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JEWISH HISTORICAL FICTION: AN INQUIRY

Marc L. Raphael

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of
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DIGEST

This thesis is an inquiry into twentieth-century Jewish historical fiction, primarily novels. None of the authors employed contemporary material, but sought to recreate historical events, persons, and conditions.

Part I of this study suggests that the Jewish historical novel offers valuable insights into Jewish history, insights otherwise unavailable to the historian or to the reader of history. Using various historical novels, we search for the role of the Jew in Gentile society and find the Jews' fate inextricably linked to that of the general society in which he lives. To understand this fate, we investigate, through historical novels, a variety of historical Jewish communities and note that the stability of the society rather than religious or racial ideology is the most direct cause of the acceptance or denigration of Jews living in a Gentile society. Thus, when Jews were singled out as scapegoats, we find them in a society undergoing severe socio-economic stress and strain and blamed for the malevolence of the situation; when economic prosperity and societal expansion was characteristic of the society in which the Jews lived, we find anti-Jewish feeling minimal and the Jews prosperous and secure. This part of our study then uses Jewish historical novels to reveal and account for the Jews' barometer role within Gentile society.

Part II of the thesis suggests that historical novelists, for a variety of reasons, disguise contemporary history in

historical fiction. The past becomes the pretext, not the text, for an expression of views about the contemporary situation. Their aim is not the portraying of a particular historical period, but the utilization of the past as a means by which the author disguises his reactions and attitudes to contemporary experiences and problems. It is in this way that historical novels can open up to us new levels of awareness for living and understanding in our own time.

For my parents

PREFACE

It is interesting that what we would call pure fiction has played such a significant role in the traditions of Judaism. Kindling the eight lights on Hanukkah and celebrating Purim have moulded much of Jewish life, while the attitudes which have been shaped by the invention of fictional personalities like Haman and Ruth have influenced Jewish literary creations and legal decisions. Indeed, important events of undisputed historicity have often left much less or not any trace at all in the customs and thoughts of the Jewish people.

In a certain sense, then, much of Jewish history has really been historical fiction, with persons, customs, and holidays serving primarily symbolical functions. Haman is not so much a Persian royal official as he is symbolic of an archetypal enemy for the Jews, a means to an end.

This has been the case with historical fiction in novel form as well. The historical situation is never really the novelist's material, but only a skeleton which is fleshed out to convey a contemporary message. The more skillful the author is, the more successfully he recreates history not for its own sake, but to provide the reader with the opportunity to confront the author's own immediate experiencing of history.

The novels and the short story discussed in this study are all historical fiction. Each volume recreates an identifiable time and an identifiable place, certainly a prerequisite for historical fiction. In addition, each of the works features an historical agent, almost always a person, although occasionally an event. Finally, every novel as well as the one story is about past time.

Past time is the key in differentiating historical fiction or historical novels from contemporary novels. The historical novel is one in which the action is laid in a past time. The difficult question is how long ago is "past time." With only two exceptions, the novels in this study deal with persons and events which occurred prior to the birth of the author and its readers. One, I. J. Singer's The Brothers Ashkenazi, spans a period of 100 years (1815-1917), but only the last part of the book deals with the twentieth century, and since the book was written in the 1930's, it is classified as historical fiction. Bernard Malamud's The Fixer describes persons and events of pre-Revolutionary Russia, and although it actually involves persons who might still be living today, the novel's historical agents antedate the birth of the author. Without exception, we can say that no novel or story in this study was written contemporaneously with the events, persons, or conditions described in it; this essay may be described, therefore, as an investigation of histori-

cal fiction.*

The term "Jewish" historical fiction is used a bit more loosely. With the exception of Thomas Mann's novels, every piece of fiction included here was written by a Jewish author, and if one can be permitted to call the biblical Moses and Joseph "Jews," every novel has a Jew as its major or very significant character. Thomas Mann was included because he illustrates so well the concealing of contemporary problems in historical fiction and on the assumption that Joseph and Jew, while not identical, are certainly related.

The investigation of Jewish historical fiction is woefully lacking on a scholarly and literary level. Other than book reviews and less than half a dozen short articles on historical fiction in general and Jewish fiction in particular, it is doubtful that one could find any secondary literature on the books included here. The single exception is a Thomas Mann novel, and this only because of his importance in world literature.

Despite warm reception by the public and critics and despite the high quality of most of these novels, they have been neglected both by students of literature and of history. When one seeks to find any literature on the disguising of contemporary history in historical fiction, Jewish or general, the task is hopeless. Other than an allusion in a review,

*Considering the rapidity of change now occurring in America, one wonders if a generation ago might not be far enough from the present to render a period historical in any event.

it is not unfair to say that the suggestion of Joseph representing Franklin D. Roosevelt and Henry Wallace in Mann's Joseph The Provider, or Joseph Nasi symbolizing a proto-Zionist in Ludwig Lewisohn's The Last Days of Shylock, is an original hypothesis. Lion Feuchtwanger devoted a few pages to the idea of contemporary history concealed in historical fiction in his The House of Desdemona, but this methodology has never been applied to Jewish historical novels as far as this author could discover. Therefore, the part of this study devoted to the thesis that historical fiction disguises contemporary experiences should be viewed as a very small attempt to suggest possibilities in this area. More than sixty Jewish historical novels were read to test this hypothesis, and although only about ten are studied in detail in this part of the thesis, it can be seen that there are plenty of sources available to anyone wishing to unravel contemporary history through Jewish historical fiction.

In the first part of our study, the claim to originality must also be made. Here we suggest that the Jewish historical novel offers us new insights into Jewish history, insights which are unavailable to the historian. Precisely because historical novelists choose an identifiable time and place to write about and not purely fictional persons, places, and periods, they are valuable sources for history. The historical novel, on one level, is a present in search of a past, but not with the same goals in mind as the historian's research.

History has as its primary task to record information, while the historical novel seeks to recreate. There can be no conflict, for the latter neither supplants nor usurps the former, but each can carve out its own territory and purposes.

History is the result of analytical, systematic, and deliberate study; historical novels are produced by creative, venturesome, and artistic minds. Thus the historical novel is capable of revealing aspects of history not noticed or not of concern to the historian.

The historian is forced to stand far beyond the matter of which he writes and to look back calmly and critically, while the historical novelist can retroject himself, as it were, back into the period of his interest and confine himself severely within its limits. The historian writing about the Near East during the period of Persian domination will view the story of Esther objectively, while the historical novelist, though bound by given beginnings and given ends, can wander away from the path at will, so long as he follows certain guideposts such as Esther as the harem favorite and Haman swinging from the gallows.

The historian looks back at an event such as the Sabbatian movement and notes its complete failure, whereas the historical novelist, bound by the characters in the events, can make no such suggestion, but rather is privileged to experience anew every vision, every hope, every pain, and every triumph.

The historian of necessity must highlight and animate the thoughts and actions of the great, the leaders; the historical novelist is free to probe the hearts and minds of the leader's least followers, for his landscape is not nearly so vast. My only chance of appearing as the next-door neighbor of a famous personage is in a historical novel, not in a history book.

Although the historian must survey, analyze, and appraise, he must retain a certain distance and objectivity. He can only risk sympathy and commiseration when he can still remain on a level higher than the action. The novelist, in recreating history, experiences the drama of his characters, breathes and thinks with them, and enters into the familiar and small things in the lives of his characters.

The historical novelist amplifies, but does not rewrite history. He can make factual errors, but so can historians. He can tell us what men did, as the historian can, but most crucial he, unlike the historian, can tell us not only what happened to men, but what they thought and what they were. This is the greatness, and the usefulness, of the historical novel to the student of history.

One word of caution to the reader is necessary. In probing these historical novels both as sources of history and as the vehicles in which contemporary history is disguised, we have had to ignore another aspect of these works--their literary richness. The rich human characterization so striking in the Feuchtwanger novels and the universal dimensions

of the family strife in I. J. Singer's novel have been grossly neglected. The wit, imagination, and artistic abilities of Thomas Mann must be sought in a reading of the novels themselves, not in our use of them as sources of contemporary history, and Bernard Malamud's powerful portrait of a tragic character may not be revealed as we use the novel as a source for historical information. And to the credit of the novelists studied here, their historical or contemporary ideologies, with only one exception, never obtrude between the reader and the human characterizations found in the novels. Treatment of these novels as literature, indeed, as great literature, is available in a variety of book reviews for those who desire it. Our task is to suggest possibilities for the historian and the nonacademic reader of historical novels, not to comment upon their literary niceties. It is no small sacrifice to withdraw from this arena of study, but if this thesis can add a dimension of understanding and possible interpretation for those who read historical novels as they read contemporary novels or pure fiction, it will have opened a significant avenue of thought and satisfaction.

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I. JEWISH ACCEPTANCE IN A GENTILE SOCIETY

1. INTRODUCTION

The roots and character of anti-Jewish feeling and persecutions have been explored by practically every Jewish historian. Although the attention given to secondary factors may differ, rare is the Jewish historian who does not emphasize racial and religious antagonism as the primary factor in his explanation of anti-Jewish feeling. This is especially true of historians of the Middle Ages, who describe the multitude of attacks upon Jewish individuals and communities primarily in terms of religious dissension.

Cecil Roth writes:

Once religious passions are aroused, it is always difficult to restrict them to one channel. It was notorious that certain leaders had vowed that the blood of Christ should be avenged in the blood of the Jews. From the Crusader's point of view, it was supremely illogical to leave older and even more bitter opponents of the Christian faith undisturbed, perhaps even profiting from their holy venture, while they went to risk their lives and their substance in battle against the Saracens.¹

Solomon Grayzel, discussing the same persecutions, writes:

The persecution during the First Crusade... was kept alive by generation after generation of priests and monks, either because of sincere religious zeal, or because attacking the Jews proved to be a sure means for self-advancement.²

Simon Dubnow, commenting upon the Spanish persecutions of the Jews, writes:

They [the Jews] had no more bitter enemies than the high nobility and the clergy, for the haughty Spanish aristocrats could not tolerate the presence of aliens in race and religion in their midst, competing successfully with them for the highest posts in the kingdom; and as for the clergy, most of whom were Dominican friars, they regarded the elevation of the Jews as a direct insult to the church...The idea of their separateness as Jews on the one hand, and of their influence as Spaniards connected with the state administration on the other, incurred the jealous dissatisfaction of the Catholic clergy and nobility.³

The clearest expression of this racial basis behind anti-Jewish actions comes from B. Netanyahu, who is also writing about the Jews in Spain:

For what was then going on in Spain was a bitter and full-fledged racial war under the cover of religious agitation. The development was by no means exclusively Spanish. Race hatreds, it must be assumed, were a factor which operated against the Jews of the Middle Ages as it did in other periods of their history. The fact that the ruling theories of the Middle Ages are completely silent on the racial problem--a problem which is as old as man's ethnic division--is, of course, no proof to the contrary. The force of electricity also functioned in nature before modern science recognized its principles or learned to harness it for specific purposes.

Spain was the first land in Europe where the elemental force of racial antagonism was brought clearly to the surface...Thus it was in Spain that the medieval theory that the Jews were persecuted solely for their religion was put to its severest test. It was therefore here that it first exploded.⁴

Although there was certainly an endless line of outbreaks and massacres, both organized and spontaneous, against the Jews before, during and after the Middle Ages, neither racial*

*I have chosen not to discuss the complex problem of whether Marrano persecution was racial anti-Semitism. For our purposes, it is enough to note that prominent Jewish historians use the term "racial" in this and other contexts prior to the clearly racial anti-Semitism of the 19th Century.

nor religious theories are adequate for explaining the roots and developments of anti-Jewish feeling. But neither can the roots be sought, as the Marxist historians suggest, only in the economic relations and social struggles of various classes within a society. Rather, the character of anti-Jewish sentiment in a given society can be best explained by a combination of the specific social, economic and political forces operating within a society, the religious attitudes and dissensions of the community, and the state of the Jews vis-a-vis these various aspects of the society.

There are many reasons other than religion which might have motivated anti-Jewish feeling, and these can only be tested by an intensive study of the Jewish and Gentile community in a specific historical period. While this has been the task of historians for well over a century now, it has simultaneously been undertaken by another group of writers as well, historical novelists. It is they who have tried to recreate the persons who populated these societies, to describe the events in which these people participated, and to portray the nature of the societies in which their characters lived.

All of the historical novelists in this part of our study are Jewish. All of them lived during the twentieth century and most knew very intimately the persecution and annihilation of their people in this century. They chose to write about historical events in which Jews were involved, in which their heroes succeeded and failed, died naturally or

were murdered, but always where their Jewish characters' destinies are intimately tied to persons and events within the larger Gentile society.

These Jewish historical novelists are our sources in this essay for the historical events and persons that they describe. We are not so much concerned with their literary abilities or style as with their reconstruction of the societies in which Jews and Gentiles lived and acted. Through their reconstructions, we view the social, economic, political and religious forces operating within the society and their relationship to the destiny of the Jews caught up in these forces. We may also gain insight into anti-Jewish feelings in the twentieth century from our study of earlier societies, for in the final analysis novelists are writing and speaking to their contemporaries, not the Jews of York, Seville or Lodz.

Our search in these novels is not for their historical reliability, although this is generally very accurate, but rather for the common denominator accounting for the fate of the Jew in a Gentile world. Why, in a given country, did the Jews swing from the extremes of great security and acceptance to the depths of despair and denigration?

To develop the thesis that anti-Jewish feeling and persecution is not simply a result of religious or racial ideology but is intimately tied to the stability of the society in which the Jews live, we have chosen seven historical novels.

2. RAQUEL

Lion Feuchtwanger, a German-Jewish author, left Germany in the 1930's and spent the last years of his life in America. In the mid-1950's he wrote Raquel,⁵ an historical novel based upon the chronicled love affair of King Alfonso VIII of Castile and Raquel, the Jewess, the daughter of Don Yehuda Ibn Esra, Alfonso's minister of finance. Yehuda was a Jewish Moslem, that is, he was born a Jew yet had acknowledged the Prophet Mohammed from his youth. When he left the Emir of Seville to serve King Alfonso, he openly returned to Judaism, and Feuchtwanger presents us with the role of a Jew and the Jewish community in the midst of twelfth century Christian Spain.

Castile, when Yehuda took over his new position, was primitive and poor:

Here, in Christian Spain, in this land of Castile, everything was only just beginning... things were all very crude here. They had destroyed what Islam had built...Agriculture was poor and backward; they tilled the ground as their forefathers had done. Crafts and industry had gone to rack and ruin. The population had decreased alarmingly...it would be a hard task putting new life into this impoverished and decayed land of Castile.⁶

But precisely because of Castile's economic state did the challenge excite Don Yehuda. All he needed was peace-- and thus began the struggle between the temperamental and reckless Alfonso, caught in the middle of the Pope's call to

the Third Crusade and the truce that he, Alfonso, had signed with the Emir of Seville, and the shrewd and ambitious businessman, Don Yehuda. The fate of the Jews of Castile is inextricably tied to the outcome of this struggle, for with peace they and Castile would prosper, with war they would be the Crusaders' first victims.

Alfonso was clearly made to understand that Castile needed Don Yehuda Ibn Esra and the Jews, for as Don Manrique, the King's First Privy Councilor explained:

"We have had to wage wars of conquest for a whole century, and we have had no time to look after our economy. The Moslems have had the time. If we want to stand up to them, then we need the Jews. We need their skill in matters of negotiation, their business connections. It is very fortunate for the cause of the Christian princes that the Moslems of Andalus have driven the Jews out of their country."⁷

And Don Yehuda did not disappoint the King or his Councilors. His plan was perfect:

"We shall demand of your grandees that, in principle, they acknowledge your right to tax them. We shall refrain from insisting that they pay immediately. We shall give them time, and still more time. In return, we shall ask for certain things that will not cost them much...to grant their towns and villages fueros, privileges giving these communities a certain measure of independence, so that more and more towns and villages cease to be under the jurisdiction of your barons and become responsible to you alone. Your common citizens will pay taxes more willingly and punctually than your grandees ever will, and the revenue will be higher. It is in the labor of your peasants and in the industry and commerce of your towns that your strength lies, my Lord and King. Increase their rights, and the power of your obstinate grandees will diminish."

Alfonso was too intelligent not to see that this was the only way of bringing the insolent barons to their knees.⁸

Alfonso could find only one objection, and a powerful one:

"Well, in the end my barons may grant free trade to some dirty little villages; but they will never pay taxes to me, that I can tell you. And they are right. In times of peace they are not required to pay any taxes...And now, thanks to your wisdom, there will be no war for long years to come."⁹

But Don Yehuda was ready for this argument and his answer was superb:

"Your barons are not in the right. Their argument is not watertight. For eight years, I most profoundly hope, there will be no war; but then, as everyone who knows you is well aware, there will be another war. And aid in warfare is what your nobles owe you. It is my duty...to prepare the country for your war in good time, and this means that the financing has to start right now. It would be against all reason if I tried hastily to scrape up the funds for war only once war had begun. We shall ask merely for a small annual contribution to begin with..."¹⁰

As Don Yehuda's plan became operative, the reaction by the nobility to the Jews in general and Yehuda in particular did not surprise the King's financial minister:

Don Yehuda learned of the violent animosity that the great nobles of the realm felt toward him. Since the death of wise Ibn Shoshan they had increased their privileges, and after the King's defeat they had appropriated still others. They were enraged to find that now another Hebrew had come, even more cunning and greedy than the former and intent on taking everything back from them. They grumbled, they cursed, they plotted. Yehuda's face remained impassive as he listened to this report.¹¹

But Don Yehuda not only had to face the nobility from whom he was slowly demanding more and more for the royal treasury, but the Clergy as well. The Church resented the monies now accumulating in the royal coffers and more than

ever were eager to grab hold of Jewish wealth:

The Jews did not pay tithes to the Church as the rest of the population did; they paid their taxes directly to the King. No papal edict, no resolution of the College of the Cardinals, had been able to alter this. Archbishop Don Martin was infuriated to find that the appointment of this cunning Ibn Esra was making the Jews more stubborn than ever in their damnable endeavor to escape from the clutches of the Church. He employed all the means at his disposal to fight the new Escrivano.¹²

Despite opposition to himself and his people, Don Yehuda never doubted that the prosperity of Castile meant prosperity and well-being for the Jews. With this in mind he never wavered from his ambitious program of reconstruction. His devotion paid high dividends:

As Yehuda had predicted, Castile flourished while the rest of Christendom went out to wage the Holy War...When the Crusade was proclaimed, the barons grumbled and complained that the Jew was preventing them from joining in the holy battle, and they declared that the Jew must be driven away. But soon it became apparent what immense advantages neutrality was bringing the country; the grumblers fell silent, and the general fear of the Jew, and the secret respect for him, grew. More and more of the nobles strove to win his favor.¹³

In the midst of the prosperity, Yehuda permitted his seventeen-year-old daughter Raquel to live with Alfonso at his Moorish summer house La Galiana, while the King, in return for the "favor," allowed thousands of Jewish refugees from France to settle in Castile:

By this time almost all of the Jewish fugitives from France were settled and becoming assimilated to the life and labor of the country. The vituperations of the prelates and barons were lost amid the merry noise of general prosperity.¹⁴

Not only the French Jewish refugees were becoming assim-

ilated to the prospering land, but Don Yehuda and his family were adjusting quite well to Christian Spain: "...a de Guzmán and a de Lara--though admittedly only a poor cousin of Don Manrique's--asked the Jewish Escrivano to receive their sons into his castillo as pages."¹⁵

Don Yehuda's son was received in no poorer fashion:

"You see, Don Yehuda," he [King Alfonso] said, "your son and I get on well together. Will you not send him up to me at the castle, to be a page?"

Doña Raquel seemed confused, and the others found it difficult to conceal their amazement. Almost stammering in his joy, Alazar burst out: "Do you mean that seriously, Don Alfonso? Will you really be my gracious Lord and Master?" As for Don Yehuda, whose wish had been so unexpectedly fulfilled, he bowed low and said: "My Lord the King is very gracious."¹⁶

Don Yehuda, the Jews, and Castile all prospered. But just as their fate was bound together in good times, so war and defeat for Castile would mean terror for the Jews. Don Yehuda put it best: "And then I recognized yet once again: my fate is inextricably bound up with that of this King of Edom."¹⁷

Don Yehuda's rise and eventual fall is characteristic of many of Feuchtwanger's heroes, rugged individuals intoxicated with power but who are ultimately defeated by historical patterns and events partially beyond their apparent omnipotent control. More specifically, we are often witness to the spectacle of the tragic role of the Jews in a Gentile society, the fate of a renegade who is willing to assimilate himself in an alien society for the sake of power and who reaches great heights before he, and his forgotten people, are brought down

to the grave. To the fate of Don Yehuda and the Jews when peace is no more in Spain, we now turn.

