

BOOK REVIEWS

Yehoudah Shenhav, *Ha-yehudim-‘Aravim: Leumiyut, Dat, Etniyut* (The Arab-Jews: Nationalism, Religion, Ethnicity) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2003), pp. 291.

With his new book, Yehouda Shenhav has made a most important contribution to our understanding of the complexities of Israeli society and politics, as well as of the fragility of Zionism. Any discussion of this book, however, must begin with a few words about the term “Arab-Jews” and its appearance in a book’s title. In the gallery of hyphenated modern Jewish identities, the term “Arab-Jew” occupies a non-place. Unlike such collectives as “German-Jews,” “American-Jews,” “French-Jews,” “Russian/Soviet-Jews,” “Arab-Jews” sounds more like an impossible oxymoron than a representation of a specific cultural and social reality. Indeed, the existence of a Jewish state that has been at war with the “Arab world” for almost 60 years, along with the strong European/Western cultural and political orientation of that state, not only helped dismantle Arab-Jewish communities in practical demographic terms, but also conceptually eliminated their very possibility. The rich terminology referring to Middle Eastern Arabic speaking Jews that emerged since their mass immigrations to Israel after its establishment (which effectively destroyed them) does not include the term. We speak, for instance, of *Edot Ha-Mizrah* (“Communities of the East”), *Mizrahim* (“Easterners,” or “Oriental Jews”), “Sephardim,” “Jews from Arab Countries” and the like, but we never speak of “Arab-Jews”—as if there could be nothing more threatening than the word “Arab” next to the word “Jew” connected by a hyphen (Arab-Jew) rather than separated by a slash (Arab/Jew). It is noteworthy that, by and large, the Arab world and its intellectuals have been equally silent about the Arab-Jewish question. While we hear of Arab-Muslims and Arab-Christians, we do not, as a rule, hear about Arab-Jews.

Only recently has the term appeared in print among Mizrahi critics of Israel and Zionism who insist on being identified as Arab-Jews, first in English, in the writings of Ella Shohat, and eventually translated into Hebrew and published in Israel.¹ It is within this context that Yehouda Shenhav offers his scholarly intervention.

Shenhav's book is a set "of four independent essays," each of which "focuses on one particular question in the social history of the Arab-Jews and Zionism." Nevertheless, as the author stresses, all four chapters of the book relate to each other "chronologically, analogically, and theoretically" (15). This specific definition is important because this book is not a history of the Arab-Jews as such—such a history, if at all possible, has yet to be written. Instead, the author offers what he calls "a genealogical analysis," which is designed "to undo the teleological order of history" and to "undermine the [assumed] connection between a Jewish identity and Zionist identity." Simply put, while the Zionist grand narrative typically presupposes that the "Jewishness" of the Arab-Jews is identical to and coterminous with their "Zionism," this study undercuts this presupposition and aims to "expose its social constructedness" (14). Shenhav effectively and convincingly delivers on this promise by unpacking the (unholy) trinity of "ethnicity, religion, [and] nationalism" on which Zionism rests. In this respect, if this book deals with the "Arabness" of Middle Eastern Jews, it does so mostly through examining the way in which Zionism constructs (permits) and understands it. Even more so, this book deals with the "Jewishness" filtered through Zionist prisms of these people. This point is crucial, for it directs the way in which this book should be read.

The first chapter of the book presents the "discovery" of the Arab-Jews by Zionism. In 1942 a group of several hundred men, all employed by the flagship construction company of the Zionist movement, "Solel Boneh," began working on a major project in Abadan, Iran. The men of "Solel Boneh" came to Abadan under the auspices of British Imperialism, as subcontractors of an Anglo-Iranian company. In this respect the "colony" in Abadan was a quintessential example of the convergence of British colonial interests and Zionist goals. However, as Shenhav points out, it was also an encounter between Zionists and Arab-Jews. The presence of Solel Boneh's men in the region enabled the "illegal entrance" of Zionist emissaries to "Baghdad, Teheran, Mosul, Choramshar, Basra, Kirkuk, and other cities" (26). The lumping together of Iranian Jews, who are Middle Eastern, but non-Arab, with Iraqi Jews is a serious weakness of this book. It seems the author was sometimes not careful enough to re-work the Zionist blind eye to such differences without replicating it. He does mention that the appearance of "an autonomous Zionist network of activity ... between Basra, Mosul, Choramshar, Kirkuk, and Baghdad," caused the "presence" of Solel

Boneh people “in the region” (44). A historical inquiry into the specifics of this network might have produced a more fine-tuned analysis sensitive to differences between Iraq and Iran. In my opinion this is a central weakness of the author’s “genealogical analysis” of the Abadan Project.

