

ISRAEL

STUDIES IN ZIONISM AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL
HISTORY, SOCIETY, CULTURE

The Chaim Weizmann Institute for the Study of Zionism and Israel was set up in 1962 at Tel Aviv University through the initiative and with the assistance of the Executive of the World Zionist Organization, with the aim of furthering the research and the teaching of the history of the Zionist idea, the Zionist movement and the Land of Israel in modern times.

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Editors

Orit Rozin Meir Chazan



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Summaries

Deborah S. Bernstein

Between the Private and the Public: Fictitious Marriage during
the British Mandate

Fictitious marriages were one of the ways in which Jewish women, who were not granted immigration permits in their own right, were able to enter Palestine during the British Mandate. The illegal arrival of single women aroused a variety of responses in the Yishuv. Although the institutional leadership desired to increase the Jewish population and to normalize its demographic composition, it opposed the disregard of the criteria agreed upon between the national institutions and the Mandate administration, fearing a loss of credibility. The rabbinate had additional reservations based on religious law and the possible ramifications of fictitious marriages. At the same time, private individuals were intent on finding all possible ways to enable the women members of their family to leave the havoc of Europe, even if that entailed illegal entrance into Palestine.

Bat-Sheva Margalit Stern

Beautiful Nadra and Her Exquisite Profile: Zionist Beauty Contests in
the Yishuv as a Means for Molding National Identity

This article analyzes the Purim beauty contests that were held in Tel Aviv, the first “Hebrew” city, in 1926–32, and the ways in which these contests served as a means to mold a new national identity. The representation of the female body as the national body is prevalent in various national contexts. The Zionists also implemented new ideas of “femininity” and “masculinity” and wove them into Zionist thinking and practice. The Zionist interpretation of Purim, the biblical festival of masquerades, was one such practice. The Purim festivities incorporated new and traditional, serious and humoresque elements, including a beauty contest and the crowning of a Zionist beauty queen. The process of selecting and crowning a young woman to represent the newborn nation incited a fierce public controversy which led to the termination of this custom. This article examines, among others, the reasons for the controversy, who took part in it and why, and who gained and who lost from participating in this new form of festivities. The focus on Tel Aviv also provides insights into the emergence of local history and culture.

Talia Diskin

Not a “Conventional” Women’s Magazine:
The Civil Woman Model in *Ha-Ishah* and Its Agents, 1926-1929

The article examines the women’s magazine *Ha-Ishah* (The Woman), which was published in Palestine in 1926–29 by two women’s organizations: Hadassah and Histadrut Nashim Ivriyot (Hebrew Women’s Organization). The article analyzes the model of the ideal woman reflected in the magazine and the connection between this model and the cultural identity of its editor, Hanna Helena Thon, and the other women who contributed significantly to its content. Most of these writers were educated new immigrants from Europe and the United States who conducted a bourgeois lifestyle in the towns and agricultural settlements. Their writings reveal some “core traits” of the desirable woman, in particular regarding involvement in the new Jewish society in Palestine and the role of motherhood, which were both intimately related to the general nation-building project. The article also examines other models of womanhood reflected in the magazine: the working-pioneer woman, the Orthodox woman, the diaspora woman and the Oriental (*mizrahi*) woman, arguing that ambivalent attitudes towards these models established the boundaries of the identity that the writers aspired to impart to their readers.

Shula Keshet

Women Writers in a Pioneering Society:
The Dialectics of Dual Consciousness

The article examines several texts written by women kibbutz members who immigrated to Palestine during the Third *Aliyah*. The texts cover a period of some thirty years, from the early settlement in Palestine to the consolidation of kibbutz society at the end of the 1940s. This approach accords with the feminist project in recent years of rereading Hebrew literature in an attempt to define the poetic strategies of women’s alternative writing within the hegemonic male space. The discussion will enable readers to identify shifts along the time continuum, reveal the dialectics of feminist dual consciousness, and define the strategies whereby women writers attempted to contend with the complex dialectical situation in order to create an alternative feminine space.

Michal Shaul

Pesia Sharshevski: An Ultra-Orthodox Holocaust Survivor Who Broke the Barriers of Gender and Sector

In the first years after World War II, Pesia Sharshevski, a Polish Holocaust survivor, spoke in various forums in the name of the survivors and also managed a boardinghouse for young ultra-Orthodox Holocaust survivors, Beit Ya'akov. The article outlines Sharshevski's unknown history and presents the messages that she sought to convey and the role she played, if only for a short while, in molding Israeli memory of the Holocaust. Her writings reveal that not only were there ultra-Orthodox Jews who embraced part of the Zionist narrative such as the lessons of the Holocaust and the centrality of Jewish settlement in Israel, but some of them even took part in its creation and consolidation. The views expressed by Sharshevski have much in common with those of prominent non-ultra-Orthodox Holocaust survivors in Israel such as Zivia Lubetkin. In the period between World War II and the rehabilitation after it, the boundaries of gender and sector were less rigid, enabling a momentary connection between "male" and "female" narratives and roles between "Zionist" and "ultra-Orthodox" Jews. Sharshevski's activities also indicate that at that time there were no clear boundaries between armed heroism and spiritual heroism, and between personal and collective memory.

