

NEW BOOKS FROM ISRAEL 2001

ZERUYA SHALED
Dancing, Standing Still

YEHOSHUA KENAZ
Landscape with Three Trees

YORAM KANTUK
The Last Berliner

NATHAN SHAHAM
Rosenberg's Shadow

TAMIARA
SAIFRA HORN

a novel

GAIL HAREVEN

• *My True Love* •

Published by Keter, Jerusalem, 2000. 285 pp

Synopsis

Everything changed that day in the summer of 1972, when 17-year-old Noa Weber met her true love. From that moment, Noa became physically, emotionally and spiritually addicted to this man. Although she was completely conscious of her addiction, she was unable to conquer it. This novel – a painful, illuminating journey into the depths of love – is Noa's attempt to understand her mysterious obsession, as well as a sober look at contemporary society, questioning such concepts as identity, independence and self-realization.

At seventeen, Noa becomes pregnant by her lover, Alec Ginsburg. But Alec is neither ready nor willing to become a father, although he is ten years her senior. He marries her under the pretext of getting her exempted from military service. Shortly after the birth of their daughter, Hagar, however, he leaves the country. Noa, devastated and completely alone, sinks into a state of semi-consciousness, endangering both herself and her newborn. Only when her family intervenes does she gradually manage to take control of her life.

After a brief stint of working as a waitress, Noa decides to enroll in law school. With the help of her devoted mother and caring neighbor, she completes her studies and begins to work for a civil rights foundation.

The image of Alec hovers over Noa's every action, decision and gesture – watching her, judging her. Despite his absence from her life, her only thought is to please him and win his approval.

Noa's absent but ever-present lover occasionally re-enters her life, and she – dependent and bound in ways she cannot understand – submits to his whims, permitting these sporadic interludes and accepting his relationships with other women as well as his three other children.

Thirty years later, now the successful writer of a series of feminist thrillers that focus on social-political issues, Noa has become empowered by the heroine of her novels, Nira Wolf – a strong, independent, prominent lawyer. At 47, she is ready to examine her life, her choices and her obsession with Alec. Perhaps this will enable her to let go and stop defining herself in terms of Alec's presence, worldview, and – especially – absence, but rather in terms of her own empowered self.

About the Author

Gail Hareven was born in 1959 in Jerusalem, where she lives today. She is a playwright, journalist and author of three novels, three collections of short stories, one work of non-fiction and children's books. Five of her plays have been staged.



DUDU BUSI

• *The Moon Goes Green in the Wadi* •

Published by Am Oved, Tel Aviv, 2000. 272 pp.

Synopsis

This poignant, amusing and captivating novel, which is set in the 1970s, tells the story of a young boy growing up in a destitute multicultural neighborhood, where ethnic origin determines status and social pressures run high; where childhood and adolescence are frequently rough and violent; and where dreams of the future often constitute the only source of hope.

Musa (Moses) Cohen is the son of an Iranian mother and a Yemenite father. This union of two very different cultures creates a great deal of anxiety for him, representing as it does an obstacle in his quest for self-identity. Desperately wanting to belong to the Yemenite "gang," he instead finds himself ridiculed and ostracized. His ethnic origin is ultimately the cause of a monumental tragedy that haunts him for years to come.

The novel, marked by its authentic use of the vernacular, fluctuates between the humorous and the serious, alternately evoking laughter, pity, compassion and empathy in its readers. It vividly depicts the atmosphere and folklore of the neighborhood; the games devised by the children from the sparse means at hand; and the relationships within and among families. Each colorful family has its own fascinating, often sad story, and Musa's own experiences and emotional conflicts are heartbreaking and extremely

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EYAL MEGGED

• *Everlasting Life* •

Published by Yediath Abronoth, Tel Aviv, 2000. 272 pp.

