

**Netta Zagagi**  
1947-2017



For her fifteenth birthday, Netta Zagagi's father bought her a collection of Greek Elegiac poems in the Hebrew translation of Shlomo Span. On the first page he wrote the following dedication: "Let the chief beauty [yafyuth] of Japheth be in the tents of Shem" (Megillah 9b). If your soul wishes to know the real taste of Greek poetry, go to the source — hoping that you will learn the Greek language so that you will know the poetry of ancient Greece'.

This episode epitomizes Netta's two passions: poetry and Classical Studies. Already as a child, in the small neighborhood of Bat-Galim in Haifa, she wrote and published poems in children's and youth magazines. Poetry was her first passion, and she never abandoned it; when she was twenty, her first poetry book was published (1967), and in 2008 her second, which also includes selected translations from the ancient Greek poet Meleager of Gadara's poems. But the seeds which Netta's father, the Bible scholar Peretz Sandler, had planted in her as a girl, acquiring for her every published translation of the Classical works, sprouted and fashioned her into a distinguished scholar in Greek and Latin literature.

Those who participated in her classes or attended her lectures in academic conferences could not fail to recognize her poetic spirit, which was manifested in her passionate love for and deep understanding of Latin and Greek poetry. Her profound, thought-provoking and learned studies and her translations (which were quite often poetic in themselves) always remained faithful to the author's world, language and rhythm.

Netta began her studies towards a B.A. degree in 1967 in the expanded track of Greek and Latin Languages and Literature in the Department of Classics at Tel Aviv University. After graduating (*summa cum laude*) in 1970, she taught Latin for two years at the Department of Classics. In 1972 she was sent to Oxford University to study for her DPhil degree. Under the supervision of Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones she wrote her doctoral thesis, *Tradition and Originality in Plautus: Studies in the Motifs of Love in the Plautine Comedy*.

In 1977, upon her return to Israel, Netta was appointed Lecturer in the Department of Classics at Tel Aviv University, where she worked until her retirement in 2008. In 1981 she was promoted to Senior Lecturer, in 1986 she became an Associate Professor, and in 1995 a Full Professor.

Between 1994 and 1996 she was the head of the Department of Classics. Between the years 2000 and 2002 she was a co-editor of *Scripta Classica Israelica*.

Netta went on sabbatical leaves to Wolfson College, Oxford (1987-1988), and to Georgetown University, Washington D.C. (2006-2007). She was granted research fellowships at the Fondation Hardt at Geneva, twice (1989 and 1994).

At the focus of Netta's research was Greek Comedy — the 'Old Comedy' (of Aristophanes) and especially the 'New Comedy' of Menander and its adaptations by Roman playwrights (Plautus, Terence and others). She also studied the Greek lyric and the Hellenistic poetry, especially the Bucolic poems of Theocritus and the Love epigrams of the Greek Anthology. Many of her studies examine the law and society of ancient Greece and Rome as reflected in love poems and stories which use legal, political and military metaphors. She was also one of the few who handled the Greek genre of Satyr play.

In her first book, *Tradition and Originality in Plautus: Studies of the Amatory Motifs in Plautine Comedy* (1980), based on her doctoral dissertation, Netta refuted Eduard Fraenkel's widely accepted theory about Plautus' originality in drawing hyperbolic mythological comparisons. Examining a wide range of Greek texts (Tragedy, Old and new Comedy, Philosophy, the Hellenistic epigrams, and the Greek Novels), Netta suggested a re-appraisal of Fraenkel's arguments and conclusions and highlighted Plautus' dependency on his Greek sources. Yet she also emphasized Plautus' originality in two areas: in his adaptation of the iambic monologues he found in the Greek plays, turning them into love songs in various meters; and in his use of legal terminology to present motifs of love for comic effect (a subject she returned to in some of her articles, see below).

In her book *The Comedy of Menander: Convention, Variation & Originality* (1995), Netta shifted the focus of her research from the Roman stage to its Greek sources. She argues that the playwright creates a special space, where comedy and daily life meet. She observes three artistic principles or techniques in Menander's work: polyphony — the interlacing of themes, motifs, and multifaceted plots; economy — conciseness and brevity in developing scenes and characters, and dramatic parsimony in using devices; and emphasis on human interaction — the playwright's use of direct interaction between his characters, striving to solve the complications they face. The book also postulates two dramatic viewpoints: the one reflects the characters' behaviour in a realistic way, conforming to contemporary social conventions; the other, as it were, comprises a mythical dimension, integrated into the realistic course of events.

These two impressive scholarly works, and the many articles which deal with similar and other themes (see list below), gave Netta a world-wide recognition. When the news about her death became known, scholars around the world wrote to offer their condolences and to emphasize their debt to her scholarship. She was highly regarded by scholars in Israel and abroad, and was often invited to participate in conferences and contribute to collections of articles.

Netta was a perfectionist. She would not publish or lecture about anything unless she considered it flawless. The same high standards which she set to herself she also expected of her students and colleagues — an unwelcome quality in an impatient world, hurrying to gain immediate success and seeking shortcuts. But those who were not afraid to work hard benefited from her immense knowledge, sharp perception and absolute devotion. She was a total person in every aspect of her life: as a teacher, a scholar and as a wife and mother. The same devotion that had made her such an accomplished and well respected scholar, was also applied in her private life, as the wife of Gadi and mother of three children.

She will be sorely missed by her loving family and devoted friends, and remembered fondly and with appreciation by her students and colleagues.

יהי זכרה ברוך.

### Netta Zagagi's publications

#### Books

1980. *Tradition and Originality in Plautus: Studies of the Amatory Motifs in Plautine Comedy*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht.  
 1995. *The Comedy of Menander: Convention, Variation, and Originality*, Indiana University Press.

