



## Aze Fellner

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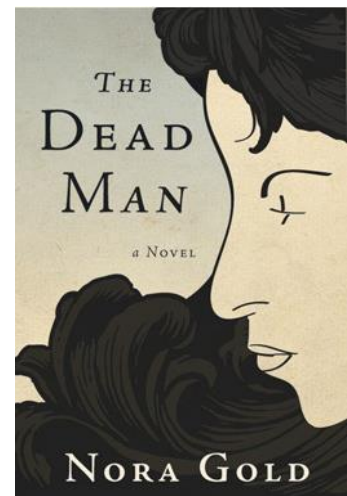
### BOOK REVIEW:

The Dead Man

Nora Gold

Inanna Poetry & Fiction series

Reviewed by Rabbi Azriel C. Fellner



What happens when a woman falls deeply in love with a man, becomes so ensorcelled by him that her inner life is transformed as she falls into total obsession? What happens to that woman when that man, married to someone else, decides to end it. The usual pain of a breakup, the heartache, the sense of loss, betrayal and regret described in this new novel by Nora Gold, *The Dead Man*, plumbs deeply and insistently into the nether world of love and passion, hate and indifference. The author sharply mines the labyrinthine tunnels of the main character's emotional life. Gold lays bare a whole series of assertions and contradictions about the life of the two main characters, and in the process might make a sensitive and careful reader challenge his own personal truths about his/her own life and relationships.

Eve, a middle-aged widow, music therapist and composer travels to Israel for an international Jewish music conference and meets Jake, a highly acclaimed music theorist and writer, fourteen years her senior. They begin a torrid affair which melts away whatever defenses they may have only to find out that neither of them, alone or apart, know themselves, despite exposing to each other their physical and emotional nakedness. It is only after the breakup that Eve begins a long and difficult journey trying to understand how her childhood, the death of her mother at a very early age, the death of her husband and the influences of her aunts and uncles have shaped her inner life. The painful un-layering of her inner life is brought about by her obsessive and compulsive behavior toward Jake who will have nothing to do with her.

It is painful to watch Eve emotionally eviscerate herself, but Gold let's us be part of that drama with vivid descriptions and powerful flashbacks. Like observing a train wreck about to happen, we are at once repelled and mesmerized by Eve's downward spiral. It is to Gold's credit as a novelist and story-teller that Eve's breakdown never becomes maudlin, never becomes a caricature of a woman scorned. She is ultimately more than that.

On another level, rarely do we find contemporary Jewish novelists who understands the ritual, the vocabulary and the penumbra of Jewish life correctly. Nora Gold does and she weaves Jewish symbols into the story with great effect, even as she is able to weave together the melodies of two lives from the tonal to the atonal.

Nora Gold is a fine Canadian novelist who deserves a large audience of readers. The characters she draws remind us that the issues of love, loss, memory, passion and creativity can be seen from a fresh perspective and that, at the end, a naked description of deeply felt emotions can illuminate the contradictions and challenges we, ourselves, may be afraid to face.