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| Oz, Amos (1939– ) |
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| The Hebrew author Amos Oz (born Amos Klausner), an essayist, a professor of literature at Ben Gurion University of the Negev, and an active contributor to Israeli and international media on literary and political matters, is best known for his internationally regarded prose fiction. He was born in Jerusalem during the British Mandate period and at the age of 15 left for Kibbutz Hulda, where he lived for three decades before moving to the southern Israeli city of Arad in 1986. His first collection of short stories, *Artsot ha-tan* (*Where the Jackals Howl*) was published in 1965. His novels and stories have been translated into over thirty languages and have garnered worldwide acclaim and prestigious literary prizes, including the French Legion d'Honneur (1997), the German Heinrich Heine Prize (2008), the Italian Primo Levi Prize (2008), the National Jewish Book Award (2006) and every major Israeli literary prize, among them the Bialik Prize (1986), the Israel Prize (1998), and the Jerusalem-Agnon Prize (2006). An advocate of peace with the Palestinians through a two-state solution and a mainstay of the Zionist Left in Israel, Oz was a founder of the peace organization Shalom Achshav (Peace Now) and has been its chief spokesperson. |
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His breakthrough as an author came with the publication of his second novel, *Mikhael sheli* (*My Michael*, 1968), about an agitated young wife and mother in Mandatory Jerusalem. Oz was hailed as part of a new generation of native-born Israeli authors because of his subject matter, his literary style, and his Hebrew. He names as his greatest literary influences Sherwood Anderson, William Faulkner, Anton Chekhov, Lev Tolstoy, and earlier Hebrew authors such as Michah Yosef Berdichevsky, Yosef Hayim Brenner, Gnessin, and S. Y. Agnon.  The themes that typify Oz's early writings concern a typically modernist preoccupation with a fragmented, discordant world. Particularly in his depictions of the kibbutz and its characters, Oz expressed the disintegration of a Zionist ideology imagined to have been harmonious and whole before it succumbed to human failings. In earlier works, Oz's Hebrew was denser and more multi-layered than that of his later works, for two reasons: the first is the influence of Agnon, an author known for the multifaceted and labyrinthine nature of his intensely allusive Hebrew; the second is that, as a young author, Oz was writing in a relatively new state using a Hebrew into which he was born, a circumstance that brought with it certain responsibilities. Unlike many of his Hebrew literary precursors, Oz's language was now formally linked to an existing national identity rather than to one that was aspirational, cultural, or religious in nature.  He produced some of his most acclaimed novels in the 1980s, including *Menuha nekhona* (*A Perfect Peace*, 1982) and *Kufsa shehora* (*Black Box*, 1987). Some of his novels from the end of that decade and the 1990s, such as *Ladaat isha* (*To Know a Woman*, 1989) and *Al tagidi laila* (*Don't Call It Night*, 1994), focused more on individuals leading quiet, mundane private lives, disappointing readers and critics who were accustomed to the more colourful and sweeping scope of his previous novels. His monumental *Sipur al ahava ve-hoshekh* (*A Tale of Love and Darkness*, 2002), a literary autobiography that presents Oz's life as intimately intertwined with the dramatic history of the State of Israel, restored him to the pinnacle of the Israeli literary pantheon and is considered to be one of the most important Hebrew works of the past century.  