Multimodality in M. Kovner's *Ezekiel's World*

Ilana Elkad-Lehman

Multimodality in M. Kovner's *Ezekiel's World*

Ilana Elkad-Lehman

ABSTRACT

The groundbreaking graphic novel discussed in this article tests the boundaries of its genre and its growing acceptance. The case study of Michael Kovner's book, *Ezekiel's World*, and its adaptation to the theater examines how multimodality shapes reading processes, and how the multiple modalities used express and shape sociopolitical views and conduct. The article's reading of the artistic-graphic novel addresses the genre in general, as well as the specific graphic elements, languages, paintings, family photographs, poems and documents embedded within it. In reading the play, it addresses the adaptation process, the animation of the paintings and the music composed for the poems included in the book. The interpretive process examines the interrelations between the modalities in the works, as well as their discourse, design, production and dissemination in the sociopolitical context of Israel in the first decades of the twenty-first century. The study contributes to the literature by demonstrating a methodology for multimodal reading, calling to expand traditional boundaries of literature and to reexamine the definition of "Hebrew literature" based on that reading.

This article presents a multimodal study informed by the social semiotics and intertextual approaches.[1] The corpus under examination includes the 2013 graphic novel *Ezekiel's World*,[2] and the play *Ezekiel*, adapted two years later by director Roni Ninio, with video art by Yoav Cohen and Adam Levinson, and

music for Abba Kovner's poem by Avi Binyamin, as performed in the Khan Theater and documented on video.[3]

Michael Kovner (1948–), a classic-realist painter, is the son of poet and partisan Abba Kovner (1918–1987). In his innovative graphic novel, he presents a fictional biography of two generations: that of Ezekiel and his son, Amos. Most of the crises in Ezekiel's life reflect events from the life of A. Kovner, who passed away twenty years before the time of writing.

The story unfolds in Israel at the time of the 1991 Gulf War. Ezekiel Avidor is a widowed poet, an aged Holocaust survivor living in Jerusalem. His son, Amos, and daughter in-law, Yvonne, live abroad. His own daughter has committed suicide. A neighbor helps him out with his daily needs, as his health is deteriorating. The present-day war evokes Ezekiel's Holocaust traumas: he relives his involvement in the Vilna Ghetto rebellion and his abandonment of his mother upon his escape to join the partisans. His Holocaust memories are compounded by nightmares about his perceived failure to prevent his daughter's death. When Ezekiel's daughter in-law and grandson come to visit, it relieves his loneliness and at the same time evokes his confrontation with Amos after a traumatic incident in his son's military service. The conflict between them reveals two contradictory worldviews about the "lessons of the Holocaust": whereas Ezekiel believes that a strong Jewish state is the supreme value, Amos demands that Israelis maintain high moral standards in treating their enemies.[4]

The study of multimodality seeks to bring the variety of creative disciplines and devices that structure meaning in media under a single theoretical roof.[5] In a multimodal approach, language is not treated separately from illustrations and photographs, from the graphic layout and typography, or from the combination of symbols, documents, or sounds in the text. These various modalities do not "accompany" the verbal text. Instead, they interact with it, allowing reader and researcher to structure meaning by a dynamic investigation of their interrelations as constituting meaning in the social context of writing and reading.

In the past, educating a literary scholar meant developing linguistic literacy skills. In the twenty-first century, however, most texts (in printed and electronic media, literature, gaming, and the everyday environment) are multimodal, thus requiring a new, multimodal literacy. Multimodality assumes that linguistic analysis of literature alone does not capture the meaning of the work. This is opposed to the narratological approach, which relies on the work's language and linguistic organization;[6] it is also opposed to the intertextual approach,

which considers drawings (for example) a paratextual interpretive addition to the text.[7] In turn, a reader of multimodal literature constructs a reading path that is not linear or predictable and acts as a navigator, interpreter, interrogator, and designer all rolled into one.[8]

Kress and Van Leeuwen argue that in the interpretive process, we must observe the text or cultural product from a multilayered perspective.[9] They propose four interrelated signification layers. First, the discourse layer—the way a society structures discourse and articulates a given issue on its agenda. In *Ezekiel's World*, this can be the way Israeli discourse on the elderly, Holocaust survivors, and emigration from Israel is structured. Second, the design layer refers to the choice of genre, font, graphic layout, color, or the addition of photographs and paintings. Third is the production layer—the outcome of the design in terms of format (book, album, or film), materials, and art reproductions. Finally, the distribution layer is how the work is disseminated: how a book such as *Ezekiel's World* is adapted to another medium or how an exhibition is used to disseminate such a book. Each layer refers to the author/artist's point of view vis-à-vis that of the consumer (reader, viewer, listener), and each is assumed to be perceived differently in different periods, in different contexts, and by different people.

The objectives of this study are threefold: to present *Ezekiel's World* as an innovative graphic novel, to model a way of reading it, and to examine interrelations between textual modalities with reference to the Jewish Israeli sociocultural context and ideologies, values, power relations, and identity constructions embedded in the text.

The research method combined multimodal,[10] intertextual,[11] and photographic analysis.[12] The procedure included recurrent readings and viewings of the book and play. Initially, these focused on the graphic and intertextual fabric, the plot, and the characters and their conflicts. In the second stage, the readings and viewings focused on second-generation Holocaust survival, the trauma, and silencing.[13] The third stage concentrated on the metacognitive aspects of the reading and viewing process. The multimodality of the corpus was mapped, referring mainly to the combination of verbal and visual text and design. The article addresses this multimodality in terms of genre, graphic layout and visual elements, typography, language, and the integration of poems. Other multimodal phenomena, such as the inclusion of historical documents and maps, await further study. In addition to this analysis, the study was informed by interviews with Michael Kovner and Roni Ninio.

A Hybrid Genre

The subtitle of *Ezekiel's World* is *A Graphic Novel*. This genre is an outgrowth of comics. In recent years, graphic novels have dealt with "dark" issues such as traumatic autobiographies, wars and the Holocaust, crime, and life in a changing world.[14] The genre also has an impressive presence in Hebrew.[15]

The novel under study is representative of this genre in dealing with war and Holocaust, and particularly with their intergenerational transfer.[16] However, it violates many of its rules in terms of design, organization, and structure. Michael Kovner is a painter who paints a story. Although the sequence of events follows a verbal narrative structure, the paintings lead the work, rather than words or a balanced combination of the two. As a painter, the author turned to the genre in his search for a new way of examining the tension between text, painting, and photography. He wrote a synopsis and produced 3,000 drawings illustrating the story scene by scene. In some, he used videos of directed scenes. He painted in acrylics, scanned the paintings and processed them in Photoshop, and combined them with oil-on-canvas paintings made in the past.[17] To these, he added poems by Abba Kovner and others, as well as photographs and documents, weaving an intertextual network.

The result is a hybrid work—part album, part graphic novel—that might be called an artistic-graphic novel. Materially speaking, it is a heavy multicolored album of 300 pages with some 4,000 paintings. The texts include notes that provide historical background and explanations, as well as an appendix with Hebrew poems by Abba Kovner. The plot unfolds slowly with the paintings, with transitions across times and places and the interweaving of additional plotlines that demand attention and concentration beyond what is usually expected in a graphic novel. Conflicts are presented in multiple flashbacks to a traumatic past that shapes the protagonist's life in the present. Some of these relate to Holocaust events that require explanations in notes, further encumbering the reading.

