shining light bursts in his head and fills him with dread, then he wakes up sweating in the dark next to his peacefully sleeping wife Naomi. The light, accompanied by the sarcastic laugh of his dead friend, haunt him in the daytime too, but he doesn’t tell anyone. As a result, daily life seems meaningless. Everything is pointless, absurd. The trauma disrupts his family life, his love-making and his work, including a business trip to Frankfurt. But Avinoam learns to live with it, and the feeling of senselessness helps him deal with the petty struggles, emotional outbursts and human sorrow that surround him as he observes everything from the sidelines, uninvolved.

This sensitive novel follows Avinoam’s attempts to overcome his panic attacks and to understand the mechanism that causes them. Although he hides his secret, his loving and wise Naomi understands. This is an optimistic novel, and the reader will empathize with Avinoam who finally manages to get a grip on life and appreciate its value. The light is not only dazzling and painful, a prelude to nightmares: it can also be soft and consoling, the dawn of a new day.

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PHOTO © DAN PORCES

It is not easy to portray a traumatic condition in such a palpable way...An impressive writing talent.

Haaretz

Raises probing questions...and this is Kantor’s greatness.

Beyn Hamilim

Made me shed a tear, and gave me unique pleasure.

Kol Israel Radio 2
Itamar Levy

Hugo’s Earthquake

a novel

In this wild and funny novel, a playwright named Itamar Levy has written a play with the same title as the novel. Hugo, the protagonist of the play, is a 70something Holocaust survivor who lives in an apartment in Tel Aviv. One day, he sneaks into the living room of his neighbor Rivka while she is in the shower, and finds a closet with an amazing machine that can simulate earthquakes. He turns on the machine—and the whole building collapses. When Hugo regains consciousness, he is alone with a hand—not his—sticking out of the ruins. He decides that it must be Rivka’s, and by the time rescue arrives, he has befriended the hand and regaled it with his heroism, including taking revenge on his caretaker’s boyfriend, and rescuing a young girl from a fire. Outside the play, Itamar the playwright’s experiences are no less amazing. He discovers that a dead friend’s body has been switched with an unknown woman who is buried instead of him. Only he knows about this. But the whole country knows—wrongly—from the press that he tried to murder the lead actor in his play. (In fact, the man tried to commit suicide and Itamar saved him.) In the meantime, Itamar’s involvement with the play grows and Hugo starts to control him. But who does all this happen to? And how is Itamar Levy the playwright connected to Itamar Levy the author of the novel?

A bold book that presents life as a drama of the absurd—and ourselves as actors wearing masks.

You know you are holding a good book when you can’t imagine how it might have been written differently...A unique writing style...This is fine literature that provides quality entertainment.

Maariv

This book does not let go of you, even for a moment...Challenging, thought-provoking, riveting.

WordPress

A fascinating, sweeping book.

IETV
Nizan Weisman

Israeli Breakfast

stories
Tel Aviv, Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2015. 192 pp.

Idan, a new army recruit, can’t take his commander’s abuse any more and breaks down. He goes AWOL and seeks refuge in the home of his non-conformist grandfather, convinced that he will understand and protect him. In the second story, Miki, a successful physicist, is attracted to Zen Buddhism and decides to leave his town and family in order to find peace in the countryside. But as he searches for his dream home, he realizes how phony the ‘idyllic pastoral life’ is, with its vacuous spirituality. In the title story, Ofer is a would-be high-tech entrepreneur whose startup has collapsed, forcing him to sell his home. This damages his relationship with his wife and he starts to doubt his masculinity. In another, a lawyer meets a bully who beat him up as a child, and is overwhelmed by the traumatic memory. In the final story, Motti takes his son on a trip to Amsterdam. This is Motti’s first trip abroad, but whether it will restore his male ego and enable his son to see him as a reliable father, is not clear.

All the stories in this impressive collection deal with the Israeli male ego. In matters of livelihood, professional ambition, self-fulfilment and the desperate need for recognition, Weisman’s heroes find themselves at a crossroads. They must face up to issues of responsibility, love and loyalty, as well as the gap between their dreams and reality. With a critical eye on social norms and a deep love for human beings, Weisman serves up slices of Israeli life full of humor and compassion.

PARTIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE

An outstanding collection… “Men Cry at Night” broke my heart…If you want to write, read Israeli Breakfast.

Haaretz

Exquisite and powerful drama.

Ynet

Weisman’s...gem has all but become a cult book since it came out.

Kol Bo

Nizan Weisman is revealed…in all his genius...Hats off!

Tolaat Sfarim, Blogspot
Blanche

Yitzhak Gormezano Goren was born in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1941 and immigrated to Israel as a child. A playwright and novelist, Goren studied English and French literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv University, and received a MFA in theater direction in the United States. In 1982, he co-founded the Bimat Kedem Theater, to promote non-European Jewish drama. In 1998, the company established the Bimat Kedem Publishing House. Gormezano Goren has worked as a broadcast editor and is active in the Israeli theater and film world. He has been awarded the National Council for Culture and the Arts Prize (1966), the Ramat Gan Prize (1979), the Govinska-Baratz Prize (1979), the Prime Minister's Prize (2001) and the Arik Einstein Prize (2015).

His novel, Alexandrian Summer, has been published in English (New Vessel Press, NY).

Blanche is Gormezano Goren’s second novel about Alexandria. The sweeping plot is set in the late 1940s and centers on a beautiful young Jewish girl. Blanche came to Alexandria with her grandmother from the island of Corfu, after her mother ran away with her Italian lover and her father vanished running after her. As her sexuality blossoms, Blanche has a love affair with Gaston, a wealthy playboy and her employer’s son. Gaston changes girlfriends like socks, discarding them as soon as they yield to him, until he meets Blanche. She enjoys his gifts, his money and his love, but preserves her chastity. However, Gaston’s father orders him to give her up and marry a rich woman instead. Blanche, unhappy at first, will also not remain single: her grandmother and a neighbor plot in secret and arrange a match with Raphael, a poor but handsome young man who is part of a Zionist underground cell.

Like Blanche, the city of Alexandria is also a heroine of the novel, and both are in full bloom. Alexandria is a lovely, vibrant and extravagant cosmopolitan city where nothing is sacred apart from money. Gormezano Goren depicts it skillfully with subtle humor, highlighting its tolerance and the neighborly relations between Arab Moslems, Christians and Jews who have come from east and west. But all this changes. When Blanche and Raphael leave the city in the early 1950s and emigrate to Israel, Blanche’s beauty withers, as does the beloved city that she is leaving, never to return.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION IN PROGRESS

Gormezano Goren writes with vibrant wit. One of the loveliest and most moving novels.

Keshet

There’s a lot of fun in this book, in the style, in the twists of the plot and in its hedonistic approach... Blanche is a landmark in Israeli culture.

Jerusalem Post
Yitzhak Gormezano Goren was born in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1941 and immigrated to Israel as a child. A playwright and novelist, Goren studied English and French literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv University, and received a MFA in theater direction in the United States. In 1982, he co-founded the Bimat Kedem Theater, to promote non-European Jewish drama. In 1998, the company established the Bimat Kedem Publishing House. Gormezano Goren has worked as a broadcast editor and is active in the Israeli theater and film world. He has been awarded the National Council for Culture and the Arts Prize (1966), the Ramat Gan Prize (1979), the Govinska-Baratz Prize (1979), the Prime Minister’s Prize (2001) and the Arik Einstein Prize (2015).

Alexandrian Summer is the story of two Jewish families in Alexandria, Egypt, before the overthrow of King Farouk in 1952. The Egyptian upper-middle class is laid bare in this atmospheric novel, which pokes fun at the rather startling sexual hypocrisies of the bourgeoisie.

Hamdi-Ali senior is an old-time patriarch with more than a dash of Turkish blood, who knows that tying one’s wife to the old iron bedstead and giving her an occasional beating is the way to keep the home-fires burning. His elder son, a promising horse jockey, can’t afford sexual frustration as it leads him to overeating and endangers his career, but the woman he lusts after won’t let him go beyond undoing a few buttons. Victor, the younger son, has no such problems: little girls being the coy creatures they are, he opts for little boys and at a tender age orchestrates gay orgies among the playschool set.