Many younger Israeli authors rebel against Oz's stylistic and thematic legacy, which they consider outdated and passé, in favour of writing that is either postmodern or more explicitly politically motivated. Nevertheless, Oz remains the most formidable and best-known Hebrew author in the world. List of WorksStories/Novellas *Artsot ha-tan* (*Where the Jackals Howl*) (1965) Tel Aviv: Massada; (1976) Tel Aviv: Am Oved.  *Ad mavet* (*Unto Death*) (1971) Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim; (1991) Jerusalem: Keter.  *Anashim aherim* (*Different People*) (1974) Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad.  *Har ha-etzah ha-ra'a* (*The Hill of Evil Counsel*) (1976) Tel Aviv: Am Oved.  *Be-or ha-tkhelet ha-azah* (*Under this Blazing Light*) (1979) Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim; (1990) Jerusalem: Keter.  *Hafradat tsva'im* (*Colour Separation*) (1989) Tel Aviv: Am Oved.  *Tmunot mi-hayey ha-kfar* (*Scenes From a Village Life*) (2009) Jerusalem: Keter.  *Bein haverim* (*Between Friends*) (2012) Jerusalem, Keter. Novels *Makom aher* (*Elsewhere, Perhaps*) (1966) Merhavia: Sifriat Poalim; (1989) Jerusalem: Keter.  *Mikhael sheli* (*My Michael*) (1968) Tel Aviv: Am Oved; (1990) Jerusalem: Keter; (2008) Jerusalem: Keter.  *Laga'at ba-mayim laga'at ba-ruah* (*Touch the Water, Touch the* Wind) (1973) Tel Aviv: AmOved.  *Menuha nekhona (A Perfect* Peace) (1982) Tel Aviv: Am Oved; (1992) Jerusalem: Keter.  *Kufsah shehora* (*Black Box*) (1987) Tel Aviv: Am Oved.  *Lada'at isha* (*To Know a Woman*) (1989) Tel Aviv: Am Oved; (1989) Jerusalem: Keter.  *Ha-matzav ha-shlishi* (*The Third Condition/Fima*) (1991) Jerusalem: Keter.  *Al tagidi laila* (*Don't Call It Night*) (1994) Jerusalem: Keter.  *Panter ba-martef* (*Panther in the Basement*) (1995) Jerusalem: Keter.  *Oto ha-yam* (*The Same Sea*) (1999) Jerusalem: Keter.  *Sipur al ahava ve-hoshekh* (*A Tale of Love and Darkness*) (2002, 2005) Jerusalem: Keter.  *Haruzey ha-hayim ve-ha-mavet* (*Rhyming Life and Death*) (2007) Jerusalem: Keter. Essays Po ve-sham be-erets yisrael (In the Land of Israel) (1983) Tel Aviv: Am Oved.  Mi-mordot Levanon (The Slopes of Lebanon) (1987) Tel Aviv: Am Oved.  Kol ha-tikvot: mahshavot al zehut yisraelit (All Our Hopes: Thoughts on Israeli Identity) (1998) Jerusalem: Keter.  Be'etsem yesh kan shtey milhamot (But These Are Two Different Wars) (2002) Jerusalem: Keter.  Al midronot har-ga'ash (On the Slopes of a Volcano) (2006) Jerusalem: Keter. Literary Criticism Shtikat ha-shamayim: Agnon mishtomem al elohim (The Silence of Heaven) (1993) Jerusalem: Keter.  Mathilim sipur (Beginning a Story) (1996) Jerusalem: Keter. Children/Youth *Soumchi* (*Soumkhi*) (1978) Tel Aviv: Am Oved; (1990) Jerusalem: Keter.  *Pitom be-omek ha-yaar* (*Suddenly in the Depth of the Forest*) (2005) Jerusalem: Keter. Online Resources Video: *Amos Oz: the Nature of Dreams*  <http://tvo.org/programs/amos-oz-the-nature-of-dreams>  Video: Keynote Speech from JStreet Conference: Making History (2012)  <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTlSqYgQ738>  Link: Interview with Terry Gross on Fresh Air (National Public Radio) (2004):  <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4195061>  Video: Interview with Charlie Rose (2011)  <http://www.charlierose.com/view/interview/11968>  Video: Oration: Israel: Peace, War, and Storytelling (2011)  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oIRXwzPQBbE>  Link: Interview with PBS's Art Beat (2009) on writing and Rhyming Life and Death:  <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/art/conversation-amos-oz/ > |
| Further reading:  (Balaban, Bein el le-haya: iyun bi-yitsrato shel Amos Oz)  (Balaban, Between God and Beast: An Examination of Amos Oz's Prose)  (Gertz, Amos Oz: Monografya)  (Gertz and Chazan, Special Issue on Oz's Sipur al ahava ve-hoshekh)  (Komem and Ben-Mordechai)  (Mazor, Lituf ba-afela: al siporet Amos Oz)  (Mazor, Somber Lust: The Art of Amos Oz) |