**Opposition and otherness of the feminine protagonists in David Grossman's novel *More than I love my life***

**The Protagonists’ Conflict and Otherness in David Grossman's Novel *More Than I Love My Life***

In David Grossman’s most recent novel, *More Than I Love My Life* (Grossman [2019] 2021), there are three female main protagonists, and the plot follows the choices that shaped their lives. This is the first novel Grossman has dedicated to women who choose to reject familial and societal expectations. In an earlier novel, *To the End of the Land* (Grossman [2008] 2010), which Grossman also dedicated to fashioning a female perspective, Ora, the main character, flees the dictates imposed upon her (as the novel’s Hebrew title indicates— “I'sha Borachat Mi'bsora”). In contrast, the three women spanning three generations in *More Than I Love My Life* choose to act in opposition to normative societal expectations, and even reconstruct their pasts and begin to repair the results of their actions.

The goal of this lecture is to examine the characteristics of opposition and otherness in the decision-making process of each one of the novel’s three female characters: Vera made a choice in the context of being held captive in a work camp; Nina made a choice while living in a kibbutz, and Gili made a choice in the context of postmodern urban living. This examination is undertaken to point out those universal feminist characteristics which are not necessarily related to the State of Israel’s political circumstances (White 2013). This examination will take the form of a comparison, with the emphasis being placed on the novel’s multigenerational nature. The inquiry will investigate the differences between the choices made by these women in different periods and focus on the feminist characteristics of opposition to existing societal norms and the expression of otherness that cannot be minimized. Methodologically, I will utilize Levinas’ concepts of feminine and the otherness (Levinas 1947, 1961, 1974).

The methodological argument will be that these concepts, created by Levinas, a Holocaust survivor himself, suggest a basis for the possibility of free choice notwithstanding the Holocaust’s occurrence. Furthermore, the leccture will show that despite the scholarly critique of Levinas’ perception of the feminine (de Beauvoir, 2008), Levinas’ conception of feminine characteristics enriches various feminist ethical perspectives (Chanter 2001, Katz 2003, Girgus 2010).

The main question that will be addressed in the lecture is how the Holocaust affected Vera’s “feminine” decisions: in her relationship with her husband, the regime, her daughter, and, ultimately, her granddaughter. The main argument will be that the various experiences of femininity as it appears in the novel allow us to illuminate a new facet of the Holocaust’s impact upon women: under, of all things, pressures that are almost too intolerable to bear, we witness women developing impressive coping and decision-making capabilities (Wittgenstein 2009; Beaney & Harrington 2018). On the methodological level, I will make another claim: the novel provides us with a new understanding of Levinas’ concepts, especially that of the feminine, which scholars have criticized.

This specific contribution to scholarship in the field is two-fold. On the thematic level, the women’s decisions in the novel will be examined as both direct and indirect consequences of the Holocaust. On the methodological level, this discussion’s contribution will demonstrate the contribution Levinas’ concepts make to understanding the philosophical facet and versatility of women’s decisions.