Synopsis

Hanoch Hazan, born and raised in Tunisia and now living in Jerusalem, is consumed by an unquenchable spiritual thirst. A civil engineer, he is married to the beautiful Atalia whom he adores and who, as the scientist she is, counters his explorations of God and faith with pure logic and fact. They have two children – Nirda, a high-school student, and Elad, a confused young man. Haunted by the tragic death of his father and by his incessant, insatiable yearning, Hanoch is about to embark on a spiritual journey that will lead him not only to a distant country, but to revelations of hitherto unfamiliar realms of consciousness. It is a journey that will change his life irrevocably.

Hanoch is desperate to escape from the spiritually barren existence of modern consumer society; from the need and insecurity of Atalia, who, despite her unwavering rationalism, lives life as though she is always on the brink of catastrophe; and from routine. He seizes the opportunity to travel to Cuba and work on a large-scale housing project, eager to live someone else's life, as it were, if only temporarily. This extraordinary, enchanting place does indeed expose him to a different mentality and way of life; it also sparks a process of coming to terms with the ghosts of his past, a search for inner peace, an understanding of man's relationship with God, of

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painful. His beloved mother, whom he also despises for her helplessness and overprotectiveness, is generally ignored and occasionally verbally abused by his father; the latter, the owner of a small restaurant, is exploited by dishonest merchants, defaulting customers and his disrespectful, ungrateful daughter; Musa's cousin Oni is murdered while defending Musa's honor. This event, along with the suicide of a close family friend, all but shatters the sensitive young boy's consciousness.

Musa Cohen's family – as well as their neighborhood counterparts – permit the author not only to tell fascinating individual stories, but also to raise universal issues such as parent-child relationships, the terms of social acceptability and the consequences of social rejection, the agonizing aftermath of war, the joys and pangs of childhood, the cruelty and compassion of human nature and hope – symbolized by the moon floating above the wadi.

About the Author

Dudu Busi was born in 1969 in the Hatikva quarter in South Tel Aviv, the location of his first novel. He lived there until age 13, when his family moved to a different neighborhood, and then to another city. He was still in school when he began to run the family's "Busi Restaurant," well-known in Hatikva, which he continues to run to this day. At 23, Busi began to study acting and performed in several plays and films. He has returned to live in the neighborhood of his childhood once more.



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redemption and grace.

Despite his initial disinterest, Hanoch becomes involved with a Cuban woman, Marta, whose religious fervor, spiritual steadfastness, and exotic beauty captivate him. However, his relationship with Marta, who becomes pregnant with his child, ends tragically. Hanoch finds spiritual guidance in Ireland, where he meets a former priest informed by the principles of Buddhism, and in Jerusalem, where a chance encounter leads him to a devout Franciscan monk. His all-consuming, ultimate quest, hinted at in the epigraph, is for "incomparable serenity, coming to terms with the love of God."

About the Author

Eyal Megged was born in New York in 1948 and grew up in Tel Aviv. He has written prose and poetry as well as columns on a wide range of subjects for Israel's leading newspapers. He also edited a weekly Voice of Israel radio program. Megged teaches Creative Writing and was the recipient of the 1993 Macmillan Prize. He has published nine collections of poetry, one collection of short stories and five novels.

Megged's previous novel, *Early Grace*, will be published by **Berlin Verlag**, Berlin.



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ZERUYA SHALEV

• *Dancing, Standing Still* •

Published by Keter, Jerusalem, 1993. 188 pp.

Synopsis

Zeruya Shalev's first novel is the story of a woman whose marriage is disintegrating, and whose consciousness is likewise suffering a severe breakdown. The language and form of the novel are a chilling, immediate expression of the protagonist's inner world, sweeping the reader into a realm where fantasy and reality are intertwined, inextricable and sometimes indistinguishable from each other, where fear, doubt and horror dominate existence.

The crisis of the protagonist's divorce rouses hitherto dormant anxieties and emotions that span her entire life. What is the true nature of her relationship with her parents? What were her experiences as a child? Were her needs fulfilled? Did she feel loved and appreciated? By examining these questions in her own associative and haphazard way, she also investigates the challenges and shortcomings of her own motherhood and her relationship with her own daughter, thereby revealing to herself her fear of failure and inadequacy.

