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**English Section:**

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**Designer:**

Amnon Katz

**Typesetting & Production:**

Mofet-Rosemarine

**Hebrew Cover:**

The blend of "high" and  
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Shmuel Katz.

**Editorial and  
Administrative Offices:**

Institute for the Study of  
Jewish Press and  
Communications, Tel Aviv  
University, Ramat Aviv  
69978. Tel: (03)6413404,  
(03)6408665.  
Fax: (03)6422318

**E-mail:**

ocarmen@post.tau.ac.il  
http://spinoza.tau.ac.il/hci/ins/jpr  
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### **Institute for the Study of Jewish Press and Communications – Information Center**

The Information Center of the Institute for the Study of Jewish Press and Communications has established a computerized research library with an online data base of some 110,000 articles and newspaper clippings published in the Jewish and Israeli media from 1989 onward, updated daily. Topics include the functioning of the Jewish print and electronic media; relations with governmental, public, legal and economic networks; the mutuality between the media and society; and information on media figures. Such areas as security, criminal and economic affairs widely covered by the media are on file, as is a wide range of bibliographic materials on the history of the Jewish media in Israel and throughout the world.

A special section contains titles and details of approximately 10,000 Jewish periodicals in some 40 languages published since the late 17th century, constituting a significant portion of the estimated 15,000 Jewish periodicals thought to have existed.

The Center also houses several collections of current and historical exemplars of the Israeli and Jewish press, including special issues, and about 1,500 relevant books, video and audio cassettes and photographs.

For information, contact **Carmen Oszi**, Tel: 972-3-640-8102. E-mail: **ocarmen@post.tau.ac.il**

## “HIGH” CULTURE AND “LOW” CULTURE – THE DILEMMA / Michael Keren

The growing exposure of the world's societies to mass means of communications heightens the lament over the destruction of “high” culture by “low” culture. High culture is that created and consumed by elites, while low, or popular culture is created for and consumed by the masses. A philharmonic orchestra that performs for the privileged in a concert hall reflects high culture, while a pop group that performs in a public park reflects low culture. Shakespearean theater is perceived as culturally superior to TV drama; mainstream literature is seen as more important and worthwhile than airport fiction; the press is divided into sober, fair-minded newspapers read by the elites which produce them, and the sensationalist yellow newspapers that appeal to the masses.

Although this differentiation is accepted by many media researchers, it loses its validity in a post-modern world that refuses to identify culture – humanity's material and spiritual way of life – with the priorities of defined elites. One of the central characteristics of the communications revolution today is what as seen is the limited ability of defined elites to control mass communications, resulting in the development of a new culture characterized by the blurring of the boundaries between elitist and popular. The appearance of the Philharmonic on popular TV talk shows is an example of this trend.

Conceivably, our failure to understand and internalize the nature of this culture – both in its new format and its ancient sources – is linked in no small degree to the strong feelings evoked by a discussion of the waning of high culture, which is identified with artistic and intellectual achievements that are ostensibly being destroyed by the media. Yet, we must attempt to analyze the process of development of the new culture, and the dilemmas that are involved, in terms applicable to the communications world in which we live. The present issue of *Qesher* contributes to this analysis by illuminating the dilemma between high culture and low culture as reflected pronouncedly in the Jewish media from their beginnings.

The opening article, by Yaron Katz, describes the technological revolution that is about to introduce hundreds of new broadcasting stations into the Israeli telecommunications market as constituting a cultural revolution which threatens traditional values nurtured in the past by public broadcasting. The article calls for a public debate on the methods by which global media contents are adopted.

The growing tendency in the theater to adopt modes of expression identified with popular culture, especially in TV,

underlies Dan Orian's analysis of the reciprocal relationship between theater and TV in Israel. The Hebrew play *Games in the Backyard*, which deals with the case of a rape at Kibbutz Shomrat, demonstrates the development of a new genre, in the author's view: TV-influenced theater.

Gideon Kouts, exploring the roots of the aspiration by the modern Hebrew press for popularization, presents a historical review of the newspaper *Hakol* (“The Voice”), founded in Koenigsberg, Prussia, in 1876. Its editor, Michael Levi Rodkinson, typified the “new journalist” in search of a mass audience.

Uzi Elyada describes the confrontation in the Hebrew press of Eretz Yisrael at the end of the Ottoman period between “proper” journalism, typified by restraint and responsibility, and “yellow” journalism, characterized by hedonism and an appeal to the emotions. This conflict, which raged between *Ha'aretz* (“The Land”), representing the former approach, and *Do'ar Hayom* (“Daily Mail”), representing the latter, is shown by the author to have constituted a veritable “kulturkampf.”

A slightly different perspective is offered by Dana Arieli Horowitz, who describes the deliberate blurring of the distinction between high and low art in the Weimar Republic, which went to the root of the identification made in Nazi Germany between “degenerate” art and the Jews.

Yecheiel Szeintuch depicts the unremitting war waged in Warsaw of the 1930s between writer Aaron Zeitlin and the Bund organ *Vokhenschrift*. The Bundist periodical, dedicated to creating a mass secular Jewish culture, attacked the elements of religiosity and individualism in literary creativity such as Zeitlin's for nonconformism with the line of “serving the new literature of the masses and their culture.”

Edna Nahshon describes an astonishing struggle conducted by means of public trials within the leftist Jewish press in the US during the 1920s, especially between the socialist *Forverts* (“Forward”) and the Communist *Freiheit* (“Freedom”). Inter alia, the author explains *Forvert's* trend toward popularization vis-a-vis *Freiheit's* emphasis on maintaining high literary standards.

Dan Almagor posits a penetrating challenge to the widespread differentiation between art, literature or mainstream drama, on the one hand, and work considered light, trifling, entertaining, journalistic or publicistic, on the other. He does so by means of an analysis of the work of poet Nathan Alterman, which reveals Alterman's oeuvre – in its abundance of facets and colors – as

essentially a single organism in which the same motif, the same lyrical sketch and sometimes even the same turn of phrase reappears in an 'ephemeral' newspaper column, in a cabaret-style lyric, in an explicitly 'mainstream' poem, in a prose sketch, in a play and even in the translation of a classical play.

Gabriel M. Rosenbaum tells the remarkable story of *Haroman Haza'ir* ("The Miniature Novel") publishing house, which operated in Eretz Yisrael from 1939 to 1961 and was the first non-mainstream Hebrew publisher to establish itself firmly. It published romances, crime stories, adventure, westerns and sports stories aimed at providing "entertaining literature of a worthy standard," in the words of founders Avraham and Yisrael Faragó, immigrants from Hungary. The author explains the success of the Miniature Novel in Eretz Yisrael as filling a need for non-mainstream literature and highlights the influence it had on creating a link, by means of translations, with both Hungarian and

English literature.

In the closing article, Hanna Adoni, Naomi Kessler-Feinstein and Shlomo Bosidan present the findings of research on cultural consumption in Israel's outlying regions, which supports the post-modernist claim that the boundaries between elitist and popular culture are blurred, especially in the realm of home consumption. Their analysis, moreover, points to the development of a "middle culture" that embodies this blurring.

We wish to thank the judges who reviewed the articles in this issue and submitted their evaluations. The board will be glad to consider articles for publication in the next two issues of *Qesher*, the first to be devoted to research by candidates for advanced degrees in the field of Jewish communications, and the second to be devoted to the role and status of women in the Jewish press and media.

## INDIGENOUS CULTURE AND MULTI-CHANNEL TV IN ISRAEL: DO THEY GO TOGETHER? / Yaron Katz

The communications revolution taking place in Israel today includes wide-ranging changes in the development of means of communications and a gradual transition from limited public broadcasting to commercial, competitive broadcasting and the adoption of advanced technologies. A vital stage in this process in Israel occurred during the transition from a single-channel reality to multi-channel TV with the introduction in the early 1990s of cable TV and the establishment of a commercial channel. The continuation of the process is anticipated with the start of direct satellite broadcasting and the establishment of an additional commercial channel. Ultimately, the communications revolution will be fully realized with competition between digital technologies and the transition to an open skies policy.

