

**Discourses of Mourning and Rebirth in Post-  
Holocaust Israeli Literature:  
Leah Goldberg's *Lady Of The Castle* and  
Shulamith Hareven's "The Witness"\***

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**Abstract**

*Both Goldberg's play and Hareven's short story illustrate the failure of the Israeli to come to terms with the Holocaust catastrophe. In Goldberg's play the characterization of the protagonist runs against the popular myth of the Holocaust victim gratefully embracing the hope of a new future embodied in the heroically idealistic Israeli. Hareven's story rules out the possibility of a mutually accepted coexistence between the Israeli and the Holocaust survivor. Both works present the treatment of the outsider as a reflection of the emotional insecurity of the majority group, since the arrival of the survivor undermines the Zionist ideological tenets of the "negation of the Diaspora" and the creation of the "new" Jew in Eretz Israel.*

The events of the Holocaust effected a complicated discourse in Israeli literature. This literature, which had long been preoccupied with the themes of Israeli nation building, was suddenly compelled to search for proper modes of response to the Diaspora destruction. The difficulty of approaching the unspeakable was compounded from the outset by the Yishuv's powerfully promoted notion of "a new beginning" which posited "an ideological divide" between the Diaspora Jews and the Israeli born *sabras* (Yudkin 1984: 1-2). In many of their programmatic statements, leading politicians and writers of the Yishuv manifested a tendency to subsume the catastrophe into the triumphant process of Jewish rebirth. Avraham Shlonsky, for instance, "claimed that the most significant act of defiance that the inhabitants of the Yishuv could engage in would be to carry on business as usual and to show that in at least one corner of the world Jews were thriving" (Ezrahi 1985-1986:252). Later, this attitude was further reinforced: public commemorations of the Holocaust have been designed to emphasize the regenerative force of the Jewish people as demonstrated in the valiant founding and the heroic defence of the Jewish State.

Israeli literary discourse, however, has shown growing discomfort with the manner in which the ideologically promoted glorification of Israel has superseded the grief and mourning of the Holocaust destruction. Natan Alterman in "On the Boy Avram," Amir Gilboa in "Isaac," and Uri Zvi Greenberg in *River's Roads*, for example, offered the surviving European remnants consolation, regeneration, and ultimate safety in the Jewish Homeland. Other writers, however, have highlighted the problematic aspects of this premise. The implausibility of the survivors' painless integration into Israeli society emerges in such novels as Yehuda Amichai's *Not of This Time, Not of This Place* and Dan Ben Amotz's *To Remember, To Forget*, which focus on the

return of the survivor-now-Israeli to Genuany to reclaim his past. Aharon Megged's short story "The Name," Ben-Tzion Tomer's play *Children of the Shadow*, and Yosef Bar-Yosef's novel *The Life and Death of Yonatan Argaman* portray the unavoidable ideological and emotional clash between the native Israeli and the European survivor. In his survey of Israeli Holocaust literature, Gershon Shaked maintains that "[these] writers plumb the depth of the significance of the Holocaust. ... They 'reveal' the weakness of the 'native Israelis,' who cannot cope with the Holocaust and its survivors" (1985:280).

Both Leah Goldberg's play *Lady of the Castle* (1954) and Shulamith Hareven's short story "The Witness" (1980)<sup>1</sup> illustrate the failure of the Israeli to come to terms with the horror of the Holocaust. The typical insensitivity of the Israeli witness of the European tragedy towards its victims assumes particular poignancy in that in both works one of the Israelis is the survivor's *landsman*. The prism of shared history and locale, which have shaped the formative experience of both characters, brings into focus their conflicting attitudes towards the past. The referential framework of common diasporic background highlights the discrepancy between the need to deny the past and the urgency to assert the significance of memory that separates the Israeli from the survivor. The clashing modes of discourse generated by these characters elucidate the evolving struggle for identity redefinition, which determines the relationships between the "new" Israeli Jew and the Holocaust victim.