The designation of the “Abadan Project” as the “ground zero” of the complicated relationship between Arab-Jews and Zionists is problematic but also useful from a historical point of view. Shenhav is well aware that there were earlier encounters between the Zionist movement and Middle Eastern Jews—most notably Yemenites and North Africans. However, 1942 is the first encounter between the Zionist movement and the Arab-Jews when at the “backdrop were concrete plans to bring them to Palestine/Eretz Yisrael” (referring to Ben-Gurion’s “One Million Program” on page 26).

In other words, this is the first encounter of Zionists and Arab-Jews when the latter were understood by the former to have a specific role to play within the evolving Zionist agenda. As Shenhav tells this story, this encounter was shaped by two equally dominant and not mutually exclusive paradigms: the colonial (British/European) and the national (Zionist/Jewish). That is to say, “Abadan” was the site where Eurocentric attitudes branded the Middle Eastern Jews as inferior Others (as “Arabs”), and at the same time Zionist sentiments wished to incorporate them within the National Jewish project (as “Jews”). Shenhav demonstrates throughout the chapter that this fusion between the colonial and national paradigms was not at all smooth; it produced a fraught and frustratingly elusive image of Middle Eastern Jewry that kept escaping stable definition.

This elusiveness is also in the second chapter, which deals with the “religionization” of the Arab-Jews, or what Shenhav calls their “Hadata” (as in “Dat” or “Datiut,” namely religious and religiosity). Here the author traces the origins of the bizarre insistence of the Zionist movement, a secular and secularizing movement, that the Arab-Jews were at once “religious” and “nationalist.” Interestingly, Shenhav’s reading of reports by emissaries of the Zionist Yishuv to Iraq shows that these personae, all “secular,” had complaints about the “failed” religiosity of the Jews they encountered there. They described these Iraqi Jews as either not religious enough, or as subscribing to a Judaism that was “not authentic.” Furthermore, the emissaries’ lack of “tolerance” and non-nuanced assessment of the religiosity of the Arab-Jews, claims Shenhav, also derived from European notions of religion that posit it in a binary opposition to the “secular.” As Shenhav points out, this uncanny discourse concerning the religiosity of the Arab-Jews was important and necessary, because of the place of Judaism as Zionism understands it: as the source of the passion to return to and claim Zion. That is, a religious passion that Zionism converts into a nationalist/political and secular fervor for Palestine. As another scholar, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin (2005), brilliantly

put it, “There is no God but He promised us the Land.” Shenhav’s uncovering of this specific slice of discourse reveals that for Zionists, or so it seems, Arab-Jews lacked both passions or were unable to convert their religious passion for Zion into a nationalist one.

Within this framework, Shenhav shows how Zionism’s emissaries, unable to understand Arab-Jewish religiosity, had instead to “invent it.” Better yet, Zionism had to “invent” the Arab-Jews as religious Jews so they could at least share with their European brethren the “proto-Zionist” phase of having a religious passion for Zion. Shenhav wraps up the chapter by showing how this peculiar attitude toward Arab-Jewish religiosity shaped the discourse concerning Mizrahim in today’s Israel: they are forever labeled as “religious” and “traditional” (117–120).

While Shenhav’s first and second chapters deal mostly with situations preceding the establishment of Israel, the third and fourth reveal episodes from the period after 1948. Chapter 3 shows how the Israeli government attempted retroactively to claim Iraqi Jewish property. After Iraqi Jews immigrated to Israel, Israeli officials in 1951 “confiscated” their property once again (after many cases of the Iraqi authorities having done so), by claiming it as part of the national (Israeli) property. This maneuver was an attempt to block Palestinian demands for reparation for property left in Palestine after the *Nakba*. That is, the threat of an Israeli “national” claim to Iraqi Jewish property was intended to stall movement on the question of Israeli reparations for Palestinian national property. Property restitution has surfaced time and again since the 1950s, always in response to the question of Palestinian property.

Chapter 4 shows how the Israeli state ultimately relegated the “struggle” to recover lost property to the Arab-Jews themselves; that is, to government officials of Arab-Jewish decent and other self-appointed representatives of the community, mostly rich Arab-Jews residing in the West, outside of Israel and the national framework altogether. The main focus of this chapter is the World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries (WOJAC), established in 1975. On the surface, there is nothing more logical than the creation of an organization of Arab-Jews in support of Israeli diplomatic efforts in the struggle against Arab diplomacy and the claims of Palestinian refugees. Yet Shenhav’s analysis of WOJAC shows how all the paradoxes produced by Zionism’s encounter with the Arab-Jews conceptually explode within it. WOJAC, no more than the Israeli government, could control and monitor a discourse that at once referred to Arab-Jews as Zionists who had immigrated to Israel out of their own volition and passion, and at the same time framed them as “refugees” who had fled their (Arab) homelands, leaving everything behind. In this fascinating chapter Shenhav shows how the organization’s attempts to reassert the primeval connection between Arab-Jews and their

previous homelands paradoxically challenged and indeed threatened Zionist notions according to which all Jews primordially belong to Palestine. He also shows how both Israeli and non-Israeli members of WOJAC began speaking in increasingly divergent voices, eventually leading the organization into a conflict with the government of Israel. The latter kept trying to dictate how members of WOJAC should best remember their past as Arab citizens and kept clashing with its members, particularly the non-Israeli ones. Not only was WOJAC unable to develop a coherent view of the Arab-Jewish past, but its Israeli members were not able to “articulate a consistent and not self-contradictory thesis concerning the circumstances of their own arrival to Israel” (183).

