

Preface: Theory and Criticism at 50

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“*Theory and Criticism* is a journal for the critical study of Israeli society and culture.” Thus began the declaration of intent that appeared on the first page of the first volume, published in Summer 1991: an unsigned, single-page text, with the words “Prefatory Remarks” printed vertically, on the side. It was only in the second volume – published a year later, in Summer 1992 – that a full-fledged “Preface” appeared, signed by Adi Ophir, the journal’s founding editor. Since then, the preface has become one of the hallmarks of *Theory and Criticism* (indeed, many of the parallel journals abroad, such as *Critical Inquiry*, do not include a preface penned by the editor). When read in succession, the 46 prefaces published over the years tell a remarkably intricate story.¹ It is the story of *Theory and Criticism* and, at the same time, the story of the political, social, professional, and emotional space in which we function, the “place” that the journal’s editorial board aims to define “in a broad and open way” (as declared in the brief creed that first appeared on the back cover of Volume 16, the first edited by Yehouda Shenhav).²

- 1 Vol. 12–13 (known also as *Fifty to Forty-Eight*) and vol. 38–39 were double volumes with only one preface each; that is why the number of prefaces is smaller than the number of volumes.
- 2 The “Prefatory Remarks” of vol. 1 do not yet address the possibility of defining the question of the “place” in “a broad and open way.” On the contrary, the last paragraph of the declaration of intent asserts, rather gloomily, that “*Theory and Criticism* is an Israeli journal, because Israel – a place, a society, a culture – is the context in which discussion emerges, as well as the object of criticism, but [it is] also the horizon, limiting thought. Moreover, the arena is Israeli because the intellectual work, for which the journal will serve as a platform and framework, is a way of participating in the complex and oppressive game of life in Israel.”

The preface is intended, first and foremost, to offer a short abstract of each article (and, in the case of single-subject volumes, to explain the theme and its importance).³ However, in addition to summarizing the articles in the volume – their argument, methodology, significance, and novelty – the preface often explained the logic that guided the arrangement of the volume’s contents; suggested how the studies and essays included in the volume reflected broader trends and developments in theory and criticism; and frequently situated the texts in the context of the political and social vicissitudes in Israel and worldwide. Thus, a rereading of the prefaces, years later, allows us not only to map the tectonic shifts that have shaped the critical-theoretical landscape in recent decades, but also to create a chronology (though quite fragmented) of the acts of violence and folly, catastrophes and calamities, that this place has seen in abundance since the start of the 1990s. Finally, in a more marginal vein, a reading of the prefaces also provides a glimpse of the personnel changes in the journal and the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute: the departure of one editor and the arrival of another, a farewell to the secretary of the editorial board, thanks to the outgoing head of the Institute. Here and there one can find a hinted allusion – and, rarely, even an explicit reference – to the troubles that clouded the journal’s activity or to the dilemmas its editors faced.⁴

- 3 Unlike other journals published in Israel, *Theory and Criticism* has never included separate abstracts in Hebrew. Abstracts in English, as well as an English table of contents, were included from the very first volume; an English translation of the preface began appearing in vol. 29 (sometimes alongside the abstracts in English, which meant that two different English descriptions of the articles appeared in the same volume). Arabic began to feature in the journal in vol. 27, first with abstracts in Arabic (which were discontinued in vol. 30 and resumed in vol. 37) and then (from vol. 30) with an Arabic translation of the preface. An Arabic table of contents first appeared in vol. 46. With the launch of the journal’s website, abstracts in Hebrew began appearing online, but not in the printed edition. Starting with vol. 46, it was decided (due to printing costs) to include the preface in English and in Arabic (as well as the abstracts in both languages) only in the journal’s website. The table of contents in all three languages continues to appear in the print version. The essays and review-essays published in *Theory and Criticism* over the years have been treated differently: receiving a much shorter description in the preface, their abstracts have not appeared in English or Arabic. This chain of events – revealing the complex interrelations between the politics of language, the yearnings of the Israeli academe, the economics of publication and promotion, and the digitization of publishing – deserves a separate discussion.
- 4 An unusual example is Yehouda Shenhav’s preface to vol. 31 (entitled *40to67*). In this preface Shenhav revealed candidly – and also, one must say, courageously – a deep crisis that arose during the editing of the volume, rooted in a web of political, legal, and personnel issues.

