THOSE WHO FORGET THE PAST

The Question of Anti-Semitism

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Afterword by Cynthia Ozick
WE THOUGHT IT WAS finished. The ovens are long cooled, the anti-vermin gas dissipated into purifying clouds, cleansed air, nightmarish fable. The cries of the naked, decades gone, are mute; the bullets splitting throats and breasts and skulls, the human waterfall of bodies tipping over into the wooded ravine at Babi Yar, are no more than tedious footnotes on aging paper. The deportation ledgers, with their scrupulous lists of names of the doomed, what are they now? Museum artifacts. The heaps of eyeglasses and children's shoes, the hills of human hair, lie disintegrating in their display cases, while only a little distance away the visitors' cafeteria bustles and buzzes: sandwiches, Cokes, the waiting tour buses.

We thought it was finished. In the middle of the twentieth century, and surely by the end of it, we thought it was finished, genuinely finished, the bloodlust finally slaked. We thought it was finished, that heads were hanging—the heads of the leaders and schemers on gallows, the heads of the bystanders and onlookers in shame. The Topf company, manufacturer of the ovens, went belatedly out of business, belatedly disgraced and shamed. Out of shame German publishers of Nazi materials concealed and falsified the past. Out of shame Paul de Man, lauded and eminent Yale intellectual, concealed his early Nazi lucubrations. Out of shame Mircea Eliade, lauded and eminent
Chicago intellectual, concealed his membership in Romania’s Nazi-linked Iron Guard. Out of shame memorials to the murdered rose up. Out of shame synagogues were rebuilt in the ruins of November 9, 1938, the night of fire and pogrom and the smashing of windows. Out of shame those who were hounded like prey and fled for their lives were invited back to their native villages and towns and cities, to be celebrated as successful escapees from the murderous houdings of their native villages and towns and cities. Shame is salubrious; it acknowledges inhumanity, it admits to complicity, it induces remorse. Naively, foolishly, stupidly, hopefully, a-historically, we thought that shame and remorse—world-wide shame, world-wide remorse—would endure. Naively, foolishly, stupidly, hopefully, a-historically, we thought that the cannibal hatred, once quenched, would not soon wake again.

It has awakened.

In “The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!”—an 1878 essay reflecting on the condition of the Jews—George Eliot noted that it would be “difficult to find a form of bad reasoning about [Jews] which had not been heard in conversation or been admitted to the dignity of print.” She was writing in a period politically not unlike our own, Disraeli ascendant in England, Jews prominent in liberal parties both in Germany and France. Yet her title points to something far deadlier than mere “bad reasoning.” Hep! was the cry of the Crusaders as they swept through Europe, annihilating one Jewish community after another; it stood for Hierosolyma est perdita (Jerusalem is destroyed), and was taken up again by anti-Jewish rioters in Germany in 1899. In this single raging syllable, past and future met, and in her blunt bold enunciation of it, George Eliot was joining bad reasoning—the, canard and vilification—to its consequences: violence and murder. The Jews, she wrote, have been “regarded and treated very much as beasts hunted for their skins,” and the curse on them, the charge of deicide,
was counted a justification for hindering them from pursuing agriculture and handicrafts; for marking them out as execrable figures by a peculiar dress; for torturing them ... spitting at them and pelting them; for taking it certain that they killed and ate babies, poisoned the wells, and took pains to spread the plague; for putting it to them whether they would be baptised or burned, and not failing to burn and massacre them when they were obstinate; but also for suspecting them of disliking their baptism when they had got it, and then burning them in punishment of their insincerity; finally, for hounding them by tens on tens of thousands from their homes where they had found shelter for centuries, and inflicting on them the horrors of a new exile and a new dispersion. All this to avenge the Saviour of mankind, or else to compel these stiff-necked people to acknowledge a Master whose servants showed such benevolent effects of His teaching.

As an anti-Semitic yelp, Hup! is long out of fashion. In the eleventh century it was already a substitution and a metaphor: Jerusalem meant Jews, and "Jerusalem is destroyed" was, when knighthood was in flower, an incitement to pogrom. Today, the modern Hup! appears in the form of Zionism, Israel, Sharon. And the connection between vilification and the will to undermine and endanger Jewish lives is as vigorous as when the howl of Hup! was new. The French ambassador to Britain, his tongue unbuttoned in a London salon, hardly thinks to cry Hup! instead, he speaks of "that shifty little country," European and British scholars and academicians, their Latin gone dry, will never cry Hup! instead they call for the boycott of Israeli scholars and academicians.