These case studies are fascinating. Nevertheless, one could object that Shenhav’s almost exclusive focus on Iraqi Jews undercuts somewhat the claim to be illustrating something generalizable about “Arab-Jews” as a broader category. Other Arab-Jewish communities appear only fleetingly in the background. The dilemmas and paradoxes of Arab Jewish identity as Shenhav so trenchantly details them are, indeed, to some extent characteristic of a broader swath of Arab Jewry. Yet many of their features derive from the specific historical experiences of Zionism’s encounter with the Iraqi Jews (and, again, in part, the Iranian Jews, who are not Arabs). One should also be wary of the usage of them “Arabs” in this context, because the book does not offer a nuanced discussion of “Arabness” as such or a historical overview of the term. Because this is a genealogy of “Arab-Jews” as a Zionist construction, one should not expect or demand to find a history of Arabness in this book. However, perhaps the term “Arabized Jews”—as opposed to the unhistorical “Arab-Jews” imagined by Zionism—would be more fitting when the author discusses the concrete people living in Iraq because the “Arab” national/ethnic identity of this country, and the region as a whole, is in itself a rather recent development.² Thus, Shenhav’s book is best taken as a critical point of departure for studying the meaning of the Arab-Jew, and the greater attempt to understand whether an Arab Jewish history is possible. From a theoretical point of view one could ask whether the category of “race” should also occupy a place next to the categories of “nation,” “ethnicity,” and “religion.”

The book is well written and lucid. The author also deserves praise for skillfully subduing the jargon that has colonized many other post-colonial texts written in Hebrew. Finally, this reader, himself an Iraqi Jew (to be honest), found the semi-autobiographical introduction to the book a moving document. It seems that many other Iraqis of our generation in Israel could have written the exact same words about their experiences.

Zvi Ben-Dor Benite
New York University

Notes

1. For a recent collection of essays, see Shohat (2006).
2. I borrow the term “Arabized Jews” from Moshe Behar’s (2001) discussion of this particular problematic.

References

- Behar, Moshe. 2001. “Nationalism at Its Edges: Arabized-Jews and the Unintended Consequences of Arab and Jewish Nationalism, 1917–1967.” PhD diss., Columbia University.
- Shohat, Ella. 2006. *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Raz-Krakotzkin, Amnon. 2005. “Ein Elohim Aval hu Hivtiach Lanu et HaAretz.” *MiTa’am* 3 (September): 71–76.

Uri Ram, *The Globalization of Israel: McWorld in Tel Aviv, Jihad in Jerusalem* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2005), pp. 266, \$18 (paper).

Uri Ram’s seminal book is an outstanding analysis of the dialectical relationship between globalization processes and the transformation of Israeli society. When discussing these processes and the relationship between the global and the local, we have to make clear what we understand as globalization, because it is a doubly contested notion: a descriptive-explanatory concept and a normative one.

While most researchers agree about a series of changes that took place in the organization of societies, economy, and culture in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, they do not agree on whether those are epochal. Researchers agree that deep technological transformations took place and that new information technologies and skills played a central role. There is also a degree of consensus about the modifications in the accumulation model: the centrality of finance in new forms of accumulation, the internationalization of capital flows (even though there is a debate about the directions and real significance of the free-flow of capital), and the modification of the relation of forces between capital and labor. However, concerning the novelty or the significance of those changes, we find two opposite interpretations. One considers the profundity and quality of changes to represent a real break with the Fordist/Keynesian world constituted by relatively autonomous national states. The other claims that no real break took place. Among the latter, a first approach posits that capitalism was globalized since its beginnings and is, by definition, a world system. A second approach refutes claims of a profound transformation of

the late-twentieth-century capitalism. Its proponents argue that the world in the late nineteenth century was even more globalized than today, and that the nation-state is still the main structural support and main political form of contemporary capitalism.

Globalization is also a contested concept from a normative perspective. There are scholars who consider globalization a positive process. They tend to be neo-liberals who see a globalized capitalism as the better of possible worlds, the first step toward a cosmopolitan democratic world order, and the demise of the Westphalian world order a necessary step toward emancipation. On the opposite side are those who believe that globalization intensifies inequality, oppression, and exclusion wrought by capitalism.

