



BOLOGNA

Fifty Years of Children's Books from Around the World

edited by Giorgia Grilli

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Presentation

The Bologna Children's Book Fair is a heart-warming story of some fifty years, a dream half a century old, as Antonio Faeti affectionately puts it in the opening article of this volume.

It's the story and dream of Italian and international publishers who from the outset wholeheartedly embraced the idea of a tradeshow entirely dedicated to children's literature that would not only be a business platform but also a forum for cultural exchange: a copyright but also an ideas market. It's a story that owes its success to publishers but also to illustrators, authors, literary agents, librarians, bookstore owners – all of whom are indispensable pieces of the mosaic that is the children's literature industry, a publishing sector that more than any other drives cultural growth and today, more than ever, can help young people broaden their horizons.

But the city of Bologna has also made a considerable contribution to the success of the Fair. Already in the early years when the event was first taking shape, there was keen interest in teaching and education sciences, so much so that Antonio Faeti, in the wake, as he admits, of the teachings of professor Giovanni Maria Bertin, became the first professor of an Italian university to hold a chair in the History of Children's Literature.

With this book to mark a significant anniversary we have tried to convey the essence of the Children's Book Fair, not merely listing the Fair's undoubted successes but providing a unique account of narrative and illustration in children's literature. Indeed this is what our long story has taught us, step by step: how to blend concrete market requirements with a higher vision of the world of books for children, and so make us real partners of this international community.

This volume is the joint effort of the Children's Book Fair and Bologna University's Department of Education Sciences. As well as an account of how the Fair came about and developed, it especially tells the enthralling "fairy tale fifty years long" of books for children from around the world.

Duccio Campagnoli
President, BolognaFiere

Hebrew Literature for Children

Zohar Shavit

Hebrew literature for children started developing in Eretz-Israel as part of the Zionist Movement's efforts to revive Hebrew culture and the Hebrew language as the national language¹. The revival of the Hebrew language was initiated by cultural entrepreneurs who set out to make a literary and liturgical language an everyday-spoken language as well. Their project required a massive educational enterprise, including the establishment of schools and the writing of a variety of texts for children.

Teaching in Hebrew in a Hebrew environment created a genuine readership of Hebrew, for the first time in modern Jewish history. This readership generated an urgent need for suitable texts for children in all the fields of the child culture. Meeting the demand was not easy. Memoirs by several teachers repeatedly mention how difficult it

was in Eretz-Israel to find suitable books for children². The scarcity of schoolbooks overshadowed all other deficiencies of the child culture; consequently, the needs and demands of the education system had top priority³.

During the first three decades of the twentieth century, the creation of a child's culture in Eretz-Israel required the construction "ex nihilo" of *all* its components, including children's songs, fairy tales, stories, novels, nonfiction, schoolbooks, poems for the festive days, and poems for the ceremonies in schools and kindergartens.

Most of the schoolbooks published between 1905 and 1923 were written by a new group of teachers who were guided by national considerations and by the desire to create a new type of Jewish person⁴. They wrote texts that

¹ Y. Shavit, *The Status of Culture in the Process of Creating a National Society in Eretz Israel: Basic Attitudes and Concepts*, in Z. Shavit (ed.), *The Construction of the Hebrew Culture in the Jewish Yishuv in Eretz Israel*, The Israel Academy of Sciences and the Bialik Institute, Jerusalem, 1998, pp. 9-29.

² R. Elboim-Dror, *Hebrew Education in Eretz Israel*: vol. 1: 1854-1914; vol. 2: 1914-1920, Yad Yizhak Ben-Zvi, Jerusalem, 1986.

³ Z. Shavit, *The Development of Children's Literature*, in Z. Shavit (ed.), *The Construction of the Hebrew Culture in the Jewish Yishuv in Eretz Israel*, cit., pp. 439-465.

⁴ I. Even-Zohar, *The Emergence of a Native Hebrew Culture in*

The debate poses the fundamental question of the cultural identity of each country and passing that heritage on. This is light years away from the idea of a pan-Arab cultural identity to be forged by a common literature for all young people.

