NEW BOOKS FROM ISRAEL
Spring 2015

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For a complete list of publications for each author, see our website: www.ithl.org.il

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Orly Castel-Bloom was born in Tel Aviv in 1960 to parents originally from Egypt. Since the publication of her first book in 1987, she has been a leading voice in Hebrew literature, constantly expanding the boundaries of narrative style. Castel-Bloom has lectured at Harvard University, UCLA, UC Berkeley, New York University, Oxford and Cambridge; at present she teaches creative writing. She has published six collections of stories, six novels and a children’s book. Her postmodern classic, Dolly City, is one of UNESCO’s Representative Works and was listed by Tablet Magazine as one of the 101 Great Jewish Books available in English translation.

Castel-Bloom has received the Tel Aviv Foundation Award (1990), the Alterman Prize for Innovation (1993), the Newman Prize (2003), the French WIZO Prize (2005) and the Leah Goldberg Prize (2007). Her books have been published abroad in 13 languages.

CLICK HERE FOR A COMPLETE LISTING ON THE ITHL WEBSITE.

The protagonist has Egyptian roots going back many generations: on her father’s side, to the expulsion of the Jews of Spain in 1492 when seven brothers of the Kastil family, from Castilla, landed on the Gaza coast after many trials and tribulations. Her mother’s side goes back even further—3,000 years before that—for she is a descendant of the only family that Jewish history has ignored: the one that said ‘No’ to Moses and stayed in Egypt. This family migrated to Israel in the 1950s and settled on a kibbutz, but they were soon expelled for Stalinism, and moved to Tel Aviv. Mixing historical and biographical facts, made-up legends plus other fictions and exaggerations, Castel-Bloom writes an unconventional saga of her family, the Kastils. As in other sagas, there are family meals and get-togethers, deaths and funerals, sayings and stories, and things that are not to be mentioned because they disgrace the family. But here these elements all slip and slide sideways into parody and the absurd.

In this colorful book, a series of deaths becomes truly comic. But ultimately, it is about ruin, the downfall of ideals and great dreams, and the irrelevance of innocence in Israel today. With great daring, Castel-Bloom takes her enormous talent to new heights.

PARTIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION IN PROGRESS.

French language rights sold (Actes Sud, Arles).

A heroic book … one of the peaks of Castel-Bloom’s oeuvre
Haaretz
Superbly designed and polished… A unique reading experience.
Ynet
A writer with a mind unlike any other…A wild, complex parody of every family and Zionist ethos under the sun.
Mako
An astonishing book, funny and horrifying.
Yedioth Ahronoth
Yishai Sarid was born in 1965 in Tel Aviv. He studied law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and received a graduate degree in public administration from Harvard University. Sarid has worked in the State Attorney’s office as a prosecutor for criminal cases; he now works as an attorney in the private sector. He also contributes articles to the Hebrew press. His second novel, Limassol, won the Grand Prix de Littérature Policière for Best Foreign Crime Novel (France, 2011), the SNCF Award (France, 2011), the Maria Giorgetti International Award (Italy, 2013), and was shortlisted for the prestigious IMPAC Award (Dublin, 2012).

Limassol has been published in German (Kein & Aber; Piper), French (Actes Sud; Babel), English (Europa, NY; Europa, London), Italian (e/o), Spanish (Mexico, Mondadori), Chinese (Hunan People’s Pub), Danish (Ferdinand), Catalan (Club Editor) and Turkish (Koton Kitap), Polish (Filo).

The startling events in this novel take place in the near future, and are documented by Jonathan, a Jewish prince imprisoned in the citadel in Jaffa after the destruction of Israel by its enemies.

Some twenty years earlier, Tel Aviv and other coastal cities were destroyed in a nuclear attack, and in its wake Yeho’az, a charismatic junior officer, seized control of the armed forces, expelled all non-Jews and founded the Kingdom of Judah. Crowned king, he built the Third Temple in Jerusalem, with sacrificial rites—now the central feature of national life—conducted as in Biblical times. Yeho’az is assisted by his sons: David, his strong and handsome firstborn, is in charge of the military; hedonistic Yo’el is responsible for Temple worship, and his youngest, loyal and trusting Jonathan, manages the Temple calendar.