Even Martin Luther (though his Latin was good enough) failed to cry Hup! Instead, he inquired:

What is to be done with this wicked, accursed race, which can no longer be tolerated? The Talmud and the rabbis...
teach that it is no sin to kill Christians, to break an oath to Christians, to rob and plunder them. The one and only aim of the Jews is to weaken Christianity. They have poisoned the springs, they have murdered Christian children for their blood for their rites. They are becoming too prosperous in Germany, and in consequence have become insolent. Then what is to be done? Their synagogues must be reduced to ashes, for the honor of God and of Christianity. Christians are to destroy the houses of Jews, and drive them all under one roof, or into a stable like gypsies. All prayer-books and copies of the Talmud are to be wrested from them by force, and their praying and even the use of God's name is to be forbidden to them under pain of death. Their rabbis are to be forbidden to teach. The authorities are to prohibit Jews from traveling, and to bar the roads against them. Their money must be taken from them. Able-bodied Jews and Jewesses are to be put to forced labor, and kept strictly employed with the flail, the axe, the spade. Christians are not to show any tender mercy to Jews. The emperor and the princes must be urged to expel them from the country without delay. If I had power over the Jews, I would assemble the best and most learned among them and, under penalty of having their tongues cut out, would force them to accept the Christian teaching that there is not one God, but three Gods. I say to you, the Jews do great evil in the land. If they could kill us all, they would gladly do so, aye, and often do it, especially those who profess to be physicians—they know all that is known about medicine in Germany; they can give poison to a man of which he will die in an hour, or in ten or twenty years; they thoroughly understand this art.

So much for sixteenth-century Hebr—a reprise, under the guise of Reformation, of three hundred years of abusive Christian power. But it foreshadows twentieth-century Hebr as well:

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the flaming synagogues, the prohibitions, the expropriations, the looting, the forced labor, the phantasmagorical lies, the Stalinist doctors' plot, the bloodthirsty reversals of intent: "if they could kill us all, they would gladly do so."

Luther came late to these pious inspirations. Nearly all had their precedents in the Church he renounced; and even the medieval Church practiced mimicry. It was Pope Innocent III who implemented the yellow badge of ignominy (Hitler was no innovator, except as to gas chambers)—yet Innocent too was innocent of originality, since he took the idea from Prince Abu-Yusef Almansur, a Moroccan Muslim ruler of the thirteenth century. Post-Enlightenment France may be known for its merciless persecution of a guiltless Dreyfus, and for the anti-Jewish rioting it set off; and, more recently, for the gendarmes who arrested and deported the Jews of Paris with a zeal equal to that of the Germans. But Paris had seen anti-Jewish mobs before—for instance, in June of 1242, when twenty-four cartloads of Talmuds were set afire in a public square. And while elsewhere in France, and all through the Rhineland, the Crusaders were busy at their massacres, across the Channel the Archbishop of Canterbury was issuing a decree designed to prevent the Jews of England from having access to food.

All this, let it be noted, preceded the barbarities of the Inquisition: the scourgings, the burnings, the confiscations, the expulsions.

Any attempt to set down the record, early and late, of Christian violence against Jews can only be a kind of pointilism—an atrocity here, another there, and again another. The nineteenth-century historian Heinrich Graetz (as rationalist in temperament as Gibbon) summed up the predicament of Jews across the whole face of Europe:

If Jewish history were to follow chronicles, memorial books and martyrologies, its pages would be filled with
bloodshed, it would consist of horrible exhibitions of corpses, and it would stand forth to make accusation against a doctrine which taught princes and nations to become common executioners and hangmen. For, from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, the persecutions and massacres of the Jews increased with frightful rapidity and intensity, and only alternated with inhuman decrees issued by both Church and the state, the aim and purport of all of which were to humiliate the Jews, to brand them with calumny and to drive them to suicide. . . . The nations of Europe emulated one another in exercising their cruelty upon the Jews. . . . In Germany they were slain by thousands. . . . Every year martyrs fell, now in Weissenburg, Magdeburg, Arnstadt, now in Coblenz, Sinzig, Erfurt, and other places. In Sinzig all the members of the congregation were burnt alive on a Sabbath in their synagogue. There were German families who boasted that they had burnt Jews, and in their pride assumed the name of Judenbrater (Jew-roaster).