Written at a time when the ideal of the "new" Israeli Jew and the notion of *shlilat hagola*, the negation of the Diaspora, were intensely promoted, *Lady of the Castle* presents the story of Lena, a Holocaust orphan in post-war Central Europe, who is kept hidden away in a Castle by its former owner, Count Zabrodsky, under the deception that the war is still going on. Lena is rescued from her captor by two members of the Israeli Yishuv: Dora, a Youth Aliyah social worker on a mission to discover the surviving Jewish children in Europe and transfer them to Israel, and Sand, a librarian searching for remnants of Jewish libraries for the National Library in Jerusalem. The conflict that emerges between them and Lena runs counter to the popular myth of the Holocaust victim gratefully embracing the hope of a new future embodied in the heroically idealistic Israeli. Dora, who was born and grew up in Lena's hometown, emigrated to Israel before the war. She identifies with the notion of the "new" Israeli Jew and impresses upon Lena the vision of the victim's rebirth in Israel. It is with tremendous anguish, mistrust, and reluctance that Lena yields to Dora's pressure and agrees to resettle in Israel. The drama foregrounds a deep emotional and conceptual disparity between the ideological "new" Israeli stance of the rescuer and the unmitigated anguish and loss of the survivor. *Lady of the Castle* does not resolve this tension but, rather, ends on a note of superficial and uneasy truce.

Hareven's story, "The Witness," actually rules out the possibility of a mutually acceptable *modus vivendi* between the Israeli and the Holocaust survivor. In a sense, Hareven's emplotment of the victim's failure to integrate into the Israeli social network presents a pessimistic, but plausible, sequel to Goldberg's play. Shlomek, an orphaned Holocaust refugee, gets to Israel in 1940. The aggressive, practically unanimous, denial of the Holocaust victim's testimony isolates him in his new home. The story is told from the point of view of Yotam, the educator in charge

of Shlomek's rehabilitation who, like his newly arrived pupil, was born in Poland. Yotam espouses the ideology of the Israeli "hero" and wishes to turn Shlomek into a "real" *sabra*. The emotional discrepancy, which characterizes the relationships between the boy and his teacher results in the exclusion of the survivor.

Both *Lady of the Castle* and "The Witness" present the treatment of the outsider-survivor as a reflection of the emotional insecurity of the majority group. Whether emerging from an underground hiding place in a medieval castle or arriving suddenly in an agricultural boarding school the survivors, by virtue of their Holocaust experience, undermine the sense of the familiar and constitute a threat to the established order. Though written almost thirty years apart, both texts explore the same discourse of anxiety generated by the encounter of Israeli rescuer with the Holocaust survivor. The account of the Holocaust experience in both texts reveals an irrevocable split between survivor and rescuer. As each of the plots unfolds, it becomes increasingly evident that the successful socialization of survivors is predicated upon the deliberate suppression of their testimony. The social integration of the survivor depends upon his or her adaptation of the majority discourse, which has intentionally dissociated itself from the European tragedy. The psychological underpinnings of this discourse, which seeks to obliterate the threat that the past posits for the present, emerge in the multi-layered rhetorical fabric of the narrative.

To ease the sense of anxiety that the Holocaust evokes in the majority group, the survivor must adjust and become "like everybody else" in the new Israeli society. Israeli characters in both texts express the Yishuv's programmatic vision of Jewish social rebirth in Eretz Israel. Thus Dora's forecast of Lena's future takes on imperative undertones: "You will come with us to Palestine. You'll join a group your age. You'll live, work, you'll be healthy and free and happy like all the young people" (*LC*, p. 58). Yotam's prediction of Shlomek's social integration reiterates Dora's forecast regarding Lena in both its message and its form. Yotam promises the refugee that "you'll get used to it here, and soon you'll look like all of us, and talk like all of us, and nobody will feel you're not from here. ... Soon you'll be a *sabra*, Shlomo, don't worry..." (*TW*, p. 38). Dora repeatedly impresses upon Lena that, since the war is over, she should relinquish her past experience. Referring to the Count, she tells Lena, "He's dead, he's a corpse. That's the truth. He belongs to the world of the dead. But you, a young, healthy, lovely girl-all of life is still ahead of you" (*LC*, p. 71). Yotam and his pupils act even more excessively. One of the students complains to Yotam that Shlomek lies about the starvation he experienced during the war: "We can't take his lies anymore. Now he's telling us that at the time of the siege they had nothing to eat except a few potatoes. This is a lie, isn't it? This can't be true." (*TW*, p. 41). Yotam attributes the boy's description of his family's murder to a sense of guilt and to an excessive tendency to fantasize: "Shlomek's story showed exaggeration and an unusual degree of unrestrained imagination. I assumed that his family got lost in a bombing, or that perhaps he felt guilty for having left them there... maybe he didn't even know what happened to them and compensated for this with stories of their bizarre death... Nevertheless, it was the first time in my career as an educator that I encountered this kind of parental death fantasy" (*TW*, p. 38).