#### Articles

1979. 'Sostratos as a Comic, Over-Active and Impatient Lover: On Menander's Dramatic Art in His Play *Dyskolos*', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 36: 39-48.  
 1981. 'Plautus, Cist. 231-49: Dialogue-Scene Substituted by Plautus for New Comedy Monologue?', *The Classical Journal* 76.4: 312-317.  
 1982. 'A Note on *munus, munus fungi* in Early Latin', *Glotta* 60: 280-281.  
 1984. 'Self-Recognition in Theocritus' Seventh Idyll', *Hermes* 112.4: 427-438.  
 1985. 'Helen of Troy: Encomium and Apology', *Wiener Studien* 98: 63-88.  
 1986. 'Mythological hyperboles and Plautus', *Classical Quarterly* 36.1: 267.  
 1986. 'Notes on P. Köln 203', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 62: 38-40.  
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 1987. 'Obligations in Amatory Payments and Gift-Giving: A Note on Plautine Originality', *Hermes* 115.4: 503-504.  
 1987. 'Amatory Gifts and Payments: A Note on *munus, donum* and *Data* in Plautus', *Glotta* 65.1/2: 129-132.  
 1988. 'Exilium Amoris in New Comedy', *Hermes* 116.2: 193-209.  
 1990. 'Divine Interventions and Human Agents in Menander', in E.W. Handley and A. Hurst (eds.), *Relire Ménandre*, Genève: Libraire Droz S.A., 63-91 (= [rev.] Ch. VI of Zagagi, *The Comedy of Menander*).  
 1995. 'The Impromptu Element in Plautus in the Light of the Evidence of New Comedy', in L. Benz, E. Stärk, and G. Vogt-Spira (eds.), *Plautus und die Tradition des Stegreifspiels. Festgabe für Eckard Léfevre zum 60 Geburtstag*, Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 71-86.  
 1999. 'Comic Patterns in Sophocles' *Ichneutae*', in J. Griffin (ed.), *Sophocles Revisited. Essays presented to Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 177-218.  
 2004. 'The Dramatic Function of "Speaking Back into the House" in Menander's *Dyskolos*', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 148: 99-113.  
 2004. 'Tradition and Originality in *Cistellaria*: the Characterization of Selenium and Alcesimarchus as Comic Lovers', in R. Hartkamp and F. Hurka (eds.), *Studien Zu Plautus' Cistellaria*, Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 167-186.  
 2012. 'What do Greek Words do in Plautus', in J. Glucker and C. Burnett (eds.), *Greek into Latin from Antiquity until the Nineteenth Century*, London and Turin: The Warburg Institute — Nino Aragno Editore, 19-36.

#### Reviews

1986. Reviewed work: A.L. Hunter, *The New Comedy of Greece and Rome*, Cambridge University Press, 1985. In: *The Classical Review* 36, 252-4.  
 1990. Reviewed work: E. Stark, *Die Menaechmi des Plautus und kein griechisches Original*, *Scriptoralia* 11 Tübingen, 1989. In: *Journal of Roman Studies* 80, 202-203.  
 1991. Reviewed work: Michael P. Schmude, *Reden, Sachstreit, Zänkereien. Untersuchungen zu Form und Funktion verbaler Auseinandersetzungen in den Komödien des Plautus und Terenz*. In: *Gnomon* 63.1, 13-16.

2000. Reviewed work: V. Masciadri, *Die antike Verwechslungskomödie. 'Menaechmi', 'Amphitruo' und ihre Verwandtschaft*, Stuttgart: M&P, 1996. In: *Gnomon* 72, 301-305.
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2007. Reviewed work: D.C. Beroutsos, *A Commentary on the Aspis of Menander. Part One: Lines 1–298*, Hypomnemata 157, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2005. In: *The Classical Review* 57, 58-59.

### Publications in Hebrew

#### Book

1979. *Attic Drama*, Unit 7 in *Classical Greece*, The Open University of Israel.

#### Articles

1983. 'Helen of Troy as a Positive Character in the Classical Greek Literature', *Zemanim* 12: 20-33.
1983. 'Plautus: His Life and Work', *Prosa* 60/63: 40-41.
1986. 'The Physical Miracle in Herodotus', *Zemanim* 21: 19-31.
1989. 'Between Comedy and Reality: On Menander's Dramatic Art in the *Dyskolos*', in Z. Rubin and H. Roizman (eds.), *Perlman Book: Essays in Classical the Culture and its Legacy in Honour of S. Perlman on the Occasion of his Retirement*, Tel Aviv university, 163-179.
1998. 'On the Characterization of the Antithesis Greeks-Barbarians in Greek Classical Literature', in R. Birnbaum, J. Glucker, and N. Zagagi (eds.), *Collected Essays: The Classical World, in Honour of David Weissert on the Occasion of his Retirement*, Tel Aviv University, 40-52.
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#### Reviews

1993. Reviewed book: J. de Romilly, *Homer*, translated from French by M. Schneorson, Bialik Institute, Jerusalem 1993. In: *Haaretz*, 4.8.1993.
1994. Reviewed book: A. Or, *Limb-Loosening Desire* (An Anthology of Erotic Greek Poetry in Translation), Bitan 1993. In: *Maariv*, 4.3.1994.
2002. Reviewed book: *Plato: The Life and Death of Socrates: Three Dialogues*, translated by S. Bouzaglo, Yedioth Aharonoth — Sifrei Aliyat Ha'Gag 2001. In: *Haaretz*, 3.5.2002.

#### Poetry

1967. *Like a Nun Whose Hair is Warm*, Eked.
1983. Hebrew Translations from the poetry of Meleager of Gadara, in *Prosa*, 60/63, 24-25.
2008. *Precious Old Times* (self-publishing).

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