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The eminent publisher on his teacher, friend, and political opposite Benzion Netanyahu

By Jason Epstein



Benzion Netanyahu and his son Benjamin, then Likud party leader, meeting in Benzion's Jerusalem home on election day, February 8, 2009. Michal Fattal/Likud via Getty Images

There can be few friendships stranger than Benzion Netanyahu's and mine, for on the urgent question of Israel's security we could not be more opposed. Benzion, a disciple and former secretary of Ze'ev Jabotinsky and to this day an uncompromising Zionist Revisionist, believes that the State of Israel should occupy both banks of the Jordan, presumably by force. At the time of the Oslo Accords, when my wife and I visited Benzion, surrounded by his books in his comfortable Jerusalem home, he denounced the accords as "the beginning of the end of the Jewish State" and admonished his son Bibi, then as now prime minister, for having relinquished Hebron to the Palestine Authority under the agreement. For me, on the other hand, Oslo promised an end to a futile quarrel in which both sides stood to lose their homes and their souls. The predictable collapse of Oslo proved both of us wrong, me in my hopefulness, Benzion in his prophecy of doom. It was Benzion's

Revisionist tenacity that led Menachim Begin of all people to accuse him of right-wing extremism. Unmoved by this criticism, Benzion scorned Begin in a conversation with me as a weakling, a compromiser. Yitzak Shamir was beneath his contempt. Yet my admiration for Benzion is akin to love, and I like to think these feelings are to some degree reciprocated.

For Benzion, the Arabs are implacable enemies. For me, they are indispensable partners who with their Jewish counterparts might once have created—and perhaps still may find the wisdom to create—a flourishing bi-national state, an exemplary multiethnic enclave within a stable Middle East or, failing that, a two-state solution. If my position underestimates the dark side of human nature, Benzion's ignores the futility and horror—the sadness—of a military solution. Since our immovable polarity is understood by both of us our discussions of Middle East politics tend to be brief. Our affection flourishes on different ground.

This unlikely friendship began by chance in the late 1970s when my friend Herman Wouk called me at Random House to suggest that I publish a book of letters by Jonathan Netanyahu, the heroic leader of the Entebbe raiders and their only fatality. Herman said the letters were remarkable, and when I read the manuscript I agreed. Jonathan was an articulate and sensitive young soldier whose modest tone hardly comported with his Homeric military exploits. I was struck however by an unexpected apocalyptic note: "any"—not just *a*, but *any*—"compromise will simply hasten the end. As I don't want to tell my grandchildren about the Jewish state in the twentieth century as ... a transient episode in the thousands of years of wandering, I wanted to hold on here with all my might." When these letters were written an Arab-Israeli compromise still seemed barely possible. That this soft-spoken hero should see no such hope was puzzling. I would soon discover the source of his iron determination.

On one of his frequent trips to New York Benzion stopped at Random House to discuss the publication of Jonathan's letters. The meeting with a proud and grieving father that I had expected to occupy an hour instead lasted most of the afternoon, prompted by my having asked about his own work, which I had been told had something to do with the Jewish expulsion from Spain in 1492. His answer led to one the proudest

moments of my publishing career, the publication some 15 years later of his masterpiece, [*The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain*](#). The 1,400-page work of scholarship overturned centuries of misunderstanding, and predictably it was faintly praised and in a few cases angrily denounced or simply ignored by a threatened scholarly establishment. Dispassionate scholars soon prevailed, and today Benzion's brilliant revisionist achievement towers over the field of Inquisition studies. The iron will that sustained Jonathan on the battlefield sustained his father in his lifelong campaign to uncover the actual origin and cause of the assault upon the third generation of Spain's Christianized Jews—the so-called conversos—by the Spanish Inquisition.

I have always considered my work in publishing an extension of my formal education, in which my authors were the faculty and their work my curriculum. Whatever I have learned I have learned from them. The prevailing scholarship of the Inquisition had accepted the word of the Inquisition itself that its aim was to exterminate as heretics the conversos, otherwise known as New Christians or Marranos, to use Benzion's favored term. These were descendants of Spanish Jews who at the end of the 14th century had been forced to convert to Catholicism or face death. Now, a century later, the Inquisition claimed that many of these third-generation descendants were secretly still committed to their ancestral Judaism, therefore Catholic in name only and a polluting influence upon true Christians. Thus they could be tortured, dispossessed of their property, and in some cases murdered as heretics. The scholarly consensus accepted these dubious charges as true.

It was this perfunctory acceptance by historians of the perpetrators' word that attracted Benzion to the subject. Why should the murderers and thieves who led the Inquisition be believed? Benzion's great achievement is to have shown that the allegations of clandestine Judaism were a pretext. He proves beyond a doubt that by the end of the 15th century all but a handful of conversos were true Catholics, integrated into the mainstream of Spanish society. Many held high positions in church, state, law, and the military, and this was the problem, for these positions were coveted by their envious "full-blooded," so-called Old Christian, rivals. Benzion shows that the conversos were tortured, killed, and their property seized not for their secret Judaism, for which there is scant evidence, but for their ancestral blood: the inescapable otherness of Jews. *Limpieza de sangre*—purity of the blood—was the unspoken issue that explains the attack upon the conversos. For the Old Christians these conversos remained a resented alien minority. Benzion also shows that it was King Ferdinand himself who instigated the Inquisition not only to augment royal revenues depleted by his imperial wars but, more significantly, to strengthen his alliance with the Old Christian majority. The conversos were punished not for their faith but for their blood and their achievements.

The significance of this discovery for later generations of assimilated Jews and their racist antagonists is self-

evident. The Office of the Inquisition in Spain survived until the 19th century, and its conditions—for example, that a single Jewish grandparent conferred Jewish blood—were later embedded in Nuremberg law. Benzion's aim however was not to exploit the Inquisition as a warning to assimilationists but to clarify a persistent and profound historical falsification.

As happens often upon the publication of a radical revision of accepted theory the first reviews of Benzion's book were predictably marked by faint praise and underlying resentment by traditional historians of the Inquisition. Some of this resentment probably arose from Benzion's impolitic but principled refusal to acknowledge recent scholarship, which simply repeated standard misconceptions. (See, for example, Wikipedia on the subject: "the monarchs decided to introduce the Inquisition to discover and punish crypto-Jews.") But the tide soon turned. Even before publication Benzion was able to mention in his preface that the "celebrated historian ... Cecil Roth, who had stood for the thesis of Marrano Judaism, retreated from his own much publicized position and embraced more or less the same view of the Marranos that I had presented in my studies of the subject." Then the great scholar Henry Kamen [wrote](#) in a lengthy review that Benzion's conclusions regarding the conversos "which are central to [his] entire argument seem to me wholly convincing." Professor Bennett D. Hill of Georgetown called the book "the finest study of the Inquisition to appear in this or arguably any century."

It often happens that book editors who spend years working with an author begin to think of themselves as something more than midwives if less than collaborators. The process requires, in addition to tactfulness, immersion in the author's subject and care that the narrative is intelligible to nonspecialized readers. The book's success is the editor's reward. A greater reward is the learning acquired as the editor becomes familiar with the author's material. I hope I will not seem presumptuous therefore if I reprint a note sent to me by Benzion on his publication day:

Dear Jason: This is a great day for me and today, more than at other times, I feel the need to tell you that I well remember your instant grasp of my new historical concept, your insightful understanding of its various aspects, and the enormous effort you made in behalf of the book, editorially and otherwise. I cannot make it clear enough how grateful I am to you. My heartfelt congratulations and best wishes.

But it was not an enormous effort, or even an effort at all, but the rarest of pleasures to work with this great scholar and to ignore the vast and immovable political divide between us for the sake of a scholarly revolution and the friendship that followed.

*Jason Epstein is the former editorial director of Random House.
Tablet Magazine*

The Future of Holocaust Studies*

By Johannes Houwink ten Cate

Holocaust awareness has become a worldwide phenomenon, and an international free republic of Holocaust researchers has emerged. Among long-term trends in the field of Holocaust studies are the universalization of victimhood and the extension of the circle of perpetrators. Present trends include Holocaust history as local history, the integration of perpetrator and victim histories, and the explanation of perpetrator behavior in ideological terms. Anticipated future developments include greater discussion of the outlawing of Holocaust denial, and the return of the explanation of perpetrator behavior in terms of disposition. The term genocide has come to be used too often. It is not only used a shield, but also as a sword in new quests for utopia.

The History of the Field of Holocaust Research

The field of Holocaust research became truly international in the 1970s.[1] The single most important development since then has been the growth of a worldwide free republic of researchers, which now includes scholars from Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom, both Western and Eastern Europe, Canada, and Australia. There is some research by scholars from South America, but it mostly deals with Jewish emigration to that part of the world during the 1930s, not with the Holocaust proper. Not yet included are scholars from Africa and Asia. The boundaries of this republic of Holocaust research are essentially the boundaries of the part of the world that during the Cold War, before the fall of the Berlin Wall, constituted the free West - along with Eastern Europe.

This points to the fact that Holocaust awareness is a way to discuss core political values of the West such as democracy, responsibility, and solidarity. It also is an instrument to strengthen the democratic ethos in Eastern Europe. As Omer Bartov has put it, "in a century characterized by a quest for perfection," Holocaust awareness deals with "the narrow path between utopia and hell." The murderous pursuit of utopian politics has "been the engine of our epoch's aspirations and disillusionments, violence and annihilation.... In essence our century has tried to define what and who is human, and then to set rules as to how human beings should live in society and who must be excluded from it altogether." [2]

In keeping with Yehuda Bauer's outlook, the basis for these discussions is the idea of the universalization of victimhood, that is, the idea that everybody is a potential

victim of genocide.[3] In other words, identity is not only an unfailing source of empowerment; the Holocaust makes abundantly clear that identity is also a risk, and possibly a fatal one. As Bauer wrote: "What happened before, can happen again. We all are possible victims, possible perpetrators, possible bystanders...The Holocaust is a warning. It adds three commandments to the ten of the Jewish-Christian tradition: *Thou shalt not be a perpetrator; Thou shalt not be a passive victim; and Thou most certainly shalt not be a bystander.*" [4]

This universality of the importance of the Holocaust by no means contradicts the specificity of the Holocaust; the two notions are two sides of the same coin. Holocaust educators across the globe prove this every day. To quote Bauer once more: "This menace is universal and at the same time - because it is founded on the experience of the Holocaust - very specifically connected with the Jews. The specific and the universal cannot be separated." And as Bauer also observed: "as a symbol of evil the awareness of the Holocaust is spreading all over the world." [5]

Division of Labor

In the somewhat smaller republic of Holocaust researchers there is - or perhaps was - an implicit division of labor. American and German scholars specialize(d) in studies of the perpetrators; Israelis have strongly focused on the victims. In the past these two types of research were not connected. There is not yet sufficient input by younger scholars from Eastern Europe, although some of the younger researchers from Ukraine appear promising. Within Eastern Europe, however, Poland stands apart, as scholars from that country such as Wacław Długoborski, Czesław Madajczyk, Feliks Tych, Franciszek Piper, and Jan T. Gross have been doing distinguished work since the 1980s at the latest.[6] Not all East European political elites support Holocaust studies and Holocaust education. They tend to regard the states they govern as victims of Stalinist terror and not as accomplices in the Holocaust; Ukraine is a case in point. Not many institutions actively support the young East European researchers. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, however, is doing so.

Overall, the field is internationalizing because researchers from new "member states" have entered the research republic. Sometimes this was a result of the debates on the restitution of Holocaust assets. The Scandinavian countries, Belgium, and Greece are examples of this tendency.[7]

Worldwide, perhaps 250 PhD students are now in the later phases of their work on the Holocaust. In April 2009, the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies of Clark University (USA) organized its First International Graduate Students' Conference on Holocaust and Genocide Studies. One hundred twenty graduate students applied; 53 delivered speeches, 80 percent of them dealing with the Holocaust.[8] Genocide

research, however, is not dominated by historians but by social scientists and experts in international humanitarian law. Some of the young European scholars working on the Holocaust have secured international funding for their research, in particular at American and British universities. But there seem to be too few possibilities for them to remain in this field because, in Europe at least, the number of available post-doc scholarships appears to be limited.