Uri Ram is aware of these contested (explanatory and normative) views of globalization. He offers an approach that is dialectical at three different levels. As Ram makes explicit, his approach to globalization emphasizes the dialectic between the global and the local. But his approach is dialectical also in that he attempts to reconstruct society as a totality—a central category in dialectical thinking. In his analysis, however, totality is neither the Hegelian conception of history as the development of the subject, nor the orthodox Marxist totality where the supra-structure is the expression of the economic basis. His is a contingent, postmodern totality. In Ram's view, society appears as a totality as the result of reconstruction efforts.

Finally, Ram's approach is dialectical from a normative perspective. He does not consider globalization a purely positive process, as he is well aware of the growing gap between "haves" and "have nots" that is one of globalization's main consequences. Nor does he share Negri's and Hardt's easy optimism concerning the emergence of the multitude as a new emancipatory subject. On the contrary, his approach to the normative dimension of globalization processes emerges from his conviction that opposition to globalization is mainly anti-universalist, fundamentalist, and anti-democratic. But he does not reject globalization as a whole, because he believes in its democratic potential. Ram's normative position is clear, explicitly siding with an emancipatory, democratic, and egalitarian project. To the oppressive and exploitative globalization "from above" he proposes the possibility of "globalization from below" even though he remains skeptical about its possibility. This three-dimensional dialectical approach places Ram in the best tradition of critical theory, as formulated by Max Horkheimer (1972: 204): "To strive for a state of affairs in which there will be no exploitation or oppression, in which an all-embracing subject, namely self-aware mankind, exists ... [taking place] via concern for social transformations [aroused] ever anew by prevailing injustices ... shaped and guided by the theory itself."

Ram's analysis of contemporary Israeli society is a true *tour de force*. He explains Israel's economic structure, culture, and politics as a changing

totality resulting from processes taking place along the global/local axis. The book is remarkable for its broad scope, impressive presentation of data, and its rigorous analysis. Ram makes explicit the book's theoretical perspective as a post-Marxist one (183). It is a post-*Marxist* perspective in the weight it gives to the structural, economic dimension and to material interests and in its historicism. It is *post-Marxist* in that it recognizes the postmodern critic of modernity's central assumptions and is aware of the place of culture and identities in explaining social processes in general and Israeli society in particular.

Ram gives the book a sort of spiral structure, continuously going back from the global to the local, offering a different perspective in every circle. He analyzes the structural transformation of the Israeli economy as the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism; as the modification of the balance of forces between capital and labor; as the emergence of a "bourgeois revolution"; and as the growing gap between the global classes and those excluded from the "new world." Linking the economic and the political dimension, he also sees this transformation as a result of the contradictory relations between globalizing and neo-nationalist, colonialist forces. While the introduction of the economical dimension to the analysis of Israeli society represents a refreshing contribution in an academic discourse hegemonized by the national and/or the cultural perspectives, Ram does not limit himself to the economic level. He also considers changes at the level of the organization of production and distribution of resources and the cultural and political spheres, analyzing the transformations in consumer culture, academic (historical) discourse, and political agency.

His analysis, however, entails the limitations of the post-Marxist approach. Born of an attempt to retain Marxism's social critic and emancipatory aim while taking into account postmodern criticism, post-Marxism oscillates between a tendency toward discourse reductionism and the return to classic Marxist class essentialism and economic reductionism. Ram leans toward the latter, giving pre-eminence to the structural/material dimension, and diminishing the role of agency. The transformation of the Israeli society is explained in terms of the global/local dialectic: from above, the structural transformation of the model of capital accumulation and ensuing cultural and political changes; from below, an atavist reaction (racist, ethno-centric, fundamentalist). Politics as collective conscious agency has very little place in this analysis, although Ram points to the lack of a political force that can articulate an emancipatory project in a globalized, postmodern world (20). However, this lack is not only a factual assertion, but a conceptual vacuum. Ram's analytical framework has difficulties recognizing politics of resistance and their emancipatory potential. In his interpretation of the political elections of the subordinated Jewish classes

in Israel, he retains the Marxist conception that the consciousness of the oppressed classes is a false one. However, while Marx's analysis leaves the combination of proletarian struggles and scientific theory open the possibility for the masses to acquire "true" consciousness, Ram's version of post-Marxism does not offer a mechanism for explaining this transition. Thus, it seems that the lower classes are condemned to false consciousness.

Ram's discussion of the contradiction between globalization and colonialism is an example of this reified assumption. When discussing the structural contradiction between neo-liberal globalizing tendencies and the continuing colonial practices in the Occupied Territories, Ram notes that this contradiction notwithstanding, global neo-liberalism and nationalist colonialism can be articulated in a common political project (59). He points out that in Israel the formula "more globalization means less colonialism" is not politically viable. Rather, "more globalization means greater socio-economic gaps," which boost the support for the nationalist right because "poverty, inequality and feelings of exclusion make the lower classes an easy prey for populism" (74). While in Ram's view the upper and middle classes have a clear view of their material interests, the lower classes dwell in the realm of false consciousness. Ram's skepticism places him squarely within the critical theory tradition. In the article cited earlier, Horkheimer (1972: 214) states that "awareness is prevented from becoming a social force by the differentiation of social structure which is still imposed on the proletariat from above and by the opposition between personal class interests which is transcended only at very special moments."