The perception of the survivor's story as a fantastic fabrication reveals the deep emotional

perturbation evoked by accounts of Jewish persecution. The tenacity of the rescuer's attempts to shape the survivor's appearance and mentality in the image of the "new" Israeli Jew also communicates a profound sense of insecurity. In his discussion of the emotional dynamics underlying the relationships between the dominant group and the "other," Sander Gilman makes the following observation:

Placing the Other beyond the pale...provides the image of the Other that is the antithesis of self. This chimera of Otherness is, of course, the result of projection. The need to perceive the gulf as unbridgeable underlines the closeness of the image of the Other to the image of self (1986:213).

In terms of Gilman's definition, the Israeli treatment of the Holocaust survivor as the "other" reveals both the extent of the rescuer's identification with the victim and the fear of such affinity. At the unconscious level, the rescuers recognize the survivors as their alter-egos and, at the same time, reject them as such. In order to gain confidence in Jewish potency, the Israeli Jew must eliminate the past of Jewish helplessness. The survivor, who embodies Jewish weakness, represents therefore a threat to the group whose *raison d'etre* is rooted in an internalized image of the free, powerful, and future-oriented "new" Jew.

As Gila Ramras-Rauch reminds us, the encounter between the Yishuv member and the Holocaust victim signifies "the 'Israeli nature'...pitted against the 'Jewish nature'" (1985:8). Adherence to the self-image of the persecuted Jew threatens the ideal of Jewish self-sufficiency. The eradication of the "shameful" past is necessary for the creation of a triumphant future. Since the viability of the Israeli-Zionist orientation is predicated upon the psychological "conversion" of the survivor, the encounter between survivor and rescuer turns into a conceptual and emotional battle-ground.

The biographical closeness between rescuer and survivor in *Lady of the Castle* and "The Witness" creates an antagonism, which reveals deeply embedded layers of unacknowledged guilt and fear. On her mission to Europe, Dora returns to the place where she was born only to discover in Lena an emotionally threatening reflection of herself as a young girl. Similarly, the appearance of Shlomek, the fugitive from Poland, invokes Yotam's reluctant recollection of his Polish origins and of his own arrival in Israel as a young boy. The survivors' birthplaces and ages signify a kinship that the European-born Dora and Yotam find emotionally impossible to acknowledge. These emissaries from a deliberately forgotten past threaten their painfully achieved and precariously maintained sense of control, confidence, and potency. Interestingly, the Israeli-born characters—Dora's companion, Sand, and Yotam's colleague, Ruta—are capable of a more comprehending, empathic attitude towards the survivor. Thus, when Dora, terrified that Lena will choose death over life, practically wrestles with her over the talisman, which contains poison, Sand acknowledges the survivor's freedom of choice. He assures Lena, "I swear to you by everything that's holy to me: we won't take anything away from you, we won't force you to do anything against your will" (*LC*, p. 62). Yotam interprets Shlomek's persistent refusal to talk about his past as a positive sign of reorientation towards the future, telling Ruta, "Here people are reborn, you know it as well as I do." Ruta, who perceives Shlomek's withdrawal as a failure

of the educational system, responds sarcastically, “In this school, somehow we are too small to qualify as midwives” (TW, p. 45).

