
"Ideologically Incorrect" Responses to the Holocaust by Three Israeli Women Writers

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Recommended Citation

Feldhay Brenner, Rachel. ""Ideologically Incorrect" Responses to the Holocaust by Three Israeli Women Writers." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 11.1 (2009): <<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1421>>

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Volume 11 Issue 1 (March 2009) Article 9

Rachel Feldhay Brenner,

"'Ideologically Incorrect' Responses to the Holocaust by Three Israeli Women Writers"

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol11/iss1/9>>

Contents of *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 11.1 (2009)

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol11/iss1/>>

Thematic Issue *New Work in Holocaust Studies*

Edited by Louise O. Vasvári and Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek

Abstract: In her article "'Ideologically Incorrect' Responses to the Holocaust by Three Israeli Women Writers" Rachel Feldhay Brenner examines the departure from the accepted literary response to the Holocaust in the works of three Israeli women writers: the play *Lady of the Castle* (1954) by Lea Goldberg (1911-1970), Ruth Almog's (1936-) novel *Exile* (1971), and Shulamith Hareven's (1930-2003) short stories "The Witness" and "Twilight" (1980). While the writers recognized the historical bonds of the European destruction and the Zionist Jewish revival, their literary responses deviated from the mainstream which tended to concur with contemporaneous ideological positions. Feldhay Brenner begins with a brief overview of the three stages in the Zionist understanding of the Holocaust and of the reflections of these stages in the literary canon. Her discussion then proceeds with an examination of the texts by Goldberg, Almog, and Hareven which deviated from the socio-ideological consensus and concludes with a brief discussion of gender signification of dissenting positions.

Rachel FELDHAY BRENNER**"Ideologically Incorrect" Responses to the Holocaust by Three Israeli Women Writers**

The literary responses of Israeli writers to the Holocaust -- those writers who did not experience the Holocaust directly -- have been closely related to the Zionist project: the theme of the national destruction has been integral to Jewish revival in a sovereign Jewish state. To a large extent, Israeli literature followed the vicissitudes of the mainstream and kept in line with the shifting horizons of the Zionist concept of the Diaspora and the Holocaust. At the time when the literary canon adhered to the Zionist ethos of Jewish spiritual and cultural rebirth in the land of Israel, Lea Goldberg sought post-Holocaust redemption in the theological reform of Christian-Jewish relationships in the spirit of the Enlightenment. At the time when increasing Zionist alignment with the Holocaust victim fostered literature viewing Israel as safeguard of the Jewish people, Ruth Almog saw the redemption of the post-Holocaust world in the ethics of mending the world that the Holocaust event engendered in the children of victims and perpetrators alike. At the time of prevailing mainstream Israeli self-perception as the victim of another Holocaust, Shulamith Hareven saw the healing of the Holocaust trauma essential to the integration of Israeli society into the Levantine-Mediterranean culture. These alternative narratives question the choices made and the roads taken.

Three historical periods shaped the Zionist attitudes to the Holocaust: the era of the Holocaust and the first decade of the state; the Eichmann trial and the Six Day War in the 1960s; and the post-1973 war to the mid-1980s period. Zionist pioneers dogmatically pursued the ethos of the "new," strong and independent Jew in the land who will eradicate the history of victimization of the Diaspora Jew. The "new" Jews of the 1948 War Generation -- a term coined by Gershon Shaked (*A New Wave* 11-13; born in the 1920s and 1930s) -- actualized, to a remarkable degree, the erasure of the exilic history. This was the generation of the "collective self" of the native *sabras*: like the cactus, after which they were named, these Israelis were externally brash but internally good, and they immersed themselves in building the nascent state (see Oz Almog). This generation subscribed to the doctrine of the "negation of the Diaspora," a dogmatic injunction to obliterate Jewish Diaspora past. The following excerpt from David Ben-Gurion's speech delivered to a group of youth leaders in 1944 at the height of the Holocaust, illuminates the centrality of this doctrine: "*Galut* [Diaspora] means dependence -- material, political, spiritual, cultural, and intellectual dependence ... Our task is to break radically with this dependence and to become masters of our own fate -- in a word, achieve independence ... *independence in the heart*, in sentiment, and in will" (Ben-Gurion 609).