The methodology of this research is not unlike that of medieval studies. One needs to be multilingual to enter the field successfully. The researchers study the documents that have not been destroyed by the Nazis. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, they discovered that many East European civil servants and individuals were just as implicated in the largest and most total mass murder in history as were German society and other West European societies and bureaucracies.[9]

The Perpetrators

Thus, the universalization of victimhood has been one long-term trend, and the steady extension of the circle of perpetrators has been another. Important studies by Yaakov Lozowick and Michael Wildt, for example,[10] have disproved Hannah Arendt's notion of the banality of evil[11] and have proved that many higher German bureaucrats were very much ideologically motivated. The rich post-Cold War harvest of regional studies of the Holocaust in Europe has now become meager.[12] This, however, may well be a temporary setback. In addition to Bauer's forthcoming book on the shtetls in eastern Poland, one of his leading students is now working on the Carpatho-Ukraine. And as the abovementioned Strassler Center gathering in April 2009 made clear, the regional approach remains to be selected by young researchers in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.[13]

There was a long and fruitful debate on the decision-making that led to the Holocaust, but it has ended.[14] Following the famous psychological experiments performed by Philip Zimbardo and Stanley Milgram,[15] there has been widespread agreement that the behavior of the ordinary perpetrators, those doing the actual killing, was determined by the situation they were put in, not by their psychological makeup.[16] As Bauer put it in his speech to the German parliament in 1998: "the most horrible thing about the Shoah is in fact not that the Nazis were inhuman - the most horrible thing about it is that they were indeed human, just as human as you and I are." [17] This notion has been extended to research on other genocides. Donald J. Bloxham has maintained that "the very existence of mass participation in most genocides shows that the context is generally more important than the disposition and beliefs of the individual perpetrator, since in the 'right' situation so many people of demonstrably different characters and values participate...." [18]

This agreement on the normality of the ordinary, lower-level perpetrators, however, perhaps belongs to

the past. There seems to be a strong contrast between the conviction that, if the situation is "right," everybody is a potential perpetrator, and the results of recent research on the evolutionary and neuroscientific aspects of morality and on the links between (recidivistic) crime and genetic factors.[19] This will lead to a new focus on the disposition of perpetrators.

Present Trends

Certain present trends appear to be here to stay, at least for the immediate future. One is the rise of "Holocaust history as local history." That was the title of a major conference held in Thessaloniki in June 2008, and it was apt.[20] Historians are attempting to tell the large story of the Holocaust through the perspective of the history, not of one region but of one single city, or even in one major labor camp. As Christopher Browning recently pointed out, this local research will show the need for a new vocabulary on Jewish resistance as well.[21]

Another trend is the integration of perpetrator and victim histories, as Saul Friedländer has done successfully in his recent synthesis.[22] The writers of the new local histories are putting the Holocaust in the perspective of the longer-term history of the relationship between Gentiles and Jews in these localities and regions. In other words, Holocaust history, Jewish studies, and East European history are moving in each other's direction.

Another development, as seen in works by Michael Wildt, David Cesarani, and Saul Friedländer,[23] is the return of the explanation of perpetrator behavior in ideological terms. There also is a new focus on the history of the different types of camps, following larger German research projects on the camps.[24] The use of personal documents, particularly diaries, has become widespread, not only as a source for the social history of the persecuted Jews, as done by Friedländer, but as a topic in its own right, in order to study how the persecuted Jews dealt with this. As Dan Michman has noted, the future use of these "Jewish voices" as expressions of Jewish societies and their structures (and not as the voices of mere individuals) also offers an opportunity to bring Holocaust history and Jewish studies more closely together.[25]

Genocides

There is a strong focus on post-Holocaust studies, dealing with how European societies have in one way or another repressed their memories of the Holocaust. Some of these studies, however, are not yet fully integrated into the broader picture of postwar political and cultural history of these countries. In a number of countries - but by no means everywhere - a strong interaction has emerged between Holocaust research and research on other modern genocides.

The Holocaust, however, remains the paradigmatic genocide, if only because of the ideological radicalism of

Nazism and the sheer number of its Jewish victims. Since Rwanda, for example, there has been a strong focus on open-air executions in the Holocaust. Scholars of modern genocides draw heavily on the highly sophisticated historiography of the Holocaust, and in doing so have made great progress. This is especially evident in the research on the Armenian and Rwandan genocides.[26]

Thanks to the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research,[27] and as represented by the work of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and Yad Vashem, the gap between the research output and Holocaust education has been narrowed.

Future Developments

Some future developments may be safely predicted. There will be more discussions on the outlawing of Holocaust and genocide denial in European countries. One of the most fundamental current political problems concerns the dangers of unbounded freedom of expression, which have become apparent.[28] Another future tendency will be the return of the explanation of perpetrator behavior in terms of disposition.

As for the needs of researchers, one is for more research on bystanders of the Holocaust and other modern genocides - that is, not on foreign governments but on the passivity of those who have chosen not to get involved. As a reviewer of a recent study on the passivity of the United Nations during the Rwandan genocide accurately remarked: "in seeking to blame western actors, [this book] twists logic to excuse those who most obviously caused the tragedy...." Research on the passivity of the foreign bystanders is useless if it blinds to the "responsibility of the local actors who author their own tragedies." [29]

There is a pronounced need to support the younger researchers from Eastern Europe in their efforts to enter the field. A still stronger integration of Holocaust and post-Holocaust studies in the more general history of the (East) European countries is another necessity. The need to secure more international funding in Europe for post-doc fellowships is also obvious, and perhaps European universities should offer more opportunities to young researchers from other countries.

Finally, there are good grounds for prudence as far as the frequency of the use of the term genocide is concerned. As the denotation of absolute evil, genocide is perhaps taking the place of the Holocaust. As Jacques Semelin put it recently in a book focusing on the Holocaust and the genocides in Rwanda and Srebrenica: "The term has been applied, aptly or not, to all sorts of violent situations:... from Cambodia to Chechnya, including Burundi, Rwanda, Guatemala, Colombia, [Iraq](#), Bosnia and Sudan." Retrospectively the term genocide has been used to characterize the "massacres by the Greeks of the inhabitants of Melos in the 5th century BC," the killing of the native Americans, the Soviet-

induced famine in Ukraine, and the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In short: "Any group today that wants to construct itself as a victim in the eyes of the entire world claims to have been a victim...of genocide." And as, for example, Arab delegates proved when they accused Israel of committing genocide against the Palestinians during the Durban Conference in South Africa in September 2001, "given the powerful emotional charge the word genocide generates it can be used and re-used to heap international opprobrium on whoever is accused of genocidal intent."

The term genocide is used as much as "a symbolic shield to claim victim status for one's people, as a sword raised against one's deadly enemy." [30] This is a feature of current efforts to shatter reality in the quest for political utopia and racial purity.

* * *

Notes

* This article is a slightly redrafted and extended version of a lecture presented by this author in Jerusalem in August 2009. Previous versions of this text were read by Yehuda Bauer, Dan Michman, and Manfred Gerstenfeld, whom I thank for their friendship. Any errors, however, are mine and mine alone. The works referred to in the following notes are selected.

[1] Johannes Houwink ten Cate, "The Enlargement of the Circle of Perpetrators of the Holocaust," *Jewish Political Studies Review*, Vol. 20, Nos. 3-4 (Fall 2008): 52.

[2] Omer Bartov, *Mirrors of Destruction: War, Genocide and Modern Identity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4-5.

[3] "In fact, all of humanity is likely to be a victim, given the current state of possibilities of destruction and unrest"; Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), xv.

[4] *Ibid.*, 67.

[5] *Ibid.*, 267, x-xi.

[6] The high level of Polish scholarship is, for instance, demonstrated by the five-volume history of Auschwitz that was published by Waclaw Dlugoborski and Franciszek Piper, eds., *Auschwitz 1940-1945. Studien zur Geschichte des Konzentrations- und Vernichtungslager Auschwitz* (Oświęcim: Verlag des Staatlichen Museums Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1999) [German]. The first excellent Polish historian in this field was Czeslaw Madajczyk, *Die Okkupationspolitik Nazideutschlands in Polen 1939-1945* (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1988) [German]. His successors include: Feliks Tych, see Beate Kosmala and Feliks Tych, eds., *Facing the Nazi Genocide: Non-Jews and Jews in Europe* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2004) and Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[7] See, e.g., Stéphane Bruchfeld and Paul Levine, *Tell Ye Your Children: A Book about the Holocaust in Europe 1933-1945* (Stockholm: Swedish Government Offices, 1998); Rudi van Doorslaer, ed., *Gewillig België. Overheid en Jodenvervolgging tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Antwerpen/Amsterdam: Meulenhoff/Manteau en Soma, 2007) [Dutch]; Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts:*

Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1430-1950 (New York: Knopf, 2005).

[8] For the conference program, see: www.clark.edu/departments/holocaust/chgsconference/graduate/Program/html.

[9] Houwink ten Cate, "Enlargement," 53.

[10] Yaakov Lozowick, *Hitler's Bureaucrats: The Nazi Security Police and the Banality of Evil* (London and New York: Continuum, 2002); Michael Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation: The Nazi Leadership of the Reich Security Main Office* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010).

[11] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, rev. ed. (New York: Viking, 1968).

[12] Houwink ten Cate, "Enlargement," 67, n. 16.

[13] See note 8.

[14] Christopher R. Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942* (Lincoln/Jerusalem: University of Nebraska Press/Yad Vashem, 2004).

[15] Philip Zimbardo, *The Psychology of Imprisonment: Privation, Power and Pathology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972); Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental Approach* (New York: Harpercollins, first ed. 1973, latest ed. 2009).

[16] Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harpercollins, 1992); Harald Welzer, *Täter. Wie aus ganz normalen Männern Massenmörder werden* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 2005). [German]

[17] Bauer, *Rethinking*, 264.

[18] Donald J. Bloxham, "The Organisation of Genocide: Perpetration in Comparative Perspective," in Olaf Jensen and Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann, eds., *Ordinary People as Mass Murderers: Perpetrators in Comparative Perspective* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 187.

[19] See, e.g., Jan Verplaetse, Jelle de Schrijver, Sven Vanneste, and Johan Braeckman, eds., *The Moral Brain: Essays on the Evolutionary and Neuroscientific Aspects of Morality* (Dordrecht, Heidelberg, London, and New York: Springer Sciences and Business Media, 2009).

Although it has been previously argued that genetics play no part in shaping antisocial and criminal behaviour a growing literature base has served to substantiate that genetic factors are as important to the development of some forms of criminal activity as are environmental factors. First, there are simply too many studies, in too many countries, using different methodologies that converge on the same conclusion: genes do play a role. Second, other potentially less controversial fields of behavioural trait research have not only identified heritability in psychiatric disorders such as autism, schizophrenia and reading disability, but also in personality traits such as political conservatism. Thus it would be surprising, if criminal behaviour - particularly recidivistic crime - was not in some way influenced by genetic factors.

Sharon S. Ishikawa and Adrian Raine, "Behavioural Genetics and Crime," in Joseph Glicksohn, ed., *The Neurobiology of Criminal Behaviour* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 81-82.

[20] Conference on "The Holocaust as Local History: Past and Present of a Complex Relation," University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki, June 2008. For the program, see:

www.fondationshoah.info/FMS/IMG/pdf/holocaust_program_thessaloniki.pdf.

- [21] Christopher R. Browning, "The Holocaust as Local History: Survivor Memories of the Starachowice Factory Slave Labor Camp," lecture presented in Thessaloniki (see *ibid.*).
- [22] Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Extermination, 1939-1945* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2007).
- [23] David Cesarani, *Eichmann: His Life and Crimes* (London: Heinemann, 2003).
- [24] Ulrich Herbert, Karin Orth and Christoph Dieckmann., eds., *Die nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, 2 vols. (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 1998) [German]; Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel, eds., *Der Ort des Terrors. Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern*, 9 vols. (Munich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 2005-2009) [German]. For the current state of the art in English, see Jane Caplan and Nikolaus Wachsmann, eds., *Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany: The New Histories* (New York: Routledge, 2010). Despite the progress in this field, it remains largely true - as the current trial in Munich against the alleged Sobibor guard John/Iwan Demjanjuk also shows - that (as noted by Margers Vestermanis and Michael Wildt in 1998) while there is a large body of scholarly literature on Auschwitz, the scholarship on the death camps Treblinka, Belzec, and Sobibor has been far too limited. It is also true that virtually nothing is known about the camps in the Nazi-occupied territories further east, in the Baltic states and in the occupied Soviet Union; Michael Wildt, "Die Lager im Osten. Kommentierende Bemerkungen," in Herbert, *Die nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, vol. 1, 508. Notable exceptions are Witold Chrostowski, *Extermination Camp Treblinka* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2004) and Jules Schelvis (and Bob Moore), *Sobibor: A History of a Nazi Death Camp* (London: Berg, 2007).
- [25] This was the essential point of a draft lecture that Prof. Dan Michman prepared for the World Congress on Jewish Studies that took place in Jerusalem in August 2009.
- [26] Taner Akcam, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008); Ugor U. Üngör, *Young Turk Social Engineering, Mass Violence and the Nation State in Eastern Turkey, 1913-1950*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 2009; Scot Straus, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power and War in Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).
- [27] The website of the Task Force is: <http://www.holocausttaskforce.org/>.
- [28] Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA on combating racism and xenophobia, 28 November 2008, *Official Journal of the European Union*, 6.12.2008, L328/55-58.
- [29] Alan J. Kuperman, book review of Daniela Korslak, *The Role of France in the Rwandan Genocide* (London: C. Hurst, 2007) and of Fred Grünfeld and Anke Huijboom, *The Failure to Prevent Genocide in Rwanda: The Role of Bystanders* (Leiden and Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 2007), in *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (December 2009): 541.