Jonathan has been physically handicapped since childhood, following a terror attack intended to kill his father. Now, however, he learns that his father ran away from the attackers, leaving him behind. His father’s image is further tarnished during the critical weeks of a military campaign outside the kingdom’s borders. The war gets tougher, more and more soldiers are killed. David is critically wounded, Yo’el flees the country with his family, and famine spreads through the land. But Yeho’az, who has delusions of grandeur, refuses to surrender and in an appalling moment, prepares to sacrifice his infant son—born to his second wife—in order to appease the deity. And then, the kingdom falls…

A courageous, disconcerting and powerful novel, a dark futuristic allegory, a warning sign for the present.

No reviews available yet.

For Limassol:

Brilliant!

Le Monde

A terse and deeply authentic novel...A real novelty in the literary landscape.

La Stampa

A gripping, honest and above all a beautiful book.

FAZ

A breathless and often moving novel...part psychological thriller, part political act.

L’Express
Lilach Nethanel was born in Netanya, Israel, in 1979. She received a BA and MA in French literature from Paris University and a PhD from the Department of Jewish Literature at Bar-Ilan University, where she now teaches Hebrew and Yiddish literature. During her research, she found the manuscript of a previously unknown novel by the classic Hebrew writer David Vogel in the literary archives, and contributed to its publication in 2012 under the title *Viennese Romance*. Nethanel is also a translator from French to Hebrew. In 2010, she was awarded the Ramat Gan Prize for her first novel, *The Hebrew Condition*.

The Old Homeland

a novel

Nissan, a gentle, 21-year-old Israeli philosophy student, leaves his tough homeland and his mother's stifling love, and goes to Paris. There, he spends the winter with his gay friend Ogen, a former Israeli who washes dishes in a restaurant for a living. But Nissan cannot love him, so he rents an attic from 90-year-old Madame Titi, who lives below him in the old house. Although her husband has been dead for twenty years, she complains that he gets into her bed every night, clings to her body and won't let her sleep. Nissan, alone in the attic, also struggles with desire. He is repulsed by physical contact, and although women want him, they find that he can't give them anything. Fiona, a poor migrant from Eastern Europe who sews at night on an old machine waits for him in vain, while Sophie, who has come to Paris from the countryside, resolutely invades his attic. But Nissan turns his back on her and later flees to wander like a ghost through the streets of Paris.

Lilach Nethanel has written a novel that is poetic, impressionistic and daring. Paris at the start of this century is depicted as a beautiful literary city, but also one that is tired and poisonous, attracting exiles who hope in vain to be reborn, while Nissan is a reincarnation of the alienated youths found in Hebrew novels of the early 20th century. His return to Europe—the old homeland—is an attempt to turn back the wheel of history.

Nethanel's literary talent is unequivocal... There is neatness, stability and polish in her writing.

Yedioth Ahronoth

A unique book in a unique style, very personal and rich... Engrossing, well written and warmly recommended.

Makor Rishon

This is a book that has the courage to say its piece, and to say it in its own way.

Maariv

Lilach Nethanel

PHOTO © SHLOMO ABRAMOV
Merav Halperin was born in Haifa in 1960 and now lives in Tel Aviv. A graduate of Tel Aviv University, majoring in history, she has worked as an editor at the Israel Defense Forces radio station, then as editor-in-chief of the Israel Air Force magazine. In 1988 she won the Yitzhak Sadeh Prize for military literature, for *G-Suit*, written with Aharon Lapidot. Today she works as an editor of biographies and other non-fiction.

**My Husband’s Away**

a novel
Tel Aviv, Yedioth Ahronoth, 2014. 222 pp.

No butterflies here, or romantic sunsets. Instead a fast, furious and hilarious book that you cannot put down except to laugh out loud. The heroine is a successful lawyer who has always done the “right thing,” until one day her husband leaves her for an older, less attractive woman and she tries to fathom where she went wrong.

