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ALIENATION AND NATIONALISM IN THE FICTION OF AVRAHAM B. YEHOSHUA

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

M.A. 1983

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ALIENATION AND NATIONALISM IN THE FICTION
OF AVRAHAM B. YEHOSHUA

by

Beatrice Carla Sebba

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the
DEPARTMENT OF ORIENTAL STUDIES
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
In the Graduate College
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my deepest appreciation and esteem for my advisor, Dr. Naomi Sokoloff. Dr. Sokoloff gave freely of her time, energy, advice and criticism, always with great patience and insight. She has been a truly outstanding teacher and counselor. I also wish to thank my other teachers and advisors in the Department of Oriental Studies, including Dr. Michael Bonine, Dr. Adel Gamal, Dr. Peter Machinist, Dr. Daniel Swetschinski and Dr. William Wilson for their suggestions and encouragement.

In 1980 I travelled to Israel to begin a study of the topic of this paper. For their kindness and invaluable guidance I extend thanks to Dr. Dan Meron, of the Department of Hebrew Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Ms. Rivka Maoz, of the Hebrew University School for Overseas Students. In addition, I must thank Ms. Irit Blumenfeld for her assistance with source material and her encouragement of my use of Hebrew.

Finally, I wish to express my love and gratitude to my family, particularly my sons David and Rafael, who patiently endured the long hours of work necessitated by this paper; and to Lee Samore, without whose friendship and constant support this undertaking would have been even more difficult.

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ABSTRACT

The fiction of Avraham B. Yehoshua belongs to the mainstream of New Wave Israeli literature. Yehoshua is concerned with themes such as alienation, generational conflict and the struggle with authority, which while expressed in terms of individual conflict, may be interpreted on a national level as well.

Three types of alienation are discussed in this paper: that which occurs during the process of engagement with or disengagement from an authority figure; that which results from failed love; and that which results when national values become blurred.

Yehoshua's stories conclude on an irresolute note, generally portraying the protagonist in an emotional quandary following a grotesque expression of his dilemma, and in a situation which finds him still existentially at odds with his environment. In this sense Yehoshua mimics the collective problems of the nation, which are unyielding as to solution and render the future vague and uncertain.

INTRODUCTION

To understand the literature of a nation is to begin to understand that nation's soul. The external history of a country and the political rhetoric which attends the historical process do not necessarily suffice to explain the hopes, tensions, and conflicts which motivate its citizens. Fiction, on the other hand, illustrating through nuance, characterization, observation and invention, yields a more profound interpretation of the subtle and subconscious forces which cause a nation and its citizenry to behave in particular ways.

Much of the literature of Israel is not available in translation; therefore, much of the world's perception of that country is based upon media attention and superficial political analysis without recourse to considered historical perspective or illuminating insights into the psychological traits of Israelis. The purpose of this thesis is, in part, to provide some such perspective and insight by examining various works of an established and critically acclaimed contemporary Israeli writer, Avraham B. Yehoshua. An additional purpose is to survey a variety of critical attitudes; Yehoshua has not been granted much critical space in English, except for fairly brief articles in professional journals and within the pages of books dealing with Israeli social history and literature. Because Yehoshua's observations of the national dilemma are embedded within the context of individual problems which can be expanded to a universal interpretation, this

study will not be confined to a reading at a national level. Rather, it will also illustrate Yehoshua's position in twentieth century literature by studying those themes which most concern him: alienation, isolation, and the struggle for power and affirmation.

In order to place Yehoshua's writings in perspective with regard to both the literature of Israel and other traditions, a survey of the position of Israeli writing in modern literature, as well as of its historical trends, is appropriate.

Israeli writing does not occupy an influential or particularly innovative position in modern Western literature. It has the potential of occupying an important position in Middle Eastern literature based on the merit of its ideas; however, it is available only to very few Middle Eastern readers, because of the fact that so very little has been translated into Arabic and other languages of the region. Furthermore, due to the hostility accorded to Israel such writing as has been translated is not met with critical objectivity.¹

Modern Israeli literature is largely derivative in style from other strains of Western writing. The earliest writings derive from Russian and Eastern European Jewish folk tales. In the period through the settlement in Palestine and beyond the creation of the State, the influence of German expressionism, French existentialism, and

1. For interesting insights into the Arab attitude toward Israeli literature, Bezirgan's article "Arab-Jewish Cultural Symbiosis: Prospects and Retrospects," provides valuable information. For the reader of Arabic, Namadhiij min al Adab al Isra'ili: ed. & trans. by 'Abd al Mun'im Salim provides a contemporary critical study of Israel prose and poetry.

surrealism is evident. In addition, Israeli writing has so far not reached a wide readership beyond its Jewish audience, within and without the borders of Israel. One reason for this may be its obsession with what one of Yehoshua's characters has called "this Jewish fate" ("haggoral hayvehudi hazze"). The nature of the Israeli quest for justification and continuation simply has not evoked a wide response from the non-Jewish reading public. Therefore, since Israeli writing has, until recently, not usually probed the general human condition and since it offers little that is startling or innovative in style, it remains fairly isolated. It must be noted that in recent years such writers as Yehuda Amichai, Amos Oz, and Yehoshua himself have been reviewed in Western journals and magazines and have lectured abroad, but they have as yet reached a fairly narrow audience. One reason for increased interest in these writers is that, in addition to the quality of their work, they move beyond national and sectarian topics and concern themselves with themes of a universal nature. In so doing they have established themselves as members of the "New Wave" (Shaked, 1970 p. 17) school of Israeli writing.

Israeli literature is inextricably interwoven into the development of the Zionist endeavor and the resurrection of the Hebrew language. Hebrew, by virtue of its unique linguistic history, has presented its writers with both inspiration and challenge. Until the beginning of the Jewish settlement in Palestine, Hebrew was used primarily in the reading of the Bible and in liturgy; its vernacular remained undynamic and relatively unchanging. Very few Jews spoke it on a daily basis and very few writers employed it as their mode of

communication. Nevertheless, Hebrew literary tradition is the oldest alive in the world. It commences with the Bible, and continues with the Talmud and Midrashic writings, medieval commentaries, the tremendous poetic outpouring in Spain during the period of the Muslim conquest, works of mysticism such as the Qabbalah, the Hebrew grammars composed at that time and modeled on Arabic grammars, the folk tales describing life in the shtetl, and the continuous modification of the prayer book. In addition, a secular tradition existed which included drama, essays and travelogues. This broad tradition, which reflects Jewish life in numerous cultures around the world, gives the Israeli writer 3,000 years from which to draw upon legend, history, analysis, poetry, metaphor, and mysticism. Even the shortest poem may include a Biblical metaphor, a rabbinic twist, a play on words involving numerology, a reference to the Holocaust, and a comment concerning Zionism. While such a wealth of materials offers the Israeli writer a feast from which to select his words, it concurrently presents other problems. Sandbank has defined the primary problem as being the necessity to slough off the sacred meaning inherent in Hebrew in order to describe a profane world (Sandbank, 1972, p. 17). Of course, this problem can also work to the advantage of a skilled writer with an ironic viewpoint (for example, Israel's Nobel laureate, S. Y. Agnon), insofar as the language of piety can be used to establish dramatic tension in the depiction of secular events (Alter, 1969, p. 196). Yehoshua demonstrated this ability, to a certain extent, in some of his earlier stories (such as "Flood Tide" and "The Last Commander") by using religious allusion combined with Hebrew bordering on the Biblical

to construct parodies of human versus divine authority. Ancillary to this problem is the fact that colloquial modern Hebrew has not yet assumed final dimensions: it is continuously changing at the same time that it is being created; and its lexical range is broadening while its very formal literary grammar yields to more flexible speech patterns. For this reason Israeli writers are at the forefront in the development of their language, employing older allusions where appropriate and molding the vernacular at the same time. Yet another difficulty, which affects not so much the writer as the non-Hebrew reading audience, is that of translation, since several thousand years of shaping a language primarily for ritual use beget a kind of esoteric code inaccessible to the untutored. In addition, the nature of a Semitic language such as Hebrew involves complexities and subtleties of grammar which are alien to the West.

Therefore, Hebrew, a revived language for a new phase in Jewish history, can be considered the perfect accompaniment of Zionism, the new ideology for this new phase. From the turn of the century onwards, Israeli writers--with Hebrew as the tool, Jewish tradition as the inspiration, and European style as the model--set out to describe the Zionist experience in Eretz Yisrael. This experience, expressed both orally and in diaries, editorials, prose, and poetry, reflected fairly precisely the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the Jewish settlers. The Jews who immigrated between 1900 and the early 1930s (i.e., before vigorous and focused persecution forced a desperate flight), were overjoyed to be in what they took for granted as their homeland. By and large there was little room in their new situation for deep-rooted

expressions of alienation. That homeland was greatly idealized; the value of physical labor was extolled; and the importance of collective effort was emphasized. Furthermore, the nature of Zionism was debated primarily in its finer points: for example, the nature of Jewish labor, varieties of socialist economic systems, the implications of socialist Zionism for family life, and so forth. Zionism itself was not in question and its ultimate goals were only hazily addressed (for example, the definition of "homeland," "nation," or "state").

To be sure, the early settlers occasionally expressed feelings of alienation from the landscape, an indication of the shock of a European adjusting to Middle Eastern topography, flora, and fauna. Not everyone could relate to the swamps, deserts, barren rocks, sandstorms, scorpions and snakes of Palestine. Such alienation, however, was a physical phenomenon, based on tangible experience in the land. (Alienation at this time was indicated by the fact of yerida [emigration] and also in the works of certain writers such as Agnon and Brenner.) By contrast, Yehoshua, several generations removed from the hardships of these earlier immigrants, effectively uses a hostile depiction of the landscape as a background for his characters' alienation from life in general. The landscape itself is not necessarily hostile; rather, the individual's perception of it creates a dream-like atmosphere which accentuates his disaffection and helplessness.

During the early period of Zionist endeavor, idealization of the dream of return to the land did not include a pronounced anxiety over the possibility of conflict with the Arabs. The indigenous Arab population of Palestine was generally not perceived as constituting a

serious threat to Jewish settlement except by a few Zionist theoreticians and writers (who will be discussed in the chapter on The Lover). During the early period of the British Mandate, settlers did not view the Zionist undertaking as one of confrontation between Arab and Jew for possession of Palestine. The Jewish homeland was to be wrested from the West, the specific enemy being Britain.

From the early 1930s until the creation of the State of Israel, the Jews of Palestine by and large did not question their cause. Nazism rendered every question irrelevant, if not blasphemous. Feelings of helplessness and desperation turned to fury as Jews fought for the establishment of a state which would be legitimized by the rest of the world. In Jewish opinion, the world would regard as obvious the necessity for such a state. Only to the Arab was it not obvious; the Arabs repeatedly asked why such a state must be born on Palestinian soil. At this point, the conflict between Jew and Arab became irreconcilably violent, with zealotry and sectarianism winning the upper hand on both sides.

Following the Holocaust, during the war for the creation of Israel and in the years immediately thereafter, Israeli writers were engulfed by feelings, thoughts, and reactions of overwhelming proportions. The loss of six million Jews, the remnants of European Jewry arriving on the shores of Palestine, the war among Jew, Arab, and Englishman, the establishment of Israel and the ecstatic celebration among Jews of that event, the immense problems confronting Israel upon the attainment of nationhood, and the ongoing conflict with the Arab states, presented men of sensitivity and conscience with issues each of

which individually was traumatic. Israeli writing did not, on the whole, give attention to all these issues equally; rather, it tended to concentrate on an affirmation of statehood and to describe those facets of life which expressed the communal undertaking.

The writers of the 1940's and early 1950's are known as the Palmach generation (the Palmach were the young shock troops of the Haganah--one of the pre-state underground Jewish armies). Their stories were aimed at a definition of the collective ideal and the obstacles and personal dilemmas encountered in the upholding of that ideal. Individual values and experiences were secondary to the necessity of maintaining a communal esprit de corps. These writers were not pronouncedly concerned with the inner personal conflicts which might produce an alienated stance because of problems resistant to solution. A literature of validation and affirmation was perhaps to be expected from a nation which had undergone the trauma of a war of survival and witnessed the reduction of the Jewish people world-wide by one-third. The nationalist themes of this literature naturally celebrated the resurrection of nationhood.

Palestinian Arab literature following the 1948 war, and more particularly following the 1967 war, exhibits a similar theme of extolling the upholding of the collective effort at the price of individual sacrifice; its most popular writers, as was true of Israel at the time discussed above, are the most nationalistic, for example,

Mahmoud Darwish, Ghassan Kanafani, and Halim Barakat.² Indeed, were the authors' names to be removed from the poetry of the Jewish Yishuv and from current Palestinian poetry, the reader would be hard put to know whether the writer was Jewish or Arab! Wars of liberation and feelings of disinheritance and disenfranchisement appear to evoke a similarity of response in various peoples; this fact becomes more poignant in the present instance because it is the same land which is being described in virtually identical terms by the opposing sides.

In the mid-1950s an important change occurred in Hebrew literature with regard to treating the collective experience, as absurdist and expressionist writing began to appear in Israel in response to the complex, and simultaneously victorious and tragic events surrounding the establishment of the State. The best known and most controversial writer to depart from collective, nationalistic themes at this early stage in Israeli literature was S. Yizhar. While not without stylistic problems, Yizhar's works were among the first to confront and question certain Zionist assumptions. His two-volume novel, Days of Ziklag (Yeme Siqlag), is exceedingly complex in its stream-of-consciousness style, its construction, and its content. Written in 1958, and dealing with a seven-day period during the 1948 war, it poses existential questions relating to the nature of war and the behavior of men in combat. This was an interesting theme for the Israeli of that period,

2. Shimon Ballas (1978) offers the best-known study in Hebrew of that contemporary Arab literature which treats the Arab-Israeli conflict.

and one not easily dealt with, for the Israeli army stands unique among the pillars of Israeli society. It is an army whose credo is the "purity of arms" and any attack upon it in print still meets with a considerable degree of hostile debate. Two of Yizhar's best known short stories are "The Prisoner" ("Haššabuy") and "Ḥirbet Ḥizeh." "The Prisoner" relates the reactions of a soldier to the harsh treatment meted out to an Arab shepherd by the Israeli officers who capture him. "Ḥirbet Ḥizeh" refers to a village of that name, and again describes the reactions of one soldier to the expulsion of its Arab inhabitants by the army. In each tale, the soldier merely recounts his feelings; he does not undertake action to rectify any wrongdoing. Unlike Yehoshua, Yizhar does not expand his protagonists' problems from their specific environment to the general human condition; instead he directly and deliberately probes a raw nerve in Israeli society. Yet he deserves mention here, for he is among the first and best-known of a small number of distinguished writers who have chipped at the cracks in the foundation of Zionist assumptions. Yehoshua, thus, did not arise phoenix-like from the ashes of war, but rather is in the tradition of writers who criticize and satirize Israeli society.

Yehoshua begins his exploration of alienation from the very beginning of his career. His first volume of short stories, The Death of the Old Man, (Mot hazzaggen), published in 1962, displays a style which is abstract in its treatment of setting and expressionistic in attitude and theme. Yehoshua employs certain themes, such as alienation, generational conflict, and the problem of power and authority, which were major elements in the expressionist literature

that developed in Germany in the early part of the twentieth century, and he illuminates them by means of motifs such as silence, lack of communication, flight, and the grotesque juxtaposition of characters.³ Sokel, in The Writer in Extremis, has described the expressionist protagonist as an auto-emotional man, unable to love except from a distance or in dreams or in tragic possessiveness, and possessing an impotent heart, unwilling and unable to relate to others. Furthermore, as Sokel has noted:

. . . the flight from an unendurable reality, engenders a feeling of unreality, or lack of substance, of inner emptiness; this in turn produces the desperate need for someone strong, real, and substantial on whom the empty man can lean, whom he can exploit, whose strength and vitality he can appropriate; eventually he destroys him in order to insure his own survival (Sokel, 1959, p. 130).

Yehoshua, in his preoccupation with the alienated, loveless protagonist who frequently resorts to flight as a solution, is solidly within the expressionist tradition.

Many critics have noted the affinity of Yehoshua, particularly in this first volume of short stories, to S. Y. Agnon and Franz Kafka. His tragic sense of irony, his occasional Biblical allusions, and the multi-layered levels of interpretation to which his stories are susceptible all reflect Agnon's work. Noteworthy here is the fact

3. I am relying upon Scholes' and Kellogg's definition of the words "theme" and "motif." Accordingly, the "theme" is the basic plot or dilemma which characterizes the story; the "motif" is the concrete image or event which illuminates the theme: it may be an historical event reworked by the writer to suit his purposes. For example, the conflict between fathers and sons is a theme which often concerns Israeli writers; the binding of Isaac by his father, Abraham, is a motif frequently retold in modern form to illustrate this theme (Scholes and Kellogg, 1966, pp. 26-27, 131).

that, in drawing upon Agnon for these elements in his writing, Yehoshua, like other contemporary writers, has not looked to the immediately preceding literary generation but instead has skipped back to the "grandfathers'" generation. This is perhaps because the Palmach generation, the writers who preceded the "New Wave" of which Yehoshua is representative, faced moral imperatives which did not admit to choice nor about which there could be a significant degree of confusion. Agnon, on the other hand, involved himself in the process of casting a nostalgic glance upon his European heritage and simultaneously questioning the religious traditions which typified it; he therefore exhibited a deep sense of ambivalence toward values about which traditional society claimed surety (Alter, 1969, p. 196). To a similar extent, Yehoshua and his contemporaries, freed of the immense shocks and psychological burdens of Palestinian-Israeli history in the 1940's, are able to level a critical eye at existential questions besetting their society.

Yehoshua's similarity to Kafka is more subtle, since they share neither language nor the same cultural tradition. Nevertheless, certain tendencies and motivations in Kafka are also to be found in Yehoshua. For example, Sokel has written:

Kafka's feeling of guilt is founded on his conviction of falling short of the parental example of robustness, energy, and success. Above all, Kafka realizes that at the basis of his father's success lies a fund of emotional substance, an emotional reality and authenticity that he feels wanting in himself (Sokel, 1959, p. 126).

Such generational conflict, exemplified by feelings of guilt turned to feelings of hatred, impotence, and despair, is a major theme in

Yehoshua's writing. Occasionally, the anger and frustration experienced toward the previous generation by the one which succeeds it, are vented upon the youngest generation. In this way Yehoshua demonstrates that generational conflict does not progress in a linear fashion but rather flows back and forth, plunging all parties into the tragic consequences of aborted communication and fulfillment. R. P. Blackmur wrote that "in Kafka, you have religious novels of rebirth where only the agony, not the rebirth, takes place" (Frank, 1968, p. 148). In parallel fashion, in the majority of Yehoshua's stories, the moral question at issue bursts forth in the denouement as a violent or grotesque action, but does not proceed to a resolution which brings peace or satisfaction to the protagonist. The major character has suffered the agony of expressing his dilemma without achieving the emotional or psychological fulfillment which would restore him to a normal life in society.

The concern with the alienated individual, in Israeli New Wave writing in general, and in Yehoshua specifically, arises, therefore, from both international and Israeli sources. Kafka and the German expressionists, followed by French existentialists such as Camus, Sartre, and Malraux, depicted the isolation and alienation of modern man both from his environment and from himself. In a sense they provided philosophical and thematic models for Israeli writers, who interpreted this problem on a "local" level, drawing upon specifically national motifs.

Following the publication of his first volume, Yehoshua demonstrated in his subsequent short stories, novellas, and novels a

decreasing use of abstract settings and characters, and an increasing concern with realistic atmosphere and questions of a national nature. His primary thrust, however, remained the depiction of alienation: man in a state of "exile," both from himself and his social context. In his evolution as a writer who addresses both personal and national problems, Yehoshua is well within the mainstream of contemporary Israeli writing. This trend in fiction wrestles with uneasy questions to which there are no clear solutions; questions which concern not Israel's legitimacy so much as her ideology and behavior. Not only does New Wave writing grapple with the issue of the individual and his needs outside the collective experience; it also acknowledges the "other side," the trauma that has been dealt the Arabs, thereby exposing and probing a most painful dilemma which thus far resists solution. In facing such questions and thereby acknowledging a crisis of conscience, Yehoshua and his contemporaries bear out Gertz's contention that: "The Israeli writer . . . discovers, after "Hirbet Hizah," that all that matters has moved to the other side: history, space, nature, meaningful time, social morality and divine force--all are now in the mountains, with the Arabs and the jackals, waiting for revenge" (Gertz, 1980, p. 74).

Yehoshua, an Israeli sabra born into a Sephardic family which has lived in Jerusalem for several generations, has emphasized his national commitment in his various essays and interviews. He has stated that the same themes would concern him if he were writing about Hong Kong. However, Zionism in his works is not simply a metaphor for human dreams and human failures; rather, it is the precise focus of his

observation, and its goals and shortcomings are woven into the fabric of his characters' lives.