Most of these goings on are seen from the perspective of Robby, the young son of the hosting Jewish family. But the real heroine of the story—smooth as marble and quietly observing the raucous traffic, swarming crowds and braying donkeys—is the city of Alexandria itself.

Published in English (New Vessel Press, NY)
Benjamin Tammuz

Short Stories


When Tammuz’s first stories were published in 1950, they were unusual compared to the realistic prose then in vogue. Today, they are still considered a milestone in the history of the Hebrew short story. The present collection combines four books published by Tammuz, plus three additional stories.

_Sands of Gold_ (Machbarot Lesifrut, 1950), Tammuz’s first collection, is set in old Tel Aviv—then still a small town—and in a rural settlement during the British Mandate. Tammuz harkens back nostalgically to childhood experiences, to innocence and growing pains. The stories focus on a sensitive, introverted boy through the lens of an adult narrator grieving for a world that has been destroyed.

In his second collection, _A Garden Enclosed_ (Schocken, 1957), Tammuz included satirical, grotesque and topical stories, sketching a portrait of Israeli society after the 1948-49 War of Independence. Here, he becomes a critic of Israeli society, condemning the vulgarity and ugliness of modern urban life.

_The Story of Anton the Armenian and Other Stories_ (Machbarot Lesifrut, 1964), shows Tammuz’s need to respond to historical events. The relationships between characters reflect the conflicts between nations, and these stories of ideas portray Israel being built on the ruins of the more authentic, rural Jewish-Arab country of the past.

In his fourth collection, _The Bitter Scent of Geranium_ (Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1980), Tammuz returns to the Land of Israel of the 1920s and 30s. Embedding them in the history of the time, he portrays various types of Jewish immigrant in old Tel Aviv. Their static quality, their eccentricities and the narrator’s distanced objectivity create a humorous tone.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE

Concentrated, excellent stories… An outstanding contribution to truly modern Hebrew literature. _Moznayim, 1964_

Tammuz’s eye uncovers something universally human. _Haaretz, 1950_

Flawlessly told… This book is definitely an event in Hebrew literature. _Maariv, 1980_

There is, in these love stories, a certain magic…Tammuz is a great storyteller precisely because of his simplicity. _Davar, 1980_
Benjamin Tammuz

**Minotaur**

a novel  
104 pp.

“Téa, this letter... is not signed and I daresay we shall never meet. Yet I have seen you and I made sure that you saw me... You didn’t recognize me. But even so, you belong to me. You will never have an opportunity to ask me questions, but my voice will reach you through my letters, and I know that you will read them.”

Thus begins a bizarre correspondence. The writer first sees Thea on a bus. With her dark hair, honey-colored eyes and regal bearing, she is the mysterious beauty he claims to have been searching for all his life. She is bright, intellectual, sheltered and romantic. He, a secret agent, becomes Thea’s phantom lover—unseen, unknown, except through the letters with which he captures her heart. The reader awaits every letter as tensely as Thea, and feels equally frustrated by the anonymity that he demands. Tammuz’s masterly writing makes the narrative utterly convincing: both Thea’s growing love for her unseen partner and the obsessive desire for innocence and beauty that she inspires.


Published in English (*NAL; Signet; Enigma; Europa NY*); French (*Buchet-Chastel; Serpente Plumes*); Italian (*e/o; Tascabili*); German (*Fischer*); Spanish (*Destino*); Chinese (*China Social Sciences*); Greek (*Gavrielides*); Turkish (*Dogun*); Russian (*Gesharim/Mosti Kulturi*); Estonian (*Elmata*); Polish (*Claro*); Slovenian (*Mohorjeva Druzba*); Portuguese, Brazil (*Rádio Londres*).

