

## *Partial Answers* is 20 Years Old!

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The present issue marks the 20th anniversary of the publication of *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*. This is the time for a retrospect.

The idea of the journal arose out of the confluence of two events. One of them was the first graduate symposium of the English Department of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where most of the papers dealt with literary works in the context of the history of ideas. The participants felt that such fruitful discussions should be continued; indeed, the graduate conference of the Department has since been held annually. At the same time, the idea of a journal, with the editorial board consisting of faculty and students, in the field of literature and the history of ideas, gained momentum. The Hebrew University was a supporting intellectual environment for work in this somewhat underrepresented interdisciplinary niche.

The other event was the formation of the School for Literatures in the Faculty of Humanities. The aim of the School was to enhance the commonalities in the study of different national literatures. Our journal was then conceptualized as a publication sponsored by that school, a venue for papers on different national literatures and on the role of literary art in processing ideas that belong to different fields.

It was also at about that time, that *Hebrew University Studies in Literature and the Arts (HSLA)*, edited by Ruth Nevo and Lawrence Besserman, ceased publication — much regretted and leaving a gap. That journal, now a bibliophile's collectible, contained excellent materials, often stemming from research rooted in teaching and of great further pedagogical value.

The initial funding for *Partial Answers* — fellowships for the Editorial workshop and publication expenses — came from the budget of the School for Literatures. The Editor is particularly grateful to Professor Menachem Magidor, a mathematician who loves literature. As President of the University, Prof. Magidor not only allotted extra funds to the journal but also lent it consistent moral support and advised us on key

administrative matters. Another great friend of the journal, then and now, is Prof. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Founding Director of the School for Literatures and a prominent member of the journal's Advisory Board, whose advice, sympathy, and active participation have been invaluable for the journal's struggle for survival.

The office of the President of the University, including the current President, Prof. Asher Cohen, has been responsive to the needs of the journal in recent years as well. We are particularly grateful to Prof. Menahem Ben-Sasson, not only for financial support of the editorial office but also for the sense of solidarity and understanding that reassured us during more trying times. We also enjoy and appreciate the thoughtful support of the current Dean of Humanities, Prof. Nissim Otmazgin and, more recently, of the Center for Literary Studies of the Hebrew University and its Director Prof. Ilana Pardes.

The title *Partial Answers* signifies that the editorial team does not believe in intellectual absolutes and encourages authors to show awareness of their partialities as well as awareness of the contingent nature of the idea-content of scholarly essays. With the passage of time, the journal came to focus on predominantly literary essays, close analyses of one or two literary works in a way that opens up to the history of ideas, avoiding the genre of theory-and-application but seeking reciprocal insight from and for disciplines such as philosophy, historiography, cultural studies, sociology, science, and theory of literature and the arts.

Two more principles were opted for by the founding team: (1) attempting to re-mediate the debris of the intellectual process, to recoup the understudied and the forgotten; and (2) publishing the work of young scholars side by side with those of experienced celebrated ones. We are grateful to the major scholars who placed their trust in the journal and stood at its cradle: Wolfgang Iser, Geoffrey Hartman, Cora Diamond, Regenia Gagnier, James Phelan, and Bernard Harrison, as well as our colleagues at the Hebrew University.

We learned as we went along. When we published the initial Call for Submissions, we also ordered books on editing and held an editorial workshop for the founding team. One of the central sessions of the workshop was conducted by Louise Bethlehem, who shared her experience of editing for *Poetics Today*, a journal which provided us, in many ways, with a role model. Louise's main message was "Check everything!" This involved not only strict double-blind peer-review procedures but also critically attentive though also sympathetic copy-editing of the accepted essays.

The latter endeavor was facilitated by the digital revolution that took place in the new millennium. In the course of a few years the office of *Partial Answers* became paperless. Internet searches greatly reduced the number of hours that editors had to spend in libraries. Digital editing and proof-reading changed the balance between time spent on technical work and time for creative thinking.

We learned much from our first publisher, The Hebrew University Magnes Press. Professor Joseph Hacker, who headed the Press's Academic Committee in 2001, taught us the importance of regularity and timeliness, and the need to have the next issue on the ready when the current issue is being published. The Director of the Press, Dan Benovici, made important comments on the graphic aspects of the text and on the efficiency of the different stages of work; he was also the one to remind us of the need for an Internet site. Matthias Bauer, Editor of *Connotations*, advised us to join Council of Editors of Learned Journals (CELJ), and we learned a great deal from the postings of the Council. In 2004, *Partial Answers* won the CELJ award as the Best New Journal of the year.