Don Yehuda himself knew full well what war and defeat would bring:

He had given up Seville and his former life in order to prevent this war. But now the enormous wheel was turning, moving inexorably nearer. The Caliph would lead his armies into Andalus, Alfonso would inevitably suffer defeats, and the citizens of Toledo would blame not the King but him, Yehuda, and the Jews...all the fury of Edom would be unleashed on the six thousand Frankish fugitives he had brought into the country. How triumphant he had been when by his wiles he had obtained this privilege for them!¹⁸

Here Don Yehuda was caught in events which were far beyond his control, although he passed no opportunity to sustain the peace between Moslem and Christian. But in another area, Don Yehuda was guilty of contributing fuel to the fire which was soon to burst upon him and his people. He contributed to anti-Jewish feeling, as Ibn Verga had pointed out,¹⁹ by acting arrogantly, haughtily and pretentiously. Warnings from the Jewish community to Don Yehuda proved of no avail:

"There is something else I should like to put to you, most humbly, in the name of the Aljama. The splendor of your house, the abundance of possessions with which the Lord has blessed you, the glory He had bestowed on you through the King's favor--all this is a thorn in the side of Israel's jealous enemies, and above all in the Archbishop's black heart. I have therefore exhorted the Aljama once more to be as inconspicuous as possible in order not to irritate the evildoers by a display of extravagance. Would that you too, Don Yehuda, refrained from irritating them." "I understand your anxiety, my Master and Teacher Don Ephraim," Yehuda answered, "but I do not share it. In my experience the manifestation of power has an intimidating effect."²⁰

Again Don Yehuda was warned to curb his desire to revel in power and importance, but he shunned the counsel:

The synagogue he had built for the Aljama was now finished. Yehuda wanted to consecrate it with all possible pomp. Don Ephraim opposed him: in his view such a celebration in these times would look too much like provocation. Yehuda insisted. "Have no fear, my Master and Teacher Don Ephraim," he said, and pledged himself: "I shall see to it that our enemies swallow their own tongues, the villains!"²¹

The war finally came, and Castile was defeated:

"The number of the Christians that were slain by the Faithful," the Chronicle records, "I cannot tell. Nobody could reckon it. The dead Christians were so many that only Allah, Who had created them, too, knows their number." Since the battle of Zallaka, one hundred twelve years earlier, the Moslems had not won such a victory in the Peninsula.²²

With defeat and disaster came rumors and accusations, and the search for the cause of the defeat:

There were wild rumors circulating in Toledo. Never--so people were saying--never would that splendid Christian army have been defeated had there not been treachery and betrayal somewhere at work. The Jew, the friend of the Emir of Seville, had intrigued with the Moslems, betraying the Christians' plans to him, telling him the strength of the various units and their positions. The King had not disentangled himself from the snares of the Jewess, who was an emissary of the Devil...²³

Not only the Escrivano was slandered, but aliens were now readily available as scapegoats for the King's defeat:

Nobody suspected the men of the Aljama, [the Queen told its leader], who were known to be loyal friends of the King. But nothing was known about those strangers, the Frankish fugitives, whom the King, in the excessive kindness of his heart, had permitted to enter the country, and people looked askance at the man, the Escrivano Don Yehuda Ibn Esra, who had given the King such bad advice. Furthermore, with all his merits, Don Yehuda was a

proud if not presumptuous man, and the splendor of his life in the midst of the Holy War kindled the anger of many simple citizens.²⁴

The populace needed a scapegoat also, and it could have possibly been the Christian Arabs were it not for the mob's awareness of how much influence two Jews, Yehuda and Raquel, had had upon their beloved King:

The people of Toledo burned with rage to avenge the defeat at Alarcos on those who were to blame for it, and their rage grew all the time...Any Jews who showed themselves outside the solid walls of the Juderia were ill-treated; several were killed. Even some of the Christian Arabs were severely manhandled.²⁵

The Queen's jealousy of Raquel, the head of the army's hatred of Don Yehuda for inhabiting his former castle, the populace's thirst for revenge, all found an outlet in the murder of Don Yehuda and Raquel.*

We come full circle with Feuchtwanger as Alfonso concluded a treaty of peace with the Moslems and normalcy returned to the Spain of the Christians:

He thought of the six thousand Frankish fugitives Yehuda had brought into the kingdom, against so much furious opposition; they were no longer irksome intruders but had become extremely useful citizens. Everything had turned out differently, and better than he, Benjamin, had expected...and now he was taking measures to preserve the peace he had made there. And the King not only tolerated it; the King was actually encouraging it...Now that six thousand would be able to live meaningful lives...All that had been achieved was little---the mite of peace Ephraim had brought home, the mite of

*Feuchtwanger understood the Spanish court system quite well. When bad times come, throw the favorite to the mob, but no need to abandon the whole Jewish community to the masses and thereby weaken the king's establishment. No need, that is, until the Jewish community becomes poor.

good sense the King had begun to show. It was only a faint new gleam in the great darkness. But it was there, this new gleam, this glimmer, and if anxiety and dread should assail him, this small ray of light would still glimmer ahead of him.²⁶

As Castile enjoyed peace and the feudal economic system developed successfully, Don Yehuda and his people played a positive role and enjoyed the friendship of the Castilians. But when the Church became insolvent, the nobles saw their feudal rights and privileges being taken from them, and the civil wars impoverished the populace--Don Yehuda and Raquel bore the brunt of the hostility diverted toward the Jews. Where these unfortunate conditions continued to exist, the Jewish people as a whole felt the torch. They were spared this fate in 1195--momentarily--as the feudal society of Castile returned to peace and shortly thereafter--victory.

3. THE KING'S PERSONS

Joanne Greenberg wrote The King's Persons²⁷ in the early 1960's. It is the story of the Jewish community of York from June, 1182, to March, 1190, and it is set against the background of medieval England. We are introduced to the Jews of York immediately and soon read of their comfort and prosperity:

Still, York was a prosperous city and its Jews were wealthy...Northstreet was cobbled and its houses were well kept. The bottom of the street ended in a close and there two great houses of stone stood opposite one another like guardians. The houses belonged to Josce and Baruch, and stood as signs for all to see that they were among the wealthiest Jews in England. At the windows, glass gleamed, and Baruch felt a surge of pride as the wanderers drew in their breaths with the wonder of finding, at the end of the world in their imagining, such luxury.²⁸

By 1182 the English feudal society of the twelfth century had reached the crest of its development and Jews and Gentiles in York had lived peacefully together for many years. Now the feudal structure was beginning to decay, and the Jews saw the signs of collapse all around them although they failed to see how their prosperity could be affected.

The monarchy had its woes:

The King's beloved successor-son had died and the younger brothers had been battling the old and tired father. After his defeat, perhaps they would war against each other. Another year's delay, and yet another, and the bright-burning sun of ambition and the thrust for glory had drawn away "The Armies of the Living God" and had left its remnant: an unled

rabble of whores and outlaws and fallen monks, scattered and exhausted, thralls of their empty bellies.²⁹

As famine and hunger entered the gates of York, the peasants too cried out:

The carpenter's heavy hand was raised and his wife cowered away from it and the children began to moan. Bett saw then that their quarrel was not with her, or really with the Jew, but with their will and their faith and with their Dear Christ, whose vicars denied them a world now because of the one to come; and with the clouds whose rain falls also on the Just; and with the Blessed Virgin, who hears, but does not grant; and with the earth, the terrible and uncaring earth, which had let them increase with child and had cut them back again by starvation.³⁰

The barons and their fellow lords were beginning to realize that their Golden Age was disappearing as the Crown and the Jews clipped their power. Baruch, the wealthiest Jew in York, received his payment from a loan to the Baron Malabestia:

"What if I should need more?" the Baron was saying. The room was very quiet.

Baruch smiled a kind of slow, twisting smile, and it was plain to all of them then that the Malabestia was tied to this kind of eternal borrowing and repaying for as long as the order of their English life prevailed. The King wanted it, the Church wanted it, the Jews wanted it, and the Baron would need more, and more, and always more of the coin that the new form of life demanded. Every silver mark was a little death to rule by noblemen. Every gold mark was a fire of life to the landless, nameless merchantman and artisan who pledged his faith to the whole nation under a single King.³¹

The Jews collected the money, but it was really the King who became rich; and Malabestia well knew it:

"We do what is needed [began Baruch]. We are like earthworms of the soil; we tunnel through it

and leave the earth richer for our passing. This your King knows as France does not. Philip expelled our people for piety. He will someday call them back for commerce and for wealth..."

"Will not our King protect his barons from the hands of mad Jews?" Richard had asked.

Malabestia had answered him shortly: "The King would take your title and my title and throw them both into his coffers. The Jews are his cows. We feed them at one end and he milks them at the other, but enough is lost between...I should like very much to carve, one day, some of what is lost between."³²

While visiting York, Malabestia discovered that he was not alone in his dilemma:

The Baron Malabestia had come...to York to see how the city was taking the news of Henry and his sons and the toil for Jerusalem. The proud landed lords were bitterly angered that now the cities had a voice in the making of law, and that the tides of custom were beginning to run against the inheritors of the great names and holdings.³³

The Baron's squire fared no better, and he symbolized an entire stratum of the nobility caught in the crumbling feudal hierarchy:

Young De Kuckney was over age for a squire, and he had borne much shame because of it. He should have been knighted long ago...but Lord Robert had been impoverished by these very Jews, and was not wealthy enough to buy the ceremonies, pay the taxes or give the gifts which attended the making of a knight. At nineteen, Richard de Kuckney was an embittered misfit among the high-voiced pages and squires, and in his anger at being jostled in the street by a Jew, he saw the trampling of the rags of his dignity...of his father who was too poor to buy his son the place which already by law belonged to him; of himself, growing old in service to a lord who had scorned him into impotence and dried up the joy of life in his veins.³⁴

Joanne Greenberg sums up the problem the nobles faced in one sentence: "The only law that truly governed the lives of

these petty princelings was grounded in the understanding of family and clan, and with its loss, the web of their civilization shook yet weaker in the changing wind of the times.³⁵

Lord Robert de Kuckney put his finger on the changes and upheavals facing the old feudal system:

Away to east lay his lands that would soon have to be mortgaged to those Jews, strangers to his life and his cause. He did not know the purposes of these people, or what changed ways their power symbolized. What he knew was that the old names and old lands were being ripped apart; and he thought of the fees he owed to the King, and of his debts to the Church. Half of the wealth and lands of his house had been given up in reparation and penance. Now, these new fees, growing larger all the time, were not to be paid in the old ways: services, usufruct or craftsmanship or in time, but in the rare coin...

"Damn them!" He turned and dug his heels into the floor. Jews and the churches, kings and kin had hedged him about with their laws and wills and he was a prisoner, trapped in a drowning stream of debt and shame.³⁶

Lord Robert's description clearly reveals the Jew's dilemma. As the economic system went through flux and instability in England, the Jew profited:

Josce knew that the business of lending money had seldom been better. Ways were changing as surely as the years. As wars and commerce became more complex, more money was needed to employ the skilled men who supplied the armies and machines. Slowly, the old land-wealth was dwindling and the noblemen were made to supply the money for a war as well as the men. To raise this money and to pay the taxes which seemed to grow and proliferate on every hand, ancestral lands were given over to Jews and others as pledges for the necessary coin...The law forbade the lending of money at interest and thus the Jews, conveniently kept as money-lenders and necessary outcasts, traded in money at whatever rates they chose.³⁷

But those persons most affected by the change saw no

other outlet for their frustrations than the Jews. The Clergy and Monarchy used the Jew well, for they waxed rich and kept it while the Jew, proving more vulnerable than his partners, was soon to lose his short-lived wealth.

All through the decade of the 1180's, the England of the earlier part of the twelfth century was collapsing. Men imagined how much worse it would be when the Pope's call for a new Crusade was answered:

A few, only a few remembered the land, and how it was in hard times, without men about. New songs would have to be written, not only about the glory of bright blood and banners, but also of the rapine of unguarded estates, of harvests rotting in the fields while people starved, lacking the hands to gather it in; of debts and famines, of the bleakness of lonely winters, of the never-to-return...³⁸

More than the call to Jerusalem plagued the land, for: "unrest was stirring everywhere...brigands and bands of the hungry were making travel hazardous throughout the land. Anguish piled on anguish."³⁹

The paranoid religious fanaticism which gripped England with the Pope's call sapped the strength of the monastic community and opened the land to anarchy. The messages of glory for Christ's Crusade fell like water on a thirsty land:

"Brothers in Christ's True Word--His land has been captured, His tomb desecrated, His name slandered! Shall we crucify Him again?"

A thousand voices shouted "No" in the churches, and ten thousand at the corners of streets, and a hundred thousand in the brisk cold of autumn fields and woods. To go forth and rescue Christ's land became a pledge for the sinner repentant, a promise for the dying, a vow for the holy, a wish for children and a blinding dream for the defeated in life and for the hands that yearned to sift mysterious gold and capture the prize of spices.⁴⁰

The Jews sensed the danger if the Crusades were to actually begin: "For the Jews it was an omen of terror; a great black vulture lowering over their heads. The blood is up, the Christians are flying their banners--God help us! Once more it would be worth a man's life to cross into Egypt or to go by land to Byzantium..."⁴¹

But not one Jew left York to begin an Exodus; most continued to amass wealth:

The Jews, knowing that they were helping to finance this war and also the war to come, saw the old peaceful bonds beginning to shake apart about them and wondered if the trembling would not perhaps shake loose some of the stitches of their own allegiance...Baruch doubled his rates of interest, and moved, through a Christian intermediary, to buy up lands from his debtors.⁴²

Worse than becoming rich while the Christians prepared for their cause, the Jews took no pains to hide their wealth and luxury:

Yomtob of Joigny stood up, knocking over his comfortable stool..."Call them children; call them evil and deny them humanity, and for your luxury you will pay with the bodies of your own children. It is easy to forget one's own vanity and evil and cruelty; the rich clothes that beget envy, the rich jests that beget resentment, the rich derisions that beget hatred."⁴³

Ibn Verga might have had Baruch of York in mind when he listed Jewish ostentatiousness as a cause of anti-Jewish outbreaks, for:

Two years after Baruch had sat jubilant in the dim cellar of the cathedral, his middlemen received the ruby-set ancestral sword as part payment of an immense debt. When he heard the terms of the noble family's defeat, he had a sudden sense of fear at his own incredible power...he had set his bow against this house and brought it down and it was

destroyed as surely as by fire. In two generations the name would no longer exist...Almost like God!⁴⁴

Baruch and Yomtob argued heatedly over Baruch's ostentatiousness. Yomtob called him a "peacock and self-righteous villain" who pushed "up the rates on loans so that a man payed until he was sucked like an empty husk...you who are smothered in jewels and buried in furs and foreclose on widows and slander Christians and treat the Christian commoners as if they were dirt."⁴⁵

Baruch tried in vain to explain his behavior: "If a man is free to risk his fortune in money-lending, has he not the right to wear the risk upon his back?...Clipping coins? I do no more clipping than anyone else--everyone has the right to do what he can. If those ignorant goats don't know any better, they deserve to be swindled!"⁴⁶

The populace took note of everything the Jewish community did and came to conclusions not unlike the fears of Yomtob:

The Jews worked hard to get coins to use. They borrowed coin everywhere. They even used their own private counters, and so hard were they working that they failed to see the questioning looks of their neighbors. Were heathens and infidels becoming rich with this war to redeem the land of Christ for His annointed? The warnings which had sounded in France years before the expulsion were sounding again. Eyes were beginning to narrow against them.⁴⁷

Making matters worse, the populace which was keyed for a march to Jerusalem was denied its opportunity for glory and riches as obstacle after obstacle postponed the Crusade's opening. Not only insufficient funds, but royal strife

contributed its share: "The years had ground on with delays and turmoil among the souls massing for the great assault on Jerusalem. Now Henry was fighting with his own sons for his crown."⁴⁸

With a new King, new hopes for the Crusade emerged: "On September third...Richard was crowned King Richard of England...Now at last, God's Will would, indeed, be done. Now, at last, the agonizing wait was over, and the armor need rust no longer, nor the soul hunger for holy adventure. The winds of spring would find the willing martyrs, swords drawn, in Jerusalem."⁴⁹

The hopes were dashed, at least temporarily, and other outlets for the disappointed were found. Baruch felt the hostility first-hand in London:

"He said that Baruch had been taken and beaten by the crowd, and that then they began to play with a sword to his neck and then here and there, laughing that he would die slowly. Someone half in jest said, 'Why not be finished with heathenness then?' and they all took up the cry--'Baptism or death.' Something of the great hunger for crusade was in the city. It was part of the anguish of those who could never go and seek and sacrifice."⁵⁰

It was easier than they had dreamed for the almost penniless nobles and lords to turn the ecstatic and disappointed religious fanatics, the impoverished and restless townspeople, and all other malcontents against the Jews for their own ends. All segments of society needed a scapegoat, and the Jews were it.

The townspeople "needed novelty and excitement to salve

them for the loss of their tradition of the land... [and] the wonderful promise of a passion, an action, a what they did not know."⁵¹

The religious fanatics needed a substitute for Jerusalem so "the least that we can do is to bring the Holy Land to us, for we have infidels enough close by at Norwich and York. Christ's killers there are thriving; we can cut them down like standing grain... Shall we not bring our Crusade against them?"⁵²

The malcontents were everywhere, men such as Richard de Kuckney who was beaten in a fist-fight by Baruch of York's son and swore, "Damn them! damn them! damn them!... Someday I will kill them all!"⁵³

For the murder and slaughter which would culminate the anti-Jewish outbreaks, the organizers chose a moment which was symbolic of the situation existing in the land:

When the wisest looked about for protection or for the embodiments of law, either civil or ecclesiastical, in the city or the shire, they found a strange and frightening lack, an emptiness in the great seats of authority... A man had always gone in a familiar path of law and command--in faith: the parish priest, the Canon, the Bishop, the Dean, the Archbishop; in civil matters: the Watch, the Bailiff, the Mayor, the King's Justice, the Sheriff, the King... With none of the great parts intact... wisdom, reason, security, law and responsibility had marched away from the Yorkshire moors to the glorious war, and because they promised to return, nothing was put in their places.⁵⁴

Joanne Greenberg has recreated the social conditions and the human frustrations which were to culminate in the slaughter of the entire York Jewish community on March 17, 1190. But why was it the Jews who were murdered? What were

Malabestia and others like him really after?

The first time the Baron tried and failed to organize the mob to destroy the Jews, he revealed his real motives:

...for the Baron's reason they might have poured down the road to Northstreet and killed every Jew in York, those men who had almost been his hounds.. The Cathedral--he could have forced his way to the vault where the debts and contracts were kept. The debt rolls would have been destroyed and no Jew would have been alive to stand against the Malabestia, a King's Justice, and declare before the King what was owed in hundreds of marks.⁵⁵

For their jewels and coin Malabestia organized the massacre of the York Jews. The Clergy and populace and ruff-raff were content with a local crusade, the barons wanted the fortunes King and King's Peoples had taken from them:

...the trip that was to gather up the gentry of the three counties for an undertaking of some kind upon York city...The idea had to do with all of the nobles and all of the Jews, with the fact of no authority in York, with a taste for crusades and with the eradication of the debt which was by now too great ever to be paid.⁵⁶

And eradicate the debt they certainly did. No sooner was the massacre completed than the barons and lords hurried to the cathedral:

As they reached into the broken box and swept up the lists of names and debts, Lord Robert shivered. All of the hands that had written were now lifeless: Baruch of York...

In the end they went out behind the cathedral where the wall was well preserved, and there they burned the records of all debts. As the parchment caught, Lord Robert de Kuckney could not help feeling a sense of ease, a kind wash of relief. Money and lands drained away, the House impoverished and disgraced. The fear and shame were all burning away with the lovely characters of the

Jewish writing...They watched the parchment burn.
No evidence must remain.⁵⁷

Again the fate of the Jew and the society are inseparable. As feudalism crumbled the English Jews were murdered and evicted, but this was only the prelude to years of economic and social collapse for England as well. England, by destroying her Jews, signaled her own disintegration.

4. THE UGLY DUCHESS

In the middle 1920's Lion Feuchtwanger wrote The Ugly Duchess,⁵⁸ a story of fourteenth century Tyrol and its Duchess, Margarete, or, because of her ugly mouth, the Maultasch. A Jew, Mendel Hirsch, enters the story for a chapter or two and through him we can gain some additional insight into the historical relationship between Jew and Gentile.

Upon meeting the Jew, the Duchess was reminded of the persecution of the Jews in Bavaria from which Mendel had escaped, and commented upon it with keen insight, probing beneath racial and theological reasons:

So this was how they looked, these people who defiled the sacrament and cruelly tortured innocent children: the race who were cursed by God and who crucified God. She had...discussed them exhaustively with Abbot Johannes of Viktring. He had neither approved nor condemned the persecutions. That ancient curse which their own lips had called down was being fulfilled on this stricken people. "His blood be on us and our children!" The Abbot shrugged his shoulders, and cited an ancient classic:

"Wretch that I am, my fears are great, for great my offences." Margarete found this solution a little too simple. Of course a man who fanned one of these persecutions into flame might be acting from zeal in the cause of God. Perhaps. It was certain that he gained much by it. For was there a more approved way of getting rid of Jewish creditors than by killing them?⁵⁹

Margarete was wise enough to listen to the Jew, and

Mendel, proudly yet honestly, summarized his potential value for Tyrol:

"Why should Trent, Bozen, Riva, Hall, Innsbruck, Sterzing and Meran be less than Augsburg and Strassburg?"...With the gracious permission of the Princess he would soon make trade flourish here. Bring money into the country, much money, big money. He could dispose of capital to any extent they liked. Gave more liberal terms than the gentlemen in Venice and Florence. He would export wine, oil, wood; import silk, furs, swords, Spanish wool, jewels, Moorish gold-work; pelts from the Eastern Slavonic states; above all, slaves, too... They had only to let him arrange it all.⁶⁰

They did permit him to settle and made certain that he would stay for they realized that "he was of the new age; he would bring life into the country."⁶¹ And they were not sorry, for Margarete's hope that a new age of commerce could be dawning seemed almost realized as Mendel began to "arrange" Tyrolese economic life:

Little by little more Jews came into the country...about twenty families. Money flowed in, the towns became greater, more luxurious, the streets better; new strange fabrics, fruits, spices, wares poured in. The mountain land lived more richly, more comfortably.⁶²

Tyrol prospered--and the Jews found a place of refuge and stability under the Maultasch's rule. Insults were hurled at them, charges were made against them, but as long as the money poured in and things stirred, the Jews lived comfortably amidst the people of Tyrol. Their enemies accused them on racial and religious grounds, but Feuchtwanger clearly reveals their deeper motives:

But Messer Artese was bitterest of all over the preference shown to the Jew Mendel Hirsch. What? Before him, the quiet, modest, cultured Italian

gentleman and good Christian, they put that stinking, gurgling, strutting, impudent, importunate Jew, that filthy devil's spawn? Was it not enough that this people cursed by God, this people who had tortured and crucified our beloved Lord and Saviour, defiled the German and Italian towns? Had the unholy Maultasch to throw them the land in the mountains as well, so that they might creep in like worms, devour everything, and no more be got rid of? There they sat now, the loathsome vermin, cropping up everywhere, pressing their money on everybody unasked, to ask for a lower rate of interest than he, the highly-respected and honoured Florentine burgess, liked by all the princes and lords!⁶³

Artese could put up with ugly Christ-killers just as well as an Ugly Duchess, but accursed Jews who also undercut his interest rates--they must be thrown out of Tyrol. This, however, was not possible as long as Tyrol flourished with the presence of the Jews, and this it certainly did in the middle of the thirteenth century:

Tariffs were fixed, the discretion and jurisdiction of the feudal lords further straitened, the central authority strengthened, burghers, traders and handicrafts encouraged. The gay, many-colored towns blossomed, expanded, became great and luxurious...From the great exchanges and markets...routes and traffic branched all over the world. What Mendel Hirsch had sown was blossoming richly.⁶⁴

The prosperous climate which made anti-Jewish feeling wasteful and impractical soon came to an end:

...the plague had arrived...the Black Death was in the mountains...Like a fury the pestilence burst into the valleys of Tyrol. Of the inhabitants of Wipptal only a third were left...There were valleys in which one in six survived the plague...everyone fled from his fellows, hostile and suspicious. Friend fled from friend, bride from bridegroom, children from their parents.⁶⁵

In the midst of the plague, Messer Artese grew richer

and richer, and only Mendel Hirsch's activities prevented him from owning Tyrol as well as all Germany:

Messer Artese was very busy; it was a good time for him. All over the world houses and estates, rights and privileges, had fallen to heirs who did not know what to do with them. He acquired and accumulated. But in Tyrol he encountered resistance. Restrictions that hemmed him in, rights of pre-emptor by the Court and the authorities, obstinate clauses... That Jew, the sly Mendel Hirsch, was to blame for it all: He obstructed him, the good Christian financier, in his business. He had contrived all these impudent, diabolically sly clauses and difficulties just to trip him up.⁶⁶

Messer Artese of Florence then heard how the Jews were said to have caused the plague in the Rhineland and what their end was for this evil. With this knowledge he went quickly to work, sensing how the populace would welcome a scapegoat and the advantages which could accrue to the nobility with the Jews out of the way. The upheaval of the land as a result of the plague presented an unique opportunity, and:

Soon from Italy the rumor came creeping through the valleys of Tyrol slimily, making headway until it became a firmer and firmer certainty: the Jews had made the pestilence. The pestilence would not cease so long as they let the Jews stay in the country. Suspicion came to a head. Persecution, violence... At Riva the Jews were drowned in the lake; at Roverto, amid great hubbub and rejoicing, they were made to leap to their death from a precipice; at Trent they were burned. In Bozen people paid more attention to pillage, and the killing was badly organized.⁶⁷

Feuchtwanger leaves us with no doubt as to the motive behind these persecutions, and does not even disguise it in religious hatred. Quite simply put, "it was not the poisoned wells, it was their ready cash and the written claims on

their creditors that caused their undoing."⁶⁸

The populace, told only that the Jews had caused the death of their children, spouses and relatives, knew no other motive for their barbarity:

...he [Mendel Hirsch] had been wise and very capable, and had brought great profit to the land, and to her beloved towns. Now they had slaughtered him, stupidly, senselessly, bestially. Why, why had they done it? She turned to one of the bystanders with the stern, imperious question. "Well, he made the pestilence!" said he, bashful, stupid, and a little defiant.⁶⁹

The organizers of the persecutions, Artese and his confreres, knew full well why they had done it, who would do it for them, and how to accomplish the murdering and pillaging smoothly and quickly. And their rewards were worth the trouble:

Bavarian and Swabian lords in place of the dead now exacted their dues on behalf of the Margrave, and far more harshly than the Jews could have done.⁷⁰

Thus the fate of the Jew as society's barometer. As the society is secure and content so too the Jew; but when economic decline and social disintegration begin, the Jew is the first to feel the consequences.

