

**A SURREALIST READING: FORMLESSNESS AND NONDIFFERENTIATION
IN YITZHAK ORPAZ'S *THE HUNTING OF THE GAZELLE* (TSEYD HA-TSVIYAH, 1966)
A CYCLE OF THREE STORIES***

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Introduction

The research for this paper was initiated by the following question: Why is it that avant-garde literary trends such as Futurism and Expressionism have been evidently incorporated into Modern Hebrew poetry and prose – alongside detailed and comprehensive critical discourse regarding this incorporation – whereas the same cannot be said of Surrealism? There is no official Hebrew or Israeli Surrealist movement or extensive critical study of Hebrew Surrealism either in literature or in the visual arts and – as I shall demonstrate – this particular absence is true in only a few other countries and consequently Israel stands out in being one of these countries.¹ The question thus raised two concerns: the first, which cannot be denied, is the complete absence of a collective, national Israeli affiliation with Surrealism and the second, which is more problematic, is the seeming lack of a Surrealist influence upon Modern Hebrew literature.² The latter concern is not as relevant to other national literatures simply because so many countries have or have had nationally affiliated Surrealist movements, which in turn suggests an impact. The fact that there has never been a Hebrew or Israeli equivalent renders the concern more pertinent. My question then developed into something of a more historicist nature: is it possible that there are instances of Hebrew Surrealism within literature that are the result of an inner poetic need rather than any conscious affiliation with the movement? If so, how would we define this particular Surrealism and what would it signify?

My response to these questions was originally twofold: first I analysed a selection of little known Modern Hebrew texts from the nineteen thirties that do surprisingly suggest a direct influence by the French Surrealist movement in particular on Modern Hebrew literature. The author of these texts, Menashe Levin (1903-81), who was one of the principal translators of French literature into Hebrew, not only employed Surrealist metaphors and similes in his short stories but also translated Rimbaud's *Illuminations* (*Les*

* The style system here used derives from the Modern Humanities Research Association Style Guide: See *MHRA: A Handbook for Authors, Editors and Writers of Theses* (Modern Humanities Research Association, London: 2002). All titles of works in Hebrew – both fiction and non-fiction – are entered in English except in the first instance where the Hebrew transliteration is given. Similarly, all titles of works in French are in English except in the first instance. Concepts and terms in Hebrew are also given in English except in the first instance. However, in the bibliography all titles are cited in their original language. Names of Israeli authors and characters are not transliterated. Transliteration follows the rules set by the 'Academy of the Hebrew Language' although the 'easy' system is employed as opposed to the 'precise' one. Thus, for example, a single apostrophe is used to indicate the presence of an Alef or an Ayin rather than two distinct signs.

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1 The eminent Surrealism scholar and theorist, Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron, argues: 'there are hardly any countries in which some sort of group laying claim to Surrealism has not arisen.' See Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron, *Surrealism* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1990), 186. Similarly, Penelope Rosemont's international anthology features Surrealists from all over Europe, North and South America, Asia, Africa, Australasia and the Middle East but not Israel. See Penelope Rosemont, ed., *Surrealist Women: An Anthology* (The Athlone Press, London, 1998).

2 This article focuses upon Surrealism rather than its precursor Dada. In view of the fact that one of Dada's main proponents, Tristan Tzara (b. Sami Rosenstock), author of seven manifestoes, was Jewish, it would be interesting to consider the effect of Dada upon Modern Hebrew literature, especially poetry. Indeed, this is a very under explored topic. However, I would argue that the two movements are fundamentally different, which is why I would advocate a separate study. Certainly, in 1940 the Dada architect and painter, Marcel Janco, immigrated to Israel and founded the artists' kibbutz, Ein Hod. His subsequent influence upon Israeli visual art – rather than literature – is also a topic worthy of further exploration.

Illuminations) – a collection of prose poems, first published in 1886 that were greatly admired by the French Surrealists and are considered to form part of the second historical stage of Surrealism alongside the writings of Comte de Lautréamont – before producing his own prose poetry, a genre that was extremely rare at the time.³ In spite of this fact, Levin has been given very little critical attention. Dan Miron and Nurit Gertz are exceptions, but although the latter does concede a certain influence of French Surrealism on Levin's work, her analyses are minimal whilst Miron asserts that Levin's writing is decidedly anti-Surrealist.⁴ Although I do challenge this reading elsewhere, I shall not discuss Levin in this particular paper.

Second, I hoped to identify those texts which possess characteristics that are reminiscent of Surrealism but which have been created in a Hebrew and Israeli context that is independent of the movement. This is necessarily complex since it implies an affinity with an already established group, yet this affinity is allegedly unintentional and in several respects dissimilar. As for the first characteristic, the original French Surrealist movement has always acknowledged Surrealist 'precursors' suggesting that a work may be unintentionally Surrealist. On the other hand, analyses of Surrealism tend to focus upon actively intentional Surrealist activity and conscious participation with the movement as a collective, i.e. via specialist journals or exhibitions or identification with a particular national Surrealism, i.e. French, Belgian, Romanian, Japanese.⁵ This paper however assumes the premise that it is possible to be 'unintentionally' Surrealist. Concerning the second characteristic, Yitzhak Orpaz's Hebrew Surrealism is rooted within Hebrew and Israeli literary cultural sources and has seemingly emerged as a response to an inner poetic need rather than as a conscious affiliation to an international movement.

The purpose of this paper is to offer a Surrealist reading of Orpaz's *The Hunting of the Gazelle* trilogy, a series of relatively unknown texts that have never before been analysed from a Surrealist perspective.⁶ Although there is considerable criticism of Orpaz's writing as a whole, there is barely anything written on this trilogy. As I shall make clear at a later stage, Orpaz insists that Surrealism has influenced neither his writing methods nor his writing and, consequently, much of his work – and in particular these three short stories – exemplifies an organic Hebrew Surrealism that has been created in an Israeli context and yet still bears significant resemblance to the movement. In addition to this, as we shall later see, Orpaz's writing methods are also very evocative of those recommended and practised by the pioneering French Surrealists.

The Absence of Surrealism in Modern Hebrew Literature

Surrealism, which officially began in Paris in 1924 with the publication of André Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism (Manifeste du Surréalisme)*, had by the nineteen thirties become a significant international movement reaching most of Western and Eastern Europe, North and South America, the West Indies, Africa and Japan.⁷ In each of these places the influence of French Surrealism evolved and developed

3 Dan Miron, 'The Poetry of Menashe Levin - the Path That Had Not Yet Been Taken' ('Shirat Menashe Levin – Ha-Derekh she lo Nits'adah'), in Menashe Levin, *Night Time Overture (Ptiḥah Le-Laylah)* ed. Dan Miron (Hotsa'at Qeshev, Israel, 2003), 29.

4 Miron, 'Afterword', in Menashe Levin's *The Flying Danseuse (Ha-Raqdanit Ha-Me'ofefet)* (Mosad Bialiq, Jerusalem, 2000), 328.

5 This paradox is reflected in the writings of André Breton, founder of the French Surrealist movement. In his 1924 Manifesto he wholeheartedly acknowledges Surrealist precursors yet in April 1964 he declares: 'The *quality* of being surrealist remains sanctioned, in the end, not only by such poetic and artistic 'talent' but by reference to a precise collective active ... 'Group' activity is essential, not only to the life of surrealism, but to its specificity'. See 'Against the Liquidators', in Franklin Rosemont, ed. *André Breton: What is Surrealism? Selected Writings* (Pathfinder, New York, 2004), 466.

6 Yitzhak Orpaz, 'The Hunting of the Gazelle' ('Tseyd Ha-Tsviyah), in *City With No Refuge (Ir She-Eyn bah Mistor)* (Ha-Qibuts Ha-Me'uḥad, 1973), 43-67.

7 Robert Short, 'Dada and Surrealism', in Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, eds., *Modernism: 1890-1930* (Penguin Books, London, 1991), 306.

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differently into a wide range of diverse strands and manifestations.⁸ Each manifestation was formed in relation to its own specific historical and political circumstances. Some strands were more politically motivated than others but the common theme was the break from the authority of the past. This break made itself evident via a move away from realism. In literature, the Surrealists' preferred mode was poetry, although – as I shall discuss at a later stage – novels that contained the 'marvellous' were also encouraged.⁹ French Surrealism's international influence continued even during the nineteen forties when Nazi military occupation banned Surrealist activity. It flourished both underground as well as in exile and indeed Nazi restrictions prompted even more fervent activity in those places where it had not been banned, such as England, Martinique, Haiti and Egypt.¹⁰ Likewise, during the nineteen fifties Cold War period when the Surrealist movement was at its most precarious, new groups – Canada, Argentina, Austria – still continued to form. By the early nineteen seventies when the Arab Surrealist Movement in Exile began – with members from Iraq, Algeria, Lebanon and Syria – there were only a very few countries where French Surrealism had not made some impact and Israel is one of these countries. Even today there is a wealth of active international Surrealist movements; moreover, scholarship on Surrealism and its legacies is abundant.

In order to appreciate fully the significance of Orpaz's own Hebrew Surrealism it is worth considering, if only briefly, the relevance of this absence to the Hebrew context. First of all, the fact that the Surrealist movement made little impact upon Modern Hebrew literature produced in Palestine during the late twenties and thirties is a curious one for two reasons: (a) during the late nineteen twenties and early nineteen thirties when Surrealism's main centre was France, there is evidence that suggests significant knowledge of French culture within the Hebrew-reading public of contemporary Palestine; (b) during this very same period, there are numerous examples of modernistic forms of writing by Hebrew authors in Palestine.