In light of the changes taking place in TV culture with the introduction of competition between the broadcasting media, public demand has grown for the removal of governmental media regulation and for additional TV and radio channels. This development creates a new TV culture molded by the multi-channel communications revolution, which differs from the indigenous culture that characterized the media in Israel for many years.

An examination of the changes in Israel's communications policy reveals a process of adaptation to norms throughout the world. The communications revolution that began in the US during the 1970s reached Europe approximately a decade later, eventually penetrating into other countries, including Israel, and today is becoming global. Yet, in the case of Israel, distinct local influences are at work balancing out global communications trends. This stems from the need to protect qualitative local programming and prevent an inundation of low-quality foreign programs. Nevertheless, because multi-channel culture has proven to be a force more powerful than governmental capacity for media regulation, Israel needs to work out a communications policy that is both attuned to the global and technological changes of the 21st century yet able to protect indigenous culture.

The goal is to deal correctly with, rather than attempt to prevent, the cultural revolution stemming from multi-channel TV. This revolution creates a reality in which values based on traditional educational and cultural contents – which policy makers in Israel attempted to nurture with the aid of the electronic media – are

crushed under the steamroller of popular Western culture. The steamroller threatens not only the traditions of sub-cultures but the traditions of the majority culture as well. This trend is enhanced by each additional broadcasting channel, leading to the conclusion that ways must be found for traditional cultures and the new communications media to coexist in harmony.

Integrating a multiplicity of broadcast channels with an indigenous culture demands the right balance between technological development on the one hand and protective devices for local culture on the other. This should be the goal of the regulatory authorities in Israel. In adopting the findings of the Zuckerman Commission appointed in 1998 to examine the structure of the Israel Broadcasting Authority, then prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu announced that he favors preserving public broadcasting and in parallel recommends implementing an overall reform in the broadcasting field based on the open skies principle and the removal of restrictions on the private sector in the field. Prime Minister Ehud Barak, in a Knesset debate on the influence of TV on violence among children, responded to the argument presented against the commercialization of TV and the multiplicity of foreign programs by declaring that he has no intention of interfering with satellite broadcasting or the Internet, and that youngsters must be educated toward correct consumption of the new media. Progress cannot be blocked, he explained. What is needed is education to understand technological development and the global media.

A comprehensive communications policy should reflect this thinking. It should be the basis for public debate on the future of the media in Israel while serving as a springboard for education toward correct, productive consumption of global communications. A similar approach should be taken toward multi-channel competition and anticipated competition between technologies: so long as multi-channel TV does not serve the interests of indigenous culture, protective systems under public supervision must be set up to preserve such culture.

Multi-channel culture, therefore, requires advance preparation – not opposition but education toward correct consumption, while planning a comprehensive policy that will guide Israel's electronic media into the 21st century at a world level of development.

## TV-INFLUENCED THEATER IN ISRAEL / Dan Orian

Theater and television in Israel have developed a curious interconnection, with Israeli audiences responding best to theater that imitates TV news magazine formats.

The 1970s and '80s – the golden age of Israeli theater, witnessed a large number of original plays focused on the country's social and political reality, turning the stage into the favored medium for drama. TV, by comparison – a single-channel medium then – produced few original dramas, favoring imported English-language series.

The introduction of a second channel and cable TV in the early 1990s altered the drama menu for the Israeli viewer. Home-grown TV plays were offered, some theatrical or cinematic in style but most typifying the TV medium – melodramas, comedy series and soap operas. These changes lowered the status of the Israeli theater, which, as in other countries, was forced to contend with the new TV-dominated reality.

Historically, the theater in Israel and in the pre-state *yishuv* was perceived as "high" culture and its contents were taken seriously, with various controversial plays becoming the subject of national debate. Audiences looked to original drama as a vehicle of enlightenment over such troublesome issues as cultural identity in a society of immigrants. However, only the affluent could afford the theater and a large segment of the population was excluded from this cultural arena. The situation changed radically with the introduction of television. The world of drama became accessible to the entire public on a daily basis, a revolution which has made a deep impact on theater both in terms of content and form.

Theater was suddenly relegated to the pre-electronic age, perceived as a somewhat old-fashioned art form. Nevertheless, it maintained its viability, partly by adopting certain TV-type attributes. One such characteristic is the blurring by TV of the distinction between reality and fiction, as in the blend of documentary with drama. Another is the segmentation of TV – programmatic segments interrupted by commercials – as compared to the continuous flow of associations in theater or film. Significantly, contemporary theater has adopted a more abbreviated, segmented style.

TV genres, too, have influenced the theater, for example "masculine" dramas based on a dominant patriarchal conception, and "feminine" dramas that focus on gender and challenge dominant ideologies. Another distinctive TV influence is an emphasis on the inter-textual, i.e., character image rather than plot.

The viewer's identification with the leading characters, reinforced by the intimacy of the very location of the TV set in the home, creates a sense of involvement with the characters in a series over a period of months or even years. TV characters evoke interest, empathy and strong affection or disaffection by millions of viewers in different countries and cultures, making plot secondary. Moreover, the actors playing the lead characters are firmly identified with them in the public mind. The writer and the director essentially serve the celebrity actor/actress and not the other way around.

The Hebrew play *Games in the Backyard* by Edna Mazya, first produced in 1993 by the Haifa Theater, well illustrates the influence of television. Running for nearly 600 performances, it has been seen by some 250,000 persons, a significant record considering that most of the audience has consisted of young people. Generally, plays written for young audiences have not had great success in Israel. This play is an exception, and, translated into various other languages, it has been produced successfully in Belgium, Germany, Austria, Romania, Russia and England.

The plot revolves around a rape and the trial that follows. Embodying the merge of fact and fiction, the theme stems from an actual case of gang rape of a 14-year-old girl at Kibbutz Shomrat in 1988. The victim submitted a complaint to the police, naming 11 perpetrators, but the D.A. decided to close the case in 1990 because of the fragile emotional state of the complainant, which would preclude court questioning. Without her testimony, the suspects, all teenage boys, could not be convicted. Thereafter, however, the D.A. office revised its position based on a new psychological evaluation, and reopened the case. In 1992 the Haifa District Court acquitted the suspects on the basis of reasonable doubt, evoking a public outcry led by women's organizations. The D.A. appealed the decision in the Supreme Court, which in 1993 convicted four of the suspects of rape, sentencing them to imprisonment.

The case elicited wide attention both because of the suspects' background (a kibbutz, viewed as establishment) and the widespread protest following the first sentence, manifested, inter alia, by the play under discussion.

The initiative for the play had come from its director, Oded Kotler, who also headed the Haifa Theater and had previously been director of drama at Israel TV. He raised the idea with playwright Edna Mazya, an experienced film and TV writer. Although she denied that the play was written about the Shomrat case

specifically, she acknowledged that the event had served as the inspiration for it. The publicity surrounding the case also undoubtedly contributed to the success of the play. This interplay of reality and fiction indeed typifies TV docu-drama. The play, moreover, is segmental, shifting repeatedly and rapidly from courtroom to scene of the crime. The young actors, graduates of a teenage TV program, take on dual roles as the teenage characters and the attorneys. The male influence is primary, while the single

female role is that of sexual victim. Dialogue accurately mimics teenage usage.

Contemporary theater creates a dialogue with TV through a mixed genre of TV-influenced theater aptly exemplified by *Games in the Backyard*. Still, TV also epitomizes a culture of commercial ratings which some theater people reject, preferring to continue producing plays that reflect theater art as high culture.

## “HAKOL” AND THE BEGINNING OF THE POPULAR HEBREW PRESS IN EUROPE / Gideon Kouts

Today's mix of “high” and “low” journalistic genres in the popular Hebrew press in Israel (with the “low” clearly dominant) has its roots in the emergence of the Hebrew press in Europe during the second half of the 19th century. What distinguished the Hebrew press then, as compared to now, was its advocacy of objectivity as a goal, an attribute delegitimized today.

Both the notion of a popular press and the goal of journalistic objectivity were widespread trends in Europe and the US during the second half of the 19th century. Seeking a mass audience for the medium, newspapers reduced prices and adjusted contents, thereby reaching out beyond the middle class consumer to the working classes. They adopted a simplified narrative style, published popular serialized novels and adventure stories, focused on human interest, and introduced illustrations and a livelier format. “Facts,” or the informative model, was favored over “values,” or commentary. The aim was to attain popularity through “objectivity.” This trend, however, did not necessarily result in greater accuracy than previous models, for a newspaper’s “objectivity” could take the form of providing a forum for many views – pluralism – or it could mean refraining from taking any stand – neutrality.

