

## REVIEW ESSAYS

# Gender on the Hebrew Bookshelf



Hanna Herzog



The most notable indication that research and discussion regarding gender and feminism are flourishing is the increase in the number of books in these fields and the fact that bookstores are allocating a separate section for them. For years, publishing in Hebrew on the issue of gender was very limited, but around the end of the 1980s it began to expand. In fact, from the turn of the century it has become difficult to keep up with all the literature being published in Hebrew. In addition to new research, this material includes translations of classical female philosophers and the republication of studies that have become classics; handbooks with a feminist orientation, both in translation and in the original Hebrew; translated and original *belles-lettres*; and popular literature centered on various gender issues. These publishing riches—not to mention the many academic articles in scholarly journals and master's and PhD theses—together with the abundance of research reported on in the daily press and in various magazines, including women's magazines, provide strong evidence that the concept of gender has percolated into the academic and public discourse.

It should be noted that there is only one series, the Gender Series, published under the imprint of the Hakibbutz Ha-me'uchad publishing house, that is devoted to research texts in the field of gender studies.<sup>1</sup> The Resling and Pardes academic publishing houses, which specialize in publishing critical thinking, have also produced several related titles. In addition, many other books in gender studies are published by well-established, as well as new, mainstream publishers.

The profusion of books and the diversity of the associated publishing houses are evidence of how the importance of gender issues and the innovations encompassed by them have become assimilated into current thinking.

The topic is now often perceived as a crowd-drawer, and given the economic logic that motivates most publishers today, including academic publishers, it can be assumed that they have assessed that there is a market for these books based on their appeal to large segments of the public.

What can we learn from this range of publications regarding the character of the Hebrew discourse on gender? This question is too broad to answer within the scope of a short survey. Therefore, I have chosen to focus here on research, philosophy, and teaching literature published over the last five years (2006–2011) in Israel, about Israel, and in Hebrew. Using a broad brush, I shall propose several ways of looking at the gender knowledge reaching both researchers and educated and interested lay readers.

### Theoretical Note

The term ‘gender’ (*migdar* in Hebrew)<sup>2</sup> was proposed as an alternative to the term ‘sex’ (*min*) in order to extricate the traditional discourse from a reductionism to the biological differences between the sexes, to emphasize that it is a social construct that refers to a complex system of power relations through which women and men are socially created and located, and to put to rest the unrestricted prerogatives that emanate from gendered hierarchy. To put it another way, gender analysis is originally and in essence critical analysis. Although the theoretical meaning of the term ‘gender’ has undergone changes in line with the transformations that have taken place in feminist theory, the perception of gender as a social construct winds through the various feminist theories. The reflexive aspect of feminist logic is a political position that demands constant exposure of the mechanisms of oppression and exclusion of various groups as well as continual reference to the margins of society and to the relationships between dominant and subordinate marginal groups. This position also requires social awareness of the socio-political conditions in which knowledge develops and of the ways in which knowledge establishes relations of domination and subordination.

The strategic aim in institutionalizing the concept of gender was to present, analytically politically, and critically, the oppressive and discriminatory position of women existing in a given society at a given time—not as a problem of women alone, but as that of society at large. Gender as an analytical concept was proposed in order to analyze social relations and social structuring, with an emphasis placed on power relations between men and women as well as between specific groups of men and women. Thus, gender is employed not only as a category of classification but also

as a means of marking processes that construct social differences and power relations. Furthermore, the reflexive discourse has made it possible to dismantle the dichotomy between the masculine and feminine worlds and to address the multiplicity of voices and the intersection between gender, class, race, ethnicity, and other social locations.