[30] Jacques Semelin, *Purify and Destroy: The Political Uses of Massacre and Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 308-313.

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Jewish Political Studies Review

Anti-Israelism and Anti-Semitism in Progressive U.S. Blogs/News Websites: Influential and Poorly Monitored

By Adam Levick

- Sixty-seven percent of the worldwide internet population visit social networking sites and blogs (web 2.0). These are now outpacing email in popularity. According to Nielsen Online they have become the fourth most popular online category. The popularity of political blogs is increasing as traditional media struggle to stay afloat.
- The three most popular progressive political blogs in the United States are Huffington Post, Salon, and Daily Kos. These three together have over thirteen million unique visitors per month.
- Within these three blogs a number of historical anti-Semitic staples appear frequently: excessive Jewish power and control over society/government; Jewish citizens are more loyal to Israel than to their own country; Israel resembles Nazi Germany; Israel is demonized.
- In part because of the huge size of the blogosphere - there are thousands of bloggers at Daily Kos alone - such hateful commentary often escapes the kind of scrutiny that the traditional media faces. A major challenge is that anonymity provides bloggers with moral impunity.

Progressive Political Blogs, Jews, and Israel

Progressive blogs and news sites in the United States are a new field where Jew-hatred, in both its classic and anti-Israeli forms, manifests itself. This incitement is hardly monitored, as many of the most popular blogs are only a few years old and it seems counterintuitive that such anti-Semitic expressions would be found in this political milieu. Monitoring the media for anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli bigotry has so far almost exclusively consisted of reading the major American newspapers,

magazines, and journals and attending to the three major news networks, as well as radio broadcasts. However, the huge amount of content in the political blogosphere makes such monitoring - which is increasingly necessary - much more difficult to achieve with any degree of thoroughness.

The phenomenon of proliferating anti-Semitism in blogs should be seen in a much broader framework. Sixty-seven percent of the worldwide internet population visit social networking sites and blogs (web 2.0), and these are now outpacing email in popularity. According to Nielsen Online[1] they have become the fourth most popular online category. They trail only web searches, general interest portals and communities, and manufacturers.

The political blogosphere encompasses a number of important sites both on the conservative and progressive side. As ranked by a combination of Inbound Links, Alexa Rank, and U.S. traffic data from Compete and Quantcast, the most popular progressive political news sites in the United States are Huffington Post, Salon, and Daily Kos.

These three together have roughly thirteen million unique visitors per month. Huffington Post, launched in 2005, has about ten million; Salon, launched in 1995, over two million; and Daily Kos, launched in 2002, about a million.[2] For comparison, *Nytimes.com* has over seventeen million monthly visitors,[3] while the *New York Times's* daily print circulation is close to a million.[4] The three top conservative news websites are Drudge Report with nearly seven million unique monthly visitors, NewsMax with over 2.5 million, and Free Republic with 1.5 million.

The popularity of political blogs is constantly increasing as traditional media, with falling advertising revenue and much greater costs associated with publication, struggle to stay afloat. For instance, the most popular news website on the internet, Huffington Post, has around fifty full-time employees;[5] the *New York Times* employs more than nine thousand.[6] Bloggers at Huffington Post are not paid for their work.[7] That model, along with the absence of costs associated with putting out a print edition, allows such blogs to maintain a remarkably large amount of continually updated, new content. Daily Kos has eight paid staffers[8] and does not even have an actual main office. According to its founder Markos Moulitsas Zúñiga, business is conducted in a "virtual" office.

The Challenge of Monitoring

In part because of the huge size of the blogosphere, such hateful commentary often escapes the kind of scrutiny that the traditional media faces. The amount of material on the websites of the major blogs makes monitoring them very difficult. The Daily Kos alone, for instance, has thousands of bloggers who contribute to the site, many of whom provide new content daily. In addition, each new blog post often produces hundreds of reader comments - threads that often are poorly monitored by the site if at all.

A major challenge in maintaining some sense of accountability is the fact that some sites, such as Kos, allow bloggers - and those who comment to such posts - to provide a blogger user name instead of their real name. This anonymity may embolden those who would generally be reluctant to attach their names to hateful statements, providing them with a kind of moral impunity. A columnist for the *New York Times* or other traditional print media, or a letter submitted by a reader at such a publication, is easily identified by name and influenced, at the very least, by the fear of public opprobrium.

Some sites, such as Huffington Post or Salon, have readily identifiable contributors. Yet, despite their popularity, the ever-increasing quantity of such bloggers makes each individual blogger less accountable than when such commentators on the national scene were far fewer.

Historical Anti-Semitic Staples in Three Blogs

Anti-Semitic commentary on the three progressive blogs in question falls into three categories.

1. Excessive Jewish Control/Power over Society/Government

The claim that Jews wield disproportionate power and influence over culture, the economy, media, and especially the institutions of government, a power that is injurious to the nation - often rising to the level of a Jewish conspiracy - is clearly anti-Semitic in nature. The U.S. State Department's *2008 Report on Global Anti-Semitism*[9] notes that anti-Semitism includes "stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as a collective-such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions."

Within polite circles Jews are no longer accused of "poisoning the wells." Yet they are still often accused of running Hollywood, controlling the financial system, and manipulating U.S. foreign policy and public debate to blindly support Israel. This latter claim, in particular, is all too common in the commentary reviewed in this article.

2. Dual Loyalty: Jews More Loyal to Israel than to the United States

One of the oldest anti-Semitic staples is that Jews are not sufficiently loyal to the countries where they reside and instead are more loyal to Israel. Indeed, this notion underlay the failure of European emancipation. From the Dreyfus Affair in France through the Nazis' rise to power, Jews - no matter how devoted they actually were to their host countries - were viewed as outsiders lacking in national loyalty.

Such ad hominem attacks against American Jews who support Israel are common within the blogs in question. The "Working Definition of Anti-Semitism" of the

European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia defines as anti-Semitic: "accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations."

3. Israel as Nazi Germany

Since Israel has only been a state for sixty-one years, this is a much more recent manifestation of anti-Semitism. In most working definitions of anti-Semitism, however, charges that Israel's behavior can be compared with the actions of Nazi Germany are considered anti-Semitic. A recent report by the Anti-Defamation League shows that such comparisons are increasingly common among anti-Israeli activists.[10]

Protests against Israel's [Gaza](#) offensive in 2008-2009 included banners and slogans likening Israeli soldiers to German troops, the Gaza Strip to Auschwitz, and the Star of David to the swastika. As the U.S. State Department *Report* notes: "the demonization of Israel, or vilification of Israeli leaders, sometimes through comparisons with Nazi leaders, and through the use of Nazi symbols to caricature them, indicates an anti-Semitic bias rather than a valid criticism of policy concerning a controversial issue."

Salon: Glenn Greenwald

Salon, part of Salon Media Group, is an online magazine with content updated each weekday. It offers reviews and articles about music, books, films, and "modern life," including relationships. Its major focus, however, is American liberal politics. Salon's revenues are derived from in-page advertisements as well as subscriptions. Its current editor in chief is Joan Walsh.

Glenn Greenwald is one of Salon's regular political contributors, and his blog stands out in popularity and influence. Although he is Jewish, he does not refer to this. He also has contributed to the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The National Interest*, and *In These Times*. Interestingly, Greenwald also has penned columns for Patrick Buchanan's paleoconservative magazine *The American Conservative*, often on Israel-related stories.[11]

Since Greenwald's blog is within the broader Salon web address, it is more difficult to measure the traffic his blog generates alone. His blog, however - apart from Salon's general traffic - is typically ranked in the top fifteen (in overall traffic) among all liberal blogs, and in the top twenty in a category including all print and online bloggers/columnists.[12] On 22 January 2009, *Forbes* named Greenwald one of the "25 Most Influential Liberals in the U.S. Media." [13]

Greenwald vs. Israel and Jews

Greenwald not infrequently vilifies supporters of Israel and Jews as such, including implications of dual loyalty and excessive control. Parts of a Greenwald article that was originally posted on *The American*

Conservative are cited on the website of right-wing extremist David Duke. He refers to Greenwald as one of those brave enough to resist the "Likudniks' politically kosher paradigm"[14] and quotes Greenwald's assertion that "large and extremely influential Jewish donor groups are the ones agitating for a U.S. war against [Iran](#), and that is the case because those groups are devoted to promoting Israel's interests." Although, seemingly, such charges of the corrosive influence of "Jewish money" and insufficient American Jewish loyalty to the United States are typical of right-wing extremism and classic anti-Semitism,

Greenwald has a liberal affiliation

Greenwald writes frequently about Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He often focuses on how the conflict plays itself out in American politics, and he makes claims - associated recently with Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer - about the power of the Israel lobby in this political debate. Indeed, the rhetoric Greenwald employs in this context is often much less restrained, and much more hyperbolic, than the more academic style of Walt and Mearsheimer.

Greenwald's Charges of Excessive Jewish Control/Power

Greenwald consistently warns of an organized, dangerously powerful Jewish community that uses intimidation and smear tactics to stifle debate on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He argues that the tactics employed by such Jews have a chilling effect on U.S. freedom of speech. He also claims often that criticism of Israel is forbidden and hazardous to the career of those who engage in it. Of course, his own harsh anti-Israeli statements have not harmed his career at all. Following are some examples:

So absolute has the Israel-centric stranglehold on American policy been that the U.S. Government has made it illegal to broadcast Hezbollah television stations.^[15]

Not even our Constitution's First Amendment has been a match for the endless exploitation of American policy, law and resources [by the Israel lobby] to target and punish Israel's enemies.^[16]

The real goal [of the Israel lobby], as always, was to ensure that there is no debate over America's indescribably self-destructive, blind support for Israeli actions. [Charles] Freeman's critics may have scored a short-term victory in that regard, but the more obvious it becomes what is really driving these scandals, the more difficult it will be to maintain this suffocating control over American debates and American policy.^[17]

The point is that the power the [Israel lobby] exercises [is] harmful in the extreme. They use it to squelch debate, destroy the careers and reputations of those who deviate from their orthodoxies, and compel both political parties to maintain strict adherence to an agenda that is held by a minority of Americans; that is principally

concerned with the interests of a foreign country; and that results in serious cost and harm to the United States.

In doing so, they ensure not only that our policies towards Israel remain firmly in place no matter the outcome of our elections, but also that those policies remain beyond the realm of what can be questioned or debated by those who want to have a political future.^[18]

Anyone who has argued that a desire to protect Israeli interests plays too large of a role in our foreign policy has been subjected to some of the most vicious and relentless smears. Ask Juan Cole about that, or John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt. Those tactics have, as intended, prevented a substantive debate on this question, as most people have feared even approaching the topic.^[19]

[Eisenhower] told Israel that "we handle our affairs exactly as though we didn't have a Jew in America" - and [this] was then likely an uncontroversial sentiment. Today, if an American politician said anything remotely like that - that American interests would take precedence over Israel's...how many seconds would elapse before the full-scale and permanent destruction of their political career was complete?^[20]

If you don't...pledge your loyalty to our policies toward Israel and to Israel, what will happen to you is what just happened to Charles Freeman. You'll be demonized and have your career ended.^[21]

Greenwald's Charges of Dual Loyalty

Greenwald accuses Jews who support Israel of having excessive emotional and cultural attachment to the Jewish state - a support, he implies, that is injurious to U.S. national security interests. The implication is that the only way American Jews could show their loyalty to the United States is by ceasing this support of Israel; moreover, that the two inherently contradict each other. Here are some examples (the first was cited earlier): large and extremely influential Jewish donor groups are the ones agitating for a U.S. war against Iran, and that is the case because those groups are devoted to promoting Israel's interests.^[22]

Those who favor the attack on Gaza are certainly guilty...of such overwhelming emotional and cultural attachment to Israel and Israelis that they long ago ceased viewing this conflict with any remnant of objectivity.^[23]

The dominant narrative among neocons and the media is that, deep down in his heart, [Obama] may be insufficiently devoted to Israel to be President of the United States. Has there ever been another country to which American politicians were required to pledge their uncritical, absolute loyalty the way they are, now, with Israel?^[24]

[Charles] Freeman is being dragged through the mud by the standard cast of accusatory Israel-centric neocons (Marty Peretz, Jon Chait, Jeffrey Goldberg, - *Commentary*, *The Weekly Standard*'s Michael Goldfarb, etc. etc. etc.).^[25]

Greenwald's Demonization of Jewish Israel Supporters

Also of note are Greenwald's extreme accusations against well-known Jewish pro-Israeli commentators, using almost demonizing terminology. In one post he accuses Michael Goldfarb of *The Weekly Standard* and Martin Peretz of *The New Republic* of "psychopathic derangement" over what he characterizes as their insensitivity toward civilian deaths. He goes on to impute to them "sociopathic indifference," and says these are the same attributes as terrorists possess. Goldfarb and Peretz, he says further, seem to get a "blood-pumping excitement" from the suffering of the weakest members of society.[26]

Regarding syndicated columnist Charles Krauthammer, Greenwald asserts: "It is difficult to find someone with a more psychopathic indifference to the slaughter of innocent people in pursuit of shadowy, unstated political goals than Charles Krauthammer." [27] And Greenwald calls Senator Joe Lieberman, in the context of his support for Israel, a "bloodthirsty" fanatic.[28]

Daily Kos: Background

Daily Kos is a progressive blog publishing news and opinion. It functions as a discussion forum and group blog for a variety of activists, whose efforts are primarily directed toward influencing and strengthening the Democratic Party. The site makes clear that "This is a Democratic blog, a partisan blog...with one goal in mind: Electoral victory." [29] Additionally, the site features a participatory political encyclopedia, glossaries, and other permanent content.

