

**Gold, Nora. *The Dead Man: A Novel*. Toronto: Inanna, 2016. PDF.**

Reviewed by Merle Eisman Carrus, Hollis, NH, USA

Nora Gold, an award winning Canadian author for her novel, *Field of Exile*, which I reviewed here earlier, has again written a captivating plot in *The Dead Man*. Writing her novels to span the international divide between Toronto and Israel, she has given her readers both a fascinating novel of psychological drama and a travel log of Israel.

As the main character, Eve, a music therapist and composer, fantasizes about her failed relationship with Jake, a famous music critic, the reader analyses Eve's obsession with Jake and why she cannot let go of this unrequited love. Eve and Jake met at a conference and had a short affair. Eve won an award for a piece of music she had written and Jake was impressed with her talent and youthfulness. She is a fifty year old widow with two sons back home in Toronto, to his sixty-five years, married with two grown daughters. As we learn the story of his life in flashbacks and memories of their time together, we see him emerge as a narcissistic, egocentric man. After many years now of not being able to release herself from her connection to Jake, Eve comes to Israel for her annual conference for music therapists and presents Jake as a case study for analysis. As the groups talk about his psychological makeup, you begin to wonder what is wrong with Eve that she cannot end her connection to him. She does not seem to be able to move forward from this affair. We hear her thoughts...."But even more than all that, it started to get creepy. Creepy hearing Jake's rage and Fran's fear. Instead of feeling powerful and in control, Eve began feeling powerless and out of control. She wasn't doing this anymore out of her own free will; it had turned into an obsession. A compulsion. An obsessive-compulsive disorder."

Reading this novel was a little like reading some of the other popular books of the day, *Girl on The Train* and *Gone Girl* among others. The reader gets inside Eve's head hearing this story from her point of view and begin to wonder about her psychological state as she reviews the relationship with Jake and the last five years since their relationship ended though he promised to get back to her within that time and has not.

*Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal Volume 13 Number 2 (2017)*

ISSN 1209-9392

© 2017 Women in Judaism, Inc.

All material in the journal is subject to copyright; copyright is held by the journal except where otherwise indicated. There is to be no reproduction or distribution of contents by any means without prior permission. Contents do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors.

While the readers are following Eve through her memories they are taken on a trip through Jerusalem and to the kibbutz where her cousins live. Gold gives an evocative descriptions of the assignation between Jake and Eve which leave the readers worried about Eve's state of mind and Jake's life, is he dead or alive and will he be alive at the end of this novel? But also, Gold describes very vividly the places in Israel. Gold brings the readers into the novel so that they feel as being there watching Eve sits on the porch on her cousin's kibbutz, and into her mind as she replays the rendezvous with Jake in the King David Hotel during their stay and four day fling, eating with them in their room.

She brought them a little of everything from the beautifully laid-out buffet, the "*shulchan aruch*," in the hotel dining room. There was smoked salmon, herring, whitefish, and carp, cut-up carrots, radishes, onions, cucumbers, and tomatoes, breads, rolls, and pastries, jams, jellies, marmalades, and spreads, four flavours of yogurt, seven varieties of cheese, olives green and black, eggs prepared any way you wanted, pancakes, waffles, and moussaka, fresh-squeezed juices (orange, grapefruit, or apple), a bowl of dates, figs, raisins, and sunflower seeds, an enormous platter of pineapple, melons, and berries, and coffee, tea, or hot chocolate. That buffet was the epitome of Abundance, Beauty, and Diversity."

The food description is mouth-watering, the kibbutz descriptions leave the readers wandering through the avocado grove and the relationship descriptions leave them apprehensively sitting on the edge of the chair.