Agonizing that she has been unable to protect her daughter properly, that she does not possess a mother's true love or the other necessary maternal qualities – selflessness, dedication, devotion – the protagonist imagines her daughter disappearing, running away, or being abandoned and finds herself fluctuating between dread,

horror and relief. She abruptly comes face to face with the emotions associated with the men in her life – her father, her husband, her lover, her beloved. What have they meant to her? What roles have they played in her life?

This novel, an extraordinary externalization of a psychological process and of psychic chaos, raises the timeless themes of identity, love, marriage, sex and motherhood, illustrating the complexity and confusion they entail, raising many questions – but providing no clear, unequivocal answers.

About the Author

Zeruya Shalev was born on Kibbutz Kinneret in 1959 and now lives in Jerusalem. She has an M.A. in Biblical Studies, and works as chief literary editor at Keshet Publishing House. She has published three novels, one collection of poetry, and a children's book. Her work has been translated into 12 languages. She was awarded the Book Publishers Association's Golden Book Prize and the Ashman Prize for her novel, *Love Life*. Both *Love Life* and *Husband and Wife* were on the bestseller lists in Israel and Germany to great critical acclaim.

Love Life and *Husband and Wife* have been sold to **English, Dutch, Italian, Norwegian, French, Spanish, Polish, Portuguese, Greek, Turkish** and **German** publishers.

Dancing, Standing Still was published in **Russian** translation.



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SHULAMIT GILBOA

• *Four Men and a Woman* •

Published by Yedioth Abronoth, Tel Aviv, 2000. 320 pp.

Synopsis

Dana, a woman in her early 40s, has reached a critical point in her life. Grappling with a severe illness, she lies in bed for hours on end, reconstructing her life. Her only antidote is her memories of the four lovers who mark the various stages of her life. What effect have they had on her? How do her choices reflect who she is? Can she distinguish between her own desires and those society has conditioned her to have? Clinging to the details of her life, Dana is at once clinging to her sanity and attempting to make sense of her choices, her achievements, and her failures. In a patchwork of intricate storytelling, associatively interweaving past and present, she recounts the stories that have shaped her life.

Four men: Yakir, an aging professor, first introduces Dana to the emotions and sensations of the tantalizing, exhilarating world of love. Uri, a serious student who has meticulously mapped out his future, ostensibly offers Dana the opportunity for the true fruition of love. But an unavoidable decision marks a turning point in this relationship from which there is no return. Dana finally meets the man she knows she is destined to marry; their childless marriage, however, slowly drives them apart. Then there is Yuval, a childhood friend, who re-enters her life unexpectedly but only peripherally.

As she reassembles her fragmented memories, Dana allows

herself, and us, to examine the fine borders between the respectable and the promiscuous, the moral and the corrupt, truth and falsehood, denial and recognition. Through Dana's constant, agonizing fluctuation between two opposing facets of her personality – the *femme fatale* and the "good girl" – Shulamit Gilboa presents a unique, unmediated account of the feminine experience, questioning societal norms and expectations; their effect on the female consciousness; and their sometimes invalidating and detrimental consequences.

About the Author

Shulamit Gilboa was born in Tel Aviv, Israel, in 1943 and began publishing poems and short stories at an early age. She holds a B.A. in Hebrew Literature and an M.A. in Philosophy from Tel Aviv University, and has taught Philosophy at the academic level and Literature and Philosophy at high school level. She has been deputy literary editor of the daily *Yedioth Abronoth* since 1984, and writes a weekly book column for the paper.

She received a prize from the Tel Aviv Literature and Art Fund and was awarded a writing stipend at Oxford in 1999. Her novel, *Four Men and a Woman*, has become a bestseller.

Four Men and a Woman will be published by **Bertelsmann**, Munich.