Daily Kos is an example of a collaborative blog, offering comment-posting privileges to its visitors. Daily Kos was founded by Moulitsas in 2002. It is financially sustained by advertising. Members can also purchase an ad-free subscription to the site.

In June 2006, members of Daily Kos organized the first-ever political blogger convention, called Yearly Kos, in Las Vegas, Nevada. The event was attended by approximately one thousand bloggers and featured appearances by prominent Democrats such as Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, California Senator Barbara Boxer, General Wesley Clark, Governors Mark Warner, Bill Richardson, Tom Vilsak, and Democratic National Committee Chair Howard Dean. Subsequent annual conventions became known as Netroots Nation and also were attended by an array of prominent Democratic Party leaders.[30]

The rules for Daily Kos diarists state that posts/comments may be deleted that:

- Contain hateful or defamatory writing
- Are deliberately designed to inflame
- Contain deliberately inflammatory titles, or titles that contain attacks

Daily Kos: Israel Equals Nazi Germany

Narratives advancing the third abovementioned anti-Semitic staple, Israel as Nazi Germany, appear perfectly acceptable in the Daily Kos community. It is common to find commentary that describes a Jewish state whose behavior is nothing short of evil, and even descends to the level exhibited by Nazi Germany.

On Israel-related news, one of the most frequent Daily Kos bloggers is one called Heathlander[31] who also maintains his own blog.[32] Heathlander has penned diaries - which are still up on the Kos website - with such headlines as "Suicide Bombings Are An Inevitable Result Of Israel's Military Policies"[33] and "Israeli war criminals - in their own words." [34] In one post Heathlander says: "Just as the French had the right to violently resist the Nazi occupation...so the Palestinians have the right to violently resist the Israeli occupation." [35] In one long post, Heathlander would not condemn a fellow Kos blogger who used the term "Zionist Occupied America." [36]

A Kos blogger called monkeypundit penned a post, still on the Kos site, titled "The Rise and Irony of the Zionist Reich." It claims that "Israel's government has policies that have become morbidly reminiscent of Nazi Germany's." In a poll at the end of the post, readers were asked to vote on the question: "Do you see the parallels between the Israeli Government and Nazi Germany?" Of Kos readers responding to the poll, 65 out of 146 said "Yes." [37]

A Kos blogger named makechessnotwar penned "In defense of violence," where he compared Israel with Nazi Germany and accused the Jewish state of practicing ethnic cleansing. The blogger states, "We should...cheer destruction of Israeli infrastructure, including telecommunication and transport, just as we do in the movies when Nazi infrastructure is bombed or hit," and "there are times when violent acts may be needed to defend themselves against the atrocities being visited on them by the barbarians in charge of Israel." [38]

Kos blogger "jon the antizionist jew" penned a long entry, "Israeli minister threatens Palestinians with a 'Holocaust,'" where he ponders the similarities between Israel and Nazi Germany. The post quotes authors who are quite unreserved in their likening of Nazis and Jewish Israelis, such as Illan Pappé, Richard Falk, and Sara Roy. It concludes by saying: "A Zionist Israel will always look to the Holocaust as the all-purpose justification for their violence towards the Palestinian Other (in defense, of course), and they will always recoil at the process by which the Israeli state comes to resemble its past tormenter in the dishing out of such systematic violence and horror." [39]

Kos blogger Snowy Owl's Diary says, in a post still on the site:

The Warsaw Jewish Resistance saved so many lives, just has [sic] [Hamas](#) saved so many lives. But now U.S. and Canada do not want a Nuremberg kind of Court to look out on Israeli war...crimes. I presume because Israel, unlike the Nazis, have not yet been crunched

[sic]. I know...that their day will come as any other Nations in history, but why will it need so many deaths from the all out war that Israel is leading us? I honestly believe the Israeli God made a mistake in calling them the chosen ones. God...probably had other values than humans [sic] one[s].[40]

Jewish Conspiracy at Daily Kos

For the most part, when conspiratorial charges of undue Jewish influence are leveled on Kos, they are thinly veiled by putting the word Zionist before the word Jew. In the several examples given, however, even this thin, disingenuous distinction between "Zionist Jews" and "regular Jews" breaks down.

Kos blogger Poli Sci 000 posted a diary on Kos called "Apartheid Israel trying to start World War III." It refers to a "secret Jewish coalition raising funds in excess of \$200 million to wage a propaganda war in America in an attempt to gain American support for another war against Iran." The post later refers to President Bush's former press secretary, Ari Fleischer, as Joseph Goebbels.[41]

Kos blogger Felipe IV posts a title: "Zionist Jews are now a crowd in the Obama Cabinet," pasting an article from a website called cherada.com. The article complains that "Most of the officials who will integrate [sic] the cabinet of Obama are renowned operators of the Jewish Zionist Financial lobby of New York." [42]

Another Kos blogger called qrswave has penned diaries about Israel with such headings as "Imagine a world without Israel." In that one he openly longs for a world where Israel does not exist and waxes eloquent on the peace and harmony that would result from the destruction of the Jewish state.[43] Although qrswave has apparently lost his posting privileges, this and other posts he wrote are still on the site. So is his profile, which links to his own openly anti-Semitic blog, The Truth Will Set You Free.[44]

One post on The Truth Will Set You Free quotes Charles Lindberg warning in 1941 that the Jews are the only ones pushing the United States toward war.[45] Another post refers to *The Diary of Anne Frank* as "Zionist fairy tales." [46] Still another argues that all U.S.-based Zionist organizations should be dismantled for treason and disloyal Zionist Jews banned and deported to Israel.[47]

Kos blogger Nepos Libertas is also a blogger at The Truth Will Set You Free. Nepos Libertas has one post at Daily Kos titled "Eulogy before the Inevitability of Self-Destruction: The Decline and Death of Israel." [48] It includes a photo of a coffin superimposed with the Israeli flag and refers to a "Zionist movement multiplying like cancer cells." It also accuses Israel of "embodying the vessel of boiling blood of horror and perfidy in demonic vileness for its pattern of terrorism and murder in the name of Zionist ideology." It goes on to state that "After the murder of JFK, Israel has extended its Zionist tentacle to grasp the United States by the neck," and concludes:

When Israel loses in the great hypothetical battle...in the unforeseeable future, it shall deploy the spread wings

of nuclear warheads to destroy adversaries and allies in the obliteration of innumerable millions of human beings, animals and organic life, inferring its conceived truth of absolute moral relativism as having possessed annihilative power in taking the world down with Israel in the orgiastically ethnocentric finale of existentially triumphant self-destruction as the ultimately defeated enemy of the civilized world. This is the bidding of a farewell formed in the extension of a middle finger by the militantly atheistic Luciferian Ashkenazic Jewish sect that - resolved they be - believe in - by genetic predisposition and/or indoctrination from birth - supremacism of the Master Race, because they have accomplished the goal of procreating State of Israel to dominate in hegemony by the art of seduction....

At the end of the post is a graphic containing the Israeli flag, with a swastika superimposed on the Star of David. Notably, this post is still on the site.

Apparently, those in charge of this progressive blog do not regard such comparisons between Israeli Jews and Nazis, or explicitly anti-Semitic descriptions of Jews and Israel as demonic forces seeking the destruction of the world, as either hateful or sufficiently inflammatory to be removed from the site.

Eyal Rosenberg and Daily Kos

Eyal Rosenberg, an Israeli blogger associated with the Left, seemingly should have been the ideal match for this political blog that is popular with Democratic Party activists. Yet his last post on the site explained his decision to leave Kos: "Reading the [comments] over the past months on Daily Kos has led me to believe that people here, under the 'progressive' banner, support views that end up in one place: Me dead." He went on to complain of the "many comments and diaries here show[ing] HAMAS was flexible and peace loving, versus those evil warlike Zionists...."

Rosenberg concluded:

Reading this site for the past few months has me feeling like I was reading the writings of West European communists in the 1970's: Confidant, [sic] just, well written, scientific, moral (remember the 'evils' of capitalism?). Ye - in the view of history - utter garbage.

I came to this site with Leftist Zionist Environmentalist Pro-Peace ideology (Meretz style). I leave it with a heavy doubt of the entire "Progressive" ideology, morals and goals.[49]

Huffington Post

Explicitly anti-Semitic remarks on the comments section of Huffington Post, the largest political online magazine on the web, became so severe that the media watchdog group CAMERA issued a comprehensive report titled "Has Huffington Post Become a Magnet for Israel Haters?" [50] The report demonstrates that articles about Israel, whatever their specific topic or ideological position, often generate a barrage of unsubstantiated charges as well as ad hominem attacks against dissenting commenters. "A dedicated crowd of anti-Israel commenters" seem to be on permanent alert for articles

dealing with Israel. Accusations against Jews and Israel, popular among political fringe groups, are leveled routinely.

Background

Huffington Post is a progressive news website and aggregated blog founded by Arianna Huffington, Kenneth Lerer and Jonah Peretti. It features various news sources and columnists and covers politics, media, business, entertainment, living, style, the environment, world news, and comedy. It is a top destination for news, blogs, and other original content. In four years Huffington Post has become the most linked-to site on the internet.[51]

Huffington Post was launched on 9 May 2005 as a commentary outlet and liberal alternative to conservative news aggregators like Drudge Report. In November 2008, Huffington Post completed a \$15 million fund-raising drive from investors to finance expansion including more investigative journalism and the provision of local news across the United States.

A 2008 report by Eric Alterman in *The New Yorker* said Huffington Post had finally broken even or was on the verge of posting modest profits based solely on advertising revenue. That revenue is believed to amount to \$6-10 million annually.[52]

The CAMERA Report on Huffington Post

CAMERA reviewed talkback threads following news stories or essays pertaining to Israel that have appeared on Huffington Post since 2006, and found that "crude and often vile slanders against Jews and Israel" were common.

Yet, in the talkback section of the site, Huffington Post states that comments will be deleted that:

- are abusive, off-topic, use excessive foul language
- include ad hominem attacks including comments that celebrate the death or illness of any person, public figure or otherwise
- contain racist, sexist, homophobic and other slurs

CAMERA's tally of 236 sequential entries from a portion of the comment thread - containing over one thousand comments - following one article about Israel found that 73 percent condemned Israel or Jews. Most often this took the form of accusing Jews of controlling the government and being disloyal. Among the most common topics raised by Israel's critics in this sample of 236 entries were:

55 contended that AIPAC or the "Jewish Lobby" control the US government.

35 raised the charge of dual loyalty by Jewish members of Congress.

11 focused on alleged Jewish control of the media....

24 were more generalized anti-Semitic rants lacking any specificity.

Israel Commentators at Huffington Post

A look at the Israel section of the site reveals that Huffington Post is quite comfortable with columnists who routinely express disdain for the Jewish state and for Zionism more broadly. Such writers include:

Antony Loewenstein:[53] Cofounder of the group Independent Australian Jewish Voices, Loewenstein has echoed Tony Judt's characterization of Israel as an "anachronism"[54] and accused its Diaspora supporters of believing in Jewish racial superiority. His blog, Antonyloewenstein.com, contains posts with titles such as: "Jew Demands We Stay Focused on Oppressing Arabs"; "One State Solution Moves Closer and Closer"; "South African Jews Killing Arabs in the Name of Zionism"; "War with Iran is not Inevitable, No Matter what Zionists Say";[55] "How to dismantle Zionism in a few easy steps." [56]

Jumal Juma:[57] Coordinator of the Palestinian grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign, which supports boycotting Israeli goods, Juma occasionally writes for the radical anti-Zionist newsletter/blog Counterpunch.[58] Going even further than the article in the Swedish tabloid *Aftonbladet* that charged Israelis with harvesting the organs of Palestinians, Counterpunch recently made news by claiming that the blood libel - the notion that Jews ritually murdered gentiles - is true and is related to such organ thefts.