The Hebrew press in Europe was largely influenced by the general press. It attempted to acquire a mass Yiddish-speaking readership in the same way that Pulitzer in the US sought to tailor an English-language press to the vast immigrant public during the 1880s. However, the Hebrew press in Europe underwent a process of modernization later than other newspapers, and functioned always as a minority press. In addition, it struggled with the ongoing process of the molding of its very language. Moreover, because the audience was by definition educated and inclined

toward ideological conviction, the goal of popularization was somewhat contradictory. Furthermore, the Hebrew press bore the major responsibility of promoting and disseminating Hebrew literature. Still, it aspired to popularization, precisely because the audience of Hebrew speakers was so limited.

*Hakol* (“The Voice”), edited by Michael Levi Rodkinson (1876-93), viewed objectivity as stemming from pluralism and carried a variety of views. As such it was the only forum in the established Hebrew news press for socialist writers, although Rodkinson himself, surprisingly, was identified with the Hasidic camp. His attitude toward linguistic style was similarly eclectic: he allowed each writer to express himself in his own style, high or low.

The paper, founded in Koenigsberg, Prussia, in 1876, was the first modern Hebrew paper to appear twice weekly. Adopting a light narrative style, it aimed primarily at entertaining the reader. A competitor, the weekly *Hamabit* (“The Observer”), edited by Peretz Smolenskin, appeared in Vienna but lasted only half a year. Both periodicals aimed at the Jewish masses in Russia and Poland at a time when popular new radical movements – socialism and nationalism – flourished alongside the new social realism in literature. Smolenskin, however, a confirmed nationalist and anti-clericalist, defined objectivity as neutrality and avoiding airing his views.

The mid-1870s was a time of crisis for the Hebrew press. It failed to live up to the expectations of its Enlightenment readership and did not expand its circulation. These weaknesses were related to some extent to the dashed hopes of the Jewish population in Russia for liberalization under Tsar Alexander II and its dismay at growing anti-Semitism among the intelligentsia, leading to

cynicism regarding all the fashionable ideologies. In any event, the existing Hebrew press barely dealt with current ideological issues. *Hatsfirah* focused on popular science, *Halevanon's* orientation was Orthodox, *Hamelitz* closed down temporarily, and *Hashahar* appeared only once a month.

A new Hebrew journalism was needed. In the event, it was an outsider who provided it. Rodkinson (b. Dubrovno, Belorussia, 1845; d. New York, 1904), brother of the editor in Jerusalem of *Havazelet*, Israel Dov Frumkin, was steeped in Hasidism and wrote several books on the topic. After becoming involved in questionable brokerage deals in St. Petersburg, he landed in Koenigsberg, where he changed his name and began to publish *Hakol* and, thereafter, other periodicals. Untrained literarily and non-ideological by nature, he viewed the establishment of a successful popular newspaper as the goal, and not the promotion of any given ideological agenda. Typically, instead of issuing a manifesto to announce the launching of the paper, he published a sample issue, showing a modern commercial approach to the newspaper as a product.

The issue was a potpourri of items on politics, science, general knowledge, the Mishnah and a variety of features. Linguistic purity was not Rodkinson's strong point, nor did it appear to be of interest to him. Spoken Hebrew was deemed suitable enough – an approach favored by many popular newspaper publishers in other languages, but unknown in Hebrew publishing.

The first issue, published on August 8, 1876, was sent out free of charge to a list of subscribers, probably because Rodkinson's name had been smeared by his competitors. Columns included coverage of the Koenigsberg stock market, poetry, biographies, fiction and travelogues. Obituaries and advertisements also appeared. The issue was roundly criticized by the Hebrew-speaking intelligentsia, but it evoked interest.

Rodkinson, in urgent need of an assistant editor, took on a young socialist, Eliyahu Wolfe Rabinowitz, for the task, permitting him, in a telling move, to advance his views as he liked in the paper so long as he got the paper out. The translated foreign news items were not "tailored"; contributors' articles were barely edited; and the format was haphazard. Intentionally or not, this laissez-faire approach highlighted the publisher's "entertainment," or "objective," outlook. Additionally, Rodkinson habitually published bald diatribes against his many critics in the literary world, thereby providing his readers with gossip and sensation,

which increased circulation.

*Hakol* became popular, but Rodkinson needed to expand circulation further. He traveled to Russia and urged key literary personalities from all camps – Hasidic, Mitnagdim (opponents to Hasidism) and Maskilim (the Enlightenment camp) – to publish articles in his newspaper without fear of editorial cuts. He successfully recruited such Enlightenment writers as poet Gershon Joseph Brill, Moses Leib Lilienblum and the giant of Yiddish literature, Mendele Mokher Seforim. He also continued publishing pro-socialist articles, bringing in younger subscribers from that camp. With this, he excoriated his socialist competitors, *Hashahar* and *Ha'emet*, demonstrating a truly pluralistic spirit.

Filling a modern role as publisher rather than editor – a distinction not yet entrenched in the Hebrew press – Rodkinson found himself too occupied with business matters to attend to editorial duties and took on an editor, Israel Efrat. By the end of the second year of its existence, *Hakol* became a twice-weekly. Not only had circulation increased, but more writers began to write for the newspaper, including promising younger authors. Most were identified with socialism and with Russian literature (in contrast to the German influence on the preceding Enlightenment generation) and, conscious of the importance of writing for a popular newspaper, they helped expand circulation further.

Besides Lilienblum, such noted writers as Isaac Kaminer, Morris Vinchevsky and Alexander Zederbaum contributed to *Hakol*. However, rivalry between Zederbaum, who had edited the defunct *Hamelitz* and later revived it, and Rodkinson became intense when Zederbaum publicized records of legal proceedings against Rodkinson in Russia during his business crisis there some years earlier. This step angered the Hebrew literati and the socialists, who supported Rodkinson and boycotted *Hamelitz*. Another rival, journalist Efrayim Dienard, may have informed on Rodkinson to the authorities at Zederbaum's instigation. Rodkinson was detained by the police for three weeks in 1879. Thereafter, he fell ill. The government censor intervened in the paper increasingly (apparently on orders from above) and the paper came out irregularly. It briefly reverted to a weekly publishing schedule, followed by Rodkinson's relocation to Berlin, where he published the paper under various names. In 1885 he resumed publishing *Hakol* from Vienna. Emigrating to the US, he published it in New York during 1889-90. The last issue came out in Chicago in 1893.

## THE "YELLOW" PRESS VS. THE "PROPER" PRESS IN ERETZ YISRAEL OF THE 1920s / Uzi Elyada

The confrontation between yellow journalism and "proper" journalism in Eretz Yisrael began as far back as the end of the Ottoman period. In 1908, Itamar Ben-Avi turned *Hatzvi* ("The Deer"), the newspaper launched by his father – the noted reviver of the Hebrew language, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda – into a communicative, entertaining vehicle focusing on dramatic events, disasters, crime, gossip and exposes of corruption. The ensuing success of this new journalistic style brought on a competing sensationalist paper, *HaHerut* ("Freedom"), which also gained popularity. These developments prior to the First World War engendered a sharp debate in the *yishuv* over the implications of such a press. Opponents of the new style, led by the labor press, especially *Hapo'el Hatza'ir* ("The Young Worker"), and author Joseph Hayim Brenner, claimed that sensationalist journalism endangered the entire Zionist enterprise. This was because it eschewed the opportunity to create an educational press that would mold a generation of labor pioneers in Eretz Yisrael and opted instead for a hedonistic press. Such a press, they charged, represented the interests of the merchant, plantation-owning and speculating sectors of the *yishuv* and distracted young people from the humanist values of the Hebrew socialist movement.

The outbreak of the war shelved the issue, but it re-emerged with the establishment of the British Mandate. The Balfour Declaration (1917) imbued *theyishuv* in Eretz Yisrael with a sense of mission regarding the prospect of realizing what until then had been a vague hope for a Jewish political entity. The building of an independent new society was viewed as a historic responsibility. The question of the kind of press that was desirable toward this end was a central issue, reflecting the perception of newspapers then as powerful tools for good or evil.