As the *Yishuv*, or the pre-state Jewish community in Palestine, saw it, the Holocaust proved the Zionists right. The Hebrew press in Palestine made it clear that the entrapment of the Jews in Europe was to be blamed for not having taken the Zionist option (Segev 18; for the Zionist youth's negative view of the Jewish victims, see Oz Almog 137-47). The contemporaneous literary responses echoed this ideological position. The fictional representations of the Holocaust focused on the self-defense of young Zionists mainly in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising (see Frenkel; Sened and Sened). While lamenting the destruction (see Greenberg), the literature of the period offered the survivors the vision of a safe haven in Eretz Israel: the life of freedom would heal the trauma and transform them into new Jews. Thus Nathan Alterman, in his famous poem, "On the Boy Abram" (1944) -- an adaptation of the biblical story of Abraham, who was told to go to the Promised Land -- commands the Holocaust orphan to look forward to the new family of the builders of the motherland. A similar image of "new" Jews who rescue the Diaspora victim emerges in Yitzhak Sadeh's poetic narrative, "My Sister on the Beach" (1950), where not only do the Israelis rescuers offer a safe haven to the "sister," a survivor, who was sexually defiled by the nazis, but they also vow to "purify" her of her "shame." The *sabras* will enable the victim to be reborn as a free and proud Israeli (for the interpretation of the ideological message in Alterman's poem, see Oppenheimer 41-47; for the interpretation of Sadeh's poem, see Oz

Almog 143-44; Zertal 263-68). However, the ethos of complete rebirth encapsulated in Shamir's famous phrase, "Elik was born from the sea" (1) could not repress the trauma of the Holocaust for long. The Eichmann trial in 1961 infused Israeli society with the consciousness of the survivors' experience, which tended to be ignored. As Tom Segev reported, "People sincerely feared meeting the survivors, with their physical and psychological handicaps, their suffering and terror" (158). The pre-1967 war period confronted the Israelis with their impotence. The isolation on the international arena invoked the Holocaust, whereas the victory that followed evoked religious sentiments, which bordered on messianic zeal (Gertz 60). The fluctuations between impotence and invincibility affected the literature of that time. In contrast to Shaked's postulation that "as early as the late 1950s the attitude of Hebrew fiction toward the Zionist metaplot of Diaspora disavowal had begun to change and the texts challenging it were already beginning to appear in print" (*Modern Hebrew Fiction* 188), I argue that it was rather the evidence of the cracks in the Zionist dogma that challenged the writers to revise their notion of Israeli identity.

The impact of the Eichmann trial and of the 1967 war engendered a body of literature that registered the crumbling "metaplot." In contrast to Ben-Gurion, who demanded the construction of a new Jewish identity, the survivors' testimonies at the trial confronted the Israelis with the problematic of the Zionist project of national rebirth. Haim Gouri, the poet-fighter and quintessential *sabra*, admitted: "We judged them without judging ourselves ... Which of us can assert wholeheartedly that our efforts to save were commensurate with that slaughter?" (249). No longer was the blame put on the Diaspora Jews; now it was the new Jew who blamed him/herself for the failure to rescue the Diaspora Jews. Gouri's *mea culpa* projected the transformed image of the State as the defender of all Jews (see also Schweid 19) it registered Israel's claim to the legacy of the Holocaust, and furthermore, its self-image as a legacy of the exterminated people. The Holocaust became the ideological *raison d'être* of the Jewish State, as a deterrent of a future Holocaust and as protector of the Jewish people at large.

The literary responses explored the Israeli rediscovery of the Diaspora. The motif of the new Israeli who realizes the futility of revenge characterizes the fiction. Hanoch Bartov's *The Brigade* (1965) tells the story of a young Israeli soldier in the Second World War Jewish brigade confronted with the problem of revenge. Yehuda Amichai's *Not of This Time, Not of This Place* (1963) takes place simultaneously in Jerusalem and in Weinburg, the protagonist's (and the author's) native town, where he wishes to avenge the death of his prewar beloved. In his novel, *To Remember and to Forget* (1968), Dan Ben-Amotz also deals with the desire of his protagonist to avenge the degradation of the Jews in the Holocaust. The failed plans of revenge lead to the realization that for a Jew there is "no other place" (*ein makom aher*) except Israel (Feldman 224; it is interesting to note that one of Shaked's books is entitled *Ein makom aher*). In this phase, Israel emerges as the only place that assures security for the Jewish people.