Kevin Coval:[59] A poet, Coval was disinvited from the left-wing J Street's inaugural conference because of incendiary comments he had made. Coval, however, recently penned a piece for Huffington Post titled "Why I'm Not A Zionist." [60] In it he states:

I cannot believe in the...Zionist project. It's built on bodies and lies.... One of its slogans, rooted in the same malicious revisionism as American History and Holocaust denial, is - A land without people, for a people without land.... The formation of the State of Israel is rooted in blood and deceit, is the same story as all colonies built in the name of Imperialism, Capitalism and Dehumanization. Therefore, I am not Zionist.

Phyllis Bennis:[61] A member of the steering committee of the US Campaign to End Israeli Occupation, Bennis, at an event held by Friends of Sabeel in North America, stated: "Israeli policies are designed to suppress one racial group while favoring another." She also demanded an end to the U.S. "unconditional support for Israeli apartheid." In a 2008 booklet called "Iran in the Crosshairs: How to Prevent Washington's Next War," Bennis defends Iran and argues that President Mahmoud [Ahmadinejad](#)'s calls to "wipe Israel off the map" were misinterpreted. Actually, "the threat is the other way around" because Israel is pushing for a war against Iran. She concludes by asserting that a major reason for U.S. toughness toward Iran is that "Israel's powerful lobbies" have "embraced Israel's approach to Iran" and have created a "serious stumbling block" to efforts to prevent a war against Iran.[62]

Adam Shapiro:[63] A cofounder of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), which spreads anti-Israeli propaganda and supports those who engage in terror against Israel, Shapiro found himself in the media spotlight when he accompanied an ambulance to Yasser Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah after it was surrounded by the Israeli military in 2003. During his stay he reportedly had breakfast with Arafat. Shapiro has spoken throughout the United States about the ISM's activities and, according to the Anti-Defamation League, has compared Israeli behavior toward Palestinians to that of the Nazis.

Conclusions

Taken together, the more than thirteen million unique monthly visitors to Huffington Post, Daily Kos, and Salon represent the opinions of many of the most politically engaged within the American progressive community. The increasing hostility toward Israel and its Jewish supporters on these blogs becomes even more worrisome in light of polling data on the views of such progressives.

For instance, an aggregate poll[64] by Gallup on American support for Israel by party affiliation, from 2002 to 2006, demonstrated that liberal Democrats are the least supportive of Israel out of five categories: conservative Republican, moderate/liberal Republican, conservative Democrat, moderate Democrat, and liberal Democrat. When asked whether they support Israel, the Palestinians, or neither/don't know, only among the liberal Democrats did a clear majority of 55 percent either support the Palestinians or respond with "neither/don't know," with only 43 percent supporting Israel. Conservative Republicans were the most pro-Israeli, with 78 percent supporting Israel outright. Indeed, many of the more popular conservative blogs/news sites - such as Drudge Report, Newsmax, Townhall, and Hot Air - tend to be supportive of Israel. They also are largely free of the strain of paleoconservative thought, exemplified by *The American Conservative*, that has historically been hostile to Jews and Israel.

There is even evidence to suggest that the outright anti-Semitism featured in this report is consistent with the increasing identification with such views among the American progressive community as a whole. A Stanford University poll[65] in May-June 2009 gauged the extent to which anti-Semitism was increasing as a result of the U.S. economic crisis. Respondents who were self-described Democrats were nearly twice as likely as those who identified themselves as Republicans to agree that Jews, as a group, were primarily responsible for the economic meltdown. The authors called this finding "somewhat surprising given the presumed higher degree of racial tolerance among liberals and the fact that Jews are a central part of the Democratic Party's electoral coalition."

Seemingly, even for those who deny that hatred of the Jewish state represents a new form of anti-Semitism it would be difficult to defend the manifestations of classic

anti-Semitism - staples of dual loyalty, Jewish control, and so - seen in these blogs. Such sentiments hearken back to the racially and religiously based anti-Semitism of centuries past, a historically lethal force that self-styled progressives should ostensibly be in the forefront of resisting. And yet, a blogger with a large national following such as Glenn Greenwald, among others, can bemoan the corrosive effects of "Jewish money" and still be considered a progressive in good standing. This is despite the fact that progressive politics is supposed to entail a commitment to combating bigotry of all kinds and a sensitivity to even subtle negative stereotypes.

Likening anti-Semitism to pollution, in a *Jerusalem Post* interview Manfred Gerstenfeld[66] makes a distinction between that "which comes out of a chimney and spreads over a huge area" and that "which comes from the exhaust pipes of millions of cars, each one contributing its little bit." The former, he says, was characteristic of the Nazi era with its "leader," Adolf Hitler, as the central cause of the anti-Semitic smoke the world over. The latter, Gerstenfeld claims, characterizes today's postmodern form of the phenomenon: global but fragmented, with no single leader. Indeed, this aptly describes the new, diffuse media with its myriad of political blogs that lack any central and readily identifiable address, or "boss." This situation enables the new media to escape the regular and focused scrutiny that previously existed.

It is impossible to know just how much harm such rhetoric emanating from progressive blogs is causing. But it is time for principled progressives to take a stand against those in their own ideological community who claim to oppose all forms of intolerance but exhibit it blatantly toward Israel and Jews.

During an appearance by Martin Luther King, Jr. at Harvard University, a student stood up and made a sharply hostile comment about Zionism. King responded: "When people criticize Zionists they mean Jews, you are talking anti-Semitism." [67]

Such moral clarity is needed to confront the increasingly acceptable hatred of Israel - and Jews - within the American progressive community.

Notes

- [1] <http://r-rwebdesign.com/blog/?p=567>
- [2] www.ebizmba.com/articles/political-news-websites
- [3] www.techcrunch.com/2009/05/20/twitter-surges-past-digg-linked-in-and-nytimescom-with-32-million-global-visitors/
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Before moving to Israel in 2009, Adam Levick worked in the Civil Rights Division at the National Office of the Anti-Defamation League, where he was responsible for monitoring progressive journals and political blogs in the United States. He has published in the *Philadelphia Bulletin* and the *Jewish Exponent*.

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The Mask of the Marranos

By Allan Nadler

The creation of the modern state of Israel has awakened many dormant cultural pursuits, perhaps none so dramatic as the discovery of long-lost Jews. Every decade or so, another tribe of supposed descendants of biblical Israel—marked by quirky uses of Jewish symbols, eclectic religious observance, and a smattering of Hebrew prayers—is revealed to have been keeping the flame in some remote area of the world, from Africa to the subcontinent. The repatriation to Israel of members of these remnants of the long Jewish exile—from the Bene Israel of India to the Falasha of Ethiopia and the Lemba of South Africa—has been among the most inspiring aspects of the modern “ingathering of the exiles” that has animated the Zionist idea.

Although the unique historical narratives of such groups have differed greatly, all have been adamant that they are authentic descendants of one of the legendary “10 lost tribes” that disappeared from history in the 8th century B.C.E.; have insisted on being recognized as fully Jewish; and have faced a battery of obstacles to their reassimilation into the greater Jewish population—obstacles, though often resented, they have striven mightily to overcome through formal conversion ceremonies and, ultimately, immigration to Israel.

But there is one sobering exception to this scenario. Beginning in the early 20th century, a number of communities in Portugal were unearthed as “Marranos”—that is, descendants of the once proud crypto-Jewish nation that came into being when Iberian Jews were

coerced into baptism and then persecuted for centuries by the Spanish Inquisition. (*Marrano* is a contemptuous Spanish epithet for “swine” or “filth” that eventually became the standard appellation for this community of *Conversos*, or converts.) Other groups of Marranos have been found in rural communities in just about every territory ever colonized by Spain and Portugal, from South America to Texas and New Mexico, as well as in places like Turkey, where refugees of the Inquisition were welcomed by the Ottoman Empire.

Forced to hide their true inner religious identity in order to survive in medieval Hispanic Catholic societies, the distant and diluted remnants of the Marranos (or “Judaizing New Christians,” as they were sometimes called) often made great sacrifices to observe what they could, and could remember, of the Jewish tradition and maintain their credo that “salvation comes only through the Torah of Moses.” Centuries of living outwardly as Christians while maintaining, usually without recalling why, the barest vestiges of their original Jewish faith took a severe psychological toll. Secrecy and avoidance of any displays of their residual Jewish practices, combined with public lives of pious Catholicism, became entrenched over the centuries, along with a deeply ingrained fear, bordering on paranoia, of being outed. True to form, most contemporary Marranos have tended to fear their rediscovery as Jews and resisted rejoining the people of Israel, from whom they were cruelly separated half a millennium ago.

Jewish historians have long been divided about the complex question of the Marranos’ “Jewishness.” At one pole is the so-called Jerusalem school of Jewish historiography, which has stubbornly maintained that, despite their centuries-long disconnection, the Marranos remained Jews in every meaningful respect. At the opposite pole are historians like Benzion Netanyahu (the 100-year-old father of the Israeli prime minister), who, giving weight to the overwhelming consensus of rabbinical opinion spanning almost five centuries, have insisted that in initially choosing baptism and later failing to take advantage of the opportunity to leave pre-Inquisition Portugal, the Marranos forfeited their membership in the Jewish nation and situated themselves outside Jewish history.

In an ambitious new work, the intellectual historian Yirmiyahu Yovel rejects both these approaches, favoring instead a portrait of the Marranos as neither Jewish nor Christian but something *sui generis*—“the other within,” in the striking phrase that serves as the title of his book, the summa of his distinguished career as a scholar of Baruch Spinoza and premodern Jewry. More important, Yovel believes the *phenomenon* of Marranism marks a new and significant element in the Jewish historical narrative, one that anticipated the varieties of Jewish identity that would emerge in post-Enlightenment Europe.

The heartbreaking history of the Marranos begins with the forced conversions of tens of thousands of Jews at the height of the Christian conquest of Spain. Jews had lived in Iberia since the 8th century, and although they

were subjected to forced conversions and punitive Church inquiries into the sincerity of those conversions by the Kingdom of Aragon as far back as the mid-13th century, the continuous existence of a community of secret Jews starts with the wave of pogroms that erupted in Seville in 1391. No major Jewish community was spared. The eminent Jewish philosopher Hasdai Crescas witnessed the horrors in Barcelona:

Using bows and catapults, the mob fought against the Jews assembled in the Citadel, beating and smashing them in the tower. Many sanctified the name of God [that is, died for the Jewish religion] among them my own only son, an innocent bridal lamb...Some slew themselves, others jumped from the tower...but all the rest converted... And, because of our sins, today there is no one in Barcelona called an Israelite.

Despite Crescas's reference to "many" martyrs, the historical record suggests that the majority of Spanish Jews confronted with the slogan "Death or the Cross" chose the cross. Over the course of the ensuing century of Christian persecution, which reached its nadir with the final expulsion of all Jews from Spain in 1492, some 200,000 Jews saved their lives by accepting baptism and, at least outwardly, leading Christian lives. Eighty thousand of their more resourceful brethren escaped to Portugal, thought to be more tolerant; but in short order they, too, faced a cruel fate: mass conversions in 1497, followed by a royal decree prohibiting the New Christians from leaving the country. The net result of this merciless entrapment of the Portuguese Conversos was that the enduring epicenter of Marranism became Portugal and its colonies.

It is certain that for a significant number (according to some historians, well over half) of these Conversos, the new "faith" was a façade, solely the consequence of lethal coercion. Not only did they remain Jewish at heart, they continued for centuries to observe elements of Jewish religious ritual, at great risk to their lives. The Marranos' historically remarkable tenacity generated a popular image of them in Jewish memory as not merely fully Jewish—a dubious status given their choice of conversion and subsequent high rates of intermarriage with original Christians—but as righteous heroes who sacrificed their lives "for the sake of Heaven."

One of Yovel's notable achievements is challenging this misnomer and complicating its more sophisticated adoption by historians. He vividly recounts an abundance of Converso biographies that illustrate the complex spectrum of their identities and beliefs—from fervent Catholicism to pious Judaizing to a deep skepticism about both religions that he identifies as the earliest manifestations of modern Jewish secularism.

In Yovel's view, the Jewish romancers of the Marranos fallaciously assume that the barest and most residual Judaic behavior on the part of the Conversos constitutes evidence of their Jewishness. (Their scholarship, he notes with grim irony, often accepts at face value the "discoveries" by overzealous Inquisitors of supposedly "Judaizing" practices among the New Christians.) Among his most fascinating refutations of

this notion pertains to the endurance among a large number of Marranos of the practice of eating the slow-cooked Sabbath stew, known among Spanish and Moroccan Jews to this day as *adafina* (what American Jews call cholent). While the genesis of this dish, which is prepared before sundown on Friday, lies in the biblical prohibition of kindling a fire on the Sabbath itself, Yovel notes that its enduring popularity among the Conversos hardly constitutes proof of Sabbath -observance:

The Inquisitors' meticulous concern with this dish highlights their bias in identifying secret Jews. *Adafina*, with its hearty ingredients and prolonged cooking is indeed distinctive—not of Jewish cult but of Jewish gastronomy... It is well known that food preferences, especially for distinctive ethnic dishes, are the last customs to disappear in immigrant and assimilating societies, the readiest object of group nostalgia, and the last bastion of ethnic characteristics.