Whereas the Israeli-born characters are capable of empathizing with the survivors’ desire to assert their freedom, the common origins of the European-born rescuers and survivors seem to preclude such empathy. In addition to bringing home the well-known discourse of suffering that the “reborn” Jew in Israel would rather forget the survivor’s experience exacerbates the sense of guilt and fear in that it confronts the European-born Israelis with the arbitrariness of their own survival. It is Lena who confronts Dora with the simple truth of historical fortuity. Speaking of her relatives who emigrated to Israel before the war, she says bitterly, “I don’t care. They got away, they’re alive over there! And I was here—I could’ve died, I could’ve been murdered—what do they care...” (LC, p. 70). The consciousness of a purely accidental escape from victimization clashes with the concept of the strong Jew in control of destiny. As the darkest chapter in Jewish history, the Holocaust is unacceptable to the Jew who is determined to write a new chapter of Jewish courage and self-determination.

Ironically, the efforts to divert attention from Jewish suffering in Europe to Jewish revival in Israel demonstrate the vulnerability of the “new” Jew who claims to have been liberated from the legacy of the Diaspora. Dora’s unresolved ambivalence emerges in her emphatic denouncement of the “old” country. While identifying the surroundings of the Castle as her birthplace, she claims to experience a sense of total alienation: “I was born here, I grew up here, spent my childhood here. And suddenly—it’s all so unreal, so strange and alien! The cities, the villages, the monasteries—they’re no longer real to me! My home is in Palestine!” At the same time, quite inconsistently, she explains why Sand cannot understand her agitation upon finding herself in this place. “Because this country,” she tells him, “is really strange for you! But for me—this was once my home” (LC, pp. 12-13). By stressing that the country is “really strange” for Sand, Dora contradicts the preceding statement about her sense of complete detachment from her native land. Her insistence on the exclusiveness of Israel as her home indicates the complexity of the feelings that tie her to the past she wishes to obliterate. Dora’s ambivalent feelings about her birthplace communicate her hostile, yet impassioned, attachment to the “old” country.

A similar wish to eradicate the memory of the Diaspora informs Yotam’s conduct. The force of Yotam’s need to define himself as an Israeli is manifest in his childish claim to have arrived in Israel at the age of five (TW, p. 42) and in his reluctant confession that he actually came at the age of eleven (TW, p. 45). Yotam refuses to acknowledge that he knows Polish even in a case of emergency when Shlomek’s well-being depends on it. He admits, however, that his contempt for his mother is grounded in his profound resentment of her insistence to communicate with him in Polish. “My mother,” says Yotam, “insists on telling people that I was eleven when I came here. She annoys me terribly. She is an old woman and has a limited understanding of natural things.” “My mother,” he adds, “insists on speaking Polish to me and even writes to me in this language, which makes me squirm” (TW, pp. 45 and 48). Yotam’s estrangement from his mother as well as his mother-tongue reflects his unrealistic desire to literally obliterate his roots and be reborn as an Israeli. Ironically, Yotam’s driving need to actualize the ideal of the strong,

straightforward *sabra* induces him to forfeit his integrity. His uncritical adherence to the prevalent ideology of Jewish heroic self-sufficiency implies a deep fear of the weakness associated with the Diaspora. Like Dora, Yotam suppresses this fear through deliberate attempts to deny and disown his past. Both Dora and Yotam recognize in the Holocaust victims that part of the self which they have been striving to repress and “forget.”

Hans Meyerhoff reminds us of the inseparability of memory and self:

all psychological theories...have emphasized the integral relationship between memory and the self. The past...leaves records, whereas the future does not...I know who I am by virtue of the records and relations constituting the memory which I call my own (1968: 43).

Whereas the European-born Israelis consciously estrange themselves from their past and strive to establish a new identity, the survivors insist on keeping the memory alive in order to assert their true identity. The appearance of the survivors and their insistence on reaffirming the past defy the rescuers. The ensuing power struggle between rescuer and survivor is brought forth in the discourse of conflicting notions of identity.

Lena, who seems to be wholly dependent upon her rescuers, be it the Count or the Israelis, is actually unyielding in her determination to hold on to the past. She repeatedly retreats to her subterranean hiding place where, like the mythological Persephone, she disappears into the darkness of her personal hell to mourn her murdered family. Unlike Persephone's loss, however, Lena's loss is irreversible. Whether imprisoned in the Castle or faced with the demand to reenter the world, Lena asserts her identity, maintaining the “integral relationships between memory and self” by living out her experience of horror. For Lena, the nightmare of the Holocaust persists even though, for the outside world, the war has ended. In her own world she is still alone in the dark forest, running away from the Nazis, seeking comfort in her childhood songs.