Looking back, from the distance of years, makes it possible to rethink what at the time seemed obvious, to expose lacunae and blind spots, or to point to future directions of thought. This possibility arose in 2010, at a special event held at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute on the occasion of the twentieth year of *Theory and Criticism* and to mark the beginning of the editorship of Leora Bilsky, the journal's third editor. The speakers at the event – particularly Yehouda Shenhav, Hannan Hever, and Michal Ben-Naftali – took the opportunity to map out or think about the history and character of the journal, but also to look forward, beyond the critical horizon.⁵ Meanwhile, another eight years have passed and twelve more volumes have appeared. Now, with the publication of the fiftieth volume of *Theory and Criticism*, we propose a similar, but broader and more systematic, reflection.

The publication of this jubilee volume is not something that should be taken for granted. In the course of reading the prefaces, moving from one volume to another, one can almost forget how fragile is the existence of an academic journal in Israel, even one with such a notable reputation. In the preface to Volume 15, the last edited by Adi Ophir, he wrote that “the appearance of a new volume, which was in the beginning almost in the nature of a miracle, has become a routine matter. In the current Israeli cultural landscape, controlled almost exclusively by measures of profit and rating, by the language and pace of television – it is the routine appearance of a journal which is the quintessential miraculous act.” Ophir wrote this in 1999. In today's cultural landscape, in Israel of 2018, this routine seems more miraculous than ever.

This present-day landscape is characterized by a political culture in which the Israeli government quashes critical voices and incites against the opposition, the media, human rights groups, and academe; and by an Israeli academic culture which glorifies publishing in English and considers writing in Hebrew a waste of time. Yet the journal itself has also undergone significant changes over the years. There is no doubt that the *Theory and Criticism* project – to promote “interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary writing through constant criticism of canonic bodies of knowledge” (as declared on the back cover) – has had a great and fundamental influence on Israeli academe. Theories and attitudes deemed radical and unruly have moved toward the center. At the same time, however, criticism was institutionalized; the critical study of the role played by mechanisms of representation

5 Ben-Naftali's lecture was published as an essay in vol. 37 (Fall 2010). Shenhav's and Hever's lectures were included in the collection titled *Four Lectures on Critical Theory* (The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2012), alongside the lectures by Adi Ophir and Leora Bilsky; a preface by the editor of the collection, Gil Eyal; and a response by the then director of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, Gabriel Motzkin.

in replicating the existing order became mechanical and was itself replicated; and, in some cases, the challenge to the academic system became the new dogma.

Paradoxically, then, the journal's impressive success undermined its own status, because it dimmed the passion and desire that had motivated the project in the first place. Moreover, the community of scholars and students that gathered around the journal – a small but highly dedicated group in the beginning – became, with time, much more amorphous, losing the sense of cohesion that had characterized it. In an essay published in the present volume, Shaul Setter recalls how, as a young man, he gulped down the volumes of *Theory and Criticism*.

In those days, the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, critical theory was at the peak of its intellectual power, and the desire to pass through its gates, to enter the orchard, was great: [...] I did not yet know then that the initiation process would be cut off, that its paths would diverge and its promises melt away; that the Eros of the 1990s would weaken and dissipate – together with Oslo, with the Queer, with the post-Communist left – and would be poured into the clerical work of writing peer-reviewed articles in the holy tongue – namely, academic English; that the process of turning criticism into a discipline would make it both very fruitful and depressingly barren.