That even those Marranos who retained secret religious practices failed to take advantage of a long period of clemency in Portugal, from 1507-1536, when they were given permission to leave the country without their relatives' suffering retribution, convinces Yovel that their Judaic beliefs were hardly fervent. Still, he does not go as far as the likes of Benzion Netanyahu (whose work Yovel derides) in seeing subsequent Marrano history as a non-Jewish phenomenon. He suggests a provocative analogy to the beliefs of moderns: Most Judaizing Marranos no longer yearned for Judaism as a concrete reality, but as an ideal, infinite dream. This is similar to the contemporary Jewish yearning for the Messiah, expressed in the saying "Next Year in Jerusalem," which is also not pronounced with any concrete intention... Jews have educated themselves to wait for a messiah that does not really come...not in our lifetime, but in a Messianic era, which is always deferred and projected beyond the present.

Of course, there was nothing removed or dispassionate about the messianic faith of the victims of the Spanish Expulsion and Inquisition. Don Isaac Abarbanel, the greatest Jewish scholar to leave Spain in 1492, produced three tracts in which he viewed the calamities as heralding messianic times. Messianic fervor was even more feverish among Marranos who managed to escape from Portugal in later decades. In a book otherwise so comprehensive, Yovel's silence about the later susceptibility of the Marranos to the 17th-century false messianic movement of Shabbetai Zevi is surprising. This is especially the case since, after Zevi's conversion to Islam in 1665, many of his followers in the Ottoman Empire, especially in the Greek city of Salonika, assumed a false Islamic identity, becoming known as "Donmeh."

That a large number of Donmeh today are known to descend from Portuguese Marranos is not surprising. They were practiced in the art of religious dissimulation long before becoming Sabbatians. What is more than a little shocking is the widespread accusations by radical Islamists and assorted other anti-Semites in contemporary Turkey that their enemies—beginning with

founder of secular Turkish democracy, Kemal Atatürk, himself—are Donmeh conspirators. Given Yovel’s near obsession with the degree to which the Marranos prefigured modernity, his omission of this fascinating chapter is regrettable.

At any rate, he argues that in time, a significant number of Marranos developed an active hostility to all religious dogmas and ecclesiastical authorities. Citing numerous statements from the Inquisition’s archives of Marrano confessions that indicate a disdain for supernatural beliefs, he concludes that many of them had replaced their Jewish faith not with a Christian one but with a “growing concern for this worldly secular affairs and even religious indifference and skepticism.”

Why Cordoba?

The Ground Zero Islamic center was named for a period in Spanish-Muslim history that some call a golden age of tolerance

By Marc Tracy



Córdoba, Spain

Amid the debate over the Islamic center slated to be built two blocks from Ground Zero, few have stopped to consider the project’s name. Though it is now to be called [Park51](#)—a reference to its address, 45-51 Park Place—its initial name was Cordoba House, and the nonprofit behind it remains the [Cordoba Initiative](#). It’s a reference to the city of Córdoba. But what does southern Spain have to do with southern Manhattan?

Córdoba was the capital of the Islamic caliphate that controlled the Iberian peninsula during the Middle Ages. Feisal Abdul Rauf, the imam who runs the Cordoba Initiative with his wife, named his project “after the period between roughly 800 and 1200 CE, when the Cordoba Caliphate ruled much of today’s Spain, and its name reminds us that Muslims created what was, in its era, the most enlightened, pluralistic, and tolerant society on earth,” he wrote in his 2004 book [What’s Right With Islam](#). Rauf is seeking to align himself with those who

see the period as the “Golden Age of Spain,” or what’s called the *convivencia*—“the coexistence”—when members of the three Abrahamic faiths lived side-by-side in peace, prosperity, and astonishing cultural and intellectual creativity.

For almost two centuries, though, as many Jewish scholars have described medieval Spain as atrocious for its Jews as have seen it as a sort of utopia. The latest to call the utopians’ bluff is essayist Hillel Halkin, in his 2010 Nextbook Press [biography](#) of the period’s greatest Jewish poet, Yehuda Halevi. “The higher Jews did rise,” Halkin writes of the time and place, “the more they aroused the anger and resentment of the Muslim or Christian majority, and the more vulnerable they became. The culture of tolerance stretched only so far.” Muslims, Christians, and Jews in medieval Spain “kept socially to themselves,” according to Halkin, “never intermarried, were convinced of the superiority of their own faith, and shared no common identity.” As for the intimations of some that the period was an ancestor of our contemporary multicultural West? “Such an analogy,” Halkin concludes, “is misleading.”

The debate over what Spain was like for its Jews 900 years ago has rarely been purely academic. Rather, over the past two centuries, Jewish historians have frequently seen in the period things they needed to see in order to make arguments about contemporary circumstances. If coexistence in Christian- and Muslim-ruled Spain was possible even in the 11th century, some have argued, then why do Jews today need a state in which they are the ones in charge—why, rather, shouldn’t the states in which they already reside welcome them as fully equal citizens? And if, on the other hand, even the *convivencia*—supposedly history’s most brightly shining beacon of multifaith tolerance—was a myth, then how could the Jews do *without* a state in which they are the ones in charge? The battle over medieval Spain is, to many, a battle over Zionism, and over what it means to be a Jew today.

According to Princeton historian Mark Cohen, the notion of *convivencia*, of medieval Spain as utopia, began with mid-19th century German-Jewish historians. Disappointed to find that emancipation did not equal equality, they crafted a long-ago world of true Jewish freedom as the model that their own world failed to live up to. “They looked back nostalgically to Muslim Spain, and said, ‘Look there,’ ” Cohen told me. “They wanted to embarrass the Christians.” They were not demanding a state of their own; on the contrary, they were demanding the right to live freely in another people’s state and, moreover, to be considered members of that people.

A subsequent batch of historians, under the spell of early-20th-century Zionism, cast medieval Spain not as a utopia but as, according to Cohen, “an unmitigated disaster.” They did so in order to argue that “Arab anti-Semitism is firmly rooted in a congenital, endemic Muslim/Arab Jew-hatred,” which in turn buttressed their case for a country of, by, and for the Jewish people.

So, which of those versions is right? Neither, Cohen said. In one essay, he refers to a “myth” (the German historians’ heaven) and a “counter-myth” (the Zionist historians’ hell) and asserts that the truth lies somewhere in between. Those who hold up the period as an ideal are exaggerating: “In a medieval situation,” he argues, “where you have monotheistic religions living in proximity, there is no such thing as toleration.” (In other words, tell “toleration” to the Jews of Granada, many of whom were massacred by angry Muslims in 1066, or to Granada’s Jewish vizier at the time, who was crucified.) And those who downplay the extent of tolerance and pluralism exaggerate, too. “If by *convivencia*,” said Cornell historian Ross Brann, “we mean that cultural and social proximity, conversation, and interaction among Jews, Muslims, and Christians were significant and productive,” then *convivencia* was real.

Despite the rise of this compromise position, some historians continue to push versions of the two more extreme versions of the period. The most prominent contemporary member of what might be termed the “utopian” school is Yale humanities professor Maria Rosa Menocal. And the historian to most recently advance the “counter-myth”—to posit that medieval Spain was largely hellish for its Jews—is Halkin.

Though *Yehuda Halevi* is wide-ranging (it spends a great deal of time, for example, on Halevi’s poetry, which Halkin translated), its central thesis is this: The defining moment of Halevi’s life was his decision to leave Spain for the Holy Land—a decision he made after realizing that a Jew could not freely and fully be a Jew in the Spain of his lifetime (roughly 1070 to 1140). “Halevi understood,” Halkin argues, “that Gentile oppression was the inevitable result of exilic existence.” It was an inevitable result nine centuries ago, and—to hear Halkin tell it—it remains an inevitable result today. And just as *aliyah* was the solution to the oppressiveness of exilic existence nine centuries ago, so it remains, according to Halkin, the solution today.

Yehuda Halevi is really a dual biography: a biography and an autobiography. “Like Yehuda Halevi,” writes Halkin, who moved from the United States to Israel in 1970, “I grew up with *convivencia*. It was just that the *con* didn’t go with the *vivencia*. Like wrong pieces of a puzzle, the two sides of me refused to fit together. The Jew and the American were barely on speaking terms.” The central moment in Halkin’s own life was when he chose to make *aliyah*, much as Halevi had done.

Halevi needs *convivencia* to have been a myth, and to be replaceable with a world in which the Granada pogrom was merely the most extreme example of a general trend, because Zionism—specifically, the strand of Zionism that states that Jews must rule themselves and have the ability to defend themselves—is a second-order value for him. For this reason, he attacks Menocal, the Yale professor and ultimate Golden Age-ist, in his book. In his interview with me, he asserted that medieval Spain has been “greatly idealized” and that Menocal and

others, “in holding it up as some kind of human ideal of coexistence, are involved in a distortion of history.”

(Brann, of Cornell, disputes Halevi’s characterization. “Menocal only asserts that this period of cultural creativity featured abundant social and economic interaction,” he told me. And Cohen accused Halkin of projecting his polemical method onto Menocal; he insists that she is an academic historian seeking the objective truth rather than a debater trying to make a point. Menocal declined to comment for this article, instead referring me to Brann and Cohen.)

The professors I spoke to—who all offered various praises of *Yehuda Halevi*—supplied the same general critique: Halkin is a talented writer; he knows his stuff; but he is not an academic. More to the point, he does not possess the academic’s relentlessly single-minded focus on determining *what actually happened*. Rather, he allows his historical descriptions to be influenced by his ideological beliefs—“He’s very political,” said Raymond P. Scheindlin, of the Jewish Theological Seminary, “and has very strong opinions about the role of the Jewish people in the world.” (See Scheindlin and Halkin discussing Halevi earlier this year.)



Hillel Halkin: *Yehuda Halevi* A masterful biography of Yehuda Halevi, poet laureate of the Jewish people

Halkin can snipe as good as he is sniped at. “Academics are in the habit of deconstructing everyone but themselves,” he told me. Additionally, he is merely the latest in a two-century-old line of Jewish historians who have deployed preferred versions of medieval Spain in arguments about the present day. “I suppose you could say,” he admitted, “that the book was written all along with what I openly profess to having: A Zionist bias.” He added, “My Halevi is very much a Zionist, or a proto-Zionist. I approached the subject with that sense, and I came away with it only strengthened.”

Imam Rauf, the man behind the Cordoba Initiative, appears to be doing much the same thing as Halkin: using his view of what Spain used to be to advance his idea for what the world ought to be today. (Rauf is

traveling and did not reply to requests for comment.) “We strive for a ‘New Cordoba,’ a time when Jews, Christians, Muslims, and all other faith traditions will live together in peace, enjoying a renewed vision of what the good society can look like,” he writes in the introduction to his 2004 book.

I asked Halkin what he thought of the Cordoba Initiative’s name. “It’s obvious what Cordoba stands for,” he replied. “Whether the real Cordoba was what Cordoba stands for is another question. But there’s nothing terribly wrong with it.”

So, maybe the solution is just to move beyond symbols? “We’re all basically defending our choices and lives and honors,” Halkin told me. “My Halevi is a defense of the choices I’ve made.”

“I’m willing to put Halevi aside and just say it,” he added.

Tablet Magazine

If Israel goes down, we all go down

*Anger over Gaza is a distraction.
We cannot forget that Israel is the
West’s best ally in a turbulent region*

By José María Aznar

Former Spanish Prime Minister published in the British newspaper 'The Times' on 17 June 2010

For far too long now it has been unfashionable in Europe to speak up for Israel. In the wake of the recent incident on board a ship full of anti-Israeli activists in the Mediterranean, it is hard to think of a more unpopular cause to champion.

In an ideal world, the assault by Israeli commandos on the Mavi Marmara would not have ended up with nine dead and a score wounded. In an ideal world, the soldiers would have been peacefully welcomed on to the ship. In an ideal world, no state, let alone a recent ally of Israel such as Turkey, would have sponsored and organised a flotilla whose sole purpose was to create an impossible situation for Israel: making it choose between giving up its security policy and the naval blockade, or risking the wrath of the world.

In our dealings with Israel, we must blow away the red mists of anger that too often cloud our judgment. A reasonable and balanced approach should encapsulate the following realities: first, the state of Israel was created by a decision of the UN. Its legitimacy, therefore, should not be in question. Israel is a

nation with deeply rooted democratic institutions. It is a dynamic and open society that has repeatedly excelled in culture, science and technology.