### Methodological Note

I located the books examined in this study by consulting the Israel Union List (ULI), which includes catalogs of the Israeli university and college libraries as well as those of selected research institutes and government libraries. The search terms used were 'gender', 'feminism', 'women and femininity', 'men and masculinity'. As noted, I limited myself only to books that appeared between 2006 and 2011. I excluded *belles-lettres* from this list, as well as handbooks and translated works, even though the latter are indubitably part of the matter under study. Thus, I created a corpus of some 150 books that focus on research, philosophy, and teaching. They can be classified into five main genres: monographs, edited works, surveys of the topic, textbooks, and books of a general nature relevant to the issue of gender.<sup>3</sup>

The largest group was composed of monographs by a single author that were devoted to the study of a specific aspect of the field, for example, motherhood, women prostitutes, or gender identities in the army. The second largest group consisted of anthologies of articles on a particular subject, such as gender and ethnicity or women's health, and most of these were interdisciplinary. The third category was surveys or analyses of a broader field, such as legal feminism. The fourth was textbooks. And in the fifth and last category were books of a general nature containing a chapter on women or gender. The growing number of volumes containing at least one chapter on gender is probably the best evidence that feminism or, more correctly, 'feminisms' have become part of both research and the educated person's world.

### Knowledge Spaces and Methods of Transmission

The most marked characteristics of the literature surveyed were the broad range of topics, the subjects examined, and the disciplines represented. This breadth was clearly an expression of the continuity and expansion of feminist writings. Feminist theories have had an immense effect on critical reading of literary and cinematic texts, on the study of psychological

characteristics linked to the world of women, and on sociological analyses of the workplace, family, education, and welfare, as well as on critical reading of legal matters.

The wide variety of publications makes generalizations difficult, but I shall point out some identifiable trends, keeping in mind that the survey covers only five years of publishing. I also acknowledge my own biases as a social scientist and the limited scope of this survey, which does not permit in-depth coverage of subjects.

### *Study and Teaching of Feminism*

The first obvious trend is the growth in the number of textbooks dealing with gender. This is true across the board, whether we look at readers that include annotated translations of classical philosophy and critical discussions of the texts (Baum et al. 2006; Yanai et al. 2007) or those that focus on fields of knowledge within feminism with a strong emphasis on the situation in Israel: gender and education, family, democracy and feminism, gender and the military, feminism and Judaism. These phenomena should be seen as examples of the mainstreaming of gender knowledge, not only from the point of view of the study of gender and the diversity of the topics, but also, and perhaps most importantly, based on the range of publishers and the audiences to which they are directed.

Some of the publishers, such as the Israel Association of Feminists and the Unit for Equality between the Sexes in the Ministry of Education, are the usual suspects. The works published by the former are directed toward students, while the publications of the latter are intended for male and female teachers in high schools and elementary schools. A third player in this arena is the Open University, whose target audience is students. However, the broadest audiences are reached by the publishing house of the Ministry of Defense, which publishes lectures via its Broadcast University series on topics such as feminism and rights (Kamir 2002), feminism and Judaism (Kehat 2008), and gender and the military (Yehezkeally 2010).<sup>4</sup>

No less impressive is the matter of gender mainstreaming, which is expressed in the inclusion of chapters on gender and feminism in general compilations for teaching and philosophy, such as theories of social justice (Dahan 2007), contemporary sociological theories (Enoch and Soker 2006), new elites (Ben Rafael and Sternberg 2007), literature and culture (Herzig 2006), and Jewish art (Sperber 2010). No one doctrine runs through these publications. This fact reflects the contemporary situation in Israel and the world, which emphasizes not 'feminism with a capital F' but rather a multiplicity of perceptions and interpretations, that is, feminisms.

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### *Feminism Is Not Only a Secular Discourse*

A new and prominent trend in Israeli society is the increasing interest in the interface between the world of religion, Halakhah, and gender. In a trilogy about ultra-Orthodox women (El-Or 1992), national-religious women (El-Or 2002), and Mizrahi women (El-Or 1994), Tamar El-Or laid the foundations for relating to the world of religious women. However, during the period studied, this trend developed into a discussion of the link between Judaism and feminism in general, and in Israel in particular.