What about publications in other languages? Local English-language production is a very minority activity in English-speaking countries of the Arab world. The publication of books in French, once strongly supported by the book bureaus of French embassies in French-speaking countries, has declined steadily. Indeed French-speaking publishers of the Maghreb are now publishing books in Arabic that they once released in French in order to reach a wider Arabic readership. Publications in minority languages like Berber, Syriac or Armenian remain very rare³¹.

Will new technologies succeed in circumventing the langue issue? There could be apps for tablets and mobile phones or e-books allowing a child to choose his language from a selection, including Arabic dialects. This would, however, imply the widespread use of new technologies by Arab children's publishers, and there are very few who as yet have ventured down this path.

A Stumbling Block: distribution

Children's publishing in the Arab world is developing apace. Barriers are coming down, new topics are being dealt with and different genres developed; production is diversifying, improving and increasing. But an old problem remains: distribution.

Children's books in the Arab world still find it difficult

to cross borders, be they regional or international. Getting hold of a Jordanian book in Egypt is as difficult as it is to find an Emirati publication in Morocco. Similarly, the international availability of these books is equally problematic even at a time when the demand for books in Arabic is growing, especially in European countries and the United States of America. This obviously has a negative impact on the profitability of the children's publishing industry as a whole. Studies have been carried out on the question, proposals put forward – such as print-on-request – but no concrete solution has yet been found³². Distribution is mainly confined to the country of production, or to foreign countries through trade shows and book fairs. This situation stops Arabic books reaching part of their readership and being able to supply its natural market effectively.

Nonetheless the prospects for children's literature in the Arab world are very promising. Increasingly, creative talents are entering the field. Several countries now have illustration schools, with the result that quality and innovation are gaining ground. Children's literature is becoming increasingly visible. In April 2013 the first IBBY³³ regional congress will be held in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, entitled "Bringing Books and Children Together". Organized by UAEBBY, the Emirati section of IBBY, this congress will allow children's publishing professionals to meet and exchange views on common and specific problems. It will doubtless strengthen the network linking children's publishing professionals.

nesses in "Takam Tikou", <http://www.takamtikou.fr/dossiers/dossier-2012-langues-et-livres-pour-la-jeunesse>.

³¹ H. Bizri, *Quelles langues pour la littérature de jeunesse dans les pays arabes ?* in "Takam Tikou", Dossier 2012 – Langues et livres pour la jeunesse, <http://www.takamtikou.fr/dossiers/dossier-2012-langues-et-livres-pour-la-jeunesse/quelles-langues-pour-la-litt-rature-de-jeun>.

³² Axel Goehler, translated by Laurence Kiefé, *En quoi la distribution du livre peut-elle menacer le patrimoine culturel?*, in "Takam Tikou", http://www.takamtikou.fr/vie_du_livre/2010-12-09/en-quoi-la-distribution-du-livre-peut-elle-menacer-le-patrimoine-culturel.

³³ International Board on Books for Young people, <http://www.ibby.org>.

endeavored to present an “autochthonic Hebrew child” through the use of several devices, the most salient of which was an imitation of a Hebrew child’s “native” speech, by introducing many passages of dialogue, and by repeatedly describing various local settings in Eretz-Israel. The texts offered a clear-cut distinction between the child of Eretz-Israel and that of the Diaspora, emphasizing the outdoor life of a child in Eretz-Israel as opposed to the indoor setting of the child of the Diaspora. The Hebrew child was presented as free, even naughty, confident, attached to the Land of Israel, and engaged in new activities such as excursions to places linked to the ancient history of “the people of Israel” and singing the “songs of Zion”. The textual plots usually consisted of a juxtaposition of events of ancient (biblical) history with current events in Eretz-Israel⁵.