Setter, to be sure, is speaking first and foremost about the local context, but the changes he laments are also part of a sweeping process of decline that has affected, in the last two decades, humanities and social sciences departments throughout the West: the institutionalization of theory; a growing fatigue; a sense of having entered a scholarly cul-de-sac; and the often desperate attempt to identify and single out the new theoretical promise.

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These processes – professional and personal, in Israel and globally – are at the center of this volume. Its large size makes it impossible for me to review all the articles in the detail they deserve (the abstracts of all the texts in the volume can be found in the journal's website). Instead, I will outline the volume while trying to offer a tentative summary of the theoretical and scholarly trends that have characterized the journal in recent years.

This volume includes two sections, reflecting the attempt to provide a Janus-like view, backward and forward. The first section, titled "Rereading," offers a personal-critical revisiting of the volumes of *Theory and Criticism*. When we began planning this volume, about two years ago, we approached authors who had published notable articles and essays in the journal and asked them to "return to the text, reexamine its content,

reception and resonance, suggesting new ideas or criticism from the perspective of the years that have passed.” We asked them to recall the birth pangs of the original text and the processes of its submission, acceptance and publication; to recount the academic, intellectual, and personal contexts in which it was written; to revisit the various responses to the article, as well as their own reactions to the criticism; and to think, in retrospect, what they would add to the text, correct or change. We emphasized that we were not interested in an actual academic treatise but rather in a theoretical-professional reflection with an inevitable personal touch.

Our call gave rise to a complex and sometimes difficult dialogue with the authors. Not all of them understood, the first time around, the nature of this intellectual and creative exercise. Some of them mulled over which text to choose, just as we had debated which authors to approach, especially because of the space limitations. We wanted to include a variety of scholars, from diverse disciplines and of different generations; to mark out, if only in general outline, a path of chronological progress; to select texts that became central milestones in the development of critical thought in Israeli academe; but also to find a way of reflecting broader trends, of which the individual text was just a part.

Eventually, this section includes thirteen texts, which manifest three types of “rereading.” Seven authors return to articles and essays published in *Theory and Criticism* and reexamine them: **Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin** returns to his foundational article “Exile within Sovereignty” (which was published in two parts, in vols. 4 and 5); **Michal Ben-Naftali** goes back to “And Not This” (vol. 11); **Edna Lomsky-Feder** returns to “Life Stories of War Veterans” (vol. 11); **Pnina Motzafi-Haller** revisits “You Have an Authentic Voice” (vol. 11); **Hannan Hever** returns to “Israeli Literature Responding to the Six-Day War” (vol. 12–13); **Amalia Ziv** goes back to “Between Sexual Commodities and Sexual Subjects” (vol. 25); and **Uri Ram** revisits “The Time of the ‘Post’” (vol. 26).

It is worth noting that we did not make a conscious decision to devote so much attention to Volume 11, but in retrospect it seems that this volume, published in Winter 1997 – and which included, in addition to the texts mentioned here, a host of excellent articles (by Daniel Boyarin, Michael Gluzman, Yoav Peled, and Sara Chinski) marking the hundredth anniversary of the First Zionist Congress – marked a peak in the journal’s activity up to that point, precisely because it was a seemingly “ordinary” issue and not a special volume like the monumental one that followed it, marking 50 years since 1948. Six years after the publication of the first volume, following Oslo, following the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, the vectors of the political and disciplinary developments intersected forcefully, generating a truly memorable volume of *Theory and Criticism*.