The reality of the war continues to persist for Shlomek as well. Having emerged from the nightmare of Europe, Shlomek continually relives his losses despite the drastic change of environment. The vividness of his mourning is manifest in his compulsion to reconstruct the experience. Shlomek's identity was largely shaped by his eyewitness experience of his community's and family's suffering and murder. Denied the opportunity to share the story with his Israeli teachers and peers, Shlomek, like Lena, defies the pressure to compromise his need to mourn the past and exercises his prerogative to return to his private hell. The story of his family's death, written surreptitiously at night, attests to the survivor's indelible connection with his past. Shlomek writes the testimony of his family's murder in his mother-tongue, Polish. This confluence of memory and discourse defines the contrast between the survivor and his Israeli antagonist, Yotam, who has eliminated all discourse with the past.

The survivors' tenacious attachment to their memories engenders the rescuers' growing sense of powerlessness vis-à-vis the victim. Both Dora and Yotam encounter resistance and ultimately fail in their attempts to reshape the survivor's views. Lena finds it impossible to identify with

Dora's outlook of a history-free, future oriented society in Israel. Shlomek tries to join this society but refuses to adjust. In both cases the integrity of self and memory precludes a successful process of indoctrination.

The power struggle between rescuer and survivor is translated into a discourse, which intends to reform the identity of the survivor and involves the infusion of familiar terms with new meanings. This amounts to a linguistically imposed transformation intended to engender new modes of thinking. The process of such conceptual subversion constitutes a tool of psychological oppression aimed at shaping the outsider's identity in conformity with that of the dominant majority. The notion that linguistic transformation will generate the desired mode of thinking underlies and informs the treatment of the survivors in both works.

When Ludwig Wittgenstein speaks about the multiplicity of linguistic forms, he observes that

This multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all...new language-games...come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten...Here the term "language-game" is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is...a form of life (1968: 23).

A game presupposes a partner; speech presupposes a listener. Language usage is, therefore, an activity, which naturally entails a social transaction: it is "a form of life" in that it represents the continually evolving experience of interpersonal communication. Wittgenstein submits that some "language-games" become naturally "obsolete," and others "get forgotten." In our texts, the deposition of unwanted "language-games" is effected through aggressive restrictions of linguistic transactions.

The dominant rescuers condition the survivors' socialization upon the adoption of their normative language patterns: the "life" of social intercourse may be maintained only when the survivor renounces the discourse, which bears upon the past. Most forms of verbal socialization, or in Wittgenstein's terms, "language-games," establish the inferiority of one partner, placing him/her in what R. D. Laing terms an "untenable position" of inauthenticity whereby one is expected "to not be oneself, to be false to oneself: to be not as one appears to be, to be counterfeit" (1976:127). The linguistic transaction that the rescuer wishes to pursue with the survivor as part of the socialization process belongs to this group of language games. The suppression of the old discourse makes it possible for the new discourse to take over by obliterating the language, which has informed the survivor's past. Consequently, the espousal of a new discourse validates the new "form of life" at the cost of self-betrayal.

The rejection of anything "old" is essential to a society, which cultivates the self-image of vibrant youth and energetic activity. Upon Shlomek's arrival, Yotam observes "that he knew a little Hebrew, the kind of Hebrew of 'Tarbut' schools, the Hebrew that here only old people are allowed to speak..." (TW, p. 36). The allusion to "Tarbut" schools, the Jewish educational network in Eastern Europe, associates the Hebrew spoken in the Diaspora with the old, outdated Jewish way of life. Consequently, as "a form of life," the Diaspora Hebrew, characterized by its

classical lexicon and grammatical accuracy, is tolerated “only” in old people, the relics of the past, but is not acceptable in the young who are supposed to be building a future liberated from the past.