Hebrew children’s literature of the Thirties was written for a child for whom Hebrew was a native language, and very often the sole language. By then Hebrew children’s literature was no longer regarded as a vehicle for imparting the Hebrew language, but it was still viewed as a means for disseminating the national values, cultivating the yearning for a homeland, and instilling ideological tenets⁶. The leadership of the Yishuv recruited Hebrew children’s literature as the main vehicle for educating children and molding their character. Most writers for children were teachers and educators⁷ who were, with few exceptions, politically

aligned and who continued writing along the same lines set by their predecessors. Children’s literature aimed at indoctrination and presented the narrative of an evolving nation, in which the Jewish community was fighting for its life and homeland. It attempted to present an ideal of the Hebrew person, characterized by perfect conduct and authentic language. The books also constructed national heroes, included descriptions of the landscape of Eretz-Israel, and encouraged *Aliya* (immigration to Eretz-Israel). In terms of their values, these writings expressed the agenda of the Zionist mainstream: self-sacrifice for the sake of the state-in-the-making, national pride, love of the soil, agricultural work, and life in a collective. This was true even of lullabies.

The most prestigious writers for adults, such as Chaim Nachman Bialik, Saul Tchernichowsky, Zalman Shneour, Jacob Fichmann, and Devorah Baron, regarded writing for children as an indispensable component of the creation of the new nation. The involvement of prestigious writers for adults in writing for children continued to characterize Hebrew children’s literature in the Thirties and the Forties. The texts of prominent modernist poets, such as Abraham Shlonsky (fig. 1), Nathan Alterman and Leah Goldberg (fig. 2), later became classics of Hebrew children’s literature. At the same time, a group of professional writers for children began to emerge. This process of differentiation, which began in the late Thirties, was completed in the Fifties, with writers such as Yemimah Avidar-Tshernowitch, Nahum Gutman, Anda Amir-Pinkerfeld, Miriam Yalan-Stekelis, Fania Bergstein and Aaron Ze’ev.

During the Forties, Hebrew children’s literature con-

Palestine, 1882-1948, in *Polysystem Studies - Poetics Today*, 11(1), 1990, pp. 175-191.

⁵ B. Even-Zohar, *The Construction of Children’s Literature within the Creation of Hebrew Culture in Eretz Israel*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 1999.

⁶ T. Arbel, *Poetics of the Literature for Children of the Yishuv during the 1930s and its Ideological Idioms*, M.A. Dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 1994.

⁷ Y. Shteiman, *The Formation of a “New Hebrew Child” in the Process*

of Culture-Building at the Beginning of the 20th Century in Eretz-Israel, Ph.D. Dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 2002.



1. Avraham Shlonsky, *Mickey Who?*, illustrations by Aryeh Navon, Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishers Ltd. - Sifriat Poalim, 1947.



2. Leah Goldberg, *Flat for Rent*, illustrations by Shmuel Katz, Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishers Ltd. - Sifriat Poalim, 1970.

continued to be an engaged literature, subordinate to ideological tenets. Eretz-Israel was still presented as the antithesis of the Diaspora. The characterization of the protagonists remained the same: assertive children, independent individuals, lovers of nature, and native-speakers of Hebrew. A special place was given to heroes of the near or ancient past, such as Judah Maccabee, Joseph Trumpeldor, and Alexander Zeid, who shared similar traits: Jewish, courageous, motivated by love of their country, tillers of its soil, honest, moral, and prepared to give their lives in defense of their people and its land. The prototypical protagonist was involved in events in which the enemy threatened the land and people of Israel and wounded their national pride. In defending the people and the land, the protagonists restored their dignity and, often, died a heroic death. Much space continued to be devoted to descriptions of Eretz-

Israeli holidays and festive days that had replaced the traditional holidays and ceremonies of the Diaspora⁸. Also, as in earlier Hebrew children's literature, the agricultural settlement continued to be preferred to the city, and there were lengthy descriptions of the landscape and of nature. The stories were almost always set in a kibbutz or moshav. Even when the protagonist lived in the city, the plot unfolded in an agricultural settlement. In these texts, the child protagonist is prepared to sacrifice his own life. The relations of the child with the adult world is not one of conflict but rather of harmony. Often adults and children replace each other.