Halperin is skilled at describing this woman who apparently has everything. She is wealthy, attractive and fashionable, has a high-octane career, two teenage children who drive her crazy, and an eccentric mother—an aging diva—who lives in an old folks home and flirts with all the men, much to her daughter’s embarrassment. She has to juggle all these, as well as her search for a new husband, without losing her cool or creasing her designer blouse. She fights on all fronts and fails on all of them, but doesn’t break. Cynical, uninhibited and godless, she dares to speak about things that everyone else hides: Why kids don’t bring happiness, what routine sex with a husband is like, how to live with betrayal, what women are prepared to sacrifice for marriage, and what men are prepared to do for sex.

Mercilessly and with infectious humor, Halperin follows the heroine’s juggling act, which is also the story of an entire generation of frazzled women, the first to be told that they can have it all—marriage, a home, children, a career, a good salary, as well as looking like a million dollars.

Written with a light touch and much charm… It should be a bestseller.  
**Haaretz**

Every single sentence is witty, and you’ll burst out laughing at least once in each paragraph.  
**Maariv**

A side-splitting debut novel… it stars on three bestseller lists.  
**Yedioth Ahronoth**

Halperin has written a bestseller… Short, flowing chapters written with effortless wit.  
**Israel Hayom**
Zadok Zemach

The Last Painting of Jacopo Massini

Born in Tel Aviv in 1976, Zadok Zemach graduated with a BA in geology from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, then studied theater at Tel Aviv University, writing and direction at the Kibbutzim College, and scriptwriting at the Sam Spiegel Film and Television School. He works as performance manager for the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company. Zemach won the Bernstein Prize, 1999, for his play Cracks in the Concrete which was staged by the Habimah National Theater in 2007. His second play, Screwed, was awarded a special prize at the Beit Lessin Theater’s Open Stage Festival in 2007; it was staged in 2011 by the Toma Caragiu Theater in Romania and in 2013 by the Haifa Theater, which also staged a children’s play by him a year later. Zemach is currently writing a script for a feature film. The Last Painting of Jacopo Massini is his first book.

Zadok Zemach

The Last Painting of Jacopo Massini

stories
Tel Aviv, Am Oved, 2014. 166 pp.

Jacopo Massini, a poor and unknown Renaissance artist, wants to paint a fresco in a Milan monastery. His dream of creating a masterpiece and fulfilling his vocation is finally about to come true, but Jacopo is weak and unwell and the inflexible abbot of the monastery tries to tell him what and how to paint... Ezra Na’im, an elderly Jerusalemite, goes shopping in the market and is dazzled by the beauty of a young woman in a red car; what happens next has never before been seen by the market’s old-timers... Claire, formerly Batya, escapes from her poor childhood neighborhood in South Tel Aviv and begins life anew in Paris, but one day she is seized with longing for her parents, and makes a phone call... A humble old woman, Masleha, joins an outing of her retirement home to the Dead Sea. On the way she has an attack of stomach pains but is too shy to ask the bus driver to stop, until she can no longer hold it in and, for the first time in her life, she breaks free... Elazar causes a commotion in his hosts’ home in Germany, involving his ex-wife, his son, an Arab migrant accused of theft and two police officers. Although Elazar wants to come to the Arab’s defense, he doesn’t have the courage and remains silent.

In vivid language, with copious imagination and compassion, Zadok Zemach spins dramatic stories about small, weak and dejected people. They cultivate dreams and long for a little beauty to brighten their dismal lives, and sometimes they enjoy moments of grace.

His style is mature, virtuoso, varied. ... Zemach’s book [is] a rare surprise... a gift of beauty that should be announced from the rooftops.

Haaretz

A novella of rare beauty...
Zemach [has] a dramatic talent for creating emotional tension and release.

Makor Rishon

Zemach writes brilliantly...this is a wondrous world of tender, heartbreaking stories.

Kol Israel

A literary gem... I was captivated by the magic of this book...a literary pearl.