Context

Ezekiel's World was published in 2013 after six years of work. For the author, the book is an attempt at a belated dialogue with his admired father. This "lateness" enables him to reflect on the father's life and their intergenerational relationship, and writing that could not have been possible previously.[18] This approach

is typical of literary writings on parents, particularly from second-generation survivors. In a psychological-literary review of forty works written by sons, Van Nijnatten found that they had a difficult time writing while their father was still alive.[19] Writing a parent's biography, he argues, is a personality-shaping project involving processes reminiscent of psychological counseling. It has therapeutic value because it contributes to the development of the author's identity, to the separation process, to reconciliation with the father, and to viewing him in a new light. Finally, as evident in the work under study, writing about the father's life is also writing about one's own.

The present work narrates the father's life from the son's point of view. At the same time, it enables the latter to conduct an imaginary conversation with his father and himself and to debate his father's militancy, particularly in the context of the political and military realities in Israel at the time of painting. These were years of particularly violent conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, a conflict that is accompanied in Israel by constant debates on human rights and military service, particularly in the context of military presence in Palestinian population centers. Traumatic events serving as background to the plot include the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, followed by the loss of the opportunity for peace; the Second Intifada (2000–2005) with its suicide bombings in Israeli cities; and the Second Lebanon War in 2006.[20]

The intergenerational conflict between Ezekiel and Amos revolves around the occupation of Palestinian territories since 1967 and the treatment of the occupied population. For the painter, this confrontation highlights moral concerns as an individual, as an Israeli, and as a second-generation Holocaust survivor in particular. "The tables have turned: now we are the oppressors," Kovner told me.[21] In the graphic novel, this situation leads Amos to emigrate from Israel.[22] Amos takes a moral stand on the violence perpetrated against Palestinians, precisely as a soldier. Above all, he does not want to sacrifice his own son—physically and morally—on the altar of nationalist ideology. Ezekiel, on the other hand, considers the existence of the state of Israel the highest moral virtue.[23]

"I'm not a political painter nor a political artist, but deep in my soul I'm preoccupied with politics. . . . I wanted to do something to express the things that bother me," says Kovner,[24] expressing his profound personal involvement with the political context. This involvement is also the reason for the shift in his creative work—from painting landscapes to what he refers to as "political art,"
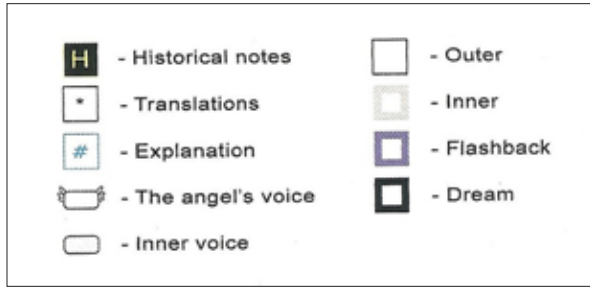
FIGURE 1. Legend of spaces and voices in *Ezekiel's World* (Foreword, 5).

which represents reality and ideology that art consumers understand as political in the context of reading.[25] This an art form of a highly personal and multimodal nature where he sounds his voice in painting, plot, play, and exhibitions.[26]

Layout

Right from the start, the reader of *Ezekiel's World* encounters a graphic language meticulously explained by the author (see Fig. 1), whose complexity violates generic norms. Kovner does not settle for the standard comic format of panels, gutters, and balloons,[27] and he makes distinctions that are more complex. Paintings are framed and entire pages are backgrounded according to the location and type of event: some events occur outdoors (white background), and others indoors (gray), flashbacks are backgrounded with dark gray, and dreams and nightmares with black. Verbal statements are in frames rather than bubbles, and the narrative of each has its own background color; moreover, thoughts are designed differently from words. Finally, Kovner refers the reader to different forms of extratextual knowledge (historical notes, translations, or explanation).

Accordingly, reading is experienced as an overflow of textual and visual materials, which is not relieved in repeated readings. In most two-page spreads, the reader encounters a collage of up to twenty paintings. All are colored, expressive, and dominant. The tiny letters are swallowed in the paintings, requiring extra effort to read. Some pages are dedicated to large paintings without any text. In between lie strewn letters, in a computerized font simulating tiny, thin handwriting, or poems by Abba Kovner and others, also in a small, handwriting

FIGURE 2. Three languages, text, painting, and poem in *Ezekiel's World* (96).

font (see Fig. 2). All of these demonstrate the innovation of the work and a design approach that privileges visual over verbal literacy.

Whereas in cinematic multimodality, the addressee is both a viewer and a listener, when reading a graphic novel, the reader needs to acquire a new type of literacy. To follow the plot, the reader must navigate; choose the reading path (what comes first?); read the texts; look at the photographs, paintings,

and graphic elements; and integrate them in an interpretive process.[28] With his intensely colorful and expressive paintings and tiny font, however, Kovner takes control of the process, delaying and disrupting the reading. The paintings and colors form voices of their own, next to the words, and the reading path is unpredictable, varying from reader to reader and reading to reading. Reading turns into labor that combines different materials provisionally, inconsistently. Therefore, this is essentially a postmodern, fluid type of reading that can be used as an additional interpretive key—applicable to one reading, it is liable to change in the next as the result of a different reading path. In turn, writing about this work stumbles into the near impossibility of dealing with its interpretive partiality and transience. Therefore, what follows is necessarily a temporary construction motivated by the circumstances and aims of my own writing, biased by my positioning as a reader and writer educated in the literary discipline, as well as my being a Hebrew-speaking Israeli and second-generation Holocaust survivor.

Language Choice: English, Hebrew, Yiddish

Michael Kovner is a native Hebrew speaker, and writing in English does not come naturally to him. He wrote the book in Hebrew, had it translated, and published it in English—including Hebrew poems by Abba Kovner translated into English, some especially for the graphic novel. This procedure may raise questions with regard to a literary work that is published originally as a translation, but the choice of publishing in English is telling in terms of the circumstance of writing, design, and dissemination, and it is motivated by a variety of considerations: personal and artistic, socioeconomic and political. Moreover, it adds another layer to the multimodality of the concept.

A painter rather than a poet or writer, Kovner aimed to produce an artistic-narrative album of high quality in terms of color printing. Expecting it to be a complex and expensive production, he hoped an American publisher would produce and disseminate the book for English readers. However, as none was found, he resorted to crowdfunding and a nonmainstream publishing house, distributing the work online or by personal sale.[29]

Kovner is also unconventional conceptually in that he is unmindful of the discussion on the nature of "Hebrew literature,"[30] informed by identity codes of the author's ethnicity, territory, and language, as well as the readers' language.

These codes characterized the literatures written in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as part of the rise of nationalism,[31] and were violated in the literature written by Jews during the 2,000-year diaspora, in the colonial world, and in the globalization era. Kovner is also unmindful of the marginal status of comics and graphic novels in Israel.[32]

In his personal, socioeconomic, and political context, the choice of English is understandable. In fact, it is common practice among authors of Israeli graphic novels to publish in English or French first, fearing of lack of interest in the genre in a language and setting that does not have a rich tradition of comics. Specifically, publishing in Hebrew would have encountered political condemnation, particularly in light of Kovner's name. In the work, Michael Kovner searches his soul while conducting a fictional dialogue with his father— a Jewish Israeli hero—and himself on the political issues that pain him and his consequent doubts about staying in Israel. These issues are currently perceived in Israel as relevant to the political left, and their discussion is often silenced by both government and society. The choice of English and a nontraditional dissemination approach reduced Kovner's Israeli readership: it reached mainly English readers and researchers interested in graphic novels.[33]

The adapted play that was performed in Jerusalem in 2015, as well as the museum exhibition in 2020, aimed at mediating the novel to Hebrew speakers. Immediately, a politician argued for denying state support of a theater comparing Israeli soldiers to Nazis, despite not having seen the play.[34] Moreover, although performing the play was still possible at the time, adaptor and director Roni Ninio believed it would not be later on, under a more right-wing government (2015–2020).[35] This raises the paradox of political art and language. Political art, by definition, seeks to make itself heard and reach its relevant audience.[36] However, the addressees of Kovner's work are not the average Israelis but members of the Israeli cultural elite who read English and attend theatrical performances and exhibitions, as well as foreign intellectuals. Nevertheless, the foreign language enables the voice to be heard after all and break the boundaries of Israel, rather than be silenced by opposing sociopolitical voices.