The journal's editors over the years were offered a different, more open and flexible opportunity to reread: to go back to a specific text they had published; to reexamine a single-theme volume they had edited; or to deal more broadly with the editorial work and the changes that had taken place over the years in critical theory. In light of the fundamental differences between them in both work and temperament, it was not surprising to discover that each of the editors chose a different path. **Adi Ophir** presents a list of fragments that sail "between memory and late understanding." His article opens with a description of the motives and circumstances that led to the founding of *Theory and Criticism*. According to Ophir, the journal was founded on the basis of "an almost intuitive understanding of 'theory' and 'criticism.'" For that purpose we did not have to ask what 'theory' is and what 'criticism' is. The fact that we refrained from asking these questions, and certainly from any attempt to reach agreed-upon answers, made possible an openness to critical thinking and to relatively divergent theoretical approaches." His article in this volume is an attempt to respond, if only in a fragmentary way, to these questions.

In the years that have passed since the end of his editorship of *Theory and Criticism*, **Yehouda Shenhav-Shaharabani** has turned to examine the complex relations between Hebrew and Arabic. In light of this intensive work, Shenhav chose to use the opportunity for reflection to imagine the volume he did not have a chance to edit (or did not know that he wanted to). In a rather Borgesian performance, Shenhav presents here the preface to a special volume titled "The Sovereign Language and the Sovereignty of Language." As is customary in the journal's prefaces, he introduces articles that could (indeed, should) have appeared in this special volume.

Leora Bilsky chose to return to the essay "Critical Theory in the Shadow of Law," based on the lecture at the aforementioned event marking the twentieth anniversary of *Theory and Criticism*. The new reading of the essay highlights the processes of resignification – the use of critical theory in a way that strips away the content of the criticism. This reading grows out of a dialogue that Bilsky is conducting with **Ofra Bloch**, a young scholar who is studying mechanisms of discrimination in Israel and the United States. Their jointly authored article thus sheds light on "the very process of reflection on previous writing – a process that is essentially a dialogue, not only between the writer and her (former) self, but also between her and scholars who propose new readings."

In addition to the ten texts already mentioned, three other texts offer a third mode of rereading – more panoramic analyses that consider various aspects of the journal's activity. **Yali Hashash** examines the development of the Mizrahi discourse in *Theory and Criticism*. She argues that in the mainstream of this discourse today, the world of

post-secular religion is depicted as an alternative to secular nationalism. Nevertheless, while this discourse purports to present a model of political radicalism, in practice it leans dangerously on conservative paradigms and on mystical fantasy. **Shaul Setter** rereads groundbreaking articles published by Sarah Chinski (1952–2008) in *Theory and Criticism* and examines their “career” since then. Through the rereading, Setter identifies a key type of criticism that emerged in the journal in the 1990s and describes how it gradually became an academic discipline. Finally, **Gilad Reich** examines the place of the visual image in *Theory and Criticism*. From among the dozens of collections of artwork and the visual essays published in the journal, Reich curated the “File of Artwork Files”: a combination of images, accompanied by an interpretative text, surveying the diverse motivations and approaches that shaped the visual aspect of the journal.

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Whereas the first section of this volume looks back, offering a retrospective account of texts published in the journal since its inception, the second section – titled “Rerouting: New Agendas for Critical Theory” – looks ahead, to the future. Of course, pointing to new directions of thought is a fundamental part of the journal’s mandate. Still, the daily routine of managing a journal – dealing with submissions, revisions, and production – does not always leave enough time for a systematic mapping of the challenges and for examining the horizon of possibilities. The fiftieth volume provides, as noted, an excellent opportunity to look straight ahead. Nevertheless, in order to outline future trends, we must first point out some of the main developments that have characterized the journal in recent years. And so, before I begin to outline the volume’s second section, I will stop to formulate a reckoning (albeit brief and tentative) of the major theoretical and critical discussions that took place in the journal during my tenure as editor.