Second, owing to its roots, history, and values, Israel is a fully fledged Western nation. Indeed, it is a normal Western nation, but one confronted by abnormal circumstances.

Uniquely in the West, it is the only democracy whose very existence has been questioned since its inception. In the first instance, it was attacked by its neighbours using the conventional weapons of war. Then it faced terrorism culminating in wave after wave of suicide attacks. Now, at the behest of radical Islamists and their sympathisers, it faces a campaign of delegitimisation through international law and diplomacy.

Sixty-two years after its creation, Israel is still fighting for its very survival. Punished with missiles raining from north and south, threatened with destruction by an Iran aiming to acquire nuclear weapons and pressed upon by friend and foe, Israel, it seems, is never to have a moment’s peace.

For years, the focus of Western attention has understandably been on the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians. But if Israel is in danger today and the whole region is slipping towards a worryingly problematic future, it is not due to the lack of understanding between the parties on how to solve this conflict. The parameters of any prospective peace agreement are clear, however difficult it may seem for the two sides to make the final push for a settlement.

The real threats to regional stability, however, are to be found in the rise of a radical Islamism which sees Israel’s destruction as the fulfilment of its religious destiny and, simultaneously in the case of Iran, as an expression of its ambitions for regional hegemony. Both phenomena are threats that affect not only Israel, but also the wider West and the world at large.

The core of the problem lies in the ambiguous and often erroneous manner in which too many Western countries are now reacting to this situation. It is easy to blame Israel for all the evils in the Middle East. Some even act and talk as if a new understanding with the Muslim world could be achieved if only we were prepared to sacrifice the Jewish state on the altar. This would be folly.

Israel is our first line of defence in a turbulent region that is constantly at risk of

descending into chaos; a region vital to our energy security owing to our overdependence on Middle Eastern oil; a region that forms the front line in the fight against extremism. If Israel goes down, we all go down. To defend Israel's right to exist in peace, within secure borders, requires a degree of moral and strategic clarity that too often seems to have disappeared in Europe. The United States shows worrying signs of heading in the same direction.

The West is going through a period of confusion over the shape of the world's future. To a great extent, this confusion is caused by a kind of masochistic self-doubt over our own identity; by the rule of political correctness; by a multiculturalism that forces us to our knees before others; and by a secularism which, irony of ironies, blinds us even when we are confronted by jihadis promoting the most fanatical incarnation of their faith. To abandon Israel to its fate, at this moment of all moments, would merely serve to illustrate how far we have sunk and how inexorable our decline now appears.

This cannot be allowed to happen. Motivated by the need to rebuild our own Western values, expressing deep concern about the wave of aggression against Israel, and mindful that Israel's strength is our strength and Israel's weakness is our weakness, I have decided to promote a new Friends of Israel initiative with the help of some prominent people, including David Trimble, Andrew Roberts, John Bolton, Alejandro Toledo (the former President of Peru), Marcello Pera (philosopher and former President of the Italian Senate), Fiamma Nirenstein (the Italian author and politician), the financier Robert Agostinelli and the Catholic intellectual George Weigel.

It is not our intention to defend any specific policy or any particular Israeli government. The sponsors of this initiative are certain to disagree at times with decisions taken by Jerusalem. We are democrats, and we believe in diversity.

What binds us, however, is our unyielding support for Israel's right to exist and to defend itself. For Western countries to side with those who question Israel's legitimacy, for them to play games in international bodies with Israel's vital security issues, for them to appease those who oppose Western values rather than robustly to stand up in defence of those values, is not only a grave moral mistake, but a strategic error of the first magnitude.

Israel is a fundamental part of the West. The West is what it is thanks to its Judeo-Christian roots. If the Jewish element of those roots is upturned and Israel is lost, then we are lost too. Whether we like it or not, our fate is inextricably intertwined.

José María Aznar was prime minister of Spain between 1996 and 2004.

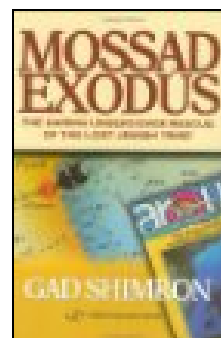
Gad Shimron

Mossad Exodus

The Daring Undercover Rescue of the Lost Jewish Tribe

In 1977, Israel's Mossad spy agency was given an assignment far different from its usual cloak and dagger activities. It was ordered by then Prime Minister Menachem Begin to rescue thousands of Ethiopian Jewish refugees in Sudan and "deliver them to me" in the Jewish state. No stranger to action in enemy countries, the agency established a covert forward base in a deserted holiday village in Sudan, and deployed a handful of operatives to launch and oversee the exodus of the refugees to the Promised Land, by sea and by air, in the early 1980s. Gad Shimron, the author of this book, was one of their number.

First published in Hebrew in 1998, this updated English version of the book offers a thrilling firsthand account of how the operation was put in place, and how the Mossad team in Sudan brought it off, despite great personal risk, running a partying vacation spot for wealthy tourists by day as they stole through the Sudanese desert to rescue desperate refugees by night. The book sheds light on American involvement in the latter stages of the operation, when the White House facilitated an airlift of Ethiopian Jews and the CIA station in Khartoum sheltered the last Mossad operatives, on the run from Libyan secret service agents, and spirited them out of Sudan in special boxes labeled "Diplomatic Mail." Enhanced by Gad Shimron's wide-ranging historical observations and his crisp, incisive prose, this is at once an entertaining read and a powerful tale of idealistic heroism.



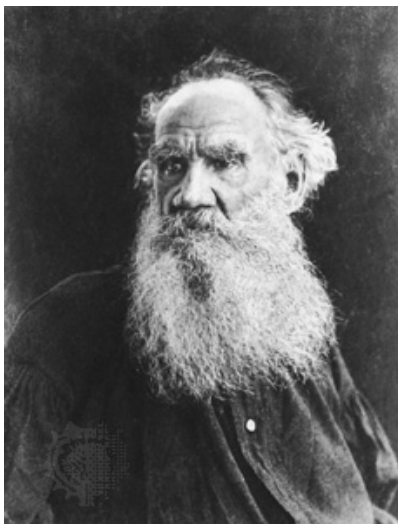
WOMEN IN THE LIFE AND WORK OF LEV TOLSTOY

By Mirjana N. Radovanov-Mataric, Ph.D.

In his eighty two years of life Tolstoy wrote a gargantuan volume of stories, novels, plays and other pieces, yet lived a full life. He knew, met, and created, a variety of women characters from Cossacks and peasants to the “grand dames” of the Russian high society. His characters are so exuberantly alive and captivating, they live with us as our friends and acquaintances long after we are finished with reading. No matter whether we admire and identify with them, like or dislike them, we never easily forget them, because of their charismatic vitality, their “intoxication with life”, and their life-giving and life-restoring ability.

What was Tolstoy’s perception of women? Did he love or hate them (as some suggest)? Who were the most significant women that had influenced and formed his view?

Count Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy was born on the family estate Yasnaya Polyana, on August 28, 1828, as the son of Count Nikolay Ilyich and Marya, Princess Volkonsky. His mother died when he was less than two years old, his father when he was nine. It is clear, today, the loss of his mother at such an early age and missing her love throughout his entire life impacted his development, scarring him for life while affecting his writing.



As a child Tolstoy was raised by good, faithful servants and his aunt Tatyana-Toinette Ergolsky, his father’s poor cousin living with the Tolstoy’s family. Hopelessly in love with Count Tolstoy, a woman of high moral standards, she turned her feelings for the Count into a platonic love embracing his wife and all his family. After Marya’s death, Count Tolstoy asked Toinette to marry him and be the

mother to his children. While she declined the marriage, she lovingly raised his children. Lev Tolstoy remembered her in his *Reminiscences* for impacting his image of women, teaching him a valuable lesson in spiritual love.

In his childhood Tolstoy eagerly absorbed stories about his mother, creating an idealistic picture of her as a simple, highly intellectual and spiritual woman. He portrayed her as Nikolay’s mother in *Childhood*. Since Marya was a good mother and wife, the pillar of the household, all Tolstoy’s positive female characters have the same virtues which were appreciated in the Russian society of the time.

Tolstoy shared the common belief of society that woman’s place is in the home. The 19th century, especially in Europe, was the golden age of family life and, consequently, the greatest family novels in the world literature were written during that period. The traditional woman’s role was to preserve the family hearth, be a good companion to her husband, and bear children. For such significant and sacred role woman had to be adequately prepared and trained by the society. The Slavic, Russian society had a long lasting Christian Orthodox tradition in which a woman’s role was also that of a seducer and the Satan’s tool in Adam’s and all men’s destruction. Together with the image of a pure hearth-goddess, there existed in the mind of men, and Tolstoy’s, another image of woman: a beautiful, dangerous temptress luring man to his fall through the carnal sin.

In his journal, Tolstoy wrote: “All the women of our Christian world are impure...Oh, how I would like to show to women all the significance of a chaste woman. A chaste woman...will save the world.” He believed that humanity’s major task was to educate a chaste woman, and in his own way he performed the task through his writing.

Even in the pre-Christianity, Slavs worshipped Lada, the sun goddess, representing female beauty and fertility. Tolstoy’s physical nature was that of an earthy pagan: strong and susceptible to *eros*. To satisfy his carnal needs, like many other gentlemen of the high class, he had a liaison with a peasant woman, Aksinya, the wife of one of his *muzhiks*. For years he could not resist her erotic power. It filled him with shame and guilt, yet he never legalized his son with her. Aksinya’s personality was later portrayed in Stepanida of *The Devil*, while Tolstoy’s guilt for the abandoned son was depicted in *Anna Karenina*.

Some critics (Renato Poggioli) tried to explain the split in Tolstoy’s nature and his writing by the early loss of his mother. He substituted her with an ideal moral image that interfered with his natural needs. The double standards of the society, whose product Tolstoy has been, widened that painful split, resulting in numerous great characters that voiced the author’s most intimate but also universally human problems.

All his life Tolstoy was forced to lead a double existence: his mind striving to the high, noble standards of his mother and his aunt Toinette, his flesh - backed up by the bigoted society - pulling him down to the world of attractive, animalistic Aksinya’s.

Like other members of the nobility, he married in his own class (slightly lower), a chaste, reasonably educated and talented Sofia Bers. Russian home life, especially that

of the high and middle classes, was based on matriarchate. Tolstoy's own mother-in-law, Lyubov Bers, was a patronizing, possessive matron, a typical bourgeois, spiritually and intellectually undeveloped. She had no use for Tolstoy's greatness and was critical of his impracticality and poor abilities as a *pater familias* and moneymaker. His wife, Sofia, was very much like her mother. Some critics consider her a poor match for a genius, others call her a perfect wife. She enjoyed being a wife and a head of the household, successfully managed Tolstoy's large homes and estate, bore thirteen children and raised eight, hosted a horde of guests from all over the world, while diligently and meticulously copying Tolstoy's numerous manuscripts. Their early marriage was happy, based upon erotic love. In later years it turned into a constant strife, because of the enormous disparity in their spiritual and intellectual worlds, and because of Tolstoy's drastic shift toward religion and ascetics. Physically, Sofia's and Lev's passionate natures attracted and complemented each other, but intellectually they lived in two separate worlds: she managed the household; he shut himself in his study to write. Bestially jealous and possessive, she secretly read his journal about her, made humiliating scenes, attempted a suicide and manipulated him in every way. Their marriage turned into a nightmare: the most powerful thinker and writer, a giant in physique and talent, Tolstoy was meek and helpless to resist her (just like Pierre Bezukhov in *War and Peace* and other husbands in his works).

This meekness, a part of Tolstoy's belief in non-violence, must have been the result of his fair and honest understanding of a woman's position in a bigoted society. In the *Kreutzer Sonata's Second Supplement*, Tolstoy argued that man was the cause of woman's complex and impossible, combined role of a mistress, mother, and a human being: "She develops into an excellent mistress, a tortured mother and a suffering, nervous, hysterical human being. And the man loves her as a mistress, ignores her as a mother, and hates her nervousness and hysteria which he himself has caused."

It has been emphasized over and over by critics and scholars that all Tolstoy's writing is profoundly autobiographical. His childhood, with the most significant women in it, has been portrayed in *Childhood*; his youthful romance in the *Cossacs*; his ideas and experiences of romantic love and marriage in *Family Happiness*, *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina*, and *The Kreutzer Sonata*.

Organized societies, since the Middle Ages, have fostered the concept of romantic love as an initiation into a family institution. Tolstoy paid his personal tribute to that deeply imbedded myth feeding on the most natural human needs. Those needs Tolstoy simply identified as physical and spiritual. A marriage based on romantic love (erotic hunger, by Tolstoy's definition), will soon exhaust it, leaving a feeling of emptiness and boredom. Where the marriage is based both on the spiritual and physical compatibility (as in the marriages of Pierre and Natasha in *War and Peace*, and Kitty and Levin in *Anna Karenina*), it will successfully serve both individual and social goals of harmony and happiness of the individuals and the society.