And all this, let it again be noted, before the Shoah; before the Czarist pogroms and the Czarist fabrication of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion"; before the exclusions, arrests, and gulag brutalities of the Soviet Union; before the shooting of the Soviet Yiddish writers in the basement of Moscow's Lubyanka prison; before the rise of contemporary Islamist demonization of Jews; before the eight-decades-long Arab assault on Jewish national aspiration and sovereignty; before the Palestinian cult of suicide bombing. Anti-Semitism feeds on itself from continent to continent, from Iceland to Japan: it scarcely requires living Jews. Its source is commonly taken to be the two supersessionist Scriptures that derive from Judaism—in Christianity, the Jews' cry (in the Gospel of Matthew) of "His blood be on us and on our children," the fount of the venomous deicide curse; in Islam, the unwillingness of Jews to follow Mohammed in the furtherance of Islam claims, no anti-Semitism.

But anti-Semitism is an Egyptian pride count in Genesics from Jerusalem's the Hebrew text governor, Manasseh's statues of the Moses liberate this, out of Egypt, lepers, Manasseh savagely despicable no plastic rephrasing the Jew name they refrain. Patara recyclers in Plutarch's \( \sqrt{\text{bored the god}} \) worship. An image of Mark's taining laws Greek er spread by A Jewish form a Greed, dened, and contended w mythology blood was
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in the furtherance of a latter-day faith which accused the He-
brew Bible of distorting the biblical narratives that appear,
Islam claims, more authoritatively and genuinely in the Koran.

But anti-Semitism originated in neither Christianity nor
Islam. Its earliest appearance burst out in Egypt, in the fourth
century B.C.E., during the reign of Ptolemy II, when Manetho,
an Egyptian priest, in a polemic directed against the biblical ac-
count in Genesis and Exodus, described a people who “came
from Jerusalem” as the descendants of a mob of lepers. Against
the Hebrew text, which records Joseph as a wise and visionary
governor, Manetho charged that Joseph defiled the shrines and
statues of the gods and set fire to villages and towns. Nor did
Moses liberate the Hebrews and bring them, under divine guid-
ance, out of Egypt, from slavery to freedom. These offspring of
lepers, Manetho declared, were ignominiously expelled, having
savagely deplored the country for thirteen years. Such calum-
ies soon infiltrated Hellenic literature. The Greeks, detecting
no plastic representation of the divine order, were quick to
name the Jews atheists—lazy atheists, since once in seven days
they refrained from labor. The Greek scholar Mnaseas of
Patara recycled an Egyptian myth (traces of it later turned up
in Plutarch) which asserted that the Temple in Jerusalem har-
bored the golden head of an ass, the sole object of the Jews’
worship. Another version had the Jews praying before an
image of Moses seated on an ass while displaying a book con-
taining laws of hatred for all humanity.

Greek enmity was most acutely encapsulated in the canard
spread by Apion, whose contribution to the history of anti-
Semitism is the infamously enduring blood libel. In its earliest
form a Greek, captured by Jews, is taken to the Temple, fat-
tened, and then killed; his entrails are ritually eaten in con-
junction with an oath of hatred toward Greeks. Christian
mythology altered Greek to Christian, usually a child, whose
blood was said to be drained at Passover for the purpose of
being baked into matzah. (A curious projection of the Eucharist's draught of blood.) From its Christian source, the blood libel leached into Muslim societies. It surfaced most recently in a Saudi newspaper, which fantasized Muslim blood in Purim cakes. Mustafa Tial, the Syrian defense minister, is the author of *The Matzah of Zion*, which presents the 1841 Damascus blood libel as an established "Jewish ritual." And in a writing contest sponsored by the Palestinian Education Ministry, the winning entry, by a tenth-grader, described a Mother's Day gift an Israeli soldier brings to his mother: "a bottle of the blood of a Palestinian child he has murdered."

