Generation Shift in Israeli Poetry: From the Modernism of Zach to the Late Modernism of Wiezeltier

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By

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Abstract

The Research Topic

In the 1960s new norms began to develop in Israeli poetry among writers later known as the "the poets of the sixties" — Yona Wollach, Yair Hurvitz and Meir Wieseltier. When compared to the poets of the previous decade, their work showed signs both of continuity and, at the same time, rebellion and innovation. Nevertheless, it is uncertain whether the poetry of the 1960s can be considered a totally independent movement, clearly differentiated from the poetry that preceded it. Despite obvious stylistic differences between the two groups of poets, there are a number of factors that have blurred the essential distinction between these poetic schools. The generation of poets of the 1950s, chief among them Nathan Zach, were still firmly on the map of Israeli poetry and when the younger generation began to emerge, they were flourishing and at the peak of their influence. Therefore the publication in 1960 of Nathan Zach's second book of poems, *Shirim Rishonim*, considered representative of the poetic revolution, took place only two years before the publication of Meir Wieseltier's first book, *Tiyul be-Iona* in 1962. The members of the two generations were publishing their work simultaneously, yet each group practiced different ways of writing poetry. The chronological overlap and the dominance of *Dor Hamedina* made it difficult to distinguish between the two schools of poetry. Despite the fact that in the 1960s the norms, determined by the *Likrat* group, were still far from being fully realized, it seems from reading texts of the

1960s' poets that some of these norms had been eroded, mostly and especially the tendency towards minimalism as the basic means of poetic function.

 The dividing lines are also unclear because the emergence of a new generation of poets was not the result of a general rebellion, as was the case between *Dor Hamedina* and their predecessors. The shift in poetic norms between the *Dor Hamedina* movement and the group of poets who emerged a decade later was not accompanied by a call to revolution, and, in particular, they avoided discrediting the previous generation by criticizing their aesthetic principles as inappropriate for the times; the poets of the 1960s did not produce a manifesto or a theoretical platform setting out their aims and beliefs.

The difficulty in identifying the shift is further aggravated by the fact that there was no transition from one prosody to another, as the poets of the sixties also wrote in free verse. New norms of writing poetry stand out when the prosody undergoes radical changes, for the rhythm of a text is largely considered the dominant factor in determining its poetic era; in the development of norms in Hebrew poetry over the generations, the changes in rhythm always served as a criterion for distinguishing between the various periods. While the revolution of Zach's generation in the 1950s is unequivocal, as there was a total transformation in prosody (from strict rhyme and rhythm to a seemingly absence of rhyme and rhythm), the transition in the 1960s was by no means so drastic.

A further reason why it is difficult to follow the shift between the two poetic styles lies in the fact that the poetry of the 1960s was extremely heterogeneous. This can be seen in the poetic heterogeneity of the members of this generation of poets; in fact, each one is an individual (a trend that began in the 1950s, for example, in the work of Zach, and expanded in the 1960s). This makes it difficult to identify common

elements in their poetry and as critics frequently failed to notice the common ground between these poets, it was inevitable that they would not see the new generation as separate from its predecessors. Many studies speak of early Israeli Hebrew poetry, from the days of *Likrat* onwards, in one breath, not discerning the generational subdivisions, both stylistic and other. They claim that this poetry all simply reflects the modern spirit of doubt, transfer of divine authority to human beings and the primacy of the individual. This sweeping generalization prevented critics from seeing difference within the general similarity. They were not aware of the new model of poetry that developed during the 1960s, but rather related to it as a variation of the existing model. The heterogeneity of the poets of the 1960s was seen as undisciplined diversity, lacking all sense of order or system. Thus, when the difference between the works of various poets was considered greater than the similarity, there was no point in talking in terms of a new generation or a separate group of poets. Even when the critics did identify the introduction of new poetic components, such as obscure language, stream of consciousness (Hurvitz), the breakdown of common meaning (Wollach), or the diversion of the metapoetic emphasis to the directly poetic (Wieseltier), they were categorized and interpreted by the critics as fulfilling the familiar functions of the poetry of *Dor Hamedina*. Early criticism did not acknowledge that these new components had totally different functions from the dominant form of poetry and that, together with the revised poetic elements, they were creating a new model of writing.