Although written mainly in English, the book includes representations of Hebrew and Yiddish as yet another aspect of its multimodality. While the plot is written in English, the work is mainly visual, and some of the paintings include Hebrew script (used for both Hebrew and Yiddish) as a semantic, symbolic, and graphic component. Hebrew text appears in some form in seven

of the book's pages, and Yiddish is used in fifteen, and in two cases we see a combination of both. Usually, the Hebrew letters appear in a highly visible font in the painter's handwriting, as opposed to the predominant computer-like font (see Fig. 2). The non-English text accompanying the paintings is related to the traumas in Ezekiel/Abba Kovner's life: the ambushing of a partisan unit which he commanded (32–34); turning in Itzik Wittenberg to the Nazis (91–96); the burning of the ghetto (238–241); the confrontation between Ezekiel and his son (180–191); and the daughter's (fictional) suicide (145). Including the Hebrew script in these paintings emphasizes the linking of trauma, language, and Jewish culture. It also indicates the novel's Jewish sources, particularly in light of the debate around "Hebrew literature", mentioned above.

I demonstrate their usage through Wittenberg's story. This controversial affair tormented Abba Kovner with guilt throughout his life. Wittenberg was the leader of the Jewish underground at the Vilna Ghetto. He turned himself in under pressure by the Judenrat (Nazi-appointed Jewish Council) and the Jewish public after the Nazis threatened to liquidate the ghetto. Upon doing so, he handed over his command to Kovner. The next day, he was found dead in his cell.[37]

The section in question relates an event that occurred during the Gulf War: Yvonne and Noni, Ezekiel's daughter in-law and grandchild, visited him at home. Ezekiel told Noni about Vilna. After their visit, Ezekiel fell—both physically and mentally. Lying on the floor, he traumatically reexperienced the most terrible day of his life, July 16, 1943, and acted out Wittenberg's betrayal to the Nazis. The events are presented in a series of blue and black paintings. The blacks gradually take over, and Yiddish and Hebrew words invade them (91–96). The red against the dark blue or black background makes the viewer feel tense, an effect akin to that of expressionist art.

I now focus on one page out of the six depicting the traumatic event (see Fig. 2). I have chosen it because it includes representation of the three languages and a graphic layout that combines landscape and portrait painting, texts in paintings, translation captions, and a poem by Abba Kovner. The reading path is up to the reader to navigate. Whereas English is naturally read from left to right and top to bottom, it is doubtful whether this is the common path here. Most probably, due to the effort involved in reading the poem, the readers look at the paintings first. Their eyes may be attracted to the letters in red, but the paintings cannot be understood without the historical context presented in

previous pages and the explanatory endnotes, and the readers may go there first. The Yiddish permeates the painting in a wild red handwriting, like the language of traumatic memories and nightmares. To express them, the artist needs the Hebrew script, the Yiddish word and the handwriting. In their presence, they are integral to the painting, and marginalize the English—but to enable the English reader to understand the text, an asterisked note provides a translation.

The painting on the top left is a portrait of Wittenberg walking in a dark world between two walls that appear to close in on him. To his right, we see a faceless, dense crowd and the writing דער קדוש גייט וױיטער (The saint walks away) for the living to keep living. He passes under a metaphorical gate of handwritten capital letters that seem to rain on him from above, forming the word "saint" or "holy" (used in both senses in Yiddish and Hebrew), which shrinks as it descends on him:

קדוש
קדוש
קדוש

The repetition heightens the drama as it evokes intertextual linkage to God's revelation to Isaiah (6:3)—"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory"—and the *Amidah*, the central prayer of the Jewish liturgy.

The figure on the top right, looking at the window, seems like Abba Kovner's profile, as he mentally accompanies Wittenberg to his death. His thoughts, in white-lettered Yiddish, betray his guilt. Above Kovner appears the Hebrew phrase "In your blood live: in your blood live," again an intertextual reference (to Ezekiel 16:6, as well as the Passover Haggadah). Kovner thinks in terms borrowed from Jewish culture, and like the affair addressed by the painting, this phrase is variously interpreted—one of the common interpretations is that life is bought with blood and misery. Abba Kovner believed (or led himself to believe) that Wittenberg turned himself in out of this consideration, believing he would save the ghetto Jews that way.

The remaining paintings are characterized by obscurity and ambiguity. Whose is the head of the central figure—does it belong to the fallen Ezekiel or the dead Wittenberg? Who shouts "Executioners" in red? Who are the figures in the smaller painting to the left? Who or what is painted in the elongated

painting at the bottom—is it the march of the Jewish masses who demand that Wittenberg be betrayed? Is it the march of his mourners? Are these trees in the dark? After reading the poem, one reviews the images and they gain powerful dramatic meaning.

To the left of the page, against a black background, we find the first part of a poem written by Kovner exactly forty-three years later, on July 16, 1986, when he was hospitalized for throat cancer. The poem is evocative of the powerful presence of the traumatic past in Holocaust survivors' lives. Reading it while looking at the images turns the reading path into a never-ending multimodal vicious circle, fueled by intensive sensory impact. We hear the clamor of the crowd, their feet, and cries: "Come down! Come down!" We see the human mass, its raging passion. We hear it follow Wittenberg to his death, a crowd "ready to devour them alive."[38] We are drowning in a whirlpool of black and red, in an extreme situation, akin to revelation, not of providence but of martyrdom. So is Ezekiel. His fall is that of the sick Kovner:

> Today is the sixteenth of July [. . .]
> On the sixteenth of July
> Forty-three years ago [. . .]
> They raced trembling between walls
> At daybreak on the sixteenth of July
> Which never ends. . .

Ezekiel's fall gains another dimension through Michael Kovner's painting. The painting of Ezekiel's "real" fall (89) is transformed into a symbolic fall in the two identical but differently sized paintings on pages 87 and 90 (see Fig. 3), laden with an intertextual charge of reference to various painted version of the fall of Icarus, particularly Chagall's (same arm posture) and perhaps also Matisse's.[39]

The fall of Icarus is emblematic of the fall of man: the failure of the striving for freedom, of the aspiration to reach the heavens, the fall of genius invention, of an artist who can no longer create. In the poem before us—the poet who is blocked, the loss of human ambition, the sense that dreams have failed to come true or have turned sour (the dreamed-of versus real Israel). From the perspective of Ezekiel's age, the elderly's ambition is not to ascend to the heavens but to walk stably on the ground—which also proves impossible, as he falls while walking at home. This image is also central to the play, as discussed further below.

FIGURE 3. Ezekiel's fall (90).

