The Jerusalem Review of Books

Reflections on the Literature of Post-Apartheid South Africa

Written and Edited by Graduate Students in The Hebrew University of Jerusalem’s Department of English Literature

(Not for distribution; internal circulation only)

Under the guidance of Professor Louise Bethlehem

June 2021
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## THE EDITORS’ NOTE

### Book Reviews

- *Thirteen Cents* by K. Sello Duiker / Asmaa Abulatifa  
  - Page 4
- *July’s People* by Nadine Gordimer / Yara Abo-Foul  
  - Page 8
- “The Sound of My Name” and “I CANNOT MYSELF” by Gabeba Baderoo / Tamir Hajali  
  - Page 10

## Creative Writing

### Short Stories

- The Reaction / Audrey Lynn Leinoff  
  - Page 15
- The Sciolist of Cion / Erit Rabinowitz  
  - Page 17

### Poetry

- 3 short poems based off of Lauren Beuke’s novel *Zoo City* / Orelia Elkaim  
  - Page 22
- A Bad Attempt at a Poem Mirroring Baderoo / Tamir Hajali  
  - Page 28
- A poem on J.M. Coetzee’s novel *Age of Iron* / Samara Qassoum  
  - Page 29
- A Poem related to Zoe Wicomb’s novel *David’s Story* and Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved* / Hadar Shimon  
  - Page 31
Literature emanating from South Africa does not always provide for a simple read. Charged, challenging, full of delicate intricacy which can only be fully appreciated by those with a trained eye, this art punctures one deeply, whether one is prepared to be punctured, or otherwise. As students of the spring 2021 semester course “Post Apartheid Literature,” under the trusted and masterful guidance of Professor Louise Bethlehem, we have now set out to create our own responses to the works that have so profoundly impacted each and every one of us for the duration of this passing year.

We are therefore proud to present the outcome of the labor of our newfound appreciation of South African writing. Before you are our responses to the narratives which have compelled us, touched us, and moved us. Some have chosen to respond to issues of race, others to issues of gender or class, matters which are so deeply engraved in post-apartheid literature, the result of centuries of systemic oppression. This is not to say that you will not find hope, beauty and passion within the pages we lay bare before you. On the contrary, we find that optimism, splendor and love are the dominating features lending themselves to the unique nature of South African fiction. Although we say unique, it is no coincidence that we each chose to respond to a specific text. For all its uniqueness, there has nonetheless been something about South Africa that has been conveyed to us via its most prevalent fictions that has resonated with all of us on a subjective, particular level. This something we speak of is often illusive, breaking free of the restraint of words, but it is ever present, likely to accompany us for years to come.
On a personal note, Asma and I would like to thank all the contributors for their impressive pieces. We have enjoyed reading you through your work, and seeing that like us, you too feel Africa. A special thanks is once again awarded to Professor Bethlehem, for navigating us through the waters till reaching Cape Town’s familiar shores, made possible by her constant guidance and encouragement. We hope that you will enjoy the fruit of our joint labor, and kuishi afrika ndefu- long live Africa!

Asma Abulatifa and Audrey Leinoff
Book Reviews

K. Sello Duiker’s novel *Thirteen Cents*; Book Review by Asmaa Abulatifaa

“I can never look at myself too long in the mirror as my blue eyes remind me of the confusing messages they send out to people. I wear my blue eyes with fear because fear is deeper than shame.” (K.S Duiker)

"For three days they don’t open the room. I shit in a toilet bowl they left in the room for me. My bed is just a sponge. For three nights I listen to my wounds, my bruises. For three nights I feel my body healing. On one wall is a mirror and on the other wall a light switch. At night when I’m bored, I play with it and watch the mirror. When the light goes off the mirror seems to suck in the light. I’m getting stronger, I tell myself, even though my stomach grumbles. When I start to feel weak, I sing. Made-up songs that have nothing to do with words, just nonsense sounds that keep writing themselves in my head. Sometimes I just hum one note and see how long I can hold it. I do that for a long time. I’m getting stronger, I tell myself again and feel my stomach muscles forming in hard ridges. Destroy, destroy, the music plays on in my head.” (K.S Duiker)