The next stage marks the disintegration of the perception of Israel as the only place of safety for the Jewish people. The breakdown of the *sabra* ideal emerges in the reenactments of the Holocaust on the Israeli territory in two novels, Yoram Kaniuk's *Adam Resurrected* (1969), which evolves at the time of the war of attrition (the limited but high-casualty war between Israel and Egypt from 1968-1970), and Amos Kenan's fantastic novel, *Shoah II* (1975), which takes place at the time of the post-1973 war period. Whereas the war of attrition undermined Israel's invincibility, the war of 1973 presented the palpable danger of the destruction of the state. The identity of the Israeli underwent the ironic ideological shift: the dissociation from the Diaspora victim was replaced by the growing identification with Jewish suffering. Kenan's dystopian novel tells the story of Israel's defeat by the Egyptians, who turn the country into a concentration camp. In Kaniuk's *Adam Resurrected* Israel's reality becomes a reflection of the insane world of the Holocaust survivor. The indistinctiveness between the Israeli and the Diaspora Jew emerges in Kaniuk's later novel, *The Last Jew* (1981). Whether in the Diaspora or in Israel, Jewish life hovers on the verge of extinction (Shaked 199). The notion of this

precariousness emerges in Bartov's later work, post-1973 war novel, *The Fabricator* (1975) which dismisses the concept of the new Jew. As a constant reminder of the Holocaust, Israel's unending wars preclude the rebirth of the Diaspora Jew into a *sabra* (see Zerubavel 122-23; see also Milner).

I now turn to the counter-canonical responses by Goldberg (1911-1970), who escaped Germany and arrived in Palestine in 1935; Almog, who was born in Palestine in 1936 to parents who fled Germany in 1933; and Hareven (1930-2003), who escaped from the occupied Warsaw and arrived in Palestine in 1940. Goldberg's *Lady of the Castle* takes place in 1947. The play tells the story of Lena, a young woman and Holocaust orphan in post-war Central Europe. Lena was saved by Count Zabrodsky, the former owner of a castle and a Resistance fighter, who hid Lena in the castle, which during the war became the Nazi headquarters. After the war, Zabrodsky kept Lena in the castle for two years under the pretence that the war was still going on. Lena is found by two members of the *Yishuv*: Dora, a youth Aliyah social worker on a mission to locate the surviving Jewish children in Europe, and Sand, an Israeli-born farmer, fighter and now librarian in search of Jewish libraries for the National Library in Jerusalem. While Dora believes in the future Zionist socialist society in Palestine, the Count longs for the past of moral values, intellectual depth, and beauty. Dora impresses upon Lena the vision of life in Israel; the Count offers Lena a utopian vision of a world of peace and love. Eventually, Lena reluctantly leaves the castle to start a new life in Israel.

The production of *Lady of the Castle* in 1955 was widely reviewed. Boaz Evron saw the play as a representation of a universal problem -- the contrast between aristocratic worldview and the plebeian future (32). Shaked claimed that "the playwright placed the ivory tower of the culture and of the past against the reality of progressive civilization" ("The Castle" 186). A.B. Yoffe and Ofra Yeglin emphasized the tension between the mystical nineteenth-century atmosphere of the castle and the mundane reality of the *Yishuv* (see Yoffe, *Lea Goldberg: An Appreciation* 61-62; Yeglin 101). Tuvia Reubner focused on the struggle to restore the identities destroyed by cataclysmic historical events (148-50). Ben-Ami Feingold saw in *Lady of the Castle* three ways to understand culture and history: the romantic desire to escape the modern world, Zionist pragmatism, and the middle way between conservatism and change (53-54). Critics downplayed the issue of the traumatized survivor. Lena's reluctant departure for Palestine was attributed to the "labor pangs" of the "rebirth" in Palestine (see Feingold 54; Reubner 154). Dora's promise to Lena: "You'll be healthy and free and happy like all the other young people," reechoed Alterman's "On the Boy Avram," whereas the promise of "purification" to Lena reiterated that in Sadeh's "My Sister on the Beach." In sum, the critics praised the play both for its universal interest and for its reinforcement of the Zionist orientation (for more on the controversy between Goldberg and Alterman, see Szobol).