The seven works included in this paper were selected to indicate Yehoshua's chronological development and also to indicate the manner by which he has maintained consistency of theme while altering his style and shifting his focus. The short stories "Flood Tide" and "The Last Commander" are among his earliest works and are concerned with relatively abstract protagonists and locales. They deal with the struggle against or submission to authority, and invite a religious interpretation. "Three Days and a Child" is included because, in accord with Morahg's opinion, it is the story by means of which Yehoshua enters Israeli reality and deals with tangible Israeli situations (Morahg, 1982, p. 182). Like the story which follows it, "A Long Hot Day," it depicts reactions to frustrated love and desire and the effects of such reactions upon the innocent. The following two stories, "Facing the Forests" and "The Beginning of Summer 1970," continue the exploration of Israeli themes and are directed to specifically national problems. Together the three sets of stories just described demonstrate three ways in which Yehoshua examines the fact of alienation: alienation from the divine, alienation from the beloved, and alienation from the homeland. The Lover, his first novel, conjoins prior themes, motifs, and settings and expands upon them. It is not simply an elaborate summary of previously explicated ideas, however; it also presents a new dimension of characterization, that of the engaged individual who contrasts with the disaffected protagonist.

This paper will demonstrate that Yehoshua views alienation on a variety of levels, from the individual to the national, and that he presents it by means of a variety of themes: for example, the struggle with authority, the denial of love, and the national crisis of conscience. These levels and themes are present in varying degrees, whether in his early, more abstract works or in his later, more "realistic" ones. Furthermore, the paper will illustrate his skill in shifting from one level to another by means of symbol, metaphor, and subtle characterization and will examine his vision of a predicament which is not, on the one hand, simply Israeli but also human, and, on the other hand, not simply universal but also pointedly Israeli.

ALIENATION AND THE DIVINE

"Flood Tide" (Ge'ut hayyam, 1962) and "The Last Commander" (Hammepakked ha'aharon, 1963) are representative of Yehoshua's earliest writings. Like other of his early short stories, they are not set in a specified location, and their characters are nameless and described in impersonal terms. They display allegorical tendencies; for each story contains a network of symbols which invites a reading on more than one level, alluding to a system of beliefs outside the text. The uniqueness of these two stories, in terms of Yehoshua's work in general and also in terms of their similarity to each other, lies in the religious symbolism which each contains and in the way in which such symbolism depicts the alienation of the protagonists.

The narrative of "Flood Tide" is reminiscent of Kafka; in fact, the resemblance of this story to "In the Penal Colony" is striking. Like Kafka's story, it takes place in an isolated prison, the narrative proceeds along lines steadily more horrifying, the protagonist is bound to a set of ossified rules and regulations to which he compulsively adheres, and he meets his grotesque fate with passive resignation. The harsh, remote setting, the spare description of an abstract locale, the dreamlike passivity of the narrator, and the struggle with (and in this instance, submission to) authority are illustrative of the Kafkaesque techniques which typify Yehoshua's earliest tales. Also reminiscent of Kafka is the protagonist-narrator's assumption that there is nothing

bizarre about his predicament. Just as we accept Gregor Samsa as a giant cockroach in "Metamorphosis," and the submission by the commandant in "In the Penal Colony" to the torture of the death machine, so we are drawn into an acceptance of this protagonist's acquiescence to his gruesome fate. "Flood Tide" is probably Yehoshua's most derivative work; it does not bear the stamp of originality that distinguishes his later works.

"Flood Tide" takes place in a prison on an isolated island far from the "Kingdom." By studying old diaries, the Chief Warden has determined that a flood will soon ensue which will destroy the prison and prisoners. Consequently, he and the other prison officials flee to the mountains, leaving in charge only one newly trained jailor. The Chief Warden also leaves behind his two dogs as company for the young man. In the few days during which the jailor awaits the inevitable flood, he occupies himself with caring for the prisoners and with studying obsessively the Manual of Regulations. In this ancient Manual are set down all the rules pertaining to the governing of the prison, and the jailor is compulsive in adhering to each rule absolutely.

When the tide has risen and it is apparent that the prison is about to be inundated, the jailor prepares to leave in a small boat which has been readied for that purpose. However, he suddenly realizes that if he leaves, taking the Manual of Regulations with him, there will be no law in the prison and anarchy will result. Therefore he returns, and, unlocking the cells for the first time in years, he gathers all 21 prisoners in his office to read them the Manual. Upon returning the prisoners to their cells, though, he discovers that his

keys have been stolen and that he cannot relock the doors. Instead of fleeing as quickly as possible, he sits, armed with his submachine gun, watching the cells. Eventually exhaustion drives him to sleep and at this point the prisoners seize him, take his gun, and lock him in one of the cells along with the two dogs. As the prisoners escape, he notices that the flood has reached its height and has begun to ebb, without destroying the prison. He, however, is trapped and alone. Until this point, the dogs have been rather friendly companions. Eventually, though, they are consumed by hunger and it is evident that they will soon devour him. This fate he greets with passive acceptance. In fact, he seems eager to be put to this test. The final paragraph begins: "The world is radiant with light. The glory of it. Still and smooth lies the water, joyously the sunbeams splinter" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 201).

As this ending, with its grotesque welcoming of self-destruction indicates, "Flood Tide" is a story of alienation from the warmth of human contact and the substance of human life. The protagonist is attached to only one thing, the Manual of Regulations, which he obeys with rigid obsession. He wishes to impress the King, a character so remote that dealing with him on a personal level is impossible. Basically the jailor delights in being alone. He has welcomed his lonely position, for he is happy to retreat each evening to his cubicle in order to study the Regulations. Indeed, he explicitly equates his solitude and his distance from human exchange with his adherence to authority: "The silence is absolute. Could any man wish for silence deeper than this? True happiness comes and floods

my heart again. I am alone here, but my solitude does not frighten me. For it is not a personal solitude, but one ordained by the Regulations and the Regulations are from the King" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 183).

Not one, but two levels of alienating authority are at work here. The remote and inaccessible King has total power over the jailor, who has willingly placed himself in this situation. The jailor, in turn, has absolute control over his prisoners. This man rejoices in that absolute power, which reflects the absolute power which the Regulations from the King exert over him. Indeed, he observes the same withdrawal and acceptance of silence among the prisoners that he himself experiences: ". . . over the years they had grown weary of each other and had limited themselves to strict necessities; before long they had found out that the only necessity is silence" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 188). There is no communication on any level between the hierarchies of power, and struggle is futile.

Unquestioning submission is also illustrated in the jailor's act of lashing the dogs to his belt as he prepares to escape. He voluntarily attaches himself to the instruments of his fate, allowing the symbols of power to crush him. His submissiveness--indeed, his death wish--becomes further apparent, just before and after he has been locked in the cell. When he considers shooting the prisoners to save himself he remarks: "I am unable to call up a single Regulation that would in any way justify such an act. I am a jailor, and I may be called upon to die for the Manual of Regulations" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 197). The prison, the prisoners, even life itself hold no importance compared to that of understanding an old and dehumanized set of rules,

and in fact, he welcomes his fate, as is indicated when he says: "What is the trial I am failing? Only a trial in wakefulness, of resisting sleep . . . not tears of sorrow, but of joy. . . . Imprisonment does not frighten me. I shall gain new insight into the real significance of the laws, here better than anywhere else" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 199). It may be concluded from this joyous acquiescence that the obsession with the regulations is the means by which the protagonist has decided to escape the realities and tensions of life. He has chosen to become a jailor, thus removing himself from the normal concerns of people and placing himself in a position of extraordinary power.

One level of interpretation of "Flood Tide," then, entails the confrontation with the problem of alienation and the dilemma of the protagonist who, while ostensibly submitting to estrangement from society, engages in a psychological power struggle and vents his frustrations upon a weaker party. The result of such confrontation, however, is not the desired validation or affirmation but rather a deterioration into emotional limbo or, on a more violent plane, destruction and death. Such an outburst becomes the means by which the protagonist gains attention for himself, having failed to do so by other more legitimate means.¹

1. Other stories in the collection to which "Flood Tide" belongs, such as "Galia's Wedding," "The Evening Journey of Yatir Village," and the title story, "The Death of the Old Man" have similarly desperate, grotesque, and violent conclusions; such action invariably stems from a lack of validating recognition of the individual who initiates the deed.

The above observations define the overt dynamic operating within the story. As Shaked has observed, "Flood Tide"'s power exists partially in the fact that it may be read on a general level and retain its sense of grim irony, without a more complex interpretation (Shaked, 1970, p. 130). This story, nonetheless, invites another level of reading due to its archetypal motifs and allusive features. Shaked reasons that the story is a restatement of the Flood Myth, the jailor representing Noah and the two dogs symbolic of the pairs of animals taken into the ark. Certain sentences at the beginning of the story, for example, invite such a reading thanks to their overtones of Biblical Hebrew: "When the waters shall prevail upon the earth, then shall the last jailor leave his prisoners and shall escape. Generations of prisoners come and go, but jailors are few and shall abide forever" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 178). The parable takes an unexpected twist, however, as the flood abates and the protagonist is condemned to die. The story of Noah is here retold in a dark, despairing narrative which confuses the question of good and evil. The animals, for example, associated in the Biblical story with resurrection, are become savage beasts, instruments of death. Unlike the original legend, there is no new beginning and no new covenant, for here the old laws have not prevented destruction.

Therefore, "Flood Tide" reflects, first of all, Yehoshua's attitude concerning the dark and isolating power of religion upon the individual, and also illustrates his use of symbols of Jewish tradition to indicate this attitude. Allusions to religious material in the story, contained in the references to the King and the Manual of

Regulations, call our attention to the issue of such power. The King is addressed in Hebrew as "Adonai hammeleḥ" or, "The Lord King," one of many ways in which Jews address God. This terminology clearly indicates the King's function as a symbol of God. Furthermore, the King is the author of the Manual of Regulations, and therefore the source of ultimate authority. Totally subjugated by God and isolated in his rigid belief system, the jailor is initially slightly afraid and in awe of his new-found power, and he recognizes that he is a captive of his destiny. He has previously said: "The slight advantage we have in being at liberty to move about the corridors and wander of an evening into the plain around the prison may cause some people to believe that we jailors are free. But we are not. We, too, are imprisoned, but of our own accord. As yet we are innocent" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 186). The only difference between him and the prisoners is that he has not yet committed a crime. But he expects to, for no one can follow perfectly the Law of the King.

Yet he tries, by studying the Manual of Regulations at every opportunity. Indeed, a major thrust of the story is that his attention to the Law distracts him from the alertness and flexibility necessary not only to cope with reality but also to ensure his survival. The protagonist's remarks about the Manual reveal that it is startlingly similar to the Torah: "It is all divided into chapters and verses: introductions, law, commandments. Yet there are times when I fancy that the Lawgiver is toying with me and has written nothing but obscure poetry" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 190). He refers to the Chief Warden's habit of reading the diaries of previous jailors, by saying: ". . . the

diaries left by the jailors of antiquity. But I know that the diaries are but commentary and the Manual is the main thing" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 184). This is an allusion to the many religious scholars who study the Talmud and various commentaries on the Torah. The jailor, however, wishes to be as near the source as possible. Being locked in the cell is not merely a test of faith; it also confronts him with the ultimate solitude--death--and in contemplating death he may approach true knowledge. His dependence on and faith in the Manual are the factors which turn him back from his escape: "All that I leave here will remain outside the Law" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 193). He would rather face death than allow anarchy. If the Law is equated with God then he has died for "Qidduš HaŠšem" ("Sanctification of the Name"), the most exalted reason for which a Jew can die.

The narrative, finally, does not convey his demise, however, as a noble sacrifice. "Flood Tide" does not deal with nobility but rather with compulsion and obsession. The jailor is essentially defenseless if the Law does not specify behavior in a particular situation. Ultimately, it does not bring life or salvation, but rather a sordid and pointless death.

Here some knowledge of Yehoshua's non-fiction prose may provide a key to issues that preoccupy him also in his fiction. He has stated quite clearly, particularly in his book Between Right and Right (Yehoshua, 1981, pp. 64-65), his complex attitude toward religion and, especially, Judaism. He believes that Jewish religion and nationalism cannot coexist and that this is the reason (most likely subconscious) that Jews remain in the Diaspora. Judaism in the Diaspora cannot

coerce its adherents into observing the Law since they may simply assimilate and disappear. On the other hand, in the Diaspora Judaism is much more powerful, since it is the primary means by which Jews express their identity. Within a Jewish nation, however, religion must coerce because Orthodox law is exacting and admits no deviation. Therefore, a power struggle between religious and secular authority is inevitable. While it cannot be stated, on the basis of his writings, that Yehoshua is "anti-religious," it is safe to say that he believes that organized religion must play a considerably weakened role in the life of the nation. On the basis of Jewish history in Eretz Yisrael he believes that the nation's survival depends upon a stricter separation of religion and state than exists at the present time there.²

With these statements in mind, it seems apparent that there is yet another aspect to "Flood Tide." The story, in this sense, is overdetermined: it contains images which may refer to several contradictory or overlapping elements, such as occur in a dream. These images may be read in more than one way without logical contradiction. In "Flood Tide," the wealth of symbolic material opens the story beyond an allegory with a direct, one-to-one correspondence between elements in its narrative and an "outside" set of values. Because the problems of God, the homeland, and the Diaspora are interconnected, in the case of the Jewish people, the fairly heavy symbolism is blurred. While the

2. At this time, the separation of powers between secular and religious authorities is indistinct in many areas of Israeli life; in fact, the government coalition depends upon cooperation with the religious parties.

story comments on the damaging influence of authoritarian religion, and thus echoes Yehoshua's reaction to the situation within Israeli society, it also points to problems of Jewish life outside of Israel.

Yehoshua has argued that life in the Diaspora, no matter what the degree of one's religious identity, has proven fatal for millions of Jews. He has stated that Jews who live outside Israel fear subconsciously that they cannot honor the demands made by Israel. They prefer to strive for other things, for example, religious perfection, rather than live imperfect lives in an idealized land. Addressing the psychological and physical peril of a life lived in "exile," he has written that:

While spiritual life in the Golah resembles the life of a man who built his house on the waterline and is always preoccupied with one and the same question--will the water surge into his house and what kind of unrelenting efforts must be made to keep it out?--we, on the other hand, resemble the man who moved his house and set it a distance from the waterline (Yehoshua, 1981, Between Right and Right, p. 73).

This statement parallels the situation which prevails in "Flood Tide." The island in the story can be interpreted as a symbol of the Diaspora, a view confirmed by the sequence of events which befall the protagonist. With the flood approaching, the man relies on the Manual for directions, but it cannot save him, even from the dogs he trusts. He is not at home nor among his own people; in fact, he does not want to be so and he prefers the foreign desolate island. He uses his "religious" obsession to justify his alienated stance and maintain his separateness from society. Death in exile is preferable to disobedience and to the imperfections inherent in a life lived among one's fellow humans (and fellow Jews, in accordance with the logic of

Between Right and Right). The flood is, then, symbolic of the inundation which constantly imperils the Diaspora Jew and, also, of the psychological and intellectual paralysis resulting from compulsive adherence to unbending religious dogma, no matter where one resides.

Even though "Flood Tide" is one of Yehoshua's earliest stories, and, in the following years, he wrote with greater complexity and at greater length of burning national issues, this story most clearly reveals his unwavering intellectual position as a secular nationalist.

In the following story, "The Last Commander," Yehoshua again employs religious allegory to illuminate the theme of alienation, but he shifts the mood from one of individual estrangement to one of collective disaffection, with a setting more plausible in terms of a national identification. Furthermore, this tale contains elements of rather affectionate satire, the target of which is the army--that unique aspect of Israeli life common to every citizen.

"The Last Commander," like "Flood Tide," exhibits despair and alienation, illustrated by the use of religious symbolism and grotesque situations. The alienation, however, is collective, expressed through the first person plural narration. This communal disaffection illustrates the transition in Israeli literary trends, occurring in the 1950's and 1960's, which moved from affirmation of the collective ideal to an examination of aberrant individuals who are unable to conform to social demands. Yehoshua, in "The Last Commander," expresses that alienation directly, not by simply focusing on the individual but by creating a sinister parody of the war stories and group allegiance of

the Palmach generation, and by depicting such alienation as a mutual experience.

"The Last Commander" concerns a unit of army veterans, with a tired and apathetic commander, sent to the South for maneuvers. There has been a hard-fought seven-year war in the country, although the South has been conquered in just seven days. The South is a mountainous desert, blazingly hot, desolate, and parched. The unit's destination is a mountain which has been formed from a volcano and still emits the heat within. The men are able to climb only half way up; there they find a furrow into which they settle. Yagnon, the commander, is the first to sleep. During the following seven days nothing is accomplished. Yagnon sleeps continuously, and after his men overcome their shock at his behavior they do likewise.

On the eighth day--a Sunday--a helicopter suddenly appears, a rope is lowered, and down it descends the company commander. He is horrified at the condition of the camp and the obvious lack of all military discipline. He immediately sets out to restore order and for six days he drives the men incessantly. They are forced to train day and night, to climb to the mountain top where he is standing with the only water available (and they all fail to reach him), and to prepare for something unspecified and ominous. On the sixth day of his visit he insists on conducting a true Erev Shabbat (the Friday evening religious service which marks the beginning of the Sabbath). Everyone is forced to pray and, following the meal, all the old nationalistic songs are wildly sung. On Saturday night he announces that the unit

will depart on a seven-day march with full gear across the desert, eventually reaching the cars which will take them home.

During his visit to the unit he has assiduously avoided any real contact with the unit commander, Yagnon, who has occasionally participated in the action but more often has slept. By the avoidance of the man, he indicates his intuition that at some point Yagnon will be a problem. Upon hearing the announcement of the march, Yagnon comments that once during the war he and his previous unit had fled from the enemy on this same mountain and had marched through the same wilderness for seven days, and nearly all had been killed. This further increases the terror of the exhausted soldiers.

On Sunday morning, as the men are gearing up for the march, the company commander announces that unfortunately he will not be able to participate as he has other places to go. Concealed joy floods the camp. As the helicopter appears, to take him away, he commands the unit to march. In the confusion of noise and dust, Yagnon delays the departure. As the company commander begins to ascend the rope ladder he understands, with helpless fury, that there will be no march. After the helicopter has vanished into the sky Yagnon returns to his sleep and the men destroy all the visible accomplishments of the preceding hellish week. The story closes as they too then return to sleep.

In its first person plural narration, and in its broad religious allusions which encompass most of the characters, "The Last Commander" relates a story of collective, rather than individual disaffection with the cosmos. The men are exhausted not merely from war but also from life. Following the example of Yagnon, they retreat

into sleep. The parallel between sleep and death appears throughout the story. As the men survey Yagnon falling asleep they observe: "If death is very close to life, then death had been caught in his eyes" (Yehoshua, 1977, p. 138). Yagnon, constantly on his back in the furrow, "gazes quietly with dead eyes" (Yehoshua, 1977, p. 149). The soldiers want to tell the company commander that he should abandon his efforts to create from them a fighting force, because they are dead men. If not dead, at least they are sleeping; that loss of consciousness blocks out the world and approximates death.

Not only are the characters in a death-like state; they are also very close to hell. The desert is not only lifeless; it blazes. Yehoshua's descriptions equate it with a nightmarish, other-worldly place. It is a "menacing, chalk-white region," with "oceans of wasteland," dead branches "twisted as though demented," and the blue sky turned into "stark white heat." When the men are in their furrow they feel the heat of a furnace, the one-time volcano. The desert is also populated with ghosts; for example, the men who died on Yagnon's first retreating march during the war. In addition, three menacing apparitions dressed in black robes appear twice on the horizon, only to disappear when they are seen. As such, they conceivably portend an ominous future, representing the fate which awaits the men.

"The Last Commander" is a story of rebellion against authority, unlike "Flood Tide," which describes the consequences of submission to authority. The men do not openly rebel, they do not kill anyone, nor do they actually die. They simply come to a halt and fall asleep. Robert Alter has written: "In the 'The Last Commander' rebellion

expresses itself . . . in a slackening; a lapse into lassitude . . . we are led also to see that this orgy of indolence signifies moral and spiritual paralysis . . ." (Alter, 1977, p. 231). The sleep which mimics death is a passive rebellion against cosmic authority; however, although this rebellion could have universal connotations--that is, the revolt of any soldiers against any war--Yehoshua particularizes it by employing symbolism which is unmistakably Jewish. A religion which had its origins in a southern desert is satirized by events occurring several millennia later. Although "The Last Commander" names no places, the assumption can be made that it takes place in Israel. The men go down to a southern desert, where a war has occurred--an allusion to Sinai, where Israel has fought four wars. In Sinai the Jews originally encountered God. An exhausted and fearful people, they were halted in their wanderings by divine authority, who decreed severe rules by which they would govern their lives. Here, the harsh and unrelenting company commander represents such an authority figure. He descends to the mountain from the sky. He is "solitary and strong, a white figure," who spends six days creating order out of chaos and on the seventh day he enforces rest. Shabbat, the day of rest, is mentioned by name, and its various traditions are described. The symbolic periodicity of the seven-day week is emphasized by frequent references to the seven-year war and to battles and marches lasting seven days.

However, these allusions to religion are not positive; the authority figure is despised, and Shabbat and order are rejected. When the commander appears the men recognize him: "We knew--that's our

enemy" (Yehoshua, 1977, p. 148). The "civilization" he offers is unwelcome; the men have found solitude, devoid of responsibility, on their mountain. When the company commander leaves, it is again by means of an ascent into the sky, to the unmitigated joy of those he leaves behind. "Seven days he was with us and each day was branded with terror . . . we have gazed open-eyed into the abyss" (Yehoshua, 1977, p. 162). This abyss is death in combat and the responsibility for fighting which the men refuse to accept. The ultimate alienation is the preference for chaos; in this instance, a total lack of military order, and a sleep which parallels death.