K. Sello Duiker’s *Thirteen Cents* is an unsettling, gruesome, frank and heartbreaking novel depicting the harsh realities endured by Azure, a thirteen-year-old homeless boy. Azure, pronounced Ah-zoo-ray as he informs the reader, roams in the streets of Sea Point after the murder of his parents. Not only does Azure grow up amongst gangsters and drug dealers, but he is also exposed early on to racial exploitation, violence and prostitution which fuel him to categorize adults as unreliable, evil and ambitious. Thus, Azure learns to be on his own, to take care of himself and to not depend on grown-ups as they are "fucked up.”
The first part of the novel centers on Azure’s attempts to survive the streets of Cape Town. Since he lacks adult supervision or support, he attempts to endure cruelty, starvation and abuse by engaging in homosexual encounters with white older men. He sells his body to white “moffies”, gay or closeted married men who enjoy degrading, painful and rough sex with children. Duiker vividly describes these sexual encounters which are shocking and eye opening to readers. During these encounters, Azure not only detaches himself from what he is experiencing as he merely does it for money, but also questions his own sexual identity through denial and repression. Azure constantly reassures himself and the reader that he is not a “mofﬁe.” In some instances however, he brieﬂy enjoys sex but this sensation is quickly replaced by sadness.

What makes Azure so special to these white men though? His only advantage is that he is a black child that has blue eyes, an uncommon feature among black South Africans which is enough to attract pedophiles. The income Azure makes out of these sexual encounters is used for food and for “zol”. He attempts to save some of his money in his “bank account” but unfortunately, he gets scammed by a woman named Liesel. By stealing Azure’s money, Liesel breaks his trust in adults one more time revealing the corrupt society he lives in. Throughout the novel, Azure is beaten, locked up, starved, and abused for no apparent reason other than the grown ups’ attempt to break him, to subject him to their power and to mold him according to their standards and needs, since Azure is perceived as a threat. Because his society considers him to be different, not “black enough,” a threat that can disrupt their order, so he must be eliminated.

Azure decides to leave the city behind and ascends up Table Mountain where the narrative becomes surrealist, supernatural and mysterious as the thin line between reality and fantasy is blurred. Magical realism dominates the ending of the novel, witnessed through unsolved mysteries, dialogues and events that leave readers shocked and puzzled. Azure starts having vivid, lucid dreams that are hellish and apocalyptic, reﬂecting his psyche. At Table Mountain, he dreams of a T-rax, the famous Saartjie, Gerald’s death, ﬁres, explosions and tsunamis. These dreams or potential visions add a mystical and spiritual aspect to the novel as they illustrate Azure’s bildungsroman.
Thirteen Cents is a masterpiece, an eye opening story that depicts the brutality children endure on the streets of South Africa and the corruption that is absorbed and that ultimately impacts and shapes their identities. The narrative demonstrates that children have few paths to choose from: to become drug dealers, drug consumers, rapists or killers as violence begets violence. What commences as a frank, direct first person narrative shifts into a complex, apocalyptic narrative that hints at the narrator’s psyche. Moreover, the novel’s ending hints at the termination of a corrupt city in order to be replaced by a new society. A rebirth. A resurrection. A phoenix rising from the ashes of injustice, trauma and exploitation.

Asmaa Abulatifa

Asmaa was born in Ramallah, Palestine and raised in Panama till the age of 14. Currently, she is working at a tech company as a customer support agent and projects’ specialist. She is also working as an English middle school teacher while doing her MA in English literature at The Hebrew University. Asmaa is fascinated with languages, books and art.
Nadine Gordimer’s novel *July’s People* is an apartheid novel that was published in 1981. The events of the novel are set in South Africa during a fictional war. The war started from the black revolution that aimed to overthrow the white biased system. The story is about July, a black servant for the Smales family. The Smales family is a white liberal family who seeks July’s help in fleeing to July’s village, to run away from the violent events. The Smales’ life changes drastically, from a luxurious life, with a big house, a pool, and good jobs and authority, to July’s rural and even primitive village life, where they live in mud-huts and have no clean water. At the village, the Smales’ father Bamford, or Bam for short, adapts to the life of hunting with other black men at the village, to supply food for his family. The mother, Maureen, tries to adapt to the black women’s life of collecting grass to use for beds, collecting food from fields, and washing her and her family’s clothes at the river. Finally, the three Smales children, Victor the oldest son, Gina the daughter, and Royce the youngest son. While Victor fails to interact well with the black children at the village, Gina and Royce become close friends with them, and they even learn Afrikaans’s language from those children.