Current anti-Semitism, accelerating throughout advanced and sophisticated Europe—albeit under the rubric of anti-Zionism, and masked by the deceptive lingo of human rights—purports to eschew such primitivism. After all, Nazism and Stalinism are universally condemned; anti-Judaism is seen as obscurantist medievalism; the Vatican's theology of decide was nullified four decades ago; Lutherans, at least in America, vigorously dissociate themselves from their founder's execrations; and whatever the vestiges of Europe's unregenerate (and often Holocaust-denying) Right may think, its vociferous Left would no more depart from deploiring the Holocaust than it would be willing to be deprived of its zeal in calumniating the Jewish state. It is easy enough to shed a tear or two for the shed and slandered blood of the Jews of the past; no one will praise Torquemada, or honor Goebbels. But to stand up for truth-telling in the present, in a mythologizing atmosphere of pervasive defamation and fabrication, is not a job for cowards.

In the time of Goebbels, the Big Lie about the Jews was mainly confined to Germany alone; much of the rest of the world saw through it with honest clarity. In our time, the Big Lie (or Big Lies, there are so many) is disseminated everywhere, and not merely by the ignorant, but with malice aforethought by the intellectual classes, the governing elites, the most prestigious electorate, and by the un

The contempt in which the Israelis hold their sovereign, or the government's "violations in the sovereignty of the Arab people," is a reflection of how they habitually treat their own children; the government "violates their sovereignty" by allowing us to live in peace, and "usurpers inhabit as other people both blood libels in the jewels." Yet the most whelmingly true of all is that the Jews, who have been "killed in peace," are, to recapitulate, a people who have been "killed in peace," who have been "killed in peace." Arab claim c

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The contemporary Big Lie, of course, concerns the Jews of
Israel: they are oppressors in the style of the Nazis; they ruth-
lessly pursue, and perpetuate, “occupation” solely for the sake
of domination and humiliation; they purposefully kill Palestin-
ian children; their military have committed massacres; their
government “violates international law”; their nationhood and
their sovereignty have no legitimacy; they are intruders and
usurpers inhabiting an illicit “entity,” and not a people entitled
as other peoples are entitled; and so on and so on. Reviving
both blood libel and deicide, respectable European journals
publish political cartoons showing Prime Minister Sharon de-
vouring Palestinian babies, and Israeli soldiers bayoneting the
infant Jesus.

Yet the modern history of Jews in the Holy Land over-
whelmingly refutes these scurrilities. It is the Arabs, not the
Jews, who have been determined to dispose of a people’s right
to live in peace. Is there any point now—after so many politi-
cally willed erasures of fact by Palestinian Arabs, Muslim pop-
ulations in general, and a mean-spirited European intelligentsia
—to recapitulate the long record of Arab hostility that has pre-
vailed since the demise of the Ottoman Empire? The Muslim
Arab claim of hegemony (through divine fiat, possessive greed,
contempt for pluralism, or all three) over an entire region of the
globe accounts for the hundreds of Christian Arabs who have
fled Bethlehem, Nablus, Ramallah, and all other places where
Muslims dominate—a flight rarely reported. Unsurprisingly,
the Christians who have not yet departed blame the Israelis for
this displacement, not the Muslim extremists under whose
threats of reprisal they live. As for the fate of Jews in the orbit
of this self-declared Muslim imperium, the current roar of “re-
sistance to occupation” is notoriously belied by the bloody
Arab pogroms of 1920, 1921, 1929, 1936, and 1939, when there
was no Jewish state at all, let alone any issue of "settlements." The 1929 attacks left Hebron, the site of an ancient and uninterrupted Jewish community, effectively *Judenrein*.

What use is there, in the face of brute political and cultural intransigence, to rehearse the events of 1948? In that year Arab rejection of an independent Palestinian state under the UN partition plan led to the invasion by five Arab armies intent on crushing nascent Jewish sovereignty; whole sections of Jerusalem were destroyed or overrun. Nineteen-forty-eight marked the second, though not the first or the last, Arab refusal of Palestinian statehood. The first came in 1937, when under the British Mandate the Peel Commission proposed partition and statehood for the Arabs of Palestine; the last, and most recent, occurred in 2000, when Arafat dismissed statehood in favor of a well-prepared and programmatic violence. (The flouting of the Road Map by Palestinian unwillingness to dismantle terror gangs will have counted as the Palestinians’ fourth refusal of statehood; but the Road Map’s callously criminalizing equation of civilian inhabitants of Jewish towns—settlements—with Palestinian murder of Jewish civilians is itself egregious.) After 1948, the Arab war against the Jews of Israel continued through the terror incursions of 1956, the Six-Day War of 1967, the Yom Kippur attacks of 1973, and the fomented violence of 1987, the so-called first intifada.