A final allusion in the story is Messianic, and this, too, appears in a negative fashion. The commander descends from and ascends to the sky, which is described as a white expanse--a heaven opposing the pseudo-hell in which the men live. They watch the sky after he leaves, dreading his return: "Many days are still left for us to sleep here. . . . Day after day passes. A sleepy, paralyzed camp. Only from time to time does someone of us lift his eyes to the gleaming expanse of white, which is called sky, in case a gray dot is fluttering, trying to come down to us and bring him back again" (Yehoshua, 1977, p. 165). It is clear that these men do not want

redemption. Not relishing their military obligations, the soldiers desire no encounter, either sacred or profane.³

"The Last Commander" may be interpreted on several levels: as a satire of military pomposity, as a portrayal of the war-weariness of Israel and the wasteful conflicts to which history has condemned her, and as a statement of the human condition in which the collective will finally collapse in the face of continual brutality (and prefers death to ongoing confrontation). These readings stem from the portrayal of individual and communal alienation in "The Last Commander," which, like "Flood Tide," offers a study of religious power which the author views with apprehension. In "Flood Tide" adherence to the Law and fear of abandoning it lead to death. In "The Last Commander," exhaustion and abandonment of law lead to passive chaos, characterized by death-like sleep. Yehoshua appears to be saying that redemption will not be found through fanatical adherence to nor fanatical abandonment of Law or of religious belief as a whole. In these stories, Yehoshua satirizes the authoritarianism and dogma which empower the religious establishment. In so doing he delivers a warning against the dangers of allowing a state to veer toward theocracy, and also against reliance on religion as a substitute for national identity.

3. We may note that whereas Yehoshua previously employed religious symbols and allusions which were solidly Jewish in origin, here he adds a Christian element--the "Messiah" in the story is not only a "Redeemer" but also ascends to the heavens and may return. In the tale "A Long Hot Day," Christian symbolism is again used in defining the protagonist's predicament: twice he casts himself down in the position of a cross.

"Flood Tide" and "The Last Commander" belong to Yehoshua's first collection of short stories. Descriptions are terse, dialogue is spare, and we are given little colorful characterization beyond that which is necessary to understand the action. Background and motivation are not closely examined--only implied. The settings are abstract, creating the aura of a nightmare. None of these stories need be read in the context of Israel. Yehoshua's power as a writer lies in his ability to involve us in impersonalized action which occurs in abstract settings, while depicting very real human dilemmas. On the other hand, because of the abstract and impersonal qualities of his characters the reader does not empathize with their fate; emotional identification with them does not happen easily, because existential problems are portrayed in abstract situations.

Following these stories, Yehoshua began to concretize his protagonists and locales. In subsequent texts he demonstrates a more refined technique and increasingly subtle symbolism overlies the foundation of a more realistic base. The following chapter discusses "Three Days and a Child," the tale which bridges the gap between the abstract and the actual in Yehoshua's prose, and between unnamed protagonists as symbols and those of flesh and blood and history. The latter are characters not only recognizable in an Israeli context but to whom an emotional response is possible. This story will be considered in conjunction with another of approximately the same period, "A Long Hot Day"; both works deal with the theme of alienation resulting from the frustration of sexual longing and lost love.

ALIENATION AND THE BELOVED

"Three Days and a Child" ("Šəloša yamim vayeled", 1965) is the first of Yehoshua's stories to be set in a clearly identifiable Israeli milieu. Although it contains dream-like elements (particularly in its descriptions of Jerusalem) it presents characters, situations, and locales which can be easily recognized as Israeli. We have already established that Yehoshua's primary theme is that of alienation and the despair which ensues from it. However, whereas the stories discussed in the previous chapter describe alienation from religion (among other things), "Three Days and a Child" treats alienation as the result of thwarted love.

The story occurs during a three-day period in the life of a Jerusalem student, with occasional flashbacks to explain the background which has brought him to his current crisis. Dov is a graduate student in mathematics who has agreed to care for Yali, the three-year-old child of long-standing acquaintances from a kibbutz which he had left five years before. The child's mother, Haya, once was Dov's lover and he has continued to love her, obsessively and hopelessly, for all the years since they first met. She is married to Zev, a fellow kibbutz member. Haya and Zev have decided to leave their kibbutz and to come to Jerusalem to study at the university. Dov is the only person they know who can care for Yali while they prepare for their entrance exams.

Since Dov has been in Jerusalem, he has been having an affair with Yael, a botany student who loves him. She in turn is loved by

Zvi, a student of zoology, who spends as much time as possible with both of them, hopelessly loving Yael from a distance. Thus the story contains a double triangle: Dov-Haya-Zev and Dov-Yael-Zvi, with Dov the connecting link.

Thematically, "Three Days and a Child" deals with Dov's ambivalent attitude toward Yali, whom he both loves and hates since the child is Haya's and strongly resembles her. He would like to kill Yali and indeed, makes various half-hearted attempts to do so, always drawing back at the last moment. He throws Yali dangerously high in the air in play, he allows him to climb a perilously high wall during their excursion to the Biblical Zoo, he takes Yali to the Muslim cemetery and hides from him there, he gives Yali a wild and sinister ride on a swing at the home of Yael's parents, he permits him to climb a chair and lean far out over the balcony of his apartment. All of these events take place during the first day of Yali's visit. At the end of that day Yali has become ill, with a sore throat and very high fever. Dov keeps Yali clean and cares for him perfunctorily, but does nothing to treat his illness. Rather, he fantasizes about Yali's death and how that event would not merely punish Haya for her rejection of him, but also would permanently fix him in her memory. For, as he says to himself repeatedly, she is careless, thoughtless, and forgetful. Yali, however, recovers and Dov gives him special care (medicine, the proper food, etc.), as he prepares to return him to his parents.

The subplot of the story deals with the second triangle, that of Dov, Yael, and Zvi. While Yali lies ill in Dov's apartment, Zvi comes to visit, specifically to bid Yael good-bye, as he is going to

the hospital for eye surgery. (Defective vision is a problem for more than one of Yehoshua's protagonists, for example, the firewatcher in "Facing the Forests" and the son in "A Poet's Continuing Silence"; this handicap is symbolic of their general confusion and "blurred vision" of life.) Zvi brings with him a cardboard box containing a "little viper," which he leaves in the apartment. The snake eventually escapes and disappears within the flat. This does not seem to bother Zvi, but it terrifies Dov. They ransack the apartment, searching for the snake. On the third morning it appears, slithering out from under Yali's bed. In the course of its capture, it bites Zvi and he kills it. Before returning Yali to his parents, Dov takes Zvi down to the main highway, where he stops an army truck that will take Zvi to the hospital.

In "Three Days and a Child" the narrator draws heavily on animal imagery to portray the conflicts resulting from thwarted and obsessive love. The text resembles a beast fable or animal parable, as has been noted by critics such as Shaked and Wachtel (Shaked, 1970, p. 145; Wachtel, 1979, p. 50.) Many elements point to this conclusion. The characters have names of animals: Dov (bear), Zev (wolf), Zvi (gazelle), Yael (ibex), Haya (animal). Furthermore, the names, to a certain extent, delineate the characteristics of their owners. Dov is indeed a rather awkward, lumbering bear, very dangerous when he is aroused. Zev is the clever wolf who has stolen Haya away from her other suitors. Zvi is a graceful gazelle, the prey of carnivores and snakes. Yael is the quick ibex (another translation of her name is mountain goat) and, as a member of the Nature Lovers Society, she spends considerable time climbing the hills around Jerusalem. Haya

embodies the unthinking, instinctual traits of all animals, (particularly in her casual treatment of others and her tendency to use them to suit her own needs). Even Yael's parents are compared to "two seedy old foxes," who "swing their tails lightly, their eyes narrow into slits" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 86). Yali's name is a nickname and Dov never learns his real name. His name surely remains deliberately obscure, since he is only three years old. He is as yet unformed; he has not assumed the traits that would give him a specific identity. Dov observes that he is a "small child, ostensibly human. No telling whether this is a defined personality or perhaps just a shape" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 64).

In addition to these features of a beast fable, the narrative incorporates other elements that further develop the animal motif. Yael and Zvi belong to the Nature Lovers Society; Zvi, in fact, is a zoology student. Dov takes Yali to visit the Biblical Zoo in Jerusalem, where the first threat to Yali's life occurs. And toward the conclusion of the tale, as Yali is recovering, Dov tells him a bedtime story which is about the very animals whose names Yehoshua's characters bear. The story is violent, and all the animals perish except for one wolf cub. Dov's relating of this tale suggests that he has gained awareness of his emotions and motives, and furthermore, at this moment, his changed and more tender feelings for Yali become clear. Even though Yali is Zev's son, he is only the innocent victim of adult hatred and jealousy and thus he is not accountable.

By presenting the subject of sexual love within the motif of an animal parable, Yehoshua illustrates his belief that failed and

obsessive love arouses passions so elemental as to be instinctual. Human sexuality is lived in terms of the law of the jungle, and sexual hunger leads to a battle of the survival of the fittest (Shaked, 1970, p. 145).

The parallel which is developed between Yali and the actual live animal in the story, the viper, exemplifies the author's attitude regarding the destructive power of jealousy and provides us with a key to understanding the resolution of feelings of alienation in the text. The snake is described as a "little viper" which "must have lost its parents" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 94). Yali is also a little viper; not merely an intruder in Dov's life, but also a devastating reminder of Dov's unfulfilled love for Haya. However, whereas Zvi is bitten by the viper and then kills it, Dov, although "bitten" by the pain of his loss, overcomes his violent impulses and does not kill Yali. The horror of "Three Days and a Child" lies not in the outburst of violence or grotesque action so typical of Yehoshua's writing, but rather in the impulse alone. In this sense it is the most "internal" of Yehoshua's stories since there is no overt confrontation of any kind. The characters relate to each other in a consistently calm and civilized manner. The struggle takes place within Dov's mind.

The only overt violence is Zvi's injury by and killing of the snake. He is the character who illustrates the results of fulfilling the hostile impulse: in the process of committing a violent deed he himself is injured. Furthermore, the snake itself functions as another symbol--the "serpent of jealousy" (Shaked, 1970, p. 146). Its killing parallels another turn of events. At the moment when the snake is

killed, it is apparent that not only is Yali recovering from his illness but also that Dov has abandoned the idea of killing him. Indeed, he takes exemplary care of him from that point on. Tender gestures are exchanged; the man and the child are "falling" for each other. "Unwittingly he [Yali] . . . has placed his hand on my shoulder, is stroking my hair gingerly. He's positively fallen for me" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 126). And further on: "I bade him kiss me. He offered his cheek. I kissed him . . ." (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 126). However, Dov's motives are unclear in this reversal of feeling. He would not mind if Yali forgot his parents. "I put out a feeler to see whether he remembers his parents still. Yes, he does, but they no longer matter" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 125). Not having Haya, Dov would not mind possessing something which is supremely dear to her.

The element of momentary tenderness in the relationship of Dov and Yali is remarkable, for it is quite rare in Yehoshua's writing. Generally his protagonists are too encumbered by their feelings of despair to extend themselves lovingly toward others. These instances do occur, however, in "Facing the Forests," when the firewatcher experiences pity and sympathy for the plight of the small Arab girl, in "A Long Hot Day," when the engineer attempts to understand and express his love for his daughter, and in The Lover, when the protagonist selects a considerate and positive course of action in resolving his dilemma with the Arab teenager who works for him. The fact that Yehoshua's alienated, self-absorbed protagonists do reach out lovingly when confronted with children suggests that children are, for him, uncorrupted and innocent and that they embody the hopeful future which

vanishes in adulthood. Innocence carries with it a redemptive power which weakens the destructive impulse of the adult who is spiritually lost, who has lost his ability to function positively. Concurrently, the trusting nature of the child highlights the pain and despair which dooms the corrupted adult.

Besides the animal motif, a second narrative element of "Three Days and a Child" which conveys alienation is the treatment of setting. In constructing this story of frustrated love, Yehoshua employs that most powerful of all Israeli symbols (and realities)--Jerusalem--which has been described with lyricism for millennia. Yehoshua writes no less lyrically but, like certain other modern Israeli writers (for example, Amos Oz in My Michael), his descriptions are hard-edged and stark, at times bordering on the sinister. It is not a kind or gentle city, and its primary deception is that it appears to be so.

In a long descriptive passage about Jerusalem, Yehoshua announces clearly that this is a story of symbols and that Jerusalem is chief among them. The section is entitled "In Dispraise of Jerusalem" (pp. 66-68), and after describing the city as hard and harsh, with dead, empty nights and with tense, anxious citizens who are obsessed with honors and language, he then adds:

Because everyone is bent upon symbols. In their zeal for symbols Jerusalemites are inclined to consider themselves symbols. Hence they use symbolic language, walk and talk symbolically, and meet each other symbolically speaking. At times, when the mood is on them, they look upon the sun, the wind, the sky stretched over their city as nothing but symbols that require study (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 67).

Many of the elements of Yehoshua's setting are alienating; the descriptions do not serve to make the city an inviting, accessible

place. Jerusalem is described in terms of the searing heat, the fiery sun, the rocks and boulders, and by phrases such as "Jerusalem in its bareness, its rocks . . ." (p. 121), ". . . white paths, ugly flowers, harsh sun trembling . . ." (p. 73), ". . . a languid, sickly sun . . ." (p. 78), ". . . a Jerusalem stewing in its silence . . ." (p. 66), ". . . gray world, gray Jerusalem . . ." (p. 80). The locations of action such as the hill on which Dov lives, the zoo, the Municipal Garden, and the home of Yael's parents are described with a measure of hostility which illuminates the protagonist's unease in both his interior and his exterior world.

The Jerusalem of "Three Days and a Child," furthermore, is in the midst of a hamsin--the fifty-day dust-filled heat wave which scorches both land and people, and is known throughout the Levant. Here Yehoshua draws on a specific Israeli reality to enhance his network of symbols, for the unstable emotions aroused during this period in the fictional world are, in reality, those typically associated with the hamsin in the region. Middle East legends describe the madness to which people can be driven during this period of furnace-like heat. It is said, for example, that if Ramadan falls during a hamsin, fasting Muslims may be very volatile. Dov is similarly volatile. The last two days of the hamsin, which correspond with the two days of Yali's fever, take place during the first two days of the story. On the third the hamsin breaks as does Yali's fever, and as does Dov's impulse to kill the boy. With the first hint of autumn, an inner calm descends upon him; and the city, the child, and he can now "cool off."

Aside from the heat, the most frequently mentioned aspects of the city, are those emphasizing her sharpness--her thorns and thistles. The wall at the Biblical Zoo, for example, has "a long history of thorns" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 69). Whenever Dov leaves his apartment building he must proceed along thorny paths which always scratch his legs. His unease is evident in other locations as well; for example, the classroom in which he teaches is situated so that the sun glares in his eyes. In other words, only in the confines of his own apartment does he have any degree of comfort. But even his flat is invaded. Yael, who is writing her thesis on the thistles of Israel, brings her collections to his place. At the conclusion of the story, after Dov has delivered Yali to his parents, he returns home and goes to bed, but his hand strikes one of her thorns on the floor. Having dispensed with the snake and with Yali, he discovers yet another invasive and hurtful presence in his apartment.

The way in which Jerusalem is portrayed, in particular her summer heat and her thorns which scratch Dov wherever he is, symbolizes his alienation and unsatisfactory relationships. He has left the kibbutz but has not found peace in the city. He does not love Yael, he does not get along with her parents, he resents Zvi, and he cannot possess Haya. In addition, he is unable to progress with his thesis. (As will be seen in coming chapters, uncompleted work, tasks begun and quit are a central problem for Yehoshua's characters). The thesis contains a "logical contradiction" and Dov cannot discover the source of the error. As such, the thesis represents the "logical contradiction" in his life--his love for Haya, which will never be

realized--and by extension symbolizes the emotional impasse at which he has arrived.

Dov's inability to attract the love he needs and to give freely of himself to others who need him lowers his self-esteem profoundly and is the source of his alienation. Morahg, in his study of Yehoshua, has noted the condition of denied confirmation; that is, the absence of affirming love which permeates the protagonist's life and therefore inhibits the attainment of constructive goals and personal self-esteem. In fact, Morahg writes: "The causal relationship between denied confirmation and individual degradation is at the thematic center of all of Yehoshua's works" (Morahg, 1982, p. 184). In "Three Days and a Child" and in the other works to be discussed in the following pages, the failure of love with its resultant feelings of powerlessness is a primary source of alienation for the protagonist, who becomes both victim and victimizer. The theme of a protagonist who is a victim turned victimizer occurs very frequently in Yehoshua's writing, and is not exclusively related to sexual longing. Inherent in the situation is a power struggle which extends beyond relationships between the sexes (as exemplified by the confrontations with divine authority in "Flood Tide" and "The Last Commander"). The loss of power frequently sets the protagonist on a course of action ending in a grotesque outburst, which, in one way or another, destroys him.

As Morahg has pointed out, "Three Days and a Child" is the pivotal work in Yehoshua's transition from an expressionist technique to a more realistic mode (Morahg, 1982, p. 187). Successfully employing various symbols, such as the animal parable, the parallel

between the weather and Dov's emotions, and between Yali and the snake, as well as the nightmarish geographic setting to convey its message, it is, nonetheless, strongly grounded in Israeli reality. The characters are not merely recognizable, provoking reactions of both sympathy and scorn; they are well-known Israeli types: kibbutzniks, students, and teachers. Yehoshua depicts with uncanny accuracy that unique quality of Jerusalem university life which is a combination of intensity, excitement, pedantry, and pathos. It is a way of life which could exist only in Jerusalem, with her overwrought history and unearthly, slightly seedy beauty. Although the story's theme of denied love and its resultant frustrations is a universal one, the powerfully evocative descriptions of Jerusalem and her inhabitants render it uniquely Israeli.

The following story, "A Long Hot Day," is similarly located in tangible settings, both Israeli and African. As in "Three Days and a Child," it concerns alienation resulting from feelings of powerlessness and despair because of failed love. In this story Yehoshua again addresses a problem--that of lack of communication and loneliness--which is universal in nature. However, certain motifs, especially that of flight, invite a national reading as well, albeit on a more subtle level than do those texts which follow "A Long Hot Day."

Unlike the protagonist in "Three Days and a Child," the primary character in "A Long Hot Day, His Despair, His Wife and His Daughter" ("Yom šarab 'arok, ye'ušo, 'išto, ubitto, 1970), while suffering profound despair, has "succeeded" in the externals of his life: he is

married, with a daughter, and has an excellent position which has allowed him to work abroad, an experience highly prized in Israeli society. These very factors, however, render him incapable of taking positive action to progress in his life, and ultimately force him to confront his powerlessness.

The protagonist (again unnamed) is a forty-two year old engineer who has been sent by his company to Africa, to share in directing the construction of a dam. After nine months there he becomes ill, and an African doctor diagnoses his disease as cancer. Since he distrusts the African's opinion he immediately returns to Israel, to his wife and child in Tel Aviv, for further diagnosis and treatment. The doctors are confounded by his condition, however, and inform him that there appears to be no problem. Throughout the story people treat him with deference, as though he were ill, but all deny that he is suffering from cancer. The reader does not know if he is the recipient of the protective denial so frequently given to cancer patients or is not ill at all. However, since the illness is the ostensible *raison d'etre* for his predicament--but the word "despair" appears in the title of the story, rather than "illness" or "cancer"--it is possible that he is actually suffering from "terminal" despair.

Most of the story takes place at his home, where he must confront his marriage and wife, Ruth, who is usually away studying in Jerusalem, and his daughter, Tamara, whose blossoming sexuality astonishes and disturbs him. Tamara is being courted by Gadi, a young man who has just entered the army and who is sending her daily love

letters. The protagonist, however, collects the daily mail, reads the letters, and stores them in his car so that Tamara never sees them.

One day when the protagonist is home alone, Gadi appears at the door, on leave from the army. The engineer is amazed by the passion for Tamara which he detects in Gadi. After a few awkward hours he shows the boy the intercepted letters. At this point Tamara returns from school, and her father leaves her alone with Gadi and the letters and climbs into his car, where he awaits Ruth's return from Jerusalem. He dozes off and awakens a few hours later, after dark. Panicked by his recollections of Africa, particularly by a tribal wedding celebration which he had attended the night before discovering his illness, and by the thought that he might truly have cancer, he decides to go for a drive. However, as he puts the car in motion he runs over Gadi, who has been hiding beneath it. With a cry of pain, the boy gets up and limps away, injured primarily in dignity. The story concludes with the protagonist falling to the ground in the form of a cross, shattered by the realization of the accident he has just caused, and overwhelmed by thoughts of Ruth and her power over him.