Nevertheless, in the Forties, a change began in the

⁸ Y. Shavit, S. Sitton, *Staging and Stagers in Modern Jewish Palestine: The Creation of Festive Lore in a New Culture (1882-1948)*, Wayne University Press, Detroit, 2004.

representation of the family. The parents were no longer portrayed as the center of the child's life or as a source of authority. The child was portrayed as primarily attached to the Land of Israel and to nature, not to his or her parents. In many texts the children leave home at an early age to fulfill pioneering missions and join a group, which thus replaces their family. Another change was the decline of the universal socialist ideology, whose place was taken by the national ideology.

But the most decisive change in the narrative of the Forties resulted from the need to relate to the Holocaust as well as to the preparations for the declaration of the State of Israel. Consequently, three narratives were developed: the narrative of the ties to European Jewry in times of affliction (and afterwards, the narrative of the Holocaust), the "military" narrative, and the narrative of the lessons that should be drawn from the Holocaust⁹.

The negation of the Diaspora, which had characterized children's literature of the Thirties, was replaced by the story of European Jewry in distress. It was marked by concern for their plight and identification with it. Other stories dealt with the immigration of refugee children, describing their difficult exodus from the dreadful conditions of Europe. The stories depicted the sense of a shared fate and even alluded to the helplessness of the Yishuv and its inability to provide real assistance to the Diaspora Jews in distress. The literature for very young children generally kept silent about the events in Europe, though sometimes it incorporated two levels of reading: The text for the very young was accompanied by a tragic level addressed to the adult reading the texts to children.

In fact, children's literature of the Forties was the first

to provide the means for telling a story of the Holocaust, which was not told in any other discourse. Children's literature told a unique Holocaust story, colored by a sense of remorse for the negation of the Diaspora, which had been dominant in the literary and educational discourse prior to World War II¹⁰.

The Holocaust narrative evolved in the early years of World War II side-by-side with the "military" narrative, which told the story of youngsters (sometimes children) in Eretz-Israel fighting the enemy in defense of the homeland¹¹. The Arabs of Palestine were also identified as the national enemy, against whom a war was inevitable. The portrayal of an enemy who was present "here and now" turned the "military" narrative into a recruitment story. For the first time in the history of Hebrew children's literature, a present-day conflict was depicted in which children would play a unique and central role¹².

Writing original popular children's literature, such as detective stories, was still taboo in the Forties, unless it was imbued with an ideology that praised the military abilities of the younger generation, as is, for example, Yemimah Avidar-Tshernowitch's bestseller *Eight on the Heels of One* (1945), which told the story of a group of eight kibbutz children who manage to capture a dangerous German spy during World War II, and Nahum Gutman's *The Summer Vacation or the Crate Mystery* (1946), which told the story

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ M. Chazan, *Reflection of the War in Children's Magazines*, in M. Bar-On, M. Chazan (eds.), *Citizens at War: Studies on the Civilian Society during the Israeli War of Independence*, Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi and The Chaim Weizmann Institute for the Study of Zionism, Tel Aviv University and the Galili Center for Defense Studies, Jerusalem, 2006, pp. 441-465.

¹² Y. Darr, *Called Away From Our School-Desks: The Yishuv in the Shadow of the Holocaust and in Anticipation of Statehood in Children's Literature of Eretz Israel, 1939-1948*, cit.

⁹ Y. Darr, *Called Away From Our School-Desks: The Yishuv in the Shadow of the Holocaust and in Anticipation of Statehood in Children's Literature of Eretz Israel, 1939-1948*, Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 2006.

of two youngsters who risk their lives trying to save an important shipment needed by the Yishuv under Turkish rule.

Towards the end of World War II the narrative of the “national lesson” evolved; it combined the Holocaust and the “military” narratives into a new narrative – of revolt and revenge by Jewish Diaspora children. The story about integrating the child-survivor into the society of children in the Yishuv began to take shape. Its protagonist was an orphaned child-refugee who arrives in Eretz-Israel. Physically and mentally broken, the child-survivor is integrated into a group of children within a short period of time and forgets the traumatic past. The “correct” mode of absorption illustrated by this narrative took on the character of a “cure”. The child was often adopted by a family or a Hebrew collective, and the adoption was accompanied by a systematic effort to erase the memory of the horrors of the Holocaust. The survivor’s successful integration was depicted as a happy ending. The large number of texts that presented such modes of integration indicates that very many writers were party to an effort to assist in the absorption process. It was only in the Seventies that survivors were encouraged to remember and were no longer “required” to suppress their memories¹³.