These issues are discussed in detail in the collections that appeared following the conferences of *Kolekh* (Your Voice); in the book *Expanding the Place of Torah* by Tamar Ross (2007), a leading philosopher of Jewish thought who, in the eyes of many, is the theological spokesperson of Orthodox feminism; in Hanna Safrai's critical exploration of the Midrash and the ways in which women, in practice, are excluded instead of being included in the discourse (see Safrai and Campbell Hochstein 2008); and in the many other volumes attempting to uncover women's voices in Jewish traditions. In these books, the boundaries between research, philosophy, and attempts to develop theological thinking are not clear-cut.

Alongside women's critical writings there has been a flourishing literature by rabbis, researchers, and religious intellectuals who are trying to grapple with the challenge of feminism. Some are profoundly critical, while others are attempting to propose ways of incorporating the feminist revolution into the world of sanctity and tradition (Maor 2007). Even general works on Jewish Orthodoxy no longer discount the feminist debate (see, e.g., Salmon, Ravitzky, and Ferziger 2006). The extensive coverage of women's learning, which challenges the traditional order with its demand for partnership in the world of work and cultural creativity and also in the realm of Halakhah, demonstrates that feminist views are filtering into the Orthodox world. Together, these developments indicate a growing social phenomenon that is engendering a variety of responses, some of which espouse preserving and strengthening the ramparts through a controlled inclusion of the notions of gender equality, while others advocate positions of exclusion, stigmatization, and Halakhic prohibitions.

It is important to note that some of the criticisms directed at feminism conceptualize the struggle as a 'cultural war', as it is described in the title of one such book (Horowitz and Eliyahu 2007), and that the opposition to feminism is not limited to religious issues but also extends to the questions of defining national borders and the issues of demography, peace, and so forth. Some of these 'opposing' publications have appeared in settlements over the Green Line, where women are active participants in the settlement enterprise. Their activities are perceived in terms of the penetration

of feminist ideas that might lead to demands for a change in the gendered religious structure. This is a matter for in-depth study.

In my own preliminary study of this issue (Herzog 2009b), I pointed out the ways in which Orthodox women over the Green Line become active partners in the whole settlement enterprise, and how this partnership becomes possible through an expansion of the meaning attached to the 'home', the place designated as belonging to women. Thus, the domestic roles of women have become enlarged, moving into the public sphere. The home is not only the individual home but also the national home, and the two together are subordinate to the world of Halakhah and serve the political agenda of the state.

### *Diversity and Variance in Gendered Worlds*

Critics of liberal feminism charge that it has not taken the diversity among women into account and has assumed that the white, middle-class woman is representative of the whole category of women. This notion has become rooted in Israeli research, and various works dealing with women in diverse social locations, special issues of journals, and monographs on the life experiences of various women testify to this approach. Many anthologies conform to the dominant discourse, including those on Palestinian women citizens of Israel (Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy 2010), Arab women in Israel (Azaiza et al. 2009), women and gender in the twentieth-century Middle East (Roded and Efrati 2009), and religious women (Cohen 2007). The place of Mizrahi women has not been disregarded, but a collection of articles on this topic (Cohen and Regev 2005) was published the year before the period that the present article covers. This cumulative knowledge is of great significance, but I cannot expand upon it due to the limited scope of this article.

Women's diverse living spaces are highlighted in these collections. They disclose various dimensions of oppression and exclusion, allow silenced voices to be heard, and illuminate the variety of ways in which the dominant order may be challenged. Nevertheless, attempting to link the very diverse articles on theoretical approaches and research topics into one identity category—that is, 'women'—presents the danger of essentialism.

Hertz-Lazarowitz and Oplatka's (2009) edited book on gender and ethnicity in higher education attempts to break open this unified view of the gendered and ethnic experience by focusing on one arena, that of higher education. The book analyzes inequality in the academic world as it interacts with ethnicity, class, and gender. In its structure, it blurs the divisions between categories of identity, discussing Mizrahi, Arab, Druze, secular, and religious women as separate categories, while highlighting

the structural biases against weaker groups. The book also demonstrates the operation of various processes in different kinds of higher education institutions that form gender inequalities.