It could be argued that this pessimistic view of the subordinated classes' emancipatory potential is inseparable from a sober critical gaze. And the present book is indeed an impressive piece of social criticism. Ram's erudition and analytical skills successfully reconstruct contemporary Israeli society as a totality, by showing the relationship among the economic, cultural, and political levels within the global/local dialectic. Ram also offers a staunch criticism of contemporary Israel from a universalist, democratic, and egalitarian perspectives. His accomplishments on both counts make *The Globalization of Israel* an invaluable contribution to Israeli sociology.

Dani Filc
Ben-Gurion University

Reference

Horkheimer, Max. 1972. *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*. New York: Herder and Herder.

Dan Bavly, *Dreams and Missed Opportunities, 1967–1973* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Carmel Publishers, 2002), pp. 368, NIS 84.

The history of the Arab-Jewish/Arab-Israeli conflict has been characterized not only by a series of wars and other violent actions that occurred since the late nineteenth century. It has also been marked by missed opportunities for peace or political settlements, notably concerning the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Many Israelis, as well as others, tend to cite Abba Eban's famous cliché that the Palestinians never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. They refer mostly to the Palestinian rejections of the 1937 Peel Commission recommendation and the 1947 UN partition resolution. Some would also relate this notion to the 1993 Oslo Accords and the 2000 Camp David negotiations. But Dan Bavly, in his detailed account, blames Israeli governments for missing peace opportunities with Arab nations owing to "shortsightedness and forcefulness" (*kohaniyut*) following the 1967 War and culminating in the 1973 War.

Yet the first major issue that Bavly discusses shows that in June 1967 (several days after the IDF's great victory), the Israeli national unity government adopted a visionary and courageous decision. It offered to return the entire Sinai to Egypt and the Golan to Syria, along the international boundaries, respectively. This was offered in return for peace treaties and safeguarding Israel's defense requirements, that is, demilitarization of both areas, and from Egypt freedom of Israeli navigation in the Suez Canal and through the Strait of Tiran and from Syria the uninterrupted flow of water from the Jordan river's headwaters (Banyas) to Israel. This historical decision was made unanimously by Israel's national unity government under Levi Eshkol (Mapai) and by the opposition leader Menachem Begin (Gahal-Herut). This government authorized the minister for foreign affairs, Abba Eban, to transmit the decision to the United States for transmission to Egypt and Syria. But, reportedly, the Americans told Eban a week later that both Egypt and Syria were not prepared to accept Israel's terms.

Bavly raises two intriguing points concerning this crucial affair. First, he doubts that the Americans even conveyed Israel's decision to Egypt and Syria, owing to their own considerations that were not compatible with Israel's position, such as keeping the Suez Canal closed to impede Russian assistance to North Vietnam. Second, he alleges that Israel neither pursued its peace initiative nor publicized it. Even the chief of staff of the IDF, Yitzhak Rabin, and the chief of military intelligence, Shlomo Gazit, were not involved in or informed of this important decision for a long time. In October 1967, the Israeli government abolished its June decision, probably in response to the Khartoum resolutions of the Arab summit of late August 1967, rejecting recognition of, negotiations with, and peace with Israel.

Bavly indicates that the Arab rejectionist attitudes derived (inter alia?) from their unawareness of Israel's June decision, as well as from its subsequent provocative decisions and actions, such as annexing East Jerusalem, establishing an Israeli settlement near Quneytra on the Golan, and offering only a partial, unacceptable solution to the Palestinian problem (the Allon plan).

The main part of Bavly's book describes a significant number of initiatives and proposals to settle the Palestinian problem on the West Bank by establishing an independent Palestinian state, or a Palestinian autonomy, or reaching a "Jordanian" solution. These proposals were presented by Israeli government and military officials, by non-governmental groups (Bavly was personally involved in some initiatives), as well as by Palestinian leaders in the West Bank. All of those were either rejected or not pursued by successive Israeli governments until the 1973 War. These include the Eshkol government (until 1969). Even though Eshkol and some of his ministers were anxious to settle this issue, Bavly does not give them much credit. He particularly criticizes Golda Meir's term as prime minister (from 1969) and her militant, uncompromising approach to peace with the Arabs, notably the Palestinians (infamously stating that a Palestinian people did not exist). Bavly examines also the negative input of Dayan, Allon, Peres, Galili, and Rabin, as well as the skeptical attitudes of the Israeli public concerning peace with the Palestinians, Syria, and Egypt.