5. FERDINAND AND ISABELLA

Herman Kesten is a German-Jewish author who wrote Ferdinand and Isabella⁷¹ during the mid-1930's. Its fate was no different from the fate of his other books--they were all burned by the Nazis. Ferdinand and Isabella is ostensibly about 15th Century Spain, but its message for and parallel with Nazi Germany are impossible to overlook. While the relationship between the Inquisition and the Nazis is central, we will here concern ourselves with Kesten's reconstruction of the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella and the situation of the Jews within Christian Spain. And fortunately Kesten offers us many opportunities to parallel the rapid decay of Spanish society and the rise in Jewish persecution.

As Ferdinand and Isabella opens and we meet the young Isabella, the Infanta, we hear the angry words of the Churchmen against the Jews:

"I know you Jews," the Rector of Salamanca countered darkly. "For century on century you have craftily confused the people and the truth, crying that you are called when you are rejected, crying you are chosen when man and God casts you out. Oh, infamy! In your midst appeared God, and you knew no better than to crucify Him!"⁷²

The Bishop of Lope continued the verbal attack against the Jews on racial and religious grounds:

"But in your temples you cry to your Jehovah and talk to God as to a business acquaintance, drive bargains with Heaven, mock at our Mysteries and rock yourselves in your white praying cloaks

with the golden nipples...Once you prospered and then crucified the Son of God. You have been beaten a million times. And will be beaten!... Stiff-necked people! Your knowledge is good for nothing! Your reason is hollow. Your prophets spoke falsely, risen up from the bellies of whales."73

At the council which decided to institute the Inquisition in Spain, we again meet the Churchmen who attacked the Jews on racial grounds. Isabella was no longer the Infanta but the thirty-year-old Queen of Spain, and the monk, tutor to the Infante Don John, argued:

"The Jews slaughter Christian children. That has been proved. They crucify them as they crucified our Lord and bake the children's blood. That has been proved. In Saragossa one Eastertide, two hundred and thirty-one years ago, they slaughtered the infant Christian Diego. At Segovia, eighty-seven years ago, they defiled a Host in the Church of St. Anne. That has been proved. The Jews must be exterminated. The Marranos must be burnt. They are patricidal vipers. The Inquisition alone can save us. Christendom stands on the brink of the abyss."74

And once the Inquisition had been established, its Inquisitor and the Queen's father-confessor, Thomas de Torquemada, preached against the heretics and villains, the Jews:

"The Jews are a race accursed! They crucified Christ. He cursed the Jews. Seville is crammed with vipers' brood...They observe still more hideous customs of this accursed religion of dogs! They have no respect for the lives of the monks; they defile the holiness of churches and monasteries, seducing and robbing nuns...They have corrupted, seduced, confused and tainted our glorious city of Seville."75

Despite the unceasing vituperations of the Clergy, Kesten does not permit us to miss the true forces behind the

pogroms, expulsion and Inquisition which so terrified the Jews of Spain:

Isabella wondered at the Jews' possessing so much gold. They have gold. I lack it. I must conquer Granada. I will no longer tolerate this Moorish affront to civilization. Rob! Take! And she pondered the abundance of the gold that the Holy Office had torn from the false Christians, the Marranos, like rotten teeth. But these Jewish-Christians were wealthier and more numerous than the Jews.

"Why," she asked, "don't you set up the Inquisition in Aragon?"

"It is opposed to the Constitution. The Aragonese love their freedom. If the Castilians revolt their lords must march in the van. The grandees of Aragon say, when they do homage to us: 'We of whom each one is as good as you and who taken together are more than you--'"

He broke off. Isabella's ironical smile exasperated him. "Why are you laughing?"

"Ferdinand, when will you finally learn how to rule men?"

Ferdinand sent an embassy to Rome for a bull for the setting up of the Inquisition in Aragon. There were too many heretics!⁷⁶

Under the guise of burning out heretics the Inquisition travelled to Aragon. But it had entered Castile under the same disguise and Kesten recreates for us the society in which the Inquisition took hold. It was a Spain impoverished by civil wars fought for almost two centuries. By the late 15th Century every class within the society was impoverished or was on its way to poverty, and it was the ruin of the Church, nobility, peasantry and monarchy from years of fighting which Kesten carefully describes.

The condition of the Church at the time Isabella married

Ferdinand of Aragon (1469) was described by Archbishop

Carillo:

"This civil war is my ruin. The taxes are not coming in. The coffers of the Church are empty. People are not bequeathing their fortunes to us any more. I have no money to pay my soldiers with. They are getting discontented."

Carillo continued by showing his confidence, as so many more were soon to do, in Isabella's ability to someday supply his needs: "I count on you, dear child. Once you are reigning I'll soon supply funds. I built the beautiful monastery of St. Anna; in your reign I will build twenty monasteries."⁷⁷

That the Church was well aware of the profits to be split by an alliance with Ferdinand and Isabella and the establishment of the Inquisition in Castile was made clear to Isabella as she met

...the sensual Inquisitor of Sicily, a fat, asthmatic gentleman with a sweet tooth and a fondness for wine, Philipp de Barberis. He had journeyed to Seville that Queen Isabella might confirm the privilege granted by the Emperor Frederick the Second in 1233 which gave the Inquisitors of Sicily a third of the estates of all heretics. Isabella loved the devout and zealous man and extended the privilege to apply to Seville. A year later Ferdinand confirmed this at Xerez de la Frontera. Two thirds of the estates of all heretics fell to the Crown. And thus sovereigns and judges divided the substantial booty.⁷⁸

Not only the Church was faltering, but the whole land was torn apart in 1470 with sickness and poverty and death. No class and no sanctuary escaped:

Now there came hunger, plague and civil war, three horsemen of the Apocalypse. They killed with the lance, they killed with the scythe, they

strangled...The Black Death rode through the land... to the monks and into the refectories through the courtyard windows, knocking at the cell doors, one by one, with bony fingers...shoemakers on their guild day counted the dead of their guild and found that in just under two months more than half of their number had died, masters and apprentices... the grandees made war on one another over quarrels at cards...In Seville the two wealthiest families, the Guzmans and the Ponce de Leons, fought so bitterly against each other that the streets ran rivulets of blood. The Duke of Medina Sidonia, head of the Guzman family, raised twenty thousand men and in one day in Seville alone burnt down fifteen hundred houses belonging to the friends of Juan Ponce de Leon, Marquis of Cadiz.⁷⁹

With the land a blood-bath and before the establishment of the Inquisition, the crown and clergy experimented with the few maravedi they could milk from the peasants:

"At the expense of the peasants the sheep owners flourish--the Crown, that is, the nobility and clergy, united bandits; they combine themselves into a general council of sheep grazers and establish their own law courts and punish the peasant when he tries to protect his crops. If he wants to raise sheep himself they demand monstrous taxes and ruin him. He is sentenced by the nobility who suck him dry. He is pauperized and enslaved."

Carillo continued his blast at the monarchy by correctly predicting where this alliance would move next:

"Now it is the turn of the Jews and the Marranos. Ferdinand is cunning. The Jews are wealthy and weak. Let us plunder the Jews! The New Christians are more powerful? Let us call the strongest of all to our aid! The clergy! We will share the loot. Ferdinand will make a flourishing business of the Inquisition. He will plunder the circumcised and uncircumcised alike, the baptized and the unbaptized!"⁸⁰

Lest we conclude that the monarchy might have escaped the devastation eroding every class in Spain and ultimately responsible for the fate of the Jews, Kesten reminds us that

Ferdinand and Isabella had little more than their destitute grantees:

"I was at Mass in the cathedral with Ferdinand to thank the Creator for blessing my body. Did you see us, Beatrix? My threadbare wollen dress? Ferdinand's stained cloak? Ferdinand says we love one another. Often we don't know who will lend us food for our table, and the cooks are grumbling."⁸¹

The poverty of the royal pair led them to rob even the Church of its holy objects; and why continue to rob the true faith when the heretic dwells in your midst with his wealth:

But now once more they had neither men nor money...She convened the Cortes. The Cortes swore that the land was plundered bare. Nobody had money.

"Then we are lost!" cried Ferdinand and the ministers.

At that Cardinal Mendoza proposed that half of all the Church treasure should be melted down...

Ferdinand could already see in his mind's eye the great cannon he could buy with the proceeds of the Church treasures...

In the end Mendoza and Ferdinand triumphed; the treasure yielded thirty million maravedi. It was then that Ferdinand had the idea, almost the idea of a genius--of making the Catholic Church tax the Spanish Jews...Great ideas ripen slowly. Six years later Ferdinand turned the Inquisition, the old court of heresy, into a Jewish* bank.⁸²

With this description of Spanish society on the eve of the establishment of the Inquisition, Kesten enables us to understand better the forces leading to the Inquisition, the

*That the Inquisition only sought converted Jews on charges of heresy was not understood by Kesten, and he errs as well in attributing such great wealth to 15th Century Spanish Jews. But his main theme is clear: the Inquisition had its roots in economic, political and social decay much more than in religious zeal.

plundering of the Marranos and the Jewish persecution. First, the Church and monarchy badly needed funds, and there was nowhere in Spain to turn for help. By persecuting the Marranos and Jews, their wealth could be easily expropriated:

Isabella seated herself on the judge's high chair and pulled off her gloves...in three hours a hundred human beings were taken off to the gallows and several million maravedi had fallen to the Crown.⁸³

Or, as Chancellor Mendoza explained it to Isabella:

"Our King, Ferdinand the Fifth, desires the establishment of the Inquisition that the estates of sentenced Jews and Marranos may fall to the Crown."⁸⁴

"King Ferdinand is of the opinion that we should introduce the Inquisition for military, political, financial, and idealistic reasons. The King asks us to bear in mind the imminent war with Granada, the enormous cost of our arming, the extraordinary way in which a modern war eats up money, the..."⁸⁵

Isabella well understood the reasons for the Inquisition, despite her return upon occasion to "heretics." Here she reflected upon the records she had been shown by the Inquisitorial Treasurer:

And the sun really does shine on the flames so that they glow like gold. That is my mint, she thinks, the Jews and the Marranos; they are my treasure; I will melt you down, I will new mint you to pay for the Holy War with Granada. Melt, my treasure; make haste, my Jewish ducats!⁸⁶

Kesten satirizes this primary root of the Inquisition in Spain, the need of the Church and Clergy for money,* in the

*This is the same view of the Inquisition offered by Shylock in Ludwig Lewisohn's *The Last Days of Shylock*: "Aye, Christianity is a thrifty religion. When they burn us they first confiscate our goods; when they borrow of us, they are at once minded to compound with their conscience for not paying us."⁸⁷

list of signs by which a Spaniard could know a heretic:

- 28. Whosoever is rich.
- 29. Whosoever possesses lands...
- 31. Whosoever is rich.
- 32-99. Whosoever is rich...
- 1001-10,000. If the Crown needs money. But it
always needs money.

Besides the immediate need for funds by Church and Crown, we see a second aspect of the Inquisition in the novel. The Inquisition successfully diverted the widespread mass discontent from the King and Queen, from the Bishops and Church, and from the nobility. All these groups turned their own and the populace's venom against the Marranos and Jews and not only saved their own lives but waxed wealthy as well. The Crown blamed the persecuted Jews and burning Marranos for the misery of the populace and linked them with every facet of society which exploited the masses, while the Clergy fanned the flames of heresy primarily against the Marranos so that wherever Jews or Marranos turned, somebody blamed them for something. But the smooth and carefully planned union of Isabella and Torquemada did not have as its end the elimination of heretics, rather, the expropriation of their money.

Torquemada brilliantly rallied the masses against the heretics by combining a call to Christ and Church and a diatribe against the heretic's wealth. The populace delighted in the burnings, the Church in exterminating heresy, and the Crown in the confiscations:

"They are clever and ambitious; they have collected all the riches for themselves, and the best

positions." (The congregation gnashed its teeth: Money! Money! And position!)... "Trade has yielded them monstrous fortunes. They despise manual labor and honorable handiwork..."

"The estates and fortunes of one and all shall be confiscated for the Royal Treasury... We shall exterminate all heresy!"⁸⁹

Jewish persecution and the Inquisition quite clearly grew out of society undergoing decay. This theme, that anti-Jewish feeling and violence only become basic policies of societies undergoing religious, economic, political, and social decay and collapse, is nowhere more clear than in Christian Spain.

6. KIDDUSH HA-SHEM

Kiddush Ha-Shem,⁹⁰ by the Eastern European novelist Sholom Asch, focuses upon a period in Medieval Polish-Jewish history. This is generally characteristic of the Eastern European Jewish historical novelists, who use Eastern European Jewish history as the raw material for their novels.

Sholom Asch recreates the setting of the Chmelnitzki massacres of the Ukrainian Jews in 1648, portraying the Jews of Zlochov and especially Mendel and Yochebed, their son Shlomo, his wife Deborah, and their Cossack servant Marusha.

Asch, in describing Poland of 1648, gives us some insight into the role the Jews played in the land and their relationship to their Gentile neighbors. Through the novel we may even understand some of the forces which lead to the Cossack massacre of the Jewish communities.

Seventeenth century Polish anti-Jewish hostilities certainly cannot be explained solely on the basis of race and religion, but are bound up with the Jews' involvement in the social and economic developments within society.

Poland in the mid-seventeenth century was a state ruled by the nobility, for the king could rarely obtain enough support to wield any power of his own. The nobles autocratically controlled the countryside and most of the towns and

villages were dominated by them as well. In the period described in the book, we meet the village Jews as innkeepers (Mendel's livelihood) and as stewards of the noblemen's mills and other possessions. In England of the twelfth century the Jews were the King's Persons, in seventeenth-century Poland and the Ukraine they were the Noblemen's Subjects.

The Jews were economically indispensable to the nobles for many reasons; as innkeepers, estate managers and middlemen between them and the peasants for example. Mendel, although living in the wilderness, was typical of the Ukrainian Jews under Polish rule:

Mendel was the only Jew who had the courage to hold in lease the inn as well as the Greek Orthodox Church so far out on the steppes near the Zaporozha Cossacks. Mendel even carried on a trade with the Zaporozhes...taking to the Cossacks calfskin leather, which he obtained from the Jewish tanners of Volhynia, sheepskin coats, flaxen shawls, dyed peasants' wool, fruit brandy and Jewish honey cakes, which Mendel's wife knew so well how to bake and which the Cossacks found so delicious. Sometimes he would come home from the Cossacks with his beard half plucked or minus one of his ear-locks, but always with his bag full of copper coins...or Turkish guns and swords with carved ivory handles and studded with precious Oriental stones, Tatar carpets or Cossack cloaks of fox-skin. And Mendel used to take the Cossack goods to the markets of Chihirin and Lubno...⁹¹

Clearly, the Ukrainian Jew and the Cossack peasant were on good terms. The Jewish innkeepers' low standard of living, their rustic life and friendly behavior, and the hostility of the nobility upon occasion against them too, probably softened the hearts of the Cossacks toward the Jews. As inn-

keeper and middleman Mendel was needed, and he had generally good relations with his lord:

Jews refused to settle in Zlochov, for Zlochov was still an unhallowed spot. It had no synagogue and no Jewish cemetery...

"You have served me well! You have sung well, and my guests are pleased, Jew. Say what you wish. Ask for a great deal, and don't be long about it. I am more afraid of your craftiness than of your appetite," the Pan laughed.

"Exalted Excellency," the Jew threw himself at the feet of the noble, a synagogue and a cemetery! A synagogue for prayer, and a cemetery for burying our dead. Give us permission to have a synagogue and a cemetery in Zlochov..."

"You have played the bear well, Jew. You shall have the synagogue for it; the cemetery you are still to earn."

"A synagogue! A synagogue!"⁹²

Although the nobility needed the Jew and the peasantry befriended him, the Jew was well aware of the precarious nature of his position. When the Cossack peasants demanded the church key without having to pay a fee, the Jew cried:

"Dear Father in Heaven, why do you punish me so? Wherein have I sinned? If I refuse to hold the church in lease, I catch it from the Polish Jesuit; if I do hold the church in lease, this one scares me with his little brothers...and learning, I have none, and the son is growing up without Torah!"⁹³

Not only in theory did Mendel speculate, but he was often thrust into the position of choosing between Pole and Cossack:

"Dear little father, have pity, let us have the key for the church, so we can christen the child. It is already four months old and not yet sprinkled with God's water. He may die unchristened, and then the devil will take him away."

"Yes, and then some of you will tell the Polish priest that I gave the key without the fee, and he will have me flogged...The Jew gets plenty of lashes for his own religion, and I have no desire to be flogged for another. I'll not do it."

"May we be stricken dumb, may our mouths be paralyzed if we say a single word," the half naked peasant besought Mendel, kneeling in front of him. "Help, dear little father. The child is sick and is liable to die. It will fall into the hands of the devil, and then come and choke its father. Have pity, dear little father."

"Take the key, Shlomo, and open the church for the parents."⁹⁴

Mendel expounded his plight to an assembly of Jewish community leaders from the Ukraine:

"To the best of our ability we strive to live in peace. The Polish magnates are absent throughout the year, and our only neighbors are the Russians; and since they are neighbors, we strive to live in peace with them. Very often they do not pay the church tax which the Polish priests have imposed upon them. They look upon it as an insult to their dignity, and so we do not exact it from them, but, instead, we collect the tax from among ourselves and pay it for them. But the Polish priests, becoming aware of this, took us severely to task. They compel us to exact the tax, and therein lies a great danger for us. We are afraid lest the Russians, God forbid, do us some evil...It would be very advisable...that the Great Assembly take up the matter and have the church tax on the Russians abolished, or else that Jews should not be forced to collect it, for that is liable to bring, God forbid, a great misfortune upon us."⁹⁵

Mendel had seen a way out of the Jew's position as middleman between two hostile groups, Poles and Russians.

Another leader added to Mendel's words the evils that the community leaders perpetrated and how this provided further justification for outbreaks against the convenient scapegoat:

"I too wish to speak on this matter," said Reb

Sholom Jacob, the parnas of Nemirov...And I desire to say here in the presence of the rabbi of Nemirov that it has reached our ears that the parnas of Chihirin, Reb Zacharia, oppresses very grievously the Jews and also the Russians. He imposes upon them very heavy taxes for gifts for his master...And because of that, the Russians are greatly incensed and a misfortune may come of it for the Jewish community at large."⁹⁶

Mendel and Jacob were quite perceptive, for both well realized the dangerous position of the Jew despite temporary security. Yet, though aware of his plight, the Ukrainian Jew could not leave the danger area: "He [Mendel] has long since been anxious to give up the inn and move into some Jewish settlement, but it is hard to abandon one's livelihood."⁹⁷

Even when the massacres began and there was still time to move, the Jew could not:

"Jews, let us not leave this place. We have built up a settlement, a synagogue--in whose hands are we going to leave all this? It can not be that a whole world should be destroyed. Another day or two and help will come. The lord Vishnewetzki will arrive with Polish soldiers, other nobles also...And it may be that Chmelnitzki has turned aside with his armies toward Chihirin, where he lives. What has he against us? We have done him no harm. To take a city and destroy it deliberately, to abandon everything to rack and ruin--no, we will not go!"⁹⁸

Not only the land held them, but as the Cossack hordes rolled through Poland bent on murder and pillage, the Jews trusted in the aid of the Polish nobles. The civil strife and disunity of the latter prevented them from even fighting the Cossacks, much less saving the Jews, and the invaders found only anarchy in the land:

Prince Vishnewetzki retired to Lithuania, and the entire country was left without any defense,

abandoned to the enemy...And the kingdom of Poland was left like a ship without a rudder.⁹⁹

Into the Polish vacuum poured the Cossacks, and the Jews, able to survive in the structured Polish society, now were defenseless and friendless:

The nobles were engrossed in the election of a new king to succeed King Vladislav who had died. No one was concerned over the fate of the distant Ukranian province...the entire region lay defenseless and open to the Cossacks and their hordes. Like a river which overflows its banks, they overran one city after another, annihilating all living things.¹⁰⁰

With the Cossacks slaughtering them and with the nobles and lords helpless, the Jews turned to the Poles for help. Jews and Poles joined forces until the Cossacks, under emotional religious guises, promised the Poles half the spoils if they would surrender the Jews:

"Before our worthy brothers, the Poles, we beat the ground with our foreheads, and send you greetings. We pray for you day and night to our Lord God that He preserve you against war, famine and pestilence, today and forever, Amen!...