(a) The French literary and artistic movements of the interwar period were certainly known to the Hebrew-reading public in contemporary Palestine. In mainstream newspapers such as *Ha-Arets* there are references to French art: for example in 1932 there is an article by Sonia Greenberg on the 'Exhibition of French Art 1200-1900' that was held at the Royal Academy of Arts in London and featured *inter alia* major Impressionist works by Claude Monet, Edgar Degas and Edouard Manet.¹¹ It was in 1932 that the Tel Aviv Museum of Art was opened to the public and its collection of modern and contemporary art had already been founded as early as 1930. Similarly, in specialised literary journals such as *Texts* (*Ketuvim*, 1926-33) and *Columns* (*Turim*, 1933-39) there are numerous surveys of the cultural scene in France, more specifically Paris, from art to music. The absence of articles on the development of French Surrealism is a striking one especially because one can find in *Texts*, for example, essays on Rimbaud and Verlaine as well as articles on dreams and the unconscious.¹² It is certainly remarkable that subjects such as dreaming and the unconscious were discussed in great depth alongside lengthy critiques of contemporary French culture and yet the term 'Surrealist' seems completely absent.

However, this is not to say that the members of the French Surrealist movement were completely unknown. In 1932 Yitzhak Norman wrote a significant piece for *Texts* on Paul Valéry in which he mentions Louis Aragon, André Breton and Philippe Soupault as belonging to the 'Dada Group', which by then was an inaccurate labelling.¹³ In 1933, V. Lichter wrote an article for *Texts* on contemporary art that

8 With regard to the Middle Eastern context, the Egyptian Surrealist movement was formed in the mid 1930s and the Cairo group was one of the most active. See 'Introduction', in Franklin Rosemont, ed., *André Breton: What is Surrealism? op. cit.*, 90.

9 See André Breton, 'Manifesto of Surrealism', in *Manifestoes of Surrealism* (University of Michigan Press, Michigan, 1972), 14. I shall explain the 'marvellous' in my section on Orpaz's three novellas.

10 Penelope Rosemont, *International*, 119-120.

11 *Ha-Arets*, 5 February 1932.

12 *Texts*, Tel Aviv, 1926-27, issues dated 17/12/1926 and 3/11/1927.

13 *Texts*, Vol. 6, issue date 6/7/1932, p.3.

mentions experimental French movements including Dadaism.¹⁴ Similarly in the journal that followed, *Columns*, it is obvious that there was a considerable awareness of modernism and the avant-garde; there is a large essay devoted to Expressionism; there are even references to Leon Trotsky's theories on art and philosophy as well as a brief mention of Jean Cocteau, both of whom are related in various ways to the French Surrealists.¹⁵ Thus, there was an interest in modernistic developments taking place in France but for certain reasons, as yet unknown, those journalists reporting from Paris neglected to elaborate upon the activity of Surrealist writers and visual artists. There were even ideological similarities between certain writers and editors at *Columns* and the French Surrealists inasmuch as they were anti-nationalist. The latter were opposed to Zionism as they were to all forms of nationalism.¹⁶ Meanwhile, Shlonsky wrote an influential article entitled 'Do not kill' (Lo Tirtsah') in which he attacked not only European patriotism but also the Palestinian Revisionist Party and the Workers Movement as all being manifestations of extreme nationalism.¹⁷

(b) During the late twenties and early thirties in Palestine – a complex period of primarily local, nationalistic literature represented by authors such as Israel Zarchi, Yehuda Yaari, Yitzhak Shenhar – a small yet significant number of Hebrew authors were experimenting with new, modernistic – and more specifically avant-garde – schools of writing such as Expressionism and Futurism. These were published in the specialist literary journals *Texts* and later *Columns*. Prose writers such as Nathan Bistriski and Haim Hazaz are considered the founders and key proponents of Modern Hebrew Expressionism – this is noteworthy since the latter lived in Paris from 1921-31 yet his writing clearly incorporates German rather than French influences – whilst poet Avraham Shlonsky is known for his embrace of Futurism as revealed by his extensive use of neologisms, his rejection of traditional Hebrew poetic forms and his rhetoric of newness: new rhyming schemes, new meters, new images all for the new homeland.¹⁸ With the exception of the aforementioned Menashe Levin none of these authors favoured French modernism over German, Austrian or Russian.¹⁹

There are certainly possible explanations as to why other modernist forms of writing such as Futurism and Expressionism found favour over Surrealism during this particular period. It is partly happenstance; after all, it is simply not possible to have a straightforward adaptation of genres from European literature into Modern Hebrew. Specific periods in European literature such as the Enlightenment or Romanticism do not run parallel with their Hebrew equivalents and there is no straightforward overlapping between the two. The development of Modern Hebrew literature does not occur in a clear chronological manner and one genre does not simply follow another in the same way that Surrealism, for example, followed Dada. Rather, genres and schools of writing in Modern Hebrew occur at various times in a jumbled way.²⁰ This is particularly the case with modernism and with unambiguous schools of writing such as Surrealism, Impressionism, Futurism and Expressionism, avant-garde movements that are easy to distinguish in European literature because they are firmly embedded in specific and often short-lived

14 *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, issue date 19/1/1933.

15 *Columns*, Tel Aviv, issues dated 17/11/1933, 21/7/1933 and 12/1/1934 respectively.

16 This opposition however was mostly demonstrated through indifference; a thorough study of political Surrealist writing reveals only one article on the subject. This article is entitled 'Pamphlet against Jerusalem' ('Pamphlet contre Jérusalem'). It was written in 1925 by Robert Desnos, who was the only prominent Jewish member of the French Surrealist movement - in it he expresses opposition towards the Zionist movement. See Robert Desnos, 'Pamphlet contre Jérusalem', in *La Révolution Surréaliste* (Librairie Gallimard, Paris Issue No.3, 15th April 1925).

17 Avraham Shlonsky, 'Lo Tirtsah', in *Columns* 28/7/1933.

18 For further discussion on Shlonsky see Michael Gluzman, *The Politics of Canonicity: Lines of Resistance in Modernist Hebrew Poetry* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2003), 47.

19 It is also worth mentioning at this stage that Menashe Levin's widow, Masha Levin, told me that in fact her husband had translated extracts of Breton's *Manifesto* into Hebrew. Interview with Masha Levin, recorded, Tel Aviv, August 2005

20 Gershon Shaked, *Hebrew Narrative Fiction 1880-1980 (Ha-Siporet Ha-Ivrit 1880-1980)* (Ha-Qibuts Ha-Me'uhad and Keter Publishing House, 1998), 145.

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historical/political/social circumstances, which simply do not correspond with what was happening in Palestine.

The haphazard nature of choosing one avant-garde style over another is supported by a further consideration: since the precise physical act of writing Modern Hebrew literature was a Zionist act and thus radical by definition, the nature of Hebrew literary modernism is necessarily different to that of its European counterpart. Its implicit relation to Zionism renders the concept of Hebrew modernism as a 'revolutionary' response to an existing Hebrew literary canon complex and multifaceted. Early Hebrew modernist writing produced in Palestine during the interwar years fulfilled the function of a nation-building tool in exactly the same way as Hebrew non-modernist writing did. Modernist or not, all Modern Hebrew texts were considered an enrichment and a building block in the development of the new culture of the new nation. To produce an Expressionistic or Futuristic work was a positive act that implicitly and explicitly supported the creation of a new national literature. These works were never intended to destabilise the quest for a Jewish State, or, more precisely, they were never intended to destroy Zionism. Modernising the Hebrew language for the purpose of literary expressions – i.e. through abandoning Biblical forms or introducing neologisms, or new syntactical models – were constructive rather than destructive. In other words, authors such as Eliezar Steinman, Haim Hazaz and even Menashe Levin, who employed European models of modernist literature were above all being radical inasmuch as they introduced such styles to Modern Hebrew literature at a time when there had been no precedent to refer to.

The revolutionary nature of modernism is completely different in the European context because the rebellion did not occur in the actual process of writing but rather in the form and content of the text that was written. If we are to focus more specifically on the French context and on the roots of Surrealism we can see that France was already an established and geographically fixed nation with an established language and culture and therefore possessed the privilege of being able to focus on rupture and destruction. The relationship between thought and language was more natural and fluent in the French author because he was writing and expressing himself in his native language and it was precisely this fluency that the French Surrealists attempted to challenge and destabilise via automatism, especially automatic writing. *The Manifesto of Surrealism* published in 1924 offers a comprehensive definition of Surrealism:

Surrealism, n. Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express – verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner – the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern.²¹

Although automatism and particularly written automatism quickly became a contentious issue – partly because automatic texts were completely unreadable but mostly because it was understood that automatic writing was theoretically impossible – it was practised with great diligence during the early years of the movement. Certain techniques and rituals that helped bring about the required mental state for automatic writing became the subject of numerous passionate discourses. The early French Surrealists tried and perfected several methods with which to induce the most authentic written automatism.

One could argue that the complex literary heritage of the early Hebrew modernists and the fact that none of them spoke Hebrew as their mother tongue meant that written automatism would have been difficult to achieve. Meanwhile other modernist movements such as Futurism or Symbolism that did not insist on automatism would have been more appealing to the early Hebrew modernists. Certainly, Expressionism called for spontaneity but it was not as extreme and it did not require accurately and devoutly writing down the words that immediately sprung to mind.