Internalization of the prescribed language patterns signals a shifting worldview. Yotam recalls Shlomek’s increasingly inaccurate Hebrew: “He would already confuse the feminine and masculine gender, saying, for instance, ‘*shteim-asar elef*.’ But I did not correct him. Let him make mistakes, I said to myself. That’s part of his adjustment. Let him become one of the group” (TW, p. 45). Thus, in his role of the survivor’s rescuer, Yotam sees Shlomek’s mistakes as “evidence of his adjustment.” By abandoning the forms practiced in Diaspora, Shlomek, in Yotam’s view, shows signs of identity transformation. Ironically, Yotam condones linguistic inaccuracies for the sole reason that they are espoused by the dominant group. “Since the future is theirs, not ours,” (TW, p. 45) as Yotam sees it, young people are free to take liberty with language patterns as part of their “language-game.”

The confluence of language and doctrine does not stop at the level of grammatical impurities. The intent to suppress the survivor’s experience is also manifest in an attempt to invalidate his/her language at the level of its contextual structure. The manipulative shifting of the language’s referential frames undermines connotations rooted in the past. The aggressive aspect of such a “language-game” emerges in the encounter between Yotam and Shlomek over the interpretation of the talmudic saying, *o chevruta o mituta*—the absence of camaraderie amounts to death. For Yotam, this expression signifies the quintessence of social homogeneity and togetherness: the group conformity, “chevruta,” is the preferred alternative to death-like isolation. But while Yotam focuses on the dire consequences of failing to become “like everybody else,” Shlomek suggests a different interpretation. He tells Yotam that in his school “*chevruta* signified the companionship of Torah students.” For Shlomek, the expression designated two essential principles in the Jewish tradition of study: the sacred duty to study the Torah and the importance of the study as a social act. “And what are we,” Yotam retorts triumphantly, “if not a company of students?” (TW, p. 42).

Yotam’s reconstruction of Shlomek’s definition not only distorts Shlomek’s interpretation of the saying but invalidates the contextual significance of this interpretation. The omission of the qualifier “Torah” defines social interaction as the only life-giving tenet. While Shlomek perceives the Torah group study as “a form of life,” Yotam’s deliberate exclusion of the cultural-religious component in Shlomek’s interpretation invalidates the survivor’s experience of Torah study. The liberty that Yotam takes in reinterpreting Shlomek’s definition is hardly accidental. The separation of the two traditionally inseparable components of maintaining Jewish congregational togetherness promulgates the notion of the “new” Israeli Jew. Yotam’s “language-game” is part of the effort to diminish the tradition of Torah studies by defining it as Jewish preoccupation with the past.

Such intentional manipulations of the contextual meaning of language invalidate the formative experiences of the outsider and eventually reduce him to silence. Shlomek’s silence, however,

does not imply acquiescence to the reconstructed version of his experience. On the contrary, it signals an ensuing preoccupation with a “language-game” which would revalidate this experience. Subsequently, Shlomek resorts to a private language which restores his authenticity: he designs a code which commemorates the names and ages of his murdered family members: “Yud-39, Beth-37, Aleph-12, Yud-8” (TW, p. 44). The code, which he engraves, writes, and scribbles everywhere, for everybody to see, embodies a self-assertion that defies language manipulation. This retaliatory activity subverts the intent to negate the past through referential distortion. As an idiosyncratic set of signifiers, the code has only one signified, the signified, which reaffirms, once again, “the integral relationship between the memory and the self.”

In *Lady of the Castle*, as in “The Witness,” the sign which affirms the survivor’s identity and independence serves to relate the past experience of death and suffering to the present. Like Shlomek, Lena also clings to memories of death in order to preserve the integrity of her authentic self. Her secret sign takes the form of the parting gift from her mother: a talisman filled with poison. In the reality of the Holocaust, the semiology of a talisman undergoes a significant process of deconstruction: it no longer signifies a fortunate life but rather the good fortune of suicide. In the post-Holocaust reality, however, the talisman undergoes another semantic transmutation. As an emblem of death, it signifies the survivor’s link with the past. Both rescue operations to which Lena is subjected seek to annul her memory of death and loss. While the Count chooses to ignore the existence of the talisman, Dora tries to take it away from Lena by force. Like Shlomek’s code, Lena’s talisman, therefore, constitutes a private sign of defiance against the invalidation of the past for the sake of the future.