Photography, Painting, and LEGO Images

Graphic novels have previously used iconic Holocaust photographs.[40] *Ezekiel's World* is somewhat different in only referring to them textually and visually. Michael Kovner turns to photos from the family album to bring in memories, next to painting locations and characters. In addition, he embeds photographs of places, maps, a manuscript, childhood paintings of his own, and more. Family photographs offer an encounter with a reality, producing a double gaze on both present and past, private and public.[41] Here, the family photos are grainy, deliberately creating the impression of old and blurred images. The photos where father is seen with son and daughter confront the reader with the public

Abba Kovner through the private arena. Father Kovner is presented with his children in their domestic environment in the kibbutz yard, a location central to Kovner's artwork.[42] They are physically close, and their body language and facial expression convey their intimacy (see Figs. 4 and 5), represented also in numerous paintings portraying an idyllic childhood. The photos are located with relation to the conflicts in Ezekiel's life, as a clash between past and present: the daughter's image appears as part of his nightmare about the suicide of the fictional Michal and next to the poem "My Little Sister" (see Fig. 6); the son's image is embedded twice "during" the argument between Ezekiel and Amos that leads to their final separation. The father's hands stretched out to his daughter and his loving gaze have failed. Similarly, at the heart of the physical closeness of the father sitting on the bench—his face level with his son's—and despite the touch of the son's hand, the distance between them is already there. On the other hand, in Michael's relationship with his father, it is now the son's hand stretched out to his late father. The contradiction between the idyllic photos and the present situation produces a poignant effect.

The poem "My Little Sister," to which the photo is attached (see Fig. 6), is part of an eponymous narrative poem about saving Jewish girls in a monastery during the Holocaust. Despite its name, it does not refer to a biological but to a symbolic sister.[43] The enigmatic poem has been variously interpreted: a historiosophical expression of the Holocaust and the spiritual-religious conflict between Judaism and Christianity,[44] a symbolic articulation of the loss of the
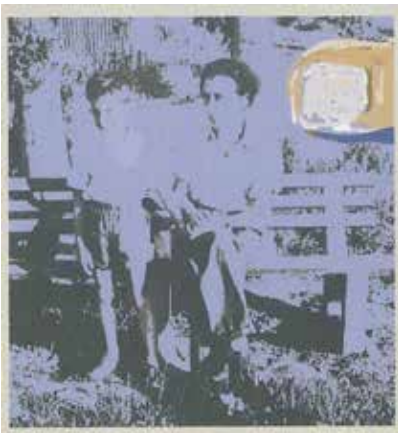

FIGURE 4. Father and son (169)

FIGURE 5. Father and daughter (13)

FIGURE 6. A portrait of Mimi Kovner (Abba's wife) and the poem "My Little Sister" (9).

covenant between God and His chosen people and the destruction of the Jewish nation given the reference to the Song of Songs,[45] and so on. Michael Kovner embeds the shorter version of the poem in the context of a biological sister (originally, Abba Kovner devoted the narrative poem to his children, Michael and Shlomit), thereby turning its meaning from symbolic to concrete: at the focus is the tragic loss of Michal, the fictional daughter and sister.

Michael Kovner usually paints in nature, using a painter's traditional tools. In *Ezekiel's World*, however, he combines photography in the work process and in the product,[46] merging the two. In this bricolage, he processes and embeds photographs, paints portraits by photographs, and uses photography as a scaffolding on the way to the painting.[47]

A prime example for paintings that arise out of photographs can be seen in the scenes of Ezekiel's LEGO building with Noni. To paint them, Kovner used LEGO bricks to build the set, photographed the scenes, and then painted

them.[48] This way, painting becomes a tool for documenting the reality of ghetto scenes not documented in photography. The game begins on Thursday, when the maquette is built, and continues through the weekend Noni spends in Ezekiel's home. At first, on Thursday evening, white dominates the LEGO colors, creating a sense of joy (158). The game continues on Friday with greens, yellows and blues accompanying the narrative and the game (194). The historical and public encroach on the domestic arena: in the game, Noni is exposed to the Holocaust lexicon and to Ezekiel's experiences: ghetto, Nazis, fences, hounds, escape, hiding in a convent, Judenrat and liquidation. On Saturday, Noni and Ezekiel order the LEGO people in groups (see Fig. 7): Germans in black, ghetto Jews in yellow, partisans in blue. Interestingly, Noni chooses to paint the members of the Judenrat in both yellow and black. He is annoyed by their actions, and says, "Why did they help the Germans? . . . I don't like them. I'm going to make them ugly" (230).

In this game, the LEGO figures play roles, and the grandfather uses them to tell his story. Conveying the Holocaust using a transitional object is a well-known phenomenon on in psychology and in the Holocaust literature, and Michael Kovner uses it deliberately.[49] Whereas in children's books and poems, the transitional object is used to sublimate the horror, here the grandson is exposed to it intensively, due to his encounter with Ezekiel's regression to the past, as he acts out his trauma.

A study of multimodality in a game found that Playmobil dolls had well-defined functions in gender, occupational, and ethnonational terms, and that these categories were illustrated using both verbal and visual devices.[50] The same happens in Kovner's LEGO game, but whereas in the Playmobil game the players only had a "social player" identity, rather than a personal identity, here the individual identity encroaches on the game. The characters have a name and a memory, and one of them is grandpa Ezekiel. It is not an impersonal game, but a life game for both: Ezekiel, who reconstructs the ghetto uprising, and Noni, who experiences the event out of childlike involvement and identification. He asks innocently, "What about your parents? . . . and all the people left in the ghetto—where did they go while the ghetto was burning down?," and "Grandpa, why did you run away?" (238–239).

Ezekiel is retraumatized, overwhelmed by the voices of the ghetto. The primary colors and the white of the LEGO bricks, their clear outlines, become an expressionist chaos against a black background. In some of the paintings, the red
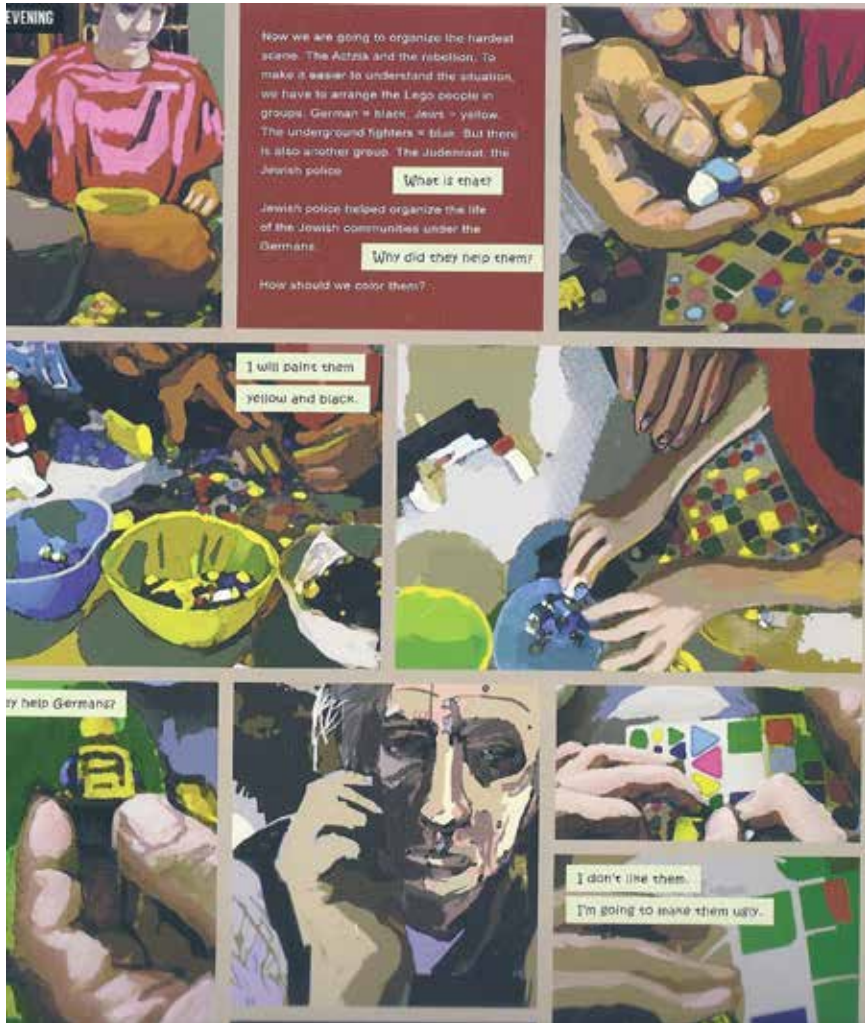
FIGURE 7. LEGO play (230).