During the Fifties, the Holocaust narrative was weakening, whereas the “military” theme combined with the “national lesson” became dominant, especially in popular children’s literature, which was slowly gaining some legitimacy but still aroused much opposition. Yigal Mossinsohn’s *Hasambah* was vehemently attacked for ruining “the souls of the children of Israel”, and this despite its ideo-

logical underpinning. Like many other prominent texts for children, it was published in a children’s magazine. Children’s magazines were extremely popular and more often than not served as the first place of publication for texts that later became part of the canon¹⁴.

From the mid Fifties, Hebrew children’s literature was no longer exclusively ideologically driven. More emphasis was put on the aesthetic and psychological features of the texts for children. Aspects of life that had previously been ignored were gradually introduced in the late Sixties. Themes that were previously taboo were now put on the literary stage: divorce, death, sex, and urban life. So, too, were new protagonists: women and young girls and certain social groups. Driven by the wish to introduce the child’s point of view, a change took place not only in terms of the- matics, but also in the poetics of the texts. In several texts, the authoritative point of view of the omniscient narrator was replaced by the child’s point of view, by embedded speech with the child, or by the introduction of more than one point of view.

The range of topics covered by children’s literature expanded greatly, both as a result of the “normalization” of the system and because of the interference with European and American children’s literatures, which were undergoing a similar process. Instead of the earlier, almost exclusive, focus on realistic fiction about the history of the Jewish people and the history and life of the people of Israel, the door was opened in the Eighties to themes from the private sphere, such as first love, friendship, parent-child relations, children’s adventures, death in war, death of family members, divorce, and family crises in general. Even when

¹³ Y. Darr, *Grandparents Reveal Their Secrets: A Holocaust Narrative for the Young ‘Third Generation’ in Israel*, in *International Research in Children’s Literature*, vol. 5, 2012, pp. 97-110.

¹⁴ R. Shikhmanter, *Autonomization Processes of the Israeli Literature System for Children and Youth. A Case Study: Davar Li’yeladim, Mishmar Li’yeladim, and Ha’aretz Shelanu in View of the Transition from the Yishuv to the State of Israel*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 2007.

describing the group or the community, the books concentrated on the child's point of view, fears, and wishes. For instance, Raya Harnik's, *Oh My Brother* (1993), Uri Orlev's *The Beast of Darkness* (1967), and Yaacov Shavit's *Nimrod the Hunting Dog* (1987) deal with a child's response to the death of a father or brother. Other writers depict conflicts between the individual and society, notably Nurit Zarchi's *Outsider* (1978), Roni Giwati's *Winter Wishes* (1993), and Yona Tepper's *David Half-and-Half* (1990).

Some of the prose writing for older children continued to be realistic fiction about the history and life of the Yishuv in the pre-state period and the history of the Jewish people (by Devorah Omer, Dorit Orgad, and Esther Streit-Wurzel). These novels did not introduce the critical historical narrative, which characterized both historiography and prose for adults. On the other hand, unlike the authors of earlier historical novels, these writers did not hesitate to explore the shortcomings of their protagonists, nor did they endeavor to ascribe to the child national values, such as heroism.

Hebrew children's literature of the last decades has avoided dealing with Israel's minorities. Whereas in the past Arab-Israeli characters appeared often in Hebrew children's literature, and popular literature often portrayed them in a stereotypical, negative manner¹⁵, they disappeared almost completely from the literature in the last decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st. They are nevertheless the subject matter of several books, for example, *The Explosion on Ahalan Street*, by Daniella Carmi; *Yusef's Dream*, about a boy from the Dehaishe refugee camp, and *Rim, the Girl from Ein Houd*, by Tamar Verete-Zehavi and 'Abd-Alsalam Yunes; and Uriya Shavit's *Like Magic*, whose

protagonist is a Muslim boy in Acco, who is portrayed not in the context of conflict and wars, but rather in the context of daily life. Hebrew children's literature also avoided ordinary daily life dealings with other marginal groups, such as immigrants from the former Soviet Union or Ethiopia, refugees and labor migrants, and residents of Israel's periphery. Even after the Ministry of Education had decreed "accepting the other" as a main study topic, the new books tended to portray children who suffer from a particular disability or to present alien creatures that have nothing to do with the here and now of the Israeli child.