The theme of the encounter of tradition and progress was reinforced by the playwright, who claimed that "the play deals with the issue of cultural continuity, the eternal debate between the old and the new" (Yoffe, *Lea Goldberg: An Appreciation* 138). Yet, Goldberg's diary entry on 20 July 1954 suggests a different reading: "How could I fall in love with Zabrodsky? How did he turn out to be the most alive and believable [of the characters]? Why am I so sure that I know him like a real person?" (*Diaries* 349). In view of Goldberg's knowledge of European languages and culture (she was a professor of comparative literature at The Hebrew University), the sense of her intimate "knowledge" of Zabrodsky is by no means surprising. As a steeped-in-European-tradition aristocrat and intellectual, Zabrodsky is the projection of Goldberg's identification with European culture. Yet, in view of the thematic of the play, the writer's consternation at the degree of her emotional affinity with a Christian who deceives a young Jewish victim of the Holocaust is certainly understandable. In the wake of the Holocaust, Goldberg, whose attachment to European culture disturbed the artistic milieu of the new Jews (see, e.g., Gluzman 64), underwent a traumatic confidence crisis.

Goldberg's confession of her emotional ties with the quintessential European illuminates the theme of European-Jewish relationships in *Lady of the Castle*. The Count and his counterparts, Dora and

Sand, do not present an abstract debate over progress and tradition; rather, the confrontation between the aristocrat and the Zionists poses the question of how to mend the world in post-Holocaust reality. Dora and Sand represent Ben-Gurion's ideological platform which, to recall, demanded severance from the European past. Conversely, the Count sees redemption of both Jews and Christians in the Enlightenment, and especially in the values of Christian Enlightenment. Since the European tradition was conceived in Christian thought, Christian triumphalist theology needed to undergo a reform. Lena's explanation encapsulates the essence of the redeeming vision: "The Count says there is no difference between Jew and Christian. He believes only in the fourth kingdom ... There will be no living and dead there, no young and old. There will be great love there and eternal grandeur, and he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death ... Sometimes he would read me the Revelation, about the end of the world and the resurrection" (*Lady of the Castle* 56-57). Zabrodsky's reinterpretation of the fourth kingdom (Daniel 8, 22-24) and of the resurrection (Revelation to John 21) helps one understand his revision of Christian theology in the spirit of the Enlightenment. As a site of "love and grandeur," the fourth kingdom counteracts Daniel's vision of the apocalypse brought forth by the beastly fourth kingdom (see Nordgreen). And the elimination of "the second death" of the Jews, who, as envisioned by John, will not be resurrected in the days of the Messiah, but rather condemned to burning in hell, signifies rejection of the Christian anti-Jewish tradition. In Zabrodsky's vision of salvation, Christians and Jews alike will enter the "fourth kingdom."

This kingdom is of here and now, predicated upon the Enlightenment's ideal of the fellowship of all human beings.