takes over (238–239), in some Yiddish appears red over black (238), and in some the horror is visible in Ezekiel's eyes (see Fig. 8). Noni shouts, "Enough grandpa, enough!" (240), but to no avail. The third-generation survivor is exposed to the story of the Holocaust and to what it keeps on doing to the first generation and remains helpless in the face of the trauma overwhelming the adult supposed to protect him.

Ezekiel the Play

Michael Kovner did not settle for the graphic novel; he also held a theatrical performance of the book in Hebrew and exhibited the paintings. Ninio, a film-maker, playwright and director, considered the adaptation of the book into play "an opportunity . . . to start developing a language . . . of video-art theater . . .
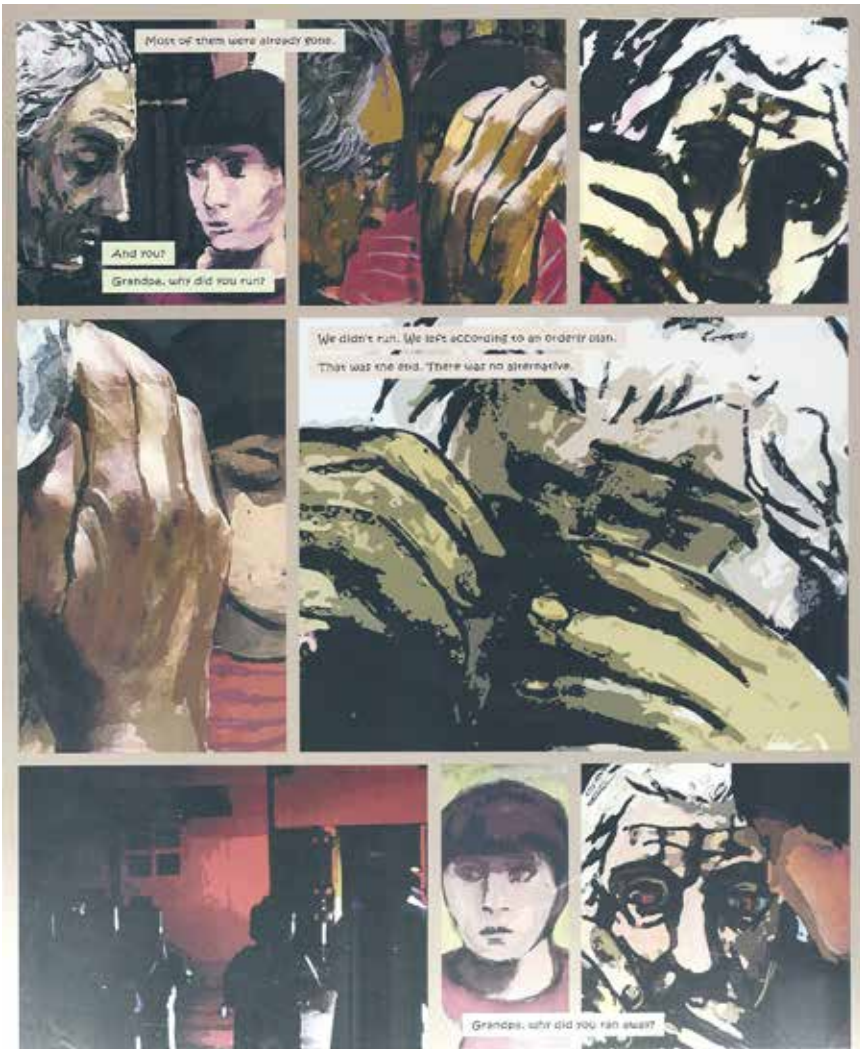

FIGURE 8. Ezekiel acting out his trauma (240).

an opportunity to use the paintings in a dramatic way."[51] He adapted the book into a multimodal play that broke the traditional boundaries between the arts. Theater critics identified the innovativeness of the play, referring to it as a form of "visual theater," or "an original theatrical language."[52]

The adaptation of literary works to the stage and screen is not a new phenomenon. Recently, several graphic novels have been adapted to film: the coherent plotline of graphic novels facilitates their adaptation and enables filmmakers to construct a story within the feature film timeframe.[53] This is not the case in Kovner's graphic novel, with its narrative and visual complexity. In the adaptation process, Ninio had to forgo several parts of the story and build his play around a single plotline and conflict, focused on the elderly Ezekiel, including only some of the characters from Kovner's novel, to simplify and dramatize the story. Ninio selected paintings from the massive visual treasure trove and animated some of them. The most dramatic revision was changing the story of an old man's fatal molestation by soldiers to a child's murder. At the time of the performance (2015), this echoed the kidnapping and murder of sixteen-year-old Mohammed Abu Khdeir in 2014 by young Jewish settlers. The result was a dramatic, political, and coherent one-hour play.

Ninio's novel visual style is retained through the video-art language he has developed. It is built on a web of interrelations between Kovner's paintings and the dramatic-cinematic language of the play: "Where am I telling the same thing? Where do I show counterpoint? Where do I promote the plot using the painting?"[54] In analyzing the adaptation, I focus on the theatrical use of the paintings and poems.

PAINTINGS

In the course of the play, Michael Kovner's paintings from the novel are displayed on two screens, sometimes simultaneously, in whole or in part, static or animated. Ninio selected the paintings and interweaved them as an additional character into the video-art by Yoav Cohen and Adam Levinson. Unlike a screen adaptation where artworks from the graphic novel are used as an infrastructure for graphical work by the film's creative team, in the play, Kovner's original paintings are used. Because the concept was that the videos were "another actor," the two screens and the video artist "participated" in the rehearsals from an early stage. The images were no extras: they operated in a distinctly multimodal fashion, as part and parcel of the drama. They were

integrated out of a deliberate choice to serve dramatic functions: acquaintance with the characters, understanding the place and time, and producing emotional effects.

The videos shape the atmosphere. For example, in the opening scene by looking at the painting of Ezekiel ascending the stairs, while creating the sense of a panting effort; by focusing on the oranges offered by Naama (the physiotherapist) to Ezekiel as connoting Israeliness, youth, and joy; or in several occasions where a relationship is formed between a character and an image screened next to or behind it. They dictate moods, for example in heightening the sense of horror by blowing up Ezekiel's Fall (Fig. 3). They clarify the identity of the speakers in dialogues (as in the correspondence between Yvonne and Amos), and emphasize the tension (and deliberate confusion) between the male characters, the fictional Ezekiel and the real Abba Kovner, those photos, alone and with his son, are embedded in the video-art. Finally, the videos allude to Ezekiel's thoughts, fantasies, and dreams—including sexual ones (the elderly Ezekiel looks at women, and the painted female figures are embedded in the play). Overall, they make for an intertextual reading, moving across theater, literature, history and art: "Suddenly Cherner on the stage, who plays Ezekiel who represents Kovner, echoes the painting by Michael Kovner of his imaginary character, Ezekiel, echoing the real character of Abba Kovner."[55]

Kovner's paintings inspire the colors of the clothes worn by the characters, the way they move in space, the design of the stage and objects on it (such as the photo of Abba and Michael Kovner on Ezekiel's desk—on which Noni is looking and through which grandfather and grandson talk about the father), as well as the background for the events.