The opening paragraph of "A Long Hot Day" signals the central dilemma of this story. "Another hot day, he thinks in his sleep and is suddenly filled with anguish" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 203). Tel Aviv is in the midst of a "sharav," the Hebrew word for the *hamsin* mentioned in the discussion of "Three Days and a Child." The heat wave, which is mentioned frequently, contributes to the protagonist's lassitude and despair. Furthermore, the story begins as he is sleeping. Like many of Yehoshua's characters, he cannot sleep at night and therefore sleeps

or dozes during the day. The fact that he sleeps at odd hours keeps him out of the regular patterns of daily society, which accents his alienation from that society, and also keeps him in a state of languor and dream-like apprehension. The paragraph proceeds, describing him as a "limp, lifeless cross," the identical position he assumes when he flings himself to the ground at the story's conclusion. This suggests that he is and will remain an innocent victim, in this case of his marriage, since he perceives his wife as having the ability to crush him. Whenever he makes sexual overtures to her (in a very tentative way) she refuses, and he never pursues the matter. His impotence is not simply an implied sexual condition; it is also the emotional apathy which has covered his life. However, since Ruth is portrayed in thin detail, blame cannot be assigned to her: insufficient facts are given to clarify her character. The reader does not know who is at fault: does Ruth spend most of her time in Jerusalem, thereby alienating her husband, or has he driven her away? Does she reject him sexually and therefore cause his impotence, or has he been responsible for the sexual breakdown in their marriage? The reader knows only that there has been a marital breakdown and that the protagonist is physically and emotionally impotent with his wife.

The primary symbols of the protagonist's alienation and impotence, or general powerlessness, are his experiences in and relationships with Africa. Coming to the continent already unhappy and with a sense of failure, he finds there is no escape from his problems, but rather an intensification of them. Africa, in other words, only broadens his sense of alienation, as underscored by the fact that it is

there that the physical symptoms of his disease appear. Indeed, for him Africa is the Dark Continent, with alien people and an alien culture, which depress and oppress him. He does not react to it with the explorer's interest; by contrast, the engineer who replaces him sends home floods of letters extolling its beauty and fascination, whereas he sends only an occasional postcard because he is unable to escape himself and become immersed in the mysteries of the country and because he is alienated from his family in Israel. The protagonist is also contrasted with the Dutchman who shares in the management of the project. The Dutchman, whom Shaked has likened to the legendary Flying Dutchman--abandoned to fate and accepting it (Shaked, 1970, p. 143)--responds to Africa with good humor. On the night before the protagonist discovers his illness, the two men are invited to a tribal wedding celebration, whose narration pulsates with uncontrolled and mysterious eroticism. The Dutchman thoroughly enjoys the experience and cheerfully welcomes the African girl who is his temporary gift. The protagonist's response, though, is frozen; and after he has returned home and to bed he awakens with the first symptoms of his disease. Is the illness actually cancer or is it the despair of his impotence, clarified for him by his failure to respond to unrestrained sexuality?

In still another juxtaposition of characters, the engineer is confronted by the African doctor who tells him bluntly and cruelly that he has incurable cancer and must undergo surgery. The African harangues against white people and the West in general. "He considered all white experts dangerous parasites, grieved for Africa. Of Israel

he had never heard, nor wanted to" (Yehosuha, 1970, p. 208). Shaked has stated that in this confrontation of the two cultures there is an implication of the "Fall of the West," the West being ill and parasitic and the third world being strong, vital, and bursting with its own resources (Shaked, 1970, p. 143). At this point, the protagonist is brought to the nadir of his power, helpless in a foreign hospital in a foreign country, with the decree of death upon him. The main theme of the story, that of power and the despair which ensues from its loss, is wrought with irony here. The protagonist has been a man of considerable power, an engineer in a managerial position and a builder of dams; that is, he was engaged in the occupation of stopping that which would flow naturally. But just as his sexuality has been "dammed," thus handing over the power in his marriage to his wife, so has his power over thousands of African workers been halted by the harsh diagnosis of the African doctor.

The fragility of power and the emotional collapse resulting from its loss, is a theme which saturates Yehoshua's writing, including all of the stories discussed here. The protagonist of "Flood Tide" willingly goes to his death rather than betray the Law which placed power in his hands. In "The Last Commander," submission to power is only temporary: the men escape control with high glee and destroy its effects as soon as possible. In "Three Days and a Child" the student considers murder as a means of exerting power over the woman who has rejected him. The protagonist of "Facing the Forests" allows a national symbol to be destroyed as an expression of the lack of power over and hence alienation from his country and the individuals in his

life. In these examples, as well as in "A Long Hot Day," and other stories, reason and power are interdependent and the loss of reason accompanies the loss of power. Yudkin has written of Yehoshua and his contemporaries:

For the writer, the world is not normally accessible to rational control. Madness hovers on the fringes and intellect is liable to collapse, so that if we do not appreciate the governing forces of the world, sometimes the forces of darkness, we shall not be assessing the situation correctly, and shall not understand events, even within ourselves (Yudkin, 1974, p. 115).

Just as in "Facing the Forests" the topic of the Crusades and the forests themselves are interwoven as symbols of the protagonist's alienation, so in "A Long Hot Day" Africa and the family's shabby car are interconnected and function symbolically. The engineer has contracted for a two-year job in Africa in order to obtain money for a new car. When he returns to Israel after only nine months, not only does he not have the money to replace the car; he discovers that its condition has worsened because of Ruth's carelessness. "Ominous throbs in the gearbox, creaks in the clutch, rattles in the engine . . . it's on its last legs" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 235). The car clearly symbolizes the marriage which Ruth has apparently similarly neglected, and at the same time it also symbolizes her. For example, when the garage boss takes the engineer for a trial drive he delivers a long monologue about the wretched condition of the vehicle: "He is speaking of Ruth: 'She's basically sound. After all, I've seen older cars than this one keep going. But when a car gets to be this age she takes on a personality of her own. She gets capricious, has whims'" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 237).

A sexual element is introduced here, for Ruth has come to rely completely on the mechanic to rescue her when the car breaks down. He has etched his telephone number into the steering wheel and is accustomed to going out in the middle of the night to help her. A triangle is established; the mechanic and the engineer are both responsible for Ruth and the car. The engineer will not give up, however, even though the car, his marriage, and his own body have broken down. Every day he works on the car himself: "In these peaceful hours he would sometimes contrive to get to the heart of the engine, to the cold, twisted steel" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 236). Similarly, he would like to penetrate Ruth's heart, to regain his sexual power and rescue their marriage. However, he does not know how to accomplish this.

His fury at his helplessness propels him to thwart the ambitions and desires of the innocent Gadi, the only person helpless enough to be manipulated. Gadi's youth and passion highlight the very things which the protagonist has lost. As the protagonist cannot function sexually, so Gadi will not be permitted to; as the protagonist has not completed the construction of the dam, so Gadi will not be allowed to complete his courtship of Tamara. The dam is very much on the engineer's mind: for example, in justifying his interception of the letters he thinks to himself: "If he did not dam this tide, they would flood her altogether" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 230). At another point in the story, he goes for a short walk, builds a tiny dam and crushes it with his foot. The act of crushing a model of the dam which he was unable to complete in Africa anticipates the act of "crushing" Gadi with the car. In his actions such as worrying over his car, rather

than directly addressing his marital problems, and intercepting Gadi's letters to his daughter in order to prevent their love from flourishing, the engineer is acting out an expression of feelings and problems with which he cannot deal. Similarly, both he and the reader are unsure as to the nature of the illness--is he actually ill or are his symptoms manifestations of profound emotional problems?

This discrepancy between external events and appearances, and the confused internal perceptions in the lives of Yehoshua's individual characters, is expressed by the writer's blend of symbol and metaphor with realistic description. His later stories, which function in realistic settings but are filled with metaphoric allusion, illustrate by their very construction his protagonists' problems. The individuals in these stories generally live lives which are socially acceptable and barely worth a second glance. However, they are motivated by forces which they do not understand, but which surge forth like sudden flames, searing the innocent. As the protagonists do not face the dark secrets and repressions which drive them to action, so they are stunned by the results of their deeds. What seems cruel is not necessarily intended to be so, but rather is the product of hidden, inexplicable pain (Shaked, 1970, p. 144). In other words, Yehoshua weaves metaphor and symbolism through his stories, which are solidly cast in Israeli reality, to explain the grotesque events which finally explode across the bland surface of the characters' lives. Metaphor and reality are interwoven just as the violent urge lies entwined within the seemingly placid, even ineffectual personality. Neither the metaphor nor the violence is readily accessible as to interpretation, and the story

would lose its authenticity if an explanation were explicitly given. The character cannot know his motives because he lacks insight. The strength of Yehoshua's writing rests in his ability to use metaphor and symbol within a realistic setting in order to mimic the irrational forces operating beneath external reality.

The manner in which Yehoshua regards alienation and the means by which he depicts its effects on his adult characters contrast sharply with his attitude toward and description of the children in his works. His narrative is less dream-like and more straightforward in his depictions of Yali's habits and toys, and of the random thoughts and disorderly belongings which fill the lives of the adolescents in "A Long Hot Day" and The Lover. Children are not portrayed in abstract settings or by means of dreams and symbols. Their world, in his depiction, is unclouded by the knowledge of failure and the doubt and anxiety which ensue from it. His treatment of children, in other words, indicates little alienation as yet in their lives. By contrast, when Yehoshua treats failure, doubt, and anxiety among adults, he becomes abstract. Dreams, symbols, and bizarre locales are employed as he strips bare the psychological strata of his adult protagonists; they are necessary devices in the revelation of motivation when the adult protagonist lacks self-knowledge and is therefore unable to articulate his feelings. Yehoshua also uses symbol and metaphor when he becomes increasingly concerned with Israeli issues and problems of national concern in his later writing. While he identifies locations and portrays recognizable types of people, he continues to employ symbolism when dealing with troublesome national questions (such as the Crusades

as a symbol of Israel, the classroom as combat zone symbolizing generational conflict, and the old car again as symbol of Israel). The protagonist's inability to understand himself is paralleled by certain painful national dilemmas which do not readily submit to articulation, and therefore both sets of problems are treated symbolically.

In the two stories in this chapter and in those which follow, the protagonists are helpless to solve their problems because they lack self-knowledge, and, in addition are unable to attract or accept loving relationships which would enhance their self-esteem. Morahg, who, as has been previously noted, has termed this problem "denied confirmation," has defined the resulting behavioral symptoms as those of the victim turned victimizer (Morahg, 1982, pp. 184-185). The student who contemplates killing his lover's child, the engineer who disrupts the relationship between his daughter and her boyfriend, the firewatcher who allows his nation's forests to burn to the ground, the old teacher who finds secret satisfaction in his son's "death," and the protagonist of The Lover who manipulates all those with whom he has contact, are directing their rage at the wrong targets. This is unavoidable since they do not grasp the source of their alienation and thus cannot make appropriate gestures or take reasonable action to achieve the recognition and affirmation of which they are in such profound need.

The theme of power and the protagonist's bizarre response to its loss is frequently illuminated in Yehoshua's writing by the motif of flight, as it is here in the flight to Africa. His characters take to the road in aimless driving, or travel, or change locations in order

to escape their problems. These problems may be caused by a general alienation or malaise ("Flood Tide," "The Last Commander," "Facing the Forests," "Summer 70," "A Poet's Continuing Silence"), and/or by maladjusted relations with women ("Three Days and a Child," "Facing the Forests," "A Long Hot Day," "Missile Base 612," and The Lover). Much attention is given to the feelings experienced in transit by the protagonist and to the vehicle in which he travels. In "A Long Hot Day" and The Lover, the car is not only the method of flight but functions symbolically as well.

Furthermore, the protagonist does not travel to the heart of Galilee or to the Negev; he invariably lives in a city on the edge of Israel (Haifa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem) and flees to a border or beyond. Two interpretations of this phenomenon are possible. One is that Yehoshua is exploring personal limits and the need, not merely to escape an unbearable situation, but also to test oneself and the limits of one's sanity (Sokoloff, 1981, p. 124). However, as the border is reached or crossed (as in "Flood Tide," "A Long Hot Day," "Summer 70," and The Lover), a breakdown occurs and the protagonist is cast up against his deepest problems. In the process someone is invariably hurt and the protagonist-victim becomes the victimizer. If there is an existential lesson to be learned from Yehoshua it is that flight solves nothing--indeed may be the worst choice of action--and that one's repressions and failures are included in the baggage with which one travels.

A second interpretation can be made on a national level. Israel is a very small country, and its borders are not merely

unfixed--they are also ongoing arenas of combat. Her citizens, therefore, suffer from being confined within a small area, and greet with enthusiasm any opportunity to work, study or travel abroad. They also suffer from the fact that they can only leave Israel by air or sea: the peace accords with Egypt were welcomed partially because they provided Israelis with the first opportunity to travel overland to a neighboring country.

Yehoshua has thus neatly paralleled the situation of Israel, whose residents are locked into a small area by hostile borders and who continually seize opportunities to leave, with the dilemmas of his protagonists, who are locked into their personal agonies by the demands of societal behavior and who flee, albeit unsuccessfully, in order to escape. The soldiers in "The Last Commander" seek to lose themselves in sleep in a desert at the edge of the country. The student in "Three Days and a Child" not only travels back and forth between Jerusalem and his kibbutz, but also feels a new sensitivity for Yali as they approach the border dividing Jerusalem: he is nearing his personal limit in terms of his ability to carry out his plan to kill the child. The firewatcher in "Facing the Forests" crosses an internal boundary as, unable to confirm his own identity, he moves toward that of another. In "Summer 70" the protagonist is on the edge of madness as he nears the border in search of his son. In the novel The Lover two major characters are constantly travelling but never approach the essential nature of their disaffection. Furthermore, not only does Yehoshua construct parallels between a sense of national claustrophobia and more strictly personal anguish; by addressing the issue of flight to or

across national borders, he invites a reading which merges personal and collective problems. The military, intellectual, and ideological demands which Israel makes of its citizens are very high and, indeed, stressful, as are the demands (whether real or imagined) under which his protagonists eventually crumble. The confluence of individual and national dilemmas becomes more clear as Yehoshua's writing progresses, as "Facing the Forests," "Summer 70," and The Lover, discussed in the following chapters, will demonstrate.

Although in these two stories Yehoshua addresses things which have exceedingly high importance in Israel--the kibbutz, the university, professional success, and family life--"Three Days and a Child" and "A Long Hot Day" are not inherently critical of specific Israeli values. Yehoshua's unique combination of satire and grotesquerie are not yet aimed at cherished Zionist ideals and achievements.

In the following stories we shall see this aim directed with deadly effect. While he continues to address universal problems of lost love, alienation, and powerlessness, he also challenges the treasured beliefs and dreams of Israel itself.

ALIENATION AND THE HOMELAND

In the stories previously discussed, it has been noted that Yehoshua treated universal themes of alienation, powerlessness, and the urge toward destruction in an abstract, almost dream-like setting. Even though "The Last Commander," "Three Days and a Child," and "A Long Hot Day" take place in Israel, they deal with life, death, love and war in a manner which would yield a similar resolution whatever the national context. The following stories, however, are firmly grounded in the actuality of Israel. Their characters, settings, and events are credible only in the reality of Israeli history and values. While they retain the expressionist quality which typifies Yehoshua's writing, their impact is heightened because the reader recognizes problems, locations and personalities with which he is acquainted and with which he can identify in both an individual and a national context. These stories are rendered particularly powerful by the combination of the author's taut, lyrical style, and his confrontation with Israeli assumptions and beliefs. While fixed in an Israeli setting, with immediate relevance to everyday Israeli concerns, these stories have, nonetheless, a symbolic quality that propels them beneath the surface of Israeli society and forces a confrontation with its underlying tensions. It is this mixture of style, setting and intellectual challenge which has placed Yehoshua at the forefront of modern Israeli literature.

The problems described in these tales, it must be added, are universal, even if placed in an Israeli milieu. In other words, Yehoshua continues to discuss those inner demons of lovelessness, powerlessness, and despair with which all men wrestle and which drive them to deeds which are twisted in motive and bizarre in outcome. The protagonists are alienated from society and from themselves and are afflicted by impotence of one kind or another (Alter, 1977, p. 225), which impels them to commit acts of destruction or causes them to abandon work in progress and to wander along an unfulfilling path toward an unknown future.

This chapter will discuss the themes of personal and collective alienation and will elaborate on Yehoshua's most familiar motifs: flight, silence, grotesque situations, and juxtaposed characters.

Shaked has stated that with the story "Facing the Forests," Yehoshua captured by storm his place in the new Israeli literature. He opened new horizons to his readers, who were becoming tired of the usual stories of heroism and idealism (Shaked, 1970, p. 135). In this story these qualities have been grotesquely distorted.

"Facing the Forests" ("Mul hayyā 'rot", 1968) concerns a protagonist who is alienated not merely in his feelings and thoughts toward himself and society, but also in terms of his external life. The protagonist is an Israeli student who is approaching the age of thirty, and is adrift and aimless in Jerusalem. Alienated and without focus, he is unable to complete the writing necessary to obtain his university degree. At the advice of his friends he accepts a position as a firewatcher in one of Israel's new forests. These forests, of

which there are hundreds in Israel, are planted using Jewish National Fund money from foreign donors and are among the most highly prized achievements of Zionist effort. The student, who is nameless as are all the characters in "Facing the Forests," hopes that the six months of solitude afforded him by this job will inspire him to write his paper, the subject of which, selected for him by his friends, is the Crusades.

When he arrives at his home, located on a hill amidst the forests, he discovers that he will be cared for by an Arab who cooks for him and tends the forests as well. The Arab is mute, his tongue having been torn out during the 1948 war, although the circumstances attending this terrible event are not delineated. The firewatcher does not speak Arabic and the Arab apparently little Hebrew; thus communication between the two men is very difficult.

As the firewatcher settles down at his new job, his writing block is exacerbated by his increasing obsession with the forest itself. He learns that the Arab's wives are dead and that the forest has been built over the ruins of an Arab village or farm, which was either destroyed or abandoned. As the months pass, the firewatcher explores the forest, and his obsession expands to include the Arab and the obliterated village. The firewatcher never makes any overt judgment concerning right or wrong; in fact, he displays no emotion at all. He is visited by his father and also by a mistress--the wife of one of his friends--and his interaction with them is neutral at best. He encounters other people as well: hikers, primarily teenagers, and

groups of tourists who come to see the forests planted using their money.

Eventually it becomes clear that the firewatcher is no longer concerned with preventing or reporting a fire; rather, he hopes that one will break out. One day he discovers that the Arab has been hoarding tins of kerosene, and he allows the Arab to understand that he would do nothing to prevent the setting of a fire. He reflects, on his final day of duty, that "it isn't his fault that no fires have broken out" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 151). One would ordinarily expect an Israeli to consider the reverse and feel pride that he had prevented a fire.

On his last night, when he is in the house with the Arab's small daughter, and with the telephone to the fire station disconnected, he realizes that the Arab is at last setting the fire. At first his reaction is joyful. He takes the child and escapes, stopping at a safe vantage point to enjoy the spectacle of five hills ablaze and the futile efforts of the firemen to quench the fire. At last he returns to Jerusalem, but in an even more despairing and depressed state. His only actions have been to explore the forests, acquiesce in their destruction, and, in a confrontation with the police, to suggest that the Arab was the party guilty of starting the conflagration.

The opening lines of "Facing the Forests" signal to us that the story's primary thrust will be toward the problem of alienation. "Another winter lost in fog. As usual he did nothing" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 131). The phrases "another winter" and "as usual" indicate that the student's lack of passion and inactivity are continuing problems. The

past and present are immediately understood; the only question is what the future will bring. The winter is "lost in fog" as is the student's life--foggy, amorphous, unclear. He has done nothing, and his inertia is indicated by his inability to write, his half-hearted tutoring of slow children, the description of his aging (for example, the many references to his bald spot), and his lack of fixed, warm associations. That he has little control over his life is made clear by the fact that it is his friends who choose for him the position of firewatcher and even the topic of the Crusades, which he will study in the solitude of the forests. One indication of this is the repeated use of the Hebrew root R. P. H. which connotes weakness, limpness, and languor, in reference to the protagonist. This weakness, or passive acceptance of events, afflicts him throughout the story and is expressed at the conclusion in his observation that he is not to blame if no fires have broken out, indicating that he has done nothing to prevent them, and in the occurrence of the fire itself, which he does not set, even though he longs for it. This man can do nothing when he does not know what he wants, but he can also do nothing when he does know.

The protagonist's alienation from common human activity, or perhaps better stated, from that middle class activity so valued in Israel, is paralleled by his alienation from normal human relationships. He has slipped away from his friends, who are marching to work, briefcases in hand, while he remains unable to complete his first degree; he sleeps with their "aging wives" without love; he is unresponsive to his father's attempts at communication; and he does not

establish a connection with the various people who visit the forest during the summer.

The two people with whom the student-firewatcher does form bonds--malevolent on the one hand and benevolent on the other--are the mute Arab and his daughter. This is the kind of grotesque juxtaposition of characters which fascinates Yehoshua, and which lends much of his writing its tragicomic quality. The unexpectedly intense connection formed between apparently incompatible characters underscores the basic alienation of such individuals from their social surroundings and emphasizes their need to extend themselves and elicit a response. (The theme of the bond established between seemingly incongruous people is further developed in the novel The Lover.)

The specific juxtaposition employed here, between a passive Israeli intellectual and a hate-filled Arab is especially potent in the depiction of alienation. First, the Arab is the enemy, and even though this Arab is also an Israeli citizen he is definitely an enemy since he is bitter and intent upon revenge for the loss of his wives and his home. Contact and collaboration with the enemy are forbidden, yet the firewatcher crosses this boundary not only to make contact but also to empathize with the man. By violating this primal taboo and temporarily "defecting" to the other side, the protagonist evidences the depths of his estrangement from his own nation.