"Is it fair and fitting that Christians, our worthy brothers the Poles, should enter into comradeship with the enemies of Christ, the Jews, against their brother Christians?...

"Not against Christians do we wage war, but against the enemies of Christ, against the Jews who crucified our Lord Jesus, and stole our possessions. Against them and against everything which is theirs have the Cossacks gone out to fight the battle of Christ...we, the Cossacks, are prepared to abandon the city if they will assemble all their possessions, their gold and silver, their silk and garments, and offer them as ransom...On the enemies of Christ we will avenge ourselves even as they did crucify God. But you and your wives and children and everything which is yours we will spare, and the wealth we will share with you. So help us our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."¹⁰¹

The Cossacks took the Jews' possessions and then slaughtered fourteen hundred men, women and children--all Jewish--before turning to the city to massacre the Christian Polish population as well.

As Poland fared the Jews fared. When the nobles ruled and the peasants labored, the Jews were needed and protected. When the nobility and monarchy fell apart and the Cossack peasant hordes were able to march, Jews and Poles fell. The Jews were a bellwether for the stability of Poland, for the disintegration of Jewish security meant the death of Polish feudalism and the Polish feudality.

7. THE BROTHERS ASHKENAZI

I. J. Singer wrote The Brothers Ashkenazi¹⁰² during the early 1930's, when the European and American continents were facing the Great Depression. The novel is more than the intense portrait of two brothers, the brilliant, industrious and unscrupulous Max and the mediocre, easygoing, handsome and personable Jacob. It is even more than the epic tale of a period in Jewish history and the political, economic and social forces moving the Jews. Both of these combine with a saga of the birth, growth and decay of a great industrial city, Lodz, and the inception and upsurge of the class struggle which was to sweep the world during the years Singer wrote his novels. The Brothers Ashkenazi is a kaleidoscopic view of a century of progress and disaster, beginning with the industrial migration of German weavers into Poland after the Napoleonic wars and culminating in the economic collapse, revolution and inflation of World War I and its conclusion. Our attention will be focused on the relationship of Polish Jew and Polish Gentile against this background of expansion and decay.

When Napoleon came to power, Lodz was a hamlet of about two hundred people, but when the Napoleonic wars were over the rulers of the area which once was Poland began to encourage immigration from Central Europe. In the Germanies "there

were many mouths and little bread, while in Poland there was plenty of bread but almost no merchandise."¹⁰³ With a vacuum such as this the Jews too rushed in, and by 1840 Lodz was a town of 20,000; by 1900 a city of well over 30,000 people.

With the population explosion came industry and the narrowing of the fields of activity available for the small merchants and handicraftsmen. Max Ashkenazi understood that the future was to be one of big industry and modern organizational and industrial procedures. His father-in-law, Reb Chaim, was satisfied with the old system:

Reb Chaim listens contentedly to the clatter of the looms... His heart is filled with pride. Let them say what they like, let them repeat a hundred times that there's no future in hand looms, and steam's the thing. Hand looms are good enough for him. They bring him a handsome income. Of course he could make more money--there's no limit to that--but if they go on producing the same income for him, not less, why, he has enough to be thankful for to God. These women's kerchiefs of his are selling throughout the length and breadth of Russia. The orders grow from week to week; he'll have to increase the hours, there's no help for it. What of that? These workers are better than machines. Let Germans and apostate Jews have their steam and their engines and their factory whistles and all the noise and excitement--Reb Chaim sticks to his good old hand looms and his Jewish workers and his Jewish ways.¹⁰⁴

Reb Chaim's conservatism doomed him and others like him who refused to move ahead. Many, especially Jews, who did switch from men to machines, were not shrewd enough to switch from Jewish to Gentile workers. As the industry expanded, thousands of Poles were left jobless and starving in the transition, and the demagogues who preached to them never tired

of chanting "Jewish capitalism" and "Jewish invention." In cities such as Lodz they were assisted by the textile industry, Poland's major industry, which not only had Jewish workers but predominantly Jewish owners. The Jew became an easy scapegoat, as Max tried to explain to the Jewish strike leaders:

"We know nothing about Jews and gentiles," answered Nissan. "We know only of workers and exploiters, Herr Ashkenazi."

"You don't know," said Max Ashkenazi scornfully. "But ask the gentiles their opinion. They know the difference between Jews and gentiles. Unity! Unity! Just try to get one Jewish worker into a steam factory, and he'll come out in a hurry, and not walking on his own legs, either."

A distinct blush mantled Nissan's face. This was his weak point, and he knew it.

"The fault is yours," he answered. "You and others like you have kept the Jewish workers imprisoned in Balut [a suburb of Lodz] ..."

"It's a lie!" cried Max Ashkenazi, bringing his fist down on the table. "At the mass meetings which you address, the workers curse me, Max Ashkenazi, not as director of the factory, but as the Jew. Don't you think I know how the gentile orators make fun of my Jewish name, my Jewish appearance, my Jewish pronunciation? And I know how the gentile workers guffaw every time I'm mocked from the platform."¹⁰⁵

Max Ashkenazi traveled a hard road to arrive at the top of the Lodz industrial establishment. Often cruel and ambitious, he was deterred by nothing from rising even faster than Lodz developed. He "took over his father's office as if it were the most natural thing in the world to oust a father from the place which he had occupied half a lifetime."¹⁰⁶

His father-in-law fared no better:

"I lent Father-in-law money. I want it back," said Simcha Meyer Max Ashkenazi coolly.

"And suppose I won't pay," asked the other. "Eh? Suppose I won't pay. What will you do about it?"

"Father-in-law knows what one does to promissory notes."

"What do you want to do? Ruin me? You know I can't meet these notes. Do you want to kill your own father-in-law?"

"Business is one thing," answered Simcha Meyer, "family another."¹⁰⁷

Max's ambition soon led him to toy with persons far more dangerous than his family:

The big money was in steam... His hand-loom produced so slowly that in a month other manufacturers could steal his ideas and flood the market with the patterns and models he had thought out. No! He was through with hand-loom. But before he gave up this factory, he would have to squeeze the last bit of blood out of it. He needed every rouble he could lay his hands on...he decided to take half a rouble per week off the pay of his weavers.¹⁰⁸

This would have been enough for the workers, for "life had been hard enough even before Simcha Meyer announced his drastic cut in pay... Food came after rent, and after that, a long way behind, clothes, so that the population went round in rags, and it was hard to tell the original part of a coat from the patches."¹⁰⁹

But expanding and prospering Lodz suddenly collapsed:

The city was like a hoggish gormandizer who goes on stuffing himself with food long after he has eaten all he needs, who goes on eating with the aid of artificial stimulants to his appetite, till he reaches the point of exhaustion and immobility and can go no further before the stomach-pump has done its work. Lodz had the indigestion of over-production.

50.

To make matters worse, a great drought struck the country at the same time...

The paralysis crept slowly upward, from the shops to the wholesalers, from the wholesalers to the factories, from the factories to the banks... Tens of thousands of workmen wandered the streets of the city.¹¹⁰

Hardest hit were the workers, the one class which had nowhere or nothing to turn to for help:

They had to stand and let the storm break on them... Hundreds and then thousands had to sleep in cellars and lofts and in the open. Some went to the woods outside the city and dug caves for themselves... Then the epidemic came to Lodz, and scarlet fever, diphtheria and typhoid fever began to fill the hospitals.¹¹¹

With good times gone, the mad workers poured into the streets to the factory of Flederbaum, the Jewish millionaire: "Bring the dirty Jew out!" they shouted as they ran through the streets. "Hang him on a lamp post."¹¹²

They didn't get Flederbaum, so they kept marching to the Jews' quarter:

"Down with the Jews!" single voices began, and increased in number and power. "Down with the Jews!" the chorus was taken up... "Down with the unbelieving dogs! Down with the murderers of the Christians!"

Rumours were born on the spot and spread with the rapidity of lightning.

"The Jews have set fire to a church!" women screamed.

"The Jews have torn down holy images and spit on them!"¹¹³

But "help" was on its way--until the Governor realized the benefits of the slaughter:

The mounted Cossacks, riding hard from the nearest camp, arrived on the outskirts of Lodz in the

afternoon of the next day. With them was the Governor. The police commissioner went out to meet them.

"What's the news, commissioner?" asked the Governor.

"A pogrom against the Jews, Your Excellency," answered the police commissioner, standing stiffly at attention.

The Governor pulled at his moustaches and said, reflectively, "Not bad." He smiled. "That will quiet the mob. Excellent, in fact."¹⁴

Just as the fate of Max and Jacob hung on the fate of Lodz, so did the fate of the entire Jewish community. The Jews prospered and enjoyed the friendship of the Poles while Lodz grew and developed, but when nature and economics combined to tragically depress Lodz, the Jews were the persons who bore the brunt of the collective despair. The transition from handmade goods to factory production, the liquidation of small companies when larger complexes arose, the depression and hunger, and the convenient position of the Jews as heads of the idle factories--all worked against the Jews.

Max explained this to Nissan as we have seen, and here Nissan heard it again from his landlord. As long as Jews and Gentiles lived together, the Jews were destined to be at the mercy of events beyond their control:

"Don't take it to heart so," said the landlord. "It's all new to you, but I've seen it happen before, more than once, in Russia. And it'll happen again and again as long as we Jews live among gentiles..."

When they brought machinery into Lodz and displaced the hand looms, there were anti-Jewish riots. When Russian students assassinated the Russian Tsar, there were anti-Jewish riots. Now when there's a

strike, the workers make riots against the Jews. The time will come when the revolutionaries themselves will be at the Jews... It'll always be like that--as long as we are Jews and they are gentiles..."¹¹⁵

Singer shifts the scene to Russia as we meet Max returning from a business venture to the Far East, and we see that the fate of the Jews when Russia is in turmoil was the same as that of the Jews of crumbling Lodz:

...the defence of the fatherland against the attack of the Asiatic hordes of Japan. By tens and hundreds of thousands they assembled, leaving the field, the factory, and the workshop, preferring the chance of war to the certainty of court martial and the firing squad if they failed to respond... There were mutinies; detachments on their way to the barracks broke loose from their convoys, smashed open Government liquor stores, and then fled...

Unable to lay hands on the agitators in sufficient numbers, unable to stem the flood of propaganda, the Russian Government resorted to a familiar stratagem, the deflection of the discontent of the masses into less dangerous channels: to wit, against the Jews. A systematic campaign of slander and hatred was instigated by the Government, and the angry masses were encouraged to revenge themselves on the true enemies of Russia, the traitors within, the unbelievers and Christ-killers.¹¹⁶

The chaos of war preparations was equalled only by the disgust and disillusionment of the soldiers who had won no victory:

The returned soldiers who had failed to conquer the Japs turned on the Jews...singing patriotic songs and attacking Jewish passers-by or robbing Jewish shops and homes.

In Lithuania and in White Russia armed soldiers joined the mobs of Jew-baiters and helped to crush the Jewish self-defence.¹¹⁷

Back in Lodz, the Russian war had opened remote territories for business and the city began to rebuild its economy.

Its population continued growing so rapidly that soon it became the second largest city in Poland. Max continued to get richer, became "Mr. President" in place of "Mr. Director," and the Jews of Lodz also prospered. A war economy meant a healthy economy, and a healthy economy meant full stomachs. Jews and Gentiles lived in peace. As Max felt:

He needed the war. He needed the big orders it brought him... In the desire for the big orders which would keep every bit of machinery productively employed, he forgot the nature and meaning of war... The word "war" became an abstraction to him. Or, rather, it was a name for a certain type of goods. There were spring goods, summer goods, autumn goods, and winter goods. And there were also war goods. And war goods were the best of all, yielded the largest profits. It sickened him, therefore, to hear orators calling for the end of the war...

But with World War I, Lodz was once again shattered. The years of painful rebuilding and redevelopment were systematically destroyed by the Germans. Raw materials were appropriated, healthy youths were shipped to Germany and a resurgence of Polish nationalism met these barbarities. The Jew was again trapped--between Polish nationalistic fervor, German occupation and Russian dejection from defeat. With Lodz's downfall the Jews were trampled on every side:

Side by side with this resurgence of Polish national passion there was a tremendous wave of hatred against the Jews, who were everywhere denounced as the friends of Germany, as spies and traitors in her pay.

All sorts of stories and rumours concerning the Jews were concocted and spread by word of mouth or printed in the patriotic Polish newspapers... Most active among those who spread these rumours were the Polish shopkeepers, who saw an opportunity of getting rid of their Jewish competitors... Jews were arrested by the thousand, hanged on improvised

gallows, flung into prison, or exiled to Siberia... The Russian command, which suffered one defeat after another, was only too ready to find a scapegoat...

But when the Germans occupied the country, the condition of the Jews did not improve.¹¹⁹

As Max surveyed the damage done to Lodz by the German occupation and destruction, he seized upon the profitable idea of transporting his industry into Russia, for "he was not going to remain under German rule. He had no more faith in Lodz. He was casting in his lot with Russia."

As he traveled through Poland and Russia Max could see evidences of the fate that the Russian and Polish Jews shared, both serving as scapegoats for their country's defeats:

To cover his hopeless incompetence and distract attention from the smashing defeats which came upon him, one after the other, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaievitch had instituted a series of mass expulsions against the Jews of Poland. Entire districts were set in motion: bands of Cossacks appeared in Jewish towns and villages and drove the population out in herds, setting fire to the homes and the shops... Cut off from all help, starving, unwashed, these Jewish communities and fragments of communities were hunted from one part of Russia to another...

When the Polish soldiers returned home to Lodz they were ashamed and dejected. After a four-day pogrom and looting of the Jewish section, they felt a little better. In this state of anarchy the Jews knew they would be attacked but could not prevent it. However, as Poland returned to normalcy, the Jews hoped for better times. They were disappointed, for the conditions necessary for peace between Jew and Gentile in Poland were not present:

A furious wave of anti-Semitism was passing through Poland... The hungry and unemployed workers everywhere, and especially in Lodz, gathered in mobs and marched on the homes and factories of the Jewish industrialists. They demanded work when there was none; and when there was work, the unemployed demanded it on their own terms. They besieged the Jews in their homes and factories. The police did not interfere, the higher officials shrugged their shoulders.¹²²

With post-war inflation, the citizens of Lodz returned to the good old days as "invisible goods changed hands a dozen times. Everyone seemed to be making money."¹²³ But soon the roof fell in as the country was flooded with money:

The paper was of the cheapest, but from week to week the number of zeroes on the currency increased; hundreds became thousands, tens of thousands, millions. Beggars offered a ten-thousand mark note by a passer-by would throw it back in his face.¹²⁴

Again the Jews felt the storm first just as they were first to profit from Lodz's resurgence. Everyone was affected by the economic collapse so everyone turned against the Jew:

Professors and economists wrote pessimistic articles, foretelling disaster. The anti-Semitic papers accused the Jews of being responsible for the decline of the mark. Placards and posters appeared on the walls, picturing fat Jews seated on bags of gold and spurning with their feet the paper money of the Republic. Workers and peasants, gathering before these posters, spat angrily and cursed the Jews... avenging themselves on the Jews who were hoarding the gold of the country and ruining its currency.¹²⁵

Lodz crumbled and came full circle. A century earlier the German refugees poured into the city; now the Polish emigres swarmed out of the dying city. Lodz died and Max Ashkenazi died with it, for he was unable to exist without his factories--his soul.

Singer sums up an entire historic process, a whole

phase of industrial civilization in the expansive pre-war industrial world. When Lodz rose from anonymity and became an industrial giant, Max Ashkenazi prospered and the Jews were safe. But when thousands upon thousands of workers battled for bread, class-warfare often disappeared and race-warfare began. Polish anti-Semitism was dormant during industrial expansion and prosperity; but when the stresses of this expansion and the beginnings of decay were manifest the crumbling society vented its anger upon the Jews.

8. THE FIXER

The accusation of ritual murder is very old. It was repeatedly used in the Middle Ages and served as the excuse for vicious and deadly attacks on the Jews. It has lasted even up to this century in Russia, where Mendel Beiliss, a Jew, was accused of extracting the blood from a murdered Christian boy. Bernard Malamud, an American Jewish novelist, wrote The Fixer¹²⁶ in order to portray Mendel Beiliss, the "Fixer."

The hero as sufferer and martyr is a characteristic Jewish theme and a continual theme in Malamud's novels. The "Fixer," though, is not only the usual passive hero of Malamud, from whom everything is taken, but the virtuous man who grows to a proper human dimension and becomes noble not by simply what is done to him but by what he does. Rising above the petty accusation and his accusers, Yakov Bok becomes the complete tragic hero.

Our interest, however, is in the "how" and "why" of this tragic accusation. How did this situation come about? Why was Mendel Beiliss singled out for this charge? Malamud is too great a novelist to deal at length with these questions, but we are provided with some clues as we come to understand the suffering and yet integrity of this Job-like person.

Yakov Bok or the "Fixer" or Mendel Beiliss was a Jew who was alienated from the traditional roots of Judaism. He was

not recognized as a Jew by the Russians:

He walked out of the ghetto when no one was looking. In the snow he felt anonymous, in a sense unseen in his Russian cap and coat--any unemployed worker. Russians passed him without looking at him and he passed them. Having been told he did not look Jewish he now believed it.¹²⁷

Since he did not look Jewish, he received an offer of employment from a Black Hundred member and after accepting the job did not reveal his identity:

What also troubled the fixer was that once he went to work...he might be asked to produce his passport, a document stamped "Religious Denomination: Judaic," which would at once tell Nikolai Maximovitch what he was hiding from him. He chewed his lips over that but decided that if the passport was asked for he would say the police in the Podol had it; and if Nikolai Maximovitch insisted he must produce it, that was the time to quit or there would be serious trouble. It was therefore a gamble, but if you were against gambling, stop playing cards... Yakov was now somewhat sorry he hadn't at once identified himself as a Jew by birth... The more one hides the more he has to.¹²⁸

Despite second thoughts, he kept his identity a secret:

He had for a fleeting minute again considered saying he was a Jew---but that was of course impossible. Even supposing--a fantastic suppose--that Nikolai Maximovitch, two-headed eagle button and all, over-looked the confession in his own interests, still the Lukianovsky was not for Jews, with certain unusual exceptions, and if a poor fixer were exposed as one living there he would be in serious trouble. It was all too complicated.¹²⁹

Later, while in solitary confinement awaiting his trial, the Jew never considered praying:

One morning something new appeared in Yakov's cell. An old prayer shawl and a pair of phylacteries had been left there after he had gone to the kitchen for his food. He examined the phylacteries, then put them aside, but he wore the prayer shawl under his greatcoat to help keep warm... When Yakov put the prayer shawl on, Zhitnyak watched through the spy

hole, often looking in unexpectedly as though hoping to catch the fixer at prayer. He never did.¹³⁰

Nor was he eager to rejoice in any aspect of his Jewish heritage: His fate nauseated him. Escaping from the Pale he had at once been entrapped in prison. From Birth a black horse had followed him, a Jewish nightmare. What was being a Jew but an everlasting curse? He was sick of their history, destiny, blood guilt.¹³¹

Mendel Beiliss, alienated from his ancestral faith and desperately trying to lose himself among Gentiles, could not escape his role in life as a Jew. To be Jewish, if only as Yakov explains it ("I'm half Jewish myself"),¹³² is to have no security in life and to always be considered, legally at least, a Jew:

"Let's not complicate matters unnecessarily." Bibikov sipped from his water glass. "Legally you are a Jew. The Imperial Government considers you one even though you twist and squirm. You are so recorded on your passport. Our laws concerning Jews apply to you."¹³³

For the Russians, he was plainly a Jew, albeit only by birth and nationality and not by choice, and thus he was singled out for the accusation of ritual murder. His fate from the very moment he was accused was intimately tied up with that of Russia. As class after class in Russian society met defeat or saw their power and prestige sinking, they needed a scapegoat. The monarchists or super-patriots, embittered over the Japanese debacle and lacking a vigorous monarch who could embody autocracy with conviction, turned upon the Jews:

They sat then on a narrow bench in the far corner of the room away from the door, the lawyer still whispering. "Your case is tied up with the frustrations of recent Russian history. The Russo-Japanese War, I don't have to tell you, was a terrible disaster but it brought on the Revolution of 1905, which was coming anyway. 'War,' as Marx says, 'is the locomotive of history.' This was good for Russia but bad for the Jews. The government, as usual, blamed us for their troubles and not more than one day after the Tsar's concessions pogroms started simultaneously in three hundred towns. Of course you know this, what Jew doesn't?"¹³⁴

A bigoted Tsar and a powerful bureaucracy struggled desperately to prevent their old prerogatives and powers from slipping out of their hands, to make sense of a world which was escaping their control and intellectual grasp:

In a sick country every step to health is an insult to those who live on its sickness. The imperial absolutists, the rightist elements, warned the Tsar his crown was slipping... As much as he could he changed back to an autocratic regime. The reactionary groups--the Union of Russian People, the Society of the Double-Headed Eagle, the Union of the Archangel Michael--oppose worker and peasant movements, liberalism, socialism, any kind of reform, which also meant, naturally, the common enemy, the Jews.¹³⁵

Not just Jews bore the brunt of these dissident groups but all people and organizations which threatened the old order. In their attempt to turn back the clock to the ancient grandeur of Russia:

They gnaw like rats to destroy the independence of the courts, the liberal press, the prestige of the Duma. To distract popular attention from the breaches of the Russian Constitution they incite nationalism against non-Orthodox Russians. They persecute every minority--Poles, Finns, Germans, us--but especially us.¹³⁶

The reactionary elements, desperate for funds and weakened by internal dissension as well as dwindling numbers,

searched for a common belief which would rally and bind together all the disheartened. They found this common principle and thus diverted the attention of the masses from their miserable plight by giving them a whipping boy as well as opportunities for plunder:

Popular discontent they divert into anti-Semitic outbreaks. It's a simple solution to their problems. Also they enjoy themselves because with the government's help they murder Jews and it's good for business.¹³⁷

An atmosphere of hysteria developed all over the country...and right at this minute, when the Black Hundreds were frantic, one day a Christian boy was found dead in a cave and there appeared on the scene, Yakov Bok.¹³⁸

Why? Why Yakov Bok? Why the Jew in York, Lodz, Seville, Toledo, Tyrol and Tulchin? Yakov sums up the thesis we have tried to develop in this part of our study as well as it could be presented. He addressed himself directly to this "Why?" and the relationship between societies breathing their last and Jewish persecution, or better, the entire history of anti-Jewish sentiment and reaction:

A hand reached forth and plucked him in by his Jewish beard--Yakov Bok, a freethinking Jew in a brick factory in Kiev, yet any Jew, any plausible Jew--to be the Tsar's adversary and victim; chosen to murder the corpse His Majesty had furnished free; to be imprisoned, starved, degraded, chained like an animal to a wall although he was innocent. Why? because no Jew was innocent in a corrupt state, the most visible sign of its corruption its fear and hatred of those it persecuted. Ostrovsky had reminded him that there was much more wrong with Russia than its anti-Semitism. Those who persecute the innocent were themselves never free.¹³⁹

9. CONCLUSION

We have been introduced to Jewish life in Gentile societies through seven historical novels on different periods of Jewish history. Through these reconstructions we have observed that the fate of the Jew is inextricably linked to that of the general society in which he lives. Whenever Jews were singled out as scapegoats we found them in a socio-economic situation of strain and stress and blamed for the malevolence of that situation. Thus anti-Jewish feeling, while fed by contributory forces such as religion, race and politics, has as its basic cause social and economic decay.