Another connected issue prevented the identification of the new generation of poets as a group. As I will propose in this paper, one significant distinguishing quality of the poetry of the 1960s is the fact that it is a poetic field that undermines the Israeli ideological hegemony. The very fact that this was largely ignored in criticism and

that central contemporary poets did not attack this aspect of the poetry of the 1960s goes to show that they apparently did not realize that they were faced with a new poetic model, i.e. they did not analyze the components of this poetry and their function in the text.

Later criticism did see the poets of the 1960s as a separate and defined group, rather than a direct continuation of the poets of the 1950s. However, no thorough, comprehensive research has been conducted on the poetic characteristics of the poets of the 1960s. Therefore, the unique qualities of this generation have not yet been determined, nor has the influence of these poets on subsequent Hebrew poetry.

Aim of Research and Hypothesis

The aim of this paper is to present the poets of the 1960s as an independent generation of writers, to define the unique characteristics of their poetry while focusing on Meir Wieseltier as the leading poet of his age. I will discuss the poetic elements that generated the shift and seek to determine the relationship between the norms of their work and the preceding generation. I intend to show that the poets of the 1960s represent a far more significant turning-point than is generally accepted in present-day criticism.

Demonstrating the distinctive nature of the new generation of poets demands a comparative study with the previous generation, based on the assumption that a valid explanation for the development of a phenomenon demands that it be seen in the context of preceding phenomena and processes. Thus I will discuss the norms of the poetry of the 1960s against the background of the poetic practices of the 1950s. The main focus of this paper will be the diachronic relationship between works that follow

each other chronologically, describing the literary dynamic that took place at a certain stage in Israeli Hebrew poetry. It will also focus on the synchronic relationship, presenting the sets of norms that characterize poetry written within one generational group.

The basic tenets of the Polysystem hypothesis (Even Zohar, 1978) on the self-perpetuating internal changes of a literary system represent the point of departure for a discussion of the generational shift. Literature is a dynamic, autonomous, hierarchical system, in which a relationship exists between the center of the system and the periphery that is both diachronic and synchronic. Literary change is dictated by an internal law according to which, at certain periods, due to evolutionary processes within the literary system — as well as changes in the canon, resulting from the interaction between the literary system and others — the center of the system will inevitably shift. Certain literary elements run their course and become marginalized while elements that were previously considered peripheral move to the center of the system. The essential necessity for constant renewal of the center of the canonic literary system stems from a combination of the needs of the author, who seeks to establish his/her position at the center of the system, and the expectations of readers, who see the literary innovation at the center of the system as an obligatory convention for the contemporary author. An additional assumption is that changes in a literary system do not take place gradually but tend to be revolutionary, representing a kind of struggle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness, resulting from both internal and external factors. The internal factors derive from the literary system itself, whereas the external factors are the result of the interaction between the literary system and the cultural systems in which it functions. The internal factors include the obsolescence of literary elements and the psychological need of writers for innovation

and motivation, while the external factors result from changes in the social context and political reality, as well as the general spirit of the times. However, when applying the theory of literary field to an investigation of Israeli poetry in these periods, a number of methodological difficulties arise. Firstly, the poetic system at this time demonstrated enormous diversity. Therefore the theory that, due to the systemic nature of literature, several poetic movements may co-exist at any given point in time, one of which will be the dominant one, while others have secondary, epigonic positions at the edge of the system, may not totally be relevant. Recent generations of Israeli poetry have demonstrated such thematic and stylistic diversity that, in effect, since the foundation of the state, we can no longer talk in terms of a leading "sun" surrounded by "planets." Even in the 1950s and 1960s there was no one monolithic poetic center. Maybe it was always impossible to speak of monolithism in literature, yet there were periods of Hebrew poetry when the sense of a central school of poetry was far more clearly defined. The periods under discussion in this paper, however, were decades of widespread searching, diversity and change. According to the Polysystem theory, in all periods three systems of norms can be identified, functioning within the literary polysystem — the central system, whose norms are dominant, the peripheral, whose norms are remnants from the preceding period, and the avant-garde, whose innovative norms will one day replace the norms of the central system. In the period under discussion, the norms of all three systems were highly developed and the center of the previous system had not yet realized its full potential. In the 1950s we find poets belonging to four different literary generations, some of whom were at their peak at this time. In addition, the 1960s saw the first collections of works by poets from various sociological generations, whose basic experiences and literary styles belong to literary movements prior to the