In short, for two-thirds of a century the Arabs have warred against a Jewish presence in “their” part of the world. The 1967 war in defense of Jewish lives (when affected Jews everywhere went into mourning, fearing catastrophe) culminated in Golda Meir’s attempt to return, in exchange for peace, the territories which, in the spirit of partition, Israel had never sought to acquire, and had so unexpectedly conquered. The answer came at an Arab summit in Khartoum: no negotiations, no recognition, no peace. So much for the “crime” of occupation.

And though the Oslo accords of 1993 strove yet again for negotiations, most of the Palestinian leadership ever compromised—through suicide bombs, buses, cafes, restau peacefully congregated.

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1993 strove yet again for negotiations, most energetically under Ehud Barak, both the Palestinian leadership and the Palestinian public chose killing over compromise—this time with newly conceived atrocities through suicide bombings, always directed against civilians, in buses, cafés, restaurants, supermarkets, or wherever Israelis peacefully congregate.

This is the history that is ignored or denigrated or distorted or spitefully misrepresented. And because it is a history that has been assaulted and undermined by world-wide falsehoods in the mouths of pundits and journalists, in Europe and all over the Muslim world, the distinction between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism has finally and utterly collapsed. It is only sophistry, disingenuousness, and corrupted conscience that continue to insist on such a distinction. To fail to trace the pernicious consistencies of Arab political aims from 1920 until today, despite temporary pretensions otherwise, is to elevate intellectual negligence to a principle. To transmogrify self-defense into aggression is to invite an Orwellian horse-laugh. To identify occupation as Israel’s primal sin—the most up-to-date Hype of all—is to be blind to Arab actions and intentions before 1967, and to be equally blind to Israel’s repeated commitments to negotiated compromise. On the Palestinian side, the desire to eradicate Jewish nationhood increases daily: it is as if 1948 has returned, replicated in the guise of fanatical young “martyrs” systematically indoctrinated in kindergartens and schools and camps—concerning whom it is cant to say, as many do, that they strap detonators to their loins because they are without hope. It is hope that inflames them.*

Perhaps the most bizarre display of international anti-Semitism was flaunted at Durban, during a UN conference osten-

*As I write, fresh news arrives—evidence of the fulfillment of one martyr’s hope. An Israeli doctor and his twenty-year-old daughter have this day been blown up together in a café, where they had gone for a father-daughter talk on the eve of the young woman’s marriage. She had been devoting her year of national service to the
ibly called to condemn "Racism, Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance." Plucked from the refuse heap, the old UN canard, "Zionism is racism," together with a determined Arab hijacking of the agenda, brought about the bitterest irony of all: a virulent hatred under the auspices of anti-hatred. At Durban the Jewish state was declared to have been conceived in infancy, Jewish representatives were threatened, and language was violated more savagely than at any time since the Nazi era. "Political language," said Orwell, "is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give the appearance of solidity to pure wind." Yet the rant that emerged at Durban—those instantly recognizable snarls of anti-Semitism—hardly merited the term "political." It had the venerable sound of the mob: *Hep! Hep! Hep!*

Among the sophists and intellectuals, the tone is subtler. Here it is not Jewish lives that are put in jeopardy so much as it is Jewish sensibility and memory that are humble and mocked.Pressing political analogies, however apt, are dismissed as "confused" or "odious." When history is invoked, it is said to be for purposes of coarse extortion: Israel is charged, for instance, with "using" the Holocaust as sympathetic coinage to be spent on victimizing others. In a *New York Times Magazine* piece called "How to Talk About Israel," Ian Buruma, alluding to Israel's 1981 demolition of Iraq's nuclear installation, contends that "it might have been justified in many legitimate ways"—but he derides Menachem Begin's appeal to the memory of the one and a half million Jewish children who were annihilated by the applied technology of an earlier barbarous regime. Is the imagination's capacity to *connect* worthy of such scorn, or is this how he Saddam Hussein's nude to living Israeli children children within the lifetimes to be tendered. I pretty trait in itself, or *critics* of the Middle East, "but it is not he between good and evil form of liberal zealot religious fanaticism—a grience to the moral real a willed inability to di. A switchblade is not a who understood the.