21 Breton, 'Manifesto', 26.

The absence of Surrealism in Modern Hebrew literature is perhaps even less surprising in the late nineteen thirties and nineteen forties because of the previously alluded to Nazi restrictions imposed upon Surrealist activity at the time. Founding member André Breton was in exile in the United States and although the other key members remained in France, they published very little and did so under pseudonyms.²² In addition, by the late nineteen thirties the political situation in Palestine – the consolidation of the Jewish population had led to a renewed surge of Arab political activity – and elsewhere was such that European modernism and avant-gardism was deemed less and less relevant to Modern Hebrew culture.²³ Certainly in the case of Menashe Levin, his experimental writing was perceived as trivial and even irresponsible in the light of local and international affairs.²⁴

A further reason as to why European modernism (and by extension, Surrealism) had become even more irrelevant is perhaps related to the issue of uprooted identity and its impact on ‘open’ and experimental writing. Whereas the majority of Hebrew writers of the twenties and thirties had arrived in Palestine from Eastern Europe, often via Western Europe or the United States, most of the writers publishing in the late thirties and early forties had been born and raised in Palestine and instilled with the Zionist ideals of their parents. The writers of this generation were significantly influenced by Soviet socialist realism and favoured this style of writing over the Anglo-American or Western European ideals to which they were also exposed.²⁵ In 1946 Moshe Shamir published a manifesto entitled ‘With my Generation’ (‘Im Bney Dori’) where he decries Western modernism and declares that it is degenerate.²⁶ This manifesto argues that the function of literature lies not in its aesthetic qualities but in its impact on history and society.

The ethos encapsulated in this manifesto was the predominant one at this time and it is not surprising that attempts at modernistic prose and poetry seemed minimal.²⁷ I say ‘seemed’ because it was during this period that the Israeli literary canon began to form and, as with any canon, numerous works are necessarily excluded. Moreover, if French Surrealism was itself allegedly borne out of an overly rooted and established identity, a reaction to an extremely lengthy and entrenched period of realism and naturalism, why would native born Hebrew writers be less prone to experimental writing? The answer is that they probably were not less prone and it refers back to the idea of a contrived canon: in the forging and creating of a new national identity, it is ‘logical’ to begin with a mimetic mode. It is only once this mimetic mode has completely run its course that there should be a need to deviate. Of course, this ‘logic’ is extremely prescriptive and artificial. There is no reason why a new national literature should be mimetic other than as a means of constructing a particular literary image. Moreover, the emergence of French Surrealism also belongs to a specific French narrative and to argue that no such writing existed before this emergence would be too facile. Nevertheless, the predominant version of the Israeli literary canon begins with realism and this continued throughout the nineteen fifties with deviant authors such as Yitzhak Oren (1918-2007) – who dealt with contentious issues such as repressed Jewish sexual violence towards the Arab – being clearly marginalised in favour of his more well-known peers, Aharon Megged and Moshe Shamir.²⁸

The year 1960 was a key point in the history of Surrealism; following a period of relative inactivity the French movement enjoyed a resurgence that dovetailed neatly with the emergence of sixties radicalism. A

22 Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron, *Surrealism*, 71-78.

23 Nevertheless, as I have already mentioned in a previous footnote, Egyptian Surrealism was active during the nineteen thirties.

24 Dan Miron, ‘Afterword’, in Menashe Levin’s *The Flying Danseuse*, 282.

25 Gershon Shaked, ‘First Person Plural: Literature of the 1948 Generation’, *The Shadows Within: Essays on Modern Jewish Writers* (The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, New York and Jerusalem, 1987), 145-165.

26 Moshe Shamir, ‘With My Generation’ (‘Im Bney Dori’) in *Anthology of Friends (Yalkut Ha-Re'im)* eds. Shlomo Tanai and Moshe Shamir (Mosad Bialiq, Jerusalem 1992), 211-216.

27 This manifesto is compromised by the fact that it is too facile to assert that modernism is socially irrelevant.

28 It is perhaps worth noting that in the early nineteen fifties Peggy Guggenheim donated her collection of Abstract and Surrealist art to the Tel Aviv Museum. Consequently, Surrealist visual art was definitely accessible to those who might have been interested.

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proliferation of Surrealist groups formed all over France and publication of literary works, tracts and declarations was immense; there was a significant increase in the number of Surrealist exhibitions and shows that were taking place around the country.²⁹ Indeed, sixties radicalism helped to resuscitate interest in French Surrealism and endowed the latter with a renewed social significance. This in turn inspired an international reawakening of the movement. Throughout the sixties new groups were formed and major international exhibitions were held in Paris, New York, Milan, São Paulo, Prague and Chicago with artists contributing from at least thirty different countries.³⁰ Furthermore, in spite of the fact that both Breton's death in 1966 and the Paris student riots of 1968 significantly destabilised the French movement's hitherto strong identity, this destabilising was not felt in the international arena where even more groups continued to proliferate well into the nineteen seventies.

It is clear that the advent of European sixties radicalism cannot be transferred to an equivalent Israeli context; however, it is fair to assert that Modern Hebrew fiction during this period was beginning to broaden considerably and was becoming more open to non-conventional, non-mimetic forms of literature. Although there is no evidence of translations of Surrealist works into Hebrew during this period, it is certain that other modernist works were accessible to a Hebrew reader. For instance, Franz Kafka's *America* was published in Hebrew in 1964 whilst the Hebrew edition of *The Castle* was published in 1967.³¹ In this sense, Yitzhak Orpaz does not differ radically from his contemporaries in the same way that Levin and Oren did. Texts such as A.B. Yehoshua's *The Death of the Old Man (Mot Ha-Zaqen)*, 1962) and Amos Oz's *Where the Jackals Howl (Artsot Ha-Tan)*, 1965), which both exemplify a deviation from the mimetic restrictions of the forties and fifties, both preceded Orpaz's Surrealist works.³² Indeed, authors such as Oz, Yehoshua and Orpaz are frequently referred to as the 'New Wave' generation. Nevertheless, I would argue that Orpaz's texts are for more reminiscent of the traditional Surrealist movement than those of Oz and Yehoshua and convey a spirit that is truer to Surrealism than that of his – more popular – peers.

Yitzhak Orpaz's Hebrew Surrealism

Yitzhak Orpaz's first collection of stories entitled *Wild Grass (Esev Pere)*, 1959) was pointedly realist.³³ His later works however – more specifically his three novellas, 'The Death of Lysanda' ('Mot Lisandah', 1964), 'Ants' ('Nemalim', 1968) and 'A Narrow Step' ('Madregah Tsara', 1972) – have been described as Surrealist.³⁴ I would also include 'The Hunting of the Gazelle' ('Tseyd Ha-Tsviyah', 1966), as belonging to this Surrealistic series. In spite of this labelling, Orpaz has never expressed any affinity with Surrealism and one could argue that his tendencies towards Surrealism are indicative of a trend that emerged from within the traditions of Hebrew literature.

Orpaz's Surrealism manifests itself in two distinct forms, the second of which forms the main focus of this paper: the first may be seen in the aforementioned three novellas, 'The Death of Lysanda', 'Ants' and 'A Narrow Step'. These novellas demonstrate the social implications of Surrealism via a plot that is suffused with cruel displays of anarchy, subversive representations of religion (more precisely, Judaism), provocative scenes that transgress social values such as implied paedophilia and frequent descriptions of (female) sexuality coupled with the grotesque.

29 Rosemont, *International*, 288.

30 *Ibid.*, 288.

31 Hannan Hever, *Fiction That Is Written Here (Ha-Sifrut She Nikhtevet Mi-Kan)* (Hemed Books, Tel Aviv, 1999), 68.

32 A.B. Yehoshua, *The Death of the Old Man (Mot Ha-Zaqen)* (Ha-Qibuts Ha-Me'uḥad, Tel Aviv, 1962); Amos Oz, *Where the Jackals Howl (Artsot Ha-Tan)* (Masadah, Tel Aviv, 1965),

33 Yitzhak Orpaz, *Wild Grass (Esev Pere)* (Machbarot Lesifrut, Tel Aviv, 1959).

34 Gershon Shaked, 'The Surrealist Stories' ('Ha-Sipurim Ha-Sure'alistikim'), in *Hebrew Narrative Fiction*, 151-153.

As I indicated in the introduction, the Surrealists' preferred mode of writing was poetry, which they considered superior to the novel. The one exception was if the novel contained the Surrealist marvellous.³⁵ Indeed, both 'Ants' and 'A Narrow Step' contain examples of the Surrealist marvellous. The Surrealist marvellous is closely intertwined with Surrealism's notion of perception. That is, Surrealism views man as alien from his surroundings; these surroundings are senseless and arbitrary. Any order that is perceived in the external world such as that expounded by fixed categories such as rationalism or positivism come from man alone and is therefore insufficient.³⁶ For instance, the Surrealists assert that the division of experience into outer and inner and by extension into dream or wakeful consciousness is entirely superficial. The world of dreams flows into that of wakefulness and vice versa – the boundaries separating the two are artificial and permeable and simply constitute man's inaccurate perception of the universe. Surrealism believes that through Surrealist activity, i.e. the awakening of certain mental faculties, this inaccurate perceived order might be broken down so that man is finally unified with his surroundings. Once this perceived order is broken down then man will finally experience a heightened reality, or more precisely, a 'Surreality'. The breaking down of perceived order can manifest itself in several different ways: the straightforward dismantling of certain social and religious structures or the more extreme dismantling of the individual's perception of form and structure, i.e. between subject and object, time and space.