This volume deals with the experiences of women teachers as well as those of students and draws comparisons between men and women from different social locations. It thus constructs a structural and cultural context that illustrates the complex relationships between gender, ethnicity, and class. Interviews with 19 women of Mizrahi extraction in institutions of higher education conducted by Nina Toren confirm the assertion that intersectionality between the three categories establishes a whole that cannot be reduced to its components (see Hertz-Lazarowitz and Oplatka 2009: 25–39). Nevertheless, Toren asserts that, on occasion, one identity supersedes the others. This occurs, for example, when class success displaces the importance of gender and origins, or when the compartmentalization of identities results in giving precedence to ethnic identity in the private sphere but not in the professional one.

In the same book, Orna Blumen and Sharon Halevi explore the intersectionality between gendered and national identities. They show that in the women's studies concentration within the multidisciplinary program of Haifa University, where Jewish and Arab woman teachers and students met during the Second Intifada, a period of repeated terror attacks, the women preferred to focus on gender power relations and leave the national power relations outside the classroom (see Hertz-Lazarowitz and Oplatka 2009: 209–223). The in-depth interviews on which many of these studies are based enable the female researchers to call into question the dichotomous divisions between women and men and Ashkenazim and Mizrachim, to reveal the complexities that are anchored in place and time, and to show the development of hybrid identities in changing contexts. This book does not assert any lack of ethnic and gender inequality, but it releases us from essentialist assumptions about origins and sex and, as such, is faithful to the original aim of those who coined the term 'gender'.

The feminist claim that knowledge emerges from below is adopted by many research monographs. These works—for example, studies of religious women's theater (Rutlinger-Reiner 2007) and of women's theater in various communities (Bresler 2006)—emphasize that knowledge stemming from experience is also a source of power and empowerment. Approaching society from the margins introduces voices that have been excluded and silenced and also facilitates a critical examination of gendered orders. Here, too, the range of topics is broad, and among them are a women's prison, women in prostitution, women with violent domestic partners, women who have experienced rape or incest, and elderly battered women.

### *Herstory and Rewriting Social History*

Studies of gender in historical contexts are another facet of research published in the five-year period under investigation. The call to return women to history has produced many studies on women: women in the labor movement (Margalit Stern 2006), women in 'red' Haifa (Nachmias 2009), women on kibbutzim (Fogiel-Bijaoui 2009), women in the early *aliyah* (Shilo 2007), women's rights and legal status during the Mandatory period (Shilo, Katvan, and Halperin-Kaddari 2009), women in Mandatory Tel Aviv (Bernstein 2008), the history of the feminist movement in political and social context (Safran 2006), and the historical narrative from a personal perspective of feminist thinking in Israel (Shadmi 2007). This historiographical enterprise was recently enriched by the addition of an edited volume (Shilo and Katz 2011) that contains dozens of studies on gender in pre-state Israel and during the period of early statehood. These varied historical writings attempt to consolidate the national collective memory.

To this collective effort we should add the writings about women in the Holocaust reproduced in two books reflecting the gendered social order. One of these, a volume edited by Esther Hertzog (2006), deals with women and family, while Sharon Geva's book (2010) relates to the discourse on heroism that has been associated with masculinity. Both books perform a service by subverting accepted ideas in redefining the meaning of family and that of heroism through criticism of the commonly accepted images of Holocaust survivors. These stories are told by women, based on their experiences and work with women. This critical step has been reinforced by a feminist reading of writings of second-generation Holocaust survivors, both men and women. Talila Kosh Zohar (2009) understands them as heeding women's voices and attempting to establish an alternative memory, different from the one represented in the dominant discourse. This is writing that attempts to convert the language of power in the collective memory, based on the narrative of heroism and victimization, into the language of life, compassion, self-sacrifice—what Kosh Zohar calls "memory that passed through mother's milk" (*ibid.*: 92).

