

CONSTRUCTION OF FEMALE SEXUAL SUBJECTIVITY IN *VICTORIA*
BY SAMI MICHAEL IN COMPARISON WITH OTHER HEBREW
AND ISRAELI WRITERS

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Sexual violence towards women in the Jewish community in Baghdad is central in Sami Michael's novel, *Victoria*. Can these violent erotic scenes be interpreted as destabilizing patriarchal mechanisms in Israeli culture? The article discusses this question taking into consideration the debates about pornography in feminist theory and exploring other representations of violence against women in Hebrew and Israeli Literature. Feminists' views of pornography are divided. From a radical feminist point of view, the production of the subordinate feminine subject in pornography is effective and ultimate. Other feminists claim that pornography can theoretically subvert the mechanism of oppression and its efficacy in exploitation of the female subject because it is by nature repetitious.

Trying to evaluate the impact of the violent erotic scenes in *Victoria*, this article examines preceding representations of violence against women in Hebrew and Israeli Literature. Portrayal of physical and emotional pain after rape or female desire that does not end in disaster seldom appeared in Hebrew and Israeli literature before *Victoria*. Although the novel is compliant with the Zionist narrative, Michael fashions a rich and particular female existence in *Victoria*, centered on feminine sexual subjectivity. I suggest that Michael's representations of violence against women, and female desire that is nevertheless left intact were accepted by Israeli readers because of the displacement identity in time, space and ethnicity to Jewish Baghdad.

This displacement, which leaves current Israeli culture untouched and therefore does not threaten the reader, allows sexual female consciousness, and sane female sexual subjectivity to enter. However, it is also possible that the feminine confession is forced, that it constructs a femininity, which, though experiencing pain, humiliation, suppuration and abuse, collaborates with the patriarchal mechanism in confessing pleasures that repeat and extend pornographic discourse, making possible the continuation of mechanisms of suppression.