Indeed, the Count's genealogy lists enlightened ancestors: one of them, a bishop, "was an ardent Voltairean, extremely free-minded, a philosopher and naturalist" who built the castle library, where Sand finds Jewish tomes alongside Christian volumes; another, Cardinal Morelli, "wrote the new commentary on St. John's Revelation ... published in 1882" (*Lady of the Castle* 26-27). The family history places the Count in the tradition of progressive thinkers, who reinterpreted Christian theology in the light of humanistic values. Indeed, a resister of nazi tyranny and a rescuer of a persecuted Jew, Zabrodsky actualized the humanistic values of his predecessors. In contrast, the nazi and the communist totalitarian regimes represent "a new religion -- a new religion of cannibals, a new life of savages, a new culture of swineherds!" (33). Thus, because the castle, which represents the tradition of the Enlightenment, was nationalized by the communists, in the Count's mind the war declared on humanistic values continues. Lena is, therefore, indispensable to the Count's mission to realize the legacy of humanism. The mending of the world in the aftermath of the Holocaust must be initiated by the Christian world. As Lena tells Dora and Sand, her relationship with the Count was a prolepsis of the redeemed world: "He looked at me as if I was a small daughter. He read lovely books to me, and taught me things that I didn't have a chance to learn at school. Much more beautiful than those they teach at school" (*Lady of the Castle* 57). The relationship grounded in the enlightened act of reading projects a harmonious union of Christians and Jews. This vision clashes with the mission of the Zionist emissaries to sever all ties with Europe. Whereas Dora's assignment to extricate the Jewish children from their adoptive Christian families signals a breakup of emotional affinity with Europe, Sand's task of extracting Jewish volumes from Christian libraries signifies the parting of the two cultures. Yet, the play leaves off on a note of doubt whether leaving Europe ensures the conversion of the survivor to the Zionist creed. This reading of *Lady of the Castle* evinces Goldberg's dissent from the Zionist vision. Instead of predicating the survivor's restoration in the national homeland upon obliteration of the European roots, Goldberg saw post-Holocaust redemption in the establishment of new patterns of Christian-Jewish relationships in the spirit of the Enlightenment.

Almog's *Exile* further problematizes the ideology of the new Jew showing that the Zionist failure to heal the Holocaust trauma lies in its politics of separatism and exclusion. Unable to integrate into the militant and devoid of love new homeland, the protagonist seeks redemption in her European roots.

Whereas Goldberg proposes the reform of Christian theology, Almog claims that redemption lies in human solidarity that obliterates ethnic and religious differences. These relationships are grounded in the responsibility of people of conscience to rebuild the world of ethics and humanistic values.

The novel is an autobiography of Margarita Rosenberg, who, together with her parents, fled her native German village at the rise of the nazis. On her way across Europe back to the village, Margarita meets a number of characters who disapprove of her trip and urge her to forget the past. Most significantly, she meets Bastian, the son of a nazi general, who struggles with the terrible burden of paternal legacy. Despite the warnings, the desire to reconnect with her happy childhood in her native village prompts Margarita to continue her journey. She remembers how her father's love transformed into hatred in Israel because of her love affair with Uriel Shemesh, an Israeli-born anthropologist. Once Uriel breaks off the relationship and leaves the country, Margarita departs to Europe.

Critics focused on the novel's theme of unrequited romantic love reflected in Margarita's identification of her affair with Uriel with the love of mythological Ariadna for Theseus and in her association of her father with the ruthless rulers, Midas and Hades. The critical assessment of the configuration as an unresolved Oedipus complex (see Shirav 227; see also Avishai; Gedanka; Herzig; Shaked, *Hebrew Narrative Fiction* 348) was validated by the protagonist, who remembers the scolding of the father and the lover: "and there was no love in these voices, but condemnation which continued to lie heavily on my quivering heart" (*Exile* 55). In my view, critics failed to notice the novel's radical departure from the ideological norms. Recall that the 1967 war reinforced Israel's militant world view. The concluding fantasy of Margarita-Ariadna, of her death caused by the anti-Semitic peasants in her native German village, seems to validate the perception of Israel as the sole guarantor of Jewish survival in an irredeemably hostile world. This "ideologically correct" reading of the story collapses in view of the loveless reality of Israel, as projected by both father and lover, which dispels the myth of Israel as protective haven. Furthermore, Uriel's departure undermines the foundations of the Zionist ideology of national rebirth. As a rationalist (his name which signifies light implies his Apollonian inclination) Uriel believes in a more satisfying life outside of Israel. The act of emigration abrogates the Zionist ideal of the *sabra*, organically rooted in and boundlessly devoted to his motherland.

As she travels, Margarita remembers Israel as "a land of sunlight, dust, dryness, and thorns; a land trampled in its holiness, a land trampled in war, a land which trampled love in brotherly hatred" (*Exile* 71). In the reality of constant wars, the land that was supposed to be the fertile ground of personal and national rebirth turned into a place of emotional desolation. In contrast, upon her return to the village, Margarita hears about the nurturing relationships of her father, a physician, with the villagers: "I could hardly believe the legends that people told me about my father, who delivered babies, who took care of the sick; he kept vigil at many a death-bed and saved many lives" (*Exile* 151). Like Goldberg, who draws attention to the progressive forces in Europe, Almog notes the impact of humanistic ideals upon the little German village, where the family of her protagonist-narrator had co-existed with Christians for hundreds of years.