Blogspot

NEW BOOKS FROM ISRAEL • SPRING 2015

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BACK TO CONTENTS PAGE
Deakla Keydar, author, screenwriter and editor, was born in New York in 1975 and grew up in Israel. She studied screenwriting at the Sam Spiegel Film & Television School in Jerusalem and writes for adults as well as for youth and children. Keydar has published a novel, a collection of short stories, two best-selling books for youth and books for children. She has also written screenplays for TV, and several of her short stories are included in anthologies, both in Israel and abroad. Keydar lives in Tel Aviv and holds creative writing workshops.

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

Pain [Wounds and Wonders]
a novel
Jerusalem, Keter, 2015. 287 pp. [Publication date 1.4.2015]

Ten years after she was seriously injured in a terrorist attack, the pain comes back to torment Iris, the heroine of Zeruya Shalev's new novel. But that is not all: Eitan, the love of her youth also comes back into her life. And although their relationship ended many years ago, she was more deeply wounded when he left her than by the suicide bomber who blew himself up next to her.

Iris's marriage is stalled. Her two children have grown up and are almost independent; she herself has become a dedicated, successful school principal. But now, after years of living without passion and joy, Eitan brings them back into her life. Unhappily, she must concoct all sorts of lies to conceal her love from her family, and the lies become more and more complicated. But can one ever restore the love of one's youth? Iris is in an impossible predicament, and in order to decide she tries to fathom whether her love with Eitan can heal all her pain, and more essentially, whether in the process she would have to hurt the people who are closest to her.

Foreign rights sold: German (Berlin Verlag)

No reviews available yet.
For The Remains of Love
An adventure of the psyche...a breathtaking triumph of love.
FAZ

A particularly intense novel, a fiery story that overwhelsms us.
La Repubblica

Searing, intense, provocative.
Author Nicole Krauss

A hypnotic study of an Israeli family by a novelist of immense talent.
The Independent
Eshkol Nevo

What was I trying to do? Just protect my women,” Arnon Levanoni says heatedly to his friend, a writer. The two are in a restaurant, Arnon pouring out his heart in a lengthy monologue. He is Israeli macho, aggressive and possessive, and his jealousy for his little daughter Ofri has made him lose control. When he becomes suspicious that his elderly neighbor has sexually molested Ofri, he attacks him, and the man is hospitalized. But Arnon gets into more trouble—with the neighbor’s young granddaughter, who is now threatening to destroy Arnon’s marriage in revenge.

Arnon and his family live in a quiet middle-class neighborhood. Above them lives Hani Doron, known as “the widow”—her husband is often away on business, and she lives shut-off with her two children. After her brother-in-law, in trouble with loan sharks, comes to hide out with her, their happy interlude together seem no more than a figment of her imagination.

On the top floor lives a genuine widow: former judge Devorah Edelman, who dreams at night that her super ego is being amputated. Now retired, Devorah is trying to start a new life and joins a social protest movement. But can she reconnect with her estranged son? Will Hani Doron overcome her problems? Can Arnon save his marriage?

The three floors of the house in Nevo’s novel reflect the tripartite Freudian model of the id, the ego and the superego. With insight and humor, Nevo lays bare the failures and psychoses that underlie the placid surface of the Israeli bourgeoisie, and gives us a gripping novel.

PARTIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION IN PROGRESS

[The book] reveals an Eshkol Nevo who is better than ever… you simply have to read [it].

Yedioth Ahronoth

Eshkol Nevo’s new book is the most powerful literary experience I have had this year.

TV Anchor Guy Meroz

This novel’s simple, flowing and engrossing language enables its complex theme to reach many readers.

Ynet

Another deserving bestseller for the collection.

La’Isha
Sami Berdugo was born in 1970. He studied comparative literature and history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. At present, he teaches creative writing at Tel Aviv University and Bezalel Academy of Art and Design. He also holds writing workshops for youth. Berdugo has published novels, short stories and novellas. In 1998, he won the Haaretz Short Story Competition. He has also been awarded the Yaakov Shabtai Prize (2002), the Peter Schweifert Prize (2003), the Bernstein Prize (2003), the Prime Minister’s Prize (2005) and the Newman Prize (2007). He is the first Israeli to be awarded a Sanskriti Foundation Residency (New Delhi, 2007). Most recently, he received the Isaac Leib and Rachel Goldberg Prize (2010).