The corollary to this thesis has also been portrayed in these novels, for in times of economic prosperity and societal expansion anti-Jewish feeling does not assert itself forcefully. Thus, when the Jew hitched his wagon to an expanding economy he rode to prosperity and security, and he continued in this state until a scarcity of economic opportunity and the collapse of once powerful segments of the society generated a basis for serious anti-Semitic expression.

We have witnessed in these novels the church, the nobility, kings, emperors and populaces desperately struggling to save their collapsing societies by pauperizing, beating, indicting and expelling the Jews. It has not been primarily war or peace, Church ideology or political expediency, though

many of these factors were involved at various times, but rather, economic shrinkage and its resultant social disintegration which most directly affected the Jew's often tragic fate. The Gospels were telling the same story in sixteenth-century Poland, which offered the Jews special safeguards and inducements to settle, as they were in mid-seventeenth-century Poland when the massacres occurred. It was primarily the Jews' barometer role within the society which accounted for this. Their fate, in short, is a most reliable index for determining the health of the Gentile society in which the Jew lived and still lives.

II. CONTEMPORARY HISTORY DISGUISED IN JEWISH HISTORICAL FICTION

10. INTRODUCTION

The disguising of contemporary materials in historical fiction is a very old literary technique. Homer was much more interested in contemporary issues like Greek democracy vs. dictatorship than he was in the barbaric events which had taken place almost half a millenium before his time, and therefore his primary purpose was not to re-create the period with which the Iliad deals. Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, Scott, and many other writers of historical fiction were utilizing the past as a pretext, not a text, for an expression of views about their contemporary situation.

There are many reasons why good and even great authors, especially historical novelists, choose to write historical fiction. An author may have found in recorded history individuals who faced problems similar, or seen as similar, to his own. Lion Feuchtwanger chose Josephus as the hero of his trilogy because here was an authentic historical character who, in being unable to come to terms easily with the Jewish and Roman world, was symbolic of the struggle Feuchtwanger himself and many of his fellow German Jews were engaged in--were they primarily Jews or Germans?

Another reason for selecting a particular historical situation for a novel is that the artist sees in this period conflicts, interests and problems facing people in general

during his time. The world-wide depression and the response of the United States Government, particularly that of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Mr. Henry Wallace, had their analogue in the biblical stories of Joseph; so Thomas Mann turned to Joseph and ancient Egypt for his novel Joseph The Provider. Again Joseph was his pretext, the 1930's his text.

Sometimes a novelist is struck by the number of times a particular event has occurred in history and wishes to turn to an early occurrence of the event to make some comments upon a contemporary experience. Ludwig Lewisohn was well aware of the numerous occasions throughout the past 2500 years when Jews had attempted to resettle and rebuild Palestine, including dramatic struggles for this end during his own lifetime. Yet he chose to disguise in a historical novel, The Last Days of Shylock, that drama which was being enacted during the years he wrote the novel.

Other authors, wishing to comment upon the behavior of a famous contemporary figure, search the past for someone who responded in a similar fashion to events around him. Feuchtwanger found a parallel to Hitler in the Emperor Domitian and Mann a parallel to Franklin Roosevelt in Joseph, although neither author is re-creating history for its own sake, but objectifying his own subjective emotions through historical disguise.

Finally, we should note that the society in which the author lives and writes may be such that he finds historical

disguise the only way to express certain political or intellectual truths about the world around him. Thomas Mann disguised his two volumes on Nazi Germany in the form of a historical novel, Joseph in Egypt, just as biblical authors, afraid to speak the truth directly to those in power may have disguised their message in various types of what we would call historical fiction.

This part of our study investigates some historical novelists and authors who have turned back several decades or centuries and painstakingly recreated an historical epoch rather than develop characters and plot not tied to the past. Their aim was not the portraying of a particular historical period, but using the past as a vehicle for today, for the story told in the past is only a means by which the author addresses himself to contemporary experiences and problems. Hopefully the literary value of their creations does not suffer in this process, and the reader can agree with Tacitus: Major e longinque reverentia--distance does lend awe.

11. THE JOSEPHUS TRILOGY

The first seven volumes in this part of the study were written by three German authors, each of whose life was directly and tragically affected by the Nazi rise to power. One of them, Lion Feuchtwanger, wrote a trilogy of historical novels from 1932 to 1942, and since they chronologically developed the life and times of Josephus, we will discuss them as a unit.

Josephus¹⁴⁰ introduces us to Joseph as a Jewish envoy to Rome, a general in Galilee, an aid to Vespasian in Caesarea and Alexandria, and a witness to the fall of Jerusalem.

The Jew of Rome¹⁴¹ presents us with Josephus the writer, the man, the father, the nationalist, and the citizen of the world.

Josephus and the Emperor¹⁴² describes the Emperor Domitian and the Roman Jew Josephus as they meet and struggle.

Joseph ben Matthias, Doctor of Law and priest of the Jerusalem Temple, became Flavius Josephus after his people were defeated by Vespasian in Galilee. This provided Lion Feuchtwanger with the opportunity to use the change of name or conflict between Rome and Jerusalem within Josephus as a major theme in his Josephus trilogy. Yet there is not only this internal conflict but an external one as well, for Rome never forgot that Josephus was a Jew and the Jews never forgave his adoption of Rome.

Josephus, caught between Rome and Jerusalem, faced the same type of choice as the German Jew of the 1920's and the 1930's. No matter how much headway he made into German society, the Germans never forgot he was a Jew; and the more the Jew adopted German culture, the more resented he became among his own people.

Josephus, like so many German Jews, was a Jew by birth but a Roman by choice and his entire history was symbolic of a struggle the German Jew faced--parochialism and Judaism or Germany and world citizenship. For Josephus and many German Jews as well the road to world citizenship could only be paved through parochialism:

Yes, he had written the psalm of a citizen of the world, and his ultimate aim was certainly the union of all the nations of the world in one spirit, but so long as that aim was not realized, could a man do better than keep his own racial group together, for no other reason than that it was the only group to acknowledge such an aim?¹⁴³

Josephus, like most "modern" German Jews with this dilemma, was no Orthodox Jew in appearance:

He should really have been wearing a hat; for a Jew in his position, unlike the Romans, was supposed to go out with his head covered. But what did it matter? Here the overwhelming majority of the Jews went about bareheaded like the others, at least when they had the Tiber at their backs. His Jewish nationalism would not become more lukewarm, even if he did not wear a hat.¹⁴⁴

Nor was Josephus or the modern German Jew in need of ritual:

For himself, Joseph could dispense with ritual; he had found his own way to God. But for the general mass of the people the rites were necessary. And most particularly now that the state was anni-

hilated, it would be hard to find a better means than ritual observance for proclaiming oneself an adherent of the spiritual principle of Jewry.¹⁴⁵

But he was a Jew who had never denied his Judaism: "Had he ever denied his faith? He had never denied it. He had done what he had done that everyone should be made to acknowledge it."¹⁴⁶

The Jews, not the Romans, are the nationalists in this trilogy, but the unique aspect of their nationalism was its goal of transcending itself. The nationalism of Josephus did not seek to consolidate itself but rather to dissipate itself, for true nationalism was cosmopolitanism for Feuchtwanger. Thus the Jewish nationalism of Josephus longed to be dissolved away in a united world, a world which had accepted Judaism and its faith.

Thus Josephus' parochial attachment to one people was only a step towards embracing a much larger segment of mankind, as the modern Jew hoped to move from his own people through the people of his state to all people:

Yes, he had been right in his prophecies; Vespasian was really the Messiah. It was true that this Messiah was redeeming the world in a different fashion from what he had expected, gradually, soberly, matter-of-factly. The redemption consisted in the fact that the Emperor was breaking the shell of Jewish culture to enable that culture to spread over the world and smelt Greece and Judea into one.¹⁴⁷

Josephus' dream was to combine Rome and Jerusalem; the modern German Jew referred to it as a synthesis of Germanic and Hebraic culture:

Joseph hoped and divined that the day would come

when he would be able to speak openly to his friend about his most secret aspirations, about the triumphant fusion of the East with Rome. On that day the Roman Caesar and the Jewish writer would become one: the first citizens of the world, the first pioneers of a later millenium.¹⁴⁸

But there could be no combination without Judaism, so Josephus never fled from his faith or people:

There was no other road towards world citizenship except through the wisdom of the Jews... There was no way of getting up to the lofty height of this concept save by the ladder of Jewish doctrine. Until a second and more fortunate Daedalus should invent a machine with which men might fly, there would be no way of reaching the top of a mountain save by climbing it and enduring the toil of ascent. But at this time and in this world the mountain one had to climb was: Jewry.¹⁴⁹

And no matter how famous a writer Josephus became in Rome, how close he was to three Emperors and how many friends he numbered among the nobility, none permitted him to forget he was a Jew. Such was the fate of the Jew-German-European in this century, as he sought world citizenship as a Jew. Stefan Zweig, though Jew-Austrian-European, was typical of the thousands Feuchtwanger might have had in mind while recreating Josephus.

Stefan Zweig, like Josephus the writer, tried to bring the outside world to his countrymen. He drew upon Hellenistic, French and Russian sources to bring all of Europe to the German-speaking peoples; he wrote biographical studies on Erasmus, Dickens and Vespucci in order to praise diverse peoples and cultures. At the height of his popularity he avoided Jewish themes, Jewish characters, and Jewish problems in order to win fame and approval by literary critics every-

where. But no matter how far apart from Judaism he went intellectually and culturally, he remained a Jew and even wrote--after his personal tragedy--an historical novel affirming his Judaism.

Yet the fate of Zweig was not unlike that of Josephus, for the Germans did not forget he was a Jew, and at the height of his popularity they burned his books and offered him exile or death. Jew-German-European: the first two parts became a contradiction and an impossibility. Perhaps, by substituting German for Roman, Feuchtwanger was describing Zweig or the thousands like him when Josephus' son, Matthias, died and he mourned:

Well, there he was now, sitting in the dirt, and he himself was dirt. He, the Western-Eastern, the man of the cosmopolitan Psalm, the man who would be a Roman and a Jew at the same time, the citizen of the world. A fine citizen of the world. If a citizen of the world meant a man who belonged everywhere and nowhere at all, then he surely was one. A cipher. Neither Roman nor Jew. A cipher.¹⁵⁰

Feuchtwanger presents Josephus as a Mr. Facing-Both-Ways, as a hero whose life was a series of compromises. The pull was accentuated by the friends and family who surrounded Josephus. There were his two wives: Dorion, the half Greek and half Egyptian and Mara, the Jewess. There were his two sons: Paulus, the Graeco-Roman and Matthias, the Jewish-Roman. And there was Titus pulling him towards Rome and Justus, the writer, pulling him towards Judea.

Even when others ceased their tugging for a time, Josephus was constantly forced to make choices. Like his

twentieth-century counterpart, he always hoped the choices could be minimized and that with a given decision he had reconciled the competing sides. Worst of all were the decisions which resolved nothing, such as that of whether to march under the Arch of Titus in conscious self-abasement in the hope of saving himself and his people from further humiliation:

And the citizen of the world, Joseph ben Matthias, also called Flavius Josephus, knowing that he was resigning for ever the respect of the Romans and the Jews and the love of his son Paulus, took his courage in both hands, summoned up his will and made the last step. As custom demanded, he bowed deeply his covered head, put his hand to his bearded Jewish lips, threw a kiss to the image of the deified Titus, and walked through the arch, above and at either side of him the triumphing goddess of Rome, the triumphal car of the Emperor, the Jews in their fetters of shame.¹⁵¹

Josephus, torn between Rome and Judea, could not sacrifice his "Germany" even when he realized it was time to get out. While he still had a chance he could have rejoined his wife Mara, who had lately gone to Palestine to live on their estate, but he could not leave Rome. The decision to stay in Rome was to lead only to tragedy:

He did not even consider the possibility of going to Judea. Now more than ever he belonged here in Rome. Now, especially after he had written Apion. He felt happy, he could still enjoy it, while he still had the strength to enjoy it. And Rome was the right setting, the only setting, for that happiness. He now felt ordained to write only as his heart bade him; he was chosen as the great panegyrist and defender of his people. But that could be only in the heart of the hostile capital.¹⁵²

Josephus here symbolizes the Jew of Germany who would

not get out. Rome could be imperial, ante-bellum Berlin or Vienna and Josephus a German Jewish general, statesman, chemist, artist, publicist or engineer who placed his trust in the Fatherland (Feuchtwanger used this term twice to describe Rome) and served the power that was to destroy him.

Perhaps one cannot be Jew and world citizen; maybe this is to demand what is impossible? Princess Berenice felt this:

We wanted to be Greeks, you and I, and yet to be Jews too, and it can't be done. Jehovah won't allow it. We wanted too much, we were insolent. That's the only sin which the Greek gods punish just as Jehovah does, the sin of insolence, hybris, and we have committed it...¹⁵³

The attempt to compromise two worlds might bring more than the feeling that world citizenship meant no citizenship; it could lead to an inability to express oneself as either Jew or world-citizen as both worlds tore one apart. Hence Josephus' envy for Mara:

"Land of Israel," she said, in Aramaic. Joseph understood her, and he envied her. He had his citizenship of the world, but he was split apart. She, on the other hand, was all one. She was rooted in the earth of Judea, she belonged to Judea, under the sky of Judea and with its people, and Joseph knew that when many times she had urged him in her quiet way to return there she had been right and he had been wrong to refuse it to her.¹⁵⁴

In Josephus, the struggle between Jewish nationalism and Graeco-Roman cosmopolitanism was decided by Josephus in favor of the latter: "So Joseph transformed himself from a citizen of Judea into a citizen of the world, and from the Priest Joseph ben Matthias into the writer Flavius Josephus."¹⁵⁵

In the Jew of Rome, Josephus saw Rome more realistically

and turned to Jewish nationalism as the key step to world citizenship: "With his heart he was for the Fatherland and stood shoulder to shoulder with his Jews; with his mind he was a citizen of the world and stood above them; and none knew better than he where love for the Fatherland began to pass the bounds of common sense."¹⁵⁶

But this return to his land and people was short-lived, for Josephus saw the Jewish sages hedging their people by ritual and preventing a world order which transcended pure nationalism. As Jannai the "Renegade" put it:

"The unity of the Law. One God, one nation, one authorized doctrine. The doctors forbid you to discuss the books of the Greeks, the emanations of the God-head, Satan, or the Holy Ghost. With so much centralizing and nationalizing they're squeezing all the meaning out of the Law. With their one authorized version of the truth they're taking the wide world out of the Scriptures and putting in a stupid, megalomaniac, trumpery little nation. If Jehovah isn't the God of the whole world, what is He? A God among many others, a mere national God. They're preaching limitation, the doctors in Jabne; they are all for the nation and all against God...Jochanan wanted to fill the whole world with the Jewish spirit; Gamaliel is driving out of the Jews what spirit they have... The mass of the people...feel that the spiritual Jerusalem which the doctors are building up is more cramped and arrogant than the stone-built Jerusalem which was destroyed."¹⁵⁷

In Josephus and the Emperor Josephus continued his quest for a synthesis between Yahweh and the Classic Pantheon but his heart beat more strongly with the fanaticism of Jewish die-hards in successive revolts. Yet he could not leave Rome in time to prevent tragedy and to share his last years with Mara, for his faith and trust in Rome as the vehicle for his

Messianic ideal of world citizenship was too strong. Only when Domitian died did all his hopes die, and he return to Judea. The world was not ready for him; nor was Germany ready for the Josephuses of this century: "He had sought the world, but he had found only his land; for he had sought the world too soon."¹⁵⁸

The Diaspora Jewish communities of Rome and Alexandria do not appear rooted in one time-place spot but could well represent the Diaspora German Jews of the Weimar Republic. Synagogue jealousies were bitter:

The two splendid synagogues in Rome proper had been burnt down, while the three great prayer houses here on the right bank remained untouched. It was, of course, a painful visitation that the two houses of God had been destroyed, but nevertheless the president of the Jewish ward on the right bank was not entirely displeased. The five Jewish communities in Rome had each its own president, and there was keen competition among them, above all between the very exclusive Velia Synagogue on the other side, and the teeming and by no means fastidious Agrippine Ward presided over by Caius. Old Aaron, Caius's father, toothlessly inveighed against the ambitious dunces on the other side of the river...was it not ordained that synagogues must always be built on the highest point in the surroundings, just as the Temple in Jerusalem from its height commanded the city? But, of course, Julian Alf, the president of the Velia Ward, had to have his synagogue in the immediate vicinity of the Palatine, although to do so he had had to choose a lower site. It was a punishment from God that his synagogue had been burnt down.¹⁵⁹

Jewish names were altered for financial and social gains as the Roman Jews became acculturated: "...those who translated their sacred Hebrew names into Latin or Greek equivalents for fashionable or business reasons...Caius, who originally had been called Chayim."¹⁶⁰

The wealthy Jewish businessmen of Rome found some remnants of their Judaic practices conflicting with profit, and they searched their souls as a German Jew who considered entering the munitions industry might have done. Thus Caius Barzaarone, forbidden by the Ten Commandments to make sculptured effigies of living creatures and consequently facing stiff competition, argued that he himself did not use the things he produced, but merely sold them to others.¹⁶¹

The description of the Alexandrian Jewish community in the middle of the first century of this era could well have been applied to Berlin immediately prior to Hitler's ascent to power:

In the midst of this community lived a group of human beings still older, still richer, still more cultivated, still more arrogant than the others: the Jews... For it was they who in reality ruled Egypt, as once Joseph, the son of Jacob, had ruled the land under Pharaoh. Tiberius Alexander, the Governor General of Egypt, was of Jewish descent, and the leading men in the province, the administrators, textile manufacturers, customs officers, armourers, bankers, corn-dealers, shippers, paper manufacturers, doctors and teachers in the schools were Jews.¹⁶²

And the role of the Alexandrian Jews in the arming of the Roman Legions was to be enacted again by the Weimar Jews as German tanks rolled across Western Europe during World War I:

The leaders of the Alexandrian Jews marched proudly with the others. They had themselves assisted in the mobilization of the troops, and they had made high profits on the equipment and the victualing. They were filled with indignation against the agitators in Judea and were glad with all their heart that Rome had lifted its foot at last to trample those agitators into the dust.¹⁶³

The fears felt by the Alexandrian Jews were present in the Roman Jewish community as well, as Caius Barzaarone, an exceptionally wealthy businessman, explained to Josephus:

"I too wake up every day with the feeling: it can't go on like this. Today they will fall upon us. But it's a fact: we're alive, we go around and do business the same as before."164

Both the Roman and Alexandrian Jewish communities were actually to experience the horrors they were afraid might come upon them, though the Roman Jews were spared during Josephus' lifetime. The excellently organized anti-Semitic movement in Alexandria differed only in time and place from the Nazi bands of the late 1920's and early 1930's:

The white shoes worn by the pupils of the Gymnasium had gradually grown into a symbol, and now the Anti-Semites over all Egypt called themselves "The White Shoes."

With the arrival of Joseph a new plague had descended upon Alexandria according to the White Shoes... In their clubs, or wherever they met, they sang verses, some of them really witty, about the Jewish hero of freedom who had deserted to the Romans...

Some of them cried: "Don't go too near him in case you catch the disease." Others cried: "How do you like our pork, little Maccabee?"... "Was your father a leper, too?"

As the security of the Empire was threatened the Roman Jews had to be careful as well, for the SS of Himmler was no new concoction:

"I want to give you some urgent advice," Justus answered Joseph. "Watch carefully in the next weeks what you say and to whom. Also think over whether perhaps you've been saying things lately which ill-wishers could interpret to your disadvantage, and consider how such comments might be invalidated. There are people in the circle of the Emperor who

do not wish you well, and you yourself are said to receive persons at your house now and then whose loyalty to the State is questionable." "Can one not communicate with people," asked Joseph, "who are Roman citizens and who have never been suspect to any officials?" "One could," he answered, "in times of peace. But now it's better to look over everybody carefully--not merely whether there was once something against him, but also whether some time in the future there might not be something against him."166

Domitian, the Emperor, made things even worse for the Jews. Feuchtwanger modeled Domitian, the force behind the Empire's movements, after Hitler in many ways. Domitian, like Hitler ("I go the way that Providence dictates with the assurance of a sleepwalker"167), was obsessed with the grotesque necessity of being a god, and like his modern analogue, he not unnaturally lacked the equipment which is essential.

The following description of Domitian and Goebbels' description of Hitler during the last years of the war could be describing the same man:

"It is tragic that the Fuehrer has become such a recluse and leads such an unhealthy life. He never gets out into the fresh air. He does not relax. He sits in his bunker alone, worrying and brooding. If one could only transfer him to other surroundings!"168

Abruptly he [Domitian] turned away from the cage before which he was still standing. He was not going to let himself be tempted to dream any further; his imagination was too prone to go wandering. He loved method, almost pedantry, in matters of government. He longed for his writing-desk. He wanted to make notes, put things in order...