Was it the experience of exile that caused Dr. Rosenbaum to change from a caring to a hating father? Or was it rather the Israeli environment of war that effected the change? Whereas the expulsion must have been deeply traumatic for the father, the daughter's story tells of Israel's failure to heal the trauma. Margarita's two concluding visions of her father show this failure as her death sentence. First, she imagines her death when her father appears as the mythological Hades and condemns her to death. Then she imagines her death upon the imaginary refusal of her father to rescue her from the villagers. Nor do her imaginary pleading with Uriel bring the "new" Israeli to her rescue. These fantasies reflect loss of faith in Israel as restorer and rescuer.

The repeated visions of death signal the failure of her journey. Yet, the final episode of the novel adumbrates a mending alternative. A silent woman in black casts red roses into the village's spring. The red flowers float on the river to the big cities (189). The flowers, which retrace Margarita's jour-

ney back to the center of Germany, indicate that the search for redemption has not ended; they bring forth the special understanding she forged with Bastian in Frankfurt. The common ground that Margarita discovered with the son of a Nazi general made her understand "how ridiculous it is to divide the world so simplistically into accused and accusers, into victims and murderers" (132). Bastian's "beaten look" in his "Jewish eyes" (138) and his sense of obligation towards the world (139) communicate that the evil of the Holocaust affected the children of both victims and perpetrators. Her understanding of Bastian's "metaphysical guilt" (124), that is, the blame he takes for evil that he did not commit nor could have prevented, makes Margarita understand her motivation to mend the death of love. This understanding evokes a special bond between Margarita and Bastian: "It occurred to me, that the silent contract of partnership between a Jewess and a German, has been more meaningful than any connection since I left my country -- it meant something basic, something that arises between two people when the dividing lines disappear" (137). In the aftermath of the Holocaust relationships are no longer determined by ethnicity or religion, but rather in the shared sense of moral responsibility toward the world. Almog scrutinizes the Zionist idea of ideological rebirth. While *Lady of the Castle* raises a serious doubt about the survivor's transformation into a new Jew, *Exile* also dispels the idea of the *sabra* as a new Jew. Whereas Goldberg underscored the complexity of the Zionist rejection of the Diaspora, Almog exposed the Zionist claim that the new Jew can lovingly protect the Jewish people. For both writers, the resolution of the post-Holocaust moral crisis does not lie in Israel's militant separatism, but rather in collaboration, solidarity, and love.

Hareven, who responded to the Holocaust in the aftermath of the post-1973 war, did not subscribe to Israel's politics of separatism either. In a 1988 essay, "Israel: The First Forty Years," she observed, "the Holocaust is made into a universal, pan-Israeli symbol of a sense of helplessness; and every fear that has a real or imaginary cause immediately becomes Holocaust anxiety" (*Vocabulary of Peace* 112). Unlike Goldberg and Almog, Hareven does not see a remedy in rebonding with European culture, but rather in Israel's integration into its geographic and cultural region. In her 1980 stories, "The Witness" and "Twilight," followed by the seminal 1985 essay, "On Being a Levantine," Hareven communicates the necessity for Israel to become an integral part of its natural environment, the Levant. The capability to open up to the surrounding world is predicated upon the resolution of the traumatic event of the Holocaust. While "The Witness" examines the detrimental role of the repression of Holocaust consciousness, the acknowledgment of the tragic past in "Twilight" represents the painful process of healing. This process opens the possibility of reintegration into the Mediterranean region.

"The Witness" is a first-person confession of Yotam, a former youth village educator, who, thirty-five years after the event, tells about his encounter with Shlomek, a young Holocaust survivor, in 1941. Like Shlomek, Yotam was born in Poland, yet he desires to pass as a *sabra*; he aspires to turn Shlomek into an Israeli, "like everybody else." To achieve this goal, Yotam encourages his pupils' ruthless treatment of Shlomek and of his Holocaust testimony. "The Witness" ends on the note of an irreversible rift between the new Israeli and the survivor, marked by Shlomek's disappearance. The testimony, however, does not disappear; on the contrary, it haunts Yotam, trapping him in the disavowed Diaspora past.