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scorn, or is this how human beings ought to think and feel? Saddam Hussein's nuclear bomb was plainly a present danger to living Israeli children; and conscious of the loss of so many children within the lifetime of a generation, Jewish memory declines to be unterred. Nor is the denigration of tenderness a pretty trait in itself, or a sign of rational objectivity. "The politics of the Middle East may be murderous," Buruma comments, "but it is not helpful to see them as an existential battle between good and evil." This suggests a popular contemporary form of liberal zealotry, very nearly the mirror-image of religious fanaticism—a great wash of devotedly obstinate indifference to the moral realities of human behavior and motivation, a willed inability to distinguish one thing from another thing. A switchblade is not a butter knife; the difference between them is "existential." And "not helpful" is one of those doggedly bland (yet contemptuous) jargonlike therapeutic phrases that reveals a mind in need of a dose of Dostoyevsky. Or of Mark Twain, who understood the real nature of what he dubbed "evil joy."

I would not wish to equate, in any manner or degree, the disparagement of Jewish memory and sensibility with anti-Semitism, a term that must be reserved for deadlier intentions. Disparagement is that much lighter species of dismissal that is sometimes designated as "social anti-Semitism," and is essentially a type of snobbery. Snobbery falls well short of lethal hatred—but it conveys more than a touch of insolence, and insolence in a political context can begin to be worrisome. It vibrates at the outer margins of "that shitty little country"; it is, one might say, not helpful.

Judith Butler, identifying herself as a Jew in the London Review of Books, makes the claim that linking "Zionism with Jew-

ishness . . . is adopting the very tactic favored by anti-Semites." A skilled sophist (one might dare to say solipsist), she tosses those who meticulously chart and expose anti-Semitism's disguises into the same bin as the anti-Semites themselves. Having accused Israel of the "dehumanization of Palestinians"; having
acknowledged that she was a signatory to a petition opposing "the Israeli occupation, though in my mind it is not nearly strong enough: it did not call for the end of Zionism"; and having acknowledged also that (explicitly) as a Jew she seeks "to widen the rift between the state of Israel and the Jewish people," she writes:

It will not do to equate Jews with Zionists or Jewishness with Zionism. . . . It is one thing to oppose Israel in its current form and practices or, indeed, to have critical questions about Zionism itself, but it is quite another to oppose "Jews" or assume that all "Jews" have the same view, that they are all in favor of Israel, identified with Israel, or represented by Israel. . . . To say that all Jews hold a given view on Israel or are adequately represented by Israel, or, conversely, that the acts of Israel, the state, adequately stand for the acts of all Jews, is to conflate Jews with Israel and, thereby, to commit an anti-Semitic reduction of Jewishness.

One can surely agree with Butler that not all Jews are "in favor of Israel": she is a dazzling model of one who is not, and she cites, by name, a handful of "post-Zionists" in Israel proper, whom she praises. But her misunderstanding of anti-Semitism is profound; she theorizes rifts and demarcations, borders and dikes; she is sunk in self-deception. The "good" anti-Zionists, she believes, the ones who speak and write in splendidly cultivated English, will never do her or her fellow Jews any harm; they are not like the guttersnipe anti-Semites who behave so badly. It is true that she appears to have everything in common with those Western literary intellectuals (e.g., Tom Paulin and the late Edward Said) whose aspirations are indistinguishable from her own: that Israel "in its current form" ought to disappear. Or, as Paulin puts it, "I never believed that Israel had the right to exist at all." Tony Judt, a professor of European history, confirms this baleful view; writing in The New York Review of Books, he dismisses the Jew "an anachronism."

Yet Butler's unsparing collusion, with those who will earn one a stand Zionist world club, I welcome she receives it, and she is safe en where, as George I be "difficult to find which had not been the dignity of print is among friends.