Two intertwined discussions, which intensified greatly during the years of Yehouda Shenhav’s editorship – namely, postcolonialism and the Mizrahi discourse – continued to be dominant in *Theory and Criticism*, but were channeled in new directions. The use of postcolonial theories to examine national, racial, and ethnic power-relations in Israel/Palestine was somewhat exhausted; instead, we have witnessed new attempts to broaden the historical, geographical, and cultural canvas. Articles published in the journal in recent years have thus examined the Israeli/Palestinian case in a comparative context (a leading example includes vol. 44, which was devoted entirely to the subject of India/Israel); have examined the scholarly terrain between Postcolonial Studies and Imperial History (for example in vol. 49, which included a section of articles and essays marking the hundredth anniversary of the events of 1917); or have sought to rethink the connection between

Zionism and imperialism beyond the familiar context (for example, in Rafi Tsirkin-Sadan's article in vol. 48, which locates Jabotinsky's Orientalist thought within Russian imperialism's concepts of the eastern frontier).

The discussion of Mizrahiness, too, which is still so prevalent in *Theory and Criticism*, has turned to new directions. Scholars, including Calanit Tsalach (vol. 46), Rivi Gilis (vol. 47), and Yali Hashash (vol. 48), have developed groundbreaking theoretical and methodological strategies that link the Mizrahi discourse and the discourse on Mizrahiness to class issues – in academe, the settlements, and the study of poverty. Hashash's innovative essay, which proposed using the American "White Trash" as a conceptual framework for understanding the place of the Mizrahim in the Zionist-Israeli hegemony, is linked to yet another trend that has intensified in the journal in recent years: employing the terminology of Whiteness Studies and Performance Studies to understand the nature of the mechanism of "Ashkenazification," and in this way to question the perception of the Ashkenazim as a monolithic entity (see, for example, the work of Orna Sasson-Levy and Avi Shoshana in vol. 42; Uri Schwartz in vol. 43; and Dana Grosswirth Kachtan in vol. 48).

Many texts enhanced the discussion of gender issues, and here too one can point out two main directions of thought. One direction – arising in articles by Limor Meoded Danon (vol. 42) and Zvi Triger (vols. 44 and 49) – examined the social and physical power relations deriving from new technologies of fertility (such as surrogacy or post-death childbirth using the sperm of the dead man) or from the critique of established medical practices (such as sex-determination surgery). These complex issues are examined in the local context, against the background of Zionist ideology and the "bio-power" of the State of Israel. Another direction seen clearly in the journal is the development of Queer Studies – for example, the queer reading of the Book of Ruth (Ruth Preser, vol. 43); the discussion of queer migration from Israel as an exception on the national temporality (Hila Amit, vol. 45); or the study of queer identities in Israel's periphery (Gilly Hartal, vol. 49).

In thematic terms, the occupation maintained its centrality in many of the articles and essays published in *Theory and Criticism* in recent years. Volume 47, a special-theme collection guest-edited by Ariel Hendel and Erez Maggor, presented current research on the West Bank settlements in order to promote a new analytical framework at the heart of which is the concept of "normalization." Other texts dealt with the application of Israeli law in military courts in the occupied territories (Smadar Ben-Natan, vol. 43); processes of colonization and rule in East Jerusalem (Oren Shlomo and Honaida Ghanim, both in vol. 48); or the depiction of the Palestinian city Rawabi in Israeli art (Gilad Reich, vol. 48).

Of course, this is only a partial list: *Theory and Criticism's* intensive engagement with Israeli control of the territories and Jewish–Arab relations is rooted first and foremost in political and moral commitment, but it also reflects the journal's commitment to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research.

And, finally, the texts published in *Theory and Criticism* in recent years developed and expanded the discussion of contemporary Israeli culture: the film *Zero Motivation* (Yofi Tirosh, vol. 43); the television program *A Star is Born* (Oren Livio, vol. 44); songs of the Biluim group (Oded Erez, vol. 45); and “multicultural” exhibitions in museums in Israel (Noa Hazan, vol. 49). In an original and particularly interesting article, which examined the rise of the image of the zombie (vol. 43), Moriel Ram offered an innovative conceptual framework, connecting popular culture with a host of concepts and other fields of knowledge: posthumanism, biopolitics, and the state of emergency.