POEMS

Roni Ninio embedded some of Abba Kovner's poems in his play in a different order. Avi Binyamin composed the music for the poems, and they were integrated in the play—by screening, reading aloud, and singing. The melodies were played as a recurring motif, similar to how music is used in film. Abba Kovner's poetry is complex and laden with double meanings.[56] Poems included in the graphic novel and the play weave an intertextual network with the melodies. In what follows, I discuss the multimodal role played by four of his poems. Unless otherwise indicated, the poems are rendered here with their English translation, as in the graphic novel.

בני צייר פרח בחול

בְּנִי צִיֵּר פֶּרַח בַּחוֹל.
הַפֶּרַח שֶׁלְּךָ, חִיַּכְתִּי אֶל בְּנִי,
נַשְׁקֵנּוּ—שֶׁלֹּא יִבֹּל?

הַבִּיט בִּי הַבֵּן כְּמַבִּיט בָּרְאִי:
הַפֶּרַח, אַבָּא, זֶה אִירִיס כָּחֹל
יִגְדַּל לְיַד מִטָּתִי.

עֵינַיִם חוּמוֹת לִבְנִי
וְהוּא מְגַמְגֵּם בְּדַבְּרוֹ. בְּיוֹם הֻלֶּדֶת שֶׁלּוֹ
שׁוֹאֵל אוֹתִי בְּנִי: אֲבָל
לָמָּה, אַבָּא, בַּצְּנְצֶנֶת הַזּוֹ
הָאִירִיס שֶׁלִּי . . . לֹא נָבַל?

In the sand my son drew a flower:
Your flower, shall we kiss it, I asked
Him with a smile—so it won't wither?

In this poem, Abba Kovner reconstructs the memory of father–son relationships (the biographical son, the son in the graphic novel and the play): the son's innocence and admiration for his father and the imagination games of childhood. At the same time, this is an ars poetica piece on the relationship between the artist and his work: the ability to emulate reality which is eternal as opposed to the perishable reality (the flower in the sand), the fleetingness of life (withering), and the eternity of art.[57]

The melody for "In the Sand My Son Drew a Flower" is heard early on, when Ezekiel walks outside with Naama, connoting innocence, beauty, and a carefree mood. Piano, xylophone, and percussion instruments play gentle and disjointed sounds like bells. Further into the play, the poem is sung when Ezekiel hints at the complexity of his relationship with his son while talking to Naama. "I was a good father," he says, "it's sad." In his novel, M. Kovner includes only the first stanza when he describes the growing closeness between grandfather and grandson, as the grandson learns to write poetry from his grandfather.[58]

אֲחוֹתִי קְטַנָּה

לֹא יִשָּׂא אִישׁ עִמִּי אֶת מִטַּת אִמִּי

לֹא יִגַּשׁ אִישׁ עִמִּי אֶל מִטַּת אִמִּי

גְּשׁוּ אֶל הַמִּישׁוֹרִים הַגְּדוֹלִים

סְעוּ עֵינֵיכֶם אֶל הַנָּהָר הַלָּבָן

מַבְצִיעַ מְצוּלָתוֹ וּמוֹשֵׁךְ

כְּחַרְטוֹם שֶׁל אֳנִיָּה

כְּבֵדָה בַּקֶּרַח

וְאִמְרוּ עִמִּי

אִמִּי

אִמִּי

My Little Sister

No one will carry my mother's bier with me

No one will come close to my mother's bier with me

Come to the vast plains

Lead your eyes to the white river

It scoops out its channel and shoves

Like the prow of a heavy

Ship in the ice

And say with me

Imi

Imi

   The next poem is the one that concludes the collection *My Little Sister*: "On the path of misery, the sister motif leads to its source, to the mother."[59] This is one of the most expressive poems ever written by Abba Kovner. The Hebrew original constructed a play on sounds (*i*, *mi*, *imi* = "island," "who," and "with me" as well as "my mother" [spelled differently]), creating an expressive orchestration of lament. This was heightened by the graphic layout of "increasingly shortening lines, like life that is gradually dwindling, gradually shortening towards its end."[60] This triangular layout is common in the Hebrew Scriptures, and Kovner reuses it intersexually for an emotionally intense ending with the painful disyllabic *Imi* (my mother). The narrator is mourning his mother, he feels guilty for abandoning her. By entreating the readers—come, lead, and

say—and by using the related metaphors, he calls on them to share his loss as an experience of emptiness and frozenness and his continued existence as the journey of an icebreaker.

In the graphic novel, it appears at the end (281): Noni and Yvonne are gone, and Ezekiel is left behind, lonelier than ever, with his traumatic memories. In the play, the poem appears about ten minutes before the end, following Noni's question about Ezekiel having left his mother behind in the ghetto. Noni asks, "Why did you run away?," and Ezekiel shouts back: "I didn't!" and reverts to his traumatic memories: he has left his mother behind to die in the ghetto.

Binyamin the composer said that in the process of composing for the poems, he began by looking at the paintings, but he was particularly moved by Abba Kovner's guilt for abandoning his mother. He felt that the play was instilled with a silent dialogue with the mother, which he tried to convey in his music.[61] In the play, the poem is sung by C'ella, Ezekiel's neighbor, who was a child during the Holocaust. She wears a red coat and a red hat, the background is dark, and in the background appears the photo of a girl with a red scarf (242 in the graphic novel), echoing the mother's figure. Her singing is accompanied by piano. The music is elegiac, in keeping with the lament in the text. The melody continues playing after the singing, and with the piano in the background, Yvonne reads out her letter to Amos.

The poem that nearly ends the play is "Sounds Nearby," part of a narrative poem called *Farewell to the South*, written by Abba Kovner after the 1948 war, where he served in the southern front.[62] Ninio created a scene where Ezekiel, having explained to his grandson how to write a poem, begins to gather words, word by word. He starts reciting, and then singing, and gradually the other actors go on stage and join his singing. The poem is inspired by the biblical story of the binding of Isaac.[63] It protests against the concept of war. It combines memory fragments—buying a bell for his son—and reflection. The bell, as a game and as the source of soft sounds, becomes here a symbol for the Jewish fate, a clarion call for all, as argued by Harshav.[64] Abba Kovner fears for his son, who is destined to continue fighting for the land, and to be bound, like the ram, to die for its sake.

<div dir="rtl">

צלילים מקרוב

קָנִיתִי לִבְנִי פַּעֲמוֹן קָטָן.

בְּנִי, אִטֶּר-יַד-יְמִינוֹ,

</div>

נָטַל בְּיָדוֹ אֶת הַפַּעֲמוֹן הַקָּטָן
וְצִלְצֵל בִּשְׂמֹאלוֹ.

פַּעֲמוֹנִים יֶשְׁנָם בְּכָל הָעוֹלָם.
צְפַרְדְּעִים מְקַרְקְרוֹת, לֹא לַשֶּׁרֶף.
כְּשֶׁבְּנִי מְצַלְצֵל בַּפַּעֲמוֹן הַקָּטָן,
נֶאֱנָחִים אָמְנוֹן-וְתָמָר עִם עֶרֶב.