The first newspaper to meet the criteria of "good" was *Hadashot Ha'aretz* ("News of the Land"; later *Ha'aretz*), established by the British military authorities in 1918 and sold in 1919 to the Jewish philanthropist Isaac Leib Goldberg. It was controlled by a group of Zionist writers and communal activists who included Mordecai ben-Hillel Hacohen, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, Joseph Lurie, Leib Yaffe and Moshe Gluecksohn (editor in chief during 1922-37). Mirroring the outlook of the educated *maskilim* in Russia of the late 19th century, the newspaper viewed the journalist as an intellectual whose primary role was not the gathering of news but the providing of commentary along given sociopolitical guidelines, an approach labeled by its opponents as the "Odessa

school." Journalists, in this perception, were educators and opinion molders of the masses. Moreover, as authors ("journalist" was considered a derogatory term), they produced work that was expected to withstand the test of time.

For *Ha'aretz*, the definition of a "proper," as compared to a "yellow" newspaper, was a central topic that recurred throughout the 1920s. A major emphasis was laid on the independence of the newspaper to express its views, dictating economic independence as a prime condition. By contrast, the "yellow" paper was not economically independent and would sell its services to the highest bidder, making it irresponsible in the context of public morality.

Because the "proper" newspaper viewed itself as a public mentor, it could and should decide which type of commentary the public should be exposed to. Freedom of expression, in this thinking, had limits. The same filter was applied to news reports. Only "important" items with relevance to the basic principles of the paper were worthy of publication.

No sooner did *Ha'aretz* appear, then another daily was established – *Do'ar Hayom* ("Daily Mail"), published by Ben-Avi, which, in the perception of *Ha'aretz*, embodied all the negative characteristics of yellow journalism. Ben-Avi's entire conceptualization of the press differed radically from that of the "Odessa" group. Influenced by periods of time he spent in Paris, London and New York before and during the war, Ben-Avi was an enthusiastic advocate of Western notions of a mass-circulation press. The newspaper's task, in his view, was to provide lively information in a dramatic style enhanced by large headlines and attention-getting pictures. It should inform, entertain, surprise, anger, amuse and arouse curiosity. It must also be profit-making.

In contrast to the publishers of *Ha'aretz*, who were immigrants from Russia, *Do'ar Hayom* was a native effort staffed by writers who hailed from the *moshavot* (villages; e.g., Asher Sapir and Alexander Aaronsohn), and from the old Sephardi community (e.g., Avraham Almaliach). The very name of the paper was taken from the mass-circulation London newspaper, *The Daily Mail*, published by Lord Northcliffe. Ben-Avi had established close ties with Northcliffe, was funded by him, and hosted him on a visit to Palestine in 1922. Patterning his paper on the *Daily Mail*, Ben-Avi aspired to create a popular modern newspaper. In his thinking, the label "yellow" was anachronistic. A good newspaper, he said, was a "healthy" newspaper, i.e., a paper that did not reflect the



“parasitic” mindset of the diaspora.

His linkage of the notion of a modern, healthy newspaper to the indigenous milieu of Eretz Yisrael was palpable from the very first issue of *Do'ar Hayom*, which announced that its target audience was the new Jew of Eretz Yisrael, liberated from the complexes of the diaspora. The blunt writing style, branded by *Ha'aretz* as “yellow,” was perceived by Ben-Avi and his colleagues as a reflection of the normalcy and vitality of the native Jew in his homeland.

*Do'ar Hayom* attained success, but it was denigrated relentlessly by *Ha'aretz* and by the labor weekly *Hapo'el Hatza'ir*. In Ben-Avi's view, this hostility reflected the patronizing attitude of the immigrants from Russia toward the native community. The difference in journalistic style between the two camps was part of a more fundamental controversy over the cultural identity of the emerging national entity. So convinced were both sides of the crucial importance of the daily press in molding this identity, that a veritable kulturkampf was waged over the issue of yellow journalism, with each side attacking the other viciously.

Targets of these attacks ranged from linguistic usage (*Ha'aretz* labeled its rival's usage “barbaric” and “castrated”) to content (“shallow” and “sensationalist,” according to *Ha'aretz*). Moreover, *Ha'aretz* was incensed by the temerity of *Do'ar*

*Hayom* to run muckraking exposes of distinguished Zionist personalities and institutions, which Gluecksohn lamented as “irresponsible.” Ben-Avi, for his part, viewed such crusades as one of the central pillars of a “healthy” press. Newspapers ought not be passive bystanders, he believed, but active players with the aim of protecting the ordinary citizen against injustice by the authorities. From time to time he titled his articles “*J'accuse*,” a reference to Zola's famous article on the injustice of the Dreyfus affair.

One of the subjects of a prolonged crusade in *Do'ar Hayom* during the early 1920s was the chairman of the *Va'ad Hatzirim* (Zionist Commission to Palestine), Menahem Ussishkin, whom Ben-Avi accused of underhanded tactics to retain the control of that body by the East European immigrant minority at the expense of the native majority in Eretz Yisrael.

*Do'ar Hayom's* crusades evoked vociferous responses by *Ha'aretz*, which published manifestos condemning its rival as dangerous to society, immoral and uncultured. In one retort, *Do'ar Hayom* ran an article by the distinguished Ben-Yehuda, who wrote: “*Do'ar Hayom* is not a proper newspaper but it is a newspaper.” This, he charged, was in contrast to *Ha'aretz* and *Hapo'el Hatza'ir*, which were no more than propaganda organs for political parties.

The bitter rivalry between these papers was to last throughout the 1920s.

## TWO TRIALS OF YIDDISH NEWSPAPERS IN NEW YORK, 1929 / Edna Nahshon

Yiddish cultural life in the US thrived during the 1920s, supported avidly by the leftist Jewish immigrant workers who arrived from Eastern Europe following the First World War. They turned the Yiddish press, Yiddish literature and Yiddish theater into a substitute for the religious practices that they had abandoned.

Within this mass trend, the Jewish Communist movement had a particular interest in providing for the cultural needs of the workers. In their thinking, catering to the cultural taste of the workers would help forge a closed radical world that would reduce the dependence of party members on “bourgeois” cultural providers and strengthen the sense of political belonging. Not only ought workers fight together for the cause, they should spend their leisure time together, too. The Communists were convinced that

they could organize unaffiliated but sympathetic Yiddish-speaking intellectuals into a common front. Such intellectuals, they believed, could not hope to be accepted into mainstream American cultural life in any case.

Opposing the communists in a long and bitter rivalry were the socialists, branded by the communists as the “right” and viewed as ideologically inferior.

Important centers of power for each movement were the Yiddish dailies identified with each camp: the socialistic *Forverts* (“Forward”) and the Communist *Freiheit* (“Freedom”). The former had a circulation of 200,000 during the 1920s, while the latter had only 16,000 then, although it reached 30,000 in 1930. *Freiheit*, however, could not be judged by circulation figures

alone. From the time it was founded in 1922 it established high literary standards and attracted some of the best Yiddish writers and poets as contributors, including H. Leivick, Moshe Nadir and Moshe Leib Halpern. Most of the contributors were not communists themselves but admired the multi-faceted Yiddish cultural blossoming in the Soviet Union then.

*Freiheit's* animosity toward the *Forverts* was not only political, namely for diluting its socialist commitment with the passage of time, but also stemmed from *Forverts'* willingness to publish sensationalist material and lowbrow literature using "common" language filled with Americanisms. These transgressions were perceived as reflections of the "reactionary" and "traitorous" leadership of the labor movement.

In 1929, *Freiheit*, under the editorship of M. Elgin, renamed *Morgen Freiheit*. The period was one of ideological radicalization in the Soviet Union, which preached an imminent global workers' revolution against capitalism and colonialism. Not only was cooperation with the socialists undesirable, Moscow held, the socialists were actually enemies of Communism.

The same period witnessed the traumatic attacks by Arabs against Jews in Palestine, culminating in the massacre of Jews in Hebron in August 1929. The event, reminiscent, in the consciousness of immigrants from Eastern Europe, of Kishinev-style pogroms, evoked a massive wave of condemnation worldwide, including mass rallies in New York and London supported by noted political figures.

