LITERARY HISTORY IN THE POST-ZIONIST ERA, 1987-2000. (H)

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The aim of the lecture is to try and identify some of the new literary voices that emerged in Israel in the so-called Post Zionist era between the two Intifadas, 1987-2000. One of the main issues the lecture will deal with is the cultural reaction to recent developments in Israeli history, primarily the gap between the ostensible triumph of Zionism after 1967 and the continued and in some ways exacerbated existential problems Israelis face today. By focusing on two writers in particular, Orly Castel-Bloom and Etgar Keret, the lecture will examine this paradox and try to put it into historical and cultural context. The lecture's main thesis is that the works of Orly Castel-Bloom express the ideological confusion of a seemingly post-national age while the writings of Etgar Keret attempt to suggest new values, especially romantic love, as a substitute for parochial nationalism. I will attempt to show how the works of Castel-bloom express a profound sense of loss on the brink of a new era. Against the relative affluence and peace of her generation, Castel-Bloom writes anxiously about a mean, hellish and incomprehensible Israeli world that has lost its anchoring in a grand national narrative. Keret's literary strategy, on the other, is different. Whether he escapes the absurdities of his age or rejects them altogether, he establishes an alternative narrative in which romantic love and the survival of the Couple or the romantic duo takes center-stage by either ignoring or replacing the previous national narrative. Finally, the lecture will suggest that the outbreak of the 2000 Intifada has put an end to some of the central concerns of both these writers by terminating the confusion of the first—Castel-Bloom—and the naiveté of the second—Keret—and making national identification and unity compelling once again, albeit tragically.