However, it must be admitted that Ram's article was highly unusual in dealing with the posthumanist angle; and that the interest in contemporary art and culture did not extend, for example, to the literary studies published in *Theory and Criticism* in recent years. As Omri Herzog and Yael Shenker argued (in an essay in vol. 45), literary scholars these days tend to focus on early canonic writers (such as Brenner and Fogel) and much less on new Israeli literature.

However, if one must point, in retrospect, to the most significant challenge we faced, it is the substantial gap between the rich range of topics, spheres and sources that the journal dealt with – Israel is, of course, anything but boring – and the feeling that the critical theory, the tool with which these topics and sources are examined, is stalling. As Shai Lavi notes in the afterword to this volume, the “normal science” routine, which in other academic contexts arouses no particular problem, challenges critical theory, whose modus operandi is a constant revolution in the means of thought. According to Lavi, “like a satellite that has lost speed and been ejected from its orbit, critical thinking that does not renew itself loses direction and height.” This understanding is at the heart of our attempt to suggest a rerouting – that builds on, and from, the rereading.

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As with the first section of Volume 50, editing the second part involved difficult decisions, mainly regarding which theoretical directions to focus on and which authors to approach. In the letter sent to contributors we explained that we were seeking articles that would present original trends and new fields of knowledge in research, criticism, and theory; articles that would bring to the fore new theoretical directions and would expose the readers of *Theory and Criticism* to recent changes taking place in Israel and worldwide.

We asked the authors to think of disciplinary and theoretical challenges with which they must cope, to present the tools that the new approaches offer, and to examine how all these are manifested in the Israeli context.

In this case, too, not all the submissions were eventually accepted for publication. In the end, the “Rerouting” section is comprised of seventeen texts, which have been woven together, as always, on the basis of their points of contact. Nevertheless, it is clear that the articles could have been organized in an entirely different way (indeed, that is why the description of the articles, below, does not always reflect the order of their appearance in the volume). Some of the articles develop discussions that have been taking place in *Theory and Criticism* for years and focus on contemporary trends and new challenges; others present fresh trends that have received little attention; and some explore research directions to which Hebrew-readers have not been exposed. Many of them converse in complex and diverse ways with texts that appear in the first section of this volume.

Our “course correction” opens with several articles that address critical theory’s coping with environmental, technological, and political changes that have shaken our world in recent years. In her article titled “Posthumanism: Prometheus and the Revenge of Deconstruction,” **Carmel Vaisman** defines posthumanist thinking as “a nonanthropocentric way of reading that casts doubt on the Enlightenment’s assumption of the centrality of humankind in the world order while questioning the definition of ‘human’ and attempting to break through its boundaries in practice.” Another perspective regarding the centrality of humankind in the world can be found in **Dan Tamir**’s article, which surveys the challenges of environmental thinking today and focuses on the mutual interdisciplinary relations between Environmental Studies in the natural sciences and studies in the social sciences and humanities. The mutual relations between the “political” and “biological” dimensions of life are described in the article by **Nitzan Lebovic**, which presents the assumptions of biopolitical criticism and explains why they are so relevant to understanding the political processes taking place in recent decades in the West in general – and in Israel in particular.

The connection between modernity and globalization, which is so prevalent in the first three articles, is manifested differently – but no less significantly – in **Mira Balberg**’s article, which examines the development of Comparative Religion (or Religious Studies) as an independent discipline. Balberg explains why this discipline was absent from Israeli academe until recently and calls for a rethinking of the categories of religion and religiosity that would challenge essentialist approaches to religions and cultures. **Tomer Gardi** examines how globalization has affected contemporary Hebrew literature and describes

the emergence of “Hebrew world literature”: such literature, written in Israel, is not only read by a global audience but is also directed at such an audience and internalizes it.