"Twilight" is an attempt to construct the Holocaust experience. It is a first-person narrative of an Israeli wife and mother, told on the morning of her "one night's year long" nightmarish return to her native European city, which she associates with Dante's descent to Hell (163). In the Holocaust underworld, she marries, bears a son and loses him in a deportation. Eventually, she reemerges into the daylight of Jerusalem. Now she can reaffirm her organic ties with the land.

Two metaphors elucidate Hareven's psychological understanding of the Holocaust syndrome. Yotam keeps in the drawer the mementos from his former pupils, along with Shlomek's testimony published "in a very important newspaper" (31). In "Twilight" it is the surgery that concludes the protagonist-narrator's nightmare. She is rolled on a hospital bed into her kitchen, where "a surgeon"

says, "Turn on the light," and she wakes in her sunlit Israeli home (169). Although his pupils' memories occupy most of Yotam's drawer, "The Witness" is not a story of an educator, proud of the generation of new Jews he raised. It is, rather, a long-deferred confession of the suppression of the Holocaust story, and the late confession attests to the unbearable psychological burden of the evasion. Ironically, the refusal to acknowledge the Holocaust story makes the liberation from the past impossible. Thus surreptitious existence of the story in the "drawer" of Israeli consciousness proves more powerful than the myth of the "born from the sea" new Jew. As the syndrome of Holocaust victimhood in the post-1973 war period demonstrates, the story of the victim contradicted the ideal which showed Israel as a new chapter of security and freedom in the history of Jews.

The metaphor of surgery in "Twilight" indicates the necessity of the excision of the Holocaust memory. For this to happen, the personal ties with the irretrievably lost world must be acknowledged. Even if imaginatively, the Holocaust must be reconstructed before the source of the trauma can be effectively removed. But the Dante-esque descent to the hell of the Holocaust has a foreboding effect: the identification with the victims evokes an irrepressible wish to die with them: "I wanted, wanted mortally to leap from this tall roof into the dark courtyard now filled with shouting soldiers, go out to the opera square. Together with all the children" (165). And so the adopted land of Israel fades away, looking like "a translation that had come off well" (160). The imaginary experience of the Holocaust threatens to replace the Zionist reality. Eventually, it is the confrontation with the destruction that saves the Zionist story. While Yotam's unacknowledged past haunts his present, the narrator's determination to confront the past cures and allows an adoption of the present and adaptation to the new reality. The narrator-protagonist understands that "I would no more go back to the city of my birth, to the lightless city ... My past was commuted. From now on I would find ... but the stones of Jerusalem, and plants growing with mighty vigor, and a vast light" (170).

The liberation from the darkness of the Europe signifies the birth of the relationship with the new place. The conclusion of "Twilight" is reechoed in Hareven's above-mentioned 1985 essay, "I am a Levantine. Born in Europe, all my days there ... were a mistake -- until I first saw strong light on rocky hedges on a mountain, a stooping summer olive tree, a well carved in stone -- and I knew ... I had arrived at some deep, palpable ancientness, the womb of the world, where virtually everything was and will be created. Here were the right light, the right smells, the right touch" (*Vocabulary of Peace* 81; the statement "I am a Levantine" also concludes Hareven's novel *City of Many Days*; see Feldman 120-21). The new place is "the womb of the world," the center of all creation; it therefore belongs to all. Thus it is shared by all its Levantine inhabitants, including the Israelis. As Hareven sees it, to be Levantine, Israelis need to reach deeply into the past and to acknowledge the roots of the Semitic self that they share with the Semitic-Arab world. This connection signifies the adoption of a worldview that promotes coexistence and therefore suspects all political extremism. A true Levantine, Hareven observes, has a profound knowledge of life: he/she "knows that everything -- every revolution, every ideology -- has its human price, and that there is always someone to pay it" (*Vocabulary of Peace* 83). While Goldberg and Almog wish to reconnect with Europe, Hareven wants to integrate into the Levant. Nonetheless, the writers display remarkable affinities. All of them reject the Zionist demand of severance from the Diaspora past. The acknowledgment of the Holocaust losses is necessary for the healing process, which is indispensable to physical and spiritual renewal. This renewal can materialize only in the context of relationships with others. Hence, the way to prevent another Holocaust does not lie in militant separatism, as professed by the Zionist ideology, but rather through cooperation with those who believe in human fellowship.