Bavly's book is based on original documents that he has gathered, on interviews with Israeli senior officials, and on his personal involvement and observations. Some sections of the book are analytical; others are descriptive, even journalistic, while the appendices contain several important documents dealing with various aspects of the Palestinian issue, including the refugee problem. It is, without a doubt, a noteworthy contribution to the ongoing discussion on Israeli-Palestinian relations.

Moshe Ma'oz
Hebrew University (Emeritus)

Risa Domb, *Identity and Modern Israeli Literature* (Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), pp. 107, \$27.50 (paper).

In *Identity and Modern Israeli Literature*, Risa Domb explores the delicate relationships among language, ideology, memory, culture, and their roles in the continuous evolution of the Jewish and Israeli identities. As living concepts, language, ideology, memory and culture mutate while adapting to internal and external changes affecting both national and individual

identity. That is the case of the Jewish and Israeli identities, which cannot be combined but which do interact along the course of their parallel mutations. Via literary works by Nathan Shaham, Yoram Kanuk, Aharon Appelfeld, Sami Michael, A. B. Yehoshua, and Gabriela Avigur-Rotem, Domb looks into the ever-changing mutation of language, ideology, memory, culture, and identity.

In the course of the novels' textual analysis, two questions should be raised by the reader. First, are the Jewish and Israeli identities on an inescapable collision course, or are they no longer antithetical? Second, based on the cultural, political, social, religious, and lingual diversity of the Jewish people in general and Israeli society in particular, are there even an Israeli identity and a Jewish identity?

Domb avoids dealing with these questions, throwing them back like hot potatoes to the reader and the contributing authors for their assessments. Looking into different literary works that raise these questions via a procession of complex protagonists, Domb's personal thesis is left somewhat hanging in the air. As she accompanies the reader on a textual journey, Domb loses her own voice and adopts the authors' points of view, creating a kaleidoscope of mismatching ideas. At the end, all that is left for Domb is to express a vague hope for the future, "The evolution and shaping of Israeli identity is the result of the past and is determined by education, ideals and priorities. Perhaps it is not too late to find a positive way forward" (102). In the course of Domb's textual study, the Jewish and Israeli identities are separated, reunited, and sometimes interchanged, leading Domb to focus only on the Israeli identity in her last textual analysis of Gabriela Avigur-Rotem's novel *Heatwave and Crazy Birds*.

The element that seems to hold Domb's book together is the Hebrew language. Language, both code and content, is a complicated dance between internal and external interpretations of one's identity. As a central feature of human identity and a powerful symbol of national and ethnic identity, Domb sees the Hebrew language as the thread connecting Jewish and Israeli ideology, memory, and culture. Though the novels discussed do not give a cut and clear view of the Hebrew language as the main pillar of the Jewish and Israeli identity, Domb certainly does: "The emphasis on the protagonists' inability to communicate in Hebrew creates the effect of self-consciousness, and underscores the theme of the search for the appropriate vehicle of expression," she writes about Nathan Shaham's novel *Series*. "But, above all, the novel ... points out that the Hebrew language must remain a central component of Jewish culture" (32). Though Domb notes that the central themes explored in *Series* are the tensions between text and image, and ideology and literature, her textual analysis filters them through the lingual lens of the Hebrew language.

But the Hebrew language is pushed to the background in Domb's analysis of Yoram Kaniuk's *The Last Jew*, Aaron Appelfeld's *The Story of a Life*, Sami Michael's *Water Touching Water*, and A. B. Yehoshua's *The Liberating Bride*. Language recedes here in favor of a detailed discussion on the intertwined relationships among memory and identity, and culture and identity. Though off stage most of the time, the Hebrew language makes small but nevertheless important appearances. Domb's view of Hebrew as the bonding thread triggers some textual detours, to remind the reader of the central role Hebrew plays in the protagonists' search for a coherent individual identity and in the Jewish people's pursuit for a national one. Domb asserts that "[t]here is no doubt that the role of the Hebrew language is an all-encompassing issue in the debate of the identity of the Jewish people, their roots, their religion and the way forward in every aspect of their being" (63). She revisits the central role of the Hebrew language in her study of Gabriela Avigur-Rotem's novel *Heatwave and Crazy Birds* in which the Hebrew language retakes center stage: "Avigur-Rotem's examination of the linguistic changes that took place during the fifty-four years of Israel's existence provides the framework for a much wider evaluation of self and identity" (96).

If identity is the essence of every human being, Domb posits the Hebrew language as the umbilical cord connecting people or nations to their past, present, and future. To continue this metaphor, memory, culture, and ideology seem to be the blood vessels that play a vital role in the ability of an individual or a nation to exist. And these vessels take up most of Domb's attention as she travels among ideology, memory, and culture, dedicating at least one chapter to each.