וּבַלַּיְלָה רָאִיתִי יַעַר מוּזָר—
מַה יָּפוּ עֵינָיו הַנְּבֹכוֹת שֶׁל הָאַיִל!
וּמְצַלְצֵל מְצַלְצֵל פַּעֲמוֹן עַל צַוָּאר—
וְדוֹלְקוֹת אַחֲרָיו גְּדֵרוֹת-תַּיִל

וְכָל הַכְּתָלִים אֲטוּמִים. וְהַבָּתִּים אִלְּמִים כְּמוֹ סֵפֶר.
אוּלַי שׁוֹמֵעַ הַיָּם הַכָּחֹל
אֵיךְ נוֹבֵט בָּעֲרָבָה הָאֵפֶר.

אַל תִּבְכֶּה, בְּנִי, גֵּא הָיָה הָאַיִל.
צַלְצֵל בִּימִינְךָ בַּפַּעֲמוֹן הַקָּטָן—
אִתְּךָ אֲנִי עַד לַיְל.

I bought for my son a little bell.
My son, my left-handed boy,
Held in his grip the little bell
Ringing it with his left hand.

The sounds of the little bell the father bought his son, move even the plants:

When my son rings his little bell
The violets sigh with evening

However, in retrospective reading, it appears they sigh in response not to the sounds' beauty but to the world's cruelty, its imperviousness to the sound of the victims' voices:

And at night I saw a strange wood—
How radiant the ram's bewildered eyes!

Around his neck a bell is ringing and ringing—
Behind him the barbed wires rise.

Who exactly is bound? Jewish past and present intermingle, and the father teaches his tender son to take his fate into his own hands.[65]

Don't cry, my son, the ram would be proud
Ring the bell in your right,
I am with you all night.

Having the son hold the bell in his right, dominant hand (as opposed to the left-handed, sinister son) represents the paternal imperative for the boy to continue struggling at all costs, even his own life, while the father's task is to remain by his side "all night."[66]

In his graphic novel, Michael Kovner reverses the meaning of Abba Kovner's poem by calling out against the binding of the sons. In this play, Binyamin's music, played with the rhythms and sounds of the bell and using the last stanza as a refrain, moderates the tragic aspect and gives the play a more reconciled and gentle tone, but on the other hand voices a clear warning for Israeli society as a whole, who must beware of external enemies and internal hatred and strife.

Ninio chose not to end the play on that note, and he added a poem not included in the graphic novel: "To Lay to Rest."[67] The poem is also laid out in the shape of a narrowing triangle. The play ends with Abba Kovner's voice, reading:

<div dir="rtl">

לָבוֹא אֶל מְקוֹם הֵעָדְרֵנוּ. לְהַדְלִיק נֵר חֵלֶב דַּק
בְּמֶרְחָב נָטוּשׁ לְעַכֵּב אֶת הַקְּרִיעָה
וְלֹא בְּלִי אֹמֶץ לֵב רָאוּי לוֹמַר
שׁוּב שׁוּבָה וְהַנְחֵנִי נָא
שֶׁלֹּא אָקִיץ בּוֹדֵד וְזָר
בֵּין כׇּתְלֵי בֵּיתִי
אֲשֶׁר בְּדָמַי
בָּנִיתִי

</div>

To come to the place of our absence. To light a thin wax candle
In vacant space delay the rending of the cloth

> And not without mettle it's fitting to say
> Please return and kindly guide me
> So I won't wake lone and strange
> Between walls of my house
> Which with my blood
> I have built up

Ending the play with the voice of Abba Kovner himself, praying to live among his loved ones, rather than strange and lonely in a house founded on his blood, shines a spotlight of pain on Ezekiel's loneliness and on human loneliness more broadly. At the same time, it offers a tone of hope, despite the pain. This ending can also be seen as a call for intergenerational reconciliation and for resolving the differences of father and son, represented by the biblical prophets Amos and Ezekiel, and for peace in the deeply conflicted Israeli society for the sake of preserving the personal and national home.

Coda

This article presented Kovner's innovative artistic-graphic novel and modeled its reading while applying a literacy that integrates the interpretation of verbal text, following plot and linguistic, historical and cultural aspects, examining the book's material qualities, its graphics (font design, color, size), studying photos, pictures, and layout—and the work's adaptation to stage. Reading included intertextual examining of interrelations between the story and Abba Kovner's poetry, and between various modalities with reference to the Israeli sociocultural and political context as embedded in the text.

Because reading multimodality requires combining and navigating all these aspects, modeling it has methodological contribution. Another contribution is challenging two fundamental academic concepts: literature and Hebrew literature. As for the former, this study calls for expanding traditional boundaries of literature as verbal art and embrace multimodal art, including comics and graphic novels. In Israel, multimodal literature is marginalized and rarely studied in high schools or universities, apart for design departments. Because twenty-first-century art and literature are multimodal, avoiding a reframing and reconceptualization of "literature" will affect the relevance of literature studies and relegate traditional literature to the archival margins of culture.

With regard to Hebrew literature more specifically, I add my voice to the ongoing debate: Is it literature written in Hebrew only? Where? When? Exclusively by Jewish people?[68] These questions are pertinent to reading in this novel, which is quintessentially Jewish in the historical, biographical, cultural, and intertextual senses, as well as Israeli, in landscape, spirit, biography, and intertextualities—but nonetheless written in English. Future studies should examine this phenomenon in light of the growing numbers of graphic novels in other languages by Jewish Israeli authors.[69]

Michael Kovner holds a metaphorical bell, confronting us with controversial and often silenced questions: the loneliness and distress of elderly Holocaust survivors, the traumatic experience of young Israeli soldiers, the emigration of Israeli young people sometimes associated with that experience, and Israelis' treatment of the Palestinians. This ringing bell is a call Jewish people should hear, and art is the bell.

Ilana Elkad-Lehman is a professor at the Levinsky College of Education in Israel, and a researcher at the MOFET Institute. She has published extensively, including two single- and three coauthored books (in Hebrew) and contributions to numerous scholarly journals (in both Hebrew and English). Her scholarly focus includes Hebrew and children's literature, the study and instruction of literature, and qualitative research methods. Elkad-Lehman's current research examines multimodality, reading processes and the development of thinking, book clubs, and the contribution of literary studies to qualitative research.

Notes

1. Elisabetta Adami, "Multimodality," in *The Oxford Handbook of Language and Society*, ed. Ofelia García, Nelson Flores, and Massimiliano Spotti (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 451–472; Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000).

2. Michael Kovner, *Ezekiel's World* (Jerusalem: Kohal, 2013), http://www.michaelkovner .com/book1.

3. Roni Ninio, dir., *Ezekiel* [in Hebrew with English subtitles], 2015, https://www.michaelkovner.com/video-movie.

4. Ilana Elkad-Lehman, "'Judeo-Nazis? Don't Talk Like This in My House': Intertextual Analysis of an Intractable Trauma," *Israel Affairs* 26, no. 1 (2020): 59–79, https://doi.org/10.1080/13537121.2020.1697072.

5. Gunther R. Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication* (London: Edward Arnold, 2001).

6. Wolfgang Hallet, "Reading Multimodal Fiction: A Methodological Approach," *Anglistik: International Journal of English Studies* 29, no. 1 (2018): 25–40.

7. Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

8. Alison Gibbons. *Multimodality, Cognition, and Experimental Literature* (vol. 3) (London: Routledge, 2012); Frank Serafini, *Reading the Visual: An Introduction to Teaching Multimodal Literacy* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2014).

9. Kress and Van Leeuwen, *Multimodal Discourse*.

10. Adami, "Multimodality"; Gibbons, *Multimodality*; Kress and Van Leeuwen, *Multimodal Discourse*; Gunther R. Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (London: Routledge, 2006); Theo Van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

11. Ilana Elkad-Lehman, *Magic in the Web: Intertext, Reading and the Development of Thinking* (Tel Aviv: Mofet Institute, 2007) [in Hebrew].

12. Annette Kuhn, "Photography and Cultural Memory: A Methodological Exploration," *Visual Studies* 22, no. 3 (2007): 283–292.

13. Elkad-Lehman, "'Judeo-Nazis?'"

14. Keith M. Booker, "Graphic Novel into Film," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Graphic Novel*, ed. Stephen E. Tabachnick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 160–173.

15. For example, Ofra Amihay, "Take This Waltz, Take This Photo: Photography and Holocaust Memory in Israeli Graphic Novels," *Jewish Film & New Media* 5, no. 2 (2017): 161–198.

16. Elkad-Lehman, "'Judeo-Nazis?'"

17. Nirith Enderman, "The Painter Michael Kovner Published a Comic Book about the Holocaust Featuring His Father, Abba Kovner," *Haaretz*, June 12, 2015 [in Hebrew]; Avraham Feder, dir., *Michael Kovner—A Painter*, Community TV Channel, 2018 [in Hebrew].

18. Mark Freeman, "Narrative, Ethics, and the Development of Identity," *Narrative Works: Issues, Investigations, & Interventions* 4, no. 2 (2014): 8–27.

19. Carolus Van Nijnatten, "The Invention of Fatherhood: The Therapeutic Effects of Writing a Father's Biography," *Family Journal* 15, no. 3 (2007): 244–250.

20. Michael Kovner, "Time Hangs above Us as an Unresolved Question," *Word, Image and Sound: Symposium at Bar-Ilan University*, November 21, 2019 [in Hebrew], *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IgvOvUXErIk&list=PLXF_IJaFk-9DpC1sK _oNVQSGPrV5zfVDV*.

21. Interview with Michael Kovner, November 2018.

22. In Hebrew, *yerida* (lit. "descent") is a derogatory term used to refer to Jewish Israelis leaving their country, as opposed to *aliyah* ("ascent," often capitalized), referring to immigration to and naturalization of Jews in Israel.

23. Elkad-Lehman, "'Judeo-Nazis?'"

24. Kovner, "Times Hangs above Us."

25. Yochai Oppenheimer, *Political Poetry in Israel* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 2003) [in Hebrew].

26. Kovner, "Times Hangs above Us"; Michael Kovner, Bochum Exhibition, 2019, *https:// www.michaelkovner.com/presentation-bochum*; Michael Kovner, Ein Harod Museum, 2020, https://www.michaelkovner.com/.

27. Michael A. Chaney, *Graphic Subjects: Critical Essays on Autobiography and Graphic Novels* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011).

28. Gibbons, *Multimodality*; Hallet, "Reading Multimodal Fiction."

29. Interview, November 2018.

30. Hannan Hever, "Map of Sand—From Hebrew Literature to Israeli Literature," *Theory and Criticism* 20 (2002): 165–190; Hannan Hever, *The Narrative and the Nation— Critical Readings in the Canon of Hebrew Fiction* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2007) [in Hebrew].

31. Risa Domb, "Ideology, Identity, and Language in Modern Hebrew Literature," *Israel Affairs* 7, no. 1 (2000): 71–86.

32. Kevin Haworth, *The Comics of Rutu Modan: War, Love, and Secrets* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2019).

33. Ayelet Kohn and Rachel Weissbrod, "Remediation and Hypermediacy: *Ezekiel's World* as a Case in Point," *Visual Communication* 19, no. 2 (2018): 199–229, *https://doi.org/ 10.1177/1470357218785931*; Elkad-Lehman, "'Judeo-Nazis?'"

34. Yair Ashkenazi, "Member of the Jerusalem Municipal Council Demands to Stop Budgeting 'The Khan' for Staging 'Ezekiel,'" *Haaretz*, June 16, 2015 [in Hebrew], https://www.haaretz.co.il/gallery/theater/1.2661566.

35. Interview with Roni Ninio, June 2020.

36. Oppenheimer, *Political Poetry in Israel*.

37. Dina Porat, *Beyond the Reaches of Our Souls—The Life and Times of Abba Kovner* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2000) [in Hebrew].

38. Abba Kovner, *Sloan-Kettering* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1987), 78 [in Hebrew].

39. On page 87, the painting appears next to Abba Kovner's poem "The Last Storm," dominated by the motif of hubris, "The pride of a fallen man."

40. Amihay, "Take This Waltz."

41. Kuhn, "Photography and Cultural Memory."

42. Michael Kovner, Ein Harod Museum, 2020, https://www.michaelkovner.com/.

43. Shalom Lurie, *Abba Kovner: A Selection of Critical Essays on His Writing* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1988) [in Hebrew].

44. Hillel Barzel, "The Lament of the Holocaust," in *Poetry and Poetics* (Tel Aviv: Yachdav, 1990), 269–299 [in Hebrew].

45. Lurie, *Abba Kovner*.

46. Feder, *Michael Kovner*.

47. Enderman, "The Painter Michael Kovner."

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice*.

51. Interview, June 2020.

52. Michael Handelsalz, "I'm Pleased to Publicly Admit That There Is Such a Thing as Visual Theater," *Haaretz*, May 27, 2015 [in Hebrew], https://www.haaretz.co.il/gallery/theater/theater-review/.premium-1.2645007; Ben Ami Feingold, "Abba and Ezekiel Meet in the 'Khan,'" April 24, 2015 [in Hebrew], https://www.michaelkovner.com/curr-khan-ben-ami-feingold.

53. Booker, "Graphic Novel into Film."

54. Interview, June 2020.

55. Handelsalz, "I'm Pleased to Publicly Admit."

56. Lurie, *Abba Kovner*.

57. Abba Kovner, *From All My Loves* (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 1975), 93 [in Hebrew].

58. M. Kovner, *Ezekiel's World*, 199.

59. Lurie, *Abba Kovner*, 243.

60. Hillel Barzel, *The Poetry of Eretz Israel: Mysticism and Symbolism* (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 2008), 674 [in Hebrew].

61. Ben Kaspit, *Osim Seder: The Play "Ezekiel" in Khan Theater*, Channel 1, April 21, 2015 [in Hebrew], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7UYpR1W3ds.

62. Abba Kovner, *Farewell to the South* (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 1949), 19–20 [in Hebrew].

63. For elaborated intertextual interpretation, see Elkad-Lehman, "'Judeo-Nazis?'"

64. Benjamin Harshav, "At the Fast and Lucid Words," in *The Art of Poetry* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2000), 158–198 [in Hebrew].

65. In another poem, "The Key Fell," it is the Jews who fled in the Holocaust "With a bell on their neck." Abba Kovner, *Collected Poems*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1996), 227 [in Hebrew].

66. Barzel, *The Poetry of Eretz Israel*.

67. Abba Kovner, *Observations* (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 1977) [in Hebrew]. Translated for this article by Ami Asher.

68. See Hever, "Map of Sand"; Hever, *Narrative and the Nation*; Haworth, *Comics of Rutu Modan*.

69. Amihay, "Take This Waltz."