### *The Importance of Legal Research*

The most prolific domain in the five-year period surveyed is the field of law. This abundance of material can be measured by the number of books published, but more importantly by the critical theoretical thinking that they contain and the attempts to translate feminist ideas into the language of legislation and social change. During the period under study,

new anthologies and studies have offered a broader picture of law and feminism through their attempt to understand whether an Israeli legal and social feminism has developed. If such a feminism has come into existence, what does it consist of and how has it waxed and waned?

One of the notable characteristics of this discourse on legal feminism is that it has not been confined to a critical theoretical platform but has also become a practical project, generating analyses that have appeared in legislation, judicial opinions, and the policy that these opinions require. For example, the volume edited by Shilo, Katvan, and Halperin-Kaddari (2009), which is entitled *One Constitution and One Law for the Man and for the Woman* (the slogan coined by women in their struggle for suffrage), explores the place of women in the legal sphere and their struggle to serve as lawyers and to fill judicial and prosecutorial positions in the period 1918–1948, prior to the establishment of the State of Israel.

Noya Rimalt (2008) surveys the historical development of legal feminist theories, locating them in the legal contexts in which they were consolidated and upon which they attempted to exercise their influence. She does this through a comparative look at the United States and Israel, an approach that is relevant not only because of the richness of the American legal discourse and because American legal feminism influenced the Israeli discourse, but more importantly because the comparison elucidates the particularistic aspects of Israeli legal feminism. The central question addressed by legal feminism is whether to pursue legislation emphasizing women's differences or to promote formal equality undifferentiated by gender. Neither of these approaches has successfully managed to eradicate the deeply ingrained patriarchalism in Israeli culture or to resolve the problem of essential equality.

In her book *Israel's Dignity-Based Feminism in Law and Society*, Orit Kamir (2007) attempts to delineate a sensitive feminism that is responsive to the Israeli way of life and to the culture and history of Israelis. She asserts that it is difficult for feminism to forge a path relevant to the thinking of Israeli men and women because the Anglo-American tradition places equality at the center of the discourse, whereas Israeli society defines itself in terms of honor. Her evidence for this is the Basic Law on Human Dignity and Liberty, which is part of the Israeli Bill of Rights. Therefore, instead of making an ongoing effort to persuade Israelis to recognize the lack of gender equality in Western liberal terms, Kamir attempts to establish a mindset that will facilitate social change and is based upon the concept of honor that is deeply rooted in Jewish and Palestinian culture in Israel. She expands this notion and infuses it with new meanings, encompassing perceptions that conduct a dialogue with the discourse on rights such as dignity and respect.

An analysis of the link between law and social and cultural practices lies at the heart of Daphna Hacker's (2008) research on parenting in the law, as does the compilation of articles in the special issue of the journal *Hamishpat* edited by Zvi Triger (2011), which proposes a feminist perspective on criminal law, the law of evidence, tort law, rape law, and so forth (see also Barak-Erez et al. 2007). The feminist legal discourse poses the feminist dilemma most clearly: Can we change the dominant structure from a position outside the system? Or is there no way to bring about change other than by becoming integrated into the hegemonic institutions with the intent to change them, being mindful of the dangers lurking behind such cooperation?

### *Men and Masculinity as Part of the Gender Discourse*

Feminist academic and political perspectives are embedded in women's marginal social locations, and this enables them to expose the mechanisms of oppression and inequality. Looking at society from the margins creates a different perspective on knowledge, that is, another understanding of society. This challenges the perspective on people as abstract, universal, and neutral and as capable of representing, as it were, all people, disregarding differences between sexes, classes, races, and more.

This insight led to the development of the wealth of research into women and their place and experience in the gendered social order. However, the same critical and reflexive position paved the way for research on men and masculinity. Although the latter developed from within the feminist discourse all over the world, it took on a special aspect in Israel because the modern distinction between the public and the private-domestic that correlates with a gendered division of work has been reinforced in the Israeli context by the Israeli security discourse, which has sharpened the separation between the public and private sphere. Security, military, and soldiering dominate the public sphere and are the bastions of male discourse, while family and mothering are at the heart of the private sphere and of women's roles (Herzog 1998).