Precisely at that moment of Jewish solidarity, the Communist Party chose to adopt a rigid anti-Zionist stance. Until then, *Freiheit* had never actually taken an explicit stand against Zionist activity in Palestine, although Jewish Communism in the US toed the Soviet anti-Zionist line. The newspaper's first reaction to news of the attacks by Arabs against Jews praying at the Western Wall in Jerusalem in August 1929 and to the massacre in Hebron was to accuse the British of conspiring with the Arabs against the Jews, comparing them to Petlyura and Belehovitz (Jew-killers during the Russian civil war), a reaction that typified that of the American Jewish community as a whole. Within hours, however, the paper was publicly reprimanded by the American Communist Party in the party's *Daily Worker*. Moscow's official reaction to the events was firmly pro-Arab, reflecting Russian interests in the Arab world and its anti-British policy. *Freiheit* quickly changed course, admitting that it had overlooked the "national revolutionary character" of the Arab uprising. Within days, the paper became a crude anti-Zionist propaganda tool, running a headline: "English Troops and Jewish Legionnaires Slaughter Arabs, Thousands Killed and Wounded: Haifa is in Flames." Editorial commentary emphasized the "revolutionary aspect of the Arab uprising," which was spreading to neighboring countries as a rebellion against

"Anglo-French imperialism." The anti-Zionist line was reinforced by rallies and demonstrations organized by Jewish Communists throughout the US against what they termed the "Zionist orgy."

The Communist response to events in Palestine evoked angry protest in the American Jewish community, including in leftist circles. Two-hundred shops in the Furriers Union, which had been under Communist domination, switched to the "rightist" union. An anti-Communist boycott organized by the Zionist organizations and the *Forverts* spread out from New York to other cities, replete with threats of physical violence against Communist activists. Newspaper venders in New York refused to sell *Freiheit* for five consecutive days, advertisers canceled ads, and, most seriously, several noted writers resigned from the staff, including Leivick and Abraham Reisen. Soon thereafter, the entire *Freiheit* editorial board was expelled from the Jewish Writers Union for anti-Jewish activity. Even the Yiddish Actors' Union, which avoided quarreling with the press, denounced *Freiheit*. The Communists were effectively excommunicated, a communal split that continued until the mid-1930s.

In September 1929, the Labor Zionist Farband, a fraternal benefit society associated with the Po'alei Zion movement in Palestine and active in the Yiddish cultural sphere, announced a public trial of the *Freiheit* and of the Jewish Communists to be held in New York's Central Opera House. Reporting on the event, *Der Tog* ("The Day"), which was involved in promoting the event, wrote that a capacity crowd of 3,000 attended and many others were turned away for lack of room. The six-member panel for the trial included the noted writer David Pinski, a founder of the Farband. Hayim Greenberg, one of the outstanding orators of the time, delivered the prosecution's address, while Leibush Lehrer, a noted lecturer and writer, took on the thankless role of the defense. Prof. Hayim Fineman, the only figure to speak in English, summarized the highlights for the benefit of representatives of the English-language press.

The accused, *Freiheit* and the Jewish Communists, were not invited to participate. Following addresses detailing the crimes of the Communists against the Jewish people, the "defense attorney" admitted all the charges, pleading only "insanity." The trial concluded with a collective conviction of the Communists for betraying the Jewish people, followed by a declaration of support for the Zionist enterprise in Palestine.

Palpable elements in the event were the bitterness of the Zionists over the internal split within the Jewish labor movement and their resentment that the Communists had managed to acquire an image of protectors of Jewish culture. The uproar over the Palestinian issue presented a golden opportunity to settle accounts with the Communists. They were depicted as causing demoralization in the Jewish labor movement and as destroying

rather than supporting Jewish culture.

The model for the notion of public trials was to be found in Eastern Europe, where such events were widespread in the educational system and as a propaganda tool in the early years of the Soviet Union and even beforehand, in Tsarist Russia. Several public trials on various issues were held during this period in the Jewish *yishuv* in Palestine as well.

On the same day and at the same time as the *Freiheit* trial, September 22, 1929, the Communists, fighting back, staged their own trial at the Star Casino in New York in the presence of over 4,500 persons. The accused were the "pen slaves of the Yiddish press," namely the three New York Yiddish dailies – *Forverts*, *Tog* and *Morgen Journal*. Three writers who had resigned from *Freiheit* were singled out in particular as traitors to the Jewish workers – Reisin, Leivick and Menahem Bareisha.

Clearly, this trial was meant to reinforce the Jewish Communist

movement. The three accused journalists, summoned to the trial, did not attend, although Reisin, who was more closely identified with *Freiheit*, sent a letter explaining his motives. The letter was ridiculed at the event. Spokesmen for the prosecution were Melech Epstein and M. Elgin, leading writers for the *Freiheit*. Spokesmen for the Communist movement were Kalman Marmor, Y. Boruchovitch and William Baum. Workers were given a role as witnesses, including several who had been pioneers in Palestine but had left because of disappointment with Zionism.

The Yiddish press in America, attacked as "chauvinist-reactionary," was accused of seeking to benefit from Jewish blood shed in Palestine and of distorting the reality there, which was, ostensibly, incitement of the Arabs by the Jewish right.

Both trials represented a cathartic moment in the history of the American Jewish left, replete with mutual slander, hatred and ridicule in a juridical charade.

## BETWEEN "HIGH" AND "LOW" CULTURE: PHOTOMONTAGE IN THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC / Dana Arieli Horowitz

Photomontage, considered "low" culture (along with caricature and comics) in Europe between the two world wars, gained wide popularity in the Weimar Republic (1919-33) in Germany. An art form that blurred the distinction between "low" and "high," it thereby reflected the transition to the modern era. Furthermore, as a creative new technique based on current material that sought to change the extant reality, photomontage lent itself to the entrenchment of political messages.

A central figure in the field was John Heartfield (born Helmut Herzfelde) who, together with a group of artists and writers, promoted various aspects of "low" art in an attempt to harness art in the service of political propaganda. The right in Germany then generally branded writers, artists, theater people, musicians and architects as "degenerates." They also associated these fields with Jews, perceiving the Jews as dominating German culture. Early on in his career, Heartfield, too, was labeled a degenerate as well as a Jew. Opponents of modernism in the Weimar Republic also stereotyped avant-garde artists as Communists, i.e., traitors and internationalists who eschewed nationalist content in their work and by implication were political subversives.

One of the most insistent charges by the opponents of the Weimar Republic, who later became supporters of the Nazis, was that the Jews controlled the media. The identification of the press

with Judaism (a notion that originated in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*) facilitated the spread of conspiracy accusations and other stereotypical perceptions that became entrenched in the latter 1920s.

Because of its popularity, photomontage in particular was considered a symbol of artistic degeneration. Heartfield, a Dada artist identified with communism, and the central figure to use the technique of photomontage for political aims, was singled out for attacks by the right, later underscored by portraying him as a Jew. This was factually untrue, although many Jewish artistic figures were in his orbit, including George Grosz, Kurt Tucholsky, Else Lasker-Schueler, Erwin Piscator and Hannah Höch.

Photomontage – the technique of cutting and pasting photo segments – was developed at the end of the 19th century once print technology produced the halftone. It was popularized by the Dada artists from 1918 onward as a means of copying reality in order to break down that reality. For these artists, photomontage symbolized the transition to a mass, urbanized society and a technological world, and served as a vehicle for criticism of the bourgeois mindset. "High" art, which portrayed the beauty of the world, held no interest for these artists. They were drawn to "low" art, i.e., art that distanced itself from such classic venues as museums, galleries and art academies and sought to convey

contemporary political messages.

The formative experience for Heartfield and his colleagues (part of the so-called "lost" generation), was World War I. A pacifist, Heartfield, as his close friend and colleague, George Grosz, was released from military service during the war for psychological reasons. He and his brother, Wieland Herzfelde, began writing for an anti-war magazine, "New Youth," which was soon banned. In an effort to circumvent censorship, Heartfield, together with Wieland, started a publishing house, Malik, in 1917. That same year, in the wake of the Soviet revolution, he, as many of his generation, shifted from pacifism to communism, and in 1918 joined the German Communist Party. The party's emphasis on propaganda and on the recruitment of artists as the spearhead of the revolution fascinated them. Piscator, Brecht, Grosz and many others in Heartfield's group joined the party, too, and created leftist modernism as a progressive alternative culture to conservative bourgeois mores.

