

“The Tree of (Real) Life as a Metaphor for Fiction-Memoir Integration”

This paper explores the blending of memoir and fiction in Amos Oz's *A Tale of Love and Darkness*. One of the most interesting ways in which the two are mixed in this book are the many instances wherein, while telling us his story, Oz mentions his works of fiction, such as *My Michael* and *The Hill of Evil Counsel*. His placement of references to fiction among the otherwise memoir storyline of the book adds an element of metafiction to his overall oeuvre. These acts render blurry the boundary between fiction and memoir, while at the same time breaking the fourth wall and possibly complicating some suspension of disbelief that may have been previously established by the works of fiction.

I argue that the fiction-memoir integration takes a particular shape in this book: beyond being a memoir, *A Tale of Love and Darkness* establishes the tree from whose branches grow Oz's previous works of fiction. The roots of this tree are formed when Oz tells us about his distant and close relatives, and the trunk is the storyline of his life. The roots and trunk support the various branches that represent his works of fiction, sustaining them with the solidity of real life. The tree metaphor is especially conducive to both interpretive and pedagogical approaches to the interplay between fiction and memoir in this masterpiece of Hebrew literature.