The changing economic reality, which is reshaping the world of literature (and world literature), is the focus of **Ronen Mandelkern**’s article, which argues that the most significant aspect of the recovery of neoliberalism after 2008 is not the preservation of the economic policy (which has actually undergone significant changes) but rather a strengthening of neoliberal modes of government in capitalist democracies. The focus of criticism, then, should be the governmental dimension. **Catherine Rottenberg** critiques another dimension of neoliberalism: neoliberal feminism. Emerging in recent decades in western countries, this form of feminism is totally disconnected from key liberal concepts such as equality, justice, and liberation – concepts that have shaped women’s movements and liberal feminism from the outset. The need to reformulate the place and role of feminist criticism is also the focus of **Miri Rozmarin**’s article, which outlines a map of contemporary political feminist subjectivity, as defined in key theoretical discussions in feminist philosophy.

Like Rozmarin, many of the authors describe the attempts to cope with the crisis that critical theory is undergoing. **Ayelet Ben-Yishai** offers a survey, the first of its kind in Hebrew, of the new trend in literary scholarship: moving away from the “hermeneutics of suspicion,” which tries to retrieve from the text what is purportedly concealed in its depths, and developing instead practices of “surface reading,” which privilege that which is present over that which is absent – namely, the text over the subtext. **Matan Shapiro** presents to the Hebrew reader the theories of the Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, whose perspectivist approach makes it possible to challenge the assumption that the creation of academic knowledge is necessarily anchored in the moral obligation to free subjugated populations from various kinds of oppression. The connection between the self and the other is also the focus of the article by **Eran Dorfman** and **Eviatar Kopenhagen**, who argue that the depleted state of continental philosophy derives from the dissipation of the tension between “life” and “the world.” They point to the image of the double, “a creature who is me and not me, me and the other,” as a means of escaping from the dead end that philosophy has reached.

Three articles propose new or renewed theoretical and critical paths for discussion of the occupation and Israeli–Palestinian relations. **Areej Sabbagh-Khoury** provides a methodical review of the paradigm of settlement colonialism and emphasizes its local relevance, both for understanding the Zionist project and for analyzing the sociology of knowledge creation in Israel. She argues that the renewed appearance of the paradigm in recent years derives from changes in Palestinian politics in Israel and from the key

role of Palestinian academics in developing this discourse. **Efrat Even-Tzur** discusses the contribution of psychoanalytic ideas to criticism of political violence and focuses on the complex issue of trauma and testimony of those who violently attacked others. The discussion of this issue, especially in the Israeli context, highlights the need to find ways to connect the therapy room to the public space. **Renana Keydar** and **Ron Dudai** deal with a similar tension, but in the legal sphere. Their article discusses “transitional justice,” that is, the question of how societies cope with the aftermath of conflicts and massive violation of human rights. They argue that the Israeli context shows that principles and techniques of transitional justice can be useful even before the conclusion of a conflict – for example, in the oppositional political and cultural sphere.

Finally, three articles present exciting developments in several fields of scholarship that have not always enjoyed, despite their centrality, a significant discussion in *Theory and Criticism*. **Roni Holler** examines the emergence of Disability Studies; **Dafna Hirsh** considers the significance of Food Studies; and **Dror Harari** presents developments in Performance Studies. All three offer helpful syntheses, combining a review of their field as it has become established worldwide and a discussion of the specific challenges and unique directions arising in the Israeli context: the image of the ideal Israeli body; the place of hummus and the Bamba snack in Israeli culture; or the visit of United States President, Donald Trump, in Israel.

As mentioned above, the volume closes with an afterword by **Shai Lavi**, the director of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and chair of the editorial board of *Theory and Criticism*. Relying on selected texts published in this volume, Lavi attempts to understand the nature of a possible turning point in critical theory. On the one hand, Lavi is undoubtedly correct in arguing that the renewal of critical thought depends, *inter alia*, on turning the critical gaze inward – toward critical theory itself. On the other hand, it seems to me that the present volume demonstrates the imperative need to develop new perspectives that would turn outward – to questions, players, and arenas that have not yet received the attention they deserve. I have no doubt that even in the absence of a dramatic and unequivocal shift in critical theory, Israel – with its history, complexity, and struggles – will continue to provide us with opportunities to promote “interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary writing that is constantly critical of canonical bodies of knowledge.”