Before the war, whites had the upper hand, but the Smales, despite being liberal, did use, knowingly, the advantage of being white in a continent with a black majority. However, during the war, blacks gained the upper hand and authority, which affected the power dynamics between the Smales family and July. At first, July relied on the family, since Maureen signed his passbook, and gave him his money for his services. She and her family were the authority. However, during the war, July becomes the authorizer. He drives their bakkie without permission, buys them food, teaches them how to cook, clean, and collect/hunt food, and he is able to come and go without a passbook. As a result of the shift in power, several tensions rise between Maureen and July in particular, and between the Smales and the blacks in general. Besides, the story introduces the chief of the village, who advocates the white’s killing of his people. The chief reveals another perspective of blacks, one that opposes July’s
perspective of liberation. The interactions between July, Maureen, and Bam before and after the war, and the chief, July, and the Smales, all reflect the fight for power.

I enjoyed reading the novel. The language is simple, yet it describes the life of blacks and whites at length. It also allows the reader to examine in depth the perspectives of blacks and whites. The novel discusses several themes, and the most outstanding ones are power and possessions. It shows how tension rises due to the shift in power, which also relates to using others’ possessions without permission. The novel highlights the principals of the apartheid regime, and predicts the latter’s fall due to all the injustice towards certain people. Since this novel is anti-apartheid, it was banned in South Africa for years. I liked the open ending as well. I feel that Gordimer kept the ending open so we, the people of the future, predict what kind of helicopter that Maureen and the villagers saw based on today’s reality. She wanted the future readers to see how this helicopter has led to the change that they observe today. The novel’s title also makes one wonder: Who are July’s people? Does it refer to the Smales, or to July’s black community, or both?

Besides, the story kept me intrigued. When I thought that I understood who July’s people can be, another category is revealed with the introduction of the chief of the village. Also, the story has several unpredictable scenes, such as the theft of the gun, or the chief’s treacherous attitude towards his own people, or even July’s infidelity. Moreover, I liked that the novel ends with suspense. The reader cannot even know anything about the helicopter and who it might be for because Maureen could not identify the color of the helicopter, its markings, nor “whether it holds saviours or murderers; and […] for whom” (160). Gordimer even plays with language, as in the latter example “for whom”; the black’s saviors can be the white murderers, and vice versa. Similarly, she includes in the novel several scenes where the black does not understand the white’s language, nor the white can understand the black’s language. The latter shows failure of communication between the two groups, which is one of the reasons for the rise of (the fictional) war too. However, this play with language
confused me, which is an aspect I disliked about the novel. Sometimes, I had a bit of difficulty deciding who was talking to whom, or who’s perspective is the one I am reading. Yet that did not affect my understanding and enjoyment of the novel.

In conclusion, I recommend *July’s People* for readers who like drama, tension, and novels that discuss social issues such as racism and oppression, or issues related to (in)humanity in general. This story is suitable for all ages, but I think that readers with more knowledge and background on the apartheid, or people who have lived under the oppression of colonialism, can understand the explicit and implicit messages of this novel. In my opinion, Gordimer’s novel is a history in the making.

---

**Yara Abo-Fuol**

I was born and raised in Jatt village, Haifa district. I studied my B.A. at the university of Haifa and fell in love with the beautiful city of Haifa. But since I am a person who likes to experience new experiences and challenge myself, I moved to the beautiful city of Jerusalem to study at The Hebrew University. I finished my teaching certificate at HUJI while I was doing my MA in english literature. I love learning new languages and educating myself through reading history books. Currently, I work as an English teacher.
"The Sound of My Name" and "I CANNOT MYSELF" by Gabeba Baderoo

Book Review by Tamir Hajali

The concrete identities of the post-colonial discourse are long gone. The idea of the orient as a signifier of someone’s identity is an outdated way of looking at a person’s identity. Because of the huge waves of migrations and intermingling of different cultures, whether it be due to diaspora, looking for a better life, or any other reason, the world has become a more colorful and mixed place. No person has a set identity anymore. One simply cannot be just an Arab or just a Jew. There are a number of mixed cultural identities that go into creating and making up a unique identity for each individual. Each person is comprised of their sexual, gender, racial, religious, class, and even age identity, which leaves the person with a sort of fragmented identity that is not concrete at all. At times, even the sub-identities themselves can be fragmented such as in mixed racial identities which is very common nowadays. All of this is what differentiates between contemporary discourse and post-colonial identity discourse. Thus, leading to the creation of the idea of the fragmented self.