The Zionist adventure model of popular literature was replaced by an adventure model based on the children's world. Especially popular were books by Smadar Shir and Galila Ron-Feder. The stories are based, as is usually the case with popular literature, on a particular repetitive pattern. They are highly predictable in terms of characters, role division, the world described, and plot development.

The narrative of the Holocaust changed; it was no longer limited to the survivors' generation but was extended to include the second generation as well¹⁶. The books recount the dreadful events of the Holocaust together with stories of survival. The narrative is of a documentary nature or somewhere between a realistic story and fantasy, as is, for instance, Uri Orlev's, *The Island on Bird Street*, which won the Andersen Prize for 1996, and Ruth Almog's, *My Journey With Alex* (1999).

Poetry for children was allotted considerable space, and new writers began writing poetry for children, introducing new models that emphasized the child's point of view and individual character (Yehudah Atlas, Adulah, Dacia Ben-Dor, Hagit Benziman, Shlomit Cohen-Assif, Edna Kremer, Haya Shenhav, and Mirik Snir). Yehudah Atlas's

¹⁵ A. Cohen, *An Ugly Face in the Mirror: National Stereotypes in Hebrew Children's Literature*, Reshafim, Tel Aviv, 1985.

¹⁶ Y. Darr, *Grandparents Reveal Their Secrets: A Holocaust Narrative for the Young 'Third Generation' in Israel*, cit.



3. Alona Frankel, *Once Upon a Potty*, Modan Publishing House, 1975.

It's Me (1977) set a model for the portrayal of the child as a unique individual rather than as a stereotypical "Sabra". The types of poetry for children developed as well: Tirtsah Atar and Nurit Zarchi's lyric poetry, Efrayim Sidon's satirical poetry, Michal Senunit's philosophical poetry, and Meir Shalev's ironic poetry. Writing of prose for the very young branched out; some works were based on a realistic model (Nira Harel, Miryam Rot), others on an instructional model (Alona Frankel) (fig. 3), some were fantasy (Haya Shenhav), and others challenged the family-role model (Meir Shalev [fig. 4], and Ergar Keret).

Hebrew children's literature of the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st saw the creation of a classical canon of books for toddlers. Writers and editors



4. Meir Shalev, *My Father Always Embarrasses Me*, illustrations by Yossi Abolafia, Keter Books, 1988.

involved in this endeavor acted out of nostalgia for their own childhood. They sought to preserve it by the publication of a single text or a short anthology, taken from a longer one, accompanied by illustrations that dominate the text: Bialik's poems for children (fig. 5); *In the Garden*, a collection of poems by Saul Tchernichowsky; *Og, King of Bashan*, by Nathan Alterman; *The Bad Boy*, by Leah Goldberg; or *The Lion Who Loved Strawberries*, by Tirtsah Atar.



5. Chaim Nachman Bialik, *Bialik for Children*, illustrations by Batia Kolton, Dvir, 2003.

The works by authors who grew up with the state can be described as coming-of-age books. In many, the emphasis is shifted from a portrayal of the children themselves to a portrayal of the generation of the parents and grandparents. To a certain extent, the children's book serves as an excuse for self-portrayal by the parents, who are placed at the center of the story, as in David Grossman's *Hug* (2011), Orly Castel-Bloom's *Let's Behave Ourselves* (1997), or the grandparents in Edna Mazyza's *Grandma Again* (1988), Nira Harel's *Once upon a Wand* (2006), and Alona Frankel's *Grandma's Porridge* (2007).

A new generation of authors joined the ranks of writers for preschoolers, including Rinat Hoffer, who illustrates

her own books, Jonathan Yavin, Dafna Ben Zvi, Shoham Smith, and Shira Geffen (fig. 6).