Second, while the firewatcher is an ineffectual fellow without goals or ties, or the ability to carry out a task, the Arab is a man of action, with achievements in the past and plans for the present which he does bring to pass. His ruined home and lost wives indicate that he

has roots and ties; his daughter is proof of his potency as well as his willingness to invest in the future; and his act of burning down the forest is the fulfillment of his intentions as well as an authentic release of his boiling emotions. When the forest has burned, the firewatcher obtains a very brief release but then returns to his bleak life. but the Arab, upon his arrest, has the gleam of malice and ultimate satisfaction in his eyes. The ability of the Arab to act emphasizes the protagonist's inability to do so.

Third, the Arab paradoxically represents the generational conflict in Israel, for his age is that of the fathers who fought for the creation of the state. The son is of the generation which is expected to carry on as guardian of the state (Wachtel, 1979, p. 49); indeed, protecting a Jewish National Forest is an awesome responsibility. But the protagonist is unable to perform this task. He represents what many Israeli writers have depicted as the weak, tired younger generation that is incapable or resentful of bearing the burden of sacrifice and war. He not only cannot identify with his own father; he turns in nihilistic despair to a father of the enemy and collaborates in the destruction of that which he has been assigned to protect. In this sense the story extends beyond the Israeli-Arab problem to a universal problem of fathers and sons. Yehoshua touches upon this theme of alienation between fathers and sons more directly and more poignantly in other works: the "sons" in "The Last Commander" refuse to obey the all-powerful "father," the commander of the title; in "The Continuing Silence of a Poet" the son is able to produce only a grotesque and garbled imitation of his father's poetry; in "Summer 70"

the fundamental theme of the story concerns the generational conflict, as the father achieves personal validation by contributing his son's life in war. However, because of the implications of Jewish-Arab contact in "Facing the Forests," nowhere else does Yehoshua describe this problem with such shocking effect.

The protagonist's empathy with the Arab and his acquiescence in the fire illustrate not only his alienation from the older generation but also an alienation, in every sense, from the land. His is a maladjusted existence in Jerusalem: he lives a passionless life in a passionate city. He is on the edge of the intellectual community and also on the edge of the teaching community, since he tutors slow children. Even more fundamentally, he is unaware of the Jewish National Fund's reforestation projects. "Forests . . . what forests? Since when do we have forests in this country?" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 133). It is virtually impossible for an Israeli to be ignorant of the existence of these forests since they are living symbols of the reclamation of the land, and their planting is widely celebrated. Nevertheless, he is surprised by the sight of the forests as he rides to the house in their midst, where he shall live. As he settles into his job as firewatcher, he neglects his studies and becomes fascinated by the forests about which he had previously known nothing.

The forests and the topic of his studies, the Crusades, are intertwined and are primary symbols of the protagonist's alienation. The setting signals his disaffection through his initial unawareness of the forests. As awareness sets in, however, the forests assume another dimension--they become a living character in the

story--symbolizing the land over which Jew and Arab are battling. The forests, in effect, are Israel, built over the ruins of Arab life which existed in Palestine prior to the Jews' return to the land. At a particular point during the summer, when the protagonist discovers that there is a destroyed Arab farm underneath the forests, and as he observes the groups of donors visiting to see the trees and the plaques which memorialize their contributions, he perceives the connection between these events and the topic of his university work, the Crusades.

When the protagonist begins to read his books he experiences further disorientation and expresses his feelings: "he feels certain that there is some dark issue buried within the subject and that it will startle him, startle others in him. And it will be just out of this drowsiness that envelops his mind like a permanent cloud that the matter will be revealed to him" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 142).

As Yudkin stated: "The subject of the Crusades is politically explosive within the context of modern Israel, and the Israeli is often compared by the Arabs to the medieval crusader and is seen as a foreign Western invader, uprooting an indigenous population" (Yudkin, 1974, p. 108). The Jew, then, who was an innocent victim of the Crusades, has become the victimizer in a modern Crusade in the eyes of the protagonist. The subject of the Crusades bestows the symbolism of the story and the forest is the symbol of the Israeli as Crusader. It is this contradiction, between the forest and the destroyed Arab village that it has literally supplanted, with which the protagonist cannot deal; his social experience is crystallized in his experience in the

forest (Shaked, 1970, p. 139). Therefore he acquiesces in its destruction and by inference, in the destruction of his land.

The dual motif of the forests and the Crusades (indeed, the tale might be titled "Facing the Crusades") treats the protagonist's existential alienation from his land. His personal alienation from other people is illustrated by a problem which characterizes much of Yehoshua's writing: silence and the lack of communication between his characters. There is little direct discourse in the narrative, and such as there is underscores the tentative nature of the protagonist's relations with other people. He initiates little conversation and responds vaguely, from an emotional distance. He is misunderstood by his friends, his mistress, and the director of the reforestation project. In addition, at the beginning of the story the reader is informed: "But words weary him; his own, let alone the words of others" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 131). His silence and "word-weariness" are especially ironic, since, as a student, words are his trade. This fact is further emphasized by his increasing boredom with the texts he tries to read during the tenure of his job as firewatcher.

However, the firewatcher's inability to communicate, and his adjustment to the solitude and silence which surround him do not make him incapable of any human contact. That "dark issue" buried within the subject of the Crusades is epitomized by the Arab caretaker; and indeed, through this man "the matter is revealed to him." The Arab is mute and the firewatcher does not speak Arabic, and so communication between them would seem to be impossible. Yet whereas the other characters have tongues and share the Hebrew language and still cannot

communicate, the Arab and the firewatcher overcome their unique obstacles and communicate very well indeed. As the protagonist's obsession with the forest, the village, the Arab and his daughter grows, he needs to express his feelings: one night he sits with the Arab and pours out the story of the Crusades. While doing so he measures the hate in the man's eyes and realizes that this is the vehicle by which he will achieve the destruction of the forests. The major point of "Facing the Forests," as in many writings of Yehoshua, is that oppressive and repressive silence and solitude lead to a grotesque, unexpected denouement, and a savage outburst which results from communication finally achieved, and which is ultimately ironic in its effect.

Shaked has reiterated in Gal Hadaš^v that many of Yehoshua's protagonists are men who have subconscious and repressed drives which lead them to an inevitable fate, and that they seek this fate willingly; in fact, they seem almost to enjoy it. Destiny is unavoidable because the paradox of the protagonist's situation must be lived to its conclusion. Such is the case in "Facing the Forests." In the initial paragraph of the story reference is made to a recurring dream of the firewatcher which foreshadows the denouement, in which he sees "a yellow waste where a few stunted trees may spring up in a moment of grace, and a naked woman" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 131). This dream symbolizes his condition: his life is a wasteland, the trees are the few ideas he has had, and the woman represents all women in his life--sexual objects, indefinite, unnamed, and nude. When he goes to assume his responsibilities he is shocked to discover that there are

forests in Israel, alive, green, and thriving. In the contrast between the dream, representing the protagonist's personal life, and the reality of the forest, the story moves beyond its national meaning to a universal one; that is, a wasted life confronting uncontrollable vitality which must then be destroyed. Such a confrontation is implied in the title. The Hebrew preposition mul, translated as "facing," also means "opposite," "confronting," and "against." The firewatcher leaves the forest briefly on an autumn day, shortly before the fire is set, and sees before him "a yellow waste . . . a kind of cursed dream. And he will stand there for a long time, facing the empty treeless silence and feeling that the encounter is taking place, is being successful even though it happens wordlessly" (Yehoshua, 1970, p. 164). The blaze, of course, returns the landscape to this state. When the protagonist returns to Jerusalem he dreams again, this time of green forests. A progression has occurred, from dreaming of a deathlike wasteland to confronting living reality, to converting that reality to wasteland and then to dreaming of life in that verdant environment which he has seen destroyed. We do not know whether this has been a positive progression and whether the denouement signals a hopeful future. In the final sentence, the man's friends ask, "Well? What now?" Has actual destruction freed the protagonist from his dire obsessions or has it merely expressed them, abandoning him, then, to an inchoate future?

The resolution, or lack thereof, is typical of many of Yehoshua's texts, in which passivity, ineffectualness and languor precede a violent or bizarre outburst which is followed by restored

calm, although the future remains unknown. In this sense there is an almost erotic dimension of tension, release and relief, which lends a pulsating movement to his narratives. However, the grotesque nature of the release, combined with an uncertain conclusion, alludes to the cruelty and superficiality in sexual relationships, as well as in non-sexual ones in general. This inconclusive nature of the denouement makes explicit the fact that such outbursts yield no satisfaction; the protagonist is unable to find authentic expression of his problems, and therefore an affirming resolution is almost impossible to achieve.

It is evident that the tension preceding the crisis and the crisis itself are of primary importance in these stories rather than the final solution. A suitable analogy would be a report describing nations at war which emphasized the conditions leading to the war and the war itself rather than the final peace agreement. Yehoshua's narratives conclude as the last shot is fired: we do not know if there will be a renewal of battle, a cease fire, or a true peace. Indeed, the stories may reflect a psychic tension within the author himself, paralleling and defining Israel's situation. Israel lives through periods of increasing tension with her neighbors which culminate in war but never resolve the essential conflict. Even the rare hopeful event, such as the peace with Egypt, stagnates in a mire of complexities. This creates an agonizing, unrelenting national tension from which no citizen can escape. Examined in psychoanalytic terms, it must result in a repression of the central issue since no solution seems possible, and therefore in an escalation of such tension and further outbursts.

In this sense Yehoshua is living and writing the rhythm of his country's history.

"Facing the Forests" is by far Yehoshua's most political story, and he has clearly stated its case. He regards a resolution of the Israel-Arab conflict as crucial and central for Israel. In an interview with Ehud Ben-Ezer, he turned to psychological terms to express the political experience treated in the story, thus indicating his sensitivity to the way in which subconscious forces may be expressed in an artistic, communal, and political manner:

We have in our lives some extremely serious repressions regarding the Israeli-Arab problem, the entire problem of our existence here. Literature has a socio-psychological function to perform, a cathartic one which lies first and foremost in the release of our repression. This is what happens in my story; I consider this story one of the ways of resolving an existential problem that was oppressing me, of releasing the repression, seeing reality with an open eye and freeing myself from the nightmare (Ben-Ezer, 1974, p. 328).

Referring to Yizhar's story "The Prisoner," Yehoshua states that that story dealt with one Arab in 1948 in the context of fairly limited Israeli experience. Twenty-six years later (the interview was given in 1974), the problem has broadened and there has been a multiplicity of contacts. Literature must deal with these painful issues. Even though it cannot solve the problems, it can release them into consciousness and create a forum for broader debate.

"Facing the Forests" unquestionably deals with issues which are difficult to face. It has been analyzed rather superficially by many critics, in part because Israelis are understandably loathe to examine anything which appears to question the existence of the state. For example, Wachtel has written: "It is unfortunate, perhaps, that

Yehoshua tells his story through the Zionist dream, a dream sacred to Jews everywhere as the means for Jewish survival. And yet the Zionist dream as metaphor can serve to show the gap that exists between man's vision and his reality" (Wachtel, 1979, p. 49).

Yet "Facing the Forests" is so inescapably Israeli in setting, symbol, and characterization that it would be dishonest only to reach beyond it to a primarily metaphoric interpretation. Rather, the reader must delve into it and, so, confront the nightmare of this aspect of Israeli reality. The story is accessible in its national setting as a plea for restraint and understanding rather than an advocacy of violence and the abandonment of one's identity: this is a more complete interpretation than those which, having noted the national motifs and symbols, leap to universal conclusions.

"Facing the Forests" progresses in theme a step beyond "Three Days and a Child" and "A Long Hot Day" which, although set in Israel, did not address issues uniquely Israeli. "Facing the Forests" is not only Israeli in setting; it is Israeli in terms of its thematic concepts. In combining the notions of both national and metaphysical alienation in this tale, Yehoshua illustrates the fact that Israel is a nation among nations, subject to the same flaws and historical tragedies as others, and conversely, that universal human anxieties will not be resolved by political ideology. The protagonist in the story suffers from a paralysis of belief, both in his nation and in himself. In seeking to overcome his disaffection, he crosses a forbidden boundary: he enters the identity of the putative enemy. This drastic transformation leads to destruction and further alienation.

For example, when facing the police after the fire, he cannot admit his collaboration; rather, he points out the Arab as guilty. His denial is the failure of yet another responsibility, that of one man for another. He is lost to himself, to his nation, and to mankind.

Among the various interpretations that are possible for the conclusion of "Facing the Forests," two suggest themselves most strongly. One is that disillusion with Israeli history is such an awesome condition that nothing can fill the void thereafter. (After the fire nothing is left except the ruins of the village which was there prior to the State.) The other is that personal redemption is not to be found by escaping one's self and seeking to become another, or to assume another's identity and problems, but rather can be attained only through inner struggle and an engaged ego. This story works very well on both levels, the nationalistic and the universal-individual.

When submitting the story to a nationalistic interpretation, it is necessary to distinguish between the attitude of the protagonist and that of the author. The firewatcher is a man without dreams and who lacks motivation. The narrative does not convey the reasons for his aimlessness and lack of identity with his nation, but it does demonstrate, through his general passivity and acquiescence with the Arab's intentions, that he is unable to act constructively. Furthermore, at the conclusion of the story, he is in the same alienated state that consumed him at the outset. The voice of the narrator (as opposed to that of the protagonist himself) expresses, through emotionless language and non-judgmental observation, a sense of passive horror toward the events

which occur, contrasting with the destructive mood of the protagonist. This horror reflects the attitude of Yehoshua himself, who, in his non-fiction, has indicated his profound concern with the country's problems. It is clear from everything which he has said and written that he does not question the right of Israel to exist. He is a committed Zionist who supports his country. However, like the father who must frequently chastise the child whom he dearly loves, he does not hesitate to ask painful questions and to examine difficult issues. It is easier for a partisan reader to "face the forests" if he understands that the writer is suggesting structural improvements in the society rather than attacking its foundations.

The following story, "The Beginning of Summer 1970," continues to develop the theme of failure and frustration in work and personal life, and of national disillusionment, and employs again the motifs of flight and lack of communication. It also brings the reader even closer to Israeli reality because it deals not only with recognizable characters and places, but also with a crisis within the country, the 1969-1970 War of Attrition. It is Yehoshua's most painful examination of the generation gap, and is a harrowing probe into the motives of a "bereaved parent."

"The Beginning of Summer 1970" ("Bitəhillat qayış, 1970"--1972) concerns an elderly teacher of Bible in an Israeli high school. Three years earlier, as the 1967 war erupted, he had been expected to retire; however, using the absence of young teachers who were called up for military service as his excuse, he has insisted on remaining. Neither

the school principal nor the staff speak to him, and he has difficulty communicating with his pupils. Three months prior to the story's opening, his son returned from several years of study in the United States to assume a teaching position in Jerusalem and brought with him his young American wife and their small son. The old man can barely speak English and so cannot communicate with the girl or the baby, and it is clear that his son is not very interested in him. The protagonist, therefore, is in a state of almost total isolation and alienation from life around him.

As the story opens, the school principal informs him that his son has been killed in action in the Jordan Valley. The old man immediately travels to Jerusalem, first to inform his daughter-in-law of their loss (in which attempt he is unsuccessful), then to go to the Hebrew University to inform his son's students of their teacher's fate, then to proceed to Hadassah Hospital to identify the body. However, at the hospital he discovers that the body has been mistakenly identified and is not that of his son. Accompanied by an army chaplain, he returns to Jerusalem and goes to an army camp to clarify the terrible error. There he is outfitted with a helmet, placed in a jeep and taken down into the Jordan Valley to the war zone where his son's company is operating. Here he does finally locate his son, who explains that his dog tags were accidentally given to the soldier who was killed.

In this apparently simple story about an old man who makes a one-day journey to locate his son there are two primary themes: the first is the increasing frustration and despair which seize the protagonist during his search for his son. Woven through the narrative

are flashbacks which describe the son's return to Israel and his father's difficult relationships at school, as well as occasional fantasies depicting the protagonist's public reaction to his son's "death." It gradually becomes clear, through the fantasies and the father's reactions during this horrific day, that he actually welcomes this fate. Although grieved by the apparent loss, he looks forward to assuming the mantle of "bereaved parent" and to receiving the attention, sympathy, and, finally, affirmation, which such status will grant him. As he gradually becomes aware that his son is probably alive, he sinks deeper into despair and confusion. At the hospital, viewing the strange body, he notes. "'It isn't him,' I whisper with growing despair" (Yehoshua, 1977, p. 43).

The second major theme of the story is the generation gap--the conflict between fathers and sons--in Israel. This theme is a constant in Yehoshua's writing, beginning with the title story in his first collection, "The Death of the Old Man" (1962), in which an old man is buried alive by the younger generation in an anonymous town. It is to be found again in "The Last Commander," in which the all-powerful father-figure descends from the sky to deliver a system of rules and regulations, which are promptly abandoned by the "sons" after he departs. In "Facing the Forests" the "son" destroys an eloquent symbol of the regenerated vigor of his pioneering "fathers." "The Continuing Silence of a Poet," from the same collection, describes the stagnant situation between a father, who had been a famous poet but who has ceased to write, and his son, a retarded youth who tried to imitate his father but can only produce a grotesque imitation of his writing.

Yehoshua's two latest publications, both novels, are The Lover (1977) and Late Divorce (1982), and each touches on the problem of communication between generations.

It is "Summer 70," however, which deals with this theme most forcefully, both because of the grotesque, tragicomic figure cut by the protagonist (Shaked's words) and the twisted motives which propel him to search for his son, and because of the national and universal implications which can be drawn from the story. In order to understand these broader implications observed at the collective level, it is necessary first to examine the individualized alienation of the protagonist and the motifs and symbols by which Yehoshua depicts it.

There are two motifs: silence, or "discommunication" as Shaked has termed it, and lack of confirmation as a worthwhile individual, which delineate the alienation of the protagonist. These two elements cannot be separated, since each plays upon and reinforces the other. The old teacher has not exchanged a word with his principal or fellow teachers since his refusal to accept forced retirement. In their refusal to acknowledge him, his peers emphasize to him that he has nothing of further value to contribute to his school. As we will see later in more detail, he has at best a tentative relationship with his pupils. They resent him because of the difficult and irrelevant material which he is teaching, and he resents them because they refuse to submit to his authority--an authority of the past, an old authority, which they feel has nothing to do with their future. In his professional life his uniqueness and worth as an individual are denied. This is particularly painful because his personal life is also empty.

It would appear that his wife has died, since she is never mentioned in the story, and his relationship with his son is fragile.

When the son and his family return from the United States they go immediately to the father's apartment, where they sleep for a day, thereby obviating the possibility of communication. The son exchanges only brief words concerning his father's work and concludes by saying "In that case . . . everything's as usual" (Yehoshua, 1977, p. 19). He then delivers a long monologue about the problem with the War of Attrition in which Israel is engaged. It is evident that he is not involved with the real details of his father's life but is instead consumed by his own ideas. Furthermore, as we have seen, the protagonist is totally unable to converse with his daughter-in-law and grandson, because his English is so poor and they do not speak Hebrew. The girl, whom he perceives as belonging to the radical Left because of her long hair, tattered clothes, guitar, posters, and generally informal demeanor, is an alien being for him. The little family remains with him for only one day and then moves on to establish a new life in Jerusalem. From this flashback to the day three months later when the central action occurs, the father has never been to visit them and is not even certain about what his son does at the university. Therefore, it is psychologically plausible that the father, denied love and warmth from his living family, should derive fulfillment and meaning from his son's death, particularly in the context of the concerned and attentive treatment which Israel bestows upon the bereaved parents of her fallen sons.

When the protagonist travels to Jerusalem he goes immediately to his son's apartment, where he encounters an Arab maid. He addresses her in halting Arabic: "Ya isma^ci . . . al waalid . . . ibni . . . maat" ("O hear . . . the father . . . my son . . . dead") (Yehoshua, 1977, p. 27). He therefore has made his first "official" announcement in the language of the "enemy." This underscores his alienation from his own society; there is, literally and figuratively, no one who speaks his language with whom he can communicate. Furthermore, because the Arabic is untranslated in the Hebrew edition, the reader is drawn into the alienated, dream-like aura of the story. Failing in his attempts to convey his message here, he proceeds to the Hebrew University. As he stumbles across the campus, trying to locate his son's office, he gradually assumes the appearance of a madman: "And I realize suddenly: They take me for mad . . . a crank wishing to draw attention to myself. In a black suit, slightly earth-caked, and hands holding a branch" (Yehoshua, 1977, p. 34).

The elderly teacher tacks the message of his son's death on the office door and then makes his way across the lawns, encountering a group of American students who tease him, and to whom he also proclaims his loss, this time in awkward English. They do not understand, and merely find him a ridiculous figure.

As he continues his wandering, the protagonist becomes increasingly grotesque: he is disheveled due to heat, dust, thirst, hunger and exhaustion, and he is slipping further into despair and fantasy. He has already begun mental preparations for the speech he will deliver to his school's assembly, in which he will expand upon his

situation as bereaved parent and discuss the national condition. His perceptions also assume a nightmarish nature as he journeys to the hospital: "Cemetery Hill, twisted lines of graves as a wild scrawl. . . . Houses copulating with houses. The Kingdom of heaven by force of stone" (Yehoshua, 1977, p. 38).