The fragmented self as a concept is a unique and challenging theme to explore and delve into in creative writing; this is exactly why it is a popular subject in contemporary literary culture, which brings me to the subject of this book review, Gabeba Baderoon. Baderoon is a colored South African poet who embodies the fragmented self because of her colored identity. She is a mixture of different racial and even religious identities, which makes her exploration of the theme very nuanced and interesting. The most intriguing poems that explore the subject are “The Sound of My Name” and “I CANNOT MYSELF.” She uses poetic conventions, tools, and themes to portray a feeling of
fragmentation in her poetry while, at the same time, showing a belief in a concrete self or true self in her poetic lines.

“The Sound of My Name” is a poem dealing with the subject of the pronunciation of the speaker’s name and the act of speaking different languages, which presumably is Baderooin herself. The structure serves the theme of fragmentation perfectly. The stanzas are fragmented and separated, and each stanza deals with a certain language. On top of that, the poem is full of fragmented lines that break off the stanza structure to form their own groups of lines or even break off on their own. The start of the poem is very organized and concise in terms of structure but, as it goes on and gets deeper into the identity of the speaker, it starts to fragment even more and more. In addition, the structure of the poem serves to mimic the language practices and training themselves. The cutoffs after each sentence in the Arabic section of the poem mimic the act of breathing in and out: “[b]reathe in, / take a sip of water, / make a flat oval of the lips, / breathe out. / Remember the sound of the exhalation” (ll. 21-25). The break in each line lets the reader immerse themselves in the act of pronunciation. The reader automatically takes a breath after finishing a line, which corresponds with the request of breathing that the speaker asks in the line. Thus, whenever there is a cutoff, the reader breathes with the speaker making it immersive by virtue of its punctuation and structure.

Contextually, however, the poem is anything but fragmented. The last lines of the poem state the speaker’s identity loudly and clearly: “Between the two is the start of my name” (l. 27). Her identity, even though fragmented, is still there and evidently existent. A mixed one that is hanging between two sides. In addition, this is only the “start” of her identity, not all of it (l. 27). So, each facet
of her identity is fragmented, but this fragmentation is not to be confused with fuzziness or lost identity. Even though she is fragmented as a person, the fragments that make her up are very clear, and she is trying to teach the addressed person in the poem these identities.

“I CANNOT MYSELF” is a much shorter poem that follows the same themes and principles but with a bit of a twist. The fragmentation is thematic rather than structural. The main theme of the poem is photographs and photography. In the poem, the speaker’s body is “assemble[d]” by a number of “photographs and signatures” (ll. 2-3). From these fragmented objects, the speaker claims that people will “search for [her]” (l. 4). These concepts, again, mirror the ones in the first poem. The fragmented self is formed from a number of fragmented objects and identities that create the mixed identity. The contextual meaning is the same as well. The speaker asserts that she “must leave behind all uncertainties,” and that “she cannot myself be a question” (ll. 5-6). Here, again, the question of clarity crops up. Even though her identity is comprised of fragments, identity is and has to be clear and concise. There cannot be a question or any bit of fuzziness in one’s identity.

Nevertheless, there exists a minute difference between the two poems. The relationship between the speaker and the addressee is different. In the first poem, the speaker is active and resolute in the creation of her identity and is teaching it to the addressee or the reader in a clear and concise way. In the second poem, however, the speaker is somewhat passive and confused in the creation of her identity. The people that she mentions in the poem are the ones that are actively looking for her identity rather than her actively displaying and explaining it. However, the firm position of conciseness is still present in both poems. She is still adamant in her strive for clarity in her identity in the second
poem as well. In conclusion, I think that these poems symbolize a lot of what people deal with these
days. The fragmented self as an issue has never been more popular, and these poems help deal with its
struggles. In her search for clarity and firmness in her identity, readers can find solace in their own
aspiration for clarity and self-understanding.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

Tamir Hajali
I was born in Taibe. It’s a small town right in the middle of Israel. Small compared to other Jewish
towns, but it’s still the third biggest Arab town in Israel. My dad is a chemist and my mom is a teacher,
so I wasn’t raised on art at all. However, I fell in love with it and here I am trying to become better at
understanding it.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
My blood does not scream from the earth, it nourishes it, as it nourished you. Even though they said that I should not be. They said, He does not belong. They said, He is not right! So they wrung me down with their soft words which coiled round me, hate lolling out of their hardened lips as they diminished my towering self into the meniscal, feathery laces of ash that became me. And you, you let them. But I am a part of you, even though you have partaken in ending me. For I am the other brother. However, did you really believe that I could not forgive you? My name means Love, after all.