Along with Wieland and George Grosz, Heartfield also joined the newly emerging Dada movement in Berlin in 1918, which viewed itself as a reaction to high-blown art, particularly expressionism, for its detachment from reality. Announcing that art was dead, the Dada movement dedicated itself to using art forms in the revolutionary political effort to alter reality. The identification of Dada with Communism became more explicit in the wake of the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht following the November revolution of 1918. That uprising paved the way for a cultural war in the Weimar Republic between the left, which was strongly influenced by the experiments in the Soviet Union and by modernist trends; and the right, with its reactionary, dictatorial and at times racial perceptions.

Heartfield's involvement with Dada blended with his publishing activity. Malik gradually became the print representative of the Communist Party, translating and publishing the leading socialist literature of the time. Heartfield served as artistic director and as house artist, together with Grosz. Collections of works by artists were also published. Books were censored from time to time, the publishing house was fined heavily, and Wieland was arrested. However, Malik continued operating until the Nazi rise to power in 1933, when it was forced into exile and relocated in Prague.

Heartfield was involved in various other related activities as well. In 1924 he became secretary of the Red Group, chaired by Grosz – a movement of radical Communist artists who viewed loyalty to Communism as taking precedence over commitment to vocation. He also served as the set designer for Erwin Piscator's Proletarian Theater, which mounted, inter alia, *The Good Soldier Schweik*. In the late 1920s he was named head of one of the propaganda departments of the German Communist Party. At the same time, he was involved in the pro-Communist *Neuer*

*Deutscher Verlag* (the New German Publishing Company) founded by Willy Munzenberg, an influential German Communist leader and member of the Comintern. In this context, Heartfield became associated with Kurt Tucholsky, a leading press critic of Weimar Germany whose columns were published in a compilation by Neuer Deutscher Verlag. Heartfield designed a photomontage cover for the book, which led to a ban on it. The publishing house also brought out a photo magazine, *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* ("Illustrated Workers Newspaper"; *AIZ*), which had a circulation of about half a million by the early 1930s. Heartfield designed the covers. He also designed political posters, a medium that elicited confrontations between groups of young Communists who stood guard over the posters and Nazi storm troopers who tried to tear them down.

Heartfield's art portrayed mankind as distorted and repulsive. He consciously preached identification with foreign ideologies that challenged the unity of the German people and heightened the sense of alienation of whole sectors of German society. His outlook was a prime example of what the Nazis called "cultural Bolshevism." Moreover, in Nazi thinking, the mass means of dissemination of Heartfield's art exacerbated its threat. Jews and Communists, they were convinced, had joined forces in a conspiracy to destroy the German people by controlling the media, the galleries, the art trade and artistic taste itself. It was for this reason that the Nazis claimed that Heartfield was a Jew. His influence was perceived as more dangerous than others' in that, through his photomontages, he repeatedly and devastatingly targeted the Nazi leaders personally – Hitler, Goebbels, Himmler, Goering and other leading party figures. He was one of the first figures to be interrogated by the Gestapo when the Nazis came to power. Urged by the German Communist Party to leave the country without delay, he escaped narrowly.

Heartfield and his brother lived in exile in Prague for the next five years and continued publishing *AIZ* from there, smuggling it into Germany. At the same time, the Nazis attempted to replicate his techniques in a pro-Nazi version of the magazine, titled *ABZ*. The ploy, however, failed and the public shunned the Nazi-sponsored publication.

Much of Heartfield's photomontage work skewering Hitler was produced during his exile. Typically, he frequently integrated linguistic puns and plays on words in his visual conceptions. The continued appearance of *AIZ* from Prague constituted a perpetual provocation to the Nazi leadership and they made concerted efforts to harass Heartfield. With the partition of Czechoslovakia in 1938, Wieland fled to Switzerland, but Heartfield tarried. British political figures and artists managed to arrange to defer his extradition to Germany and he escaped to England at the last moment in late 1938.

## LITERATURE, POLITICS AND HUMOR / Yechiel Szeintuch

The first half of the 1930s witnessed unremitting attacks by the organ of the Bund in Poland, *Vokhenschrift*, against Yiddish writer Aaron Zeitlin, a reflection of a deep conceptual gap between two currents in Jewish thinking in Eastern Europe then. The Yiddishist Bund distanced itself from everything connected with Jewish tradition and championed a secular Jewish social revolution with cosmopolitan values. It shared this impetus with the Jewish Communist movement, whose monthly was titled *Literarische Tribuneh*. In contrast, Zeitlin, a bilingual (Yiddish and Hebrew) writer, was steeped in traditional Jewish culture, which permeated his daring modernistic writing style. As an editor of the literary monthly *Globus*, he was delegitimized by the Bund weekly.

The ideological distance between the two camps was reflected in the statement of principles that appeared in the first issue of *Vokhenschrift* in January 1931. The weekly, edited by Hayim Solomon Kazdan and Jacob Pat, declared itself a forum for stimulating Jewish secular culture for the masses. This ideological commitment to secularism contrasted with Zeitlin's tendency toward religiosity. Moreover, the emphasis on a culture for the masses, or a workers' culture, conflicted with the individualistic approach to literary creativity. The *Vokhenschrift's* stated intention to entrench its ideological message in Yiddish culture and literature worldwide sharpened the dispute further, turning it into a kulturkampf between the two periodicals during the 1930s.

Literature, wrote *Vokhenschrift* editor Kazdan in 1933, cannot simply be a bystander to the momentous labor struggle that was taking place – it must serve this emerging agenda, not cloak itself in a "tallit of philosophies, esthetics... and symbolism." Either Yiddish culture will be one identified with the masses, he declared, or it is fated to be diminished. Earlier, reviewing a new play by Zeitlin, "Jacob Jacobson, or the Creation," Kazdan praised its grotesque satiric style as good theater but dismissed the play because of its ideological failures. In true Marxist socialist spirit, he lambasted the play for its "ideological emptiness," "bourgeois" mentality and negative message. No positive, revolutionary, activist ideal was held out. Zeitlin's failing, in Kazdan's view, was that he did not believe that the world would be redeemed someday. His world, therefore, was a world without purpose, and the play a reflection of Jewish decadence rather than true art.

*Globus*, founded in July 1932, aimed to provide an alternative forum for Yiddish writers in Poland and throughout the world, publishing literary works, criticism, poetry, essays, plays and short stories. At the same time, Zeitlin and Isaac Bashevis Singer, its editors, took on the task of fighting back against *Vokhenschrift's* attacks vociferously, devoting an article in each issue to the dispute.

The conflict with the Bundist *Vokhenschrift* and the Communist-sponsored *Literarische Tribuneh* did not start with the appearance of *Globus* in 1932, but predated it with the appointment of Zeitlin as chairman of the P.E.N. Club of Yiddish writers in Warsaw at the start of the 1930s and the policy of the group regarding the acceptance of new members. Animosity was also related to the labeling of Zeitlin as a "shund" ("trash") writer and to the ideologically based deligitimation of him. More broadly, as discussed in an article by Singer in *Globus* titled "The War Has Already Begun" (1932), the dispute reflected the relentless buildup of forces by two ideological movements that were sweeping over Europe – socialism/communism and fascism – neither of which, Singer argued, viewed man as a goal but only as a means. Writers were pressed by the politicians representing these forces to align themselves with one or the other side. The end result, Singer predicted, would be a blood bath. Politicians, he wrote, viewed the neutral writer as a rival and a mercenary. They had begun to "reorganize" art for their own ends. The goal of such "recruited" art, Singer maintained, was inevitably to spread hatred between groups, for without hatred there is no conflict.