The rhetorical similarity which characterizes Lena’s encounters with the Count on the one hand, and Dora and Sand on the other hand, binds all the rescuers with a common motif of ideological appropriation of the survivor through peremptory displacement of linguistic signification. Such a reading of Lena’s relationships with her rescuers contradicts critical readings, which have focused on the contrasting world pictures represented by Count Zabrodsky and Dr. Dora Ringler.<sup>2</sup> Gershon Shaked, in particular, outlines the opposition between the Count and Dora in terms of the age-old humanist tradition of European culture versus the cannibalistic vulgarity of modernity. His critical reading focuses on the theme of the heritage of refined beauty and erudition that was destroyed and replaced by the worship of technocratic efficiency. According to Shaked, the confrontation between the Count and Dora, seemingly over Lena’s future happiness, signifies, in fact, the defeat of cultural uniqueness and the victory of the cult of the masses (Shaked 1958:186-190).

Dora, in her advocacy of egalitarianism and rationalism, is indeed situated in direct opposition to the Count’s elitism and mysticism. Yet, while the ideologies that Dora and the Count represent may contradict each other, their methods of implementation are similar and equally ruthless. Both seek to appropriate Lena through manipulative “language-games.” And in this regard the Count is a counterpart to Dora’s aggressive dogmatism rather than her opponent. The Count’s will to power, as it emerges in his relationship with Lena, is as intense as Dora’s. The discourses in which both Dora and the Count engage Lena manifest similar ends and means. They aim to

reshape the survivor's worldview to fit the "forms of life" that suit her rescuers' self-interests. Hence, the victim's language of loss and death must be replaced by the rescuers' respective visions of redemption. Whereas Dora wishes to transfer Lena into Israel, her own refuge from the haunting memories of the past, the Count imprisons Lena in the Castle, which is his refuge from the threatening invasion of the future. Whereas Dora impresses upon Lena the hope of regeneration and rebirth in Israel, the Count infuses Lena with the hope of regeneration and rebirth in "the fourth Kingdom."<sup>3</sup>

By deceptively prolonging the nightmare of the Nazi threat, the Count creates an atmosphere that is conducive to Lena's conversion to his mystical vision of redemption drawn from *The Revelation to John* and *The Book of Daniel*. In this atmosphere of constant fear and complete isolation from the world, the language of the vision, which promises peace and security, has permeated the captive's worldview. In her conversation with Dora, Lena constantly resorts to the eschatological imagery from John's vision to counteract Dora's offer of new life. For instance, when Dora offers assurances that it will not be hard for her to start a new life in Israel, as all the other survivors have, Lena responds with a vision of the Kingdom in which there is no "second death," that is, the New Jerusalem of eternal life. As Lena admits, the Count's teachings shaped her "dream" at the time "when there was no more hope, when I knew I would die" (*LC*, p. 72). The mystical rhetoric of redemption infiltrated Lena's language at the most vulnerable stage of her survival. To fend off despair, she consciously embraced both the dream and the dream giver (*LC*, p. 56).

Although it is conceptually antithetical to the Count's Christian mysticism, the vision of "normal life" that Dora presents must appear to the war victim as fantastic and dreamlike as the Count's vision of the afterlife. Dora offers to take Lena away from the country and the people who witnessed and abetted her family's murder. She promises her freedom, peace, and joy in her new homeland. Inadvertently, Dora's description of life in Eretz Israel, though concrete and down to earth, is strikingly similar to John's Revelation of New Jerusalem, the city of peace and light where no evil will be admitted: "But nothing that is impure will enter the city, nor anyone who does shameful things or tells lies" (chap. 22). Both Dora and the Count offer Lena visions of regeneration and emotional rebirth, and both offerings are couched in vocabularies of renewal that seek to supersede the survivor's memory of horror. Much like the Count's mystical aspirations, Dora's rational propositions are designed to attenuate the survivor's constant recourse to the past. Both are intended to de-intensify Lena's recollections in which pre-war innocence coalesces horribly with the devastation of the Holocaust experience.