When we think of Tolstoy's greatest heroines, the first that comes to mind is Natasha Rostova. Natasha is Tolstoy's favorite woman character, portrayed after his wife's younger sister Tatyana. At the beginning of *War and Peace* she is a charming, restless Nature's child in awe with life. Like Anna Karenina, she "has too much of something, which may prevent her from happiness," as Natasha's mother worries. That "something" is Slavic sensitivity, capability for compassion and suffering, extreme intensity of feelings and urge to experience life in all its manifestations ("nothing human is alien to me"). She is sensual, intuitive, natural and happy. Her innocence is contrasted with Helen Kuragin's mature, dark erotic power, the same like in her brother Anatol. Both are the embodiment of emptiness, vanity, and destructive sexuality.

In Natasha's development, she will be powerfully attracted to them, just like the author to Aksinya. However, strongly grounded to the nature and earth, Natasha intuitively finds her right mate (Pierre Bezukhov, who is, like Levin in *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy himself).

Natasha's and Pierre's happiness, however, strikes the readers as somewhat limited, narrow and selfish, closing them in on themselves, as if Pierre and Natasha were more human in their search than in realization of their happiness. One immediately remembers Tolstoy's famous opening for *Anna Karenina*: "All happy families are alike, only the unhappy ones are different." It seems as if both Natasha and Pierre cease to be archetypal heroes in quest, now drowning in the collective, all-embracing contentment of the satiated.

Evaluating his life and work, Tolstoy divided it into four periods. The third, the time of his happy marriage and *War and Peace*, he characterized as "selfish," because he was interested in his own family happiness only. The same can be said about Natasha and Pierre, the protagonists of Tolstoy's ideas. All humans are in search of happiness, and happy people charge the environment with a positive energy, but they do not "expand the limits of life," as his *Anna Karenina* and other suffering characters did. Tolstoy, himself, never ceased his quest; he still is one of the greatest teachers of humanity together with his vibrant characters.

Like other excessively alive and erotic women-characters, Anna was selected to show Tolstoy's beliefs that physical relations "debilitate and exhaust a person, debilitate him (or her) precisely in the most existentially human function, the function of the intellect," as he stated in "*The Church and State*." In this opinion Tolstoy reflects both his time and his class. Eros, if excessive and not sanctified by marriage, is a negative force, Tolstoy teaches. To show this in a novel form, Tolstoy was prompted by seeing a dead body of an adulteress, a governess who had committed suicide. The character of Anna was primarily planned as negative, and the initial A in her name suggested adultery (as in Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*). However, Tolstoy the Christian, wanted the readers to feel compassion, not contempt. Writing *Anna Karenina* proved to be one of his most difficult tasks, because it dealt with his most intimate thoughts and feelings; because it was a

modern, avant-garde novel tackling some profoundly psychological and growing societal issues, including that of women's emancipation. In the process of writing, the strong, life-like, charismatic character of Anna - like that of Milton's Satan - grew stronger than her creator, acquiring a life of her own, causing a controversy among the readers and the critics, opening issues that even Tolstoy himself may not have fully anticipated.

The character of Natasha is all instinct, at the expense of intellect; Anna is a deeper, more mature and more dangerous woman, the corruption of civilization already in her blood. She is exceedingly vital and sensuous, tragically matched with a weaker, pompous, unlovable husband. Their marriage, like many others, has been arranged per social status, rather than by biological and psychological standards. Physically attracted to Vronsky, Anna finds the fatal object of her romantic drive. Led by a blind erotic passion, she abandons her husband, her social position, her own son. Condemned by the society, and even more strongly and painfully by her own conscience - the Orthodox morality deeply imprinted in her psyche - Anna has no way out except in death.

In *Anna Karenina*, probably the most intricate of his works, Tolstoy uses repetition and contrast in characters' typology. So Anna's and Vronsky's relationship is contrasted with several marriages, especially that of Kitty (Anna's opposite) and Levin (Tolstoy). When Levin falls in love with Kitty, he sees in her that "girlish," "childlike," "innocent" and pure feminine principle (like in Natasha) that will not threaten to become a rival to the pure memory of his mother. Through the novel, Kitty and Levin have to suffer and mature (just like Natasha and Pierre), in order to become suitable partners and soul-mates, sharing the same ideas, goals and beliefs, crowned with the sacred bond of marriage and parenthood. Kitty's and Levin's platonic love, sanctified by marriage, is thus contrasted with Anna's and Vronsky's displaced, adulterous passion. Tolstoy is showing: from the society's point, the former have made the right choice and are blessed with happiness, the latter made a wrong one and are condemned to perish. Here, again, Tolstoy the writer and teacher, in the name of the society, condemns, but as a human, co-sufferer, understands.

Judith Armstrong explains the magnitude and success of Anna's character with the fact that Tolstoy himself is "replicated" not only in the character of Levin, but even more "deeply, implicitly, and possibly unconsciously, in his heroine, Anna." The ambivalence of Anna's nature and personality is the same ambivalence Tolstoy carried in himself; the conflict in Anna is the same Tolstoy could not resolve. Torn between sexuality and spirituality - strongly endowed by both - the product of his time and class, Tolstoy could not resolve his conflict, just as Anna could not resolve hers. Finding no way out, Anna turned to death. Finding no way out, Tolstoy turned his suffering into writing. At the end of his life, old and tired of constant strife, in a state of mind similar to Anna's, he left his home to die at a small railway station at Astapovo.

If it were not for Tolstoy's conflict and suffering, for his search for truth and resolution of those existential,

universal human problems, we would not have had such great works as *Anna Karenina*, *War and Peace*, *Father Sergey*, *Kreutzer Sonata* and others. Being a great artist, Tolstoy believed in his mission of a teacher as well.

Although labeled as conservative, Tolstoy was a great philosopher and educator. In *Anna Karenina* he dealt with the problems of a female psyche, as well as with the growing problems of woman's emancipation: free love, adultery, divorce, contraception, freedom of choice. Even though Anna is not an emancipated woman, she is not a passive follower of her man either. She is not a sex object, but a subject, the hero of the novel, actively seeking the right to create her own destiny, expanding the boundaries of the socially accepted female behavior. In the sex game, she is the stronger, braver partner, ready to enter the unknown and to pay for it. That is why characters like Kitty and Natasha may look like the end of a line, Anna as a new beginning, a step further in the liberation of the Russian (or any other) woman.

A lover of truth in service of enlightenment, Tolstoy helped the issue of women's liberation through his heroine Anna, who - like heroes of the Ancient Greek tragedies, like Hamlet and other noble examples - offered her life as a sacrifice for those that will come hereafter, with the same human problem, expecting the humanity to be ready for a more humane approach and a possible solution. That is the role of great heroes in everyday life around us, as well as those in great literature, art, mythology and religion - the teachers of humanity at their best.

The Russia of Tolstoy's time already had a number of educated women, influenced by the European ideas of feminism, voiced in the revolutionary Chernishevsky's book *What Is To Be Done?* Tolstoy did not believe in the emancipation of women, if that meant losing contact with nature and woman's biological and emotional role. He was an ardent proponent of education, both for men and women, based on the laws of nature and directed toward a happier, harmonious living of an individual within the frames of society and the universe as a whole. Although a wealthy landowner, Tolstoy chose to live a simple life like his peasants: he chopped wood to prepare his simple oatmeal *kasha*. He despised and openly criticized those Russian intellectuals, who lost contact with nature and real life, spent their time in barren abstract disputes, turning their backs to the acute needs of the people.

Tolstoy's portrait of a liberated, educated woman of that kind is given in Katarina Dudkina of *The Infected family*. The portrait is a caricature, one of those "cardboard" characters that do not inspire sympathy. Like Joseph Campbell, Tolstoy knew that imperfection in humans is loveable, perfection is boring. Dudkina is not perfect. She only thinks she is. With her attitude of self-satisfaction and vanity, she is dry, artificial, not feminine enough to sense when a man is not interested in her but in a younger, more attractive and natural, as well as richer woman. We feel compassion for Anna Karenina, but not for Dudkina, because she is incapable of suffering. Instead of her heart, her ego will suffer disappointment when she finds out the truth. Even then, she will not learn anything from the experience, shielded by her enormous vanity.

Moving from his prime years to maturity, Tolstoy turned to radical Christianity and ascetics, renouncing physical pleasures and luxuries as vanity and selfishness. The denouncement included all of his previous writing, except for the one with the moral message. During that time his married life was a constant strife and conflict. The split between his spirituality and sexuality became unbearable. Apart from the marital duties, Sofia felt out of Tolstoy's life and reacted with petty, humiliating schemes and techniques to control and destroy that part in him that eluded her (she even threatened suicide if he went to Stockholm for his Nobel Prize. He never did). Committed to the philosophy of acceptance and non-violence, Tolstoy did not openly resist her, but could not change either.

The dark, pessimistic period of his last years resulted in three stories that further analyze male-female erotic relations: *The Kreutzer sonata* (1889), *The Devil* (1889), and *Father Sergey* (1889-1897). The first is a personal confession of a man who murdered his wife out of jealousy. The murdered wife is symbolically Sonya Tolstoy; the dark, murderous jealousy is Tolstoy's, at the time of Sonya's infatuation with the family friend, pianist Tanev.

In this story Tolstoy, like Dostoevsky, deals with murder, studying the intricate interconnection between sex-violence - suicide. In both cases, as Ruth Benson points out, the killing is an escape from an intolerable erotic scene. Both sex and violence are impersonal, and Tolstoy condemns both men and women for the perversity and degradation of the act.

The Devil deals with the sexual infatuation of a gentleman with his serf Stepanida. Although "happily" married, Irtenev cannot control his passion, and finally shoots himself to death to find an exit from the erotic hell. The Tolstoy-Irtenev and Aksinya-Stepanida relationship is obvious.

Father Sergey is a story of an officer and a gentleman at the pinnacle of his career. Disappointed with his fiancée's affair with the Tzar, he abandons the worldly life and his career, and goes to the country to live as a hermit. In his fasting and meditation, he fights the devil of his sexuality. An attractive divorcee, Makovkina, presents the temptation in a physical form. In a torment to control his lust, Sergey cuts his finger off (a phallus symbol and a redeeming sacrifice). Makovkina, shattered, leaves to join a convent; Sergey acquires fame as a saint and a miracle worker. He, who renounced worldly fame, accepts the spiritual one, thus practicing the sin of vanity. When a young feeble-minded girl is brought to him to heal, he rapes her. In guilt and panic, he leaves his cell and travels on foot for miles to see Pashenka, an archetypal pious woman-servant, popular in the life of the Russian folk, probably a portrait of Tolstoy's "nyanya" - servant who raised him after his mother's death. After talking to Pashenka, Sergey learns the simple wisdom of serving others. He goes to Siberia for the rest of his life, enlightened by the new wisdom.

In all three stories the main female characters are openly archetypal sexual women, using their charm and sexuality not for natural purposes of procreation but for corruption and destruction. Through Pozdnyshev in *The Kreutzer*

Sonata, Tolstoy argues: "If love is spiritual communion, then that spiritual communion should find expression in words, in conversation...There was nothing of the kind...nothing to talk about...Spiritual affinity! Identity of ideals! In that case, why go to bed together?"

Parallel with the negative heroines, Tolstoy still portrays, at least in a brief sketch, his ideal women, in Liza, Irtenyev's wife and in the old Pashenka. Till the end of his life Tolstoy could not blend those two images into one. For him, women stayed either angels or devils. But, during his last period, he did not blame women only for the corruption and sin, did not see them as the Satan's tool. He blamed men as women's teachers for "infecting" them with their own sexuality. In his pessimistic picture of the most intimate human instincts, Tolstoy is sensing the problems of a modern society. In this way he is our contemporary. Corrupted by civilization modern men and women, the ones that lose contact with nature, stay isolated even in the most intimate human contact, that of sexual union. Not only do they stay isolated, but in the extreme cases one partner may turn to a blind, violent act of murder.

What, then, is Tolstoy's message?

It is all in his writing and can be summarized as follows: an individual is happy when harmony is maintained. The harmony is gained through living close to nature, as a part of it, understanding and following nature's laws. In relations with others, an individual should exercise acceptance and non-violence, love for everybody and everything in the Universe. Marriage and intimacy should be based on both physical (biological) and spiritual compatibility, in order to result in a natural harmony and happiness. Tolstoy's answer to the growing problems of a civilized society is in education and enlightenment.

And what is the woman's role in it? Tolstoy's answer is: The crucial role of birth, sustaining life, and the education of the new generation as given by nature to women. Women are men's mothers, sisters, wives and companions through life, life of an individual and life of the mankind.

That also answers how much Tolstoy appreciated women.

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