The fact that these wanderings around Jerusalem, punctuated by announcements in foreign languages and in writing to total strangers, occur prior to his visit to the hospital morgue, indicates that the protagonist is most concerned with establishing his status as bereaved parent. He accepts his son's "death" too willingly; he does not need to make a positive identification of the body before loudly proclaiming the tragedy to whoever will listen. His use of Arabic and English, both of which he speaks poorly, not only illustrates his eagerness to accept his status, but also underscores his alienation. Lacking someone close, he approaches strangers. This permits him to assume a public stance immediately and, indeed, considering the circumstances of his private and professional life, a public forum is the only one available to him.

In "Summer 70" Yehoshua also introduces the reader to other types of alienated individuals: the Arab servant woman who works for a Jewish family and speaks no Hebrew; the American students with their "Diaspora bodies" who also speak no Hebrew; the American daughter-in-law who, with her presumably radical ideas and lack of Hebrew, is not attuned to the social crisis caused by the war. Even the son is alienated to a degree; he has returned with a "new gospel"; full of changed political ideas and a "new" approach to the study of

history. In this story the alienated interact with the alienated ; in fact, they reinforce and illuminate each other's alienation. They are also juxtaposed with others who are integrated into society: the high school students, the school principal, the army chaplain, the soldiers whom the protagonist encounters as he goes down to the Jordan Valley. This juxtaposition serves to underscore the very tightly knit character of Israeli society, particularly in time of crisis. While not intolerant of the idiosyncratic "odd man," the country has little use for his strange ideas or language, as long as it perceives reality as a fight for existence. There is a barrier between the Israeli worker-soldier, who understands and responds to the country's demands of him, and the individual who lacks a specific duty to perform.

The concept of the barrier between "normal" society and the individual is also a theme of "Facing the Forests," in which the firewatcher draws apparent satisfaction from the destruction of the Jewish National Fund forest. In that story, the process of confronting this barrier produces an attack on a national symbol. In "Summer 70" the elderly teacher, in his attempt to cross the barrier, derives temporary confirmation of his worth from his "bereavement," which will at last grant him the acknowledgment he craves and will prove that he does have a contribution to make. Here the national symbol--that is, the fallen son and his grief-stricken parent--is grotesquely parodied when the "resurrection" of the son (Shaked's words) consigns his father to fantasy and the edge of madness.

Yehoshua's frequently employed motif of flight is used in "Summer 70" to parallel the protagonist's plunge into fantasy and

despair. He had been living on the edge of reality, emotionally poised either for a restoration of connecting relationships or for a final break with the world around him. The journey in search of his son, which takes him down to the Jordan Valley, becomes also a descent into madness. That it is a virtually literal descent is made clear by what he says in the army camp in Jerusalem: "Since morning I have been rolling down an abyss" (Yehoshua, 1977, p. 50). In the valley--in the depths--and on the Israeli-Jordanian border, which symbolizes his private border between reason and its loss, he finally understands his true motives. He is forced to this realization by his daughter-in-law, who has also come after hearing the confusing story. Sitting together with her in a tent, after bidding good-bye to the son, who returns to the inferno of the war, he notes:

Her head turned toward me, gazing at me in fascination, in wonder, and the dread that drove her through several barriers last night in order to reach this place deepens, as though by my power I had killed him [emphasis added], as though by my power I brought him back to life, as though I had not wished but to indicate one possibility (Yehoshua, 1977, p. 68).

"Summer 70" is punctuated by three reflective episodes which, as Shaked has observed, serve to organize the story and, further, to clarify the emotional decline of the protagonist. At the story's beginning, in its center (following the identification process at the hospital), and at its conclusion, the protagonist states: "I believe I must go over the moment when I learned of his death again." Each time this is followed by a description of the sky on that particular morning and then by a description of his class as they prepare for an exam just before he learns of his son's "death." The fact that the old man is

obsessed with the moment when he hears the news signals its importance to him; it is more than important: it is the beginning, center, and end of a new life for him.

The description of the sky which occurs in each fantasy undergoes an interesting development. In the first episode, the old man recalls that "the sky is open"; in the second reflection it is "rent from horizon to horizon." The increasing intensity and distortion in his perception of the sky reflects the increasing desperation of his emotional state as the story progresses. For the protagonist's second reflection occurs after he has determined that the dead soldier is not his son. He says, "I'm sorry" to the attendant and collapses. Ostensibly he is apologizing for the trouble he has caused them, but perhaps he is also sorry because his daydream of attention and notoriety will not come to pass. At this point he returns, in fantasy, to the moment of notification. In the final sequence the sky is "cut to the depths." The heavens have initially offered him hope: they are open. But as hope dissipates they assume a more ominous appearance. It is not merely the sky but also his destiny which is "cut to the depths."

The second part of these reflective episodes--the protagonist's recollection of his class at the moment of receiving the news--serves two functions. Like the description of the sky, it reflects his chaotic emotional state and, in addition, it is one of the elements which illuminate Yehoshua's second theme in the story, the conflict and gap between generations.

In his first recollection of his class, the elderly teacher is about to enter the room to give his students an exam when the principal approaches him. The students are typical high school seniors: "wild-haired, red-faced, in their blue school uniforms, scrambling back to their desks. . . . One of them is at the blackboard, rubbing out wild words. . . . They look me straight in the eye, impudent, smiling to themselves, but silent" (Yehoshua, 1977, p. 10).

This is a straightforward description of a rather disorderly class about to be examined in a disliked subject. There is no profound confrontation with authority or ideas, and little indication of anything other than the normal tension between teenagers and an authority figure. The drama of the day has yet to descend upon the protagonist.

After he has viewed the body that was incorrectly presumed to be that of his son, the old teacher reflects again. This time the students are in the process of writing the exam, and they are stunned by the unfairness of its difficulty: "Slowly they raise their eyes. . . . Their faces start to burn, a dumb amazement seizes them. . . . Each of them forlorn in his seat. . . . Someone rises and leaves the room with flaming face. Another follows, and a third, suddenly it seems as though they were up in revolt. At last" (Yehoshua, 1977, pp. 46-47).

The fury and revolt which the teacher perceives in his students reflect his inner turmoil as he is engulfed by feelings of grief for his son, but also by rage at the society which sends its sons to die in fruitless wars and concurrently denies him fulfillment. His emotions

by now are a twisted array of grief, anger, and regret. Since he lacks the means to revolt, he projects revolt upon the class.

The third recollection, at the conclusion of the story, projects a different atmosphere. The class is passive and silent:

And I realize: I am not important to them any more, have lost my power over them, they have done with me, I already belong to the past. . . . They read, give a little sigh, then pull out clean sheets of paper and start drafting their straightforward, unimaginative answers. . . . The students follow me with their eyes . . . traces of their names scored on desks as on tombstones (Yehoshua, 1977, pp. 69-71).

In the denouement of the story, the emotional and ideological revolt, if it ever existed, is finished, and in its place are resignation and submission to destiny. The protagonist, having confirmed that his son is alive, is dazed, exhausted and despairing, and has no alternative other than to return to his fantasy. In this fantasy, however, there is not merely resignation but also the acknowledgment of separation. The protagonist belongs to the past, not only for his students but also for his son, who is anticipating the opportunity to develop his new ideas concerning history. The old man has already experienced the feeling of estrangement in his encounters with the soldiers, who regard him as a quizzical relic. One young officer asserts that there is no difference between Bible and history, a revolutionary assumption for the elderly teacher, who regards the Bible as an ethical and moral foundation and as a prophetic guide: in other words, as much more than simply the history of the Jewish people. What has occurred during the protagonist's later somnambulant years is a questioning of values, as exemplified by the students' behavior and the subtle but insistent dissension of the son and daughter-in-law. It

is in these brief moments in the story that the problem of both a national and universal generation gap is raised. The teacher regards his students as they quietly write the exam, and ponders:

. . . as though I had deceived them somewhere. I mean, as though with the material itself I had deceived them. As though everything we taught them--the laws, the proverbs, the prophecies--as though it had all collapsed for them out there, in the dust, the scorching fire, the lonely nights, had all failed the test of some other reality. But what other reality. . . . Does anything really change? (Yehoshua, 1977, p. 70).

The protagonist's thoughts vis-a-vis his students not only reflect his personal dilemma, but also indicate Yehoshua's concern for the generational conflict and the struggle with authority which exist in Israel. As we have already noted, much of his writing is permeated by this concern, albeit on a more submerged level. In "Summer 70" the War of Attrition, his most powerful and obvious symbol of the father-son conflict, functions as a background motif, illustrating the theme of the "War of Generations," which is actually the more prolonged and complex "war" in the story (Shaked, 1970, p. 229). The father's authentication through the loss of his son, and the combat-zone aura of his classroom form a dual grotesquerie which alerts the reader to the dark side of Israeli reality. Yehoshua, in other words, has written a tragic satire probing a crucial value in his society. Jewish fathers created a country in order that their sons could live in freedom. However, the creation of that land has not guaranteed life and peace; rather, it has ensured endless wars which are subject to increasing criticism, most significantly from within the society; and the deaths of thousands of sons for whom the promise was not fulfilled.

Discussing this theme in general Israeli literature, Shaked has written:

There is no doubt that these subjects . . . testify that a whole generation in our literature is not able to accept simplistically the 'founding values' which surround war and peace in our life. The situation of our existence is not accepted as Torah from Sinai but rather raises doubts, misgivings, and anxieties (Shaked, 1970, p. 234) [translation mine].

Indeed, the literal Torah, which is taught by the elderly protagonist, is not accepted by his students; he must escape into fantasy rather than face the fact that the "laws, proverbs, and prophecies" have collapsed "out there, in the dust." His reality is the old reality of idealistic Zionism: life-affirming and socially just. The reality of the new generation is war, ending in the anarchy of the battlefield. The old precepts cannot prevail against the chaos of blood and death. In the context of Yehoshua's many writings, "Summer 70" appears to be particularly prophetic, since a contemporary reader, thirteen years hence, can look back not only upon the wars of 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1970, but also upon those in 1973 and 1982. It is significant, moreover, that the current war in Lebanon has given birth to a protest organization of soldiers on active duty called "Yesh G'vul" ("There is a Limit"). The implication here is not that men have lost their will to fight but rather, as Shaked wrote, that previous givens are no longer accepted without question.

In no other nation does the disengagement from values, paralysis of will and loss of faith in the "founding ideology" have such serious implications as in Israel. This is so partly because Israel is so close temporally to her creation. Yet because of the

intensely introspective and critical nature of her citizens, the basic ideology is already subject to impassioned debate. In addition, Israel is the only country which must daily justify her existence. Her enemies and even her carefully neutral friends forgive no errors. Yet, in contrast with most of the writers of the Palmach generation (the group writing during and after the 1948 war), contemporary Israeli writers and other intellectuals have not hesitated to examine the "sitra' aħra'" (the "other side" or "demonic side") of their society (Shaked, 1970, p. 235).

The need to examine the painful subject of the "failure of the dream" is thus not unique to Yehoshua. It is inevitable in a society which is self-absorbed and at the same time self-critical; intensely nationalistic and yet in search of normal universal ties; energized by a high degree of bravado and pride, but traumatized by the paralyzing and horrifying experience of the Holocaust. The exceedingly complex fabric that is woven from these individual threads presents a real challenge to the critic who would examine each particular part while not unravelling the whole. In other words, the challenge is to expose and discuss serious problems while acknowledging positive values which lie at the foundation of the society. In "Summer 70" Yehoshua offers his most complete treatment of the protagonist's alienation, exemplified by the old man's estrangement from his class and his son. He avoids "unravelling the whole"; that is, he does not present a completely despairing picture because he includes elements of hope in the story. The resignation of the class to its fate--ostensibly to the exam, but actually to a violent and uncertain future--points to the new

generation's willingness to assume the inherited burden. This is a burden not assumed joyfully but instead out of an acknowledgment of the perceived necessity to fight. Despite the ferocity of feelings and the disinterest in historical values, the young generation will uphold the tenets of its predecessors. The bewilderment and fantasies of the protagonist, while to a certain extent reflecting national problems, are not presented in the narrative as being endemic to the whole society.

The other figure of hope in this story is the old man's son. Initially the catalyst of his father's despair and fantasy, and depicted as being insensitive to the inner turmoil of the old man, nevertheless the son is also the bearer of new ideas. He returns to Israel intellectually bestirred, and he is intent upon developing his ideas within the context of Israeli problems. (In his final conversation with his father he remarks of the war: "such a loss of time . . . so pointless" (Yehoshua, 1977, p. 64).

Shaked has interpreted the story as one of universal implications, stating that it might also apply to the American participation in the war in Vietnam (Shaked, 1970, p. 232). This observation is particularly valid since the War of Attrition occurred during the period of the Vietnam War, and the son has returned from an apparently activist life in America with his "New Left" wife. The years 1969 through 1973 were critical for both countries, as each was engaged in protracted war with little of value won or lost, other than lives, and each engaged in generational dialogue. In the United States in particular, this "dialogue" between fathers and sons occasionally

reached combat-zone proportions. The allusions in "Summer 70" to the daughter-in-law, her long hair, the guitar, the posters, and the eagerness of both young people to debate the old man--all indicate that the New Left was arriving in Israel and bringing with it dissent and a different future. In stories such as "The Death of the Old Man," "Facing the Forests," and "The Continuing Silence of a Poet," it is clear that the father's generation is more vital than that of the son. However, in "Summer 70" the sons have discovered a source of inspiration and life different from that of their fathers (Shaked, 1970, p. 233). We may grant, then, Shaked's point that "Summer 70" delivers its message in themes of universal dimensions. Nonetheless, the poignance and immediacy of the story are derived from its portrayal of Israeli characters and locales and from its haunting study of Israeli values.

The following chapter discusses Yehoshua's first novel, The Lover. In this book his primary themes of alienation, generational conflict, powerlessness vis-à-vis authority, and denied love are continued. These are again illuminated by the motifs of flight, lack of communication, and war. The Lover differs from the previous stories, however, in its abundance of rich, detailed characterizations, its more frequent use of direct discourse, and its vividly realized locales which need not be named in order to be recognizable. The Lover is additionally interesting because certain elements in its plot and conflicts are contained in some of Yehoshua's earlier stories. It is, so to speak, an elaboration of both theme and motif. The juxtaposition of Arab and Jew in "Facing the Forests," the problem of the ineffective

husband and ambitious wife and their old car in "A Long Hot Day," and the troubled classroom and troublesome staff of an Israeli high school in "Summer 70" are all to be found in this novel. It would appear that in his short stories Yehoshua worked out various themes which he then combined in this novel, which is a portrait of personal and national conflict during the period surrounding the Yom Kippur War of 1973.

THE ALIENATED AND THE ENGAGED

Yehoshua's first novel, The Lover (Hammə'aheb, 1977) is set in the period of the Yom Kippur War of 1973. Its plot concerns the search by an Israeli family for the wife's lover, who has vanished during the heat of battle in the Sinai. The story is related in monologue form by the six principal characters: Adam, the middle-aged owner of a thriving garage and automobile repair shop in Haifa; his wife, Asya, a frustrated, aging secondary school teacher who occupies herself with intellectual pursuits in literature, history, philosophy, and politics; their daughter, Dafna (Dafi), a teenager struggling to comprehend her emerging sexuality and intolerant of her parents' unhappy marriage; Gabriel, an Israeli who had emigrated from Israel and returns after ten years to reclaim his inheritance from a dying grandmother; Veducha, the grandmother, who has emerged from a long coma and is physically frail but mentally alert; and Naim, a teenage Arab boy who is employed by Adam in the garage.

Besides the fact that The Lover is a novel, it differs in other important ways from Yehoshua's previous writings. First, rather than one protagonist, there are six, and although some (for example, Adam, Dafi, and, later, Naim) are given more attention in terms of the frequency and length of their monologues, all bear crucial importance in the progression of the narrative and the impact of events. This is the first instance in which Yehoshua has given to a variety of

characters a detailed history and a rich characterization. Previously the protagonist acted upon and reacted to others, essentially outside of a context in which the reader could understand the lives and motives of other characters. The single protagonist carried the burden of illustrating in his thoughts and actions the primary themes which preoccupy Yehoshua, of alienation, denied love, and lack of power. However, in The Lover, virtually all the characters suffer to one extent or another from existential malaise, which brings into play a chain reaction where the motives of one affect the behavior of another toward a third, and so on. Thus, the opening line of the book, "And in the last war we lost a lover" signals the action which is to follow; that is, the family's search for Gabriel, and ultimately leads to the concluding rejection of despair by Naim: "The people will wonder what's happened to Naim that he's suddenly so full of hope." Naim and Gabriel never meet, nor is it necessary that they do so, just as it is not necessary for Naim to understand the desperation of Adam, Asya, and Dafi, which obliquely cause him to commit the deed leading to his attainment of hope. By employing an expanded group of individuals, Yehoshua is able to illustrate that despair and loneliness are not confined to the "outsiders" in society, but rather are facts in the life of every man, no matter with how many people he may come into contact.

This last observation yields another major difference between The Lover and Yehoshua's earlier work. For in the novel, the individual characters all function within the mainstream of Israeli society. Unlike the obsessive loner of Flood Tide," the slightly

corrupt soldiers of "The Last Commander," the ineffectual student of "Facing the Forests," the blocked poet of "A Poet's Continuing Silence," the impotent engineer of "A Long Hot Day" or the semi-retired and confused old teacher of "Summer 70," the people of The Lover, with the exception of Gabriel, are striving to live, produce, and develop within the socially approved norms of the Israeli middle-class. Veduca, the dying old grandmother, is as involved and concerned with events surrounding her as her mind and deteriorating energy will permit. Naim, by definition an outsider because he is an Arab, longs for acceptance by the Jewish family, while struggling to retain his pride and dignity. Only Gabriel remains truly alienated in the usual manner of Yehoshua's previous protagonists: isolated from self-knowledge, from concern for others, and from the struggles and values of his country. As against the stereotypical yored (Israeli expatriate), who returns to Israel with a certain degree of guilt, regardless of the reasons for his having left, and with eagerness to integrate once again into the life of the country, Gabriel has returned for the most cynical motives, and his demonstrated lack of patriotism reaches its apex during his disappearance. His presence in the story, however, in no way dilutes the effect upon the reader of being confronted with "normal" Israeli types. Indeed, it may achieve the opposite effect: it highlights the varying degrees of engagement in the natures of the other personalities and therefore renders more poignant the ultimate, devastating isolation of each.

Still another new feature of The Lover is its more frequent use of direct discourse, in comparison with previous tales, where little of

this appeared. Because Yehoshua's Hebrew in exposition tends to be rather spare and formal, the entire tone of his short stories and novellas is formalized. This enhances his earlier more abstract style by providing an elegant and mannered description of a country which is exceedingly casual in behavior, manners, and speech. In the novel, by contrast, the use of colloquial speech in direct discourse brings the reader into more immediate contact with that informal society with which he is familiar.

A second effect of the more frequent direct discourse in The Lover is that the reader is drawn into the assumption that the characters are actually communicating with each other. In actuality, they are not: they hear but they do not listen; they understand the words but do not comprehend the motives or needs of the speakers. This is made particularly clear at the moment when Naim declaims the poetry of Bialik, Israel's national poet, to Adam and his family (Yehoshua, 1978, p. 166). The family is stunned by his knowledge of such a person, but in the end Dafi finds it hilariously funny. They do not realize that Naim is not only declaiming poetry but also proclaiming his profound need to be accepted and to belong.

Therefore, although The Lover marks a new point of departure for Yehoshua in terms of style, since for the first time he assembles a complex cast of fully described characters who appear to function adequately on an external level and who do interact with each other, it is clear that he has not departed from his earlier major themes. In order to clarify how these themes are conveyed, it is necessary to examine the book more closely in terms of plot, motif, and symbol.

The Lover is a tale of lives lived adjacently, of tangential events which unwittingly set others in motion. Gabriel has returned from Paris, having spent ten years away from Israel, in order to claim his inheritance from his grandmother Veducha, who lies comatose in an institution for the incapacitated elderly. He brings her old Morris car to Adam's garage in Haifa for repair, and shortly thereafter Adam sees a way that he can use Gabriel. He introduces the young man to his wife, Asya, who needs his assistance with her various academic endeavors. Eventually the two become lovers, and it is clear that Asya has fallen deeply in love. Gabriel's attitude is casual, as is Adam's, who appears to be relieved of emotional responsibility for his wife. When the Yom Kippur War erupts, Adam convinces Gabriel to join the army, and thereafter Gabriel vanishes. During this period Adam discovers Naim among the Arab workers in his garage. He develops a liking for and trust in the boy and begins to use him for special errands, in the course of which Naim meets and falls obsessively in love with Dafi. At the same time that these events are taking place, Veducha miraculously awakens from her coma; Adam returns her to her old home in Haifa and installs Naim in the house as her caretaker. Observing Asya's declining spirits, Adam becomes desperate in his search for Gabriel. The war is over, seasons have passed, and there is no sign of the lover. Therefore he decides to take a tow truck and answer night calls regarding highway accidents, in the hope of locating the old Morris. During these night rides he takes Dafi and Naim along as assistants, unaware of Naim's love for his daughter. One night he indeed does find the car, and through it, he traces Gabriel to the

ultra-orthodox section of Jerusalem. Gabriel relates his story: he fled from Sinai in the midst of the battle, disguised himself and the car, and went to Jerusalem to lose himself in the Hassidic community there, knowing that they would not probe his identity. Upon hearing the story, Adam summons Asya to Jerusalem and together the three return to Haifa. While they are journeying home, Veducha dies. Fearing that he will be blamed for her death, Naim goes to Adam's apartment, where he finds Dafi alone. The two of them share a meal, almost ritualistic in its elegance, and then make love. At this point the adults return. Asya and Gabriel are too generally confused to notice what has happened, but Adam instantly grasps the scenario and hurries Naim out to the old Morris. He intends to take the boy to the Lebanese border, but is turned back by army guards and instead drives Naim to his home village, admonishing him to return to school. After the boy has departed, the old Morris gives upon the ghost, and Adam is left, at the end of the book, stranded in the fields, wondering how to summon Hamid, his Arab foreman, for assistance.