In his study at last, he gave instructions not to disturb him under any circumstances, bolted the

door, was alone. He smiled maliciously; he was thinking of the silly rumours which were current about what he was up to when he locked himself in alone for days. He stabbed flies, they said, cut off legs of frogs, and the like.¹⁶⁹

Domitian's plans spanned millenia and certainly paralleled Hitler's machinations in the early months of 1933:

He set to work. Neatly, point by point, he noted down all that he wanted to get out of his Senate in reference to this war. To begin with, he would at last realize his favourite old plan and have the power of censorship transferred to him for life, censorship, the superintendence of the state economy, morality, and rights, and with that also the inspection of the Senate, the authority to exclude members of that body.¹⁷⁰

The tyrant's mania for morality was contemporary:

The war offered the welcome opportunity to sharpen the moral laws as well. The ridiculous, conceited, refractory aristocrats of his Senate would of course again make fun of the fact that he forbade others every smallest irregularity, but allowed himself every whim, every "vice." The idiots. How could he, the God, since it was true that he had been ordained by fate to safeguard Roman propriety and morality with an iron hand, how could he know mankind and their vices if he did not himself, like Jupiter, descend to them from time to time?¹⁷¹

And again it seems that Feuchtwanger had Hitler clearly in mind, for it is said of Hitler that: "As unscrupulously as he indulged his own unbounded appetites, so deeply was he permeated with his mission to lead his people back to the morality and religious heritage of their ancestors."¹⁷²

With this parallel in mind, we note again the tyrant's fixation with his subjects' personal morality:

"I want to restore to this society, to this aristocracy, which has degenerated under a line of bad rulers, their feeling for the severity, the simplicity, the sense of duty of the ancients. I

want to lead this people back to religion, to the family, to the virtues which insure the present and guarantee the future. People shall say of the age of Domitian, with more truth than of the age of that Augustus: 'No more does unchastity shame the pure home. Virtue and justice have driven out lewdness and vice. Honour be to the women, for the child looks like the father.'"¹⁷³

Domitian's ancestry and his method of eliminating his enemies or those who did not please him were also paralleled in the case of Hitler:

About ninety gentlemen sat in the Senate who did not conceal the fact that they were hostile to him. They looked down on him... They called him an upstart. Because his grandfather had not won renown, they thought that he, Domitian, did not know what true Romanness was. He could show them who was the better Roman, the great-grandson of the little banker or the great-grandsons of the Trojan heroes.

Ninety, that was a large number; he could not put so many names on his list; unfortunately only a few of the unpleasant gentlemen could be done away with during his absence. But a few... could in any case be put on the list, and the thought that on his return he would not have to see at least these any more would warm his heart when he was far from Rome.¹⁷⁴

Perhaps Domitian was also the archetype of the earlier enemy of the Jews, the pre-Hitlerian enemy who used Fritz Haber's genius in chemistry to extract nitrogen from the air and thus prolong the war, and who used Walter Rathenau's devotion to Germany to marshal raw materials during the war and the resources of peace after the war. Domitian was the Imperial Host who tolerated and used the Jews ("It really was strange how closely the Flavians were bound together with Joseph and his family"¹⁷⁵) until they were no longer of use and could be destroyed: "Domitian enjoyed his triumph to the

full. There, opposite him, stood a man whom the gods had vanquished--all the gods, his own also, his Jehovah."¹⁷⁶

In Germany of the 1920's and 1930's, many Jews turned their thoughts and energies to a new world in Palestine. A large percentage of those Jews who fled Germany turned towards Zion and the Zionist organization in Germany flooded the German Jewish community with offers of assistance to all those who would come to Palestine.

Jewish leaders in Germany were frightened by this heightened nationalism as an advertisement in a Berlin newspaper, signed by hundreds of prominent Jews, revealed:

"We profess the Jewish religion, but reject any sort of Jewish nationalism. We regard ourselves, along with the overwhelming majority of German Jews, as members of the German, not of the Jewish, people. In the establishment of the National Jewish homeland we see an error which is bound to jeopardize the work of emancipation of the champions of German Judaism and the ethical-religious task of Judaism for humanity."¹⁷⁷

The Roman Jewish community faced similar problems and had similar reactions, as they immediately made clear to Joseph:

The Roman Jews he had already noticed, would not put themselves to much trouble to help him in his mission... The hundred thousand Jews in Rome were not so badly off... With discomfort they saw that the nationalist party in Jerusalem, which was hostile to Rome and called itself "The Avengers of Israel," was gaining more and more influence. They had no intention of endangering their comfortable situation by involving themselves in the perpetual squabbles that took place between the Jerusalem politicians and the imperial government.¹⁷⁸

As wealthy Caius Bazaarone explained it to Joseph:

"These people in Jerusalem were doing all they

could to make their native country stink in their nostrils. Why in God's name did they not live in peace with the Roman administration? One could easily get on with the imperial officials; they were tolerant people, that had often been proved; but no, these people in Judea always insisted on executing their private whims, the mania for being in the right was in their blood, one fine day they would spoil everything."¹⁷⁹

An article in the official organ of Zionism in Germany, Jüdische Rundschau, might have echoed John of Gishala's argument to Joseph:

"To acquire meaning and life God needs His country. You see, that is what makes Jehovah a problem today. Jehovah can only acquire real new life when Judea has become the land of His Jews instead of a temporary resort for His Jews. Jehovah needs a body. His body is this landscape. His life these olive groves, vineyards, mountains, lakes, the Jordan, and the sea; and as long as Jehovah and this country remain separated, neither the one nor the other is alive."¹⁸⁰

And perhaps Zion was where the Roman and German Jew properly belonged, Feuchtwanger was suggesting. Despite John of Gishala's power and persuasiveness, we sense Feuchtwanger's attitude toward Zionism when Josephus answered John with Nietzsche's favorite phrase: "Power makes stupid." Josephus is used to reveal what happened to Jews who used power rather than spirit, Nietzsche rather than Buddha, Samson rather than Isaiah. Feuchtwanger's Zionism was the Zionism of Leo Baeck, for the Jew must respond to wisdom and spirit, not power, and thus the Hebrew University and not Judas Maccabeus was to be the new hero.

The Jews learned the senselessness of regional-political nationalism by the end of this trilogy--although the Europe of Feuchtwanger's day didn't learn it even after a World War--

and hence after 1500 pages and a life of sharp ups and downs, this was Joseph's conclusion: "The land came to get him, and he sought it. He had sought the world, but he had found only his land; for he had sought the world too soon."¹⁸¹

It seemed to be Feuchtwanger's contention that no one could be wholeheartedly universalistic without in theory destroying his own particularism, and that the Jewish people must yield their universalism if they wish to see themselves as the particular vehicle through whom God's way could and would become the order for all humanity. Thus the existence of Israel and an all-encompassing globalism would be impossible--one or the other must yield, warned Feuchtwanger. Perhaps Josephus did not seek the synthesis "too soon," perhaps it is still impossible 2000 years later.

12. JOSEPH IN EGYPT

Between 1935 and 1938 Thomas Mann wrote the third part of his tetralogy on the Biblical Joseph, Joseph in Egypt.¹⁸² It was during these years that Mann, in voluntary exile from Germany, first proclaimed publicly his antipathy for Germany's current rulers. The result was that the Nazis deprived him of German citizenship and his honorary doctorate, and this led to more letters and statements by Mann denouncing Fascism.

The tremendous spiritual agony Mann faced during the years 1935-1938 is heightened when we remember that all his life Thomas Mann considered himself "non-political." To turn political suddenly and confront the truth of Nazism so dramatically suggests that Joseph in Egypt, written precisely during these years, must bear the marks of Mann's inner struggle. To this struggle we turn.

The first volume of Joseph in Egypt recorded Joseph's experiences as he was led by the Midianites from the pit to Goshen, as he was sold to Potiphar, and as he began his service in Potiphar's home and portrays Joseph in his relationships with the other servants, Potiphar, and Potiphar's wife. The novel ends with Joseph's banishment from the house and his impending imprisonment.

Mann, an exile himself, might have been led to see

Joseph and Egypt as parallel to his own situation, for Joseph was in exile. To the Nazis, Mann was an outsider, a foreigner; to the Egyptians, Joseph was the foreigner, the Jew. The Egyptian "purist" felt any foreigner to be an abomination, as we are shown by a dialogue between Potiphar and his wife:

"Do you intend," she said after a pause, "to invite Beknechons, first priest of Amun, to your party?"

"Of course, naturally," he answered. "Beknechons? It goes without saying. Why do you ask?"

"His presence seems important to you?"

"Why not? Beknechons is a great man."

"More important than that of the Babylonian maidens?"

"What sort of comparisons are these, my love? What choice are you putting before me?"

"The two are not reconcilable, my husband. I must make it clear to you that you must choose between them. For if the Babylonian maidens dance before Amun's high priest at your feast, it may be that the strange fire of fury in their eyes would not equal that in Beknechons's heart and that he would rise and summon his servants and leave your house... He would not suffer the Hidden One to be affronted before your eyes."

"By a dance?"

"By a dance danced by foreign dancers--when, after all, Egypt is full of beauty of this kind and even sends its dancers abroad."

"...Beknechons's objection to what is foreign is very strong."¹⁸³

German nationalism was represented by Beknechons's hatred of all that was foreign, and by the nationalism of the national god of Egypt, Amun:

"Amun hates the laxity of foreign ways and the disregard of pious old custom, because it enervates the land and weakens the authority of the kingdom. That is what Amun hates, as we both know; for he wishes the fibre of moral discipline to be strong in the land, as it always has been in Kemt, and to have its children walk in the path of patriotic tradition."¹⁸⁴

With a little updating, these could have been the words of Alfred Rosenberg, the ideologist of German National Socialism, or any Nazi theoretician. But Mann's Egypt did not just hate things foreign in general; Joseph, the semite, victim of Egyptian hatred and, symbolically, of Nazi hatred, was singled out for racial, religious and cultural contempt and denigration throughout the novel:

"The truth is that the forwardness of this youth has become a subject for violent anger and widespread disaffection in the house. Dudu, the guardian of your jewel-caskets, has more than once, yes, very often, taken occasion to speak before me, uttering bitter complaints of the offence to the pious in making them suffer the domination of impure stock..."¹⁸⁵

Dudu, whose nationalistic fervor was aroused primarily by Joseph's material and social elevation, put it this way:

The slave Osarsiph [Joseph], for so he mysteriously chose to call himself, the Shabirite lout and scum of the desert...had been bought, against the dwarf's advice, for far too high a price, a hundred and sixty deben, of some worthless peddlars from the desert, who had stolen him from a prison grave... But instead of sending the foreign hand to field labour, as sensible folk had advised the steward, the latter had let him lounge about the court and he had come to stand before Petepre [Potiphar] in the palm orchard, and the rascal had turned it to his advantage in a way that could only be called shameless...a scabby Asiatic in a house of Egypt!¹⁸⁶

Dudu not only evinced this attitude in his words, but in his actions as well:

Dudu showed his dislike whenever he could, especially by casting up at him--from below--the reproach familiar in the stern old code, that of being a stranger, a Shabirite, and as such unclean. At table, when the upper servants of the house broke bread together, among them Joseph and the steward Mont-kaw, Dudu, pursing his upper lip till it stuck out like a thatch, insisted that the Hebrew be separately served...withdrew from the abomination, spat toward the four quarters of the heavens, and drawing a circle round about him, practised charms and exorcisms against the pollution...¹⁸⁷

Egyptian nationalism paralleled German chauvinism most closely in the speech given by Potiphar's wife before the servants of Potiphar. Fascist demagoguery was alluded to clearly by Mann in this speech filled with hatred and pathos. She addressed the common people, her almost drunk servants, her "Egyptian Brothers!"--using "we" and "each other" as cleverly as Hitler:

"Egyptians!" she cried. "Children of Kemt! Sons of the river and the black earth!"...now all at once their birth, which had been very much in the background and had no practical value for the individual, was brought to their notice with flattering emphasis--because it could be used to rouse their sense of honour, unite them in a common pride, and make them pant with fury against someone who had to be destroyed.¹⁸⁸

Her stratagem was successful, as she used the technique suggested by Hitler a few thousand years later: "He [an orator] will always follow the lead of the great mass in such a way that from the living emotion of hearers the apt words which he needs will be suggested to him and in its turn this will go straight to the hearts of his hearers."¹⁸⁹

Having motivated them successfully, the master demagogue continued:

"Egyptian Brothers!" They were her brothers all at once; it went through and through them, they found it thrilling. "Behold me, your mistress and mother, Petepre's chief and true wife! See me as I sit upon the threshold of this house--we know each other well, you and I!--"We" and "each other"! They swallowed it down, this was a good day for the lower classes!--190

And now, with her audience completely prepared, she could turn to the subject of her appeal, reminiscent of Goering's Jew-baiting speech at the Reichstag fire trial:

"But likewise know you this Hebrew youth, standing here half naked on this great day in the calendar, lacking his upper garment, because I have it in my hands. Do you recognize him, who was set as steward above the children of the land and over the house of one great in the two lands? He came down out of his wretched country to Egypt, Osiris' beautiful garden, the throne of Re, the horizon of the good spirit. They brought this stranger to us into this house"--"us" again!--"to mock us, and bring shame upon us."191

By this time it was child's play for Potiphar's wife to accuse Joseph of rape, exhibit his torn garment, and see him fettered and kenneled.

The parallel to Nazism was present in the exotic New Year's Feast of Egypt. The state exhibited its splendor, distributed food and drink, and welcomed the peasants in order that:

...they might, against their own better knowledge, lull themselves in the dream that it would always be thus, that with this feast the golden age of free beer and roast goose had dawned, and never again would the tax-gatherers come, accompanied by Nubians bearing palm rods to harass the little peasantry... The populace was all joyous reverence and pious zeal, untiringly it gazed upon the unfolding splendors of State and Church, which were calculated to lay up in the hearts of Wese's children and her guests a fresh supply of daily patience and proudly self-deluded devotion to the fatherland.192

Mann's description of Pharaoh's entrance at this festival reminds one of the Nuremberg rallies where thousands of men marched in perfect order, bands blasted, standards and flags waved, torches smoked and searchlights turned--all in a mounting crescendo of excitement on the supreme moment when the Fuehrer himself made his entry.¹⁹³

Imagine Hitler on parade as we witness the appearance of Pharaoh on these feast days:

Pharaoh drove out wearing crown and gloves; he came out from his palace brilliant like the rising sun, and betook himself to his father's house, to behold his beauty; in his high swaying canopied carrying-chair, surrounded by ostrich-feather fans, enveloped in heavy clouds of fragrant smoke, which streamed back upon him from incense-bearers walking in front of his chair, their faces turned toward the good god. The voices of the reading priests were drowned in the jubilations of the throng, as they hopped on one leg and rejoiced. Drums and cornets preceded the procession, in which walked troops of Pharaoh's relations, dignitaries, unique and true friends of the king as well as just plain friends. Ranks of soldiers closed up the rear, with field badges, battle-axes, and throw-sticks. The lifetime of Re to thee, the peace of Amun!¹⁹⁴

The entire New Year's Festival had one simple purpose, to enable "the whole great city to swim in beer and bliss and belief in a carefree golden age."¹⁹⁵ And precisely because the Egypt of Joseph's time was anything but golden, was this so necessary.

Joseph entered Egypt during the reign of Amenhotep III, at the end of the 18th Dynasty. Egypt was in a rapid decline as the Hittites were attacking from the North-East and Palestine was being filled by desert tribes. The priestly party of bitter nationalists, reactionaries and worshippers of

Amon were engaged in strife with the King's party of internationalists who worshipped Aton as the only true God--and this was the beginning of the civil war which was to break out under Ikhnaton. A picture not completely unlike Germany in the late 1920's and the 1930's was painted of Egypt:

For the prevailing atmosphere--to put it in an old phrase--was fin de siècle. It was that of a society composed of descendants and heirs, already remote from the patterns of the founding fathers whose victories had put their successors in the frame of mind to regard the conquered as elegant.¹⁹⁶

Despite almost 700 pages of adventures in this novel alone, it may be that not Joseph but time is the protagonist of the novel. The Nazis claimed that Fascism represented the beginning of a new historical epoch, while Mann argued that time was bottomless:

They had possessed for ages a faculty of religious insight. They, or rather their forerunners in the service, had first divided up and measured time and contrived the calendar... Up to that time men had just lived on in blind timelessness, without measure or mark.¹⁹⁷

Time, in the first volume of the novel, almost appears to stand still. Egypt, the land of the ancient pyramids and eternal Nile, is pictured as "timeless." Further, the Nile is associated with the vegetative principle and rebirth and renewal, and Egypt is clearly the land of recurrence and regeneration.

Joseph though, precisely because he was in such a land, was not caught in the web of the present. He, as Mann perhaps, had this vision of an eternal past which necessarily pointed ahead to a future for the spirit and humanity.

Thomas Mann's own "war" with Fascism and his difficulties in these years immediately preceding the War, were perhaps alluded to in his description of Egypt's internal, religious strife. Amun-Re, the sun-god at Karnak, represented Fascism and pure Germanism, while Atun-Re represented free thought as well as supra-racial and supra-national culture and values:

...those inner contradictions and factions which reigned in the land of ancestors and among which Joseph's career was run: certain religious and patriotic fundamentals which went counter to that career and had almost succeeded in sending him out untimely to the field; likewise certain factors of an opposed kind, free-thinking, tolerant--or one might say degenerate and capricious--which favoured his rise...the court was angry at Amun in his temple and at his oppressive power, the latter-day embodiment of patriotic conservatism and the bondage of tradition...

He [Amun] was rigid and strict, hostile to every sort of wide-ranging speculation, averse to foreign influence, abiding by unarguable custom and the sacred testimonial. All this though he was much younger than he [Atum] of On. The ancient of days was here flexible and blithe, the new unbendingly conservative--and that was confusing.¹⁹⁸

This "unbending conservatism" became no more flexible when it encountered Joseph, the foreigner and free-thinker:

But even as Amun at Karnak looked askance upon the growing esteem in which Atum-Re-Horakhte was held at court, so also, Joseph felt, the god looked askance at him, Potiphar's foreign body-servant and reader...he soon deduced that the sun-meaning of Re favoured his course, while that of Amun did the opposite--also that this situation, too, demanded exercise of tact. For his was a free-thinking spirit in fashions, whims, and habits--and free thinking against Egyptian Amun.¹⁹⁹

Lest one conclude that Mann was a polemicist rather than a superb artist, it seems fitting to conclude with one of his

many satirical passages. This one hardly disguised contemporary history at all, for it mocked middle and upper class conversations which have both preceded and outlived Fascism:

"I should be untruthful," he said at last with a little sigh, "were I to say that your share in our pleasant conversation is conducted with great tact. I made a skilful transition to the more worldly and material things of life, bringing the subject round to Pharaoh and the court. I expected you to return the ball by asking me some question, such as for instance whose ear-lobe Pharaoh tweaked in token of his favour when we went out of the hall of the canopy after the levee; but instead you turned aside into observations about such irritating matters as mines and desert wells, about which, truly, my love, you must certainly understand even less than I."

"You are right," she replied, shaking her head over her blunder. "Forgive me. My eagerness to know whose ear-lobe Pharaoh tweaked today was only too great. I dissembled it by small talk. Pray understand me: I thought to put off the question, feeling that a slow leading up to the important subject is the finest and most important feature of elegant conversation. Only the clumsy blunder in their approach by precipitation, betraying at once the whole content of their minds.²⁰⁰

13. JOSEPH THE PROVIDER

By the advent of World War II, Thomas Mann had come to the United States. He continued his verbal and literary attacks against National Socialism while simultaneously coming to respect Franklin D. Roosevelt more and more. Carefully observing the New Deal and writing during World War II, Mann completed and published the last novel in his tetralogy, Joseph the Provider, in 1943.²⁰¹

Joseph, as Mann, was still in exile, but the experiences and events Mann had lived through and reacted to were disguised in the dialogue and movements of Pharaoh's palace at the end of the 18th Dynasty. Joseph rose from the prison to the palace and mixed within his role as Provider of Egypt was the familiar yet moving drama of his deception and reconciliation with his brothers and father.

In recreating Egypt during the years of Joseph's pre-eminence, Mann was heavily influenced by American politics and institutions created during the Depression years. President Roosevelt had introduced the New Deal with these words:

"There is no unsolvable problem if we face it wisely and courageously. There are many ways in which we can help, but we can never help by merely talking about it. We must act and act quickly."²⁰²

Joseph's early directive to Pharaoh Amenhotep sounds much like Roosevelt launching his economic and social reforms:

...there must be much taking of thought against the coming of evil. Not to avoid it, for we avoid not the purposes of God; but to anticipate and provide against it by proper foresight. For the term of blessing which is promised us means in the first place a stage wherein to take breath to bear the affliction. But in the second place it means time and space to take steps, at least to clip the wings of the raven of calamity; to take note of the coming evil to work against it, and so far as possible not only to keep it in bounds but perhaps to derive from it a blessing to boot.²⁰³

While yet in prison, Joseph's thoughts expressed this symbolically in religious terms. He feared "sin" terribly, and for him sin was the lack of foresight and planning:

For it was deeply rooted in his native tradition, where the word "sin" had almost the same sense as want of foresight. It meant folly, it meant clumsy dealing with God, it was something to jeer at. Whereas wisdom meant foresight and care for the future. Had not Noah-Utnapishtim been called the exceeding wise one, simply because he had seen the Flood coming and provided for it by building the great ark? The ark, the great chest, the Aron, wherein creation survived in the time of the flood, to Joseph the ark was the first instance, the earliest pattern of all wisdom--in other words, of all knowledgeable foresight.²⁰⁴

"Knowledgeable foresight" was Joseph's concern, and even while in prison he was provided with the opportunity to show his planning ability. This was his apprenticeship, somewhat akin to Roosevelt's as governor of New York:

The words: "The governor of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison, and whatsoever they did there he was the doer of it," are to be understood as meaning that Potiphar's former house steward, some six months after he entered Zawi-Re, had become, without any special title or promotion, the head manager and provisioner of the whole fortress. All the records and accounts went through his hands, and these, as everywhere else in the country, were endless: all purchases of oil, corn, barley, and cattle, all the giving out of supplies to the guards and convicts;

all the operations in the brewery and the bakery of Zawī-Re; even the income and outgo of the Wepwawet temple; all matters connected with the dispatch of hewn stone from the quarries, and much, much else besides, came to be Joseph's business, greatly to the relief of those who had charge of it before.²⁰⁵

The theme of the novel is planned economy, for which Joseph, as Franklin Roosevelt, had adequate theoretical and practical experience even before assuming office on a national level. Joseph's vision of a welfare state sounds very much like the Beveridge report, which was issued while Mann worked on this novel:

There cannot be enough barns and granaries; there are many in the land, but yet all too few. New ones must be built everywhere so that their number is like the stars in the skies. And everywhere must officials be appointed to deal with the harvest and collect the taxes--there should be no arbitrary estimate which can always be got round with bribes, but instead there must be a fixed ruling--and heap up grain in Pharaoh's granaries until it is like the sands of the sea; and provision the cities so that food is laid up for distribution in the bad years and the land does not perish of hunger... I said distribution; but I do not mean it so that the corn should be handed out once and for all, but we should distribute to the poor and the little people and sell to the great and rich.²⁰⁶

Among Joseph's titles was that of Minister of Agriculture, and his "ever-normal" granary program, agrarian reforms and global consciousness remind one of Roosevelt's Secretary of Agriculture from 1933 to 1940, Henry Wallace. Almost all of Wallace's major programs--soil conservation, store reserves, production control and higher farm prices--were suggested by Joseph to Pharaoh and many were put into operation:

Pharaoh must search out among his servants: one filled with the spirit of planning and foresight, master of the survey, who sees all even unto the borders of the land and beyond, because the borders of the land are not his borders... He shall build the barns, direct the host of officials, and establish the laws governing the collection.²⁰⁷

Pharaoh quickly searched and found his man, Joseph: "...he was duly installed as minister of agriculture and supplies; and in this capacity he carried through important reforms, among them the ground-rent law which has particularly impressed itself on history."²⁰⁸

Joseph went to work immediately with his new task:

We may say that from the first day Joseph's administration tightened the reins on the one hand and loosened them on the other. That is, he put all the emphasis on the corn rent and looked very leniently at other debts. The people might keep their linen of the first, second, and third quality, their oil, copper, and paper, if only the corn delivery, the fifth of the bread-grain harvest, was conscientiously handed over. This explicit and universal tax provision could not be regarded as oppressive in a country where the fertility is on the average thirtyfold.²⁰⁹

The results of Joseph's complex and lengthy agricultural reforms, described in exacting detail by Mann, were more impressive than even Wallace's":

...what happened under this wise and resolute minister was the breaking up of the still existing large estates, whose out-of-date methods injurious to the general weal, had long been a thorn in the flesh of the modern state, and the settling of peasant owners on the smaller ones, farmers who became responsible to the state for an up-to-date management, improvement of the canals, and irrigation of the soil. The result was a more even distribution of the land among the people and an improvement of agriculture under crown supervision.²¹⁰

But Joseph was much more than simply a minister of agri-

culture or a "cabinet-member." Joseph was surveyor, commander, steward, shadow-spender of the King, Friend of the harvest of God, nourisher of Egypt, chief mouthpiece, prince of meditation, Grand Vizier, universal friend of the King, unique friend, Adon over all Egypt, double of the King, Lord of the land of Egypt, Regent of Egypt Privy Counsellor, vice-horus, and more. His position "was equal in fact to that of a lord over the land of Egypt, without whose voice no one could stir hand or foot in the two lands."²¹¹ But more than anything else, he was the Provider, the F.D.R. of Egypt:

The name, then, which was added to Joseph's many titles, was a name of life. It meant: "The god" (Aton, one did not need to specify) "says, Life be with thee!" But even that was not its whole meaning. It meant, for every ear that heard it, not only "Live thou thyself," but also "Be a life-bringer, spread life, give living-food to the many!" In a word, it was a name that meant satisfaction, sufficiency; and in that character above all had Joseph been exalted. All his titles and styles, in so far as they did not refer to his personal relation to Pharaoh, contained in some form or other this idea of the preservation of life, the feeding of the country; and all of them, including this excellent and much disputed one, could be comprehended in a single epithet: the Provider.²¹²

Joseph's agrarian reforms, rationing and taxation; his exploitation of the rich barons and generous liberality toward the little man; his brilliant tact with the priests of Amon and revolutionary regulation of business; his socialization of property and his Nile Valley Authority--all were symbolic of the New Deal. Roosevelt described the New Deal in this way:

"It is a partnership between Government and farming and industry and transportation, not partnership in profits, for the profits still go to citizens, but rather a partnership in planning, and a partnership to see that the plans are carried out."²¹³

Joseph, as guardian, provider and saviour, was F.D.R., and his economic system was that of the New Deal, "an astonishing mixture of socialization and freehold occupancy by the individual--a mixture which the children of Egypt thought of as "magic," a manifestation of a divinity benign and cunning at once."²¹⁴

Joseph's strict division of his day into business and social hours is strikingly modern, and could easily be descriptive of an American President:

...the routine of Joseph's days, which seldom permitted the exalted one to eat with his wife and children. This meal with the brothers and the resident honourables, however lively and enjoyable it was, was not a social but a business function, and Pharaoh's friend had to perform it nearly every day. Thus he usually took only the evening meal with his wife, in the women's wing of the house, after spending a little time playing with his charming half-breed sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. At midday then, he took his meal in male society, either with the ranking and upper officials of the office or with important travelling dignitaries or emissaries or plenipotentiaries of foreign powers.²¹⁵

Franklin Roosevelt, born of millionaire parents, did not hesitate to fight for the beleaguered proletariat:

"Anti-trust laws were intended to prevent the creation of monopolies and to forbid unreasonable profits to those monopolies. That purpose of the anti-trust laws must be continued, but these laws were never intended to encourage the kind of unfair competition that results in long hours and starvation wages."²¹⁵

Joseph's attacks on the rich, his compassion for the poor despite his heritage of exceeding wealth and his enormous power, paralleled F.D.R.'s:

...it pleased the people that Joseph unhesitatingly levied the tax on the still recalcitrant district barons as well and forced them to make up-to-date improvements on their properties for the good of the state. For the reactionary spirit of these men operated to keep their estates in a condition far behind the times: the irrigation system was clumsy and inadequate; they retained it partly out of laziness but mostly out of defiance; and thus the soil yielded less than it should have done. To this gentry Joseph emphatically prescribed the repair of their water systems...²¹⁷

Thus when Jacob's son drove through the streets of Weset, the populace greeted him with lifted hands and shouted: "Adon! Adon! Ka-ne-Keme! Live for ever, friend of the harvest of God!"²¹⁸

Joseph's popularity was the result of his careful handling of production during years of feast and famine, and assured him the continued support of the masses as well as Pharaoh for a longer period than anyone could have expected. Joseph knew well the road to popularity:

...there was much laughter among the people, admiring laughter, at the way in which Joseph coolly exploited the price situation in dealing with the rich and great to the advantage of his master, Hor in the Palace, making him gold and silver by pouring vast sums into Pharaoh's treasury in exchange for the corn he gave the property-owners. He was displaying therein a shrewd loyalty to the divine, which is the essence of all dutiful, devoted, and rewarding service. But hand in hand with this service went the free distribution of grain among the hungry little people of the cities, in the name of the young Pharaoh, the god-dreamer, to whom thus accrued as much and even more profit than to Joseph by his gilding. It was a combination of crown politics and concern for the little man, a novel, ingenious, and invigorating policy.²¹⁹

Joseph's tact in dealing with the religious institutions of Egypt was brilliant, for he simultaneously realized that the people would be more accessible to the new if they were allowed to keep their traditional faith, and that he must not give Amun the impression that the agrarian reforms were directed against him and his power:

The tradition emphasizes that the reform did not extend to the landed possessions of the church: the priest-hoods of the numerous shrines endowed by the state, especially the landed property of Amun-Re, remain unmolested and tax-free... That too was wise--if wisdom is a shrewdness amounting to guile, which knows how to disarm its antagonist while yielding him all outward respect. This consideration for Amun and the lesser local lumina was certainly not to Pharaoh's mind. He would have liked to see the god of Karnak cropped and plundered, and grumbled boyishly to his shadow-dispenser. But little Mama, the mother of the god, agreed with Joseph; with her backing he stood out for sparing the belief of the little man in the old gods of the country, though Pharaoh would gladly have destroyed them root and branch.²²⁰

But the riches his sale of corn got and went on getting for the great house meant indirectly such a heavy loss to the state god that the bowing down before his anciently sacred right of freedom from taxation looked like sheer irony.²²¹

In Joseph in Egypt and Joseph The Provider we have perhaps the most striking example of how an author can disguise contemporary history in historical fiction. Although this study has subordinated Mann's human drama for his historical elements, the reader of these two rich novels will gain insight into what George Bernard Shaw meant when he said, "The man who writes about himself and his own time is the only man who writes about all people and about all time."²²²

14. THE MARKED ONE

Jacob Picard of Southern Germany was moved by the Nazi catastrophe to preserve some of the Jewish life of South German villages in a series of short stories written during the 1930's. Not only did he write with fervor after 1933 but he refused to leave his homeland until the very last moment, escaping only in 1940. In The Marked One,²²³ a forty-page story about one Sender Frank, Picard not only created a memorable character of the early nineteenth century but provided some insight into German-Jewish rural life of the Nazi era.

Perhaps Picard alluded to the Nuremburg Laws and other restrictions imposed on the German Jews under Nazi Socialism when he explained the appellation of "familiaris:"

Those, who at that time were permitted to found families, were given the appellation of "familiaris" and precisely what that meant in that dark period must be made clear to those who are alive today... Was not everyone permitted to marry?... No, not all were permitted to do so. Only those might marry who received permission from the government, and the number of these was always definite and small.²²⁴

And in explaining how all of this came about, Picard might have had in mind German racial theories of Aryan superiority and fear of "contamination:"

The great distrust of the world, which grew out of ignorance of our fathers and of their true character, had inspired in the mighty Empress of

Austria a groundless fear of supposedly secret actions by the Jews against her ancient realm. She was deluded into thinking that, by diminishing increase among this small part of the many peoples over whom she ruled, she was protecting the others and guarding them against harm. Hence she issued the decree, renewing it from time to time, that in every Jewish family...only the oldest son in each family would be permitted to marry.²²⁵

Sender, born January 1, 1800, and marked with the fate of this unusual birthday, not only was the youngest son in his family and hence doomed to remain unmarried, but was given every burden and unpleasant task available by the "generous" leaders of his kehillah. Even worse, the congregation faced him to read the Tochacha passage from the Torah, the chapter of curses, so that the imprecations might bring hurt, illness, humiliation and perhaps death to Sender rather than to the congregation.

One day Sender awoke and realized his fate. Deciding he was "fed up," he left his family and community and set out for parts unknown. Although receiving work as a craft apprentice in a far-away village, he was soon thrown out when the Christian community decided that he limited job opportunities for non-Jews.

With his next decision, Sender becomes symbolic of the German Jew throughout history and the German Jew of the modern period especially. Sender decided to return home, for the humiliation "and oppressive circumstances that had driven him away had faded a little from his mind and his predominant feeling now was that which each human being cherishes for his original home."²²⁶

The German Jews of the Middle Ages, expelled from their homes over and over, would inevitably come back a few years later to start life almost completely afresh. When the Romantic Reaction of the early nineteenth century and the racial anti-Semitism of the late nineteenth century emerged, the German Jews were certain it would soon pass. And like Sender, many German Jews of the 1930's could not imagine leaving their homeland, the land of Goethe and Schiller, Einstein and Baeck. As Sender came home, so Picard could not leave, for: "We are all so bound to the original circle of our lives and to the community of our birth that none can loosen those bonds."²²⁷

Perhaps the kehillah represents the directives of National Socialism and Sender a certain type of Jewish response, for Sender replied quite differently to the demands of the kehillah to sacrifice himself for them during the Torah reading now that he was home again. Pushed and bullied formerly by the kehillah, Sender was now the Jew responding nobly to the demands of the Nazis in the only way possible--refusing to cooperate:

...he remained calm and silent and unmoved by their loud demand to sacrifice himself for them, although they despised him and though they were now by their cries desecrating the sacred place. They had all turned around now and gazed upon him and were filled with fear...

But Sender did not stir. And no one else summoned the courage to say the beroches over that passage of imprecations in his place.²²⁸

No one in the community ever spoke to Sender again, for

he had refused to make the sacrifice demanded of him by the community; and the community was certain he was eventually to be punished for this rebellion even when they heard rumors of Sender's good fortune after he left home once again. Perhaps the individual, noble, "go-it-alone" response of a Sender was no more accepted by the Jewish communities of Germany between 1933 and 1937 than by the Nazis: "For it is thus among men that the majority will never admit its own guilt, but seeks to project it upon one who has separated himself from it..."²²⁹

15. MOSES, PRINCE OF EGYPT

Howard Fast wrote Moses, Prince of Egypt²³⁰ after leaving the Communist Party in the 1950's*. While he may not have had in mind a particular twentieth century tyrant or country to disguise as Ramses or Egypt, he certainly wrote a powerful novel pitting justice or Moses against injustice or Ramses and his Egypt. Egypt's inhumane treatment of human beings, its efficient spy system, and the power and savagery of its military science all have well-known contemporary parallels. Moses himself could well be many a man of this century struggling for righteousness and justice, macaat. Moses called it, against a Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, Francoist Spain or Fascist Italy.

Ramses is carefully described by Fast and his actions were typical of men far removed from the world of ancient Egypt. The vitality and personal cult of the tyrant diverted the populace's attention from its woes:

Ramses was as eternal as the River Nile, and the priests made little effort to destroy the legend of immortality that had sprung up around him. He had created a far-flung empire such as the world had never before seen, and his building in stone was refashioning the face of Egypt.

* It would be interesting to explore the relationship between Fast's break with the Communist Party and his choice of Moses as the central character and justice as the central theme. Why Moses? one could ask.

His restoration of the full flush of Egypt's power and glory had closed the eyes of the people to the fact of the land in itself; the enervated and impoverished peasantry, the dwindling population, the empty and abandoned cities of Upper Egypt--and the disease of mass slavery that fed on the body of the land like a swarm of insatiable maggots.²³¹

Fast's description of Ramses, the lord over all of Egypt's power and cruelty, would fit nicely into a description of modern tyrants. Compare, for example, a recent description of Hitler with that of Ramses:

When half of Europe lay at his feet and all need of restraint was removed, Hitler abandoned himself entirely to megalomania. He became convinced of his own infallibility.²³²

To say that Hitler was ambitious scarcely describes the intensity of the lust for power and the craving to dominate which consumed him. It was the will to power in its crudest and purest form.²³³

Ramses was a man simple people could understand and love, perhaps because kingly insensitivity was misread as kindly simplicity. Along with that, he expressed human qualities which were always reassuring in a god. He bragged and lied without shame. He was a large, powerful, good-looking man, who did things hugely and lustily. He ate enormously, with gusto and relish, drank vast quantities without ever losing his head, and engaged his manhood in a manner that more than anything else convinced his subjects that his divinity was founded in fact. If his apparently inexhaustible virility--or lust, as some would say--had been laced with sadism...or had been petty and sick in its manifestations, the people would have simply tolerated it and accepted it as they accepted the inevitable aberrations of god-hood on the throne; but here it was, so vast, so unprecedented, so all-encompassing that they took pride in a reputation already recognized all over the known world.²³⁴

Young Moses, a Prince at Pharaoh's court, committed himself at an early age to a life directly antithetic to Ramses' values and those of Egypt as a whole. Put simply,

Moses was good and Egypt was bad, Moses was justice and Egypt was injustice; and since justice must include brotherhood, it was Moses' "blood-brother" and servant, the Negro Nun, who joined Moses in the crusade. Their entire youth was dedicated to this goal, to macaat:

...which Moses would translate in later life as the word "justice" although, growing into it, he felt it sometimes as "truth," sometimes as "order," and sometimes as a hunger to be a little better than he or any other man was.²³⁵

Moses did not need to wait very long to aim towards macaat, for during a session of archery practice with Pharaoh's "legitimate" sons he knocked down a prince who was about to shoot a slave's child instead of the stationary targets. His instructor had some inkling of the flame that somehow had been kindled and summed up the quest which Moses had begun: "As for what you did, some will say a slave's life is worthless, and others say different. You will have to find your own answer, Moses."²³⁶

Moses, on a visit to the Land of Goshen, heard the tale of the desert Bedouins who settled there many years ago and the long history of these desert tribes finally concluded with these words:

"So it was that some twenty years ago his soldiers went into the Land of Goshen and told the desert people there that the God Ramses had taken ownership of them and now they would work for him without pay. At first some of them resisted, but when a few hundred were hanged and a few hundred whipped, the resistance came to an end. Some of them fled back into the desert, but not many--for it is a long time since they lived in the desert and they fear it and have forgotten its ways. And soon they will forget that they were ever free

people and they will be content to be slaves. So it goes, Moses."²³⁷

Moses, as the reader of the novel is able to guess, could not believe this injustice: "But they were strangers and they lived among us," Moses said. "Will the gods forgive us for this?"²³⁸

His sense of macaat was stirred when the answer given was that Moses need not brood over right and wrong for the world is what it is:

But Moses, on his part, felt that he was coming to know less of what the world was; or perhaps it was the world that was taking shape before his eyes for the first time--a real world, boundless and chaotic and so far meaningless. One day in the market place had washed away his own sense of being grossly misused, and had given him a measure against a world where not all were princely; and now the slave, to whom he had never paid much attention was becoming a symbolic and constant factor in his thoughts.²³⁹

Injustice and cruelty, a constant enemy in Fast's novels, whether set in ancient Egypt or in this century, is illustrated by the living conditions of slaves in the Delta:

...the slaves were kept in chains in long sheds, men, women and children indiscriminately bound together... Once each day, they were fed a meal of dry bread and salt fish, and now and then a little fruit to ward off sickness. They made their toilet in the river muck behind the shed, and each morning, to clean them for the day's market, they were dragged through the river bottom... every mealtime was fight and fury and screams and recriminations, and since the floor of the shed was damp, packed mud, there was a good deal of sickness.

...they joined in sympathetic keening and moaning, recalling memories of home and family and weeping in hopeless frustration.²⁴⁰

It is against this background that we view Moses' act

of justice and compassion, for after being cheered wildly for beating, in a fierce struggle, the slave he had chosen, he did something unique in Egypt, something which changed him instantly from a hero to the complete opposite.

Moses took off his princely kilt and wiped the blood and dirt from the man's face and neck and body, and this most "unprincely" action was remembered by the people of Tanis when everything else about Moses was forgotten.

The same compassion for the downtrodden and the oppressed was felt by Moses when he first met Miriam:

His heart went out to this plain, dirt-stained and work-worn woman as it had never gone out to anyone before, opening with love and a compassion that saw and embraced all the ugliness of the life of these people, the dark and barren ignorance, the vile superstition, the truncated hopes and blocked horizons, the meanness, the selfishness, the ignominious brand of slavery and degradation.²⁴¹

Moses was forced to accompany the mighty and ruthless Egyptian army to Kush, yet he spent his idle time in thoughts foreign to any Egyptian we meet in the novel. Here is Fast's hope for modern man and his continual search for a land, a government, or an ideology which would make this hope and dream a living reality:

...surely there was in every man a spark that, no matter how overlaid it became with brutality and hostility, could not be snuffed out. So that when men looked upon their cities and saw the slums, the filth, the misery, the hunger, it was as if they looked upon what had happened to themselves...somewhere, he could believe, there was a promised land where reason blended with unreason--where men lived without murder, filth and deceit.²⁴²

"Egypt"--communism, Fast is perhaps suggesting--is not

the place where macaat is realized, for it stands only for enslavement and unrighteousness: "Macaat only can exist without fear, and if the human soul can be purchased and sold at whim, fear is never quieted."²⁴³

Others saw Moses' quest for macaat and comforted him when the outrages of the world depressed and saddened his ideal:

"...the priests loved you because they saw something else, a hunger for justice, for right, for truth--the macaat that was once the glory of Egypt and is no more; they saw a little flame and dreamed that it could be nursed into a great fire. They saw that, as I saw it, as Nun sees it--

"And it's a lie, a deceit," Moses whispered brokenly.

"Is it? I don't know, Moses, Time will tell."²⁴⁴

Fast, too, like Moses, perhaps felt that his vision of macaat was simply a deceit and lie. One cannot be certain if he found what he sought outside communism, but one can sense that for Fast as well as for Moses, Egypt and communism had become only dark gods. This was summed up by Moses (or Fast) in his reply to Nun's vow to serve him eternally, for injustice and cruelty and tyranny are the ancient and modern false gods worshipped by men of each generation who fear:

"Was it a strong oath?" Moses asked, tears filling his eyes. "It if was an oath by Nebushtan, I cast it aside. Neither do I serve nor do homage to any of the dark gods that are born out of the fears and agonies of mankind."²⁴⁵

16. MOSES

Sholem Asch published Moses²⁴⁶ in 1951, a time when American antipathy to Iron Curtain and neutralist nations was reaching its height and the liberal, genteel, middle-class American Jew or Protestant of the suburbs was rapidly emerging dominant in Jewish life. Moses as a founder of democracy and enemy of totalitarianism would reflect the first theme; Moses as a liberal fighter against clericalism and for social justice the second. This was precisely the Moses Asch portrayed, and it is not simply that Moses championed so many causes and was drawn so as to appeal to any reader that this is a poor novel, but the inability of Asch to evince an authentic response from Moses when he defended everything good and rebelled against everything evil. Listen to Moses speaking to his mother before he met a single Hebrew slave other than his brother, father and mother: "I will wait with you for the redemption which our God promised to our forefather... Is not your poverty and your bondage my poverty and my bondage?"²⁴⁷

Asch is probably quite sincere in portraying Moses as a twentieth century champion of social justice, but the efforts of Moses on behalf of the downtrodden too often ring with a false sound. Having glimpsed the Hebrew slaves for a brief time, Moses ran home to his "Princess-mother" and

exclaimed:

"The Spirit of my people has awakened in me a great love-thirst toward my brothers. Absent from them, I suffer more with them than if I were with them. I waken in the nights and cry out aloud, remembering their enslavement. Love and pity for my brothers eat at my flesh like the fangs of a lion... The lash that falls on them burns me with shame and pain. It is as though the God of my fathers had taken my heart and had made it into sponge to suck up their anguish."²⁴⁸

Moses' absorption in the sorrows of his brethren results in pithy statements flowing from his lips in almost every discourse. "Better to suffer for righteousness than to become enslaved to unrighteousness,"²⁴⁹ he tells himself while shepherding in Midian.

Jethro and his daughter are no more authentic than Moses. Jethro heard from his daughters that Moses defended them from the brawling shepherds at the well, and he instantly recognized in him the justice of a Hebrew and recounted for him the entire history of the Patriarchs:

"It is not an accepted thing in our land, to take the part of the weaker against the stronger. May I then know the name of the thrice-blessed land whence thou comest? It is not Egypt, however thy dress testify."

"It is an accepted thing among my people."

"Thy people!" exclaimed Jethro. "Art thou not, then, of the people of Abraham the Hebrew?"²⁵⁰

Perhaps the culmination of Moses' lack of real authenticity comes with his marriage to his second wife, a Negress, for Asch has Moses marry her in order to protest against racial discrimination. Moses heard the people explaining that, "The Negroes, the Africans, the Abyssinians, the

children of Cush--it was they who longed for the Egyptian fleshpots, not we!"²⁵¹ and in response to their cruel treatment of one Cushite, Tiha, Moses betrothed her:

How was he to undo the injustice committed against the alien-born seekers of God? He was seized through and through with the desire to perform an act, a personal and individual act, which would bring restitution to this woman--an act peculiarly and specifically his own, because his was the guilt when his own flesh and blood had committed the wrong.

And then on the instant it was as if God had opened a passage for the light. He saw! He understood!