I see that you have joined us, hello and welcome. You are all invited to hear my profession of love. But remember, the purpose of this admission is not to pass judgment. For one, I have already passed. What you will see is a reaction. It has no beginning, nor will it ever have an end. Leave this kind of thinking to small-minded men like Aristotle. Time does not move linearly for us. There can be no judgment here. We are all the darkest brothers. Additionally, my confession is not about reconciliation. For there is nothing to forgive, you see.

Let me introduce myself. My name is Luthando, and I am not truly here, because if you have been observant, as I am sure that you have been, you will know by now that I am dead. Then again, you would need to believe in truth to accept what I have just conceded. I do not admire this term, truth, for it has never permitted my light-feathered wings to take flight. The weight of the word itself is enough to pull a man down and give rise to another, you see. Who was it that said that flying too close to the sun is wrong? Another white Western, I am sure. Well, my friends, the day I took flight, the day I
reached the sun, that was the day that I was happy to allow my feathers to melt and burn. I only flew so high to enjoy the plummet, the cool waters lolling me in, back to my womb. This was the moment I was free. I wish I could tell this to Lindanathi.

You are thinking now of time, and of fire and water. But I am still stuck on words. I like the essence of the word memory, for example. It is the memory of me that keeps me alive, through Lindanathi, and now, through you. Thank you than, for joining me here. Lindanathi. This is the name my parents gave my only brother, the one who still lives, reacts, even though the HIV in his blood has remained inactive. They named him after a girl. Now what do you think of that? Ironic, isn’t it? It should have been my name. This is why you killed me, after all. You killed me for rejecting manhood, for allowing myself to be instead of wanting to become.

Yet, not ironic at all. Lindanathi means wait for us. And this is what my brother has done. Waited for us to forgive him. Waited for my forgiveness. In the interim, he went and injected himself with HIV, to speed the process of truthfulness and reconciliation up. How silly. Had I a mouth, I would have laughed. The dead can be so cold, you are thinking. Yes, I know. I am not perfect. But I did not allow the disease to burn through my brother’s veins. No. For there is no hate in me. If I still had a mouth, I would tell him this. I would also tell him that he has internalized his name, much like I have. Too much so, I think. I should be angry for what he did to me, and he should be waiting for the sign. No, no.

There has been too much hate, too much anger already, I refuse to feed the fire any longer. I am ash now, but by choice. I can fly by the sun and enjoy its blaze, fearless and featherless. And I can also crash into the deep of Cape Town’s lullaby of a sea. With pleasure. Lindanathi has said that the ocean puts a lid over us. But I think he misses the womb.

It took a man without a face to prove to him that my story should not overshadow his own. For we are all faceless, we learnt that the hard way. This also means that we all share sameness, and this, they could not see. You are confused, where is your story? I would apologize, but this is not a committee of truth, of confession, of reconciliation. I was gay, you see, and when the time for the ceremony of castration came, and our darkest brothers chose to cut off too much of me, Lindanathi knew of their plans, and turned me in. Handed me over, without warning me. He knew a truth but
chose to say nothing. For this, he has been carrying the weight of what he created, by interpellation, by submissiveness. You are judging him, stop! He is my brother, you are my brothers, they are our brothers. There is nothing to forgive, if the victim refuses to be victimized. And I refuse to be. After all, I know why my darkest brothers unconsciously chose to kill me: they were sending me back to Apartheid’s Eden.

There is so much to write about still, much to say that is new, and washed, and clean. If only I had a body, I would let it show you. I try reaching out to Lindanathi with the waves, licking at his feet to reap his attention, to show him that his sins have washed away. I forgive you my brother. There is no hate sunk into me. It was squeezed out of our people long ago, leaving space for a song. A song, you ask? But you said, you say, that this was a confession. Did I say this was? If it is, it is a confession of love. I love you, my brother. Go and live for us both. Cup the water in your hands and hold unto it, it is the source of our life. It will flaw you through and out of every torn crack. Let yourself drift amongst our people therefore, let the tears bear you out anew. I will not let your disease dry you up. This is not a confession at all, don’t you see? It is a song. Lindanathi, do not wait for us, go! For I am the other brother, and I choose love.