An Ongoing Tale on Land
a novel

At age 48, Marcel Ben-Hammo still doesn’t know what to do with his life. He lives alone in temporary lodgings, estranged from his father and especially from his sister, who is bringing up his six-year-old son on her own. Now he goes back to revisit places where he had found the intensity of life in unexpected, dramatic and at times bizarre situations. Setting out from northern Israel and traveling south, his journey is mostly to locations on the sidelines, places that Hebrew literature tends to ignore. Marcel wants to find out what has changed and whether he could find a new beginning in any of these places. The events in the past offered him life choices that he avoided, daunting as well as attractive possibilities that he was afraid to embrace. For example, he wanders around a community where the parents of a girl he was once going to marry lived; he visits the grave of his mother, who died when he was a year old; he recalls Lufti, an Arab construction worker with whom he had a close and passionate relationship. But he cannot find himself. Meanwhile, he disfigures himself, cutting himself with a knife at each stop and deriving masochistic pleasure from it.

Berdugo’s travel literature is excitingly different—engrossing and unique in its observations and in the existential questions it poses. Electrifying Hebrew prose of a kind that only Berdugo can produce.

PARTIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE.

Every encounter with Berdugo’s work creates great intellectual enjoyment...His poetic style is mesmerizing.

Ynet
He has a distinctive voice, a language of his own.

Haaretz
A remarkable book.

Time Out
Asaf Schurr was born in Jerusalem in 1976 and has a BA in philosophy and theater from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He has worked on the editorial staff of the magazine Kahn for human and animal rights and environmental issues, and as editor for the culture, art and politics website Maarav. At present he is a translator and writes literary reviews for the Hebrew press. Schurr has received the Bernstein Prize (2007), the Minister of Culture Prize (2007) for Amram, and the Prime Minister’s Prize for Motti (2008). Motti was also a finalist for the Sami Rohr Prize (USA, 2013).

His novel Motti was published in English (Dalkey Archive), German (Berlin Verlag), French (Actes Sud) and Italian (Voland).

Asaf Schurr was born in Jerusalem in 1976 and has a BA in philosophy and theater from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He has worked on the editorial staff of the magazine Kahn for human and animal rights and environmental issues, and as editor for the culture, art and politics website Maarav. At present he is a translator and writes literary reviews for the Hebrew press. Schurr has received the Bernstein Prize (2007), the Minister of Culture Prize (2007) for Amram, and the Prime Minister’s Prize for Motti (2008). Motti was also a finalist for the Sami Rohr Prize (USA, 2013).

His novel Motti was published in English (Dalkey Archive), German (Berlin Verlag), French (Actes Sud) and Italian (Voland).

**The Building**

a novel

Omer visits the building where he lived as a child and looks for a spare key to the apartment he grew up in, which still belongs to his family. The apartment has been rented out, and Omer is there to evict the tenant's bad-mannered boyfriend, Aner, who has barricaded himself inside and refuses to open the door. As Omer knocks on the door of each apartment, trying to locate a key, a gateway opens up to his childhood, for the people he knew then still live there. The children are now adults, the adults have grown old, and each one has a story that he wants to tell.

The atmosphere of the novel is oddly surrealistic, and the people Omer meets are flawed and menacing. His nightmarish ramble from apartment to apartment lasts three days, the bleak uncertain present highlighting the memory of a childhood that was remarkably innocent, warm and secure. Now, the apartment house feels like a seething inferno, a disaster zone, and Omer's journey is both enjoyable and painful as he wanders like a sleepwalker through the shadows of daily life, exposed to old, dark secrets that lurk beneath the surface. And over it all hovers a riddle that will be solved at the end, after a surprise discovery in the basement.

In his unique and brilliant style, Schurr takes a profound look at human life and at the world of writing.

PARTIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE.

**Click here for a complete listing on the ITHL website.**

**Literature at its finest...This book is superb.**

**Makor Rishon**

Schurr succeeds in writing prose that is both youthful and mature...a serious literary talent.

**Yedioth Ahronoth**

Many readers will feel that the descriptions fit their own story, bang on.

