SURREALISM AND THE WORKS OF YITZHAK OREN

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The French surrealist movement was brought to public attention in 1924 with Andre Breton’s *Manifesto of Surrealism* and advocated an anarchic individualism that sought to challenge and reform the world through purely aesthetic means. The French surrealist movement as led by Andre Breton, influenced the literature of other countries almost immediately. Even in the twenties it was successfully brought to Belgium and then in the thirties and forties it became a worldwide movement and can be found in the literature of North and South America, Canada, Iraq, Egypt, Japan, Australia, Africa, the Canaries and most of Europe. This international movement seems less obvious in the writings of British Mandatory Palestine. There is hardly any record of surrealist writings during the twenties and thirties in Palestine. However, it is known that during this time there were experimental literary journals such as Ktuvim, edited by Eliezar Steinmann that encouraged modernist styles of writing such as expressionism. These journals reflected the contemporary and significant attempt at moving away from traditional literary forms as represented by writers such as Bialik, and moving towards a more adventurous and Western European writing style. It was only later, in the 1950’s and 1960’s, with writers such as Yitzhak Oren and Yitzhak Orpaz that Hebrew surrealist fiction began to emerge. Yitzhak Oren, who was born in Siberia and who immigrated to Palestine in 1936, belonged in theory to the Palmach Generation of Israeli writers but rejected the literary realism of his contemporaries. In this paper I shall analyse three surrealist features contained within the work of Yitzhak Oren. These features are: firstly, a literary playfulness that manifests itself both in style and in content and disregards any so called traditional sense of consistency; second, a sense of the ‘marvellous’, a term that will be further explained in the analysis; third, an emphasis on the gap between the limited world of the conscious mind and material universe that is both temporally and spatially confined, and the endless and infinite realm of the unconscious.