Lena, however, continuously tries to communicate her experiences. She seeks to involve Dora in her ordeal by focusing on a song that they both knew as children. This song, she recalls, "helped me a bit" to overcome the fear of the dark forest when fleeing from the Nazis who "took" her parents and siblings (*LC*, p. 54). By referring to a song that Dora knows, Lena attempts to place her experience in a familiar referential framework. At the same time, the associations that the song invokes demonstrate that the memories of death and horror have irrevocably transposed the experience of a happy childhood. Pointedly, Dora chooses not to relate to the song. Instead, she

manipulates the victim's need to share memories and grief in order to promote her vision of a new life for Lena: "You will tell [your aunt in Palestine] this whole story yourself," (*LC*, p. 70) she tells Lena. The survivor's experience, purposely de-personalized as "this whole story," is thus skillfully used in a "language-game" meant to "save" Lena by taking her to Israel.

In this sense a strategy akin to that of Yotam in relation to Shlomek's testimony emerges in Dora's response. Both rescuers deflect the acuteness of the survivor's need to tell about the experience. They downplay the tragic circumstances of the event and advise the victim to defer the telling. Thus Yotam suggests to Shlomek that he refrain from telling the story altogether in order "not to irritate the class" (*TW*, p. 41), and to the end he deplores the fact that Shlomek did not wait longer before publishing his testimony. Dora simply puts off the telling until Lena gets to see her relatives in Israel. Neither Yotam nor Dora respond directly to the experience as addressed to them. Their reticence reflects a reluctance to listen to, identify, and empathize with the victim. Such reticence causes the survivor's reaction of disengagement and silence. Neither Shlomek nor Lena accept the solution that their Israeli rescuers offer. Shlomek, in desperation, leaves his new home, deliberately severing all contact with Yotam and the school. Lena's decision to join Dora reflects her wish to leave the confinement of the Castle rather than to start a new life in Israel. Having articulated in fragmented, disconnected phrases, her desire to "breathe the air...outside..." (*LC*, 94), she withdraws into complete silence.

The conflicting discourses of Holocaust mourning and Israeli rebirth end in a silence, which marks the separation between rescuer and survivor. Gershon Shaked seems to address this issue in his comments on Israeli Holocaust literature: "The survivors remain vulnerable and tormented. The Zionist home did save their bodies, but could not restore their spiritual repose" (1985:288). As the two texts examined here suggest, spiritual peace may lie beyond reach not only for the survivor, but for the Israeli rescuer as well. The intense effort to modify, reshape, and eventually obliterate the memory of the holocaustal terror attests to the rescuer's constant preoccupation with the dark side of Jewish history. The emphasis on a future of rebirth and regeneration is nourished by an underlying consciousness of degeneration and death. The glorification of Jewish self-sufficiency and military prowess implies fear of victimization and helplessness. Thus, the rescuers' often ruthless and insensitive treatment of the survivors may have reduced the Holocaust victims to silence, but it has not terminated the Israeli discourse with Diaspora history.

*Lady of the Castle* and "The Witness" are part of this continuing discourse. As mentioned earlier, Hareven's story constitutes, in a sense, a sequel to Goldberg's play. The failure of Shlomek's integration into Israeli society belies Dora's prediction of the survivor's emotional rehabilitation in Israel. "The Witness," however, narrated by Yotam thirty years after "the Shlomek affair," also reveals the failure to actualize the ideal of the "new" Israeli Jew oriented solely towards the future. Yotam's need to explain and justify a distant event, which involves a Holocaust survivor is indicative of the ongoing process of Israeli self-definition vis-à-vis the destruction of the European Diaspora. The possibility of a direct dialogue between rescuer and survivor does not materialize in either of the texts. These literary representations of post-Holocaust Israeli reality,

however, reflect the urgent need to break the silence and resume the interrupted discourse between the diasporic past and the Israeli present.

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> *Lady of the Castle* and "The Witness" are cited hereafter as *LC* and *TW*, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Tuvia Rivner (1979) and Ben-Ami Feingold (1982).

<sup>3</sup> See Daniel, chap. 8. The "Fourth Kingdom" is the Messianic Heavenly Kingdom of Redemption which will follow the earthly kingdoms of Media, Persia, and Greece.