immediately preceding one. Thus, when Zach adopted high modernism as the distinctive model of his poetry, he disrupted the hegemony of Alterman and moved to the center of the literary system, yet without displacing his predecessors completely. In the same way, Shlonsky and Alterman did not force the poetry of Bialik's generation out and the rise of Wieseltier did not signify the weakening of Zach. In the 1950s and 1960s all these poets co-existed, creating a *simultaneity of alternative centers*, in which the dominant central poetic model existed together with other poetic models.

In order to examine the shift of literary norms in this period, it is essential to focus on the one inner dichotomy of the system relevant to this discussion — the relation between the primary and the secondary in a literary system. The Polysystem theory sees these terms as historical concepts, enabling us to explain the renewal of the literary system and the emergence of new models within the system. It is the tension between the primary and secondary models that causes a literary system to develop. A primary model is creative and innovative, whereas the secondary model has run its course; clearly, the shift of norms takes place only when the primary model conquers the center of the system. Therefore, in this paper I will be focusing on the primary, innovative and creative movement of each period. In the 1950s the innovative movement was Dor Hamedina, while in the 1960s it was the work of Wieseltier, Wollach and Hurvitz. Each group fulfils, for its period, the creative, dynamic function.

When discussing a normative shift in which the earlier generation was not completely pushed aside, and in which there seems to be considerable similarity between the two generations, then the shift can best be described in terms of two kinds of change which the system is undergoing; total change and change in certain indicators. Total

change is conspicuous and includes the entire field, such as the shift that took place between the poetics of Alterman and Zach. Change in certain indicators appears only in some aspects of the poetic field; for example, there could be a change in thematics, while the poetics remain unchanged, or there might be localized developments in poetics, and so on. These changes nevertheless express a new poetic concept and indicate the formation of a poetic shift. The literary shift on which this paper focuses can be categorized as a change in certain indicators rather than a total change.

 A second difficulty that arises as a result of the extreme heterogeneity among the poets of the new generation in the 1960s is how to identify a valid poetic movement from among their varying, even blatantly opposing, poetic styles, other than in terms of the common denominators of all "young" poets, as many critics have done. In the periods under discussion in this paper, there is no monolithic unity even within each separate generational group. For instance, in the case of Dor Hamedina, its members wrote according to various poetic formulae. Nathan Zach and Yehudah Amichai, for example, each adopted their own basic stylistic model from Anglo-American poetry. We can differentiate between native Israeli poets and those born overseas, as the poetry of the latter is heavily influenced by English and German culture, and of the former far less. This is even more true of the generation of the 1960s, for despite being called a "generation," they are almost completely heterogeneous. Moreover, a generation is often distinguished not by the common features among its members but by what they all reject. In other words, it can be identified clearly by what it negates. This generalization does not apply to the generation following Zach, as there is nothing they would not consider legitimate. In this case, when there is significant difference between all the poets, and the message of the 1960s is one of permissiveness and "anything goes", a study illustrating all the

various poetic formulae would be unwieldy and ineffective. Identifying the shift in norms requires simplification, in order to isolate the qualities that locate their position on the map of Israeli poetry in that period, and to understand the laws of the shift. This aim has determined the selection necessary to reveal the essence of the object under discussion. It would seem logical that the wider the corpus and the greater the number of poetic elements being investigated, the more credible the mapping of the poetry and the more valid the presentation of reality. However, such a detailed approach is unlikely to fulfill the aim of understanding the poetry and analyzing its laws convincingly. In fact, it may well result in nothing more than a description of the poems, with no real analysis of content, thereby preventing a full understanding of the subject under discussion.