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YORAM KANIUK

• *The Last Berliner* •

To be published

Synopsis

A writer is contemplating his new book, a children's story. The story is about a Jewish man, Gustav Vierundzwanzig, and his grandson, Uri. The grandfather, a native German, fled to Eretz Israel in 1939. He continues to communicate telepathically with his wife, Hilda, who disappeared in Germany. He teaches this telepathic "game" to his grandson, who becomes thoroughly acquainted with Berlin despite never having been there. The boy becomes a living map of a Berlin that no longer exists, and undertakes a mission to find his missing grandmother.

The writer is the author himself, Yoram Kaniuk. In the summer of 1999, he sets out for Berlin, following in the footsteps of his young protagonist, searching for the imaginary grandmother of an imaginary boy. He soon realizes, however, that he is actually in search of something else entirely. As opposed to the children's story Kaniuk has initially set out to write, *The Last Berliner* is actually a mosaic of travel stories, of "funny, sad, moving and banal events" written about in newspaper columns and of unpublished material. It is an investigation into Germany, Israel and the Holocaust, the story of shadows, of "echoes of footsteps" of millions of Jews.

During his travels in Germany, Kaniuk encounters numerous people who all have stories to tell about the war – where they were,

how they survived (if they were Jews), or in what capacity they served (if they were Germans).

Kaniuk interweaves these stories, as well as others he has heard, with his meditations on the paradox of the German cultural Renaissance on the one hand and its horrific killing industry on the other; on how present-day Germany is dealing with the Holocaust and on the appropriate ways to commemorate it; on whether Germans and Jews can and should live together in Germany; on how Israel dealt with such events as the Eichmann trial and the Gulf War; on God; and on the need for an understanding of the Holocaust – and the seeming impossibility of making any sense of it.

About the Author

Yoram Kaniuk was born in Tel Aviv in 1930 and fought in Israel's War of Independence. He began publishing novels and short stories in the 1960s. In addition to publishing 27 books, Kaniuk is also a painter and a journalist. His work has been translated into 20 languages (see ITHL Directory of Israeli Authors for complete list) and has been widely acclaimed abroad. Kaniuk has been awarded the Prix de Droits de l'Homme in Paris (1997), the President's Prize in Israel (1998), and Le Prix Méditerranée Étranger (2000). He lives in Tel Aviv.

The Last Berliner will be published by Eicon Ullstein List, Munich.



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NAVA SEMEL

• *The Rat Laughs* •

To be published by Yediot Ahronoth in Autumn 2001. Approx. 200 pp.

Synopsis

The Rat Laughs is a five-part novel dealing with the horrors of the Holocaust and the influence of this harrowing chapter of human history on man's relationship with God; on the understanding of human nature; on the need to forget in order to survive; and on the need to remember, nonetheless.

Part One is the story of a nameless five-year-old child, as it is told to her granddaughter years later. The child's parents entrust her to a family of farmers living in a remote, picturesque village. She is hidden in a dark potato cellar for approximately a year, with little food and only a rat for company – and raped repeatedly by the farmers' son. The narrative, which alternately advances and retreats, also presents a metafictional contemplation of the act of storytelling: What is its purpose? Does it really have the power to liberate the storyteller? Does the act of silencing and obliteration transform memory into an independent entity, governed by memory – "the story's legal offspring"?

Part Two is the granddaughter's diary, which sheds more light on the survivor's story as well as on the title of the novel. The rat, according to the alternative myth of creation related by the grandmother, demanded that God grant him the gift of laughter, but soon came to realize God's most miserable mistake: "... in a world where

children must be hidden ... chaos is not simply an incidental 'bug,' but a complete systems breakdown. Such a world should be destroyed from its foundations and rebuilt from the start."

Part Three, a collection of poems ostensibly written by the survivor child, is followed by a research report (Part Four) written in the year 2099 by an anthropologist bent on uncovering the origins of the widespread "Girl and Rat" myth. This chapter, which defines myth as "encrypted historical memory," is also a reflection on the nature of memory – its persistent presence in man's consciousness; its scarring effects; and the possibility of subsequent hope: "A historical scar is indeed no guarantee that horrific events will not repeat themselves; the existence of memory can, nevertheless, grant some hope." Part Five, the novel's final chapter, is the diary of the priest who takes the child in. In an attempt to restore her speech, her hope and her faith in God and mankind, he discovers that he has lost his own.

About the Author

Nava Semel (b. 1954, Tel Aviv) holds an M.A. in Art History and is an art critic. Semel has worked as a TV, radio and recording producer and as a journalist. She has written poetry, prose for children and adults and television scripts in addition to translating plays. Semel has received several literary prizes including the American National Jewish Book Award for children's literature. Her books have been published in English, French, Spanish, Dutch, Italian, German, Czech, Albanian and Romanian.



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AMNON JACKONT

• *The Last of the Wise Lovers* •

Published by Keter, Jerusalem, 1991. 177 pp.

Synopsis

Ronnie Levin is the only child of an Israeli couple living in a New York suburb. His father, an Israeli government agent, spends most of his time traveling across the country on secret missions. His mother, a beautiful, talented woman, adores her promising son. Ronnie is bright, handsome and has a loving girlfriend; but something is about to go terribly wrong.

Driving home from a back-to-school costume party, Ronnie has a mysterious and frightening encounter. Dressed as a woman, and mistaken for his mother, he is stopped in the Lincoln tunnel, where he receives a cryptic message intended for her. The message contains a threat to both her life and that of an unknown man. This moment marks the beginning of the most terrifying and confusing two weeks of Ronnie's life, during which he attempts to solve the enigma in which he has become embroiled, thereby protecting his mother and saving the anonymous man. His mission, as he will later discover, is also one of self-discovery.

As the mystery unfolds, and as Ronnie gathers more clues, he undergoes a painful personal process of discovery and disillusionment concerning the people closest to him. First he learns that his mother, whom he has always respected and adored, is a lonely, frustrated woman who is living a double life. Her secret, which she

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AMNON JACKONT

• *Honey Trap* •

Published by Keter, Jerusalem, 1994. 206 pp.

Synopsis

Daphne Bernstein is seeking a second chance. A misguided decision changed her life in a single moment, and from that moment on she has been searching for the opportunity to get her life and the life of her young daughter back on track.

As a result of her mistake, Daphne's medical license has been revoked for ten years. Her endeavors to rebuild her life have taken her across the United States and have brought her, ultimately, to Jerusalem, a city she does not particularly like, but which offers her new hope. She soon finds, however, that this hope comes at a high price; she is now embroiled in a web of fear, danger, secret service involvement and biological experiments that could seal the fate of millions. But her second chance is worth the price.

Daphne's ordeal allows her to examine her life – her relationships with men; with her mother; with her daughter. She reflects on her marriage to a man she never loved while gradually developing a strong attachment to a man she should not love. Contemplating her relationship with her mother, she questions her own motherhood, afraid that she might be repeating the mistakes her mother made with her, thus perpetuating the cycle of criticism, miscommunication and lack of understanding.

This suspense-filled novel depicts the suspicion and paranoia

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goes to great lengths to conceal, involves not only an extramarital affair and the betrayal of his father, but also a dangerous, clandestine conspiracy. Ronnie also comes to acknowledge that while his father's absence created a strong bond between him and his mother, it constituted a painful void in his life. Finally, Ronnie discovers that his beloved Uncle Harry, whose friendship and advice he so cherished, has betrayed virtually every member of his family.

Through his relentless quest for the truth, Ronnie finds that what he held to be true is actually false, and that things are rarely as they seem. Re-evaluating his reality, he learns to question everything he has hitherto taken for granted. He discovers that this life-threatening ordeal is in fact his own rite of passage.

About the Author

Amnon Jackont, one of Israel's most well-known writers of thrillers, was born in Ramat Gan in 1948 and lives in Tel Aviv. He holds an M.A. in History from Tel Aviv University; has hosted programs on radio and television; and writes editorials for the printed and electronic media. Between the years 1988 and 1999, he served as the editor of suspense novels at Keter Publishing House and currently edits Keter's history books. He is also a lecturer of History at Tel Aviv University. Jackont has published four novels, as well as a collection of short stories. His books have been published in **English** and **Russian**.