Singer, as his close friend Zeitlin, lived with the keen sense of an impending world war as early as 1932 – a war whose suffering would vastly exceed that of World War I. He left Poland in 1935, recounting once to the author that by then he had read Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and had believed every word. He characterized politicians generally as opportunists who attached no importance to the individual and were fanatic in realizing their own ends, inevitably through bloodshed. Intellectuals, by contrast, are empathetic to human suffering, are prepared to go against the mainstream, yet have limited influence. The true writer, Singer held, will never serve a murderer, for he loves his fellow man too well.

## “LIGHT” VS. “SERIOUS”: NATHAN ALTERMAN’S RHYMED NEWSPAPER COLUMNS VS. HIS LYRIC POETRY / Dan Almagor

Satiric rhymed newspaper columns, a genre that has been popular in the Hebrew press in Israel from the 1930s onward (see *Qesher* Nos. 17-19), are perceived as a lesser genre than “lyric” or “serious” poetry essentially for two reasons: they are written quickly in response to current events, and they are published in the transitory medium of the newspaper. This bias is unfounded, especially in the history of Israeli literature, for, in addition to Nathan Alterman, the work of such distinguished writers as Max Brod, Leah Goldberg, Dov Sadan, Jacob Fichman, Baruch Kurzweil, Hayim Shirman, Gershom Scholem and Avraham Shlonsky was first published in newspapers.

Alterman, the foremost figure associated with the rhymed satiric column, earned his living essentially from this genre and viewed himself as a journalist first, although he devoted a great deal of his time to a plethora of other literary genres as well, as poet, playwright, essayist, lyricist, translator, storyteller, critic and researcher. Yet, he himself appeared to have graded his poetic output: he anthologized most of his lyric poems (which had first appeared in literary magazines) in book format starting in 1938, but did not bother to do so for the lyrics he wrote for songs (which as early as 1934 earned him the critics’ title of “prince of the Hebrew song”), and only began to do so for his rhymed satiric columns in 1948, over a decade after he began writing them. Moreover, he pointedly subtitled the first and second volumes of his rhymed columns – both of them modest collections culled from his many “Seventh Column” pieces that appeared in *Davar*. Only after his death was the bulk of his journalistic work anthologized, as were his lyrics, children’s songs and original and translated plays.

Significantly, many of his “serious” poems, and a number of his plays, contain segments of real events, such as from the Second World War and the Holocaust, which echo earlier journalistic or song-writing output.

In the event, after his death (in 1970) his rhymed columns were not only anthologized, they served as a fertile source for songs, for analysis and for quotation, aired on radio programs, utilized by the army entertainment troupes and reworked for the country’s early

song festivals. Verse such as “Evening” (first published in *Davar*, July 20, 1934) and “December” (*Ha’aretz*, December 18, 1934) was posthumously rescued from oblivion to be put to music and become well-loved songs.

Unlike most of the writers in Palestine then, Alterman dealt with the significance of the Holocaust as soon as rumors of it reached the country, in 1942, writing rhymed columns then that were immediately, and throughout the war, quoted and recited in homes, classrooms, rallies and on the radio. These poems retain their powerful impact no less than his “serious” poems written on the same theme at the time and later on.

An examination of both his lyrics and his rhymed satiric columns reveals motifs that are closely interwoven with those in his more “serious” works, leading to the realization that his entire oeuvre is essentially a single living organism. One example of many is his theme of the link to the homeland. A poem on this theme, “The Olive Tree,” describing rootedness, appears in his compilation of poems, *Stars Outside* (1938). Two years previously, his lyrics for the popular “Song of the Squadron,” which became the anthem of the Haganah Field Squadrons, contain a similar line echoing the theme of entrenchment. Eight years after the appearance of *Stars Outside*, in 1945, he returns to this symbol in one of his rhymed “Seventh Column” pieces in *Davar*, titled “The Land of Biria,” describing attempts by British soldiers to uproot fences built by Jewish settlers at Biria. Still later, in his compilation of poems, *City of the Dove* (1957), several ballads echo the same theme, such as “The Foundling,” “Michal and Michael” and especially “Lo, a Day and an Evening of Battle Have Ended,” highlighting the link between tree, man and soil.

Another recurring theme is the conflict between the helpless child and society or the state. The heroes of many of Alterman’s columns on the tragedies of the Holocaust, the pre-state illegal immigration and the War of Independence are children (e.g., the famous image of the girl and boy in “On a Silver Platter”), including Arab children.

Alterman’s work consistently exemplifies the intermingling of “light” and “serious.”

## “THE MINIATURE NOVEL” AND “THE QUILL”: THE TRANSPLANTING OF A POPULAR HUNGARIAN GENRE FROM BUDAPEST TO TEL AVIV / Gabriel M. Rosenbaum

Early in the 1930s, a Jewish journalist, Miklós (Moshe) Faragó set up a publishing house in Budapest which he named Világvárosi Regények, or “City Novels”. Faragó had had a colorful past. Forced to flee Hungary in 1920 because of his involvement (as press-office director) in the short-lived Communist government under Béla Kun in 1919, he escaped to Vienna. There he was contacted by the founder of a Zionist newspaper in Transylvania, Chajim Weiszburg, who was recruiting a professional staff for his new weekly, *Új Kelet* (“New East”). Later *Új Kelet* became a daily, and Faragó was hired as its first editor. Permitted to return to Hungary in 1927, he became the manager of the daily *Mai Nap* (“Today”), and several years later founded City Novels.

The new publishing house devoted itself to a single product: abbreviated novels in a 64-page booklet format of 11x15 cm. sold for 10 Fillér (a few pennies). At first the novels, apparently originating in Austria, were translated from German into Hungarian. Soon, however, the novels were being written by Hungarian authors, most of them well known, who were approached by Faragó to write for his format in return for generous payment by the standards then. Each booklet was issued in some 15,000-20,000 copies and was distributed throughout Hungary. At first they appeared weekly. Later they came out twice-weekly. Genres and subjects included romances, crime, adventure, westerns and sports. While popular story booklets had appeared in Hungary before, Faragó aimed at a higher level than the typical “penny-novel” standard.

The rise of anti-semitism and the political atmosphere in Hungary convinced the Faragó family that there was no future for Jews there. Faragó and his two sons, András (Avraham) and István (Yisrael), traveled to Eretz-Yisrael (Palestine) in 1939 and set up a publishing house in Tel Aviv, calling it *Haroman Haza'ir* – The Miniature Novel, having meanwhile shipped copies of all the Hungarian booklets they had published, including printing plates for illustrated covers, to Eretz-Yisrael. Miklós Faragó and his sons approached writer and poet Avigdor Hame'iri, an immigrant from Hungary, with a proposal to serve as editor of their transplanted publishing operation. Hame'iri responded enthusiastically, later writing in an introduction to the first Hebrew booklet published by the firm that the genre of the small novel (as distinct from a long story) showed that for a novel to be exciting it did not have to be “trash, and that not all crime or adventure books are cheap literature. Meanwhile, a blatantly anti-Semitic article in the daily

*Magyar Újság* (“The Hungarian Newspaper”) in November 1939 attacked Faragó and his publishing house.

Returning alone to Budapest in 1940, Faragó installed a Christian as editor of his publishing house in light of new anti-Jewish employment laws. City Novels managed to survive until close to the end of the war. Several months before the Russian conquest, Faragó together with other writers and intellectuals, was taken into a forced labor squadron under the German army. City Novels was closed. He survived the war but his wife did not. In 1947 he returned to Eretz-Yisrael.

At first, the Faragós were highly dependent on Hame'iri in locating Hebrew translators and checking the translations. Once the brothers Faragó learned Hebrew, however, they were less satisfied with his contribution, primarily because they insisted that the linguistic level be simpler and closer to spoken Hebrew than was Hame'iri's literary style. Eventually, they retained Hame'iri for the prestige of his name alone, while Yisrael Faragó did the actual editing. When Hungarian-language sources dried up, English-language works were translated. The brothers Faragó also did their own printing, a skill that both had acquired at a vocational school in Vienna. Avraham Faragó in addition, designed covers, which he had learned to do in Hungary.

Paper rationing in Eretz-Yisrael and in the early years of Israeli statehood forced the publishers to reduce the length of the booklets from the original 64 pages to 48 and later to 32 pages. The firm was also forced by the Ministry of Interior to change the name of the booklet series from The Miniature Novel to “*Haqulmos*” (“The Quill”) so that it could qualify as a “weekly” and thereby be entitled to purchase paper. The format also had to be altered to assume the appearance of a magazine, acquiring such features as jokes, riddles and puzzles. A subtitle was inserted: “A Weekly Devoted to the Short Story and Light Reading.” The publishers' name, however, remained The Miniature Novel.