According to the above definitions, it seems fair to assert that it is actually impossible to imagine Surreality. To envisage an experience of the world that is unencumbered by logic, rationalism, form or structure is actually unachievable. Consequently, one might argue that the individual can only catch glimpses of Surreality. Thus, it is not surprising that Breton offered a method with which to obtain such glimpses. This method is the quest for, and affirmation of, the marvellous. The marvellous may be loosely defined as a necessarily temporary provocation or disruption of a positivist or rationalist way of thinking. It is an image that affects human sensibility.³⁷ It comprises a momentary awareness of the innate interrelationship between dream and waking life, between the unconscious and the conscious, between the everyday and the poetic. The Surrealist experience of the marvellous, which can only ever be brief, ends alienation and transforms the world into an adventure whereby there exists a causality so that everything is suddenly imbued with meaning and significance. It is not *per se* a world where strange things happen but rather a world that on occasion appears aglow with a strange quality.

Texts that describe such moments of the Surrealist marvellous – classical examples include Louis Aragon's *Paris Peasant* (*Le Paysan de Paris*, 1924) and Breton's *Nadja* (1928) – are nearly always narrated in the first-person and describe daydreams, visions, hallucinations, revelations in such a way that the surrounding material reality is enhanced rather than undermined.³⁸ The position of the reader is immediately one of belief rather than of hesitation; there is an understanding that the narrator is truthfully describing his experience of reality.

Both 'Ants' and 'A Narrow Step' contain examples of the Surrealist marvellous and both are located within specifically Israeli and Jewish contexts. In both novellas, the reality described is familiar to both reader and protagonist; there are no supernatural elements. However, this familiarity is pushed to its extreme limits at the onset of invasive elements such as the ants or Sabi, the grotesque dwarf. Moreover, the protagonist-narrators describe these invasions as though they are closely intertwined with their own unconscious needs and fears. For example, in 'A Narrow Step', Sabi, the misshapen dwarf slyly enters the otherwise normal lives of the two protagonists, Miri and Yeruham, who is the narrator. At first, Sabi's presence is innocuous but soon it is apparent that he not only poses a threat but that he has abilities that suggest the supernatural. Nevertheless, he is presented in such a way that neither the reader nor the

35 The Surrealist marvellous should not be confused with traditional pre-Surrealism definitions of the marvellous, such as those defined by Tzvetan Todorov or Christine Brooke-Rose.

36 William Plank, *Sartre and Surrealism* (UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor 1981) p.65.

37 Breton, 'Manifesto', 16.

38 See Louis Aragon, *Paris Peasant* (Picador, Paris, 1971) and Andre Breton, *Nadja* (Penguin Books, London, 1999).

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protagonists doubt his 'realness'. Closer analysis of the dwarf suggests that his arrival undermines Miri and Yeruham's putative bourgeois contentment and corresponds uncannily with their unconscious desires to break free from this contentment. In this sense, their encounter with him is in fact an encounter with themselves.

The second way in which Orpaz's Surrealism manifests itself is the focus of this paper and is exemplified in *The Hunting of the Gazelle*. I would argue that this type of Surrealism is unique. It does not contain examples of the marvellous but rather recalls the more traditional Surrealist pursuit of automatic writing. I choose the word 'recall' with caution; well-known examples of automatic writing, such as Breton's 'Soluble Fish' ('Poisson Soluble', 1924) are densely populated with complex Surrealist imagery and always appear nonsensical at first glance.³⁹ It is only after a concerted effort to decipher this imagery that the narrative becomes comprehensible. This is not true of Orpaz's trilogy; nevertheless, Orpaz's particular use of language – use of repetition, ambiguity of subject-object relations, ambiguity of time sequences, blurring of descriptions of subject and landscape – evoke a restrained automatism. Interestingly enough, Orpaz, whilst resolutely denying any influence of Surrealism and rejecting the label 'Surrealist', employs a method of writing very similar to that proposed by the French Surrealists.

Orpaz explained that the trilogy was written during the hottest months of the summer in ecstatic, dream-like circumstances.⁴⁰ For example, during this period he would fall asleep and dream that the sea was rising very high and then slowly descending as if to swallow him up. Instead of being afraid, Orpaz would experience a wonderful sweetness and then wake up just before being engulfed. Still dazed from his apocalyptic reveries, he would leap out of bed, jump onto his chair, and drink a cup of hot tea. Semi-naked, wrapped in a single sheet and sweating from the profuse heat, he would then begin to write. Furthermore, even if he could not remember what he had written the previous day, he would nevertheless carry on writing. Orpaz would translate this intensity into words, and in fact most of the dreams described in his stories are based on his own dreams (or memories of dreams) including that of the rising sea, an image that occurs as a leitmotif in several of the cited works. In addition, Orpaz described how during these ecstatic periods of creativity, he would listen to Johann Bach and Gustav Mahler and that in the case of 'The Hunting of the Gazelle' the first few paragraphs are unintentionally reminiscent of a fugue.

However, Orpaz insists that this type of writing does not constitute automatism but rather a 'controlled ecstasy':

It is the moment in which ecstasy, internal spontaneity and controlled imagination come together; a blazing but controlled imagination that is already set to stanzas, notes and fugues.⁴¹

Although Orpaz rejects the term 'automatism' in favour of 'controlled ecstasy' one cannot deny that his intensive method of writing is still reminiscent of that propounded by the French Surrealists who also favoured certain ecstatic conditions in which to create; perhaps, however, it is more akin to Louis Aragon's methods of writing than to André Breton. That is, Breton argued that automatism should remain as close as possible to that particular blind source which inspired it; Aragon on the other hand claimed that this blind source merely suggested a rhythm or an image which in turn was developed in conjunction with full consciousness.⁴²

I shall discuss Orpaz's rejection of the 'automatism' label in my conclusion but first I would like to consider how the effect of automatism is achieved within the trilogy. I would suggest that it is the sense of formlessness and nondifferentiation that creates the impression – false or otherwise – that the text was written purely in response to an inner rhythm or voice. This formlessness manifests itself in various ways: first, between the subjects within the narrative who are described in such a way that they appear to merge

39 Breton, 'Soluble Fish', in *Manifesto*, 93.

40 Personal interview with Orpaz, recorded in Tel Aviv, August 2005.

41 *Ibid.*

42 Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron, *Surrealism*, 50.

into one another; second, in the description of subjects who seem to repeatedly fuse with the surrounding landscape as if they were one and the same; third, via the description of the subjects' relationship with the objects around them; fourth, the seeming disintegration of time; fifth, the blurred synchronicity between the three stories that create the impression they are one and the same text. Furthermore, as I shall demonstrate, this formlessness also exists at a much deeper level, between language and reality.

Brief Outline of the Three Stories: 'The Hunting of the Gazelle', 'The Expulsion' ('Ha-Gerush') and 'The Bus Stop' ('Ha-Taḥanah')

Prior to an analysis, it seems appropriate to give a short summary of each story. The first story, 'The Hunting of the Gazelle', takes place at an unspecified time, probably somewhere in the South of Israel.⁴³ In this story the three nameless protagonists, a man, a woman and a male driver are travelling in a jeep, looking for gazelles to hunt and kill. The first time that the man shoots, he misses and the gazelle escapes. This occurs a second time as well. The third account is less clear and the fourth is a repetition of the first two. In between these four accounts, the story consists of a description of the man's thoughts regarding his prey and various observations he makes of his female companion and the driver, as well as descriptions of the landscape. Moreover, each of these descriptions is repeated and the result is a lengthy and seemingly stagnant text.

'The Expulsion'

A man named Adam and a nameless woman go for a walk in the Golan at an unspecified time.⁴⁴ Adam is leading the woman and everything that he does such as sit down or drink, she does too. They reach an inflorescence, which covers them like a strange wedding canopy and as they walk reeds wound their feet. It is evident that they are going to a particular and significant destination. At one point, Adam sits down on a hill and suddenly hears a voice calling him. He experiences what appears to be a revelation: a bright, transparent goblet in the heavens, upturned and open at both ends. He falls to the ground and loudly declares that he can at last see.

Meanwhile, the woman removes her clothes and throws herself into a stream. She suddenly stands up and finds a pebble in the water. She then rubs the pebble over her breasts and thighs in a clearly sexual way. Following this, she coils herself around an ancient tree trunk. The man covers her naked body and is then overcome by an incredible hunger; he eats an apple. He then realizes that the light will never return to him and that he has been cursed for eternity. He is described as one who has been banished, too afraid to turn and look at what he has left behind.

At the end of the story, Adam leaves his wife and children and donning the crown of thorns on his head, he lies where the first ancient dead man lay – namely the original Adam – and continues the ritual. Yet, the resurrection does not really occur but only seems to because of the way in which the light illuminates the head of the dead.

'The Bus Stop'

The third story, 'The Bus Stop', is even more complex.⁴⁵ It consists of approximately four scenes that are repeated throughout the text with slight changes in detail each time. As we shall see, these minute

43 Orpaz, 'The Hunting of the Gazelle', in *City with No Refuge*, 43-67.

44 Orpaz, 'The Expulsion', in *City*, 59-67.

45 Orpaz, 'The Bus Stop', in *City*, 67-79.

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changes perform specific functions within the narrative. The first scene is a description of what the narrator can see from his seat, namely a bus stop. He can also hear the sound of the sea but he does not know where this sound comes from.