An unedited **English** translation of *The Last of the Wise Lovers* is available.



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that consume a vulnerable, hopeless woman who is conscious of the enormous discrepancy between reality and her ability to decode it. Jerusalem, with its mystical mixture of the holy and the mundane; with its occasional delusional, fanatical pilgrim; provides the perfect backdrop for this complex plot and for Daphne's confusion.

"All these years I've wanted only one thing: another chance, to start again where life went wrong," Daphne explains to her daughter. Through this perilous, treacherous experience, she learns just how rare second chances are, but never ceases to believe in their existence.

About the Author

Amnon Jackont, one of Israel's most well-known writers of thrillers, was born in Ramat Gan in 1948 and lives in Tel Aviv. He holds an M.A. in History from Tel Aviv University; has hosted programs on radio and television; and writes editorials for the printed and electronic media. Between the years 1988 and 1999, he served as the editor of suspense novels at Keter Publishing House and currently edits Keter's history books. He is also a lecturer of History at Tel Aviv University. Jackont has published four novels, as well as a collection of short stories. His books have been published in **English** and **Russian**.

An unedited **English** translation of *Honey Trap* is available. Jackont's first novel, *Borrowed Time*, was published in **English** by **Hamish Hamilton/David & Charles**, London.



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RAM OREN

• *The Mark of Cain* •*Published by Keshet, Tel Aviv, 1996. 352 pp.***Synopsis**

This bestselling, suspense-filled thriller tells the stories of several seemingly unrelated characters. Shifting from one story to another, Oren gradually unravels the overall plot, ultimately revealing its shocking, almost unbelievable dénouement.

Michael Bornstein is happily married to Ruthy, and is the father of two young boys. As the Head of the Mossad, he has successfully planned and supervised numerous operations that have saved countless lives. Now he is about to discover a past he never knew or imagined he had; he is about to reveal the Mark of Cain he has unwittingly borne since the day of his birth.

On the other side of the world, on a secluded farm in Argentina, Elsa Mueller, a rabid Nazi, is meticulously planning terrorist operations. These operations, carried out in conjunction with Argentinean collaborators, as well as with American and Muslim extremists, aim to destabilize democracies across the globe and institute fascist regimes in their stead. The loss of innumerable innocent lives is of no consequence to her, and the elimination of as many Jews as possible in the process is simply an added bonus.

These two apparently discrete, antithetical lives are, in fact, closely intertwined. Intricate plot twists and surprising discoveries reveal that Michael and Elsa are, in fact, brother and sister, the

children of Adolf Berman, commander of a Nazi concentration camp. Berman and his wife, killed while fleeing the camp when it was stormed by the Allies, were survived by their two children, who were adopted by two very different men and raised in entirely different environments. Elsa was taken in by Herman Mueller and his wife. Mueller, himself a Nazi general, fled to Argentina, where he founded an underground Nazi organization, which Elsa took over after his death. Michael, born as Werner Berman, was found by a Jewish concentration camp survivor who managed to hold on to the four-month-old baby against all odds – thereby gaining a new lease on life. Despite inconceivable trials and tribulations, the two arrived in Eretz Israel, where Michael was raised as a Jew.

The unexpected encounter between Michael and Elsa shocks them both; causes complete upheaval in their lives; and forces them to examine the implications of these new-found family ties.

About the Author

Ram Oren (b. 1936, Tel Aviv) graduated from the Faculty of Law at the Hebrew University and is a member of the Lawyers' Association.

He has worked as a journalist and was a senior editor of the daily *Yedioth Ahronoth*. He is founder and owner of Keshet Publishing House. Oren has published nine novels. His work has been translated into English and French. *The Mark of Cain* was published in **English** in Israel by **Keshet**. Oren's novel, *Live Ammunition*, was published in **French** by **Mazarine/Fayard**, Paris.

