

Spring 2007

Dr. Nili Gold

SEMINAR IN MODERN HEBREW LITERATURE: GIANTS OF HEBREW LITERATURE  
HEBR 359-401 (Cross listed: HEBR 659, JWST 359, JWST 556, COML 359, and COLL 220)

Distribution III: Arts & Letters

T/R 10:30–12:00 Williams Hall 216

Office: 707 Williams Hall. Tel: 573-5312

Office Hours: Tuesdays. 3:00-5:00 and by appointment

Class conducted in Hebrew. Texts read in the original language.

**Description:**

The course focuses on the central pillars of the Modern Hebrew literary canon, and their impact on Israeli literature. The poets H. N. Bialik (1873-1934) and S. Tchernichovsky (1875 – 1943), and the author S. Y. Agnon (1887-1970) provided future writers with the tools to express modern and post-modern sensibilities. Drawing from the ancient wells of Bible, Talmud, and Midrash, they forged a new diction for passion and love and for representing the inner world, psychological insight and political assertions. Bialik's personal/political poems echo in D. Ravikovitch's verse, and Tchernichovsky's haunting lines resurface in present-day writings. Agnon's short stories inspired the works of writers as different as A. Oz and Y. Amichai. We will compare the classic to the contemporary, and discuss the lasting power of these giants in the context of modern Israel. Grading is based on 5 two-page papers in Hebrew, a final exam, preparation for class and participation.

Schedule of Instruction: Assignments listed are to be completed before days indicated \*

**I. Introduction:**

- The reverberations of the classical poets in contemporary Israeli life and literature
- Historical background: Bialik, the creator of Modern Hebrew poetry, the national poet; Agnon, the father of Modern Hebrew fiction

**1/9** D. Grossman's speech and Tchernichovsky's "ראי אדמה" (handout)

**1/11** The 'conversation' between E. Glass, Ravikovitch and Bialik (handout)

**1/16** Oz's childhood encounter with Tchernichovsky – from סיפור על אהבה וחושך

**1/18** Tchernichovsky - "לנוכח פסל אפולו" "

**II. "בדמי ימיה"**

- Agnon's feminine voice: A Freudian reading of a young girl's monologue
- The role of intertextuality in Agnon's writing.

**The sections to be read will be chosen according to students' level**

**1/23 - 1/25** Readings chosen from pp. 5- 15

1/30 - 2/1 Readings chosen from pp. 16- 25

**Friday, 2/2 First Paper Due** (based on your reading up to p. 25): Suggested topics: The role of the men protagonists; The role of Jewish customs; Mrs. Gottlieb's 'agenda'; Various intertexts. Choose one of these topics or suggest another topic that was not discussed in class.

2/6 - 2/8 Readings chosen from pp. 26- 40

2/13 - 2/15 Readings chosen from pp. 31- 54 and conclusion

**Friday, 2/16 Second Paper Due** (based on your reading from pp. 26-54): Suggested topics: The diary as a literary genre; The symbolism in the story; Jewish society; Parallel plots in the story. Choose one of the topics or suggest another topic that was not discussed in class.

### III. סיפור על אהבה וחושך and the "Generation of the State"

Oz's autobiographical novel as testimony to the personal and literary ties between the classical author and the quintessential representative of the "Generation of the State"

2/20 Readings chosen from Chapters 1 and 12

2/22 Readings chosen from Chapter 12

**Saturday, 2/24 Make-up for Passover (4/3)**

Film: "Aviva, my Love" Israeli Film Festival. International House, 3701 Chestnut Street, 8pm. Free admission for our class, but you **MUST RESERVE!** One page response paper due 2/28

2/27 Readings from Chapter 29

2/28, **Wednesday, 1-page response to "Aviva, my Love" due** (pass/fail)

3/1 Discussion on the relationship between the "Generation of the State" and Agnon, conclusion (optional reading: "מיתות אבי" by Amichai)

**3/6 and 3/8 Spring Break**

**Monday, 3/12 Third Paper Due** based on reading of sections from Oz's סיפור על אהבה וחושך  
Suggested Topics: The role of Klausner in the narrative; The differences between Oz's recollection of Tchernichovsky and Agnon; Was Oz "liberated" from Agnon? Choose one of these topics or suggest another topic that was not discussed in class.