There has been an increase in fantasy literature for both preschoolers and young adults, perhaps in the wake of the Harry Potter series, and perhaps even more in the wake of reality and survival TV programs. These texts consist mainly of urban fantasy, which portrays the end of the world with unfamiliar and alienated realism and in which the space depicted is very violent and chaotic, as in, for example, the translated books Cassandra Clare's *City of Bones*, Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games*, and Diana Wynne Jones's *Archer's Goon*.

The number of "problem" books for young adults has increased. These books deal with such problems as dyslexia (*Chani's Story*, by Amela Einat), and sexual abuse and the danger of sexual harassment in the virtual world (*Predator on the Internet*, by Dana Aviram). Many of the "problem" books are aimed at preschoolers; they deal, for example, with family breakups, as in *Tal's Mother and Father Are Separating*, by Shula Modan, or love between same-sex partners, as in Ami Gedalia's *You Have Pleased Me So*. The adventure literature of the end of the twentieth century is different in character from its predecessors, not only because there are new writers, such as Yannets Levi, the author of *Uncle Leon's Adventures*, and Eldad Ilani, the author of *The Perfect Story*, but because the texts, inspired by Munchausen, have unrealistic plots set in a succession of imaginary places, such as the Sahara Forests or the West Pole.

Translations have always played a significant role in the development of Hebrew children's literature, because they were one of the means of filling up the field of Hebrew books for children as quickly as possible. Also, the cultural entrepreneurs were eager to prove that all of a child's educational and cultural needs could be met in Hebrew. This made the translation of the so-called children's classics a



6. Shira Geffen, Etgar Keret, *A Moonless Night*, illustrations by David Polonski, Am-Oved Publishers Ltd, 2006.

priority. Even before World War I, several translations of books for children were published. Later, some publishers began specializing in translated literature for children. Translated literature continued to have a dominant place in the twentieth century. Translations and re-translations of children's classics (most of them dating to the end of the

19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries) continued to predominate.

In addition, popular and successful children's literature published mainly in the United States and England began to be translated regularly into Hebrew, often within months of the publication of the original. In addition to

the Harry Potter series, works by well-known writers, such as Eric Hill's Spot series or the Olivia books by Ian Falconer, have been translated almost immediately after their publication in English. Many of the translated books challenge accepted norms; examples include Adam Mansbach's *Go the Fuck to Sleep*, Dav Pilkey's Captain Underpants series, and Geff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, which are characterized by wild humor, coarse and humorous language, and cartoon-style illustrations. Also, as part of the process of globalization and of the attempt to endow Israeli childhood with a more universal character, American classics for toddlers – for example, works by Robert McCloskey and Margaret Wise Brown – have been translated.

The increasing radicalization and seclusion of ultra-Orthodox society led to the development of a separate literature for ultra-Orthodox children. It began with booklets self-published by Yokheved Sachs and continued with whole shelves of books for children. The topics, limited at first to stories about the Sages and to descriptions of commandments and blessings, were inspired by tales in which the stereotypical Polish landowner and the village Jew were the protagonists. Gradually, however, a variety of literary genres followed: novels, adventure stories, mystery novels, and even comics.

Like secular Hebrew children's literature at the outset, ultra-Orthodox children's literature was part of the educational system and was perceived as formative literature that aimed to teach a lesson and that portrayed a model of ideal life, very far removed from real life. In its infancy this literature had to justify its existence, to prove that it had educational value and that it was not intended for leisure. The writers, most of whom were women, tended, with a few exceptions, to conceal their identity.

In the last decade of the 20th century and in the first decades of the 21st, there was a change both in the topics

of the books and in the way they were presented. The texts became less stereotypical and portrayed a more complex reality that included conflicts within the family; examples include Le'ah Frid's *I Can Call You Ima* and Havah Rozenberg's *Tangle*. Topics were added, such as historical events and even science fiction. Some of the books were published initially as serials in the ultra-Orthodox press, and short stories were followed by novels and diaries, which gave legitimation to focusing on the children themselves. For example, Chaim Walder's series Kids Speak, Children Talk About Themselves deals with children's feelings, such as fear and jealousy, and complex relations with parents. The taboo has been lifted on discussing topics such as matrimonial matches, unmarried young women, the newly religious, foster children, adopted children, children with special needs, and parents with psychiatric problems, but the taboo on addressing love and sexuality remains¹⁷. Less successful was the effort of writing books for the children of the settlers in the occupied territories (for instance Emuna Elon), probably in an attempt to base the books on a different value system from the one prevalent in Hebrew children's literature since the Seventies.