The identification of the public space as masculine led to the search for the roots and meaning of Israeli masculinity. A special contribution, in the five-year period under review, must be accorded to the study of cultural texts. Michael Gluzman (2007), for example, asserts that the Hebrew literature that developed at the turn of the nineteenth century, during the establishment and consolidation of the Zionist enterprise, ought to be read as part of the shaping of the new male body and the new masculinity. Just as the nationalist discourse in Europe positioned the male body as a symbol of the nation, so too did the Zionist discourse adopt this perception. But

the Zionist revolution was also a profound transformation that yearned to liberate itself from the traditional Jewish image of the nation as a woman and of the Diaspora Jew as having feminine qualities. The strong male body embodies the new Jewish identity, and aspects of the male body play a central role in Hebrew literature, largely written by men. "In a society permeated by militaristic values and in a culture frequently deliberating about questions of power, the male body remains a central subject in which political, gender, and sexual questions come together" argues Gluzman (*ibid.*: 29).

In the same spirit, Yosef Raz (2010) asserts that Zionism was not merely a political and ideological project but also an undertaking that reordered sexuality and emphasized heterosexuality, rejecting the feminine dimensions within men. His book tracks Israeli cinematic representation from its inception and uncovers the male sexual perceptions in Zionist, military, ethnic Mizrahi, and homosexual discourse, while taking note of the profound connections between them.

Orna Sasson-Levy's book (2006) takes issue with the role of masculinity in the foremost bastion of Israeli masculinity—the military. Her basic contention is that the identity of the combat soldier is the hegemonic identity in the army and that other non-hegemonic groups are required to establish their own identities in relation to it. However, in a rich and subtle analysis, she refutes assertions of a uniform male identity and draws one possible connection between masculinity, the army, and citizenship. Sasson-Levy shows how ethnic, class, and gender differences are crucial in establishing the identities of soldiers—women and men alike—and thus create different roads to citizenship. Women and Mizrahim, although included within the army, are at the same time pushed to the margins. During their military service, they develop a civic-national dialogue with the military that differs from the hegemonic one. In the final analysis, these mechanisms become an instrument for reproducing the ethnic and gender hierarchy.

### *Where Has Politics Gone To?*

In examining the works published over the five years under consideration, what features prominently is an almost total absence of publications on matters of state, political parties, and mechanisms for the control of political bodies or works considering their relations with economic, media-related, or legal factors and civil society. No less surprising is the disregard for questions of gender and international relations in an era characterized by globalization and at a time when central questions in Israeli politics are linked to the international arena. Those books that did address the narrow

political aspect focused more on histories demonstrating how women organized themselves and the feminist movement (Safran 2006) and on the oppositional feminist left (Isachar 2009).

Among those studies that did grapple with contemporary political issues, note should be taken of *Between Exploitation and Rescue* (Gorni 2011), which has launched an eco-feminist discourse in Israel, and *Security and Resilience for Whom?* (Dayif, Abramovitch, and Eyal 2007), an important study challenging the concept of security, published with the support of Women to Women and the Women's Coalition for Peace. These two works attempt to challenge basic thought patterns commonly accepted in Israeli politics. The only book that addresses the issue of feminism and its relation to democracy is *Democracy and Feminism* (Fogiel-Bijaoui 2011). Written as a textbook, it contains a summary of earlier studies and the present state of research, but it provides little new research of its own. Nevertheless, many of the ideas raised in this volume may well serve as the foundation for a series of studies on topics that are not already covered by Israeli research.

Feminist discourse has expanded the concept of what is political and has identified diverse spheres of gendered power relations that have shaped the structure of society. This has undoubtedly been an important contribution toward understanding the gendered order and gender-differentiated power (Herzog 2009a). But, paradoxically, refraining from discussing the traditional political power mechanisms has reproduced traditional perceptions that politics is a matter for men. More importantly, it has neglected an important link regarding whether, and how, critical thinking, such as the power of feminist civil society, lively and multifaceted as it is, can be translated into procedures for decision-making and policy design, both in local terms and on the level of the global order.