The Romantic tradition, from the Romantic poets of the nineteenth century up to the present, works according to the "psychology of belatedness" (Bloom's terminology, 1975). Since Romanticism embraces the principles of renewal and revolution, favoring trespass and the negation of what had previously been considered idolized or defamed, it is critical and revisionist. Romanticism prefers innovation to tradition, admiring the original, the expressive and the authentic. Therefore greater value is attributed to what came later, the new and recent. A period in which these ideas hold sway makes canonization extremely difficult, when there is no one body which can decide and there are perpetual controversies as to which are the great writers, their centrality, innovativeness, and so on.

In order to analyze the intergenerational relationships, I propose to focus on the strong poets of the two periods, and relate to the literary facts embodied in their work. The poets of the 1960s each have their own particular qualities, yet there is one who illustrates the normative shift more than the others and he/she is the strong poet of that

group.   The main historical-poetical processes of a given period appear in an extremely developed fashion in the works of the strong poets. Furthermore, the very existence of the intergenerational changes in the work of the strong poets is a *prerequisite* for a shift in poetic norms. The work of a poet who is considered the leading figure of his/her period reflects the concerns of the entire generation. When we come to discuss a strong leading poet, we can talk of the legacy of his/her poetry and its influence on other poets, as the work of the strong poet will include the basic elements of the poetic style of lesser ones, whereas their work does not include the unique qualities of the strong poet. The strong poet can grasp the spirit of the age, and even express it, whether he/she consciously seeks the role of voice of the generation, or not. In the latter case, his/her work may serve as the unconscious political voice of the generation. The work of a strong poet is able to express, within the framework of his/her poetic form, most of the emotional range specific to the people that speak the language of the poetry. Therefore, even in a period open to all poetic styles, such as the period under discussion, the possibility remains that the works of one poet will have the power to stand out; the distinction between leading and lesser poets has always been one of the traditional tenets of literary criticism, for this distinction is the basis of a literary canon.

In order to clarify the poetic image of the new generation and the characteristics of the generational shift, this paper will focus on the change of norms as it appears in the work of Nathan Zach and Meir Wieseltier. The choice of Zach is clearly indisputable; among other things, it was Zach who carried out and led the poetic revolution against the style of Alterman. The choice of Zach and Wieseltier is based not only on research, which has evaluated them as strong poetic figures, but also on the fact that the reading public sees them as the major poets of their times. They have both

entered the canon of Hebrew literature; formal recognition through such prestigious awards as the Israel Prize confirms their status as leading literary figures. The inclusion of their works in the canon is the result of a wide consensus among literary critics, literary historians and the reading public. Since the 1970s there has been considerable agreement among critics, with few voices of dissent, that Wieseltier is one of the most important poets. The choice of Zach and Wieseltier as the strong poets who represent the generational shift in norms, is further supported by the additional roles they both played, each in his own period — the ideologist, composer of the theoretical platform of his generation's poetics, essayist and writer of texts, and controller of the literary means of production (both held positions as editor of literary journals, Zach of *Likrat* and *Yochani* and Wieseltier of *Pshita* and *Gilionot Shira*). In this paper I hope to show that, in addition to their status as the strong poets of their generation, there is also an intertextual relationship between them that can be described in terms of literary father and son.

Therefore Wieseltier is seen as the major representative of the poetry of the 1960s, as the various basic elements to be found in the work of other poets of his generation, such as Wollach and Hurvitz, appear in concentrated form in his poetry. As I will demonstrate in this paper, despite the significant stylistic differences between these poets, the similarity is greater than the difference, and amidst their varying forms and styles, there is one deep structure which is most fully and clearly developed in the poetry of Wiezeltier.

According to Bloom (1975), the determining concept in such circumstances, is the "counsel of necessity" — in other words, writers who are essential in order to show the continuum of literary tradition. On the basis of Bloom's theory, it becomes clear that Wieseltier is essential as the representative of his period in a description of the

continuous development of Israeli poetry. Compared to Wollach and Hurwitz, whose poetics are widely considered not only innovative but also springing out of nowhere, with no roots in Hebrew poetry, Wieseltier's work is far more than the pursuit of new techniques and styles. He saw traditional techniques of writing poetry as an educational source. His reaction may have been critical or favorable, but in this way he maintained the traditional heritage of Hebrew poetry as he did not allow the spirit of the Israeli experience in the 1960s to dominate his work entirely, and it has been discussed that strong poets have a more pronounced feeling of the weight of tradition than do minor poets.