The second scene is a description of the bus arriving at the bus stop and of an old seed-seller who is sitting nearby. Young people then emerge from the corner of the street and surround him. In the third scene, a soldier and a young girl appear from the corner of an alleyway, hands entwined. The focus then returns to the old seed-seller who is sitting with his eyes shut, hugging his box of seeds. In the fourth scene, the young people taunt the old seed-seller and accidentally stumble into a pram with a little girl in it. The narrator imagines that he is secretly communicating with the little girl. There is then a switch from first person to second person, which is entirely different in content to the rest of the text and seems almost like a momentary lapse or reverie. Scenes that are, for the most part, variations of the first four, follow this literary lapse.

The Merging of Subjects

In the story 'The Hunting of the Gazelle', this technique is evident. First, the three subjects are nameless. The fact that they are nameless makes them less easy to identify and it is certainly very easy for the reader to blur the actions of 'the man' with those of 'the driver'. Very little information is given to differentiate the three characters. We know for example that all three are wearing sandals. We also know that they drink their cups of water differently: i.e. one sprays the water out in a jet, the other empties the cup in one gulp and the other drinks slowly in large gulps.⁴⁶ Otherwise very little is known. It is as though they can only be defined by how they differ from each other and these differences are so slight that the overall impression is one of vagueness. They are unfinished sketches whose lines overlap, rather than solid, tangible personalities. The actions of each of the characters are also extremely subtle, which makes them harder to tell apart; for example, the driver turns his head only slightly and at one point the narrator says that with the jolting of the jeep it appears as if there are three heads shaking and jumping.⁴⁷ Were it three 'people' rather than three 'heads' the reader would understand that there are three completely different individuals, three subjects. Three 'heads' compounds the sense that the man, the driver and the woman are barely indistinguishable and transforms them into objects. This is markedly different to Orpaz's protagonists in the three previously mentioned novellas, each of whom are given names – Yeruham, Miri, Jacob, Rachel, Naphtali – and clear distinguishing traits such as jobs, desires, fears, a past, etc. They are clear subjects within the narrative whereas the status of subjectivity in 'The Hunting of the Gazelle' is ambiguous and in constant flux.

It is certainly no coincidence that this endless flux of subjectivity should be punctuated by styles of drinking water. Water is not only a key leitmotif in Orpaz's trilogy but it also corresponds with the fluidity and formlessness of each of the texts. In 'The Hunting of the Gazelle', for example, the vagueness of the narration is loosely bound together by the water motif. Water not only distinguishes the three characters but in some instances it connects them. For example, in the following passage, which is repeated twice more in the text, the descriptions of water slowly but surely submerge the two characters so that they feel identical physical sensations:

This was the moment when the driver of the jeep told her something that had happened to his fisherman friend, who caught a woman with his harpoon. Now the two of them laughed and felt the water's caress upon their skin.

This was the moment when the driver of the jeep told her about his fisherman friend who caught a water maiden with his harpoon. And they felt the jubilation of the water upon their skin.

46 Orpaz, 'The Hunting of the Gazelle', in *City*, 44.

47 *Ibid.*, 44.

This was the moment when the driver of the jeep told her about his fisherman friend, who caught a woman with his harpoon ... this was the moment when the woman and the driver of the jeep both laughed and saw lots of fish and heard the burbling of lots of water in their ears.⁴⁸

In these three variations there is a gradual crescendo of collective sensory experience, from a mere 'caress' to 'lots of fish' and the sensation of being so submerged that they can both feel water in their ears. The metaphoric language employed manifests itself into a shared reality, which in turn complicates the role of imagination. If it were simply that the evocative power of words inspired the imagination of the driver and the woman then surely they would imagine things differently. The fact that they experience identical sensations suggests even more strongly that there is no differentiation between language and reality. The signifier 'water' does not simply refer to the signified, it also summons it into being; thus, hearing the story is the same as experiencing it.

This revitalising of the relationship between language and the world is a key concern within traditional Surrealist philosophy. That is, as we have already established, the Surrealists argue that man can only be completely unified with his surroundings through the breaking down of perceived order. Language is part of this perceived order and employing this language limits the individual to only experiencing the perception intrinsic within that language. According to the Surrealists, it is metaphor in particular that allows the individual to be liberated from these confinements of perception and thus it contributes to this revitalising of the relationship between language and the world.⁴⁹ According to the Surrealists, metaphor is not simply a way of comparing one thing to another; it is also a means of creating something completely new. Indeed, much Surrealist writing and criticism describes the metaphor in terms of alchemy, whereby one element literally transforms into something else.⁵⁰ More crucially, this transformation is not simply conceptual, but it is also the transformation from the figurative to the literal.

Thus, Orpaz's text is not just telling the reader that the driver and the woman are experiencing the story through words; rather, it is showing the reader that through Orpaz's narrative the inconceivable is possible, in this case a collective physical sensation brought about by description alone.

The merging of subjects is also evident in 'The Bus Stop'; this merging is achieved at a purely textual level. The first evident example is contained in the repeated line whereby the gymnast's hair 'flutters over her eyes' followed immediately by 'the eyes of the old seed-seller are closed'. This line, which is repeated three times during the text, fuses the two characters simply by virtue of the proximity of the word 'eyes'. That is, it is as if one triggers the other. Moreover, each of the three repetitions reveals miniscule variations, so that what initially appeared to be a clear pattern within the text rapidly dissolves. Nevertheless, linguistically speaking there is always a relationship between the two sentences; this is because the location of the word 'eyes' is always constant. It is the nature of the relationship that is destabilised because of the subtle deviations:

The head's hair flutters over her eyes. The eyes of the old man the seed-seller are closed ...

Her head's hair flutters over her eyes. The eyes of the old seed-seller are closed ...

Her head's hair flutters over her face, covers her eyes. The eyes of the old seed-seller are closed.⁵¹

With each variation the figure of the girl slowly but gradually emerges and this emerging corresponds with the increasingly developing sentences. At first, the reader is not even sure whose hair is fluttering over her eyes but by the third variation the girl not only has hair and eyes but also a face. Ironically, perhaps, these deviations can only ever be of interest to the reader since the eyes of the seed-seller are

48 *Ibid.*, 48, 55 and 56 respectively.

49 Inez Hedges, *Languages of Revolt: Dada and Surrealist Literature and Film* (Duke University Press, Durham N.C., 1983), 81.

50 The concept originates with Rimbaud's 'alchemy of the word' ('alchimie du verbe'). See Rimbaud, *A Season in Hell (Une Saison en Enfer)*.

51 Orpaz, 'The Bus Stop', 68, 70, and 73, respectively.

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forever closed. On the other hand, the girl's sight is also blighted by the fact that hair is forever covering her eyes and in this sense the two characters are also brought together by virtue of their mutual blindness. In view of their blindness, the fixed juxtaposition of 'eyes' and 'the eyes of' within the narrative – separated only by a full stop – corresponds with their marred vision at a textual level. Certainly, in the Hebrew, the difference between 'the eyes of' and 'her eyes' is only very slight.⁵²

'The Bus Stop' also contains a slight switching of scenes, which similarly creates a sense of blurring between subjects. The first scene is as follows:

They bumped into a child's pram ... "Savages", cried the woman who was pushing the child's pram, in one hand she held a lemon lollipop ... {this} woman, maybe the mother, her face broad and impervious.

The second is as follows:

They bumped into a wheelchair ... "Savages", cried the woman in the wheelchair and her face was impervious. But a young, tall, woman was pushing the wheelchair ... the face of the woman in the wheelchair was impervious ... her lips sucking on a lollipop. The eyes of the young woman stared at her, the woman, maybe her mother, with concern.⁵³

Certainly, in Hebrew the word for pram and the word for wheelchair are construct nouns and can be easily exchanged simply by switching the second noun.⁵⁴ There is really very little to distinguish the female pushing the pram and the female invalid; and the rapid switch from the independent mother figure to the dependent invalid is as discreet as the switch in Hebrew from pram to wheelchair. This denotes a crumbling of subjectivity, since the identity of the woman pushing the pram is unstable as is the identity of the female invalid. The only way to explain the rapid switch would further involve a complete collapse of time, the dismissal of categories – past, present and future. After all, the key distinguishing feature between the two females is that in the first part of the story the narrator imagines that he is speaking to the child in the pram and in the second part he imagines that he is speaking to the young woman pushing the wheelchair. One could assume that the woman pushing the pram has aged and become the invalid. This would certainly explain why they appear so interchangeable. Thus, the merging between the two female characters is taken to its extreme and they are in fact the same.

The Merging of Subject and Nature

In 'The Hunting of the Gazelle', it is clear that there is a deliberate blurring of the gazelle and the woman and therefore the man's relationship to both. This is achieved through the order in which descriptions are given. For example at the start of the story, the narrator describes how the man and the gazelle look at each other: whilst he raises his rifle she is looking at him as though hypnotised. However, when he shoots, the next sentence is immediately a description of the woman – 'her frozen face and her thin neck' – as opposed to a description of the gazelle's reaction, which is what the reader expects.⁵⁵ The fact, furthermore, that the woman's neck is described as thin, reminds the reader of the gazelle's neck, which is given an identical description. This is not to mention the fact that the state of being hypnotised is attributed to both the woman and the gazelle at different stages of the text. An even more precise merging is when the narrator says that the woman stamps her feet and that her feet trip along like a distant gallop. This is immediately following a description of how the man will slaughter the gazelle and what he will do with her skin and also her hooves.⁵⁶

52 In the Hebrew the three repeated lines read as follow: עיניה. עיני עיני

53 *Ibid.*, 68 and 70.