But George Eliot to Jewish national of the pound of fl Caesar's funeral:

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CITIZEN: Tear
CINNA: I am (not Cinna
CITIZEN: It is
tear him!"

And here is I between the sta

—As a friend
BUTLER: As
—Tear her t
BUTLER: I a
Zionist!
he dismisses the Jewish state as—alone among the nations—"an anachronism."

Yet Butler's unspoken assumption is that consonance, or collusion, with those who would wish away the Jewish state will earn one a standing in the European, if not the global, anti-Zionist world club. To a degree she may be right: the congenial welcome she received in a prestigious British journal confirms it, and she is safe enough, for the nonce, in those rarefied places where, as George Eliot has it (with a word altered), it would be "difficult to find a form of bad reasoning about [Zionism] which had not been heard in conversation or been admitted to the dignity of print." In that company she is at home. There she is among friends.

But George Eliot's Zionist views are notorious; she is partial to Jewish national liberation. A moment, then, for the inventor of the pound of flesh. Here is Cinna, the poet, on his way to Caesar's funeral:

**Citizen:** As a friend or an enemy?

**Cinna:** As a friend.

**Citizen:** Your name, sir, truly.

**Cinna:** Truly, my name is Cinna.

**Citizen:** Tear him to pieces; he's a conspirator.

**Cinna:** I am Cinna the poet, I am Cinna the poet! ... I am not Cinna the conspirator!

**Citizen:** It is no matter, his name's Cinna. ... Tear him, tear him! Come, brands, hol firebrands! Burn all!

And here is Butler, the theorist, on her way to widen the rift between the state of Israel and the Jewish people:

—As a friend, or as a Zionist?

**Butler:** As an anti-Zionist Jew.

—Tear her to pieces, she's a Jew.

**Butler:** I am Butler the anti-Zionist, I am Butler the anti-Zionist! I am not Butler the Zionist!
What's in a name? Ah, the curse of mistaken identity. How many politically conforming Jews will suffer from it, even as they toil to distance themselves from the others, those benighted Jews who admit to being "in favor of Israel"? As for that nobly desired rift, one can rely on Heps to close it. To comprehend this is to comprehend anti-Semitism at its root. And to assert, as Butler does, that in the heart of this understanding lurks "the very tactic favored by anti-Semites" is not merely sophistry; not merely illusion; but simple stupidity, of a kind only the most subtle intellectuals are capable of.

The melancholy encounter with anti-Semitism is not, after all, coequal with Jewish history; the history of oppression belongs to the culture of the oppressors. The long, long Jewish narrative is in reality a procession of ideas and ideals, of ethical legislation and ethical striving, of the study of books and the making of books. It is not a chronicle of victimhood, despite the centuries of travail, and despite the corruptions of the hour, when the vocabulary of human rights is too often turned ubiquitously on its head. So contaminated have the most treasured humanist words become, that when one happens on a mass of placards emblazoned with "peace," "justice," and the like, one can see almost at once what is afoot—a collection of so-called anti-globalization rioters claiming defamation of Israel, or an anti-Zionist campus demonstration (not always peaceful), or any anti-Zionist herd of lockstep radicals, such as ANSWER, or the self-proclaimed International Parliament of Writers, or the International Solidarity Movement, which (in the name of human rights) shields terrorists. Or even persons who are distinguished and upright. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, who marched at Selma, and who was impassioned in protesting the Vietnam war, appealed to his peace-and-justice colleagues to sign a declaration condemning the massacre of Israeli athletes by Palestinian terrorists at the 1972 Olympics. Too many refused.

It is long past time (pace Buruma, pace Butler) when the duplicious "ri be logically spression, Zior series of divi them steepe by the Exodt itilization for r have sometit who then be ing canards called self-h love that co Not self-ha uplifting slc Anti-Se it. "Semitis guistic gro Arabic. Ti Arabs, bein that any o of anti-Se term fabri Semite s steady dr confront 

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duplicitous "rift" between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism can be logically sustained. Whether in its secular or religious ex-
pression, Zionism is, in essence, the modern flowering of a vast series of diverse intellectual and pietistic movements, all of them steeped in the yearning for human dignity—symbolized by the Exodus from slavery—that has characterized Jewish civil-
ization for millennia. Contempt and defamation from without have sometimes infiltrated the abject psyches of defeatist Jews, who then begin to judge themselves according to the prevail-
ing canards. Such Jews certainly are not what is commonly called self-haters, since they are motivated by the preening self-
love that congratulates itself on always "seeing the other side." Not self-haters, no; low moral cowards, rather, often trailing uplifting slogans.