Thus, although my research focuses on the generational shift as it is expressed in the changes in norms between the poetics of Zach and the poetics of Wieseltier, I will endeavor to show that my conclusions are sufficiently broad and relevant as to be applicable to other poets of the 1960s. I will also include an investigation of the works of other outstanding poets in each period in order to support my conclusions.

The Research and Conclusions

This paper presents the poets of the 1960s as a separate group, distinct from the generation of Nathan Zach. As a generational group, its members had certain shared experiences and experiments, which produced a common poetic basis and similar ideological positions. From this stemmed a poetic form with a deep common structure: the new poetic model of the 1960s was the natural and inevitable result of the new world-view of that generation. The hypothesis that the poets of the 1960s can be distinguished from their predecessors by the change in world-view will be

investigated according to the analytical concept of the *ideologeme* (Jameson, 1981), or the disclosure of the political unconscious in literary texts. Seeing the generational shift as involving a change in world-view explains a number of textual developments and even solves the dilemma of the variations in the basic poetics of the poets of the 1960s, Wollach, Wieseltier and Hurvitz. Their heterogeneity does in fact have a common ideological basis — the variations, which are sometimes even antithetical, are the manifestation of the same ideologeme.

The 1960s generation of poets can also be seen as an absolutely distinct movement when compared to the poetics of the 1950s in relation to certain cognitive assumptions. The poets of the 1950s are widely held to be the generation that legitimized the topics of individualism and universalism in literature. Although the doubt-ridden modernistic self, with its existentialist roots and refusal to identify with the establishment, is primarily individualistic, at the same time it represents humanity as a whole, as far as humanity can be defined and represented. The poetry of the 1960s, on the other hand, is basically not existentialist and universalism has given way to a fierce individualism that is at odds with the bourgeois taste and morality of the hegemonic Zionist Israeli culture of that period. In this paper I will demonstrate that it was actually the poets of the 1960s who fully realized the meaning of "individualism," which has largely been attributed to the poetics of *Dor Hamedina*. Rereading the poetry of *Dor Hamedina* in comparison with the following generation reveals that the individualism they flaunted was in fact extremely conformist. The world-view expressed in their poetry remained safely within the realm of accepted social attitudes and refrained from challenging the consensus (which, of course, endeared them to readers and critics). It was the generation of the 1960s who took the concept of individualism to its extreme, be it in the content of the poems or the

thematic material combined with the language they adopted. The 1960s' poets all stress their individuality, by means of crass deviations from accepted language, behavior and thought. The provocative poems of the younger generation rudely awaken readers from their bourgeois comfort, emphasizing the complexity of reality and undermining the representation of cultural hegemony. The hegemonic culture of the modernism of *Dor Hamedina* confined the poet, the poem and the reader within a framework of accepted, universal, humanistic values (which were, in fact, largely a myth), presenting a rosy picture of reality. The poetry of the 1960s, however, confronts the reader with the raw stuff of reality, avoiding the traditional images of the hegemonic culture that *Dor Hamedina* expressed so well.

The new poetic model of the 1960s did not comprise a complete break with the earlier model. It included the reorganization of existing elements and a shift in their functions, with some new poetic elements; these together created the poetics of a new movement. The poets of the 1960s took from their predecessors the norms that suited the new ideologeme, such as blank verse, and eliminated those that smacked of moralism or philosophies they did not share, such as "natural language." Together with this, it is clear that some earlier norms were abandoned simply because they were associated with the old style and were therefore unacceptable, a common phenomenon in times when originality and innovation are valued above all else. We can take as an example, on the one hand, the crude, direct language of Wieseltier, and on the other, the subtle, esoteric style of Hurvitz — two opposing expressions of the outlawing of the "natural language" of 1950s' poetry. Similarly, the social orientation of Wieseltier's poetry on the one hand, and the antisocial idiosyncrasy of Wollach and Hurvitz on the other, represent antithetical rejections of the universalistic persona of

the Dor Hamedina, one in the realm of concrete space and time, the other in the realm of the authentic autobiographical self.

As a result of the change in world-view and the absorption of poetic elements that are alien to the modernistic position, the poetry of the 1960s cannot be categorized according to conventional modernistic streams. Therefore in this paper the poetry of the 1960s will be described as late-modernistic, according to the definition of Wilde (1981).

