Dalia Rabikovitch (1936-2005)

Born in Ramat Gan, Israel, Dalia Ravikovitch was six years old when her father died in a car accident. Her family moved to kibbutz Geva, a transition that Ravikovitch later recalled as traumatic. At the age of thirteen she moved to the city of Haifa, where she was transferred from one foster family to another. Orphanhood and alienation are the fundamental experiences in her poetry, which is characterized by a lyrical, elegiac tone.

Ravikovitch is a highly regarded poet in Israel. Her work combines biblical-archaic language with simple, day-to-day semantics, and ranges from abstract to concrete. She was among those who generated the poetic shifts in Hebrew literature of the 1950s and 1960s, and her voice is one of the most influential and unique in modernist Hebrew poetry.

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Her first poems were published in the Orlogin journal, edited by the poet Avraham Shlonsky (Ravikovitch’s mentor and great supporter). Her first book of poetry, Ahavat

tapua’h ha-zahav (The Love of the Golden Apple), was published in 1959. The collection was

welcomed with great enthusiasm and distinguished Ravikovitch’s poetics according to its connections with the legendary world of dream, journeys from abstract to concrete landscapes (which usually end with a fall), and an original use of figurative means. Systematic repetition in her poems creates a monotonous rhythm, evocative of a “swearing” ceremony, which corresponds to the mythic. In her poetry, Rabikovitch hybridized biblical language, using rare and unique words together with more colloquial language in an almost childlike manner. These trends were also reflected in her next books.

In her later poetry, mostly after Ahava amitit (True Love), there is a turn to the concrete. This turn found its best expression in her political poems, which were initially published in Tehom kore (Abyss Calls) and later became the cornerstones of her poetry. Another theme in her poems was added to her late works associated with the experience of motherhood. But this experience, like other experiences in the world of Ravikovitch's poetry, is far from being satisfactory: this is a sense of motherhood which is based on absence. Ravikovitch lost custody of her only son after a legal battle, and a sense of vulnerability, fragility, and loss that accompanied most of her poems is also expressed in her motherhood poems. In her late poetry she moved away from classicist forms and allowed herself more freedom in terms of form and style.

In addition to poetry, Ravikovitch published three books of short stories. However, compared to the widespread acceptance of her poetry, both by the older generation as well as by the younger one, her prose won just a cool acceptance and was considered simplistic. Ravikovitch was also engaged in translation and in writing popular songs, and she published several children’s books. Still, her main strength lies in poetic writing, focusing on the experience of the “negation of reality” as well as the failure to survive beyond reality’s limits.

Poetry

*Ahavat tapuach ha-zahav* (The Love of the Golden Apple) (1959). Jerusalem: Machbarot L'sifrut.

*Horef kashe* (Hard Winter) (1964). Tel Aviv: Dvir.

*Ha-sefer ha-shlishi* (The Third Book). (1969). Jerusalem: Levin Epstein.

*Tehom kore* (Abyss Calls) (1976). Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuhad .

*Ahava amitit* (True Love) (1987). Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz HaMeuhad.

*Ima im yeled* (Mother with Child) (1992). Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz HaMeuhad.

*Hatzi sha’a lifney ha-monsoon* (Half an Hour Before the Monsoon) (1998). Raanana: Even *Hahoshen* (Breatsplate Stone).

*Mayim rabim* (Many Waters) (2006). Bene Berak: Hakibbutz HaMeuhad.

Collection of Stories

*Mavet ba-mishpacha: Shnem Asar Sipurim U-Masa* (Death in the Family: Twelve Stories and one Essay) (1976). Tel Aviv: Am Oved.

*Kevutzat ha-kadur-regel shel Winnie Mandela* (Winnie Mandela's Football Team) (1976). Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz Hameuhad.

*Ba’a ve-halcha* (She Came and Went) (2005). Ben-Shemen: Modan.

Written by Moria Codish