

satire and stream-of-consciousness techniques to the English-speaking world. Scholars of comparative literature will appreciate the latest volume as it manifests Elkhadem's mastery of modern narrative devices, his development of the journey motif, and his graphic portrayal of the theme of emotional isolation in a fascist world. As one of his most accessible works, it will also be of interest to first-time readers of his fiction. It is most appropriate that such a significant work appears in a bilingual edition.

David Grossman

SEE: *UNDER LOVE*

Translated from the Hebrew by Betsy Rosenberg

New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1988. Pp. 458. \$22.00

Reviewed by Robert DiAntonio

While it is universally accepted that the trauma of the near destruction of East European Jewry defies explanation or description, an ever-increasing number of young writers seem compelled to deal with it as a literary theme. One such writer is David Grossman, the author of *The Yellow Wind*, the critically acclaimed reportage of the Palestinian dilemma.

In *See: Under Love* Grossman creates a beautifully written epic novel that is as disturbing as it is challenging. In the vein of Gunter Grass's *The Tin Drum* or Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, it brings a magical vision to historical events. However, its scope goes beyond an analysis of those events evolving as a multi-faceted exploration of the nature of evil and the power of love.

In the work's first section, "Momik," the reader comes to know and is charmed by a precocious nine-year-old Israeli boy, Momik Neuman. Momik has few friends and spends most of his time with his aged parents. The year is 1959 and the atmosphere of the era is directly integrated into the novel's flow: "All three of them are deaf to the hooligans, because they hear only their own secret language which is Yiddish, which soon the beautiful Marilyn Monroe will understand because she married Mr. Miller, a Jew, and every day she learns three new words, and these hooligans, let them drop dead, amen."

Grossman is one of a new generation of writers who finds a great sense of loss in the vanishing of the Yiddish language and the fading values of *Yiddishkeit*: a devotion to cultural values associated with what Irving Howe calls "one of the most vibrant and humane of modern cultures." Momik's parents are Holocaust survivors, as are their friends. They are all as guarded about their past as they are protective of young Momik who tries hard to piece together their stories of what happened "Over There:" "Over There, a place you weren't supposed to talk about too much, only think about in your heart and sigh with a drawn-out krechtez." Momik keeps notebooks and attempts to create his own Nazi beast in their basement, believing that he will then be able to tame it and free his family.

While symbolism is a strong component of the novel's first chapter it is the moving story of Momik's attempt to understand his family's past that will

intrigue, enchant, and astonish the reader. A long lost uncle, Anshel Wasserman, is returned to the family and it is Momik who lovingly cares for him and who most closely connects with the seemingly senile old man. In his youth Anshel was a famous writer of children's stories that recounted the adventures of a group of high-principled Jewish kids called, "*The Children of the Heart*."

In section two there occurs an abrupt change of focus which will challenge even the most diligent reader. The book now enters into a surrealistic world that tells of the life of Bruno Schulz, a preeminent Polish-Jewish writer. Momik Neuman is now an adult, a decade later, in search of the truth regarding Schulz's death and whereabouts of his manuscript, *The Messiah*. The book's third section -- with Momik present again as an adult -- recounts a confrontation between his Uncle Anshel and the camp commandant of Auschwitz. The section opening moves the novel well into the realm of the symbolically fantastic: "When the third attempt to kill Anshel Wasserman came to naught, the Germans sent him running to camp headquarters with a very young officer named Hoppfler at his heels yelling, '*Schnell!*'" Anshel, like his pen name, Scheherazade, invents stories nightly for the camp commandant in a vain effort to humanize him. The stories themselves again deal with brave Jewish children who the reader has already met as the children of the heart, only this time Wasserman adds some interesting twists and bends. Unlike his namesake Scheherazade, Wasserman only wishes to die and he makes Obersturmbannführer Neigel promise to try to kill him after every session. All to no avail.

The book's final section is in the form of an encyclopedia of the fictional life of Kazik, one of Wasserman's new characters, and it is in this section that many of the work's mysteries are resolved. The encyclopedia is to be read "in a sequence . . . skipping forward and backward at will." This will remind many of Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch*..

Grossman's work is one of the most complex and appealing novels in recent memory, a work that will undoubtedly generate much critical attention. While its strong metafictional nature suspends the rules of conventional reality, its first section, "Momik," can be enjoyed by those readers who generally pass over non-realistic fiction.

Ultimately, the book deals with the redemptive possibilities of life in the aftermath of the Holocaust years. Momik Neuman like the author, David Grossman himself, is drawn into -- almost compelled to explore consequences of the Holocaust and in the process writes a moving elegy -- in Hebrew -- to the cultural values and the Yiddish-speaking people of Eastern Europe.