

## Contemporary Israeli Literature as a Mirror of the Arabs' Images and the Perception of the Israeli-Arab Conflict in Israeli Society

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### **Abstract**

The research of the perception and images of Arabs in Israeli society and in the State of Israel is one of the keys to understanding the Israeli-Arab conflict. One of the discoveries available to the historian researching the historical development of images are literary works, and novels in particular, as a source of prevailing perceptions for addressing this issue through time. The unique sensitivity of the writer as observing the 'Zeitgeist' ("spirit of the times"), documenting world views and images of his or her generation, creates moving texts which often provide far more significant perspective than customary historical sources. In recent years, many novels engaged the Israeli-Arab conflict were published. From this great selection, this article focus on three novels written by some of the most famous and important Israeli writers of recent times: Amos Oz's *A Tale of Love and Darkness* (Keter, 2007); David Grossman's *Until the End of the Land* (HaKibbutz Ha'Meuchad, 2008); Yoram Kaniuk's *1948* (Yediot Achronot, Sifrei Hemed, 2010). All these books are very popular, sold in great numbers and translated to several other languages. The three books together portray a broad attempt to embrace the Israel-Arab conflict, which is already 130 years old. The books contain biographical material and reflect the author's personal experiences. All three aspire, to an extent, to engage in the self-criticism of Israeli society. In the research of the above-mentioned novels, this article uses the fruit of the historiography discourse and rely on three major approaches: New Historicism, Neo Cultural History and History of Sensibility. Three basic concepts - "Image", "enemy" and "Threat" were used in the analysis of the images and for drawing

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conclusions. Surprisingly, the three novels express very pessimistic mood about the chances of peace between Israel and the Arabs. Despite the fact that the three novelists are devoted supporters of peace, they express deep fears and strangeness towards the Palestinians, the Arabs and the surrounding Muslim world. The Israeli society, according to these novels, is more aware than ever before to the subjective integrity of the Arab and Palestinian narrative, and at the same time lost the feeling of destination and justice that motivated it in the first decades. After Rabin's assassination and the stagnation of the Oslo process, Israel, according to the images in these novels, is in a double deadlock because of the severe internal disagreements and the continuous deep fears of external threats of the Palestinians, the Arab states and the Muslim world.

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## ***Introduction***

The beginning of the Arab-Israeli conflict lies in local conflicts between the first Jewish colonies (1882) and the local Arab inhabitants (Palestinians) in the Land of (Eretz) Israel. These conflicts were essentially practical disputes and disagreements that regarded issues including land ownership, pasture rights and usage of water. During the 20th century, the conflict escalated and became a conflict between the establishing Jewish community in Eretz Israel (later to become the State of Israel), the Palestinians, the Arab states and parts of the Muslim world, including terrorism and radical Islam. At the end of the 20th century, tremendous efforts were carried to reconcile the opposing sides and to bring the conflict to an end. Major successes of these efforts resulted in peace accords between Israel and Egypt (1979) as well as between Israel and Jordan (1994). Nevertheless, the bloodshed, unfortunately, was yet to be ceased. The Oslo process now seems to be another failure, and

since the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin (1995), the conflict appears to have reached a "dead end".

During the 1980's and the 1990's, Israeli society has passed "historical revisionism", which opened what was considered to be the conflict's "Pandora's box" - the "War of Independence", or the "Nakba" ("the disaster"), as addressed by the Palestinians. Groundbreaking studies of those years and the bitter debate between the "Old" and "New historians" (Gelber 2007: 397-499) in Israel, eventually led to acknowledging the existence of the Palestinian narrative. The degree of acknowledgement of the other narrative is well reflected in the mere fact that the term "Nakba" and the discussion of the Palestinian refugee problem were officially included in textbooks approved by the Israeli Ministry of Education for teaching history in schools (Avieli-Tabibian 2009; Domke, Orbach, Goldberg 2009; Naveh, Vered, Shahar 2009; Barnavi 1998). However, this recognition did not result in more positive attitudes towards the Arab minority in Israel, nor in the shaping of more moderate approaches towards the Palestinians during the peace process. In fact, the general trend of the Israeli society had taken a right turn and has become less tolerant as Israeli society expresses its despair of the peace process, followed by "escapism" from the harsh reality by pursuing the pleasures of life ('Carpe Diem').

In the last decade, it seems that all options, better and worse, were exhausted with no remarkable results, and that all emotions have faded. A sense of hopelessness, an awareness of difficulty, as well as a sense of a Sisyphean and enigmatic reality, envelops everyone who attempts to look at the never-ending Arab-Israeli conflict.

The "Arab spring", the rising of ISIS and the disintegration of Arab countries, as seen in Syria and Iraq, has increased the notion of doubt and uncertainty regarding the chances of resolving the conflict in Israeli society and significantly diminished the readiness to take risks towards the Arab and Muslim world on the Israeli side. The recent events have vividly highlighted to Israelis once more that "We are sitting on a volcano", as coined by the Second Aliyah writer, Yosef Haim Brenner in a story published in the year 1910, before he himself was killed in the year of 1921, in one of the first outbreaks of violence in the conflict (Brenner 1910).

## ***The origins of the Arab perception in the Jewish-Israeli society***

One of the most important keys to understanding the conflict is the study of Arab images in the Israeli society and the State of Israel. It is a way to understand perceptions, lines of thought and future expectations. The changes that Israeli society has undergone in the last decades have exposed all layers and all fractures. Like a great river, carving its path into a steep canyon and exposing layers of ancient rocks, the river of time and war has uncovered all images, perceptions and impressions on their various forms.

The Study of the images of the Arabs in the Jewish community and the State of Israel between 1882 and 1956 shows a relatively static picture. However, images tend to be updated as circumstances change, rather than being completely replaced. Arab society in Eretz Israel and in the Arab countries was described as an anachronistic and feudal society. The internal relations between the non-Muslim minorities and the Muslim majority, as well as between the townsmen (Effendis), the peasants (Falachim) and the nomadic tribes (Bedouins) was characterized by mutual hatred and loathing. The Jewish community characterized itself as "an island in the Arab sea" - since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which was revised to the idiom "a villa in the jungle" by the end of that very same century. The Arab culture was perceived as backward and savage, as well as destruction- and desolation- seeking.

According to their images in the eyes of the Jews at that time, the Arabs despise human life, surrender to power, ignore reality and immersed in imagination. The Arabs were considered incompetent fighters and the Jewish fighters considered themselves superior over the Arab fighters. In addition, while the development of Israel by the Jewish community benefited the Arabs, they remained ungrateful. Furthermore, in the eyes of the Jews, the conflict with the Arabs is another incarnation of the Jewish people's struggle against pursuers through the generations.

Time was serving the Arabs because their advantages in territory, population and other resources were infinitely superior to those of the Jewish side; Social, economic and military progress of the Arab nations would increase the threat on the existence of Israel, whereas the Arabs within Israel are a "fifth column". Negative conceptions painted the conflict in dark colors, which characterize the majority of the images and was further strengthened over the years. The Jewish side attributed itself with the idea of progress (as perceived in its European version), the rejoice of building and creating, humanism and the concern for human life. The

Jewish community and Israel saw themselves as endowed with all cultural virtues, opposing the backwardness, ignorance and vendetta customs of the Arab culture. The military defeat of the Arabs in the War of Independence emphasized the military capabilities and the rootedness of the Jewish community. The burden of exile and fear was "exchanged" with the Arabs, whose future was not as looming as during the years preceding the war. Israel then considered itself as the only true democracy in the Middle East, situated in the heart of the Arab-Muslim world, ruled by military dictators and degenerated kings (Ben Dor 2012, 271-275).

The defeat of the Arab militaries in the war for independence did not immediately alter the perception of the Arabs. From the 30's through the 70's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the sense of immediate danger of elimination and threat of destruction governed the images of the Arabs and the perception of the conflict developed by the Jewish community and the state of Israel. David Ben Gurion, the first Israeli prime minister, on the other hand, used to compare the constant war with the Arab countries to the epic biblical wars between the Israelites, inhabiting the land of Israel, and their enemies. In this way, Arab countries were considered as an additional link in the ongoing chain of the enemies of the Jewish people throughout history. The danger awaiting the Jewish people that returned to their land is genocide: the systematic extermination, guided by Nazi ideology that the Arab people supposedly adopted. Ben-Gurion also used to compare the invasion of the Arab armies during the War of Independence with the 'Blitzkrieg', the swift attacks of the German army during World War II, and the Arab regimes were therefore considered and imaged as the successors of the Nazi regime. The Holocaust demonstrated, in terms of awareness within the Jewish public, that genocide can indeed occur, and massacres carried during clashes between ethnic and religious groups in the Middle East (such as the Armenian genocide by the Turks) served as additional proof that a Jewish genocide can indeed take place in the Middle East. The perceived threat was intensified because of the severe inferiority of Israel in terms of population size and territory compared to the Arab and Muslim worlds. The Jewish people perceived Gamal Abdel Nasser, the charismatic Egyptian president and leader of the Arab world, as a kind of a "Middle Eastern Hitler" and all of his actions and declarations were considered and interpreted in this context. The Six-Day War strengthened this image because the Arab nations united under his leadership and prepared to destroy the young State of Israel (Ben Dor 2012, 118-121, 275-277; Podeski 2005, 151-208; Ben Dor 2007, 363-388). Even the

Yom Kippur War (1973), and its initiating surprise attack, coupled with the lack of preparedness of the IDF, especially illustrated and reinforced the constant fear of destruction in the young state, and the images of the Arabs were accordingly adjusted. If after the Six Day War it seemed that the Arabs needed generations of rehabilitation before they can achieve capability to successfully attack Israel and threaten its existence, their fighting and combat strategies during the surprise attack that started the Yom Kippur war and their following achievements proved that the image was not fairly accurate. Furthermore, it was clearly demonstrated that the Arabs were able to find new ways of dealing with Israel's military advantages. The glorification of the army, which characterized the period, which followed the Six-Days War, gave way to national repentance for the hubris sin and the contempt for the Arabs (Yadgar 2004, 54-69).

One of the discoveries awaiting a historian, who studies the historical development of images during conflicts, is the special quality of literary works, and novels in particular, as a source reflecting public opinions at the time of publishing. Presumably, the novel is a soldier in the service of fiction, while historical notes serve the objective truth. However, the special quality of the writer as an observer, documenting the *Zeitgeist* (spirit of the time), common worldviews, and the images of his contemporaries, creates exciting and important texts for the historians, which sometimes are far more important than usual historical sources. Important literary works often express much more than personal and private content. The literary creation also influences and shapes the minds of many, whereas the images used by the writer affect the public of readers.

In a study devoted to the story of "Khirbet Khizeh" (by S. Izhar, 1949) and the TV movie which followed (1978), the historian Anita Shapira clearly emphasized the special power of literature, particularly today, when we are more aware of history's limitations: "The power of literature is that it does not purport to describe reality, yet it describes the truth, sometimes its power in transferring the picture of the reality is greater than that of history...today, when the limitations of the historical method in reconstructing the reality of the past are a convention, the historian's willingness to use literature providing insight into reality is growing. Literature doesn't only reflect a certain reality, but it is also one of the tools for fixation of the reality in the public imagination and in the collective memory" (Shapira 2007, 14-15).

I also noticed a similar notion within the framework of my research for my doctoral dissertation (Ben Dor 2003; Ben Dor 2012, Preface). At the beginning of my work, I have invested much effort in the study of military documents. I found that due to their laconic and technical nature, in many cases, interpretation of these sources was not very fruitful. It was much easier to extract images from discussions, on the other hand. These include governmental discussions, those of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee and the Knesset (Israeli parliament) in particular. Nevertheless, it was optimal to extract images from a wide range of cultural phenomena that characterized the Israeli society of those years, such as literature, theatre plays, movies, newspapers and other means of culture and mass communication.

When we examine Israeli literature, it is clear that although the Arabs were not the main theme in the Israeli novels written about the War of Independence, the writers addressed the Arabs, and in some cases their perceptions of the Arabs even conflicted with that of the mainstream during the 1950's and the 1960's. These 'subversive' perceptions can be seen, for example, in the stories of Yizhar Smilansky ("Captive", "Khirbet Khizeh", Ben Dor 2012, 255-261) as well as in Uri Avnery's books (Avnery 1990a; Avnery 1990b). In this sense, these voices heralded the changes in the images of Arabs after the Yom Kippur War (from 1973 onwards).

I soon realized that the 'sounding box' of literature, distributed by the thousands, is much larger than that of highly classified intelligence and operations documents that were only available for few and were kept in a safe for generations until they were made available for historical research. Furthermore, the reference to contemporary Israeli literature novels as historical sources for the study of Arab images in Israeli society is a significant innovation.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the images of Arabs in Israeli society as portrayed in three recent novels by the writers Amos Oz, Yoram Kaniuk and David Grossman (Oz 2007; Kaniuk 2010 ; Grossman 2009), and to discuss what we can learn from these images about the attitude of the Israeli society to the Arab-Israeli conflict today. The tools for the theoretical analysis used in this paper follow three basic concepts ("Image", "Enemy" and "Threat"), as well as some ideas from New Historicism, Neo Cultural History, Clifford Geertz's idea of cultural analysis and History of Sensibility.

## ***The books***

These three books, originally written in Hebrew by some of Israel's most highly evaluated authors, can be considered "canonical" in terms of their cultural importance in Israel. The three authors are highly recognized after decades of appreciated work and much public attention revolves their work. Many copies of these books were sold. These books were also translated into many languages. Amos Oz's book (*A Tale of Love and Darkness*) was published in January 2002 and had already sold 97,500 copies by November 2004. By the end of 2011 the book was sold in over one million copies in 30 languages (Blat 2011). David Grossman's book (*To the End of the Land*, 2009) was printed twelve times in 2009. Similarly, Yoram Kaniuk's book (*1948*), published in 2010, sold more than 100,000 copies by 2013. The intended audience of these authors is primarily the Israeli society and especially the Jewish majority, although the Arab minority in Israel, who speaks Hebrew, is also well-exposed to these books. Additionally, two of the books (*1948* and *A Tale of Love and Darkness*), amongst other languages, have been translated into Arabic, which further expanded its optional spheres of influence.

Oz's book deals with the formative years of the conflict, from his childhood during the 1940's to the early 1950's. The writer was born in 1939, so these crucial phases of the conflict correlate with his years of childhood and adolescence. The writer expresses the prevalent images in the Jewish society at the years of the British Mandate and the War of Independence as he understood and interpreted. Oz, whose views today are clearly "dovish", grew up in a 'revisionist' (right wing of Zionism) family, a legacy which is clearly expressed and addressed in his book. The book has a special impact on the readers and its special status is reflected, amongst other things, by response letters received by the author. Yigal Schwartz (2005) analyzed 400 of those letters shortly after the book was published and concluded that the book has become "a book of worship for the readers". For example, it turns out from the letters that the readers experienced intense emotional upheaval and even made a "pilgrimage", marching through the places mentioned in the book (Schwartz 2005). The book was also translated into Arabic with the donation of the Hourri family, whose son, George, was murdered in March 2004 by a terrorist who mistaken him for a Jew. The family



dedicated the translation to the memory of their son with the hope of improving the relations between Arabs and Jews.

In May 2003, David Grossman (born in 1954) started to write the book *To the End of the Land*. It was six months before his eldest son, Jonathan, completed his mandatory military service, and six months before the recruitment of his younger son, Uri. Together with Uri, he weaved the plot of the book. Uri served in the Occupied Territories and shared some of his experiences with his father. Grossman wrote: "I had a feeling - or rather, a wish - that the book I was writing would protect him"(Grossman 2009, 633).

On August 12, 2006, during the final hours of the Second Lebanon War, Uri's tank was hit by antitank missile while engaged in the rescuing attempt of a damaged tank, and he was killed, along with his crew members. Not much later Grossman wrote: "After the end of the "Shivaa" (custom seven days of mourning of the Jewish tradition), I went back to the book. Most of it was written. What changed, above all, is reality's sound box, in which the latest version was written"(Grossman 2009, 633).

Yoram Kaniuk's "1948", originally bears the name of that year according to the Hebrew calendar (Tashach). This name is very common in commemorating the war in the Israeli side and in many ways, it is as a popular name as it's "official" one: "The war of Independence". It is occasionally used as a part of a phrase as in "the generation of Tashach"; "the battles of Tashach"; "Memories of Tashach", "Haifa be-Tashach" and others. But the book is far from the consensus and even surprisingly "rebellious" in his spirit. In a way, it echoes the books of Netiva Ben Yehuda (Ben Yehuda) and Uri Avnery in his sincere exposure and 'subversive' nature.

The book is written as a late testimony. Kaniuk, an old man, is trying to revive his youth when the war took place, when he was a boy of seventeen and a half in age. The young and the old personalities are constantly mix through the testimony. Kaniuk the elder makes a painful and tormented account with his actions as a young man and with his contemporaries. He claims that his comrades, the "Palmach" fighters, those who survived the bitter battles in which many died, have turned the memory to a resource, designed to shape the social consciousness and historical memory. In this way, the memory of sacrifice and bravery has become a tool to acquire political and economic profits. The freshness and honesty in the book are emphasized when Kaniuk compares his late wisdom with his early naivety, and

declares: "wise men are not trying to establish a new state in Hamsin (Arabic word that signifies a very hot weather), in a land full of Arabs and surrounded by Arab states that regards them as strangers with malice intentions", thus defining himself; "I was a fool who went to be a hero and hit the enemy (Kaniuk 1948, 12)."

In these three novels, the writers deal with censorship, but not in the common sense of limiting the publication of information by the authorities. Rather, this is a social or even a personal censorship, in the author's mind, determining what is acceptable and what is not, what is allowed and what is not, as derived from the author's own conventions and beliefs. Kaniuk objects the 'official' representation of the war of Independence and that of the Palmach, which was largely created by his former comrades. Kaniuk dares to describe atrocities that he witnessed during the war, and even took part of, although unwillingly. These deeds include a case in which he accidentally killed an Arab child. Far until the 1980's, it was not acceptable to refer to atrocities carried by Israeli soldiers during wars. The ugly sides of war, like every war in history, were hidden, in most cases, by adopting the myth of "Tohar Haneshek" (literally: the purity of weaponry). These Hebrew words reflect the efforts of the Jewish military to avoid the killing of innocent and uninvolved people, and focus the killing only in the fighting forces of the enemy. Only in the research literature of the "New Historians" and, as well as in other memorabilia and documentary books published during recent years, there has been brave reference to these aspects of war (Ben Dor 2012; Dror 2005, 161). Kaniuk bypass the 'unwritten ban' by writing in a testimonial flood about those years, rather than in an historical, objectiveness-obliged manner. Since Kaniuk acknowledged that he was in his last years during the writing of the novel (he died in 2013), a sense of freedom from the social and personal censorship had permitted the density and flux of his writing.

A taboo is also broken in Grossman's book because of the critical dealing with the circle of bereavement, and the representing of the mandatory service in the IDF and the fighting of the youth as a mechanical circle, a semi-automatic "Akeda" (in Hebrew: binding for sacrifice, like the binding of Isaac). The parents, the state, the army, the enemy and the ones who must deliver the bitter message to the family share the 'circle of bereavement', according to the author. This presentation cuts off the grief from its accepted, well-rooted justifications in the Israeli society. Even the way in which parts of the Yom Kippur War is described, for example, the abandonment of the Me'ozim (military posts, strongholds) and the captivity, is a

breakthrough, although this book generally joins previously published memories and studies of recent years about the war.

Consideration of the plots of these three books together, provides a wide attempt to encompass the Arab-Israeli conflict, already over 130 years old. Amos Oz has written a novel based on his life and his family stretching from the thirties to the early fifties and further back to the roots of his family in Europe before making "Aliya" (immigrating to Eretz Israel). Yoram Kaniuk leaves his testimony to future generations, with "flashbacks" to current reality, as a warrior in the War of Independence. David Grossman weaves the plot of his book from the "Hamtana"(waiting) period that preceded the Six Days War through the Yom Kippur War and subsequent conflicts with the Palestinians in the occupied territories and in Lebanon. Biographical layers are found in all three books that greatly rely on the author's' personal experience (sometimes they even explicitly rely on preliminary research and echo the historiographical discourse). All three aim to some extent to personal and public self-examination of the Israeli society.

The end of all three books is tragic; the book 'A Tale of Love and Darkness' ends with suicide of the mother and the author's remorse that he could not prevent her from committing that. '1948' ends with a statement about the contrast between institutionalization and commercialization of historical memory by the Palmach commanders in the past and the feelings of the ordinary fighters and express hopelessness about the future. The end of Grossman's book is supposedly open, but Ora, the wife and the mother of two sons, begins to become aware of the possibility that her son fell in battle and her efforts to preserve his life by escaping the notice of his death were in vain.

### ***Theoretical Background***

Theory supports the use of literary sources as a source for the study of the history of public images. Neo-Historicism takes a distinctly interdisciplinary approach and combines literature, history and social sciences. This approach is very similar to the approach adopted in this paper, when I study the images (i.e. perceptions) of Arabs in novels for the purpose of historical research. Neo-historicism and Stephen Greenblatt assign great importance to historical anecdotes that represent in their eyes a concentrated expression of the reality that should be interpreted as a way to understand history in more original and meaningful ways.

The use of novels as a source for the study of the history of images and their evolution reinforces the argument of the Neo-Historicism that literature is not timeless, transcendent and autonomous, and that it is not a passive reflection, but a power that acts in the world. I argue that the study of images in novels has a dual value, because the writers express the public ambiance and affect the public, thus shaping society's perceptions. In this way, my attitude fits Greenblatt's concept that society and text create each other and that text not only expresses society but also influences it (Maza 2004, 249-265).

My research also draws from New Cultural history, which was influenced from Micro-history and anthropological research, and engages in deciphering the hidden meanings of dreams, beliefs, rituals, images and other practices. In the development of my attitude to Micro-history I was influenced by the groundbreaking research of Carlo Ginzburg (2005) dealing with the spiritual world of a miller as a basis for revolutionary interpretation of cultural changes in the early modern period. In the field of anthropological research, I was influenced from Clifford Geertz who stated that "cultural analysis is not an experimental science that strives for laws, but the science of interpretation that seeks meaning. What I'm looking for is a commentary, exposing social meaning of phrases seemingly obscure"(Geertz 1990, 17). The three novels I analyze in this study reflect the worldviews of their heroes; not important historical figures but rather the common people who were entangled in the strings of wars and conflict. If we take the characters in Grossman's book as an example (two men, a woman and her two sons), it is obvious that we cannot describe them as "larger than life" characters. These are usual people who were swept unwillingly by the tides of time, entrapped in almost unbearable situations, such as sickness and hospitalization in the time of great anxiety and fear for the existence of Israel before the war in 1967; the Egyptian surprise attack, which started the Yom Kippur War; falling in the captivity of the Egyptian army, being fiercely tortured, and barely survive; military service in the occupied territories with the risks of being attacked by terrorists; and participating in a large military operation in Lebanon, with the risk of being killed.

According to Wickberg, the dominant approach in New Cultural History deals with the representation of cultural discourse, and cultural texts (including novels) are examined as expressions of relations of race, class and gender (Wickberg, 2007, 661-684). In all three novels, relationships between Jews and Arabs are well-expressed and the novels deal with the way in which Arabs are perceived in the eyes of Jews through most of the conflict. During

this long period, a radical changes in the balance of power between the two sides occurred: the Jews became the majority and built an independent state, while most of the Palestinians had become refugees, whereas some remained a minority within the newly established Jewish state. The conflict reflected in the books is also a conflict between cultures, as the Israeli society, in large part, strives with all its might to connect and to belong to western civilization. It is enough to indicate the poor status of Arabic studies within the Jewish education system as a prime example to the disregard of the Israeli society to the surrounding Arab world (The State Comptroller, 774, 784). In 2009, the Israeli State Comptroller discovered that Arabic studies in many schools in the Jewish sector were insufficient, do not comply with required hours, and sometimes Arabic was not taught at all. This is despite the fact that Arabic is an official language in Israel, with an officially identical status to that of Hebrew.

While mainstream Cultural History deals with objects, the "History of sensitivity" (History of Sensibility), focuses primarily on the importance of modes of sensation and perception ("Perception and Feeling") of situations and the ways in which objects are understood, perceived and become part of the human experience (Wickberg,2007, 661-662). The novels deal mainly with the ways in which the characters "translate" and "process" historical events. Ora, the protagonist in Grossman's book, is also trying to save her son's life by disconnecting from history, attempt that gave the book its Hebrew name:"A woman flees from announcement". The three writers absorb reality with their unique sensitivity, and express their impressions in the novels.

Three basic concepts - "Image", "enemy" and "Threat" were used in the analysis of the images and for drawing conclusions.

## **Image**

An image is the figure portrayed in the mind, not because of a direct perception of the object, but rather, as a combination of memory, knowledge, cultural deposits, and social conventions. These include stereotypes, as well as accumulated experience. If we wish to broaden the definition, we may include each person's, organization's or each group's subjective knowledge. Images are of great significance in the process of making decisions and interpreting reality, and hence, are of high importance in conflicts between peoples as well as in historical research. Images directly affect societies' actions and responses, and once

an image has been created, it becomes an essential part of one's self-identity, as well as the definition of the "other's" identity. Using images, based on accumulated experience, we examine the signals received from reality and formulate positions and decisions.

### Enemy

There are many definitions for the term "**enemy**" – Whoever attempts to attack or hurt; whoever hates someone or something and wishes bad things for the other; the armed forces of a nation, with whom the relationship is overtly or covertly hostile, which has led or might lead to war; a person belonging with those forces, or anything that injures or hurts. To the same extent, an enemy is also who is perceived as such, regardless of reality.

War is a state of animosity and hatred between two opponents. In each social order there are forces acting against each other and threatening to destroy one another. One of the human responses is attaching the tag "enemy" to anyone or anything perceived as threatening. The notion of "enemy" may be expressed in relationships within a state or between states. In the (common) case of doubt and lack of information about the "other side of the hill" (the enemy's actions and intentions), images serve to bridge the gap. The relationships between the United States and the Soviet Union during the "cold war" serve as an example to a case in which each side perceived the other as an enemy. As mentioned earlier, enemies may be real or imaginary, and no social system can exist for a long time without a trustworthy defense system against them.

Attitudes to the enemy may undergo radical changes during times of war. The term may become almost technical, thus neutralizing it from any humane references, as fighting is not usually based on vengeance and personal hostility. The person's mere belonging to "the other side", the "counter camp" makes him or her- a target. However, an opposite process is also presumably possible, whereby during fighting, the human aspects of the fighters and the civilians of the other side may be exposed. Such situations may create moral dilemmas, and naturally lead to their expression in cultural creation in each of its aspects.

### Threat

A threat is the declaration of intent to punish or hurt someone, mainly if that someone does not do what he or she is asked to do. It is a sign or warning of nearing trouble, danger and so forth. The level of threat and its extent, mostly in times of crisis, is hard to measure, and errors in evaluation of threats may be radical. The more profound the conflict, the more total

the perception of threat is, and as such, it leaves no room for flexibility or concessions to the other (Finlay, Holsti and Fagen 1967; Fussel 1977; Keen 1986; Rieber 1991; Ben Dor 2003, 1-13, 384-386).

### ***The Images of Arabs in the novels***

#### **Amos Oz – A Tale of Love and Darkness (2007)**

##### *"Bloodthirsty Arab masses"*

Presumably, it seems that Oz reflects faithfully the national narrative. He writes, for example, that the local Arabs in Israel are descendants of "the ancient Hebrews" and the Jews should distinguish between the peasants ("Falachin" in Arabic) and urban Effendis that incite the peasants to attack the Jewish community. There is a hope that the incited Arabs in Eretz Israel will realize that they will benefit from the wealth and the prosperity of the Jewish community and accept the existence of the Jewish state. Britain manipulates one side against the other and evokes trouble between the peoples. The Jews constantly fear "waves of violence" ("Meoraot" in Hebrew) and pogroms. Furthermore, the Jews are afraid that the local Arabs, the Arab countries and the Muslim world, would attack the Jews with the expected termination of the British mandate and slaughter them: "hordes of bloodthirsty Arabs, millions of excited Muslims, will rise and within a few days would slaughter us all" (Oz 2007, 341). The Middle East is described as "full of microbes" but it is also sensual and dangerously seductive (Oz 2007, 41-43). Eretz Israel is in the front of Asia and the Jewish community in Eretz Israel is the standpoint of the enlightened civilized nations against "the waves of the Eastern wildness" (Oz 2007, 83). The Jewish people have the exclusive right on the land, and if the Arabs do not agree, than, as his grandfather told him after the Six-Day War, they can return to their historical homeland - Saudi Arabia. In the Land of Israel, as his father had explained to him, the Jews are no longer victims, and will respond forcefully to all pursuers (Oz 2007, 126). The severity of the threat is proved if we bear in mind that even after the War of Independence the Arab states continued to threaten the newly born state with a "second round" which will erase the insult of the Arab defeat of losing the War of Independence in 1948 (Oz 2007, 432).

When the writer speaks for himself, he creates a picture of Jews and Arabs living side by side. In his youth, strolling on Sabbath through Hebron road, Jerusalem, the author passed by the homes of the rich Arabs. The "Arab Enemy" appears as a society of masters who drink coffee and play backgammon. His father greeted them in Arabic that sounded to them like

Russian, and they responded politely with blessings out of surprise (Oz 2007, 54). Two episodes, described at length, elucidate the images of the Arabs in the eyes of Amos Oz. One occurs at a clothing store and the other at the household and the yard of an upper-class Arab family.

In the first episode, at the age of three and a half, Oz lost his way in a clothing store while following what seemed to him as an Arab girl. It turned out that the "girl" was in fact a hunchback dwarf that made him afraid. The temptation turns at once into a threat and he quickly hides. An Arab Tailor, working at the shop, found him and alleviates his fears. In the eyes of Oz the child, the Arab rescuer became an example of kindness and Oz stresses his feelings of affection towards him (Oz 2007, 258-269). In the second incident, during the summer of 1947, Oz is invited with his relatives to the rich Silwani family home in Sheikh Jarrah, Jerusalem. The family wished to express gratitude to his uncle. In the surrounding Levantine splendor, Oz, a young boy at the age of eight, noticed the presence of weapons; guns and swords, adorning the lounge. In comparison with the luxury demonstrated by the hosts, the Jews (Oz and his relatives) look poor and ridiculous. Indications of the expected conflict were already in the atmosphere, and Oz, wanting to express the bravery of the Jewish people, climbed a tree in an effort to impress Aisha, a girl of eleven or twelve years old. He wanted to prove her that the Jews in Eretz Israel are not "miserable people ... Awlad Al-Mout, [in Arabic:] born to die". (Oz 2007, 372)

On the tree, he found and waved a metal ball connected to a chain that fell and crushed the foot of Awad, the younger brother of Aisha. Looking back, Amos Oz examines this incident and his conduct with regret and guilt. He wonders where Aisha and her lame brother (as a result of the accident) "ended up". Did Aisha grow old in a refugee camp? and who might be the Jews living today in her home in Talbia (A middle-class Arab neighborhood in western Jerusalem, occupied in 1948 and since then populated by the upper echelon of Jewish society including many state officials)?.

The episode with the Arab girl reflects Oz's conflicting emotions towards the Arabs, in the words of Mordecai Bar-On: "attraction and repulsion, awe and suspicion, excitement and passion for acceptance, but primarily foreignness, alienation, anxiety and fear" (Bar On 2005, 50). Even after the occupation of the Old city in 1967, in his first visit to the reunited city of Jerusalem, Oz, to his disappointment, found out that he was an undesirable alien, because the



conquered Arabs regarded him as an occupier, and he could see in their eyes that they wished for his death (Oz 1968, 243).

Anita Shapira offers the possibility that the abovementioned incident at the home of the rich Arab family is in fact a metaphor for the relationship between Jews and Arabs in Eretz Israel, and demonstrates the way the conflict had begun: "a bond of friendship is created [between Arabs and Jews], but as a result of misunderstanding, incitement, caprices, misplaced pride, and perhaps unacceptable behavioral norms, the friendly meeting ends in disaster" (Shapira 2005, 167).

The figure of the good man and benefactor from the clothing store stands in extreme contrast with the Arab threats of massacre at the outbreak of the War of Independence: "Azam Pasha, the Arab League secretary, threatened the Jews, 'If indeed they dare to try to establish a Zionist entity, and even over one step of Arab land, then 'the Arabs will drown them in their own blood, and the Middle East will witness atrocities that even the acts of the Mongol conquerors shall blanch in contrast" (Oz 2007, 390).

The conflict, according to Oz's diagnosis, is between two persecuted people - Arabs and Jews - both are victims of abusive Europe. Each of the victims saw the European guilt of injustice reflected in the other. Arabs see the Jews as Europeans who exploited and oppressed them, while the Jews see the Arabs as a part of their persecutors throughout the ages, following the Nazis (Oz: 2007, 388-389). The general idea in the book is that the conflict is a tragedy that has no solution. If there has ever been an ally to pull both sides out of the maze, it was inevitably blocked during the war of Independence (or Nakba). Symbolically, the two sides cannot even call it in the same name.

In the opinion of Gershon Shaked and Anita Shapira, Oz's perception, as reflected in his description of events during the War of Independence, is primarily Zionist. Anita Shapira even claims that the book is designed to meet the claims of Post-Zionism and in the same time to confirm the classic Zionist narrative. The book expresses, in her opinion, Oz's personal disappointment of his associates in the Zionist Left from the Palestinian return to violence after the beginning of the Oslo peace process (Shapira 2005, 163-171). Gershon Shaked emphasizes the chain of events, which took place in Jerusalem during the War of Independence (Shaked 2005, 19-20). Oz describes the Arab siege on the Jewish part of Jerusalem and the murder of many Jews by the Arabs, such as the *Hadassah* medical convoy

massacre on April 13 1948. Oz also refers to the urban Arab terror, including the blowing up of the Anglo-Jewish newspaper, the 'Palestine Post' and the 'Jewish Agency' buildings. While it is claimed that Jews expelled the Arabs, it is important to point that in the territories captured by Arabs, such as Gush Etzion and the Jewish Quarter in the old city of Jerusalem, Jews were entirely banished, and the Jewish settlements (including holy places, like the synagogues in the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem) were completely destroyed.

The essence of Oz's views is reflected in the dialogue between the young Oz and one of the old men of Kibbutz Hulda, in which the latter expressed the view that an Arab victory in the War of Independence would have led to the murder of all the Jews in Eretz Israel: "we won [in 1948] and we took [the land] from them. Nothing to be proud of!, but if they would have won us in forty-eight, there was still less to be proud of. Not even one Jew they would have left alive, not even one, and in reality, in the entire area that is currently in their hands there is not even a single Jew" (Oz 2007, 486).

### ***Yoram Kaniuk -1948 (2010)***

*"I love the enemy"*

The parent's generation instilled the youth born and raised in Israel during the British Mandate with the feeling of being persecuted throughout history, with the recent example of the Holocaust in Europe, as well as the mission to fight the Arab enemy, which became another link in the chain of enemies of the Jewish people throughout the ages. The teachers wanted the youngsters born in Eretz Israel to revenge the "Pogroms" (bursts of killing, raping and looting by the mob) from which the Jews suffered throughout the ages. The Arabs indeed became a bitter enemy in the waves of violence during the 20's and the 30's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but from the perspective of youngsters, the images of Arabs were also affected by childhood and adolescence experiences, as well as mutual relations between Jews and Arabs, as well as landscapes, food and drinks: "We went to build a state against Khmel'nitsky (A Ukrainian leader who led an uprising against Russia, which resulted in the massacre of many Jews in the 17<sup>th</sup> century), and the Cossacks, and the Germans, and all we found in front of us were Arabs, whom we knew from the shooting at us during the 30's when we drove to Gadera, and from the donkies, from the market in Jaffa, and from the shouting 'Itbah al Yahud' (massacre the Jews), from the tasty tahini, from coffee with cardamon, from Khayat beach of the noble Arab that my father liked to visit his palace in Haifa" (Kaniuk 2010, 26).

The youth, in contrast with their parents, were born in Eretz Israel, and were no longer "Polacks, Russians, Germans, Romanians and Greeks", but natives to the country, and several "key" features of their character were shaped by the relations with the Arabs. Therefore, the war against the Arabs led to an internal split in the psyche of the native-born, Israeli Jews who grew up in Eretz Israel during the British Mandate. Part of their identity, carved by thirty years of the British attempt to establish a "Palestinian nation" comprised of Jews and Arabs - was questioned during the violent years, and was later completely torn in the War of Independence (Kaniuk 2010, 27).

Another tear, severe and far more complex, was the one between the native "Sabra" Jews and the diaspora, usually members of the family that remained in Europe and perished in the Holocaust. The "Sabra" is trying to put a fence in his mind between himself and the survivors who came, according to the description of Kaniuk, to torment the lives of his parents and his already torn identity. One of the Holocaust survivors slams at Kaniuk boy's face: "And who are you? Kind of an Arab who does not know the Jewish language [i.e. Yiddish] ...and you will kiss the Tutchess [ass, Yiddish] of the Germans here, this time disguised themselves as Arabs" (Kaniuk 2010, 34). The spirit of "the Gentile Jew", forged in the country, which denies the historical heritage of the Jewish Diaspora, and detached from the typical Jewish characteristics, became more complicated with feelings of guilt as the dimensions of the holocaust atrocities were being realized: "I am guilty [testifies Kaniuk] of having cream during the war when I went to Gadera, while they [the Jews in Europe] died" (Kaniuk 2010, 35).

During World War II, the Jewish community in Eretz Israel actually prospered whereas during the same time the Jews in Europe were systematically murdered. The question whether the Jewish community in Israel did everything it could have done to save the Jews of Europe still remains debated amongst historians. Kaniuk felt the dilemma when someone clanged to him in the street and told him that he looked completely like the son he had lost in the Holocaust (Kaniuk 2010, 36).

Kaniuk was convinced that the Jews were able to leave Europe and go to Eretz Israel before the war, but did not want to do it. When he questioned and asked, he discovered that the members of his father's family, except for two of them, were shot and buried in a pit they were forced to dig for themselves. The rupture with the Diaspora is also reflected in the

adoption of the myth of Masada. Judaism made Rabbi Yohanan Ben Zakkai a hero, but Zionism adopted Elazar ben Yair, the zealot that convinced the sieged Jews surrounded by the Romans in Masada to commit suicide: "the Jewish-Arab struggle created a need for heroes ... the Jews in Eretz Israel adopted the suicide of the people of Masada, who preferred death over slavery, adopted Elazar Ben Yair, and saw him as a Zionist myth of 'death or conquest'..." (Kaniuk 2010, 43). In October 1947, just before the outbreak of the war, shooting began from the Hassan Bek Mosque between Jaffa and Tel Aviv, and a riot broke. Kaniuk witnessed a terrifying event in which an Arab was trapped by a mob that beat him to death. Kaniuk was trying to protect him as the best he could and a Jewish policeman shouted at him that he should not help the Arab who 'came to kill Jews', and that the Arabs are 'born to kill Jews'. In vain, Kaniuk tried to help him but the mob did not stop from the beating, and for the first time in his life, he saw someone dying (Kaniuk 2010, 48). The incident actually strengthened Kaniuk's sensitivity to others.

But the horrifying experience of being unable to save the Arab from the mob was substituted quickly by the personal feeling of acute danger. During the first six months of the War of Independence, and when we refer to the Palmach in particular, the experience that the fighters had in the battlefield was that of "the few against many". They felt isolated, vulnerable and nearly unarmed with respect to the Arab masses. The Arabs attacked in waves, like a force of nature, as Kaniuk described the Arab onslaught on the Castel (a village on a steep hill, 20km to the west of Jerusalem, blocking the main road to Jerusalem): "a crowd like swarms of locusts, grazing the ground, climbing quickly. The black and red Kufiyahs rose in a storm, skipped over the rocks. There were hundreds of people who jumped on the south side of the mountain. We did not know where this great army grew and where he hid before, and it was startling to see it flowing like a herd of shouting monkeys climbing trees" (Kaniuk 2010, 55).

The distance between victory and defeat of the two sides, in the Castel and in the entire war, was a hair's breadth. What really happened, as we know today, from historical perspective, was that the Arabs were losing their hold on the country while the Jews were establishing theirs. If we imagine the country as a theater, we might say that the Arabs were "descending" from its "historical stage" while the Jews were "ascending". However, during that time, during the battle on the Castel, reality seemed very different. The commanders who stayed behind and covered for the privates' retreat were shot and killed as the Arab "black masses" reached the slope, killed the wounded and abused the corpses. A sharp turn of events

occurred when it became clear to the Arabs that their most esteemed military leader, Abd al-Qader al-Husseini, was killed in the battle over the Castel. The Arabs returned to Jerusalem to attend the funeral and abandoned the recently-occupied place. It was a defining moment, "Maybe that was the moment that changed the fate of the war" (Kaniuk 2010, 58).

In Kaniuk's eyes, the inferiority of the Jewish fighters was terrible: "what is a war to wage without tanks and airplanes ... without arms, food, water, and without guns ... Jerusalem besieged, flogged, shells were falling all the time, and people are killed waiting in line for water and kerosene" (Kaniuk 2010, 61). In the eyes of Yashkeh, a partisan who fought at the battle of Stalingrad, on the other hand, the war against the Arabs was merely "children's laughter" compared to the horrors he witnessed in Russia: "...like a war of children against children, and against the Arabs shouting and slaughtering, and running away from the first bullet. Except for the Jordanians that were excellent soldiers, he told me that he never saw worse troops" (Kaniuk 2010, 92).

Throughout the war, Kaniuk debates the question of attitude towards Arabs with himself and with his close friends. The values he absorbed at home, during the visits with his father at the homes of Arabs and Muslims did not fit the reality in which Arabs mutilated the corpses of his dead friends. The dilemma is sharply demonstrated by another event described by the author. N., one of his friends, after witnessing an abused corpse of a Palmach fighter in one of the Arab villages, revenged by murdering a young woman. Then, when Kaniuk wanted to save a child from the avenger, he pointed his gun at the avenger and accidentally hit the child.

Kaniuk sued the avenger as part of a "Friends Trial" and in that occasion he told his friends what happened. Even though Benny Marshak, "the politrook" (responsible for coping with moral issues) of the Palmach, was there, but nothing came out of it. "N", the avenger, responded in a story that was intended to prove the treachery of the Arabs, and in this way to justify his deeds. This story was about the Kibutz of "Hashomer Hatzair", at the vicinity of the colony where N. grew. The members of "Hashomer Hatzair" believed in the fraternity between Arabs and Jews and invited the Arab neighbors to eat in the Kibutz's shared dining room. One of the Arabs, Jamil, was especially friendly with the members of the Kibbutz, and they fed him and taught him how to read and write. When a fighting broke out and a gang attacked the kibbutz, it turned out that Jamil, who knew every path and every tent in the Kibbutz, has led their way (Kaniuk 2010, 120-121). Kaniuk's friends laughed and since then

Kaniuk had been nicknamed "Jamil" by his comrades. Even many years later, on an occasional meeting on the street, they hugged him and called him Jamil. When Kaniuk went tormented about the Arab boy who was killed, as mentioned before, "N" reminded him: "You bled, you had bullets stuck in your body, enjoy that you stayed alive" (Kaniuk 2010, 121).

Battles were mixed and blended with memories and some have become "black holes", lacunas not to be mentioned. Kaniuk fought at Saris, in Beit Machsir, the Castel, Nabi Samuel, Colonia, Mount Zion, San Simon and other battles during his service in the Palmach during the war of independence. The battle of Nabi Samuel was a major failure. The commander, who was in an armored car and went back to Maal'e Hachamisha to call reinforcement, fell to an Arab ambush and never returned. The fighters fired all the ammunition and eventually shot a Davidka (an Israeli massive mortar) shell that fell between them and the enemy and did not explode. The fighters were afraid to move and pretended to be dead. The Arabs prepared themselves coffee, sang, shouted in Hebrew at the Jews and shot them even though they thought they were dead (Kaniuk 2010, 140). Meanwhile, the "presumably dead" and the wounded were hit by gunfire until finally three of them, including Kaniuk, got up and ran to Maal'e Hachamisha. In that battle, according to Kaniuk's opinion, the Palmach fighting was disappointing and the Arabs fought well. It was therefore decided, without saying so explicitly, to keep these battle "a secret" (Kaniuk 2010, 141).

In another harsh battle, in the monastery of San Simon, the Palmach fighters were actually massacred by the enemy because of their inferiority in manpower as well as weapons. At this difficult situation, and strangely enough, it seemed that a kind of "intimacy" developed between them and the enemy: "I remember horror that enveloped me and how Raful [Rafael Etan, later chief of staff of the IDF, during the 'Peace of Galilee' war, 1982] was injured, and I helped him to sit on a chair ... as he kept shooting. Someone shouted at him to stop and let the medic treat him, as he cried out a in a whine of love, but I am killing the enemy!" (Kaniuk 2010, 144). Kaniuk thought the end was near, because he heard Dado [David Elazar, later chief of stuff of the IDF, during the Yom Kippur War, 1973] talking to Raful about lack of a chance to survive, but they will fight to the end, and even blow up the seriously injured if they had to withdraw, so that the Arabs could not abuse them. Suddenly, the Arabs retreated and Dado, looking at the retreating enemy, concluded that it was a 'pupil against pupil' battle, and that the Arabs blinked first, merely five minutes before the planned surrender of the Palmach force. After the victory, the fighters looted the houses of the rich Arabs in the

Katamon neighborhood of Jerusalem. Impressed by the splendor, huge mirrors, crystal chandeliers and the abundance of food and wine, the fighters washed themselves with champagne and cognac (Kaniuk 2010, 147).

Another episode represents well the feelings created between the fighters of opposite sides. In the battle of Mount Zion, Kaniuk was wounded by gunfire of a soldier of the Arab Legion. He lied down wounded and awaited his death. He closed his eyes, and when he opened them, it turned out to his surprise that the enemy soldier disappeared. Later it turned out that it was in fact an English man in the service of the Arab Legion. In 1950, when they met in Paris, the man told Kaniuk that he seemed to him like "Christ on the Cross". The man described his doubts: "I am a lover and an enemy, I tried to kill you but I also saved you. I loved you and hated you" (Kaniuk 2010, 161)."

The dualism between friend and foe characterized only the "sabra" who grew up in the country. The newcomers, on the other hand, didn't bother themselves with such dilemmas. After the cities Lod and Ramle were emptied of their Arab populations, new immigrants came in. In Kaniuk's eyes, these Jews were bitter and did not notice the emptiness of their new homes, neither did they care who lived there before them. Everything was strange for them, and as far as they cared about anything, "they were right because they survived" (Kaniuk 2010, 176). In many ways, they were stronger than the native Israeli Sabra because they survived the horrors of the Holocaust and the Second World War in Europe (Kaniuk 2010, 177). The suffering they experienced hardened their hearts so they could not recognize the suffering of the Arabs who went to exile after the War for Independence.

### ***David Grossman – Until the End of the Land (2009)***

#### *An "Arab Salad"*

In Grossman's book, Arabs are lurking in the shadows during the day, whereas during the night they are the nightmare from which one is waking up in horror. Arabs can also be depicted as a wall that the Israeli society is speeding to crush into. There is no mentioning in the book of the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt (1979), nor of the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan (1994). There is also no reference to the negotiations and the agreements signed between Israel and the Palestinians. It seems that the author chose to ignore any signs of positive relations between Israel and the Arabs, and maybe by his choice he meant to

emphasize that the overwhelming weight of relations between Israel and the Arabs remains hostile, hateful and violent.

The story revolves three principal figures – a woman named Ora, and two men in her life: Ilan and Avram. She later gave birth to two sons, one of each. Like most of the Israeli public, Ora also tried to ignore the immediate danger of the conflict. This is the common Israeli way to cope with its endless continuity and to avoid the existential necessity to act to resolve it. It worked very well for her, until fate summoned her son to a "big military operation" - words that are commonly associated with a beginning of war in the Israeli reality. A 'big military operation' is only the beginning, and no one knows when and how the war ends. For example, the first war in Lebanon started in 1982 as the 'Peace for Galilee' operation, lasted for three years, and kept the Israeli IDF involved in a violent conflict in Lebanon for 18 years, until May 2000. Ora felt that almost miraculously, for twenty years, including six consecutive years of her two sons serving in the "occupied territories" during their military service, her family remained untouched by all dangers: war, terrorist attacks, rockets, grenades, bullets, shells, bombs, explosions, snipers and suicide bombers. They managed somehow to live quiet and normal life, "until we were caught" (Grossman 2009, 303).

At the beginning of the book, all three principal figures are in a hospital, with high fever, under the influence of medicines and could not distinguish between day and night. During times of anxiety before the Six Day War (1967), the moral was law and the general mood in Israel was that the state was under immediate danger of annihilation.

At the hospital in Jerusalem, Ora's soul is bonded with the soul of Avram. The nightmares of their illness and the deep fears they felt during the preluding "Hamtana" (waiting period in Hebrew) were entangled together, with the joy of the surprisingly magnificent victory. The false horrific reports of the "Voice of Thunder from Cairo", the Egyptian propaganda radio station, which broadcasted in Hebrew with a heavy Arabic accent and with many mistakes, had become a part of Ora's nightmares, and she even imagined that the voice spoke inside her and announced that the destruction of the young Jewish state had already taken place and that the Arabs won the war. The voice told her that the "Zionist entity" had been conquered by waves of brave Arab fighters while the Zionist airplanes were dropping like flies. Ora lays in her bed, terrified by the words spoken in her head, and could not even call for help



(Grossman 2009, 38). Avram brings Ilan to their meetings in the hospital, until Ilan eventually wins her love and their first son, Adam, was born.

Six years later, during the Yom Kippur war, Avram and Ilan, Ora's two lovers, were serving as intelligence officers in 'Bavel' (Hebrew for Babylon), the main IDF's signal intelligence facility in the Sinai Peninsula. Avram, driven by his desire to 'know everything', memorizes the names and personal numbers of all the commanders of the Egyptian troops. As it happened, Avram was sent down to one of the strongholds on the Suez Canal, where he was captured in the Egyptian surprise attack. The Egyptian soldiers beat him and on the way to Cairo. Peasants attacked the truck in an attempt to assault him. Avram was imprisoned in Abbasiyya prison in Cairo, and for three times the Egyptians instructed him to dig his own grave, where they told him to lay as they threw dirt on him. In the investigations he was starved, beaten and raped (Grossman 2009, 184, 191-193, 470). He lost all hope, and when he was finally freed from captivity and returned to Israel, he whispered to Ora that he would be better off dead (Grossman 2009, 195). In January 1974 he woke up from coma and asked Ora, waiting by his bed, if Israel still existed (Grossman 2009, 383).

Ilan went looking for Avram on the eastern bank of the Suez Canal, while the Egyptians had already penetrated 20 km into the area controlled by the IDF (Grossman 2009, 523). Descriptions of the fall of the Suez strongholds and the shock faithfully reflect the failure of the IDF at the beginning of the war, as understood from a significant number of sources including memoirs, research and published documentation (Avital-Epstein 2013). For example, Ora told Avram what Ilan had told her about his journey in Avram's footsteps, in a vain attempt to find him, walking all night between the smoky remains of "Zelda" APCs, jeeps, tanks and cracked fuel trucks (Grossman 2009, 524-526). The description recalls Moshe Dayan's (Minister of Defense during the Yom Kippur war, 1973) impressions from the battlefield of the one of the most difficult battles that took place at the "Chinese Farm", in sight of one of the harsh battles: "Hundreds of combat vehicles damaged and burned some still smoldering. Israeli and Egyptian tanks coop each other, tens of meters apart ... I am not a novice when it comes to war and its horrors, but I have never seen such picture ... a huge killing field, extending in all directions, as far as the eye can see" (Dayan 1982, 652).

Anxiety is inherited from one generation to the other. Offer, Ora's son from Avram, still a child in kindergarten, is afraid from the ratio between the number of Arabs and Muslims to

the number of the Jews, as well as the number of countries that are friendly or hostile towards Israel. Due to his anxiety from terrorist attacks, he sleeps with a heavy wrench near his head (Grossman 2009, 420). In the Seder (Passover night service) Offer started crying that he didn't want to be a Jew, because Jews are always killed and hated (Grossman 2009, 419). Ora even thought to invite Sammy, the Arab driver (see below), to prove to him that not all Arabs are enemies. To calm the boy down, she took him to the memorial site of the Armored Corps in Latrun where only the sight of many heavy tanks, could calm the boy down. Ora says: "Maybe a bit primitive ... back then I thought that what is good for the entire country, is good for my child" (Grossman 2009, 422).

*Sammy Jubran, an Arab from Abu Ghosh*

The bilateral relations between Arabs and Jews in Israel are manifold and complex. While hospitalized during the Six-Day War, Ora, Ilan and Avram even fear the Arab nurse and feel as if they were her captives (Grossman 2009, 37). After the defeat of the Arab armies, they witnessed the desperation of the Arab nurse who banged her head on the floor and walls, saying in Arabic that Palestine was lost. Similar duality lies also in the relationship between Ora and Sammy. Sammy Jubran, an Arab from the village of Abu Ghosh, located close to her home in the Castell, the very same hill on which Kaniuk fought, is Ora's soulmate. For twenty years, Sammy drives her, Ilan and the whole family. Sammy is the only Arab character winning a major role in the plot, representing the Arab minority in Israel.

Because of the long drives, Ora became a confidante of Sammy and he shares everything with her. She loved to hear his talks about his family, about the complex relationship between clans in Abu Ghosh, the intrigues in the local Council and about the woman he loved since he was fifteen years old, and may not stop loving even after he married his cousin (Grossman 2009, 88).

Sammy succeeded in his life and business because he was very shrewd and wit, with wisdom flavored with the cunning of a good merchant (Grossman 2009, 88). The description of the way in which he succeeded in establishing a fleet of cars thanks to goats he sold, indicates determination, originality and momentum patched with Orientalism.

However, Sammy is also loyal and deeply connected to the Palestinian narrative. When Ora and Ilan were separated, Sammy grins on their decision to "share" him as well, as if he was a part of their property and compares the "division" between them to the history of the

Palestinians: "We, the Arabs, he laughs with his huge teeth, we got used to being divided by you, since the partition plan [1947]..." (Grossman 2009, 85). Sammy was also anxious from the possible expulsion of the Arabs from Israel. Since he was a kid, he counted every truck he saw on the roads, civilian or military, because he feared that the trucks would come and take him and his family and expel all the 'Arabs of 1948' (as the Arabs in Israel named themselves) across the border, as the Israeli supporters of Arab population transfer promised (Grossman 2009, 97).

The dialogue with Sammy arouses Ora's fears of the possibility that destiny will turn again, and the Jews would become a minority. So it was important for her to learn how Sammy can avoid developing hatred and bitterness. Ilan had never believed that Sammy is sincere, and said that his humble behavior will change to violence as soon as the Arabs would have the upper hand (Grossman 2009, 91). Ora, on the other hand, believed that Sammy was able to deal with his impossible situation as an Arab in a Jewish state (Grossman 2009, 91). When checked for security reasons at the entrance to the airport, he told her that he was named "pissed Arab" to which he responded: "maybe you're pissing on me, but I'm not pissed" (Grossman 2009, 91). In this manner, as in others, it is clear that the author processes reality and uses it in his own way. Discriminatory attitude towards Arab citizens at the airport is indeed a common practice. For example, in February 2012, Iara Mashur, an editor of a widespread weekly magazine in Arabic (and daughter of the deceased Lutfi Mashur, the editor of the daily Arabic newspaper "A-Sinara") preferred to give up the flight of "El Al" from Milano, Italy, to Israel because of the humiliating security check required by the airline's security personnel (Khoury 2012).

Sammy himself sharply diagnosed the ambiguous attitude towards the Arabs and put it as the contrast between day and night: "...he will never be able to understand the logic of the Jews: during the day you are constantly checking and tracking us, looking in our underwear, and at night, all of a sudden you give us the keys to your restaurants, gas stations, bakeries and supermarkets?" (Grossman 2009, 148).

The relationships between Ora and Sammy were so good that even when Offer was called up for reserve duty for a major military operation in Lebanon, she asked him to drive Offer and her to the gathering area of the military unit in the Gilboa region. Strangely, it seemed that on a day of going to war, Ora forgot Sammy's "Arab nature", and so the three of them found

themselves in an extremely difficult situation, when Sammy drives Offer to the place from which he would be dispatched onward into war. Offer, slams harsh words at her because she asked Sammy to drive them: "What happened to you? ...What if suddenly someone will discover An Arab here and think he came to commit suicide? And didn't you think what he feels when he has to drive me here? Can you grasp what it means for him?" (Grossman 2009, 99-100).

On her way back from the Gilboa she apologized to him for putting him in the impossible situation as an Arab driver who is required to bring a Jewish soldier to join a military operation directed against his own people. She also felt she owed him a lot for his help (Grossman 2009, 125). When they parted, and she went slowly up the stairs to her home, she had a feeling that despite what happened, and despite his strange silence on the way back, their friendship deepened that day: "as if it was purified in a more realistic fire, the fire of the test of reality" (Grossman 2009, 125).

#### *An Endless conflict*

On the verge of the operation, Offer says: "we really have to beat them once and for all, even if it is clear that it will not wipe them entirely, and will not diminish their desire to continue hurting us even a little...but perhaps, at least, it will deter them" (Grossman 2009, 94). Offer then quoted the Prime Minister, who manifested the same expressions that were used by the Jewish side to characterize the enemy even before the War of Independence: "We will not stop until we have eradicated the terrorist infrastructure ...and till we defeat the gangs of murderers and cut the head of the snake..." (Grossman 2009, 113). Similar images were used to describe Arab villages in military reports during the War of Independence (Ben Dor 2012: 56). However, the inherent contradiction in his words between the strong conviction that Israel must "beat them" and the awareness that a victory is not feasible, and that all that can be achieved is a certain degree of deterrence, is very clear. In this way, Offer's words clearly delineate the tragedy of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which turned into "an intractable conflict", as Bar-Tal defined it: "Intractable conflicts, which last a long time because none of the parties cannot win them, and does not want to settle them by peaceful means, which involve compromises and concessions. They are accompanied with great hostility in a vicious circle of violence. Conflicts of this kind are regarded as insoluble and self-perpetuating" (Bar-Tal 2007, 25). Bar-Tal and Chernyak-Hai (2009, 229) emphasize the importance of self-perceived collective victimhood in the ethos of societies involved in an intractable conflict.

Both societies, the Israeli and the Palestinian, have this sense of self-perceived collective victimhood and they blame each other on being the guilty aggressor in intentional, severe and unjust harm. The collective memory of the Jews includes the unbearable burden of the Holocaust and the ongoing victimhood during almost 2,500 years of recorded persecutions and violence.

The continuity between generations is clear when fathers send their children to battle. Young people embrace the aggressive approach, even with absolute certainty that force will not end the conflict. The adults, however, demonstrate a mixture of fatigue, fatalism, depression and confusion.

Among the rituals enacted in mind in the long years of the war in Lebanon was the last picture taken before the battle. The fear is that this picture would be advertised in the newspaper with faces surrounded by a red circle, illustrating those who did not return. To the Mother's horror, she discovered that her son was not ready to give up on his participation in the operation, even though he was on a holiday vacation. He perceives the operation as a reward, and as a realization of everything, he struggled for in his military service, and a "compensation" for the severe service in the occupied territories (Grossman 2009, 88).

Ora imagines the military operation as if it is a part of a large-scale system shared by her son and his fellow fighters, officers who prepare the plans, rows of IDF's tanks, and even the enemy, who might hurt her son and take his life: "...the people in the villages and towns there [the Arabs], of those, peering out through the closed shutters at soldiers and tanks driving through their streets and alleys, and the boy, who could in lightning speed, hurt Offer tomorrow or the day after, and maybe tonight, with a stone or a bullet or missile" (Grossman 2009, 108). The last sight that her son might see: "a narrow alley, discarded stone block and veiled face of a young man, eyes burning with rage and hatred" (Grossman 2009, 111).

#### *Escaping the message*

One morning Ora finds herself having the worst nightmare in any parent's life in Israel, the fear of losing her son in the war and becoming a bereaved mother. She concluded that she had to disappear completely and totally disconnect from reality, in a practically impossible attempt to prevent this terrible danger. In her imagination, by disappearing, she avoids fulfilling her part in the chain of events that would seal the fate of her son. Simply, she would not be present when the men sent by the IDF would come to tell her about his fall, as it is the

procedure in such a tragic event (Grossman 2009, 129). She decides to take Avram with her to escape into the natural scenery of the Galilee, and calls back to Sammy to drive her to take Avram with her from Tel Aviv. She takes Avram with her on this attempt to escape from reality to the natural scenery of the Galilee. Avram, Offer's father whom she met in the hospital for the first time during the six-day war (1967), still suffered from the scars of captivity in Egypt (1973), as mentioned above.

On their way to the north, at night, Sammy puts a sick child, the son of an illegal immigrant, or a Shabachnik (in Hebrew a nickname for a person that entered Israel illegally) to a school in Jaffa that functions as a shelter for many Palestinians that entered Israel illegally, and Ora experiences the nightmare of the Palestinian's return, which casts horror on Israeli society. At night, the place served as a hospital for them. Ora looked at the shadows of: "men, women and children, dressed in rags, silent and submissive with refugee ashes sprinkled on them. They stood at a distance, along the walls, and looked at her. Ora froze, terrified, 'they are coming back', she thought" (Grossman 2009, 144). Ora's thoughts reflect one of the biggest dilemmas of the conflict: the hope of return, held by the Palestinians, is the nightmare of the Jews in Israel.

On the way, Sammy and Ora quarreled about which radio channel should they listen to. She expected he would give up, but to her disappointment, Sammy is unable to give up on even such a small matter and it seemed that their friendship had completely faded. Ora bitterly thought that the reason was that the Arab culture is based on stubbornness, even in small matters, that they feel as if the entire world is in debt for them, and that they are incapable of forbearance, feeling obligated to revenge every insult. Eventually, she felt so furious as if she was ready to 'kill' him. After the crisis they: "glanced at each other from the side, shivering, swollen. 'Sammy', moaned Ora, look what has become of us" (Grossman 2009, 170).

#### *Anxiety for the future of the State of Israel*

Fears for the future of the State of Israel are reflected in Ora's job and in an opera produced by Adam (her son from Ilan). Ora found a job in a museum for the documentation of Israel that was established in Nevada, USA. She collected objects for the museum that represented the material culture of Israel during the 50's. Sammy helped her, drove her around the country and easily represented himself as a Jew, while Adam produced an opera about exile from Israel. Avram himself remembered that when he was in captivity, he envisioned "a convoy of

exiles", formed from columns of people coming from all towns and villages (Grossman 2009, 89, 258, 275). Offer himself, while parting from Ora, told her clearly: "... if I would be killed... leave the country, just get out of here, you should not be here" (Grossman 2009, 410-411). The Jewish majority, so it seems, fear the reversal of fates: the Palestinians who went to exile in 1948 will return, and the Jews would have to leave.

*"All those who ruined her life"*

In general, the Arabic language and the attitude towards the Arab culture both play an important role in the novel. Ilan and Avram served as intelligence officers in "Bavel", the main alert base of the Israeli intelligence in the Sinai peninsula, positioned towards the Egyptian army, the most threatening enemy in Israeli eyes back in those days. Portrayed as ideal intelligence officers, they are almost 'worshippers' of the Arab language, to the point of memorizing dictionaries by heart. However, Ora hates the language that even sounds negative to her: "...almost every word in Arabic in some way relates to some trouble or disaster..." (Grossman 2009, 584). Likewise, Ora disliked the speakers of the language, the Arabs, and in a symbolic and humorous way express her wrath against them while cutting vegetables for a salad. Ora cuts the vegetables furiously as if chopping all staunch Arab leaders and warriors who wished to destroy Israel, amongst them Abdel Qader Al-Husseini, Haj Amin al-Husseini, Ahmed Shukeiri, Gaafar Numeiri, Ayatollah Khomeini, Yasser Arafat, Mahmoud Abbas, Gamal Abdel Nasser -as well as hostile organizations such as Hamas and weapons such as Scud missiles and rockets (Grossman 2009, 584-585). To the hated Arabs she added all those in the Jewish side who endanger her son by making him an active part of the conflict: "Baruch Goldstein and Yigal Amir [two infamous Jewish killers who massacred innocent worshipping Muslim citizens in Hebron, and prime minister Rabin, respectively, and by doing so endangered the peace process]...Golda Meir and Menachem Begin, Shamir and Sharon, Netanyahu, Barak, Rabin and Shimon Peres ... all those who ruined her life, continue to nationalize every moment and every child of her" (Grossman 2009, 584-585).

***Summary: A gloomy picture***

The study of the three novels has resulted with grim conclusions about the images of Arabs and its effects on Israel today. Amos Oz's book reflects the conventional perceptions in the Jewish community during the British Mandate. The romantic approach, shared by some of the first settlers, that the Arabs are descendants of the ancient Hebrews and that the Arabs will eventually learn to appreciate the development of the country by the Jews and will

become grateful, was dissolved by the rising waves of the violent struggle against the Jews. The Jews feared that the Arabs in the country, the surrounding Arab countries and the Muslim world, would rise up and murder all of them. While there are a number of complex Arab characters in the novels, as well as some manifestations of feelings towards them on behalf of the author, it appears that there is no way to create a shared life for the two peoples. If there was any hope until the War of Independence, it is quite clear that in its aftermath, the conflict turned into a complex labyrinth with no way out.

According to Yoram Kaniuk, the attempt to forge a shared identity of Jews and Arabs during the British Mandate, began to tear during the waves of Arab violence, and completely vanished during the War of Independence. The shared identity with the local Arabs that the "Sabra" felt was contrary to the education they received, according to which the Arabs are another link in the chain of enemies of the Jewish people throughout the ages. The soul of the "Sabra" was tormented also because his disapproval of the Jewish people in the Diaspora and Holocaust survivors, who were in many cases family members. Yoram Kaniuk himself was raised on the values of tolerance and sympathy towards the Arabs, based on his childhood experiences. However, in the battlefields of 1948, the Arabs turned to bitter and inhuman enemies when they attacked in waves, and his friends were killed by his side. In this reality, the Arabs, according to Kaniuk, had lost all their human characteristics. He describes the Arabs as treacherous, cruel and inhuman enemies who abuse the dead. Indeed some of these cases took place in reality, but he attributes the image and this behavior to all Arabs. The threat of the Arab enemy was also augmented by the terrible military inferiority that Kaniuk and his friends suffered from in weapons, fighting equipment, as well as food and water supply. However, the loss of humanity that made the Arabs a complete enemy did not dismiss Kaniuk from the rift in his soul between his education and childhood experience, and the horrors of war. Kaniuk himself was mentally scarred because he accidentally killed an Arab child. At the end of the War of Independence there was nothing left from the common grounds that the British were trying to create for both peoples. For the Holocaust survivors who came to Israel, there was no dilemma; the Arabs were an enemy, just like the Nazis.

The starting point of David Grossman's novel is Israel's fears of defeat and an Arab occupation during the "Waiting Period" prior to the Six-Day War. The main figures in the novel constantly express fear of the destruction of Israel, and are engaged in activities aimed at commemorating the Zionist enterprise and the State of Israel. The deep anxiety of the rift



between Israel and the Arab world is passed on to future generations. The shock and surprise that revolved the Yom Kippur War, due to the initial success of both the Egyptian and Syrian armies, reinforced the existential Israeli fears. The Egyptian army captured Avram, one of Ora's two lovers, and the description of the serious abuse he suffered reinforces the image of the Arabs as cruel and inhumane.

Even in the relationships between Jews and Arabs within Israel, represented by the relationships between Ora and Sammy, an Arab from the village of Abu Gosh, there is constant hidden doubt. The Jews themselves, as described in the novel, do not believe, deep in their hearts, in the reliability of the relationships between them and their Arab friends, and are afraid that during a time of crisis the Arabs will turn out to be a Trojan horse, a fifth Column, an enemy from within. Even in the case of a long-standing personal friendship, a lack of basic trust eventually poisons the relationships. Palestinians are described as attached to their "Nakba", the memory of becoming a displaced nation, and hope for the return of the refugees. The Arab citizens of Israel fear of population transfer, while Jews are afraid that their luck will reverse and they will be deported and thus becoming refugees themselves. The Arabs understand well the contradiction built into their very existence as citizens of the Jewish state surrounded by neighboring enemy Arab countries. Discrimination against them, such as thorough humiliating security checks at the airport, only reinforces their feeling that they cannot feel "really belong" to a Jewish state. In this reality, the end of the conflict cannot be even remotely envisaged. Ora's symbolic attempt to try to avoid receiving notice of her son's death results from total despair, and is the only thing she can do to save her son.

The negative attitude towards the Arabs was also expressed in the attitude towards the Arabic language and the Arab culture. In the past, when Jews lived in Arab and Muslim cultural space, they tended to socialize, knew the language well and even made important cultural contributions in Arabic (during times such as the 'golden age' of Spanish Jewry and during the rise of Arab nationalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries). Today, on the other hand, the study of the Arabic language and culture are mainly means to know the enemy and serve to fight it. Ora expresses her hatred towards the Arabs when she cuts a vegetable salad (...also known in Israel as an "Arab salad"). There is one important innovation, though. Ora also states how she hates Jewish leaders and extremists whom she considers guilty for risking the life of her son and many others. In this way, Grossman reflects a major change-taking place in the Israeli society. Unlike past times, the lives of the individual are more important, and

should not be sacrificed on the altar of national goals. It is no longer "Good to die for our country" as the famous last words that were attributed to Joseph Trumpeldor right before his death in the battle on Tel-Hai (1920).

The images discussed in this study reflect images of three important Israeli writers that can be characterized as members of the left wing of the Israeli public opinion. However, the importance and weight of these writers in Israeli society are beyond their location on the political spectrum. Moreover, the Israeli left, from its very beginning, had a strong belief in the prospect of peace, and showed high commitment to resolve the conflict and achieve full reconciliation between Israel and its enemies. Constant pursuit of peace is considered a comprehensive consensus that overlaps large parts of the Israeli society, including the left, the center and the moderate right wing, as reflected by the willingness of different governments to make significant contributions and concessions when opportunities for peace emerged.

This is what makes the findings of this study stunningly surprising in my view. The three writers are quite similar in their negative images of the Arabs and in their despair of the chances to solve the conflict. If writers of the left wing, which are strong supporters of reconciliation with the Arabs, express such despair from the Arabs and fear for the future of Israel in this area, we have to deduce that this state of mind is likely shared by most of Israeli society today. These three exciting novels show that the burden of the past is one of the major difficulties facing the chance to solve the conflict. According to the novels studied here, the negative images, enemification and hostility have become a heavy burden that blocks any possibility of change, and might even prevent identification of a positive shift on the opposite side when and if such process might occur.

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