**Mako**
Benny Barbash

_Benny Barbash_ was born in Beersheba in 1951, and currently lives in Tel Aviv. He holds a BA in history from Tel Aviv University. During the 1980s and 90s, Barbash was a leading figure in the Peace Now movement, and was involved in many initiatives, both local and international, to further Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. He has written fiction, plays and screenplays, including the script for *Beyond the Walls*, a landmark in Israeli cinema which won several international prizes. Barbash has received the ADAI-WIZO Prize (Italy, 2006) and the “Public’s Favorite” Prize for *My First Sony* (Paris, 2008).

His books have been published in seven languages, among which: English (*Headline*); German (*Berlin Verlag; Ullstein; List*), French (*Zulma; Points*), Italian (*Giuntina*).

His bestselling novel, *My First Sony*, is forthcoming in Spanish (*Blackie Books*). *Life in Fifty Minutes* is forthcoming in French (*Zulma*).

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**Life in Fifty Minutes**

*Love Hate Envy Friendship*

_a novel_

Tel Aviv, Yedioth Ahranoth, 2015. 270 pp.

_When it comes to humor there aren’t many Israeli writers who can compete with Benny Barbash, and his new book is further proof of it._

Zahava, married with two grown children, finds a blonde hair on her husband Dov’s undershirt. She suspects that he has a mistress and starts to investigate. Married for over 30 years, she has long lost interest in the man who snores next to her at night. Gone is the attractive guy for whose sake she gave up everything and became religiously observant. Now, Dov has left religion, lost his looks and developed irritating habits, and she is just a bored, frustrated housewife. So she feels compelled to expose her husband’s treachery.

The methods Zahava uses to solve the mystery of the blonde hair and the mad scenarios that cross her fertile mind make for a hilarious plot. Odd clues bolster her suspicions and feed her obsession: a pistol that she didn’t know about, and a mysterious box that she finds in his desk. But despite all her efforts, she can’t open it, and even an expert from the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem finds it impossible.

To crack the secret of the box, readers have to get to the end of the novel, and on the way they will have a hilarious read.

PARTIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE.

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In his prickly, irony-rich language, Barbash takes us on a bitter yet semi-playful trip through realms where everything is imploding.

_Yedioth Ahronoth_

[The book] ultimately allays all of the fears, every keyhole gets its key, every secret is unraveled.

_Israel Hayom_

An excellent and engaging book that flows...The process that the readers undergo is riveting.

_Marmelada_

A fine writing ... mesmerizing and enriching.

**People of the Book**
Nurit Zarchi

In Her Shadow

stories
Tel Aviv, Yedioth Ahronoth, 2013. 101 pp.

The stories in this collection fuse into a kind of novel, in which Nurit Zarchi journeys back to the world of her childhood. Her father was a writer. After his death, her mother ruled all. Twice widowed, she is depicted as a domineering, emasculating woman, who has had to give up her own artistic ambitions to cope with the harsh demands of Israeli life. Although she insisted on having a piano in her home, she transmits a clear warning to her daughter to steer clear of the arts. But her daughter—the narrator—cannot accept a life of stifling mediocrity and longs to escape to loftier, more satisfying worlds. As she matures, she becomes aware of similarity between herself and her mother. Both grew up without a father, in the shadow of a dominant mother who was hardened and emotionally dulled by the hardships of life. Unlike her mother, however, the narrator is not prepared to surrender her hope of salvation through literature. But her attitude towards it is ambivalent: although it gives her moments of happiness and sublimity, it also entails frustration, loneliness and personal sacrifices.

An absent father and the suitcase of manuscripts that he left behind, life in the shadow of an active, troubled mother, the fraught relationship between a woman writer and her poet husband, a brief romance between a teacher and a young man many years her junior—all these and more are the subjects of Zarchi’s unique and inspired writing.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION IN PROGRESS.

Nurit Zarchi was born in Jerusalem in 1941 and grew up at Kibbutz Geva. She studied psychology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and later literature and philosophy at Tel Aviv University. Zarchi has worked as a journalist and holds creative writing workshops for children and adults.