The major happy development in the history of the journal was its being accepted by The Johns Hopkins University Press in 2007. Since then, the cooperation with William Breichner, Director of the Journals Division, and with the attentive and responsive production coordinators of the Press, has not only enhanced the standing of the journal but has also given us a full sense of institutional stability along with total academic freedom and care for professional quality.

The work of the editorial team has been done on a volunteer basis; only the Managing Editors have received part-time pay. Their contribution went well beyond this remuneration. Edward Waysband, the first Managing Editor, stayed in the office for innumerable hours, facing the challenges of starting from scratch; he was, actually, the Founding Managing Editor. Hannah Landes, who replaced him when he went to Toronto for his post-doc, streamlined the journal's correspondence and other office procedures as well as the distribution of the tasks; her courage and joyfulness helped to lift the spirits of the team at moments of difficulty. Tali Banin, who has been doing this work in recent years, has made further improvements in the functioning of the team and has firmly stood guard over the increasing flow of submissions, inquiries and other correspondence, peer-review, and the accuracy of the final product.

The members of the editorial team (Associate Editors) screen and sponsor the submissions, copy-edit the accepted articles, and help with proofreading. The distribution of the tasks takes into account the talents

and the interests of each editor — e.g. the amazing philological precision of Jonathan Stavsky or the infallible screening judgment of David Hadar. Some members (Daniela Tourgeman, Yael Shapira, Chaya Fischer) brought existing editorial proficiency to this work, while others learned such skills in the process and could later apply them to their own work as well. Editorial experience enhances one's own research writing also through the element of random input that often expands one's horizons beyond those of strict mission-orientedness. Most of the members of the team joined its work when they were MA or PhD students or post-docs; many have stayed on in the team even now that they have faculty positions in this and other Universities (Tel Aviv, Haifa, Bar-Ilan, St. Petersburg) and colleges (Azrieli, Beit Berl, Shalem). Ruben Borg, one of the founding editors while still a PhD student, is now Professor in the English Department, has completed two terms as Head of the Department, and is co-editor of a new journal, *The Parish Review: Journal of Flann O'Brien Studies*, published by Open Library of the Humanities. Galia Benziman continues working for *Partial Answers* with full commitment despite the challenging duties of Head of the English Department in the time of the pandemic.

The journal has published a number of special issues and thematic clusters such as “Literature and the Ideas of Space” (2003), “Eyewitness Narratives” (2009); “Uneasy Pleasures” (2011); “*Bildung* and the State” (guest-edited by Pieter Vermeulen and Ortwin de Graef, 2012), “The Novel and Theories of Love” (2014), “Comics and the Canon” (guest-edited by Ariela Freedman, 2015), “Saul Below as a Novelist of Ideas” (guest edited by Victoria Aarons and Gustavo Sánchez-Canales, 2016), “Modern Jewish Spaces” (guest-edited by Murray Baumgarten, 2016), “British Women Writers” (guest-edited by Yael Shapira and Miranda M. Yaggi, 2010), “Mapping Victorian Empires, Cultures, Identities” (guest-edited by Zoe Beenstock and Galia Benziman, 2021), and “Romanticism in the Age of World Wars” (guest-edited by Brecht de Groote and Ortwin de Graef, 2022). It has published two kinds of narratological clusters: one on thinking *with* narrative — “Narrative as a Way of Thinking” (2006); “Narrative Knowing, Living, Telling” (guest-edited by Matti Hyvärinen, Jarmila Mildorf, and Kai Mikkonen, 2008); the other on thinking *about* narrative — “Audionarratology” (guest-edited by Jarmila Mildorf and Till Kinzell, 2017); “Monika Fludernik's *Towards a 'Natural Narratology'*: Twenty Years Later” (guest-edited by John Pier, 2018). The present special issue, “Limits of Narrative,” guest-edited by Merja Polvinen and Samuli Björnininen belongs to the latter series — thinking about the uses and the possible abuses of narrative on the basis of specific works.