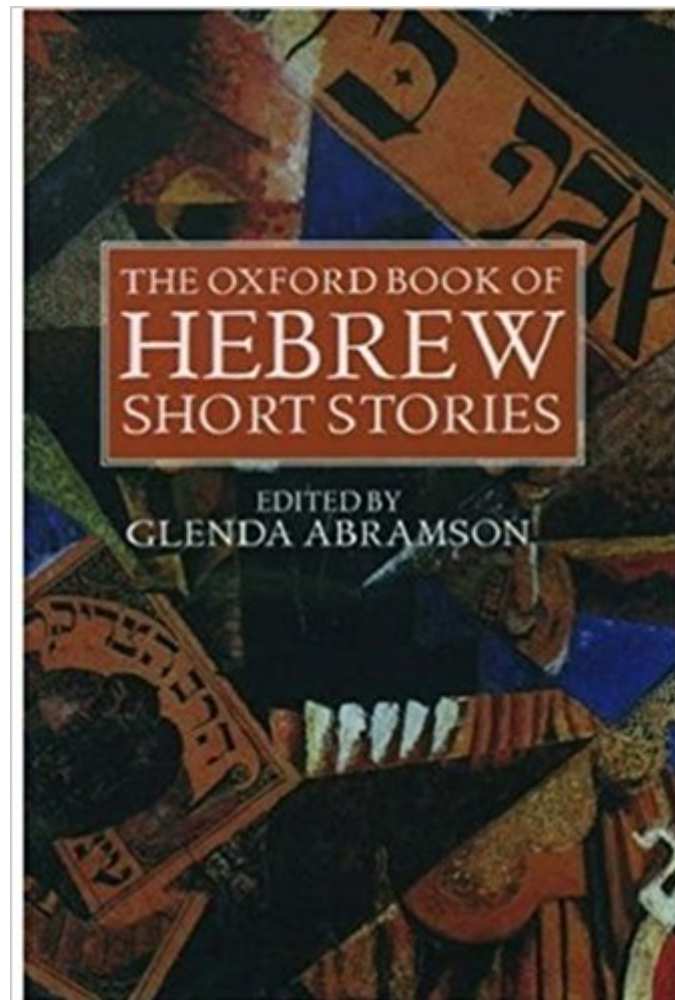




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The Oxford Book Of Hebrew Short Stories



Synopsis

It is unusual for a creative literature to be so much younger than its language, and the story of the development of Hebrew fiction is no less fascinating than the stories that embody it in *The Oxford Book of Hebrew Short Stories*. From a narrative whose concerns were predominantly historical and religious, Hebrew fiction has grown to embrace the modern world and to deal with subjects such as daily life in a small Jewish town, intellectual disillusionment, and the huge political changes with which Jewish writers have had to come to terms following the establishment of the State of Israel. War inevitably features often in these 33 stories which reflect, more than the literature of any other country, the social and political dilemmas of a multifarious culture. Alongside the grand themes are more intimate explorations of human relationships, and of individual triumph and anguish within the complexities of twentieth-century life. This anthology demonstrates the astonishing richness and diversity of Hebrew short fiction by including not only established authors of the stature of Amos Oz, A. B. Yehoshua, Yehuda Amichai, and David Grossman, but also less well-known writers whose stories have not been published in translation before: Orly Castel-Bloom and Savyon Liebrecht among the younger women writers, Yitzhak Oren among the more experimental older generation. Glenda Abramson's informative introduction sets the scene for a powerful literary collection, the definitive anthology of a vibrant modern genre.

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Customer Reviews

I am the translator of "Cinema," by Yitzhak Ben-Ner, which appears in this anthology. [A collection of powerful stories by Yithak Ben-Ner, RUSTIC SUNSET, also translated by yours truly, has just

been published by Lynne Rienner Publishers and is available from . Try it: you'll become a Ben-Ner fan, I assure you!] The uniqueness of this new Oxford anthology is its consistently high quality. The works it chooses are the best short fiction that modern Hebrew literature has to offer, and the translations are readable and idiomatic. The book covers the breadth of modern Hebrew literature from the 19th century into the 1990's. You'll find pivotal writers such as Uri Nissan Gnessin, who wrote in stream of consciousness years before Joyce; Nobel Prize winner S.Y. Agnon; Amalia Kahana-Carmon, known as the Israeli Virginia Woolf, whose style has been often described as untranslatable -- our translators in this collection do a superb job, but I'm sure that the compulsive Ms. Carmon drove the translators crazy!; Dahlia Ravikovitch; Aharon Megged and the late David Shahar (both of whose translated works have been especially celebrated in Europe but scandalously ignored by the American literary establishment); Ruth Almog; and more familiar names such as Amos Oz, A.B. Yehoshua, Aharon Appelfeld and David Grossman. By delving into this collection, the English reader will for the first time ever, be able to sample modern Hebrew literature from the same vantage point as that of educated Israelis, who view the writers in this collection as the building blocks of contemporary Israeli culture. Congratulations to the editor of this anthology and to Oxford Books.

There are many ways of compiling an anthology, and many ways, perhaps, of considering what a collective voice is. Glenda Abramson, in the introduction to her "Oxford Book of Hebrew Short Stories", gives a fairly history-book account of the development of modern Hebrew letters, with the one note that "throughout the development of Hebrew literature writers have been nominated as representative because they exemplify a political consensus or a dominant ideology and many others have been omitted because they are perceived not to have done so." Her own candidate for greatness, Yitzhak Oren, failed to make this roll-call of social realism because while others were drawing the portrait of the new state he was indulging in "Kafka like fantasies". Off-hand, this does not seem such a unique bias. Kafka was hugged into the bosom of European literature in an era of absurdism and, let us never forget, as a dead saint. His meticulously prosaic depictions of the fantastic, the reports of an insurance man, were fine parables for the shook-up faiths of the post-concentration camp dissenters against ideology. Wherever else in the globe such fantasy has sold, such as South America, there was also a political bias toward resistance in the audience. Abramson's man Oren has suffered, like science fiction writers and other writers of "speculative" fiction in the U.S. and other lands of true believers, by not being taken seriously because he saw through the emperor's clothes. The trouble with making one's only dissent to received opinion one

"revived" writer and a handful of stories which "appear for the first time in an anthology in English translation...

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