Words such as "use," "assist" and "responsibility," both in the novel and in the above summary, underscore Yehoshua's persistent concerns with human responsibility and the tragedy which results when it is not assumed, as well as the fine line between the one who assists and the one who receives that assistance and becomes the user. In The Lover, Adam may be considered the protagonist; that is, the person upon whom all action ultimately devolves. He assumes responsibility without regard for the subsequent dependence upon him by others; he requests assistance and then uses those who have helped him; in Morahg's words,

he becomes the "victimizer." In profound need of human contact--"If only someone was to touch me, quietly, out of genuine friendship, good will, interest" (Yehoshua, 1978, p. 67)--but incapable of attracting it, he resorts to exerting his power as garage boss and well-to-do businessman. Inarticulate as a young man, Adam was forced to quit school and become a mechanic, never acquiring the education or intellectual sophistication to be on equal terms with his wife. Asya is, for him, the delicate, shy, somewhat strange embodiment of an ideal, and from the beginning he has never been secure in his relationship with her. Their marriage assumes tragic dimensions upon the death of their only son. The boy had been deaf--another signal of the communication gap which permeates the story. When he was old enough to play with other children, he was given a hearing aid, for which Adam designed a device that allowed the boy to turn it off at will; in other words, whenever he wished to tune out the world and be alone. One day, when the device was turned off, he was struck and killed by an automobile. From this catastrophe, Adam and Asya never recover. Their sexual and emotional intimacy rapidly diminish, and each substitutes work for a true marriage. Adam's lingering need for a male child, however, is suggested by his treatment of both Gabriel and Naim. He ensures that each of them has work, money, and a place to live. Yet he is unable to reach across the barriers of human isolation; in the final analysis he uses them for his own purposes. At the story's conclusion there is a hint of his continued longing for and identification with his lost son. Standing in the field beside the broken-down Morris, he says: "Silence envelops me, deep stillness, it's

as if I'm deaf" (Yehoshua, 1978, p. 351). The discommunication in Adam's life is total, and the quality of deafness indicates that his condition arises from within himself rather than being an imposition of exterior tragedy.

Perhaps the strongest illustration of Adam's alienation is his repeated attempt, at the beginning of his monologues in the first section of the book, to describe Asya. Even though he provides the reader with her history and a clear description of the woman she has become, he is dissatisfied because he is unable to reach the essence of her being. Several sections begin with lines such as: "But how to describe her? Where to begin?" (Yehoshua, 1978, p. 53).

The impact of the estrangement between the couple is heightened by the fact that Asya is revealed to the reader primarily through the impressions of Adam, Dafi, and Naim. She does not speak for herself except through the contents of her dreams, which comprise the totality of her monologues. Even her name, Asya (the Hebrew word for Asia), indicates a remote, unknown continent. Despite the fact that there is no self-revelation in a waking state, however, it is clear, for example, that she has not only suffered grievously from the loss of her son, but that in addition, like Adam, she identifies Gabriel with him. While Adam is searching for Gabriel, Asya dreams of the child, and within the dream remarks: "Slowly I began to realize that this wasn't Yigal but some kind of replacement that Adam had brought here for me" (Yehoshua, 1978, p. 180). Her separation from the other characters is exemplified by Dafi's remark: "Mommy isn't here . . . Mommy isn't here even when she's at home" (Yehoshua, 1978, p. 30). Asya's alienation is

that of disengagement from the emotional needs of her family. She loses herself in intellectual pursuits rather than permit the threatening intimacy which would crush her again, just as it did when she lost her only son. Gabriel, of course, upsets her delicate emotional balance; and the depths of feeling of which Asya is capable are indicated by the anguish which his disappearance induces in her.

Gabriel's alienation is all-encompassing and particularly ironic, since he is the character to whom the most emotion is directed and around whom most of the action occurs. Vedula wants to see him because he is the last remaining member of her family, and she needs, at the end of her life, a sense of continuity into the future. Asya loves him, and for this reason Adam, Dafi and Naim trek the roads at night. The Hassidic community in Jerusalem, into which he disappears, tries to persuade him to join their sect. Yet Gabriel invests no part of himself in anyone else, and least of all in Israel. Especially ironic is the fact that whereas most Israelis leave the country to make their "fortunes" elsewhere and do not expect to return impoverished and in need of money, the reverse is true of Gabriel. He is awaiting Vedula's death in order to claim his inheritance. Viewed symbolically, Vedula represents the totality of Israel, in terms of her birthdate--1881, the events which befall her, and her "fighting spirit"; only from her can Gabriel receive what he needs most in life. Wanting (and taking), he gives back nothing in return and, indeed, turns his back on his country in its most perilous hour. He not only deserts the battlefield; he also edges himself into a community which does not recognize the State of Israel.

We do not know the reason for Gabriel's almost total alienation; the only information provided about his background is that while he was teaching and studying in Paris he spent some time in a mental hospital. There is a basic flaw in his ability to relate to others, but it is never clarified. Therefore, even though his actions appear to be cold-hearted, the fact that he is somehow wounded and essentially lost, increases his vulnerability and renders him a sad, rather than completely calculating individual. Furthermore, the profound sadness which possesses Gabriel parallels the tragedy which distances Asya from others; this may well be the common bond which draws them together. The similarity of their reactions to emotional pain is indicated by the fact that neither of them has a direct voice in the story (except for Gabriel's single long monologue explaining his disappearance). Asya speaks through her dreams, but both of them are revealed through the observations of others. The characters who are struggling for affirmation, Adam, Dafi, Naim, and Veducha, speak to us directly; Asya and Gabriel have been drastically weakened and lack the vitality necessary to engage in direct discourse.

Gabriel's parasitism parallels that of Adam, who, by virtue of his business, derives his living from the misfortunes of others (automobile accidents are luridly depicted in the novel). Both men victimize others to satisfy their needs, although Gabriel's motives appear, on a surface level, to be more cold-blooded than Adam's. In portraying two such very different men, Yehoshua conveys the message that alienation is not a condition unique to aimless, rootless

luftmenschen (Gabriel), but also afflicts the individual who has found his place in society and would seem to be well-integrated in it.

Juxtaposed with Gabriel and Adam, who are, after all, Jewish Israelis with both position and acceptance available to them in their society, is Naim, a member of the Arab minority in Israel and thus by definition an "outsider." Despite the fact that Naim is alienated by indifference and occasional hostility, he is the most engaged character in The Lover. Unlike the majority of Yehoshua's other characters, he is not apathetic, miserable, nor unmotivated. Sent by his family, who cannot afford to educate him, to work in Adam's garage with his uncle Hamid, the foreman, he yearns for education and a sense of belonging. Many of his monologues consist of acute perceptions of Jewish society.

Naim is introduced in the midst of the Yom Kippur war: "They are getting themselves killed again and when they get themselves killed we have to shrink and lower our voices and mind not to laugh even at some joke that's got nothing to do with them" (Yehoshua, 1978, p. 121).

His thoughts continue during his initial appearance:

No, they don't hate us. Anyone who thinks they hate us is completely wrong. We're beyond hatred, for them we're like shadows. Take, fetch, hold, clean, lift, sweep, unload, move. That's the way they think of us, but when they start getting killed they get tired and they slow down and they can't concentrate and they suddenly get all worked up about nothing, just before the news or just after, news that we don't exactly hear (Yehoshua, 1978, p. 121).

Slowly the impersonal "they" changes as he begins to know the Jews as individuals, through Adam, Veducha and Dafi. Throughout the story Naim views with intensity the Jews he meets. He spends much more time thinking about them than they do about him. For Adam he is a

convenience, to be used when his talents befit the occasion. At times Adam even forgets that he exists. This is particularly difficult for Naim because he is on the edge of developing filial feelings toward the man. For Veducha he is the enemy, a reminder of the "Arab problem" she has known during her ninety-odd years in Palestine. At times she harangues him, and at times she attempts to "reeducate" him. For Dafi he is, until the final scene, an object of amusement to be teased and then forgotten, the "sweet little Palestinian problem." Even when she and Naim make love, it is clear that she is not so much interested in his individuality as in the experience of a "rite de passage," which has occurred--with any luck--before her girlfriends' sexual initiation.

Even though Naim is generally buffeted about as a rather peripheral individual by the other characters in the story, he passionately pursues authentic connections and real discourse with them. He is exasperated by the cosmic burden which seems to afflict the Jews--"And I walked among the people aimlessly, looking in the gloomy faces of the Jews, always so worried about their Jewish destiny" (Yehoshua, 1978, p. 158). In his willingness to work hard for Adam and to learn; in his love and pursuit of Dafi; and in his interminable arguments and discussions with Veducha, it is clear that Naim, in sharp contrast to other characters in Yehoshua's writings, is a thoroughly engaged person.

Naim's relationships and the work which he performs are typical of the position of the Arab living under Israeli rule: he is a manual laborer, a caretaker, and an illicit lover. However, Yehoshua goes beyond the stereotype to portray him with individual uniqueness. His

family, home, village, and his dreams and fears are described. Though at the beginning he is introduced as an inexperienced, uneducated, apprehensive youth, his character develops through his interactions with his family, his introduction to Jewish family life, his facile mastery of the responsibilities and opportunities given him, and finally, his sexual initiation. Throughout, he observes and contemplates, always open to new ideas and experiences.

To understand Naim's importance not only in this book but also in Israeli literature, we must examine the way Arabs have generally been depicted by Hebrew writers. From the initial Zionist settlement in Palestine and continuing to the present, the Arab has usually been cast as the possessor of a charming, quaint, pre-modern culture, or his role has been that of the dark, sensual, hostile "Other," symbolizing all that is threatening to Israeli life. Palestinian Jewish writers in the first half of the century, such as Moshe Smilansky, Yitzhaq Shami, Yehuda Burla and Haim Hazaz, wrote with sympathy and out of personal acquaintance with Arab culture and were primarily concerned with an accurate description of that culture (Waldman, 1979, p. 9). However, the characters were not usually portrayed as individuals but as representatives of certain aspects of their culture and therefore appear as stereotypes. Furthermore, with the exception of certain individuals such as Y. H. Brenner, writers of fiction did not address the problems arising in Arab society generated by Jewish settlement in Palestine. Rather, they tended to assume that eventually the Arabs would accept such settlement when they realized the benefits which it would presumably give to them (Domb, 1982, p. 63). On the other hand,

Jewish essayists, journalists, and political analysts such as Ahad Ha'am, A. D. Gordon and David Ben-Gurion did confront the depths of Arab opposition and attempted to suggest ways of attaining a rapprochement between the two peoples. Although these writers maintained an absolute commitment to Zionist ideals, they also displayed an equal sensitivity to the moral aspect of the Arab problem (Barzilay, 1977, p. 38).

With the achievement of statehood in 1948, Israeli literature underwent a shift in perceptions of the Arab. The Arab, having been met in combat, was no longer seen as the noble savage or the romantic heir to the customs and traditions of the Hebrew patriarchs, but rather as the unrelenting and unforgiving enemy. Israeli writers, engaged in responding to the Holocaust and in addressing the needs of a new collective society, were psychologically unprepared to discuss the individuality of the Arab. An exception to this trend is S. Yizhar who, in his novel The Days of Ziklag, and his stories "The Prisoner" and "Hirbet Hizah," did confront his readers with the questions of morality in war and Jewish behavior toward the Arabs. In the following decades, other writers, for example Benjamin Tammuz and Amos Oz, dealt with Arab characters, imbuing them with individual characteristics, but generally casting them in the role of the unknowable and unreachable "Other." The function of the Arab in postwar Israeli literature has usually been that of a mirror; that is, a device by which Israeli Jews may examine their own behavior, motivations and moral attitudes. This is partly due to the fact that Israeli writers are concerned primarily with the degree of Jewish culpability in the Palestinian problem and

partly because, on the whole, Arab psychology remains inaccessible to them. The fact that Israelis harbor ambiguous and sometimes ignorant attitudes toward Arabs may seem curious, considering that Israel is surrounded by quite populous Arab states and contains a large Arab minority herself. The military and political situations, however, probably contribute to the blurred, subjective image which Israelis have of Arabs.

Gershon Shaked has provided perhaps the tidiest summation of the problem of treatment of the Arab in Israeli literature:

Hebrew literature transferred to the Arab the stereotyped image of the "goy," both as oppressor and as a desirable anti-norm endowed with physical strength. . . . Later. . . the Arab became a kind of persecuted Jew in Israel. But the Jews, affected by their own maladjustments, the fear of war and a sense of guilt, are also pursued. History is the pursuer of both Arabs and Jews" (Waldman, 1979, p. 8).

We may therefore consider Yehoshua's motives in imbuing a major Arab character with those positive qualities which so many of his possess, his energy, his life-affirming attitudes, and his search for authentic communication. To this question three responses are in order. First,

1. Two stories in particular illustrate Shaked's theory concerning the equal devastation wrought upon both Arabs and Jews by historic inevitability. One is Shulamit Har Even's novel City of Many Days, which portrays Jewish and Arab life and relationships in Jerusalem during the final decades of the British Mandate. Both populations are described with equal sensitivity and individuality, and as war hovers on the horizon its tragic effects on both sides are illustrated without the assignment of blame to either one. The other is Benjamin Tammuz's short story "The Swimming Race," in which the interdependencies and relations of Arabs and Jews on the Tel Aviv-Jaffa coast are described, culminating in the disaffection and death wrought by war. In both stories it is clear that the characters are ensnared by anonymous forces which deal out destruction without design but with considerable irony.

Naim is not the only Arab character in The Lover; he is contrasted with his brother and his father, each of whom represents an extreme reaction to the status of a minority within a dominant society. His brother, Adnan, is a frustrated student who is unable to gain acceptance into any Israeli university, finally becoming a guerrilla and dying during the course of a terrorist attack on a Haifa university. Although Naim understands Adnan's motives, he is ashamed of the deed and tries to conceal the fact that they are related. Their father, a peaceful village man, has had great hopes for Adnan's success, but following the attack, and beset upon by the Israeli security service, he denounces his dead son, cursing him before the authorities with whom he has clearly cooperated in the past. Naim is further ashamed by the humiliation of his father and the disintegration of family pride and dignity. With the portrayals of these individuals, and including descriptions of the other Arabs who work in Adam's garage, Yehoshua has depicted a certain spectrum of Arab life in Israel. In addition, by delineating Naim's ambivalent feelings toward his family and the Jews he meets, Yehoshua has also indicated the general ambivalence which must beset every Israeli Arab.

A second point is that Yehoshua, in creating a sympathetic Arab protagonist, is raising to a national level the theme of the victim become victimizer. In The Lover, as in other stories discussed in this thesis, various characters deny each other love and recognition, whereupon those who are denied wreak vengeance upon the others, whether by psychological manipulation or by overt violence. The actions of the State of Israel (especially when viewed through the eyes of left-wing

intellectuals such as Yehoshua) can be interpreted as those of a victimizer; Israel is completing a circle of violence which began with the persecution of Jews in the Diaspora and which has continued throughout her embattled existence in the Middle East. Morahg contends that The Lover portrays Israel as a nation in the midst of moral decline and spiritual malaise, which are the result of a "pervasive denial of mutual confirmation among its individual inhabitants and of a communal denial of confirmation practiced by Israeli Jews toward their Arab counterparts" (Morahg, 1982, p. 191). Therefore, Naim's presence in the book is not merely that of a rather amiable fellow in the throes of adolescent lust; he is also a political symbol of the Arab-Israeli dilemma, forcing the reader to confront the root cause of a conflict which has pitched the nation into a convulsive war, and to realize that this "cause" is a creature of flesh and blood.

The third point to be made concerning the portrayal of Naim returns to the theme of alienation, and to the notion that alienation is a condition within the individual psyche rather than a state precipitated by exterior events. In contrast with Adam, Asya and Gabriel, who suffer from severe discommunication even though they appear to possess the capacity to function within a cohesive society, Naim can never integrate into that society despite the fact that it is his designated nationality, nor can he receive anything but the coolest social acceptance. Nevertheless, although alienated nationally and experiencing the power of discrimination personally, Naim remains existentially engaged, authentically in touch with himself, and fervent in his willingness to explore and enjoy life. By establishing this

contrast between the alienated, who actively choose not to seek the place where they may naturally belong, and the unalienated ("L'homme engagé," in Camus' words), who will never find that place within the dominant community, Yehoshua emphasizes the fact that alienation is actually self-imposed exile.

Veducha, the old grandmother, represents the fourth dimension in an examination of the relationship between exile and alienation. Whereas Adam is the alienated native, Gabriel the alienated exile, and Naim the engaged exile, Veducha is the engaged native. Wachtel has called her "old lady Zionism" (Wachtel, 1979, p. 52). Veducha was born in Jerusalem, in 1881, the year of the initial immigration of Russian Jews to Palestine. Her experience, thus, sums up the modern Jewish experience in Israel. She has grown up as part of a Sephardic family in the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem, mingled with Arabs, lost a daughter to an Arab sniper, and witnessed the emigration of her son-in-law and grandson (Gabriel) from the country. In 1973, at the age of 92, she lapses into a coma. She has no specific disease; she is merely old and mentally exhausted. Considering her age, she remains physically vigorous when she emerges from the coma. Viewed symbolically, she represents Yehoshua's picture of Israel--the physical body appears to be intact, but mental rot has begun and consciousness (or conscience) lost.

Yet Veducha is so emotionally and mentally energized that the picture of her as a huge old lady barely able to move from her chair becomes blurred. She reaches out for contact with everyone she meets. She yearns to see her ill-motivated grandson, Gabriel. She blesses

Adam for his attention to her needs. She develops a love-hate relationship with Naim, but fundamentally she needs him, depends on him, and treats him like a son. At the same time that she refers to him as a "fatah" (the armed guerrilla faction of the PLO) and worries that he may kill her some night, she also fusses over him, attends to his needs, gives him Gabriel's old clothes, and finally implores Adam not to take him away from her. Even as she is dying and Naim tries to revive her, she alternates between the fear that he is killing her and the urge to will him her house. Their dialogues are the most direct in Yehoshua's writing concerning the debate between Jew and Arab. Compare the following exchange, which occurs as Veduca prompts Naim to clean up before eating:

"Shame on you, boy, we aren't in Mecca, wash first."

He was offended, going pale with anger. I had profaned the Muslim holy of holies.

"What has Mecca to do with it? Mecca is cleaner than all Israel"

"Have you been there?"

"No, but neither have you" (Yehoshua, 1978, p. 223).

These furious, prodding debates, suffused with wit, love and anger, contrast sharply with the weary, inattentive words, mimicking real conversation, that pass between so many of Yehoshua's disaffected, loveless protagonists. The fact that Veduca is a 92-year-old Jewish woman and Naim a young Palestinian boy renders only more ironic their dependence upon each other. Their relationship illustrates the fundamental truth that attainment of confirmation depends upon one's reaching out for it and that it is indeed attainable, no matter how

disparate the partners in the exchange. The bond between Veducha and Naim suggests that in the final analysis Jews and Arabs are dependent upon each other, and that no intermediary will suffice. Not only does Veducha need Naim to supply her with her daily provisions, but he also needs her as a foothold in Haifa, in order to be near Dafi and the civilization he enjoys. The hint of a national parallel regarding Jewish-Arab interdependency exists in this story of two disparate people who inhabit the same house. In light of their mutual dependence, they seek for a means to establish a modus vivendi and mutual respect.

It is through Veducha that Yehoshua brings the reader into contact with contemporary Israeli current events. In his earlier writing, his descriptions of landscape, setting and character produced a realistic atmosphere, but he never supplied the details of political life which so preoccupy most Israelis. However, Veducha is an avid newspaper reader, especially of Ma'ariv and Yediot Aharonot, and has favorite correspondents, whose opinions she uses to harange Naim. She is very concerned with politics, and through her the reader learns about Golda Meir, Henry Kissinger, the repercussions of the Yom Kippur War, and the government crisis. In other words, she is feisty old Israel: "a real livewire" in Naim's words; occasionally comatose, sometimes without conscience, now and then obtuse, frequently obsessed with Arabs, but still alert, prepared for a good fight, and even at her death, pondering her fate and not yielding gracefully.