Since the Fifties, and in an accelerated manner in the Sixties, children's literature has undergone a process of autonomization and normalization. This was evident in both the professionalization of children's literature – the clear distinction made between literature for adults and literature for children – and in the centrality of publishing for children. Almost all large publishing houses were involved in publishing for children and most of them appointed editors specifically for children's literature. The economic basis of children's literature became much more solid, several books for children became bestsellers, and several writers for children were able to earn their living

¹⁷ T. Rotem, *An Interview with Esther Malchy*, in *Haaretz*, 6.1.2013.

from writing, even before this was the case for writers for adults. The professional differentiation was accompanied by gender differentiation: most of the professional writers for children were women. At the same time, most of the prestigious writers for adults wrote at least one book for children, though only David Grossman and Meir Shalev did so repeatedly. The status of the writer for children was enhanced by the awarding in 1978 of the prestigious Israel Prize to three writers in recognition of their life's work in children's literature (Nahum Gutman, Anda Amir-Pinkerfeld, and Levin Kipnis) and in 2006 to Devorah Omer.

Since the Seventies, Hebrew children's literature has experienced a tremendous boom. Publishing policy, even of the publishing houses of the labor parties, was now put on a commercial base in its broadest sense. The number of published books and the number of copies sold increased considerably. The number of books published more than doubled between 1965/6 (145) and 1979/80 (366). The Central Bureau of Statistics could not supply data for children's books published after 1996. However, according to the data of the Jewish National and University Library (which does not necessarily accord with the data of the Central Bureau of Statistics), it received 463 children's books in 1996, 518 in 1997, 450 in 1998, and 474 in 1999. Then the number of children's books began to decline: 370 in 2001, 317 in 2002, and 346 in 2003. Starting in 2004 there was again a rise in the number of children's books published, from 480 in 2004 to 807 in 2007, followed by a decline, 638 in 2008 and 660 in 2010.

The standard of visual presentation of books for children improved enormously, and a new generation of illustrators for children became an integral part of the scene. Age differentiation became more and more distinct: books for infants, books for toddlers, books for preschoolers, books for the first grades, and books for young adults. A new genera-

tion of artists followed the older generation of illustrators, such as Nahum Gutman, Aryeh Navon (fig. 1) and Shmuel Katz (fig. 2). Most prominent among the new generation were Yossi Abolafia (fig. 4), Ora Eitan, Ora Ayal, Alona Frankel (fig. 3), Hilla Havkin, Avner Katz, Danny Kerman, Rutu Modan, and Rut Tsarefati¹⁸. They were joined recently by a new group of illustrators; outstanding among them are Ofra Amit, Orit Bergman, Michal Bonano, Aviel Basil, Yana Bukler, Batia Kolton (fig. 5), Lena Guberman, Liora Grossman, David Polonsky (fig. 6), and Mcrav Solomon¹⁹. These artists have transformed books for preschoolers into a sophisticated dialogue between the written text and the visual text.

Hebrew children's literature has undergone tremendous changes. Starting as a literature regarded as a major agent of the Zionist project, with virtually no natural reading public, it has acquired a large and stable readership and emerged as a full and "normal" system, with a "normal" reading public, and functioning on the same basis as any other national literature in the Western world.

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¹⁸ R. Gonen, *Value-Messages Israeli Illustrated Books for Young Children from 1948 to 1984*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Haifa University, 1991.

¹⁹ N. Shilo-Cohen (ed.), *The Big Book of Illustrators: Recipients of the Israel Museum Ben-Yitzhak Awards for the Illustrations of Children's Books, 1978-2004*, The Israel Museum & Am Oved, Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv, 2005.

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