Zarchi has published novels, short stories, poetry, a collection of essays and over 100 books for children. Her many prizes include the Prime Minister’s Prize twice (1980; 1991), the Ze’ev Prize (five times), four IBBY Honor Citations (1980; 1984; 1998; 2004), the Bialik Prize (1999), the Education Minister’s Prize for Lifetime Achievement (2005) the Amichai Prize (2007), the Ramat Gan Prize (2010), the Lea Goldberg Prize (2011) and the Landau Prize for Poetry (2013). Her books have been published abroad in 10 languages.

CLICK HERE FOR A COMPLETE LISTING ON THE ITHL WEBSITE.
Raquel Chalfi

Selected Poems


Already when her first book was published, in the mid-1970s, Raquel Chalfi’s poetry stood out for its poetic distinction and the originality of its worldview. Indeed, her poetry reflects a rich, emotive and chaotic inner world: Gazing at the outside world with wonder and curiosity, Chalfi is vulnerable and shifting, without clear boundaries and riddled with inner contradictions. She questions the intriguing similarity between self and cosmos, and the urge to merge with the world creates exciting but also perilous experiences. Fusion with the cosmic or social is multi-faceted, and her attitude toward it is ambivalent. For these are experiences that threaten the “I” with loss of control and a collision that may lead to the brink of insanity. These fears are expressed, for example, in the flora and fauna that populate her poetry—real, imaginary or hybrid creatures, sometimes marvels full of vitality and at others monsters. Chalfi’s witches play a similar role—these poems have aroused much interest and become very popular among readers. But her witches express ambivalent qualities: daring, power, creativity, sexual independence and a revolt against repression on the one hand, and on the other: vulnerability, resignation, victimhood, and painful crashes to the ground of reality. Thus they are both wondrous and mundane; they soar to heights, but then sink down to reality, are defeated and pay the price.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF SELECTED POEMS AVAILABLE.

A lyrical poet, subtle and precise, whose work radiates warmth, life, and wisdom.

Amos Oz

Chalfi has a remarkable talent for enabling the poem to morph into a living illustration, a spectacular show of verbal animation.

Yedioth Ahronoth

This is super-intelligent poetry of consciousness, highly aware... An unending wellspring of wise and lovely poetry.

Yekum Tarbut

Poet Raquel Chalfi was born in Tel Aviv, where she lives and works. She completed her MA in English literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and later studied theater at Berkeley as well as film at the American Film Institute in Hollywood. Chalfi has worked as a journalist and film maker and has taught film at Tel Aviv University. She has made documentaries as well as experimental films and has written plays for which she won awards, both in Israel and abroad. She published her first book of poetry, Underwater and Other Poems, in 1975. Chalfi is the recipient of several literary awards, among which the Prime Minister’s Prize (1999), the Ashman Prize (1999) the Bialik Prize for Poetry (2006) and the Brenner Prize for Poetry for The Book of Creatures (2013).

Click here for a complete listing on the ITHL website.
Ronit Matalon

Read & Write

essays

In this collection, Ronit Matalon looks at Israeli life and culture and interprets them through stories about her family and childhood in a rundown immigrant neighborhood populated mainly by Mizrahim, Jews from Arab countries. It opens with a series of autobiographical essays, each of which can be read as a short story. These are followed by essays on photography and the plastic arts, thoughts about people coping with various situations, political essays, and comments on literature. There are also portraits of writers, artists and intellectuals sketched with powerful imaginative force. The book as a whole portrays the “Israeli condition” with its rifts and contradictions, its stormy drama of identities and the dialogue between its Mizrahi voice and hegemonic Zionist discourse.

A central theme is Matalon’s engagement with Middle Eastern identity and the positive aspects of the meeting between Western and Oriental cultures—the intellectual openness, sensitivity to the suffering of the other side, and understanding for the positions of those considered the enemy. Her political essays deal with the First Intifada and describe visits to Gaza and Palestinian refugee camps that leave impressions still relevant today.

In Matalon’s work, there is no distinction between the personal and the national, and she reveals unexpected convergences in a warm tone full of humor, sympathy and compassion.

PARTIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE.