HASIFRUT/LITERATURE

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revival (Arad). Some writers made use of slang in their dialogues to depict various social groups (the native Sabra, the Oriental Jew etc.) but it did not become a real ingredient of their literary style. They never used slang either to revive their style or change its basic norms, so that stylistic norms remained just as conservative and secondary as structural devices and modes of characterization.

THE DECLINE OF HEBREW LITERARY CENTERS IN EUROPE AND THE RISE OF THE CENTER IN EREZ ISRAEL

by ZOHAR SHAVIT

[Hebrew article: 45–50]

The article describes and analyzes the process of decline of Hebrew literary centers in Europe and the rise of a Hebrew cultural center in Palestine. It is claimed that Hebrew literary centers in Europe began to decline already towards the end of the 19th century, shortly after they had a period of flourishing between 1880-1895, when production of books and periodicals became modernized, and writers and readers institutionalized, resulting in immense and unprecedented growth in number and scope of readership. The reasons for this change are briefly described as well as the reasons for the decrease in readership which led to the decline of the centers in Europe and the building of an alternative center in Palestine.

The decrease in numbers of readers which was the prime reason for the decline of the European centers was the result of various factors. The most important among them were the following: (a) Hebrew literature, which had functioned as a mediating literature with the outside world, could no longer fulfill this function for the next generation which was already able (due to different training) to read European literature, and as a result abandoned Hebrew. (b) The scope of the older generation which continued to read Hebrew was to a large extent an optic illusion, because it was not "high brow" literature it was interested in, but rather the popular literature which was actually sold in big numbers. The real character of the readership was not properly understood mainly because Hebrew literature never legitimized popular literature and was never aware of its existence, though it did sense the reader's reluctance to read the new "high brow" literature of the revival period ("ha-tehiya"). (c) Because of the legitimization given to a "lacking" system, readers were forced to read literatures other than Hebrew, and gradually neglected the latter in favor of European and Yiddish, both for ideological reasons and because Yiddish, which underwent a process of stratification, could supply most of their needs.

As a result, the newly built literary establishment which was supported for a short time by the wide readrship apparently collapsed, in spite of endless efforts to rebuild it. In Palestine, on the other hand, there developed a stable and steady readership, small in absolute numbers, but relatively wide, which was growing wider and wider. This was the case because in Palestine, unlike Europe, Hebrew culture was considered an indispensable condition for the creation of the "National Home" and in spite of the lack of almost any condition (economic and intellectual) for a cultural center. However, the center in Palestine managed to survive and became the hegemonious center, because unlike the case in Europe, its readership was authentic and all its cultural needs were supplied in Hebrew. The opposition between authentic and superficial readership; between a uni-lingual and fully stratified system (at least potentially) and a multi-lingual lacking system made the existence of a Hebrew center in Palestine possible while it led to the gradual decline of Hebrew centers in Europe, long before the holocaust swept away their last remainders.

ON THE PROBLEM OF ACCEPTANCE OF THE MAQĀMA IN ARABIC LITERATURE

by RINA DRORY

[Hebrew article: 51–62]

When The Maqāmāt genre first appeared in Arabic literature in the fourth century A.H. (the tenth century A.D.), the canonized Arabic literary system was in its last stages of crystallization. Together with this process a somewhat normative poetics was developed which functioned as the established ideology of the literary