You feel like holding the book in your hands for a while...before putting it back on the shelf of timeless novels.  
*Il Corriere della Sera*

An uncommon book, very suggestive and original, whose charm enraptures the reader. Not to be missed.  
*L’Unita*

I was overwhelmed by the story...The design is beautiful and complex, with not a word wasted.  
Author Alan Sillitoe

About the expectations and compromises that humans create for themselves...very much in the manner of William Faulkner and Laurence Durrell.  
*New York Times Book Review*

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**Bottle Parables**

a novella  

In this novella, Tammuz deals with the issue of Jewish identity after the Holocaust and what he sees as the place of Judaism in Western culture. *Bottle Parables* is the story of an assimilated Jew who lives in London and works as an art dealer and a muralist, painting on restaurant walls. At the lowest point in his life, when his art has become completely commercial, he meets an old Holocaust survivor who saves him. This man, a former art collector who also published Yiddish magazines, expounds his views on the essence of Judaism and the role of the Jew in the world. He claims that the Jews’ natural place is in the Diaspora and not in a country of their own, because their spirituality and intellectuality preserve Western culture from decline and degeneration.

Published in Italian (*e/o*)

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE**

*Il Corriere della Sera*

An uncommon book, very suggestive and original, whose charm enraptures the reader. Not to be missed.  
*L’Unita*

I was overwhelmed by the story...The design is beautiful and complex, with not a word wasted.  
Author Alan Sillitoe

About the expectations and compromises that humans create for themselves...very much in the manner of William Faulkner and Laurence Durrell.  
*New York Times Book Review*
Yishai Sarid has written an unusual thriller—without bodies, good guys or bad guys. The narrator is an unsuccessful Tel Aviv lawyer. He has only one client, a loser like himself, who tries to commit suicide; he shares a seedy apartment with a lazy, penniless alcoholic who dreams of being an actress; and to top it all, he has a strong, opinionated “Jewish mother.”

By comparison, the case that our lawyer is given on reserve duty in the army is a challenge: A young woman named Almog has accused an elite officer of rape. The girl comes from an underprivileged family in the south, while the officer, Captain Erez, is considered of “the best”—a young man with values, motivated to excel and to contribute to society. But the narrator and Kobi, his gay assistant—whose personal life is also complicated—find that the relationship between the accused and the victim is not what they expected. And the further the investigation proceeds, the harder the picture is to pin down. Was it rape or a misunderstanding? And if it was rape, how to explain Erez’s reaction when the narrator tells him that Almog is pregnant? Indeed, Erez, who so far has denied the charge, is ecstatic. He is even willing to marry Almog. Thus the accused confesses and the narrator closes the case, but without any sense of satisfaction.

Published in French (Actes Sud, Arles)
Nissim Aloni (1926–1998), one of Israel’s leading playwrights, was born in Tel Aviv. He studied history and French culture at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, then spent a year in Paris, where he became acquainted with new European theater. His first play, *Most Cruel the King*, was produced by Habima Theater in 1953. After his return from Paris, he wrote and directed *The King’s New Clothes*, which marked a total revolution in Israeli theater. Aloni’s work was critically acclaimed. He wrote and staged 12 plays, and published one collection of short stories. Among his many literary prizes: Playwright of the Year (1964; 1971; 1976), Director of the Year (1971), the President’s Prize (1971), the Tel Aviv Prize for Stage Arts (1971), the Bialik Prize (1983), the Israeli Theater Prize for Lifetime Achievement (1995), the Israel Prize (1996) and the Israeli Theater Prize for Translator of the Year (1997; 1998).

These four stories, first published between 1956 and 1962, are about children growing up in disadvantaged areas of South Tel Aviv during World War II. In the title story, a boy’s everyday trials—parents fussing over his homework, the state of his fingernails—are increasingly interrupted by radio news bulletins charting the Germans’ ravages across Europe. The boy merges the chaos of the world into a blurred personal mythology staked to gothic reality by one glaring eye: “In the attic of Salomon’s house lived an owl which was a thousand years old and put the curse of death on anyone who dared approach it.”