54 עגלת תינוקות/ עגלת נכים

55 Orpaz, 'Hunting', 46.

56 *Ibid.*, 48.

Even the fact that the man and the male driver, when drinking their cups of water, are described as being quick or not even drinking properly, whereas the woman drinks slowly sip by sip, carefully at an even pace, silently absorbed,⁵⁷ reminds the reader that the two men are planning to go to Eyn Netifim because this is where the gazelles go to drink. The woman's slow drinking of her water therefore emphasises the idea of the unsuspecting victim. Again, it is the water leitmotif and its correspondence with the fluidity of the text that brings together different parts of the text, in this case the (female) human and the (female) animal, which in turn compounds the sense of nondifferentiation.

'The Hunting of the Gazelle' contains a further example of merging subjects with nature, namely a description whereby the red granite appears to be fluid and flow into both the gazelle's eyes and those of the man, as if the landscape were a part of both of them. Furthermore the description is repeated four times during the story, each time with a slight variation. As we shall see, these variations perform a very precise function.

A liquid the colour of coffee, the colour of warm-orange, the colour of molten gold – encircled her big pupils and flooded them. And from there the warm gold flowed into the eyes of the man.

The brown-orange flooded them. From the eyelashes from the eyelids the warm orange flowed to her pupils and from there to the eyes of the man.

The warm-orange flooded them. From the eyelashes from the eyelids, perhaps from reddening rocks in the bosom of the mountain, the warm-orange flowed to her pupils and from there to the eyes of the man.

The warm-orange flooded them. From the eyelashes from the eyelids, perhaps from the reddening rocks of the mountain's bosom, the warm-orange flowed to her pupils and from there to the eyes of the man.⁵⁸

The most noticeable aspect of these variations is that the source and nature of the 'liquid colour' is very gradually realised and consolidated both in terms of the words used but also in terms of punctuation. It is yet another instance whereby gradually developing sentences correspond with a process of becoming. In the first repetition there is no indication as to the exact source or nature of this 'liquid colour'. Furthermore, the exact hue is not known, it is as at once like coffee, like gold, like orange. Likewise, in the second repetition, the nature of the liquid – which we now know to be either brown-orange or warm-orange – is ambiguous, yet its liquid trajectory is highlighted by the complete lack of commas in the last sentence. Indeed, this lack of commas also gives the impression of immediacy, the sense that there are no structures in Orpaz's story to act as obstacles. The disintegration of syntax is a linguistic means of representing the completely uninterrupted path of the warm/brown-orange.⁵⁹ The language used to narrate the story thus seems at one with the reality represented within the story. By the third variation the reader assumes that the source is in fact the granite – definitely warm-orange at this point – yet this granite is still described using the indefinite article. It is only in this last variation that the granite – and probable source of the 'liquid colour' – is given the definite article. The granite thus assumes essence and form and yet at the same time it has an amorphous quality that allows it to appear like liquid forever flowing from rocks to the man to the gazelle.

The second part of the trilogy, 'The Expulsion', is a particularly interesting case because the putative religious plot is almost subsumed by the role of nature in the story. Whilst the landscape in 'The Hunting of the Gazelle' is limited and bare, that of 'The Expulsion' is absolutely full of different birds and animals and plants. There are rock partridges, mountain swallows, warblers, hawks, rabbits, butterflies, lizards, ferns, terebinths and thorns. Whilst Adam's revelation keeps him apart from nature, his female companion, who has not shared this experience, becomes more and more integrated with the landscape.

57 *Ibid.*, 44.

58 *Ibid.*, 46, 50, 54 and 55 respectively.

59 In Hebrew, the 'warm-orange' and the 'brown-orange' are only differentiated by the letter vav and it is quite easy for the reader to accidentally slip from one to the other.

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Thus, she does not hear Adam shout but instead she hears the babbling of a nearby stream. She eventually flings herself, naked, into the current and is described as follows:

The thorny ferns did not scratch her skin, the rocks' sharp edges did not wound her, the hard tree knots caressed her like sponges. The water seemed to gush out from her body, to flow from her eyes, from her navel ...⁶⁰

Again it is water that connects forms usually considered as separate and contributes to the sense of fluidity of boundaries between the woman and nature. The physical water in the story does not differentiate between the woman and the surrounding rocks; it flows through her regardless. She is just another rock for the water to flow through. She remains unharmed and instead of being treated like an alien body she is rapidly integrated into the landscape. She is no longer a recognisable human; she has transformed into something that is completely unaffected by thorns, sharp rocks, etc. The merging of woman and landscape is total and absolute.

Although 'The Expulsion' contains other examples of the bringing together of subject and landscape I shall only consider one more that is again repeated with slight variations:

Her brownish-red hair burst out from beneath Adam's straw hat, flooded her nape and shoulders and in the strong afternoon light seemed to flow towards the shining rocks ...

There stood a rabbit...its skin brownish-red like the colour of the woman's hair ...

The mound crouched like a kind of animal ... its head gleamed brownish-red, like the woman's hair...⁶¹

In the first description the language is figurative; it is the strong illusory effects of the sun that inspire the poetic image of the woman's brownish-red hair flowing to the rocks. That is, the rocks are not really affected; they just seem to be. As the descriptions progress, it seems that in actual fact her – very precisely coloured – hair is reflected elsewhere in instances where the effects of the sun are not the cause.⁶² In this case it is colour rather than water that connects the various forms. Moreover, the similes in the last two variations begin with the landscape rather than with the woman and in this sense the landscape becomes the subject, so that there is no hierarchy of imagery. The other way around – the woman's hair resembled that of the rabbit, the mound – would perhaps sound more natural and it would have rendered the human subject as the focal point within the narrative.

The Merging of Subject and Object

The merging of subject and object in 'The Hunting of the Gazelle' is a pertinent example of the Surrealist perception of metonymy. In the same way that the Surrealist metaphor is viewed as an alchemical process whereby the figurative becomes manifest or literal, the same is true of metonymy. In the case of 'The Hunting of the Gazelle' it is not simply that the subjects are being metonymically described via the parts to which they are attached, but rather these parts become the subject. For example, at the very start of the story there is the following sentence:

The peaked white hat, the jeep driver's sailor's hat, made a quarter turn behind...⁶³

This is the first instance where the subject and object are blurred. That is, it is the hat that is described as turning as opposed to the person wearing the hat. However, the text in its entirety – the overall atmosphere of formlessness that prevails – creates the impression that the hat really is turning and is not simply metonymically describing the movement of the girl, who is the one wearing the driver's cap. Similarly, after a shot is fired, we read:

60 Orpaz, 'The Expulsion', 63.

61 *Ibid.*, 60, 61 and 62.

62 Even if the sun were the cause, it would be extremely uncanny if everything, including rabbits and mounds of earth, were bathed in exactly the same brownish-red hue.

63 Orpaz, 'Hunting', 43.

His head then moved, or, more precisely, almost moved, in the brim of the straw hat, the man's hat, worn by the head of the woman.⁶⁴

Again the 'head' is described as a separate entity. Instead of saying 'he' moved, or 'he moved his head', it is the 'head' that moves and it is the hat that is being worn by the 'head' of the woman, and not by the 'woman'. Moreover, the reader is given the impression that it is precisely a 'head' that moves and not the 'woman'; and it is precisely a 'hat' that is being worn by a 'head' instead of a figurative translation that would say such and such turned around and such and such wore a hat.

The third example is in the sentence:

The Adam's apple of the driver in the jeep laughed.⁶⁵

Here the subject of the sentence, in this case the driver, is erased: it is not he who is laughing but instead it is his Adam's apple. Again the text implies that this sentence is not only a figurative description of the man laughing but an image wherein an Adam's apple is capable of laughing independently of the person to which it is attached. In all three cases the expected subject of the sentence, i.e. the driver, the man, and the woman are not the ones carrying out the action but it is the otherwise inanimate objects that are doing so instead. The figurative language of metonymy is realised within the reality of the text.

The Disintegration of Time

In 'The Hunting of the Gazelle' the actions of the three characters frequently appear synchronised. For example, the man loads his rifle and at the exact same moment the male driver puts his knife back into its sheath and at exactly the same moment the woman is watching as though hypnotised.⁶⁶ In addition, the phrase, 'it was at that moment when', appears throughout the text as if to emphasise the synchronicity or lack of temporality. That is, the reader doesn't know which action came first, how long it lasted and when exactly the following action occurred. It could have occurred at any or all of the time; furthermore, as far as the notion of time is concerned the story seems to be progressing but, due to the constant repetition of phrases and even whole paragraphs, the reader is lulled into a sense of time standing still. Dialogues are repeated, actions are repeated, thoughts are repeated and even the constant moving of the vehicle versus the movement of the gazelle, seem to cancel each other out. Moreover, the fact that the hunter never catches the gazelle, never slays her, never skins her compounds the impression that time is not moving. In other words, the putative quest for the gazelle symbolises a clear sequence of events that is never realised in the story.

