

# Pe'amim

Studies in Oriental Jewry

**149**

## Poetry and Literature

Editor: Avriel Bar-Levav

Associate Editor: Yair Adiel



**Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish  
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## **In This Issue**

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Ronit Matalon's fiction deals with all ranges of "otherness". Matalon writes about the relations between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim, Jews and Arabs, new immigrants and natives, center and periphery, homosexuals and heterosexuals, blacks and whites. Thus she breaks down the term "Otherness" and highlights its variegation; at the same time, she presents the heterogeneousness inherent in hegemony, which is not composed of a single layer but of different strata. In *The One Facing Us*, Matalon describes how a person can concurrently belong to the hegemony and to the Others, and characterizes the dilemmas stemming from this dual belonging. In contrast to the hegemonic outlook, that the Other is a disturbance to proper functioning, Matalon construes a thematic mold of "strangers at home". Here hegemony is an alien force that penetrates the home of the Others, threatens them, usurps their space, applies spatial violence to them, and enforces contact on them. The Other is the one that tries to break away and be autonomous, but hegemony is resolute in invading their home, defiling them, and wounding them because of their difference. Matalon's literary mode seeks to restore to the Others the right of speech, the right of looking at hegemony without mediation, and hence it is characterized by fragmentation which constitutes striving against the canonic and established literary formula. While Zionism highly prized people's similar and common features, so as to create an "Israeli" identity, Matalon insists that the migrant does not shed his earlier identity but rather strives to create a new identity that combines different identities,

with the adoption of some new elements and the rejection of others. Women's literature in general and the essays of Jaqueline Kahanov in particular are afforded a special place in Matalon's prose, the purpose being to sharpen the Otherness of female writing in the Israeli literary landscape, and to protest against its marginality. Women's writing in Matalon becomes the banner of Otherness, and the thing that can encompass cultural pluralism.

Dr. Shai Rudin teaches at the Gordon College of Education, Haifa  
shairudin1@gmail.com

The poems that will be discussed in Shira Shevarsman-Maziel's article are short and daring poems of love by Todrus Abulaphia. In structure and content these poems meet the accepted definitions of the category of the classic poetry of love. However, they are also open to an additional erotic interpretation. Abulaphia, like some of his predecessors, includes Biblical verses in his poems, but the dissonance between the original context and his intentions cause amazement and ridicule.

Shira Shevarsman-Maziel is a PhD student at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Department of Hebrew Literature.  
shira.maziel@gmail.com

The article by Dvora Bregman offers a first comprehensive survey of Hebrew poetry in 17th century Livorno. After identifying the relevant authors and their major compositions, it goes on to specify the social role this poetry played

in the local community and in other Jewish communities. It clarifies its Baroque nature and its contribution to the history of Hebrew poetry. Of special interest is a discussion concerning the “Academia de los Sitibundos” on which a recently published poem by Moses Zacuto sheds new light

Dvora Bregman is Professor Emeritus at the Department of Hebrew Literature, Ben Gurion University of the Negev.  
dabregman@013.net

During the 1970s there was a shift in historiographical writing about Jews from Islamic countries and their heritage. This article by Tamir Karkason discusses Shlomo Haramati’s work regarding three Ottoman Sephardi *Maskilim* who preceded Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. The article elucidates Haramati’s use of these figures to empower the Jews of his time. Tamir Karkason is a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of History of the Jewish People and Contemporary Jewry, and a Rotenstreich Fellow in the PhD Honors Program of Mandel School for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

karkason@gmail.com

Joseph Conforti’s article deals with the activities of Dr. Mordecai Ehrenpreis during the years 1900-1914, when he served as Chief Rabbi in Bulgaria. Ehrenpreis, an ardent young Zionist from Galicia, a Hebrew literature critic and a graduate of the Advanced Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin, stood out in the early Zionist Congresses

alongside Herzl and Ahad Ha'am. His time in Bulgaria was marked by the fierce struggle between the local Zionist movement and the old leadership (the *Notables*) over the hegemony of the Jewish street. The Zionist movement in Bulgaria identified him as the main factor preventing control over local Jewish communities and tried to dismiss him. In spite of this struggle Ehrenpreis was able to advance the various causes of Bulgarian Jews. In the last years of his service in Bulgaria, Ehrenpreis moved away from the national movement and from Hebrew writing. In the summer of 1914 he abandoned the Bulgarian Jews, and settled in Stockholm where he served as chief rabbi and became a Swedish writer.

Dr. Joseph Conforti is a scholar of Bulgarian Jewish history in the modern era.

fati@netvision.net.il

This issue includes Prof. David Malkiel's review of the book by Andrea Morpugo about the history of Jewish cemeteries in Italy from the Middle Ages up until the 20th century. A review of Nina Pinto-Abecasis's book, *The Peacock, the Ironed Man and the Half-Woman: Nicknames, humor and folklore in the day-to-day speech of Tetuan's Haketia-speaking Jews* by Prof. Tamar Alexander also appears here.