The 1960s poetic model incorporated elements from the postmodern repertoire (McHale, 1987). While the poets of the 1960s were not necessarily aware of the emergence of postmodernism on the world stage during these years, the incidence of postmodern elements (such as the raising of the trivial to the status of subject matter suitable for poetry, and, conversely, a return to the elegant structure of earlier poetry) enables us, in retrospect, to identify as such the new norms in their work, which appeared spontaneously. I also hope to show other sources of influence on the poetry of the 1960s, which exist together with trends in world poetry that followed the modernistic period (*Confessional poetry*, "*Open Form*", *Beatnik poetry*, *the New York School*). The postmodern elements reflect the changes in ideologeme, as the key to understanding the world of postmodern art lies in the transition to a new emphasis on the culturally peripheral; these are elements that the dominant culture does not accept, as they do not express its declared values. The poetry of the 1960s reveals that it cannot retreat into a world isolated from the materialistic, urban, consumer society of the end of the twentieth century, and in fact there are poetic shifts in relation to the culture of the masses. Thus, a world-view based on the destabilizing of traditional cultural distinctions between high and low elements, the canonic and the non-canonic, differentiates the poets of the 1960s from their predecessors (for example, the use of

the grotesque and the pornographic in their love poetry). The new poetic movement of the 1960s comprises three sets of poetic norms: norms that existed in the previous generation and continued; norms that existed in the previous generation, suffered rupture and change and continued in an altered version, and completely new norms that were not present in the works of the preceding generation.

Among the norms that continued into the 1960s, the poets of the 1960s maintained the hallmarks of the modernism of Zach and his generation. These include, firstly, the prosody, which favors free rhythm and blank verse, creating content-determined form; secondly, the use of everyday oral language, without elevation or verbal exaggeration; thirdly, a lowering of the rhetorical tone, restrained pathos and neutral expression. Although the poets of the 1960s preserved all these elements, they underwent a change in status. While these were the central norms of the 1950s, overshadowing all other textual dimensions, in the 1960s they lost their centrality and exclusivity. This is because in the 1960s the various textual dimensions became far more flexible, with the result that different textual elements can be found existing side by side. Therefore the stylistic elements that were transferred from the poetics of the 1950s did not maintain their central status, as they now found themselves in a more pluralistic environment and were merely one poetic option among many. Close reading of the poetry of the 1960s reveals elements that the 1950s' poets would have considered unacceptable, such as a wide range of language, far less neutral and more marked, ranging from high to low registers. The 1960s' poets also favored non-official Hebrew, using many foreign words even when a Hebrew equivalent existed, as well as high, stylistic language. The form of the poems does not always reflect the principle of content-determined form either because of the use of given verse forms

or, conversely, the use of completely random form. As for the low register and minimal argument, they, too, are part of poetic materials that are more direct and revealing, resulting in a more provocative rhetorical style.

The 1950s' norms that underwent rupture and fundamental change in the 1960s include such phenomena as the shift from the predominantly emotive function of language to predominantly reader-oriented; the weakening of the projection of the "self", together with a forceful, more objective presentation of the world; and a shift from sterility to the "nitty-gritty" of the world, from depth to façade, from the abstract to the concrete, from euphemism to provocation. There was a process of concretization of the poem (especially in Wieseltier) alongside a move to extreme abstraction (Wollach and Hurvitz). We see change in the mode of irony, a shift from the "natural" to blatant artificiality or "open form," and a move from persona to the authentic personality and the use of various voices. In general, we are witness to the negation of symbolic or mythic poetry, or of any style that would hinder the direct presentation of social reality or the authentic self.

New norms that appeared in the 1960s and were not present in the poetry of the preceding generation include a range of techniques that disrupted modernistic certainty (techniques which later appeared in a more intensive form in postmodernism, with the emphasis on the ontology of the text). We find ontological narrative perspectivism, rather than psychological perspectivism; thematic parody of the author; blurring of the distinction between historical fact and fiction, source and imitation, reality and myth — as a means to stress instability and lack of authority. The poetry of the 1960s features anachronism, tautology and aphorism, a radical style and emphasis on surface rather than depth. We see pastiche and stylistic borrowing in Wieseltier, together with elimination of the connection between form and content.

