Our research addresses the presentation of Arab cleaning women in Hebrew literature. This exhausting service work, which necessarily entails close encounters between the male or female employer, and which is in a structured position of servitude that is often susceptible to exploitation and work caprices, is done by women.

In this lecture we will focus on literary works that portray Arab cleaning women. We will examine how the confluence of nationality, gender and status are expressed in the various texts. Our desire to closely observe the Arab cleaning women enables us to expose the complexity of the nationalist power relations. The treatment of the Arab cleaning woman reflects authoritarianism, superiority, and even worse - total lack of regard. Even literary criticism usually ignores this character, such that the image of the Arab cleaning woman becomes doubly transparent.

We will demonstrate that hostility between the nationalities exists from the outset in the relationship between the Jewish employer and the Arab cleaning woman, who is perceived as an a priori enemy, thereby creating complex power relations. We will try to understand how the foreign, threatening woman enters a close relationship with the home owners. Is the national inferiority of the cleaning woman in the Jewish space what entices comfortable subjugation? After all, according to Karl Schmidt, her difference releases her employers from legal obligations, such as granting social benefits. Is it the ease of exploitation that enables the employers to overcome their nationalistic fears? Is bringing an Arab cleaning woman into a Jewish home a means of symbolizing and deepening the occupation?

We will see how some of the texts blur the nationality contrast, but it still rears its head and erupts in various ways and in textual symbolism that indicates the presence of foreignness. In addition, the description of the encounters between the cleaning women and their employers echoes the historic reality and reveals a complex mosaic of relationships with the national past and with the connection to the geographic space and the home space.

We will present examples from the following texts: *Objects*, by A.B. Yehoshua; *Early in the Summer of 1970*, by A.B. Yehoshua; *Arabesque*, by Edna Shemesh; *Portrait of a Cleaning Woman 1*, by Yonit Naaman.