Here, as in the rest of this fine collection, the child’s perspective is beautifully captured. His innocent, unblinking gaze grasps the world and claims from its everyday stories his own unassailable knowledge. And all the while, the Jewish folklore and spirituality of the Mizrahi-Eastern neighborhood casts an enchanted aura over the whole.

Published in French (Viviane Hamy, Paris)

ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE
Aryeh Sivan (1929-2015) was born in Tel Aviv. He fought in Israel’s 1948 War of Independence as a member of the elite Palmach unit. Sivan studied Hebrew language and literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and worked as a high school teacher. He published some fiction and many collections of poetry. Sivan received several awards, including the Prime Minister’s Prize (1973), the Brenner Prize (1989), the Shin Shalom Prize (1992), the Bialik Prize (1998) and the prestigious Israel Prize for Poetry (2010). His poetry has been translated into 17 languages.

**Adonis**

*a novel*


Ostensibly a detective mystery, this light-hearted first novel is built like a box within a box. Wandering about Tel Aviv during the 1991 Gulf War, the narrator comes across the diary of Avner Ben-Horin, a former policeman turned private detective, and retells his story. The diary dates back to British Mandate Tel Aviv of the 1930s—an energetic, defiant fledgling town with a frontier quality. An introspective man with a literary bent, Avner Ben-Horin is hired to unravel the disappearance of Zecharia Yulin, but his account of the investigation is in fact a shell, opening up to become an intensely nostalgic, confessional narrative.

Under detective cover, Sivan (whose poetic voice is heard throughout) paints a colorful, exotic portrait of Tel Aviv’s past, including the violent political schisms between leftists and Communists, the literati and oddball characters from all corners of the earth. His target is also the nature of literary creation. The nameless contemporary narrator returns at the end to consider Ben-Horin’s motive for writing the tale of his failed stab at detective work. He raises an array of possibilities, thus doing the work of critics and saving them the use of their scalpel. The true subject of the novel, however, is the author’s loving, sinuous recreation of place and time.

Published in German (*S. Fischer*), Estonian (*Eesti Raamat*) and Chinese (*Baihuazhou*).

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE**

A unique book…A landmark.
*Die Welt*

Can be read…as a detective story, a political thriller, an intelligent puzzle.
*FAZ*

A wonderful poetic novel, in which the detective story only seems to dominate.
*Volksstimme*

A complex thriller with mysterious characters and a colorful picture of Tel Aviv in the 1930s.
*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*

A gift for riddle solvers…thoroughly entertaining, full of eye-winking and tongue-in-cheek wit.
*Yedioth Ahronoth*
Nava Semel

Hymn to the Bible

poetry

Abraham and Sarah, David and Michal, Joseph and Potiphar’s wife, Ecclesiastes and Mishael, and other biblical characters peek out with a wink and a smile from the pages of the Bible. They are vibrant folk, driven by impulses and desires, subject to the twists and turns of fate; they sin and they go astray. Is the human condition in the 21st century any different to that of antiquity? Not necessarily.

Lilith demands equal rights for women; Esau goes to couples therapy; Michal is jealous of her brother Jonathan who is in love with her husband; Sarah is a xenophobe; Vashti is a battered wife; Mishael goes on a coming-of-age trip to the East, and young Ecclesiastes leads a protest movement in the city square. Everything is still happening today, or in Ecclesiastes’ words: “There is nothing new under the sun.”

In writing this book, I wanted to go back to the tradition of dramatic rhyming verse, to popular Jewish balladry, and to the biting cabaret of Berthold Brecht. The words wave hello to earlier times, and particularly to the poet-playwright Itzik Manger, a father of Yiddish theater, whose plays have been with me since my childhood with all their dizzying theatrical and literary spectacles. Perhaps the time has come to acknowledge these underground sources that feed our Israeli identity, and to create a new partnership with them.

From Nava Semel’s Preface

A really intriguing book…
It takes the biblical stories to places that are daring even to the secular reader.
Maariv NRG

A refreshing breeze…It’s fun to tuck into the Bible’s legends…when served up in such an intriguing dish.
Israel TV, Channel 1

Well worth reading…A different way of looking at the Bible.
Ynet

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