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One important theoretical direction that crops up occasionally in this volume, but is not developed directly, is Animal Studies. The reason for this omission is that Animal Studies is the subject of Volume 51, a single-theme special volume edited by Yoav Kenny, which

will appear in Summer 2019. The titles of the texts included in it can be found, as always, on the back cover of this volume.

With the publication of volume 51, I will complete my editorship of *Theory and Criticism* after six-and-a-half years. And so, this is an opportunity to thank all those who have helped me in this endeavor: the members of the editorial committee and the editorial board; the authors of the articles and essays; the friends and colleagues who often helped me with good advice (thanks especially to Prof. Yehouda Shenhav); and mainly to the reviewers without whose important behind-the-scenes work it would not be possible to publish an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary journal such as *Theory and Criticism*.

Thanks also to the devoted team of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, the journal's home since its launch: to Dr. Tal Kohavi, the executive editor and director of the Institute's Press, for the help, the willing ear, and the gift of common sense; to Yael Shalev-Vigiser, for five years' investment and exceptional dedication as editorial secretary; and to Sanda Fuchs, the current editorial secretary, who is about to complete her time here, for the rare combination of seriousness and fine humor. To the new editorial secretary, Anat Shalem, I wish much success and satisfaction in her work.

Naama Pinhasi-Zipor was the journal's copy editor for about eight years, until 2017. Copy editors (who are in fact "language editors") do not usually receive recognition for their important contribution, and I am happy to take this opportunity to thank her for her persistence and dedication: I learned a great deal from her – about the Hebrew language, about handling texts, and about human relations. Many thanks also to the excellent language editors who are part of the Institute's team, Ronit Tapiero and Ayelet Kamay, for their support on various occasions; to the designer Nomi Morag; and also to all the other translators, proofreaders, designers, typesetters and printers who have worked with us.

In addition to the peer-reviewed articles that appear in *Theory and Criticism*, the journal regularly publishes essays and book reviews. Since these are not usually reviewed by academic referees, they require a great deal of editorial initiative and assistance. I am very grateful to the editors of the "Essays and Criticism" section who worked during my period as editor – Yaniv Ron-El, Ella Glass, and Matan Boord – for their involvement in the journal, and I wish them luck in the continuation of their academic journey.

Thanks to Prof. Gabriel Motzkin, the former director of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, who put his trust in me; and to Prof. Shai Lavi, the current director of the Institute, for his support and help. Even when we disagreed, we knew how to rise above the disagreements in order to move forward with the journal's activity. I am certain that he will bring *Theory and Criticism* to new heights.

As this volume goes to print, I have been happy to learn that a special search committee has chosen Dr. Shaul Setter as the next editor of *Theory and Criticism*. The challenges, as this volume demonstrates in so many ways, are great – but so are the possible rewards, as the journal recalculates its route. On behalf of the *Theory and Criticism* community, I wish Shaul all the best in this undertaking. I have no doubt that he will open up new ways of promoting criticism – and theory; and I very much look forward to reading his first Preface, which will join the long tradition described here.

I cannot imagine my work over the years without the great experience, initiative, and friendship of the deputy editor, Orna Yoeli-Benbenisty, who worked alongside me. Her familiarity with all the aspects of editorial work and her willingness to help out in every way were crucial for our ability to publish two wide-ranging volumes each year, and I have no doubt that her presence will continue to help the journal in the future. I thank her from the bottom of my heart.

And finally, my thanks and love to Shira Zeitak and to our daughters Tamar, Talya, and Ruth, for their love, patience, and support.