### IV. The Creators of Modern Hebrew Poetry; Polarity and Duality: in the Poetics of Bialik

3/13 The conflict between the poet's national and personal expression: "לבדי";  
Assignment for 3/15: Prepare "עם דמדומי החמה"

3/15 "עם דמדומי החמה" ; Assignment for 3/20: Prepare "ואם ישאל המלאך"

3/20 "ואם ישאל המלאך" The forging of the poet's personal myth

3/22 Continue with "ואם ישאל המלאך"

**Friday, 3/23 Fourth Paper Due** An analysis of a short poem of your choice by Bialik (not studied in class).

V. Bialik's Language of Light and its Reflection in poems by the Israeli Poet Ravikovitch

3/27 Ravikovitch, "שכרה", "כתמי אור"

3/29 Excerpts from Bialik's "הברכה"

4/3 **Passover, no class. Make-up, February 24<sup>th</sup>, *Aviva my Love*. Details above**

4/5 Continuation of Bialik's "הברכה" and Ravikovitch's "חמדה"

4/10 **Passover, no class. Make-up April 17<sup>th</sup>, details below.**

4/12 In-class visit by Professor David Fishelhov, conclusion: the persistence of the classics in Contemporary Hebrew Poetry

**Friday, 4/13 Fifth Paper Due** An analysis of a poem that was not discussed in class (the poem could be by Bialik, Tchernichovsky, or Ravikovitch).

**Monday, 4/16, 8pm Etgar Keret at Hillel**, make-up for Passover (4/10) [**Attention:** the event is on the 16<sup>th</sup> at Hillel and not as indicated in the syllabus included in your packet]

4/17 In-class visit by Etgar Keret, discussion of the stories we read (handout)

4/19 Conclusion

**Texts:** packet of xeroxed material available at Campus Copy Center (3907 Walnut St.)

Suggested Hebrew readings:

Ben-Dov, Nitza: Ahavot Loh Me'usharot (Am Oved, 1997)

Kurzweil, Baruch: Masot Al Sipurey Sh. Y. Agnon (3rd ed., Jerusalem 1970)

Miron, Dan: Hapreda min Ha'ni He'ani (Open University Press, 1986)

Shaked, Gershon: Omanut hasipur shel Sh. Y. Agnon (Merkhaviya, 1973)

Suggested English readings:

Band, A.J.: Nostalgia and Nightmare: A Study in the Fiction of S.Y. Agnon (Berkeley, 1968)

Ben-Dov, Nitza: *Agnon's Art of Indirection* (Leiden & New-York: E.J. Brill, 1993)

Shaked, Gershon: Modern Hebrew Fiction (2000)

**Assessment:**

Class preparation & participation (30%): All readings & film viewings must be completed by the dates indicated on the syllabus.

Papers (45%): 5 two-page response papers written in Hebrew, each presenting an analysis of the text as stated in the syllabus, and handed in on each of those dates. ALL papers should follow MLA guidelines for writing papers, citing, footnotes, bibliography (if applicable) etc. Double spaced, 12 point font. Place in instructor's mailbox (NELC office, Williams Hall 8th Floor).

Papers that are hand written must be 4 pages long, very clear and double spaced.

Final Exam (25%): The purpose of the final exam is specifically to assure that you read all the material. It will NOT be an essay-based test.

\* The syllabus serves as an outline. The amount of material we cover may differ depending on the pace of the class. The content of this course changes from year to year. Students, therefore, may take it for credit more than once.

Sources: All printed in Israel:

*Ha'aretz* November 4, 2006

Shaul Tchernichovsky, *Mivhar*, Tel Aviv: Dvir Publishing, 1967.

Haim Nachman Bialik, *Kol Kitvei H.N. Bialik*, Tel Aviv: Dvir Publishing, 1965.

S.Y. Agnon, *Kol Sipurav Shel S.Y. Agnon*, Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing, 1971.

Amos Oz, *Sipur al Ahava ve-Hoshech*, Jerusalem, Keter Publishing, 2002.

Yehuda Amichai, *Ba-Ruach ha-Nora'ah ha-Zot*, Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing, 1985.

Dahlia Ravikovitch, *Kol ha-Shirim ad Koh*, Tel Aviv: ha-Kibbutz ha-Me'uchad, 1995.

*Al Sephat ha-Shir*, Nili Carmel-Flumin, Editor. Tel Aviv: Dvir Publishing, ND.

Lea Goldberg, *Mukdam oo-Me'uchar*, Rechavia: Sifriyat Poalim, 1970