The first booklets appeared in editions of 3,000, dropping to 1,400 during the Second World War but rebounding and reaching 4,000-5,000 at certain periods. A brisk second-hand trade in the booklets also developed, while a large proportion of the readership, including pupils in schools, passed the booklets along from hand to hand. The booklets were ever-present in newsstands, at bus stations and in soldiers' rucksacks. The phrase “miniature novel” even appeared in a popular song by Hayim Hefer, “Love”.

Side by side with the Hebrew editions, the brothers Faragó



initiated translations of their booklets into other languages geared to various linguistic audiences in (Eretz-)Yisrael, but these were not as successful as the Hebrew editions and did not last long. Miklós Faragó republished the original Hungarian editions in Israel during the 1950s and '60s in a shorter 32-page format and, following the 1956 revolution in Hungary, exported them to the various countries where large numbers of Hungarians emigrated. Another initiative was a separate series of westerns, titled "The New Series," in a larger format. By then, the term "miniature novel" had become a generic concept in the Hebrew literary scene and in the Hebrew language. The format introduced by the Faragós was also copied by other publishers, especially in the romance and western genres, to the point that the market became flooded, which was one of the factors leading to the demise of the publishing house.

A significant aspect of the story of The Miniature Novel in Israel is that in publishing a total of some 1,000 editions, it became one of the largest Hebrew translation projects ever. Many of the

Hungarian novels were republished in a second revised edition, re-edited by Yisrael Faragó in which the brothers Faragó endeavored to update the Hebrew translation, striving to arrive at a simpler and more readable Hebrew style. Additionally, the brothers introduced Pseudo-original Hebrew novels by adapting Hungarian stories to the Israeli background. In all these activities, they regarded themselves as responsible for supplying the Hebrew reader with low-cost but high-level popular literature.

Noted literary and journalistic figures were involved in the enterprise, including, in addition to Hame'iri, Aharon Amir, Yehuda Edelstein, David Giladi, Mordecai Barka'i, Ya'akov Rabi and Benjamin Tammuz.

The Miniature Novel was the first publishing house for popular literature to survive for so long a period and to play a continuous role in Hebrew culture in (Eretz-)Yisrael. Competition from imitators as well as changes in the taste of the public began to erode the status of The Miniature Novel as the chief supplier of popular literature in Israel in the late 1950s, and it closed in 1961.

## CULTURAL LIFE IN ISRAEL'S OUTLYING REGIONS / Hanna Adoni, Naomi Kessler-Feinstein, Shalomo Bosidan

A research project examining cultural and media consumption in Israel's outlying regions, conducted in over 900 locations in Israel (both Jewish and Arab) in 1996, found significant differences in patterns of consumption based on level of education, size of community and ethnic origin. With this, the findings showed that a middle-level culture has developed in Israel which blurs the distinction between "elitist" and "popular" culture, especially in activity that takes place outside the home.

The study also showed that the most widespread leisure-time activity in all groups is trips throughout the country, get-togethers with family and friends, and reading newspapers.

The research covered outlying cities (population 50,000-99,000), towns (population 20,000-49,000), villages, kibbutzim and moshavim. All are served by *Omanut La'am* (Art for the People), a non-profit body that is parallel to the American National Endowment for the Arts. It aims to expand the consumption of culture in Israel, especially "elitist" culture (theater, art exhibits, ballet, etc.), and to reach peripheral population sectors.

Two general criteria may be said to define a hierarchical division

between cultural genres: fine vs. popular arts; and type of presentation, i.e., for a live audience vs. a reproduced format, as films, books or discs. Within this division, the higher end of the live-audience genre would include classical-music concerts, opera, ballet, exhibitions in museums and galleries, theater and experimental theater. The higher end of the reproduced genre would include educational and scientific TV programs, classic or innovative films, fine prose, poetry and periodicals geared to elite groups. Popular shows would include pop or folk concerts, musical comedies, melodramas and light comedies. Popular reproduced materials would include TV entertainment programs and series, entertainment and thriller films, best-selling books and mass-circulation periodicals.

The research under discussion posed three sets of questions: (1) What are the characteristics of cultural-preference groups in Israel; are they determined primarily by level of education or by other sociodemographic variables (age, gender, ethnic group, extent of religious observance); or are they influenced by size and type of population center? (2) What is the relationship between various cultural patterns; can certain cultural activities be defined



as elitist and others as popular; can a differentiation be made between cultural activity outside the home vis-a-vis at home; and can elitist or popular culture in the periphery be clearly delineated? (3) What is the relationship between cultural-preference groups and cultural activity, and to what extent do background, size of population center and type of population center influence this relationship?

The research sample consisted of 1,256 adults over the age of 20 from 964 Jewish and Arab population centers who were questioned by the Gallup Institute in Israel by telephone. The results indicated that the most frequent activity format by all groups was informal encounters with friends and family. Nearly half the respondents had such encounters on a daily basis (a statistic that reflects findings for the population as a whole. Trips throughout the country were also popular, generally with family or friends. A large proportion of leisure time was spent at home, generally revolving around electronic media consumption (music and TV). Newspapers were read daily by over half the sample, a reflection of Israelis' high level of political involvement, which was further borne out by a finding that 20% of the respondents

belonged to a volunteer organization. All these data correspond with national findings.

The findings on out-of-home activity were more mixed but pointed to the potential for museums, theater and cinema as foci for encounters for residents of the periphery. Possibly most surprising was that patterns of cultural and media consumption in the outlying regions did not differ significantly from those of the general population.

Another significant finding was that the rise in educational level in Israel has led to greater consumption of "high-level" cultural activity, especially inside the home. Level of education in this context was shown to have the greatest bearing both in the Jewish and the Arab populations.

Yet another important finding was that the better educated population in the small population centers were the most consistent consumers of the *Omanut La'am* cultural offerings, both elitist and popular, presumably because these were all that was available. In this respect, type of population center had a significant influence on cultural consumption.

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## CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

**Prof. Michael Keren:** Department of Political Science; head of the Institute for the Study of Jewish Press and Communications, Tel Aviv University.

**Dr. Yaron Katz:** Member of the faculty, Holon Institute of Academic and Technological Studies; author, *It's a Sellers' Market: The Marketing of Politicians in the Media* (1999).

**Prof. Dan Orian:** Department of Theater Arts, Tel Aviv University; author, *The Image of the Arab in the Israeli Theater* (1996), and *The Jewishness of the Israeli Theater* (1998).

**Prof. Gideon Kouts:** Department of Jewish Media and History, University of Paris 8; editor, *Re'eh*, International Journal for Hebrew Research in Europe; Kol Yisrael reporter, France.

**Dr. Uzi Elyada:** Senior lecturer, Departments of General History and Communications, University of Haifa.

**Dr. Edna Nahshon:** Lecturer, Jewish Theological Seminary, N.Y.; specializes in Jewish performance studies; author, *Yiddish Proletarian Theatre: The Art and Politics of Artef, 1925-1940* (1998).

**Dr. Dana Arieli Horowitz:** Lecturer, Political Science Department, Tel Aviv University; author, *Romance in Steel:*

*Art and Politics in Nazi Germany* (1999).

**Prof. Yechiel Szeintuch:** Yiddish Department, and Joseph and Ida Berman Chair in Research of Yiddish Literature, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; author of books and articles on Yiddish literature and culture in Poland between the world wars.

**Dr. Dan Almogor:** Lyricist; translator and researcher of Hebrew literature, language and the milieu of Eretz Yisrael in modern times.

**Dr. Gabriel M. Rosenbaum:** Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

**Prof. Hanna Adoni:** Department of Communication and Journalism, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; past editor, *Devarim Ahadim: The Israeli Journal of Education, Culture and Society*.

**Naomi Kessler-Feinstein:** Doctoral student, Department of Communication and Journalism, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

**Shlomo Bosidan:** Graduate, Department of Communication and Journalism, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; past head of research division, *Omanut La'am*.