The disintegration of time occurs in almost the same way in 'The Bus Stop'. There are barely any time markers – i.e. afterwards, beforehand – within the text, apart from the phrase, 'it was that moment when'. This phrase occurs six times within the text, again creating a confusing sense of temporality within the narrative. In four out of the six, the phrase is employed to mark the gradually deteriorating fate of the old seed-seller: in the first two scenes he is simply surrounded by the young boys; in the third, his chair falls to the ground, with him in it, and all his seeds are scattered; in the final version, he falls again but this time it is the more troubling image of his limbs that are scattered as well as his seeds. This final scene is a complete unravelling of the old man so that he too has lost his (physical) form.⁶⁷

A second way in which the text evokes a disintegration of time is in its consistent use of water imagery. 'The Bus Stop', which is the text that most recalls Yitzhak Orpaz's aforementioned reverie, is replete with descriptions that allude to the sea and to the movement of the waves endlessly hitting the shore and erasing what has been, so that the effect of time appears to dissolve. The story begins with the narrator

64 *Ibid.*, 50.

65 *Ibid.*, 50.

66 *Ibid.*, 45.

67 'Bus', 67, 69, 71 and 76 respectively.

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describing how he can hear the sea but he doesn't understand where this sound is coming from. This unbidden sound then permeates the text completely, so that the narrator perceives everything in terms of the sea. In the following passages, the narrator repeatedly describes a scene where a group of young boys approach an old man:

They cover the old seed-seller like the sea.

They cover the old seed-seller like the sea. And the old man's head sinks and re-emerges alternatively.

Like a torrent, they flood, like the sea, they cover, the old man, seller of seeds. But the old man's head turns ('sav') and re-emerges from the sea. His head falls backwards, a white moss is growing from his sides and skull.

The seed-seller's old ('sav') head sinks and rises alternatively, like a cliff in the sea. A white moss is growing from his sides and skull.⁶⁸

In this series of repetitions, as with others I have discussed, such as 'The Hunting of the Gazelle', there is a gradual crescendo of imagery although it seems to peak at the third variation and then subside, almost like a textual equivalent of a wave. The language employed is unusual and clearly alluding to the sea. This is particularly the case with the motion of the man's head, as well as the word 'moss' which, whilst in English does not sound too out of place, is very peculiar in the Hebrew. Moreover, the subtle exchange of 'sav', which in Hebrew can mean both 'old' and 'turn' and which appears at almost the same point of the sentence in both the second and third variation enhances the fluidity of the water motif through language.

The Synchronicity Between the Three Stories

The reader of 'The Hunting of the Gazelle' and 'The Bus Stop' and, in certain instances, 'The Expulsion' could believe that he is reading two and sometimes three versions of the same story. In each of the stories there is a clear objective; in 'The Hunting of the Gazelle' it is the hunter who wishes to catch his prey. This hunter has a female companion. In 'The Expulsion' it is Adam who is determined to find a particular location and he too has a female companion; in 'The Bus Stop' the narrator is trying to communicate with a small girl. It is only in 'The Expulsion' that the objective is putatively attained. All three females are repeatedly compared to animals, i.e. gazelles, rabbits, lizards. These comparisons, in turn, are frequently rearranged in the different stories; for instance, Adam's companion is described as having stalk-like hands whereas the gazelle is described as having stalk-like hands. Or, the hunter's companion is described as drinking her water slowly, in large gulps, which is exactly how Adam's companion drinks her water.

Second, there are very clear parallels in the inner voice of the male protagonists. This inner voice permeates each of the three stories, speaking through each of the three male protagonists. For instance, in 'The Hunting of the Gazelle' there are several variations on the following:

To be strong, to be strong, said the man suddenly to himself.⁶⁹

... It is my responsibility to take you with me...it is my responsibility to shoot you...⁷⁰

Meanwhile, in 'The Expulsion' we find:

It is your responsibility to be strong, he said to himself.⁷¹

Likewise, in 'The Bus Stop':

"You are beautiful, dear girl", in my heart I called out to her, "and it is my responsibility to tell you something."

68 *Ibid.*, 67, 70, 72, and 73 respectively.

69 'Hunting', 48.

70 *Ibid.*, 49.

71 'Expulsion', 61.

“It is my responsibility to tell you something, dear girl” I said to myself, “It is my responsibility to be able to tell you something.”⁷²

In each case, the inner voice is urging the protagonist to achieve a particular goal: the hunter’s objective is to kill; Adam’s objective is to experience a revelation; the narrator from ‘The Bus Stop’ feels he has to speak to the young girl about something, although he does not know what. Moreover, each inner voice is associated with duty, with responsibility, and this duty is clearly in conflict with the inner desires of the protagonist. Consequently, there is a struggle between desire and duty. ‘The Expulsion’ is the only example where duty overcomes desire and it is surely no coincidence that this is the story with the most overt religious overtones. In the other two texts it is as though the sense of responsibility is endlessly swamped by intervening thoughts and images. Certainly, in ‘The Bus Stop’ this is portrayed by a distinctly dream landscape wherein characters eerily transform – a baby in a pram is suddenly a girl in a wheelchair – and once familiar scenes repeatedly undergo subtle changes. The physical landscape in the story is forever shifting, forever impossible to navigate and the language also captures this sense of the ungraspable. In the following passage, the voice of the narrator appears subsumed by the oneiric landscape that he is trying to describe. The use of parenthesis is misleading because it is ostensibly there to describe the alleyway and yet when the sentence resumes it repeats part of this description, and this repetition is consequently disorientating. Moreover, parentheses are also intended to impose a time sequence upon a narrative, but in this instance the reader is simply led in circles:

Only the tops of the trees pruned into squares, and between them, fifty meters above the pavement, enclosed between the main street and one unpaved alleyway, – three houses, walls pressed together but of different heights, so that, the tallest among them, its concealed side is lost in the main street and it stretches as if whispering something to the middle house, which also stretches to the ear of the house on the left – an old house with two floors whose concealed side is lost in one unpaved alleyway.⁷³

The motif of the ‘unbidden’ inner voice also connects ‘The Bus Stop’ and ‘The Expulsion’. In the former, the narrator repeatedly declares that there are two voices that appear out of nowhere; in the latter also Adam hears a voice but does not understand where it comes from. Certainly, in the former example there are no religious connotations to this voice whereas in ‘The Expulsion’, there are. Again, the very clear sense of duty forbids the blurring and confusion of two competing voices that exists in ‘The Bus Stop’.

There are particularly striking parallels between the way in which the hunter addresses his prey in ‘The Hunting of the Gazelle’ and how the narrator addresses the young girl in ‘The Bus Stop’. For instance, in ‘The Bus Stop’ the narrator declares:

You are beautiful, dear girl, but you don’t have to stare at me like that...⁷⁴

Similarly, in ‘The Hunting of the Gazelle’ the narrator imagines that he is speaking to his prey:

You didn’t have to stare at me like that, dear gazelle.⁷⁵

Third, there is a consistent merging of the descriptions between the nameless female in ‘The Expulsion’ with that of the young girl in the ‘The Bus Stop’ and that of the female companion in ‘The Hunting of the Gazelle’ as well as the female animal, namely the gazelle. It is surprisingly the neck that most links the four females. In ‘The Hunting of the Gazelle’ there are numerous descriptions of the gazelle’s thin neck but also that of the female companion:

Her neck was very flexible. She could turn her head on it as though on an axis.⁷⁶

Meanwhile, in ‘The Expulsion’:

The woman attached herself to the trunk ... encircling it with her flexible neck.⁷⁷

72 ‘Bus Stop’, 74.

73 *Ibid.*, 69.

74 Orpaz, ‘The Bus Stop’, 71.

75 Orpaz, ‘Hunting’, 51.

76 ‘Hunting’, 52.

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And in 'The Bus Stop':

Her head moved this way and that way upon her thin neck. I feared lest it would break ...⁷⁸

The focus on the neck is quite striking, reminiscent of dreamlike imagery from other literary texts such as Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, where there is similarly a focus upon the various contortions of the neck as distinct from the rest of the body. It is similarly the eyes and, more precisely, interpreting their gaze which is a common theme in all three stories. Moreover, this need to interpret also manifests itself in the stories with the consistent use of 'perhaps', a word that instantly introduces vagueness and lack of clarity. Although 'perhaps' appears at several points, the following, taken from each of the stories, are specifically related to the gaze.

Her eyes were big and round. At first it was impossible to decipher what was expressed in them. Perhaps it was that thing one calls ... astonishment.⁷⁹

Adam hastened his step. He remembered the woman's eyes as they had stared at the animal ... they were open and cunning, perhaps from fear, he thought to himself.⁸⁰

Her eyes were wide, and perhaps as a result, it seemed as though they were breathing.⁸¹

This all-encompassing sense of doubt and ambivalence contributes to the atmosphere of nondifferentiation within the three texts. That is, the protagonist is unable to decode the signs that surround him; everything is a guess, there is no clarity. Moreover, in each instance, the indecipherable entity is the female and each female is described in such a way that human and animal elements appear merged. For example, in the first quotation the hunter imposes an anthropomorphic characteristic upon the gazelle, the idea that she might be 'astonished'. Similarly, the protagonist in 'The Expulsion' could be seen as doing the opposite, attributing traits to a human that are often associated with animals – fear and cunning. In fact, the word 'cunning' is also used later in 'The Expulsion' to describe a rabbit, which suggests that the adjective is deliberately employed to link the two, human and animal. In the third quotation, the protagonist again experiences confusion as he attempts to interpret the girl's gaze, and the fact that he sees her eyes as 'wide' also links her to the 'open' and 'round' eyes of the gazelle and Adam's companion.

