The Birth of *Mr. Mani* by A.B. Yehoshua / Yaron Sachish

A.B. Yehoshua's monumental novel, *Mr. Mani*, might have remained no more than an idea in the author's mind, buried among the files of his extensive archives in the National Library.

Yehoshua's idea to write an intricate, complex novel consisting solely of dialogues in which we hear the voice of only one character was inspired by William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. He began writing the novel in a large notebook, but, having completed only one chapter, found it too difficult to carry out his plan.

The chapter he completed before abandoning the entire project was published in 1986 in a special issue of the magazine *Politica*. The issue opened with the novel's third one-sided conversation, preceded by a brief sketch by Yehoshua of the book's aborted master plan: "Five conversations between two people with each conversation taking place in a different historical period and in a different place, moving back in time." The chapter was met with an enthusiastic reception and scholars and critics pleaded for Yehoshua to continue his efforts and complete the entire project. The extraordinary reception of this chapter of a novel that had been stashed away in the author's bottom drawer also gave rise to a play in the Haifa Theater.

Encouraged by this reception, Yehoshua devoted himself to completing the entire book, and in 1990, *Mr. Mani* was published in accordance. The book was an immediate success. It was translated into ten languages, garnered important national and international prizes, and is considered by both critics and Yehoshua himself to be the author's most important and complex work.