Audit Lynn Leinoff

Audrey is in the final stages of completing her M.A degree in English Literature at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In her spare time, Audrey enjoys singing and performing as part of the The Hebrew University choir, and writing creative fiction. Several of her short stories have been published in various student-generated publications.
The Sciolist of Cion

A short story inspired by Ways of Dying and Cion by Zakes Mda

By: Erit Rabinowitz

“And so we beat on, boats against the current, bourne back ceaselessly into the past”
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby

With a self-satisfied grin, the sciolist begins to muse. Toloki is a worthy character. The sciolist pats himself on the back, so to speak, for a job well done innovating the professional mourner. And yet, something feels incomplete. That nagging feeling in the back of his mind, the tingling in his fingers,
Toloki’s unending apparitions between the moments of sleep and wakefulness, all leading to the conclusion that the story is unfinished.

Yet, the ending feels complete. Just enough is left unresolved, the outcome sufficiently ambiguous. “Shall I continue where we left off?” he asks himself, the words trailing away at the end of his question. Something is dangling in front of him. Someone is calling him to return to the story.

Apprehensively, the sciolist ventures to consult Toloki, his character.

“Toloki, creature of my own making, what shall I do with you now?” he inquires hesitantly.

“Haven’t you done enough for me already? I have found Noria, we have built a life together. The story, as it stands, ends on a hopeful, if not redemptive note. I have fulfilled my role. The story is complete,” Toloki replies resolutely.

“Toloki, you have done much, and yet your work is not complete. While you may have spoken to our own limited context, who will care to read about you? Who will delve into your story and truly understand the nuances? No, it will simply take too much work for those self-centered, self-interested citizens of the world to truly appreciate your story. You must visit a more popular context if you are to be appreciated outside of South Africa.”

“Why may I not be left alone in my imperfect resolution?” Toloki asks, but the sciolist does not care to answer, as he retreats back into his solitary musing.

Surely, Toloki’s South African adventure has come to a close. Where can he possibly go from here? Forward into an unending cycle of oppression and violence? No, the story must end on a hopeful, if melancholy note. There must be redemption, complex, enlightened, radical. Yet, Toloki was tailor made for South Africa. His life on the fringes of society, in a context so few cared to address in
literature, was significant. However, there is something missing. The sciolist cannot expect readers from the outside to appreciate Toloki in the way that people who have lived, breathed, and seen South Africa can. Rather than leave it up to the readers to make the connection, to see the significance (and let’s be honest, can you ever trust readers to make the right connections?), the sciolist is compelled to lay it out neatly before them.

Furthermore, after traveling the length of a book, professional mourning has had its day in the South African slums. There is no reason to allow the innovation to sour. The profession provided its own bit of comic relief and dark humor in *Ways of Dying*, but the novelty would surely fade if Toloki’s next adventure simply continued from where the previous one left off. Toloki wouldn’t have to leave his profession entirely, but maybe it didn’t need to be the focus of his next journey.

Finally, it comes to him, as if it was always there, waiting to be recognized. Toloki must go somewhere new, he must explore the dangers of stagnation, of a life which is tantamount to a slow death, leading back into the past of the ancestors, rather than forward into the future. To make this exploration impactful, the sciolist plans to explore temporality. What is the function of memory as a foundation for familial and communal lore? In exploring the foundational myths of another complex culture, how might Toloki use his own multifaceted life experience to shed light on the struggles of others?

Toloki belongs somewhere that people can recognize, he needs a wider readership. Those self-centered British and American readers want to explore themselves, not some long-forgotten colonialist disaster on the other side of the world. They think it all ended with Mandela. Toloki must come to them, dredge up the past of their own history of erasure. His literary unearthing of the
forgotten, downtrodden, poor. What do the insignificant, unremarkable, impoverished look like elsewhere?