The narrative world of the poem is determined partly by its stylistic form and partly by phonetic elements, a fact that is overt rather than covert. The writing is deliberately "bad", flaunting the aesthetic of the non-aesthetic. Not all elements in the text are relevant or necessarily connected to its meaning. Non-canonical genres appear (such as pornography). The artificiality of the text is emphasized, by the use of strict, archaic verse forms for subject matter that is trivial and, at times, arbitrary. The inner dialogue gives way to a staged, fictional world. As has been said, the varying, sometimes even contradictory, modes of poetic expression in the poetry of the 1960s are seen as part of one ideologeme. However, they all appear in the most highly developed form in the work of Wieseltier, and I therefore intend to conduct a systematic and comprehensive study of the textual expression of change in the poetry of Wieseltier, based on four main branches of poetics. I will call upon various theoretical models to support my interpretation of Wieseltier's works, basing myself on the rules of dynamic functionalism, whereby a theoretical model is applied to an appropriate text which it most readily illuminates. The first branch illustrating the shift is the general use of language, materials and subject matter. The various textual levels in Wieseltier's poems are pluralistic and heterogeneous, tending towards multiplicity. Wieseltier's innovativeness in subject matter can be seen in his thematic diversity and richness; his works reveal four main thematic areas, which appear simultaneously — lyrical, emotive poetry; poems on trivial, personal matters; social poetry; and poetry of ideas. In Wieseltier's thematics the presentation of the reality that he chooses to show in a poem is marked, with no stylistic whitewashing. It includes material that is hard-hitting and, at times scandalous, such as sex and violence. He aims to present the "hard facts" about the world, instead of emphasizing the beautiful, the universal and the moral, as was the

case in the 1950s. Similarly, his theory of language is that "anything goes" — direct, referential language and stylistic language, high and low language, official Hebrew and unofficial, including archaic expressions and numerous foreign words. The second branch of poetics is the use of figurative language. Here we can discern a trend towards two opposing extremes; on the one hand the increased use of metaphor and highly figurative language, and on the other, the use of metonymy, employing extremely direct language and removing from the poem any kind of figurative expression. Wieseltier takes traditional images and uses them differently, relating them to a completely new, modern, semantic field. He lowers and toughens register and uses collective symbols idiosyncratically by displacing their accepted significance. He also reintroduces allegory as a late-modernistic mode of expression (as the term was interpreted by Benjamin, 1977).

The third branch is rhetoric. On the whole Wieseltier abandons the tendency towards abstract subjects and an uncertain, impressionistic position, in favor of concrete norms of expression, intimate and political, which appear in varying degrees of clarity and frequently may be inferred from the text. He tends not to maintain the common poetic practice of autobiographical distancing; even if the contents of a poem are, in fact, not autobiographical and authentic, they will probably be presented as such. The basic element of Wieseltier's poetry is dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981), as a means of renouncing the modernistic "self."

The fourth branch to be studied is the elusive language of intertextuality. There are certain factors that lead to referential ambiguity and an ontological loss of direction — use of multiple basic styles in one poem, together with several kinds of intertextual relationships, such as modification of the source itself (in factual content, not merely in interpretation or in the "gaps" between facts). In many cases the intertext becomes

the core of the poem. Moreover, the pragmatic central intertext (Culler, 1981) derives from the modernistic poetics of the Anglo-American school with which Wieseltier conducted a continual dialog.

In sum, these devices express a new poetic economy, deriving from a new world-view. In the 1950s the norms were modernistic, unifying, total and epistemological, seeking to counter chaos and entropy. In contrast, Wieseltier disrupts these unifying mechanisms and the illusion of oneness, which were the result of a particular world outlook that he could not accept. The poetic models of the 1960s' late-modernism were based on pluralism, carnival, and ontology. Wieseltier, and the other poets of his generation, chose to undermine the homogeneity and stable world-view of their predecessors to present the world as they saw it.