The terms "memory" and "identity" have become standard fare in many historical and literary writings. One anthology calls them "two of the most frequently used terms in contemporary public and private discourse" (Gillis 1994). Analyzing Kaniuk's *The Last Jew* and Appelfeld's *The Story of a Life*, Domb shows the interdependence of the two concepts. On the one hand, the temporal and spatial continuity expressed by "identity" derives from the preservation of aspects of the past in the present and future implied by "memory." "For Kaniuk the identity of the next generation must result from an integration of every aspect of Jewish experience. In order to achieve this it is necessary to reconnect with Jewish history through the preservation of memory" (54). On the other hand, the selection of certain aspects of the past for preservation in memory is determined by the identity of an individual or a group recollecting that past. "The effects of the Holocaust on all aspects of Israeli life, the increased ethnic awareness and the new phenomenon of the 'born-again' Jew have brought about a Judaisation of secular society" (64).

Most nations are partly defined by a shared culture that is assumed to be shared with previous generations, and includes a cultural heritage from these generations, as if it were an inheritance. The Israeli society, as reflected in the Israeli novels selected by Domb, is a unique phenomenon where one nation tries, not always successfully, to melt different cultures and civilizations into one (82). As Domb points out, the clash between past and present cultures has a vital influence on the evolution of the Israeli identity. Erik Erikson (1968: 22, 31), who closely studied Freudian psychology, emphasized that identity forms in a dialectical interaction between individuals and their communal culture. He described identity formation as a process of assimilation of the broader culture into (pre-existing) individual identities. In his formulation, there is also extensive overlap between identity and memory: you are what you have experienced of your cultural environment. Trying to overcome the cultural gaps among Israelis Domb, again, sees language as the glue that can hold things together: “[O]ne way to bridge cultural differences is through the act of translation, particularly of literary texts” (83). She calls for individuals to come to terms with their own identities before trying to resolve the national one “Understanding the self is the first step towards understanding the other” (87).

In *Identity and Modern Israeli Literature*, Risa Domb conceptually broaches the essence of collective identity as that which resides in a shared and interactive sense of “we-ness.” Although the concept is distinguished in the book from both personal identity and social identity, Domb admits that the three types of identity clearly overlap and interact. Empirically, and due to her selection of literary works, Domb shows that collective identity can surface in a variety of contexts with the predominance of ethnicity (Sephardic versus Ashkenazi experience), religion (religious versus secular Israelis), and social backgrounds (Zionism versus Communism and Holocaust survivors versus Israeli Sabras). Analytically, the collective identity is generally discussed from the structural, lingual, and literary standpoint, where the latter focuses attention on the symbolic expression and maintenance of collective identities.

Identity and Modern Israeli Literature is a valuable work, all the more so because it is Domb’s final contribution to the field. On 12 January 2007, Risa Domb passed away in London at the age of 70. At the time of her death, Domb was head of the Center for Modern Hebrew Studies at Cambridge University. The Hebrew literary community deeply grieves this loss.

Yaakova Sacerdoti
Frankel Jewish Academy

References

- Erikson, Erik. 1968. *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Gillis, John Randall. 1994. "Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship." Pp. 3–24 in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John Randall Gillis. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Steven V. Mazie, *Israel's Higher Law: Religion and Liberal Democracy in the Jewish State* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006), pp. 313, \$90 (cloth), \$31.95 (paper).

About 30 years ago, I wrote an article in which I indicated that many American Jews who staunchly advocate an iron-clad separation of religion and state in the United States are willing supporters of linkages between religion and state in Israel. I have no idea whether Steven Mazie ever saw that article but his new book clarifies that there is nothing hypocritical in maintaining such different stances. Although it initially struck me as Janus-like, and at times somewhat schizophrenic, the book successfully emerges as a unified work whose central thesis is that one must look at the range of ideals and principles on which a country is founded in order to understand and evaluate its approach to the separation issue.

For insight into and clarification of the range and intensity of attitudes toward relationship between religion and state in Israel, Mazie interviewed 31 Israelis—men and women, Jews and Arabs—across the religious-secular spectrum. Some of his interviewees are well-known in Israel and are identified by name, but most are presented pseudonymously and were selected solely because of their positions on issues of religion and politics and their willingness to express them. Almost every variation on the religious-secular spectrum is represented, and the interviews and the chapters based on them make for lively and informative reading. If read solely as an ethnography that seeks to demonstrate and explore the range of opinions as well as the related range of emotions on issues of religion and politics in Israel, the book succeeds admirably.