### **Summary: Gender Knowledge as a Collective Project**

The initial conclusion from this survey of books on gender research published in the years 2006–2011 testifies to the great expansion of gender knowledge. There is no doubt that far more material would have been located had it been possible to include articles in journals on the many fields of knowledge and thought that were not surveyed. As in other spheres of discourse, feminist discourse is an arena of struggle over boundaries and meanings. But the logical thread intertwined among the various streams of feminist discourse is the use of women's points of view, emerging from their social locations and everyday experiences, as bases for knowledge. This situated knowledge serves as a source for analyzing social inequality

and reciprocal relations between exclusionary and excluded forces (Haraway 1988; Harding 1991).

Feminist analysis was originally undertaken as a theoretical and empirical attempt to unveil a portion of the human experience that had been shunted to the margins, ignored and silenced (Harding 1991). The view from the sidelines has served as the basis for a continual re-examination of social arrangements that realign themselves anew and present new boundaries. The inclusion of women's points of view and the perspective of situated knowledge have extended the reach of research to everyday life. They have erased the boundaries between the knowledge created in institutions of higher learning and that fashioned through the daily experience of men and women, turning the human experience into a source of knowledge. This process has expanded and filtered into strongholds of thinking and has changed gendered knowledge. In addition, many domains that seemed to be neutral and universal have been exposed to gender critiques. The demand for different knowledge creates not only a different social reality but also a different political reality.

I should like to conclude this discussion with a warning. The concept of gender has gained acceptance in academic research as well as in public discourse. But it should be noted that in public discourse, as well as in research, there is a tendency to equate gender and sex—that is, to adhere to a dichotomous division into women and men—and, in many instances, gender is associated with women. In other words, the word 'gender' has often become a synonym for 'women'. The use of the concept in public discourse has not necessarily been accompanied by the adoption of the feminist world of knowledge. The tendency to identify gender with women arises from the fact that the concept of gender, which was conceived of as a challenge by feminist women and which required a transformed look at the world from the point of view of women, was propagated largely by women and shone the research spotlight on that part of society that is female.

This is by no means surprising, for the claims of exclusion, discrimination, and oppression of women stem from the deprived group and not from the dominant center that was, at its core, masculine and populated mostly by men. That is why the gender discourse became—and still is—identified as a discourse on and by women. Many people, including some feminists, have viewed gender and women as interchangeable terms and thus miss the major analytical and theoretical contributions of the gender turn in feminist thought.

The Hebrew books now on the library shelves undoubtedly testify that there is a trend toward integrating gender thinking into research. However, the question that remains to be investigated is whether, in the process of

integrating these concepts in research, as well as in public discourse, there has been an erosion in the critical aspect from which gender discourse is derived—and that is the central claim of feminist analysis.

**HANNA HERZOG**, Professor of Sociology, teaches in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Tel Aviv University and is the Chair of the Gender Studies Program. She specializes in political sociology, ethnic relations, sociology of gender, and sociology of generations. Among her books on gender are *Sex Gender Politics* (1999; in Hebrew), co-authored with others; *Gendering Politics: Women in Israel* (1999); and *Gendering Religion and Politics: Untangling Modernities* (2009), edited with Ann Braude.

## NOTES

1. In the interests of full disclosure, I must note that I am an editor of this series with Hana Naveh, who is editor-in-chief. Previously, Orly Lubin was also a member of the editorial board.
2. On the origin of the Hebrew term, see the introduction to Izraeli et al. (1999: 9–10).
3. I did not conduct a quantitative analysis nor was this a rigid classification, because the division between the various genres is not clear-cut and this was primarily an initial means of sorting the material. Some books fall into more than one category.
4. Hagai Boaz is the editor of the Broadcast University series on Army Radio, the radio network operated by the Israel Defense Forces. I am pleased to note that Hagai is one of my better students, and I am gratified that he is a leader in the assimilation of gender thinking within the framework of this series.

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