**Oz, Amos (1939--)** 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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Oz began publishing his first short stories as a young man in Kibbutz Hulda in the 1960s. 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 multilayered 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 favor 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.

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