Sources and Structure

In this paper I aim to investigate phenomena that occurred in Israeli poetry at a specific point in time when there was a shift in poetic norms. I will seek to identify these phenomena, interpret them and present an explanation of their causes. The texts being discussed are characterized by a functional duality, whereby the creation of the text itself is the object that must be explained (*explanadum*), and, at the same time, it will be used to explain the process of change in the field (*explanas*). The corpus under discussion comprises the entire body of works by Meir Wieseltier and also Yonah Wollach, Yair Hurvitz in the 1960s, the works of Nathan Zach in the 1950s and a selection of poems from poets of *Dor Hamedina*, such as Yehudah Amichai and Dalia Rabikovitch.

In addition to a study of the poetry of these writers, I will also relate to other items they published in journals and the press, such as criticism and controversial discussions, as well as comments on current affairs and interviews they gave. Zach and Wieseltier both took an active role in literary life, frequently responding to issues under discussion in journals and newspapers.

I will also discuss the criticism written about this new generation of poets from their early days in the 1960s up to the present time.

In addition, I will be relating to research studies conducted on the poetry of the 1950s and 1960s. Most of the studies discuss purely poetic aspects, either in the work of one poet or several. There are hardly any attempts to present a comprehensive theory about the poets of the 1960s, either by defining the generational characteristics or by seeking to distinguish them from *Dor Hamedina*. Some studies, however, do include significant, valid general statements about the poetry of the 1960s. In most of the studies relevant to my discussion the dominant approach was synchronic, isolating certain poetic aspects of the poetry of this generation and investigating them with no reference to their developmental context or intergenerational reciprocity. My sources also include various works of literary theory, which relate to topics that arose during my investigation, such as the dynamics of generational shifts in literature, modernism, postmodernism or subjects such as the status of autobiographical elements in poetry.

The poems themselves will be examined empirically in the light of poetical theory, with the aim of revealing the essential qualities that define these poets as a separate generation, distinct from the group of poets who were their immediate predecessors. I will present a model, based on the minimum rules of a systemic structure and their interdependency, which allows a succinct description of the poetics of the 1960s.

As I have demonstrated, my investigation will be both synchronic and diachronic, with two focal points, concentrating primarily on the literary analysis of the poetry but also relating to the social context. The first part of my paper, in which I seek to establish the profound generational distinction of the 1960s' poetry, will demand seeing the poem as a semiotic text, reflecting values and world outlook, while the second part will focus on the literary analysis of the poems. Discussing a poem as a semiotic text involves going beyond the narrow literary analysis of the poem and seeing it as a text within a culture, connected to various extra-literary systems. Modern approaches of literary criticism do not discuss solely the intention behind the poem, but also what is absent from the poem, not only what it says but rather what it takes for granted. They examine how the text relates to other texts and other artifacts, what it explains and what it disregards, also what it seeks to promote or respond to. In general, the aim is to link the text to the broad mechanisms of cultural narrative and ideology. This kind of study may in some cases bring out the greatness and significance of a text that otherwise would have been considered unimportant. In this paper my interpretation of texts will concentrate not only on the ideological content but also on the literary elements and conventions of the work as a whole.

The presentation of my position in this paper is divided into two sections. The first section (chapters 2 – 4) deals with the 1960s' generation in general. It contains the definition of the generations, biographical information about the poets belonging to this group, the circumstances under which this new poetic movement developed and its emergence on the map of Israeli poetry and an investigation of the poetic influences that affected this generation. This section will also discuss the poetics of *Dor Hamedina* in a diachronic comparison with the poetry of the 1960s. I will show

which elements of the poetry of the Dor Hamedina were adopted by the poets of the 1960s, which were abandoned and which underwent significant transformation. The second section of the paper (chapters 5 – 9) will focus on the specific poetic elements of the generational shift as they appear in the individual poems of Meir Wieseltier in comparison with the work of Nathan Zach. All chapters of this paper follow a standard structure with a number of stages. The first stage is to state what is being compared (for example, the subject matter, the use of figurative language, the language of allusion) and a theoretical discussion defining the concepts employed in this paper. The next stage is a comparison of the texts that are the focus of this paper, i.e. Wiesltier and Zach, in order to portray the change of literary norms over a period of time and extract the implications of the comparative study. The final stage is the formulation of points of change or perpetuation.