Veducha cannot be separated symbolically from her Morris. Her care of the car symbolizes Yehoshua's perception of the growth of

Israel and its woeful situation during and after the Yom Kippur War, as well as of the progression of Adam's life (Morahg, 1982, pp. 188-189, 193-194). The car was built in 1947, the year of the partition of Palestine, and also the year when Adam quit school. Veduca has kept up its appearance; she has given it embroidered seat covers, and when Adam receives it in 1973 it still has its original blue paint and a good exterior. But internal decay has set in. It is filled with spiders and cobwebs, and it barely runs. Such is the view of the country, which looks modern and attractive, but has neglected its founding precepts, and does not address trenchant questions that are fundamental to its existence. The car continues to function symbolically in terms of the manner in which Gabriel, the yored, treats it, for his treatment parallels his attitude toward the country. He has no respect for it other than to use it: he paints it black, the color of mourning, and then allows it to deteriorate again. After the car has been painted, Israel falls into a state of depression and despair following the war, and, furthermore, Veduca dies. When Adam finally retrieves the car from the ultra-orthodox sect in Jerusalem to whom Gabriel has lent it, it is in a state of disrepair since it has been used but not cared for. This recalls the attitude of certain very orthodox sects (for example, the Neturei Karta), who do not acknowledge Israel's right to exist because it is not the Messianic state for which they pray. Nevertheless, they find it convenient to remain, both because it is the soil of Eretz Yisrael and because the country, governed by coalition with religious parties, ensures them a reasonably comfortable life. Yet they do nothing to foster progress, nor to focus

upon the state's ideological foundations (in which they do not believe). Since Yehoshua's contention is well known that Israel may not justify herself on religious grounds--not according to a historical right to the land, nor to the fulfillment of Biblical promise--one may suppose that he believes that the country, symbolized by the Morris, will come to no good end in religious hands (Yehoshua, 1981, p. 68). Significantly, at the conclusion of The Lover, the Morris, its battery dead, stands useless in a field between an Israeli Arab village and the Lebanese border, with Adam helpless alongside it. The symbolism is here complete, for the car, having passed from the hands of "old lady Zionism" herself into the hands of a careless, cynical expatriate, then into the possession of a religious group who values it only for its utilitarianism, is now finally driven to collapse by a middle-aged Israeli at an impasse in his life, who stands alongside it, helpless, in the middle of the night in the midst of a field near the border. The role of the car is clearly a device to illuminate Yehoshua's notion that Israel was, in the mid 1970's, at an ideological "dead end." This symbolic circle is most piquantly captured by the illustration on the front cover of the Hebrew edition of The Lover, which shows an old black Morris, on top of which is a slowly melting memorial candle for the dead.

The car serves yet another function in the story, albeit less symbolic: it is the vehicle which is used by both Adam and Gabriel in their frantic journeys, and so is an inherent element of the flight motif to be found in many of Yehoshua's writings. Both men, victims of their alienation and set adrift by their lack of emotional moorings,

are wanderers, Gabriel the more so as he has actually left Israel and has spent unfulfilling years abroad. When he flees the war in Sinai he leaves Israel, in a symbolic sense, once again, for he goes to a community which, although in the heart of Jerusalem, regards itself as being outside of Israeli life and to a certain extent, outside of history. When he returns to Haifa with Adam and Asya, it is not to return home, but to escape yet another situation which has become untenable. When Adam takes to the highways at night to search for Gabriel, his motives are unspecified. Why does he need to find this man? Why has he acquiesced in Gabriel's seduction of his wife? His driving is compulsive and indicative of his general aimlessness. He has joined those Israelis of whom he remarks:

And on the roads the endless roar of traffic, army convoys, private cars, trucks, hitch-hikers, soldiers. . . . Adventurers, kibbutz volunteers from abroad, laborers from the occupied territories . . . the land is still uneasy, men wandering about in a vague search for something, for some account that remains to be settled (Yehoshua, 1978, p. 220).

Like the country he observes at night, Adam is in a vague search for something, but he does not know which accounts need settling. The actual garage accounts are managed for him by other people, such as his bookkeeper and his daughter, but the existential ones remain his own, undefined and therefore not addressed. In the final flight toward the border with Naim, Adam, like the protagonist of "Summer 70" who travels into the Jordan Valley to verify the fact that his son is living, is at the most confused moment of his life. Unable to reconcile the discovery of Gabriel, the meeting again of Gabriel and Asya, and then the discovery of Dafi and Naim together, he is simply

impelled to move. Since Yehoshua has used the motif of borders before, in such stories as "Three Days and a Child," "A Long Hot Day," "Missile Base 612," "A Poet's Continuing Silence," and "The Beginning of Summer 70," it is clear that the primary focus here is not the particular detail of taking Naim to the Lebanese frontier. Rather, it is the fact that Adam has reached, literally and figuratively, his own personal limit and is now stymied.

The concluding pages of the novel contrast the state of mind of the alienated protagonist, who is stifled with confusion, self-pity, and thoughts directed at himself, and the young man who remains open and attuned to others. Adam at first tries to replace the car's dead battery with an extra one belonging to Asya; when it also fails he thinks: "her battery too has gone dead these last months, I hadn't noticed" (Yehoshua, 1978, p. 351). In actuality he and Asya have not noticed each other for years. He continues: "Standing beside a dead old car from '47 and there's nobody to save me" (Yehoshua, 1978, p. 351).

Contrasted with Adam's immobile, deafened state is the hopeful attitude of Naim. Having undergone a day of both fulfillment and loss (he has alternately possessed Dafi and then been taken away from her), Naim rejects despair; he will not yield up his dreams nor his orientation toward other people. Having finally been able to love Dafi, he is able also to love Adam, who indicates, in turn, that he understands the boy by his admonishment that Naim return to school. Contemplating Adam, he muses:

I've been burned with kindness.

. . . a good man, a good and tired man, and they get on Adam's nerves so. . . .

It's possible to love them [the reference here is to the Jews] and to hurt them too. . . .

The people will wonder what's happened to Naim that he's suddenly so full of hope (Yehoshua, 1978, p. 352).

This is one of many examples in the story which bear out the contention mentioned in the first pages of this chapter: the actions of one character toward another (Dafi's making love with Naim) affect the behavior of the second party toward a third (Naim's feelings of affection and respect for Adam). Here Yehoshua underscores the difference between one who is unable to attain love and therefore is unable to give it, and one who receives love and then is able to transfer it to other individuals. This validates Morahg's theory concerning confirmation and its denial: when an individual receives confirmation of his selfhood (in this case, Naim experiences an authentic validation of his manhood), his extended behavior becomes appropriate and positive.

Some readers and critics have interpreted The Lover as a plea for Jewish-Arab understanding and coexistence. While it is certainly that, it is concurrently a universal story, examining the qualities of alienation and engagement. The Lover illustrates the notion that these conditions do not derive from exterior circumstance but rather from ineffable forces which motivate the individual from within. In creating the characters of Naim and, to a lesser extent, Veducha, Yehoshua has introduced still another difference between this book and

his previous stories--and that is the element of hope. While there are indeed incidents of communication, or near-communication, and brief moments of individual affirmation, the earlier stories generally portray a grim, hostile cosmos from which the protagonists have withdrawn. These individuals play their singular roles against a background of secondary characters who, rather than being completely portrayed personalities, are instead representatives of qualities which will cast the protagonists up against themselves. This is the function of the prisoners and the dogs in "Flood Tide," the last commander in the story of that title, Yali and his parents in "Three Days and a Child," the mute Arab in "Facing the Forests," the Dutchman, African doctor and the protagonist's family in "A Long Hot Day," and the students and son in "Summer 70." The Lover, however, extends Yehoshua's existential vision to include finely-shaded areas of characterization among a number of individuals, even those in the background. This novel is significant, then, not merely because it is yet another step away from Yehoshua's earlier abstract style, but even more, because it uses its new realistic mode to depict a multiplicity of answers to the moral dilemma, through an array of characters who embody those answers. It might be contended that Naim is naturally optimistic and in search of affirmation, because he is young and therefore presumably inexperienced in the disappointments of life. However, Naim is the essential "outsider"; external pressures have consigned him to this position since his birth. Nevertheless, he remains engaged, determined to seize from life all that it has to offer. Furthermore, Veduca, his diametric opposite, displays similar

qualities. Although she is complaining and argumentative and has "realized that God had lost consciousness" after World War II, her eye is on every detail, and she will not be denied nor take for granted a single breath. Although Naim and Veducha are dissimilar in an exterior sense, they share an attitude which pursues life; even more significantly, they pursue validating relationships and admit dependence upon others. Just as "Three Days and a Child" marked a turning point in Yehoshua's writing from an abstract realm to a more realistic one, so does The Lover mark another transition: through the characters of the old lady and the boy, we encounter attitudes of affirmation and confirmation for the first time.

Having examined such a variety of characters in The Lover and having observed the positive and negative resolutions which are provided, in particular for Naim and Adam, we may then glance back at the previous stories to investigate the question of whether the denouement of each is entirely bleak. The conclusion of this paper will address this issue, in an attempt to articulate Yehoshua's general viewpoint toward the matters which he addresses in his fiction.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined Yehoshua's fiction in terms of the themes which most concern him: alienation, the struggle for power and authentication, and the conflict between generations. It has also examined the national implications of these problems, which Yehoshua presents primarily on an individual level. In an effort to determine what resolutions Yehoshua sees for the problems he has presented, we may find a key in the denouements of the stories discussed here.

With the exception of The Lover, Yehoshua's stories conclude on a note of despair, if not horror. Each protagonist has passed through a crisis which results in violence, madness, deepening hopelessness, or alienation, or a combination thereof. The protagonist of "Flood Tide" finds himself locked in a prison cell, stalked by two dogs who are about to devour him. All his prisoners have escaped, and he is alone with the fate to which he has been compulsively drawn. His death wish is about to be fulfilled. There is no hope, redemption, or spiritual freedom attained here, for the man has been completely obsessed by the Manual of Regulations and is inevitably led to the decisions which cost him his life.

The multiple protagonists of "The Last Commander" similarly find themselves at a distance from civilization; unlike the jailor of "Flood Tide;" however, they abhor the "Law" and desire no rules at all. They are content to lose themselves in sleep, but considering the many

references in the story to death, this condition certainly resembles the sleep of the dead. The satiric nature of this tale lends it an element of humor. Nonetheless, it is finally despairing since the men clearly have lost their dreams, their desire for action, and most significantly have refused to take the dangerous march which will restore them to their society. In other words, they will not assume the risks inherent in daily living: they are too exhausted to make further effort.

Profound despair and the decision to abandon engagement typify Yehoshua's earlier stories such as "Flood Tide" and "The Last Commander." It is possible that such resolutions indicate the existential outlook of the writer as a young man, since his later works do contain elements, however slight, of hope and affirmation. Another conclusion may be drawn as well: that is that confrontation with divine authority, whether in submission or rebellion, yields an awesome response which is ultimately life-negating. (In this sense Yehoshua contrasts interestingly with Camus, who viewed the collapse of divine authority not as a total negation of life, but instead as an opportunity to pursue with urgency and immediacy those life-affirming values which are devoid of obligation to the supernatural but lend coherence to human activity.) These stories discussed in Chapter 1 are the most metaphysical in Yehoshua's work; in questioning the nature of man's relationship to God, they pose a challenge to which there is no adequate response and their conclusions, although tempered by satiric and grotesque imagery, are grim indeed.

"Three Days and a Child," permeated with the threat of violence, and the borderline madness of Yehoshua's special Jerusalem atmosphere, offers a bleak picture of human behavior, characterized by Haya's utter thoughtlessness and the obsessive and murderous impulses of Dov and Zvi. The violence in the story is latent, in Dov's thoughts of killing Yali, but this does not lessen the impact of horror upon the reader. Nevertheless, unlike the protagonists of "Flood Tide" and "The Last Commander," and indeed of other stories contained in Yehoshua's first volume, Dov veers from his dark impulse and selects the most rational course of action. Yali's trust and innocence touch him and carry him at least temporarily beyond his hatred and jealousy. When Dov relates the animal story to Yali, a story which is actually a parable within the general animal parable which forms the motif of the story, he indicates a growing self-awareness that includes a more tender feeling for the child. This awareness increases as the two embrace each other and as he begins to care properly for Yali. Although still estranged physically from Haya and emotionally from Yael, he has been touched on some human level which weakens his morbid impulse. "Three Days and a Child" is thus not only the story by means of which Yehoshua brings the reader into contact with the tangible Israeli scene; it is also the first story in which the protagonist experiences a positive human emotion in response to the trust, innocence, and need of another person. It would appear that in shifting from the realm of allegory in which the protagonist functions as a symbol of an existential dilemma, to a more realistic realm,

Yehoshua must confront ordinary individuals who occasionally slip from their angst-ridden solitude and establish loving connections.

These moments, however, touch us most deeply precisely because they are so infrequent and because the protagonist is at best in a state of irresolution rather than final despair at the denouement. Such is the situation in "A Long Hot Day," in which the engineer finally casts himself upon the ground in the form of a cross, a sacrificial and supplicating posture. Having struggled with apathy and impotence throughout the story, he reaches an emotional turning point. Perhaps, lying in his crucified position, he is acquiescing to his wife's dominance and is willing to be completely crushed by her. On the other hand, this may be his direct plea for attention, his cry for a restoration of their marital bond. In either case, he realizes that his disaffection, if not his illness, can only be cured by a loving connection. This realization opens the possibility of future options, which renders the story's conclusion not entirely hopeless.

"Facing the Forests," having illustrated the violent outburst which is potential in an alienated person, concludes with the protagonist in an even more hopeless state than he was before he retreated to the forests. He has achieved ironic communication with the enemy and destroyed a national symbol, but these facts serve to accentuate his essential state of alienation from those things which we would ordinarily expect to engage an Israeli. It is only when he observes the Arab's daughter and, noting her approaching womanhood, feels pity and sympathy for her (and indeed saves her from the blaze), that the possibility of an engaged attitude can be detected in him.

This detail, however, is buried among many neutral or even hostile encounters and therefore highlights, once again, the protagonist's basic disaffection.

The elderly teacher in "Summer 70," estranged from the world around him and confused by the apparent crumbling of Zionist values which have formed his basic assumptions about life, descends to madness in his search for his son. His sad and comic figure becomes a grotesque reflection of what to Yehoshua is the disarray of Israeli values. This story is especially bleak, since its ending returns to its beginning: the protagonist continues to fantasize that he is a bereaved parent despite the discovery of his son alive. Although he addresses his "dead" son, telling the young man that he himself will spread the "new gospel" brought from America, in point of fact his entire validation as an individual depends upon his son's death. "Summer 70," like "Flood Tide," concerns a protagonist who lives by fixed assumptions. In the latter, the jailor who obediently follows the dictates of the Law loses his life; in the former, the old teacher who sees his values sour and become irrelevant, loses his mind. "Summer 70," however, and also "Facing the Forests," reach beyond the question of assumptions made in the personal domain: they extend to the national realm as well. They are the most political and nationally oriented tales in Yehoshua's fiction, and as such, are grim remonstrances about the necessity of remaining alert as to motive, flexible in action, and sensitive in terms of values when assessing and responding to a national ideology.

The denouement of The Lover, like the novel's realistic mode, is a departure from Yehoshua's previous writing. While it is true that Adam, like previous protagonists, is left alone, helpless and facing unresolved questions, a new dimension is introduced with the contrasting stance of Naim. The last line of the story belongs to him: "The people will wonder what's happened to Na'im that he's suddenly so full of hope." This conclusion, which leaves one character irresolute but not hopeless, and another "full of hope," not only is a comparison of the conditions of alienation and engagement, but also illustrates the writer's point of view: Yehoshua draws his characters with compassion, and his stories are laced with irony and, in specific instances such as "The Last Commander" and The Lover, with wit. The compassionate feeling and ironic tone relieve, however slightly, the dramatic tension wrought by the grotesque nature of the protagonist's thoughts and deeds. As a result, beginning with "Three Days and a Child" and continuing in the stories written thereafter, the protagonist is actually a person of texture and complexity, capable of extending himself to others. The fact that there is rarely anyone for him to touch forms the tragic essence of these works.

The question then arises as to what ingredient is lacking in the protagonist's life. It has been established that Yehoshua provides little explanation for the internal aspect of his characters' alienation. We do not know why a protagonist harbors morbid impulses or commits grotesque deeds. It is clear, however, that the release achieved during the crisis in the denouement of the story yields no satisfaction. An incident in The Lover may provide a clue to that

element which is missing in the lives of these characters. Whereas the crisis for Adam occurs when he reunites Gabriel and Asya, the crisis for Naim takes place when he is finally alone with Dafi and makes love to her. Their union brings him not merely sexual release but also delirious feelings of affirmation and hope for the future. For Naim feels that he has established a genuinely loving connection with another person and even indicates to Adam that he is willing to marry Dafi. This episode explores the only authentically fulfilled relationship between man and woman in Yehoshua's works.

Therefore it is necessary to address the great sexual tension which permeates so many of Yehoshua's stories. His attitude toward male-female relationships is bleak indeed. By their presence or their absence, women bring grief to his protagonists, who are uniformly male. Without women in their lives, men become violent or mad. With women, they are brought to despair and sometimes impotence.

In "Flood Tide," "A Poet's Continuing Silence" (a story not directly addressed in this paper, but similar in theme and style to those which are discussed) and "Summer 70," the absence of women is pronounced. Insanity and despair permeate all three stories. Furthermore, these qualities gain momentum as the stories progress. In the last two, the protagonists are elderly and widowed. They are barely surviving in a world which has become alien and devoid of warmth and human contact.

In the remaining stories (and others in Yehoshua's first volume, The Death of the Old Man, such as "Galia's Wedding" and "An Evening Journey to Yatir Village"), women bring grief, not solace.

They fulfill, as Shaked has noted especially in the characters of Gália and Haya, the image of "La belle Dame sans merci" (Shaked, 1970, p. 129). Furthermore, there is no doubt that lack of sexual fulfillment is at least partly responsible for the underlying violence in "Three Days and a Child" and "Facing the Forests." Even though the men in both these stories have mistresses, as well as previous lovers, the love which is denied them only accelerates their destructive urges.

"A Long Hot Day" and another tale not addressed here, "Missile Base 612," are in a certain sense preliminary outlines for the outburst of marital despair which prevails in The Lover. In these stories disharmony in marriage is the basis for the protagonist's misery. Again it is sexual dysfunction or frustration which brings the hero to alienation from his surroundings, but here alienation is expressed in physical flight from his home. Each protagonist is essentially passive in the face of estrangement from his wife; the only action taken is to travel--away from the problem. The function of travel or flight in Yehoshua's works is crucial: it is a search for identity and authenticity because there is no loving affirmation at home. It is inevitably doomed to failure--thus the violence and despair which ensue.

A parallel may be drawn between the flight motif, especially as it prevails in Yehoshua's later short stories and novels, and the wandering and rootless existence of the Jewish people. More than one observer has claimed that the Jew, who from dire necessity has learned to live "with his suitcases packed," is an example of alienated twentieth-century man par excellence. This fact becomes more poignant

with the realization that the State of Israel was created precisely to remedy this problem. That it has not succeeded in doing so is clear, since Israelis emigrate from the country in large numbers and Jews elsewhere move from one country to another without considering Israel as an alternative. The notion of wandering culminates, in Israeli fiction, in the figure of the yored (expatriate), who becomes an ironic reversal of the Zionist dream. Such are the roles of certain protagonists in Yehoshua's novels, The Lover and Late Divorce. Alter has remarked, of the phenomenon of escaping the confines of the country: "The nervous shuttling between home and horizon in Israeli writing is also perceptible in the new prominence it has given to the role of the expatriate" (Alter, 1977, p. 255). In the texts discussed in this study, of course, there are no yordim except Gabriel; but characters frequently travel to the periphery of the country and beyond.

The fact that the motif of flight figures so prominently in the conclusions of Yehoshua's stories is paralleled by the note of irresolution upon which the stories conclude. Such irresolution is not unique to Yehoshua; he is actually part of a literary trend which reflects widening political questions of an increasingly complicated dimension. This complexity, uncertainty, and paralysis of will has been observed by Ramras-Rauch in a discussion which focuses upon novels by Amos Oz, Benjamin Tammuz, Hanoch Bar-Tov, and Aharon Megged, and touches briefly upon Yehoshua as well. She contends that conclusions which are inconclusive, and a future which is unclear reflect the position of New Wave Israeli writers, who are in the process of

addressing the very destiny of the land itself, as well as its underlying values (Ramras-Rauch, 1978, p. 143). This future cannot be defined, not only because of political problems vis-a-vis the Arab states, but also because of the unresolved question of Jewish identity and belonging. Since Israel's existence cannot be taken for granted, and, accordingly, no predictions can be made about the outcome of present historical and sociological processes, these writers are unable to provide clear and precise resolutions for their stories. They are uncertain about future events, and their confusion is illustrated in the dilemmas which challenge their protagonists.

Ramras-Rauch is not alone among critics in noting the similarity between fictive theme and national problem in the works of New Wave Israeli writers. Gertz, for example, has written:

To be or not to be is not a personal dilemma, but a national one. Israeli writers treat national problems not because they have decided that the writer must be involved, but because their most fundamental existential problems are shared by all Israelis. The personal biography of an Israeli writer is also the social-historical biography (Gertz, 1980, p. 77).

This thesis, therefore, has investigated Yehoshua's writing from two standpoints: as it portrays the personal journey of the individual protagonist and as that journey, in particular stories, parallels the national quest. Whether the alienation which he depicts is the result of failed love or a lost battle with authority, it consistently reflects, in motif and uncertain conclusion, the sense of unease and questioning which prevails in Israel. This challenge of values which does not lend itself to facile answers, is not necessarily ominous. It is perhaps to be expected in a country whose citizens are contentious

and constantly alert to change and who, following centuries of dislocation and abuse, are struggling to establish norms of behavior and belief in a situation unprecedented in history. Yehoshua, an artist of expressive power, intellectual honesty, and a finely balanced sense of irony and tragedy, combines his individual and national perspective in a manner which shifts naturally from one level to the other with subtlety and grace.

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