Anti-Semitism is a foolish word; we appear to be stuck with it. "Semitism" has virtually no meaning. The Semites are a lin-
guistic group encompassing Hebrew, Akkadian, Amharic, and Arabic. The argument one occasionally gets wind of—that Arabs, being Semites, cannot be charged with anti-Semitism, or that any objection to Arab political conduct is itself an instance of anti-Semitism—is nothing if not risible. Anti-Semitism (a term fabricated a century ago by a euphemistic German anti-
Semit) signifies hatred of Jews, and hatred's easy corollary: a steady drive to weaken, to hurt, and to extirpate Jews.

Still, one must ask: why the Jews? A sad old joke pluckily confronts the enigma.

—The Jews and the bicyclists are at the bottom of all the world's ills.
—Why the bicyclists?
—Why the Jews?

—implying that blaming one set of irrelevancies is just as irra-
tional as blaming the other. Ah, but it is never the bicyclists, and it is always the Jews. There are innumerable social, eco-
onomic, and political speculations as to cause: scapegoatism; envy; exclusionary practices; the temptation of a demographic majority to subjugate a demographic minority; the attempt by corrupt rulers to deflect attention from the failings of their tyrannical regimes; and more. But any of these can burst out in any society against any people—so why always the Jews? A metaphysical explanation is proffered: the forceful popular resistance to what Jewish civilization represents—the standard of ethical monotheism and its demands on personal and social conscience. Or else it is proposed, in Freudian terms, that Christianity and Islam, each in its turn, sought to undo the parent religion, which was seen as an authoritative rival it was needful to surpass and displace.

This last notion, however, has no standing in contemporary Christianity. In nearly all Christian communities, there is remorse for the old theologically instigated crimes, and serious internal moral restitution, much of it of a very high order. But a salient fact remains, perhaps impolitic to note: relief has come through Christianity's having long been depleted of temporal power. Today's Islamists, by contrast, are supported and succored by states: Iran, Syria (and Lebanon, its vassal), Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Libya, Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Egypt (which suppresses its domestic extremists, while its official press, film industry, and other institutions encourage anti-Zionist incitements). Iranian weapons flood into Gaza, whether by sea or through tunnels from Egypt. Saudi Arabia not long ago unashamedly broadcast a telethon to collect millions to be sent to Palestinian terror gangs; it continues today as Hamas's chief funder. And though Saddam Hussein is finally gone, it will not be forgotten that he honored and enriched the families of suicide bombers. (I observe a telltale omission: those who deny any linkage between Iraq and terror universally discount Saddam's lavish payments to Hamas and Islamic Jihad.)

The riddle of anti-Semitism—why always the Jews?
survives as an apparently eternal irritant. The German-Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig, writing in 1916 (in italics) of “hatred of the Jews,” remarked to a friend, “You know as well as I do that all its realistic arguments are only fashionable cloaks.” The state of Israel is our era’s fashionable cloak—mainly on the Left in the West, and centrally and endemically among the populations of the Muslim despotisms. But if one cannot account for the tenacity of anti-Semitism, one can readily identify it. It wears its chic disguises. It breeds on the tongues of liars. The lies may be noisy and primitive and preposterous, like the widespread Islamist charge (doggerelized by New Jersey’s poet laureate) that a Jewish conspiracy leveled the Twin Towers. Or the lies may take the form of skilled patter in a respectable timbre, while retailing sleight-of-hand trickeries—such as the hallucinatory notion that the defensive measures of a perennially beleaguered people constitute colonization and victimization; or that the Jewish state is to blame for the aggressions committed against it. Lies shoot up from the rioters in Gaza and Ramallah. Insinuations ripple out of the high tables of Oxbridge. And steadily, whether from the street or the salon, one hears the enduring old cry: Hep! Hep! Hep!

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