The emphasis on post-Holocaust reconnection with the world contrasts with the Zionist mainstream. Inexorably, Zionist ideology interpreted the post-Holocaust reality as hostile to the Jews. This perception reinforced Israel's militant separatism. In the canonical literature, the separatist mentality, encapsulated in the slogan "there is no other place," communicated that only militarily powerful Israel

could deter another Holocaust. The three women writers objected to this aggressive position and advocated return to humanist values, cooperation with people of conscience, and openness to the existing native surroundings. These contrastive approaches bring forth the question of gender. Is it possible to speak of masculine and feminine gender differentiations, in view of the fact that the three writers are women? Was the vision of post-Holocaust redemption in reconnection shaped largely by the writers' feminine gender, whereas the espousal of militant separation attests to the masculine characteristics of the dominant ideology, or rather are these positions product of orientations that transcend gender proclivities?

The supposition of gender typology gains validity in light of the positioning of gender as determinant orientations that Carole Gilligan explores in her seminal study, *In a Different Voice*. Gilligan identifies the feature of individuation in the development of men as opposed to the relational development in women. While men tend to be concerned about asserting their individual rights and independence, women's preoccupation with care and social responsibilities places them in a situation of interdependence. Thus the genders represent "two different moral ideologies, since separation is justified by an ethics of rights while attachment is supported by an ethics of care" (164). This differentiation seems to depict accurately the motifs of separation and reconnection. Recall Ben Gurion's postulation that rejection of the dependence that characterized the Diaspora Jew was an indispensable step to Jewish complete "independence in the heart, in sentiment, and in will" in the land of Israel (609). This "moral ideology" of personal freedom seems to clearly illustrate Gilligan's notion of the masculine "ethics of rights." Hareven's "moral ideology" seems to articulate the "ethics of care," placing the responsibility for individual welfare above the responsibility to ensure the individual's right to independence. The Ben Gurion-Hareven juxtaposition seems to follow Gilligan's gender typology.

A closer look at the signification of the Zionist expectations questions these gender-informed suppositions. Ironically, Ben Gurion's ideology of Jewish independence constructed a conformist national community: the demand for Jewish total independence required unquestioning compliance with Zionist militancy. The conception of the rebirth of the nation "from the sea," bound to defend its existence against the hostile world, imposed conformity that denied the new Jews their individuality. The survival of the newly born society required the devotion of its members for each other, and in this sense created the culture of caring. Recall how Dora and Yotam promised the survivors, Lena and Shlomek, to become "like everybody else," that is, to join the community of heroic fighters, provided they obliterate their Holocaust experience. In this sense, the "masculine," militant society of Israel espoused the "feminine" inclinations of attachment and interconnectedness, thus exposing the unreliability of gender typology. This perspective highlights the works of Goldberg, Almog, and Hareven as expressions of the right to individuality in a society that associates care with conformity. Lena's reluctance to leave the castle with the Zionist emissaries, Margarita's departure from Israel for Germany, Shlomek's disappearance from the classroom of the Zionist educator, the awakening of the narrator in "Twilight" to the reality of the Levant -- these actions signal rejection of the conformity of the mainstream. These characters' quest for post-Holocaust redemption transcends the Zionist exclusionary uniformity. The search to mend the post-Holocaust world refuses to be subsumed under the rubric of gender. Rather, their defiance of the Zionist militant independence in the post-Holocaust period presents the three writers as independently thinking individuals, who see redemption in the post-Holocaust world in moral togetherness of human beings of various ethnic origins and faiths which defies divisions and categorizations. Only in a world where the individuality is valued and respected can the boundaries among religious, national, and ethnic groups that care for themselves at the price of exclusion and subjection of others be abolished.

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