Lilach Rosenberg-Friedman

Women of the Yishuv in the *Ha'apalah* (“Illegal” Immigration, 1945–1948)

The article explores the unique story of more than 100 women who were active in the illegal immigration to Palestine during the British Mandate period, the *Ha'apalah*. This historical episode, characterized by female incursion into the male arena of security, provides a platform for discussing broad issues in the study of gender and nationalism: whether nationalism fashions a new female identity or, on the contrary, reinforces the traditional identity in order to realize national goals; and whether women's participation in the national struggle, which deviated from their traditional roles, attests to the adoption of a new identity. The article shows that the women's activity abroad, far from home and from traditional concepts of their role, enabled them to form a new self-awareness. The opportunity they were given to perform new roles and their relative freedom of action led to their empowerment and the fashioning of a new identity.

Orit Kamir

Collective Memory, Law and No Women: Why the Israeli Legal Discourse Is Not a Viable Venue for the Commemoration of Women

This article claims that Israeli collective memory often adheres to a narrative pattern that is highly compatible with the frame of mind best titled “national honor.” The following is a dominant narrative pattern in Israeli collective memory: “the villainous enemy shamed and humiliated us; we remember the shame and humiliation, the honorable duty to avenge them, and the brave heroes who sacrificed their lives to cleanse our national honor.” Very few documented legal proceedings can be interpreted to fit this narrative formula; hence the minor role played by the legal discourse in the Israeli collective memory. The 1961 Jerusalem Eichmann trial qualifies as one of these rare legal proceedings. Moreover, Israelis subconsciously assume both “the villainous enemy” and the “brave heroes” to be men. Consequently, only three types of legal proceedings have paved women’s entree into the Israeli collective psyche: those that claim recognition for women as “brave heroes” (as in the case of Alice Miller, a young woman who demanded to be given a chance to serve as an IDF pilot); those which claim that women are victims and their assailants “villainous enemies” (as in the case of Rachel Heller, a woman soldier who was raped and killed); and those that were understood to challenge the established categories of “brave heroes” and “villainous enemies.” However, most women participate either in family-law proceedings (such as divorce and child custody), or in criminal proceedings regarding their sexual victimization (such as rape and sexual harassment). These women’s legal stories do not follow the paradigmatic commemorative pattern. Furthermore, the women are “protected” in the name of “privacy” (i.e., “personal honor”) in the criminal context and “family honor” in the family-law context, and their names are concealed. In conclusion, for more women to be commemorated through the legal discourse, Israel’s honor-based mentality must change both in the context of commemoration and in the context of paternalistic “protection” of women.

Chaim Noy

“I Worship You, Israeli Soldiers”: Gender and National Performances at an Israeli Commemoration Site

This article examines discursive practices that establish gender-cum-national positions and identities in Israel. It explores how visitors at a national commemoration site located in Jerusalem perceive themselves in relation to the national Zionist and militaristic ethos and symbols. My approach is performative, highlighting the aesthetic and constitutive aspects of the discursive practices examined. The analysis is based on entries in a commemorative visitors’ book located at the site. A semiotic analysis of the entries in the book is complemented

by ethnographic observations and interviews. The performance framework helps show how hegemonic and counter-hegemonic identities are publicly constituted, and how differences in visitors' national identity intertwine with differences in gender and ethnic identities. The article explores theories concerning the relations between collective and national identities, and although it focuses on women, it also considers the ways in which masculinities are performed at this heritage site.

Yael Guilat

The Voice of the Mother: Motherhood and Counter-Memorial Discourse in Israeli Contemporary Art

Memorials, which are perceived as the main form of sculpture in Israel until the 1980s, reflect male hegemony both in the field of art and in the national arena. The fact that women are so scarce, both as images and as creators of memorials, can be explained by their place in the national order of priorities. Towards the end of the 1990s, a new perception of motherhood that challenged traditional female roles in the national order found public expression both in art and in direct political action. The activity of organizations such as Women in Black, Four Mothers, and Shuvi expressed women's desire to make themselves heard on questions of security and the military that women allegedly do not understand. These organizations, especially Four Mothers and Shuvi, like women artists such as Yehudit Matzkel, spoke as "the soldier's mother," seeking to take back what had been taken away from them: their own soldier, their own son, who was potentially a fallen soldier. The theme of trauma and anticipation of trauma fed the work of Matzkel, Drora Domini, Arianne Litman-Cohen, Rachel Giladi and other artists examined in this article. Their works present a new artistic perspective, as well as addressing the question of the place of women (as mothers) in the Israeli discourse of bereavement and memorialization. Drawing on the concept of "counter-memory," the article suggests that this body of art can be understood as "counter-memorials," a strategy of resistance and dissidence.