

ABSTRACT

‘DICKY’S DEATH’: AMICHAÏ’S TRAUMATIC TEXT

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This essay focuses on Yehuda Amichai’s collection of short stories, *In This Terrible Wind*, in order to underscore the fundamental differences between his poetry and his prose. Unlike Natan Zach, who asserted that ‘Amichai in long lines and in short lines is one and the same’, I argue that the poetry and short stories reveal two different, perhaps incompatible, aspects of his writing. In his poetry, Amichai’s voice is often placid, a tone that is achieved by means of linguistic self-control. In stark contrast, his short stories are often constructed as dreams or nightmares, and reveal a flaw in the fictional world that blights its linguistic representation. Unlike the emotional lucidity so characteristic of his poems, Amichai’s stories reveal the traumatic biographical foundation, and can thus be read as a form of textual ‘acting out’.

These differences are clearly evident in the different texts, verse and prose, that Amichai wrote about the death of his commander and friend Haim (Dicky) Laksberger in the War of Independence. Amichai grappled with Dicky’s death throughout his life, returning to the subject in his writing at least once every decade. While Amichai’s poetic voice is restrained and reveals only a trace of the war trauma he experienced, the short story ‘Dicky’s Death’ offers a traumatic and socially disruptive poetics that dramatizes both the extremity of emotion embodied in trauma and the failure to contain it.