The last two examples of synchronicity relate solely to the first and third story. In 'The Hunting of the Gazelle' the following variations occur:

He moved his hand in an arch, as though pointing to the lap of the mountain, which could not be seen, because it was hidden behind the nearby hills.

He moved his hand in an arch, as though pointing to the lap of the mountain, which could not be seen, because the nearby hills covered it.

The man moved his hand in an arch towards the big mountain, which was hidden behind the granite promontories.⁸²

In these variations there are switches between subject and object in the final clause. In the first variation, the lap of the mountain, the 'it' is the subject; in the second variation, the nearby hills are the subject and the lap, the 'it', is the object. In the last variation, it is the big mountain that has become the subject of the narrative.

Similarly, in 'The Bus Stop', there are three occasions when the soldier appears:

77 'Expulsion' 63

78 'Bus', 71.

79 'Hunting', 46.

80 'Expulsion', 61.

81 'Bus', 71.

82 'Hunting', 45, 47 and 57.

His left hand – and the beret inside it – was directed towards the bus stop's post, as though pointing to it.

His left hand – and the black beret inside it – was directed towards the bus stop's post, as though pointing to it.

The soldier's eyes were not laughing. His left was directed towards the bus stop's post, as though pointing to it.⁸³

In these variations, there is not a switch from subject to object but rather the subject appears to transform. The 'left' in the first two variations refers to the soldier's left hand whereas in the final variation 'left' seems to indicate his left eye.

Lastly, in both stories there are anomalous switches to a second person narration. In 'The Bus Stop', this occurs with a sudden meditation on walking through the sea:

You walk by the sea. The sand is soft, as though it melts beneath your feet. The waves are not hurrying, and neither do you. The edge of the sea is not far, you can see it with your naked eye, approximately, at the place where the sky begins. Your legs stride through the water, on the sands that are below the water. You count: how many waves until I get there? Ten, maybe eleven.⁸⁴

This atypical narration also occurs in 'The Hunting of the Gazelle':

You climb the mountain ... you stride towards its peak ... the granite rock collapses beneath your feet ... you climb the mountain for an hour, two hours, three years, four eternities ... And behind the square rock – this you know for certain – rises the crest of the tall mountain ... And you know that here a meeting is intended ... you only have to raise your eyes.⁸⁵

These unexpected changes in the narration are again related to the motif of the competing, ambiguous voices. Whereas the protagonist in 'The Expulsion' has a very clear objective that he dutifully attains, the putative objective in the other two stories constantly eludes the protagonists. In the first example, it is only a sense of urgency that propels the voice rather than a clear goal, whereas in the second there is at least the intimation of a 'meeting'. Moreover, in both cases, the switch in narrative voice occurs only once, as though to remind both the protagonist and the reader of something that transcends the reality described. Even if this 'something' refers to religious experience, which is of course a matter of interpretation, it dissolves rapidly into yet another one of the many voices within the text. In this sense, it does not stand out as a superior aspect of reality. If the incongruous voice of these two second-person reveries is in fact the voice of revelation then it blends effortlessly with the voice of dialogue, the voice of personal desire, the voice of speculation, the voice of anxiety and so forth.

Conclusion

In this article I have demonstrated the way in which Orpaz's trilogy creates an effect of formlessness and nondifferentiation. The particular use of language – use of repetition, ambiguity of subject-object relations, ambiguity of time sequences, blurring of descriptions of subject and landscape – are the textual equivalent to a visual representation of formlessness as might be exemplified by a painting or photograph. In addition, this formlessness subverts not only established codes of perceiving the world; it also subverts established codes of describing this world. The disorientating use of punctuation and syntax for example defies logical and rational ways of ordering narrative, whilst the lack of a comprehensive beginning, middle and end undermines the sense of control which is usually provided to the reader via narrative structure. Out of the three stories 'The Expulsion' stands out; unlike 'The Hunting of the Gazelle' and 'The Bus Stop', which both have a series of competing voices, 'The Expulsion' has one dominant voice that the protagonist follows without being distracted by the voice of his female companion or that of the

83 'Bus', 67, 70 and 73.

84 *Ibid.*, 69.

85 Orpaz, 'Hunting', 55.

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landscape. He confidently follows a particular path and consequently there is a clear ending to the story. Although the voice that Adam hears could be interpreted as the voice of religious experience or revelation, the story's position in the trilogy suggests that this voice is simply one of many and thus possesses no hierarchical authority. Moreover, the story's consistent affinity with the two other texts underlines its unstable position. That is, if it were not for Adam's personal conviction, for his personal sense of how the universe should be structured, the text could easily dissolve into a fluidity of images similar to those in the other two stories.

Of course, the question that remains to be asked is: why is *The Hunting of the Gazelle* trilogy significant? First, I believe it to be a pertinent example of an organic Hebrew Surrealism that has been written from within a specifically Israeli and Jewish context. The fact that Orpaz adamantly denies any association with the Surrealist movement as a whole consolidates this claim. As I intimated at the start of this article, the term 'Surrealist' is complex. Whilst Breton always acknowledged 'precursors' he nevertheless insisted that to be Surrealist was to be consciously affiliated to the Surrealist movement and cause; to contribute to Surrealist catalogues, to participate in Surrealist exhibitions and to endeavour to follow the Surrealist manifesto with its unique rules and methods. This active and conscious participation has always manifested itself nationally, rather than regionally or linguistically. Thus, for example, there have been Australian and New Zealand Surrealist groups rather than perhaps Anglophone Surrealist groups. As I have also said, Israel is one of the very few countries that have not created a national Surrealist group.⁸⁶ Of course, these national affiliations are also problematic inasmuch as they forcefully categorise literary and artistic expression, which in itself imposes a structure and is therefore un-Surrealist. Orpaz's trilogy however demonstrates that the need to express a Surrealist vision of the universe can be non-derivative. I believe that interpreting the trilogy in this way is novel: neither scholars specialising in Surrealism nor Israeli literary critics have considered *The Hunting of the Gazelle* to be a pertinent example of Hebrew Surrealism.

Second, although Orpaz's experimental works, including the aforementioned three novellas as well as the trilogy, were produced during the so-called 'New Wave' generation, I believe that his unique Hebrew Surrealism – and in particular that of *The Hunting of the Gazelle* – sets him apart from his peers, writers such as Oz and Yehoshua, who also produced modernist works. While canonical texts such as Yehoshua's 'The Yatir Evening Express' (1959) or 'Facing the Forests' (1968) contain dreamlike sequences and climactic scenes of destruction they each contain a clear narrative, and the form and structure of the represented universe remain intact.⁸⁷ Furthermore, *The Hunting of the Gazelle* strongly resists interpretation. Whereas the two aforementioned stories by Yehoshua lend themselves quite easily to a plethora of symbolist, allegorical and postcolonial readings, the same is not true of Orpaz's trilogy. The complex and disorientating language prevents this. In this sense, Orpaz's trilogy is unique because its Surrealistic form renders it perhaps more extreme than the modernist texts of Orpaz's peers. Although elsewhere I suggest that this extremity is related to Orpaz's relatively less popular status within Modern Hebrew letters I shall not discuss this here, since it would require further detailed discussion of his numerous other works. Nevertheless, the fact that Orpaz only received his first literary prize twenty years after his first publication whereas Oz and Yehoshua enjoyed almost immediate success is a topic worthy of further research.⁸⁸ This in turn raises further questions that in turn form part of a larger project: is it

86 This paper did not focus upon the visual arts but I would like to briefly mention Miriam Bat-Yosef, whom I have interviewed and who appears to be the one exception. She is a self-proclaimed Surrealist painter, and has lived in Paris for over thirty years, having decided that her native country was hostile to Surrealism and her work. Her situation merits further research.

87 Indeed, it has often been argued that Yehoshua was greatly influenced by Jean-Paul Sartre, a fairly significant fact when discussing Surrealism. That is, the Surrealists' notion of formlessness and nondifferentiation between subject and object was a positive one, one that eventually led to a more authentic relationship between man and his surroundings. Sartre on the other hand rejected this state of seeming absurdity, which he experienced as 'nausea', and instead insisted upon the function of language as a means of maintaining form and total differentiation. See Plank, *Sartre and Surrealism*, *op. cit.*, 83.

88 This is in addition to the fact that Orpaz is considerably less well known internationally and has only been translated into four languages, in stark contrast to Oz or Yehoshua, whose works are available in over thirty different languages.

possible that there have always been examples of Hebrew Surrealism – i.e. works by Menashe Levin, Yitzhak Oren – but that they have always been marginalised by the Hebrew literary canon? Is it possible that there are more palatable versions of Hebrew modernism than others? To answer such questions would necessitate a completely different methodology to the one used in this paper; nevertheless, the simple fact that Orpaz's *The Hunting of the Gazelle* elicits a Surrealist reading certainly brings the issue of canonicity versus marginality to the fore. *The Hunting of the Gazelle* is only one example of a Hebrew Surrealist text, but there are more, both by Orpaz and by other authors, and it would certainly be very revealing to pinpoint their common features and to offer a precise definition of Modern Hebrew Surrealism. What is it? What is its function? How important is its existence to studies in international Surrealism?

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