To reach the Americans, the sciolist must put the context right in front of their faces, relating directly to their current political climate. It is unfortunate that Toloki was unenthusiastic, to say the least, about continuing the adventure. Why would he want his story to end in some long-forgotten slum, with a few pieces of twisted metal? It’s true, the sciolist takes pride in the ending of the original story, it was definitely powerful, however, he knows that Toloki’s mission is incomplete. It’s a good thing the character has no actual sway in the decision. He is just as powerless over his own future as those whose deaths he has been mourning. It was nice to do him the courtesy of consulting him about his wishes, but he should never have been under the illusion that his opinion was actually of any significance at all.

What would happen if Toloki went to small-town America? What if the sciolist filled the text with overdetermined Biblical allusions? Ruth, Orpah, Mahlon, and Obed in a rundown shack. Perhaps against the background of irresolute cultural origins, somewhere people can’t move forward, because what the past is sucking all the air out of the room. Perhaps here, precisely here, is where Toloki the professional mourner can explore a life of mourning, and perhaps perfect his own practices along the way.
Erit Rabinowitz

Erit is a high school English teacher and mother of three. She moved to Israel over a decade ago and immediately began studying for an MA in English Literature at The Hebrew University. She is proud to finally be finishing this semester.
Poetry

3 short poems based off of Lauren Beuke’s novel *Zoo City*

- Poem #1 *Our Fated Hatred* Orelia Elkaim

I may be slow
And perhaps that’s not your flow
I may be short, not your normal escort
I got these claws, I could fight your inlaws

I am a Sloth
I know, I know, I know
Nobody wants a Sloth
Especially not a criminal
But you are no regular crime maker
And I am no regular Sloth familiar
But before I begin my songs of whim
Let me go back, to the days of the pack

Once upon a time in the Zoo jungle
As I was hanging upside down
A strong and sturdy branch
They took me away
Their gnarly fingers entwined
All over my greasy Sloth skin
To be attached as your kin

My mother once told me
Do not worry, we shall be safe
We are the unwanted
We are the slow, lazy mammals
If the Animal Kingdom were a reflection of society
And we were human beings
We would be the outcasts, the ne’er do wells
The very name Sloth
One of seven deadly sins
The utter audacity of humankind, the pure chagrin

Why must we Sloths bear this association?
Our slowness is not laziness, it is a strategy for our survival
My mother was wise, but she was naïve
Humans still separated my mother and I
Apart from my family did I become
My long sloth arms helping none...
This time.

So you see, dear Zinzi
At first it was hard, but soon we discovered
Just how close to each other we truly are
You and I
The abjected creatures
The misunderstood freaks
Poem #2  *At First it was Hard*  Orelia Elkaim

The time of recognition
The time of familiarity
Literally
Has come
It came, it passed, yet is forever entwined
Will forever be entwined
Between you and I

At first it was hard
To see you working so
And me behind your back
Always yawning for a snack
I know it was not an easy task
But your fierce  *Mashavi*
And my comforting droopy arms
Worked together like a charm
No charm better, no  *Muti*  sweller
Than you and I

At first it was hard
Seeing you with strange men
Me admonishing you to take the higher road again
You were stubborn, I was stedfast
You were stoic, I was less than heroic
But we tried
Tried
Easily we got along
We became like two bards singing a strange song
In Elysium Heights of Zoo City

At first is was hard
Seeing you work for rags, I mean rands
No currency could give you
What they have taken from you
Your brother, your justice
But your fierceness and strength
Forever will be admired by me
Taught by you to be sharp
I taught you to be sensitive
Sometimes I would lead the way
In paths of darkness, despite my half blindness
For you I will guide the paths of Hell and lead you
Somewhere far, somewhere beautiful
Perhaps the jungle where I was born
Before I got torn
From the mother I only ever had
To the passionate baddest Aposymbiotic chick
We never knew we could click
I am done with these silly rhymes, forgive me
This is what happens when you give a Sloth Muti writing skills
• **Poem #3 [Zinzi December]**

Two detectives on the run
An animal and animalled having fun
Sometimes fun turned to nightmares
But nightmares, in retrospect, taught us lessons
Zinzi December

Let me tell you about my pal
She's the coolest type of gal
Zinzi December

She talks about her life without me
A life with her mother, her brother
Former Life
Former Being without a Mark
Former person, Former human
A former life, normal strife
Zinzi December

Those talks ceased when hard times came
Any focus on the past was made in vain
I know it is hard being animalled
Those otherwise do not know the strain
They see how you hang around with "low lives"
They see degradation, abjection, ghetto urban lives
I see Zinzi December

