



Review

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to the need for the inner exegesis Fishbane so brilliantly makes evident. This must ever and always be kept in mind.

It should be clear that this is not a book to read; it is a book to study and to use as a *vade mecum* in working through biblical texts. Gratifyingly, it has a full index of the passages discussed so that in every instance one may find Fishbane's insightful examination. That examination will lead one to re-examine the passage as I have suggested in the second example above and wrestle with the text and its problems, problems that may previously have escaped one's thoughtful attention. To and of this volume one must exclaim: קח!

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CUNNING INNOCENCE: ON S. Y. AGNON'S IRONY. By Esther Fuchs. Pp. 174. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1985. Paper. (Hebrew).

This work represents the first book-length study of irony-generating techniques—particularly those of point of view, narrative, plot, characterization, and the reflexive irony of fiction as a mirror of reality—found in all of Agnon's fiction. Its primary contribution lies in the thesis that irony is the organizing principle which pervades and dominates all Agnon stories, be their nature pietistic, secular, or Kafkaesque.

The shortcoming of past studies in identifying the dominance of the ironic tone throughout Agnon's fiction has, Fuchs asserts, at least two primary reasons. The first is the author's conscious, cunning use of what certain critics have come to identify as the naive and nostalgic tone permeating many of his works. Unfortunately, they have often missed the author's contrived ironic use of this posture. The second is the critics' ideological slant which they bring to bear in interpreting Agnon's writings, particularly those dealing with matters of piety and faith. The ironic features of many stories, claims Fuchs, are masked by these readers whose point of departure is the assertion that Agnon's writings are chiefly allegorical. Such a presumption neutralizes the significant incongruities, inner tensions, and contradictions within the ironic tale, leading to a complete misunderstanding of its implied message. And while a number of past studies have taken note of the author's irony, these have frequently been characterized by the employment of the double standard of applying the ironic approach to only the secular stories while avoiding those resembling tales of piety. All this has resulted in giving short-shift to Agnon's artful mastery and literary sophistication. But this is not true of all previous studies, and a more complete survey of that literature would have placed the matter in better and fairer perspective.

Having set forth these observations in her first chapter—whose reading would have been eased by replacing the many Latinizations with valid Hebrew equivalents—Fuchs proceeds to examine the ironic point of view as a factor in eliciting meaning in Agnon's fiction. It is here that Agnon's strong moral and ethical stance may be distinguished from that of his narrators. But this task is made especially difficult for readers whose religious beliefs conflict with the implied author's inclinations to raise issues of theodicy, challenge religious norms, and parody accepted traditional responses to life's vexing questions.

The third chapter examines and illustrates the manner whereby plot becomes a means for creating irony, particularly in cases when the causal or logical relationship between episode sequences is absent. The segmented, asymmetrical, ironic plot — which includes repetitious, cyclic, or digressive actions — is thus a mirror of the chaotic and seemingly purposeless confluence of events comprising existence.

Characters and the narratological transmission of speech — particularly via first-person narrative and *erlebte Rede* — as contributors to irony are discussed in the fourth chapter. The incongruity between speech and action, character as alazon and his milieu, enhance the ironic effect in each work.

The last chapter is devoted to an examination of one of the more intriguing facets in literature, Agnon's self-irony within his work. The effect is attained by either supplying the reader with too much information (paralepsis) or leaving out the critical bit necessary for comprehension (paralipsis), acts which variously draw attention to the story as a fictional construct and point to its nature as a mimesis of reality, and the author as both its mirror and inventor. Implicitly, it teases, mocks, and provokes the reader's thoughts for regarding fiction as reality.

Each chapter is well organized in itself, opening with a general discussion of the issue at hand, providing appropriate definitions—which seem to repeat themselves at times—and discussion in the abstract. A survey of some past works of criticism, at times needing further fleshing out, frequently tears down familiar assumptions prior to building up Fuchs' own thought-provoking and well-founded thesis. This is then applied to a detailed analysis of Agnon's *Hakhnasat Kalah*, followed by a demonstration of the applicability of the issue to Agnon's other fictional works, be they realistic or unrealistic, pietistic or secular.

Since many of the characteristics enumerated by Fuchs are to be found in each story, it is unavoidable that we too come to agree with her own conclusion regarding the weight Agnon has placed on this device in his writing.

Implicit in Fuch's study is the notion that the proliferation of ironic situations and techniques, often for the purpose of satirizing accepted modes of thought and action in traditional Jewish society, places Agnon in league with his predecessors of the age of the Haskalah, making him direct heir to some of their literary and ideological traits. Implicit among these are his less-than-pietistic view of faith and the notion of *batlanut* as a social phenomenon.

If anything can be pointed to as missing, it is a thorough index of Agnon's writings as well as key technical terms and names mentioned in the study. This, however, is a relatively minor matter in a well written, thought-provoking study which contributes immeasurably to altering our way of reading and understanding Agnon's art and message.

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THE HEBREW BIBLE: A SOCIO-LITERARY INTRODUCTION.
By Norman K. Gottwald. Pp. xxx + 702. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985. Paper. \$19.95.

This book is perhaps the best general introduction to the mainstream of current critical study of the Hebrew Bible on the market. As the subtitle suggests, the author is attempting to bridge two major trajectories in current biblical studies. How well he achieves that objective is subject to debate; for Gottwald's strength certainly lies in the sociological more than the literary dimensions of that task.

The book is in four parts. Part I, "The Text in its Contexts," details the methodological pluralism and ferment in the world of biblical studies (with particular interest in "Newer Literary Methods" and "Social Science Methods"), surveys the geography and archaeology of Palestine, and discusses the literary history and composition of the Hebrew Bible. The rest of the book is arranged chronologically, dealing in turn with the premonarchic era (Part II, "Intertribal Confederacy: Israel's Revolutionary Beginnings"), the "Monarchy: Israel's Counterrevolutionary Establishment" (Part III), and post-monarchic era (Part IV, "Home Rule Under Great Empires: Israel's Colonial Recovery").

The book is not illustrated, other than a series of maps (in line drawing), a figure of "The Cosmos of Genesis 1" (p. 476), and numerous tables and charts, some of which are rather complex (see charts 11 and 12, pp. 600-606). The maps on pp. 71-76 are useful but not up-to-date (Ebla does not appear in the maps of the Near East in 2300 and 2050 B.C.E.). In fact, one gets the impression from Gottwald's cursory remarks here (p. 65) that none of Ebla's "rich archives" are published (though see his later footnote on p. 165). The book has a 65 page bibliography "Arranged by Divisions of the Text," a list of "Commentaries on Biblical Books" (English only), and an index (pp. 678-702).

The genre of the book itself is a bit difficult to specify. Though apparently originally intended as a revision of his earlier textbook, *A Light to the Nations*, the present book is too massive and detailed to make it as a popular textbook. At the same time it is not a reference work in the manner of Brevard Childs, *An Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*. The book is a hybrid of sorts, somewhere between the general "textbook" and the classic reference "introduction" to the Old Testament. It will find its most welcome