However, Mazie's goal was more ambitious. He sought to analyze and evaluate both liberal theory and Israeli society in terms of the relationship between religion and politics via the range of opinions expressed by his interviewees, and there, matters are somewhat more problematic. Although he does initially say that his sample is not meant to be representative, Mazie at times seems to treat his interviewees as if they were a representative sample. At other times, it is not quite clear whether he is referring to the distribution in his "sample," Israeli society, or both. For example, Mazie

asserts that “at least half of them, and perhaps two-thirds, favor what they regard as separation of religion and state” (145). If the “them” is his sample, it is irrelevant because they are not necessarily representative of Israeli society. As for Israeli society, data from the most extensive survey of the opinions of Israeli Jews, the 2000 Guttman Institute survey of the beliefs, observances, and social interactions of Israeli Jews, present a somewhat more complex picture. The data indicate that more than three-fourths (78 percent) believe that the State should have a Jewish, although not necessarily religious character; approximately 80 percent support the observance of *kashrut* in public establishments; and 70 percent believe “that consideration should be given to preserving the character of the shabbat in public” (Levy, Levinsohn, and Katz 2004: 275–277).

Mazie expresses his appreciation of and support for the maintenance of the Jewish character of Israel in the public sphere. At the same time, he indicates his criticism of laws and policies that enforce the stance of one sector at the expense of others. He is thus opposed to what many of his interviewees view as a monopolistic religious establishment, which is exclusively in the hands of the Orthodox and which refuses to grant legitimacy to any other religious stream. Moreover, although none of his interviewees state it explicitly or in these terms, the religious establishment has become so bureaucratized that the entire organization suffers from a process suggested by Max Weber and developed by Robert Merton, namely, “goal displacement,” in which the bureaucracy attains a kind of “life wish” of its own, and the original goal for which it was established is displaced by the goal of keeping the organization going. An incident related by “Yoel,” a religious Zionist who made aliyah from Queens, makes the point that the organization in this case, the Rabbinate, acts as a real bureaucracy, treating all equally and dispassionately, alienating all, religiously observant as well as secular.

That the Rabbinate is in need of radical repair is clear. The question, however, is what to do about it. Some of Mazie’s respondents clearly favor disbanding it altogether, while others staunchly disagree. Mazie himself is aware of the complexities involved, especially with respect to the issue of civil marriage, and he takes a moderate approach. Whereas his non-religious respondents were as vociferous in their advocacy of civil marriage as were his religious respondents in opposing it, Mazie strives, although not very successfully, to chart a course that would allow for non-Rabbinate marriage while not completely disbanding the institution.

Although all of Mazie’s religious respondents were vehement in their opposition to civil marriage, in fact not all are; indeed, not even all Orthodox rabbis are. In 2003, Israel’s Sephardi chief rabbi, Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron, delivered a talk at a conference of rabbinic judges, in which he asked whether the current law requiring rabbinic marriage does not have diminishing returns.

He went on to suggest that there are definite benefits to civil marriage, such as reducing antagonism from many non-religious individuals who object to being forced to either marry under rabbinic jurisdiction or marry abroad civilly (Bakshi-Doron 2004). Bakshi-Doron's is a minority opinion, and it is not surprising that he was roundly criticized.

Despite Mazie's strengths, his book is not without serious factual errors. For example, he avers: "Children of marriages forbidden by *halacha* (these include union between a *Cohen* and a divorcee ...) are considered *mamzerim* ... They and their offspring, stigmatized with an irrevocable brand of illegitimacy, may marry only other *mamzerim*" (174). That is simply not so, neither in *halacha* nor in Israeli law. *Mamzerim* are not children of *any* forbidden marriage, but only children of adulterous or specific incestuous relationships. Although there is a religious prohibition of the marriage between a *Cohen*, a male of the priestly tribe, to marry a divorcee, their marriage is valid and their children are not *mamzerim* who are "stigmatized with an irrevocable brand of illegitimacy."

Despite this, Mazie has written an important book that contains a rarely seen reasoned and sensitive analysis of the critical issue of religion and liberal democracy in Israel.

Chaim I. Waxman
Rutgers University (Emeritus)

References

- Bakshi-Doron, Eliyahu. 2004. "Hashe-ala hi ha'im chok hanisu-in vehagerushin shel hamedina 'adayin shomer 'al achdut ha'am." *Eretz Acheret*, no. 22 (July): 25–29.
- Levy, Shlomit, Hanna Levinsohn, and Elihu Katz. 2004. "The Many Faces of Jewishness in Israel." Pp. 265–284 in *Jews in Israel: Contemporary Social and Cultural Patterns*, ed. Uzi Rebhun and Chaim I. Waxman. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England.

Yehouda Shenhav (Hebrew: יהודה שנהב, born 26 February 1952) is an Israeli sociologist and critical theorist. He is known for his contributions in the fields of bureaucracy, management and capitalism, as well as for his research on ethnicity in Israeli society and its relationship with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yehouda Shahrabani (later Shenhav) was born in Beersheba in 1952 to a family of Iraqi Jews. At the age of three he moved with his family to Tel Aviv and again, at the age of ten, to