Authentic, vitality, passion and divinity
Zinzi December, do not mess with her
Running from neighborhoods in Elysium Heights
Solving crime, justifying the unjustified
You would be so lucky
To have met Zinzi December
Know anyone who has been dismembered?
Call Zinzi, she will find
Any lost item, lost body part, done with or without crime
She's what a rapper would call a "dime"
My Zinzi December

Her moods are inflammable
Her body jammable
Zinzi December
She may cringe reading these poems
She may shed a tear or two for our bonded shared history
She may wonder at my mystery
Baby ain't no hiding from me today
I got the power to write and its about to go down right away
Zinzi December
I love you forever
Never forget your furry friend
We shall be pals ’till the end

Orelia Elkaim
Orelia was born in San Francisco, California. She moved to Israel at the age of 19, served in the IDF, and completed her B.A in English literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Currently, Orelia teaches English at a gifted high school in Jerusalem and is pursuing her M.A. in English literature. She enjoys reading, writing, traveling and photography.
A Bad Attempt at a Poem Mirroring Baderoone by Tamir Hajali

Yes, it starts with a T,

Yup yup, the soft T.

After that, it’s an A,

No, an A as it’s pronounced in Far.

Then you use an M,

As in Malformed.

Now, try an I,

No, it isn’t an E.

I know it’s not right phonetically,

But that’s how I spell it.

After that, an R.

No, we aren’t done.

There is still more, way more...
A poem on J.M. Coetzee’s novel *Age of Iron*

By Samara Qassoum

**What Do I Stand for?**

I’m suffering from an incurable disease  
The pain I feel, no one can ease  
It is an accumulation of shame  
But there is no one to blame

I am disgraceful with no voice  
But no one understands that I don’t have a choice  
Privilege comes with a price  
And my body is what I sacrifice

In searching for what’s right and wrong  
I lost the sense of where I,  
Belong  
What do I stand for?  
A question that I can’t just ignore

I have witnessed a crime  
I am part of this crime  
I didn’t do it, it was done in my name  
Is that the same?

The other day I saw a man on his knees  
He was beaten by the police  
But I don’t know how it feels  
All I want is to **live in peace**...

I have been silent  
While others have been silenced  
I led a privileged life
While others were fighting to survive

My fridge was filled with bread and meat
While my neighbor was living on the street
I was searching for my identity
But others were losing their dignity

I am both here and there
But I’m going elsewhere
I’m leaving to a different place
And behind me, I’m leaving no trace

The end is near...
I am leaving with fear
Is it fear of death?
Probably that’s not what it is

It’s a fear of making no impact on this harsh reality
That I have done nothing to stop violence and brutality
Will this war ever cease?
I just want to leave in peace...

Samara Qassoum
Samara is originally from Sakhnin, a small town in the North of Israel. She moved to Jerusalem six years ago and fell in love with the diversity of this city. She is currently doing her M.A. in English literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and works as a high school English teacher.
A Poem related to Zoe Wicomb’s novel, *David’s Story*, and to Toni Morrison’s novel, *Beloved* by Hadar Shimon (Photo by Eyoel Kahssay on Unsplash)

**A Story**

There I go.
Writing a story
Telling a story
Telling my daughters about my story
Telling them about their mother
About their great-grandmother
Whose blood still runs in their veins
Who did nothing to stop that evil
Who actually helped it happen
Made it possible
And then
Finally
Cursed them to have the same fate
No
She hardly ever met you
My beloved daughters
Perhaps she can see you now
She lived in Hell and went to Hell
Which is worse?
Knowing you -
She would have been proud of you
She tried to be proud of me
What has she seen in me?
Telling me her stories
In secret
In the dark
While crying
Was that love?
How can I tell you my tale if I love you?
Embraced together
Bathed in light
Will not make amends for you,
My story will still hurt you
Perhaps one day
It will be written down
Perhaps you will read it
Perhaps you will know
It will not hurt you
Then
My beloved

Hadar Shimon

I was born and raised in Jerusalem. Although my father was a sculptor and my mother was a painter, I grew up in an extremely orthodox Jewish household. Now, as a 43 years old woman, wife and mother to 3 daughters, I am leading a happily secular life. After 15 years of teaching and working with high-school children, I now inquire about femininity, equality and gender relations through literature.