"Art thou willing to be betrothed to me, Moses, and to be my wife?"²⁵²

Asch not only turns Moses into a modern liberal, but rationalizes, cleans up, tones down and explains away all that is bothersome for a genteel and rationalistic, liberal, Jewish reader. All the plagues are given natural explanations:

It was quite natural that in the height of the summer, when the waters of the Nile had sunk low, fish should become swollen from the heat and their carcasses should float to the bank, giving out a poisonous stink. And the putrefaction of the fish had multiplied the frogs, turtles, and blood-worms. Now, when God destroyed the frogs, and they lay in heaps on the river banks, on the edges of the marshes and the water channels, it was natural that clouds of gnats should rise from them.²⁵³

The miracle of the manna is treated in the same manner, as a special extension of quite ordinary phenomenon:

When the mantle of dew had been licked up there was seen, covering all the rocky levels, a thin, white hoar. This hoar consisted of innumerable myriads of tiny, crystalline flowerets linked into each other like sugar crystals. The sunbeams broke against the flowerets, which dashed back the light,

so that the whole valley was one brilliant dazzle.

He, of course, knew what it was. How many times had he not gathered, among the clefts of the rocks, or from the milky cactus leaves, the floweret crystals, a mixture of insect deposit and the thick essence of the dew? Dried in the sun, then rubbed, they yielded a sticky mealiness which could sustain man's life in the desert.²⁵⁴

Not only the miracles are explained away but the brutality of the Hebrews as well. Thousands of Moabites and Amorites were not simply ruthlessly murdered, but only after the offer of friendship and peace had been rejected did Jehovah permit it as necessary and decent. And even then the command to fight is for a humane long-range goal, "so that the terror of Jehovah may fall on the others, and they will not dare to attack us."²⁵⁵

The irrational taboos of the Mosaic legislation would bother a modern reader such as a Reform Jew, so Asch graciously breaks into the narrative to allay our fears of some type of primitive superstition being connected with the man who forged the consciousness of a people:

But all these laws and regulations concerning diet and personal hygiene and public health had a more than temporary purpose in their effect on the character of the people, on its behavior and its psychic condition. The enunciation of the principle that every living creature belongs to God, that therefore one is forbidden to slaughter it merely in order to eat it; that it may be slaughtered only as a sacrifice to God, and its flesh enjoyed only under certain circumstances: all this infused into the Jewish people a humanitarian attitude toward God's creatures. The beast is God's; its blood may not be consumed, for the blood is the life, and life is God's... And until this day shehitah, the Hebrew mode of slaughter, is the most humanitarian way of killing an animal

for human consumption, for by shehitah the animal is dedicated to God, not to man.²⁵⁶

The peoples of Egypt and Canaan were incestuous and "from these practices degeneration resulted, and they brought forth cripples and witless creatures and all manner of monsters."²⁵⁷ Thus Moses introduced strict sexual prohibitions for the Israelites, including a law which forbid a husband to be with his wife during her menstrual period. Lest a traditionalist feel slighted, Asch tells us that these laws have "shone with the light of eternal significance"²⁵⁸ and "infused a strange freshness and beauty into Jewish life, like the winds laden with the odor of new blossoms blowing through the days of the Pentecost...and made the woman like the ripe grape filled with wine."²⁵⁹

Ritual is also rationalized, lest the modern Israeli and liberal or secular Jew find the narrative unappealing. The excessive Biblical narratives on ritual and sacrifice are either omitted or thrust entirely upon Aaron, so that Aaron becomes the priest and villain and Moses the prophet and hero. Moses objects to rituals of any form and refuses to join Aaron in their performance. Asch describes the sacrificial laws in some detail and immediately thereafter adds:

The cry of protest against the priests was later to be heard from the lips of the prophets, for the best sacrifice to Him was the humble and broken heart... God did not need the sacrifices, the priests and Levites did; and the sacrifices were brought for them, not for Him.²⁶⁰

Moses is an agitator and social revolutionary in this novel; he is made to appear like a character in a Victorian

social revolutionary's novel of the Fourth Estate. Moses disguised himself as an Israelite proletarian at a council for leaders led by Korah, he committed a "political" assassination when he murdered the Egyptian, and he added, almost as a demagogue, a monotheistic tinge to his propaganda-like speeches at Israelite secret meetings plotting the overthrow of the totalitarian enemy. Moses had a good teacher in his sister Miriam, who though rebuking him for neglecting his wife and child, taught him the art of working as a political activist:

Miriam was never still. She knew every one of the families; she visited them in their tents; she was familiar with all their struggles and needs and sorrows. Here she would help a mother conceal her little man-child, and then smuggle him past the guards and overseers to a place of security... It was from Miriam that Moses first learned of Egyptian savagery.²⁶¹

Moses and Aaron are continually contrasted in the story, Aaron always appearing black and Moses white. Aaron argued against Moses that the Golden Calf was a proper home for Israel's God, but the dispute pit only paganism against monotheism. The contrast is even clearer in this comparison:

Aaron was so absorbed in the maintaining of the living tradition of the patriarchs among the tribes, and in strengthening the hope of the impending redemption, that he lost sight of the individual living Hebrew... He was even of the opinion that as long as the slaves were in exile to the Egyptians, the exile had to be accepted for what it was.

But Moses, reared a freeman in Pharaoh's court, could not reconcile himself to the savagery of the slave regime. He perceived that, while his

brother continued to assert the tradition, and to prepare himself for the priesthood, the individual Hebrew was rotting away in the lime pits of Egypt.²⁶²

The contrast also highlights the concern of Moses for a pure democracy, while Aaron symbolizes on many occasions all that could oppose this goal. Offering something for everybody in this book, Asch appeals to the liberationist sentiments in America, i.e., liberate Eastern Europe from Communist influence, prevalent in particular among Roman Catholics:

Aaron raised his sons in the spirit of a hereditary priestly order. Nadab and Abihu saw themselves as being, after their father, the founders of a sacerdotal dynasty, and they gave evidence continually that they expected the Israelites to take upon themselves the new bondage, that of a priestly dynasty...

The ambition of Moses was not to seize and to hold power, to transmit power to his sons, to fasten a caste on his people...but to guide and direct his people toward the model of justice and integrity.²⁶³

Moses answered Egyptian, or modern day, totalitarianism with a concrete program of democracy and freedom, for no matter his artificiality in other areas--this was his authentic response to slavery and tyranny. Despite the pomp and pageantry surrounding the Exodus, Sinai, the Ten Commandments, and even the giving of representation to all the tribes, none can doubt the commitment of Moses and Asch to a vision of freedom. Probing beneath the cinematic melodrama of the endless moral conflicts, one cannot but feel that the patriotic democrat as well as the liberal religious or secular Jew

will find nothing objectionable in Moses' realization that:

...slavery to God liberated: the slave of Jehovah is a free man with a free will to serve God with all his heart, with all his soul, defiant of the hatred and cruelty of a whole world.²⁶⁴

Freed from ritual, ceremony and tyranny, Moses and the American Jew together can be:

"...the warriors of God, the defenders of His glory, the guardians of His trust, the supporters of the order He has created... It is not enough that you shall love with all your hearts the good and the just; you must hate with all your senses evil and injustice, till the day comes when these are wiped from the face of the earth and you become a people which by its moral life should be an example to all the peoples of the world."²⁶⁵

17. THE LAST DAYS OF SHYLOCK

The Last Days of Shylock²⁶⁶ by Ludwig Lewisohn is not simply an attempt to redress what the author felt was an ancient wrong done to Shylock by Shakespeare, but a reaction to the collective Jewish suffering in Renaissance Europe. Lewisohn's Shylock, the author's own invention, introduces us to a variety of little-known episodes in the suffering of the Jews while busily engaged with his own worries in Venice.

The vindictiveness of Shakespeare's Shylock is justified by Lewisohn by revealing what he has suffered, by making Antonio an active enemy, and by having Shylock only want to humiliate and not kill the Christian merchant. This Shylock, much more concerned with his daughter than his money, is ever noble and long-suffering. He is an aristocrat, an art and architecture connoisseur, an international banker, an Orthodox Jew with the learning of a rabbi, and a great philanthropist.

Our study will center on the activities of a major character in the novel, a friend of Shylock's, the Duke of Naxos or Joseph Nasi. Shylock escaped from Venice after his enforced baptism and journeyed to Constantinople, to Joseph Nasi. Joseph, who had wisely provided Selim II with funds while he was yet a crown-prince, was elevated to Duke and personal treasurer when the prince became king of the Ottoman

Empire.

Joseph Nasi is portrayed in this novel as an early Zionist, for he won from Suleiman and Selim II the promise of permission to rebuild Tiberias in Palestine:

"And I asked him for the city of Tiberias and for seven villages and for the lands round about in the land of Israel to be a country and a place of refuge and a land of their own for as many of our people as could dwell there. I dared not ask for Yerushalaim which Suleiman had caused to be surrounded with great new walls nor for Hebron nor even for the holy town of Safed. I asked for a ruined city and for villages in the sand of the hills and for forgotten lands."²⁶⁷

Some of the ecstasy felt by Jews all over the world when the news of the Balfour Declaration was released is perhaps voiced by Shylock as he surveyed the miracle of Jews rebuilding Zion now that Joseph Nasi had secured Tiberias for the Jews:

And there passed before him in the procession of memory all the Jews of all lands that he had seen: people from Holland and Germany and France and Poland and Hungary and the dominions of all kings and bishops and other potentates. And when their hearts were opened they had all said: L'shanah haba'a b'Yerushalaim! Next year in Jerusalem. Aye, this land was the Jews' land, to be redeemed by them today or in a thousand years, by men or by a Messiah.²⁶⁸

With permission granted, the modern method of economic independence Joseph had in mind is revealed:

"People cannot live on the stones of towers nor on trading with the Arabs. I have it in mind to bring to that country thousands of mulberry trees for the feeding of silkworms; we shall set up looms and teach the people to weave and perchance our silk will be as good as the silk of the loom of Lyons..."²⁶⁹

Not only was Joseph's economic approach precisely that

of the Yishuv leaders of this century, but the entire story of the attempt to rebuild Tiberias parallels the trials of the Zionists in the twentieth century, especially the 1920's.

Certainly an historic achievement of the Zionist movement was the ability of untrained Zionists to work farms in the midst of burning heat, malaria and primitive conditions and to become the nucleus of a Jewish agricultural class. The Jews brought into Tiberias by Joseph and Shylock were no better prepared to reorient their economic energies and patterns, yet:

The men of the Jewish pilgrims, though few had ever handled a pick or a spade before but had been peddlers or money-changers or students or leeches, joined in digging the pits for the walls about their city in their own land.²⁷⁰

The last of the major Aliyoth, the fourth, occurred shortly before Lewisohn began writing this novel. In this group were not the young idealists of the earlier emigrations but 30-35,000 poor refugees escaping from a variety of Polish anti-Semitic measures and outbreaks. This type of refugee, in contrast to the pioneer, is considered by Shylock as the first Sabbath descends upon Tiberias:

...after the day's work, men gathered in the house of study and peace began to descend upon the city and its people. And old men among them, whose feet had trod the paths of exile for many weary years, whose brows had been furrowed by the long shame of the yellow hat, whose breasts had been seared by the Jew's sign worn upon them, whose backs had been bent in unwilling obsequiousness to priest and knight and burgher--these old men grew clear of eye and certain of tread and with their pale hands planted seeds in the

holy soil and arose and gazed calmly at the horizon.²⁷¹

The Arab clan leaders in Palestine did not welcome the succession of Aliyoth waves into the land. Their dislike was at least partially economic, fearing the ideas which collective farming and free labor might put into the minds of the fellahin they dominated. It is also an economic objection which Emir Ahmed first presented to Shylock a few centuries before the first Aliyah:

Bedouins were pouring into the town...they carried naked swords and daggers at their belts and the sheichs assembled and with long strides made their way to the house of a rich Arab, wherein the Emir Ahmed and the officers of the Sultan had taken up their dwelling... The vein on Shylock's forehead swelled. Treachery was in the air. He turned to the Emir: "What seek these men?" The Emir's strangely golden eyes were cold. "From time immemorial their tribes have come hither in the spring-time for the grazing of their flocks. It is a right and a custom from of old. Now the villages are filled with Jews and the grazing places with the Jew's cattle and these poor men's flocks are like to die of starvation. They desire me to send the cry of their distress to the Commander of the Faithful. They ask: 'Is there still a Kaliph in Stamboul, or has the Jew Joseph Nassi dethroned and slain him?'"²⁷²

The reaction of the sixteenth century Arabs to the firman of Sulim II resembled the protestations of the twentieth century Arabs to the Balfour Declaration. The Emir Ahmed led the Arabs in the novel, the Emir Faisal the Arab protestations of this century, against Jewish immigration to Palestine. The Arab riots and murders of 1921 in Petach Tiqva, Rehovoth and Hadera, or the tragic raids and murders of August, 1929, undoubtedly produced situations no different from the riots and killings at Tiberias:

With desperate and astonished eyes Shylock and Rabbi Joseph looked at each other and as though drawn by a magician's spell, hastened to the walls abandoned by the workers. They stumbled over stones; they faltered into pits that had not yet been filled. They stopped suddenly and put their hands over their hearts. Four Jewish youths lay still beside their spades and trowels, stabbed in an hundred places there beside their work.²⁷³

Lewisohn, as others who followed the early Zionist struggle, saw the Jews of Palestine turn toward an activity generally unique to them--fighting. The nucleus of the future Israeli army, the Haganah, was just forming and the verbal attacks by men such as Bialik after the Jewish passivity during the Kishinev pogroms, would no longer be heard in reference to the Jews of Palestine. It was this momentous decision to which Lewisohn addresses himself through Shylock:

He dreamed a waking dream of a great, free Jewish folk, which would armour itself with strength and with valour and, if need were, with the sword, even like the Christian and the Moslem peoples, and defend its right and be revenged upon its foes. And in his waking dream he saw an army with banners come out of the land of Israel and take ship for Venice and harry the proud Republic and impose terms on the Signoria even to the giving up of the isle of Cyprus where, he had once heard, long ago in the far days of Rome, Jews had been so numerous and warlike that they rebelled and ruled the isle and had slain there thousands because the Emperor Hadrian had forbidden even the sign of the covenant in Palestine and had threatened to turn Yerushalaim into a Roman city, dedicated to the gods of Rome.²⁷⁴

The twentieth century Palestinian Arabs probably had national and religious as well as economic grievances against the Jews. They sensed the possibility of someday being completely engulfed numerically and what was worse, for an

illiterate, devout and superstitious peasantry, it would be by people of an alien religion. It was upon these fears that the greatest Arab nationalist of this period, the Mufti Haj Amin el Husseini, concentrated in appealing to the religious fanaticism of the fellahin.

The Mufti himself or one of his followers might have been Lewisohn's model for the sherif who arrived in Tiberias to stir hatred against the Jews among the Arab workers and populace:

...the free square in front of the mosque, where they sat down in a great semi-circle and listened to the harangue of an old man in a filthy white burnous and a turban dark with dirt who stretched his brown hands to the sky and whirled about on his bare feet and uttered strange cries and ululations... Foam began to spatter from the old Moslem's mouth; his eyes disappeared in his head, so that only the ghastly whites of them could be seen. But he kept speaking and crying and ululating and the Arabs in the circle round about him bent them to the earth and groaned and wept.²⁷⁵

The speech of the man, reported by Rabbi Joseph to Shylock as the latter knew no Arabic, played upon the religious fanaticism of the listeners:

"It is a sherif from the coast of Yemen," said Rabbi Joseph, "who has thrice made on foot the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina and Yerushalaim and the holy mount of Musa and there, in a cave of the Djebel Musa, he says, he found a prophetic parchment on which it is written in the speech of the times of the Prophet of God, that if ever the walls of the city of Tiberias be raised again, it will be for a sign that the religion of the Prophet will perish and that they who cause the walls to rise will be the blackest of sinners and the murderers of their faith."²⁷⁶

The propaganda worked, for the Arabs not only continued

their violence but refused to lift a hand to build the walls. Thus the dream of Joseph Nassi which Shylock tried to bring to fruition was shattered, for:

...at these walls the Jews also now worked no more. They had come with a great hope...now they retired to their huts and sat at their looms or went to the synagogue beside the lake, minded as though they were still in exile and happy only in the thought of the merit in the eternal world that belongs to whoever dies in the land.²⁷⁷

Lewisohn wrote these words at a time when the hopes of Zionism were not substantially much higher. Destroyed physically by the terror of 1929 and destroyed psychologically by the Shaw and Simpson Commissions which investigated the riots and absolved the Arab leaders from any connection with them, the Zionists saw their leader, Weizmann, resign as president of the World Zionist Organization. Shylock's problems were thus not unique, but typical of those facing "Builders of Zion" repeatedly. His labors failed and "his soul told him that he was not fated to see the landscape again;"²⁷⁸ the generation of Jews who suffered through the events of 1929 and 1930 were to be much more fortunate.

18. CONCLUSION

In this part of our study, we have attempted to suggest that historical fiction offers us remarkable insights into the contemporary context in which the authors live. The authors are less concerned with the specific historical period or personages they portray than they are with opening up in their readers new levels of awareness for living and understanding their own time.

Lion Feuchtwanger hoped that Jews living in Germany in the early 1930's would see the parallel and find some resources in Josephus for helping them to establish their place within German society. Thomas Mann responded to the Nazi control of his homeland by employing Joseph in Egypt to comment on Hitler and Nazi Germany; in Joseph The Provider, he was primarily interested in America's response to the depression both she and Germany faced. Jacob Picard, like Mann and Feuchtwanger, used an event in the past to reflect upon a problem of immediate concern for his people, the Jews of Germany in the 1930's. All three authors were using the same technique, disguising in historical fiction contemporary dilemmas and offering some solutions to contemporary problems.

The American novelists studied here used the same technique, although they responded to different events than the German authors did. Howard Fast disguised a contemporary and perhaps universal reaction to tyranny and injustice in

Moses, Prince of Egypt. Sholem Asch, in Moses, interpreted a biblical hero and biblical events in terms of the values, attitudes and prejudices currently held in the 1950's. Ludwig Lewisohn used The Last Days of Shylock to reflect on the events taking place in Europe and Palestine in the 1920's. Again, the personal and contemporary experiences of the authors permeate each of these works of historical fiction, and, we have argued, the reader learns more about contemporary history in good historical fiction than he does about the epoch in which the action of the story is laid.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER 1

1. Cecil Roth, History of the Jews, p. 180.
2. Solomon Grayzel, A History of the Jews, p. 341.
3. Simon Dubnow, An Outline of Jewish History, III, pp. 141-42.
4. B. Netanyahu, Don Isaac Abrabanel, p. 42.

CHAPTER 2

5. Lion Feuchtwanger, Raquel: The Jewess of Toledo (1956).
6. Ibid., pp. 9-10.
7. Ibid., p. 15.
8. Ibid., pp. 36-37.
9. Ibid., pp. 37-38.
10. Ibid., p. 38.
11. Ibid., p. 46.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., p. 99.
14. Ibid., p. 257.
15. Ibid., p. 99.
16. Ibid., pp. 104-5.
17. Ibid., p. 360.
18. Ibid., p. 311.
19. Ibn Verga, himself a victim of the expulsion from Spain in 1492, asked why the Jews are singled out by the nations of the world for punishment, and in answering his own question he suggested: Jewish arrogance, haughtiness, and pretensions to power (Solomon Ibn Verga, Shebet Jehudah, Narrative LXIV).
20. Feuchtwanger, Raquel, p. 50.
21. Ibid., p. 259.
22. Ibid., p. 353.
23. Ibid., p. 357.
24. Ibid., p. 358.
25. Ibid., p. 367.
26. Ibid., p. 430.

CHAPTER 3

27. Joanne Greenberg, The King's Persons (1963).
28. Ibid., p. 16.
29. Ibid., p. 125.
30. Ibid., p. 45.
31. Ibid., p. 29.
32. Ibid., p. 31.
33. Ibid., pp. 127-28.
34. Ibid., p. 133.
35. Ibid., p. 278.
36. Ibid., pp. 47-48.
37. Ibid., pp. 22-23.
38. Ibid., p. 108.
39. Ibid., p. 137.
40. Ibid., p. 106.
41. Ibid., p. 107.
42. Ibid., p. 126.
43. Ibid., pp. 52-53.
44. Ibid., p. 112.
45. Ibid., pp. 115-16.
46. Ibid., pp. 114, 16.
47. Ibid., p. 119.
48. Ibid., p. 124
49. Ibid., p. 168

50. Ibid., p. 197.
51. Ibid., p. 227.
52. Ibid., p. 138.
53. Ibid., p. 134.
54. Ibid., pp. 218-19.
55. Ibid., p. 129.
56. Ibid., p. 213.
57. Ibid., p. 277.

CHAPTER 4

58. Lion Feuchtwanger, The Ugly Duchess (1928).
59. Ibid., pp. 146-47.
60. Ibid., pp. 148-49.
61. Ibid., p. 149.
62. Ibid., p. 151.
63. Ibid., p. 167.
64. Ibid., pp. 170-71.
65. Ibid., p. 174.
66. Ibid., p. 175.
67. Ibid., pp. 176-78.
68. Ibid., p. 177.
69. Ibid., p. 179.
70. Ibid., p. 178.

CHAPTER 5.

71. Herman Kesten, Ferdinand and Isabella (1946).
72. Ibid., p. 18.
73. Ibid., p. 21.
74. Ibid., p. 198.
75. Ibid., pp. 243-44.
76. Ibid., pp. 261-62.
77. Ibid., p. 99.
78. Ibid., pp. 197.
79. Ibid., pp. 113-15.
80. Ibid., p. 213.
81. Ibid., p. 110.
82. Ibid., pp. 159-60.
83. Ibid., pp. 190-91.
84. Ibid., p. 200.
85. Ibid., p. 223.
86. Ibid., p. 249.
87. Ludwig Lewisohn, The Last Days of Shylock,
p. 127.
88. Kesten, pp. 233-34.
89. Ibid., p. 244.

CHAPTER 6

90. Sholem Asch, Kiddush Ha-Shem (1926).
91. Ibid., p. 5.
92. Ibid., pp. 6, 25, 27.
93. Ibid., p. 9.
94. Ibid., pp. 43-44.
95. Ibid., p. 73.
96. Ibid., p. 74.
97. Ibid., p. 7.
98. Ibid., p. 20.
99. Ibid., p. 130.
100. Ibid., pp. 180-81.
101. Ibid., pp. 194-96.

CHAPTER 7

- 102.. I . J. Singer, The Brothers Ashkenazi (1936).
103. Ibid., p. 5.
104. Ibid., p. 69.
105. Ibid., pp. 383-84.
106. Ibid., p. 242.
107. Ibid., p. 193.
108. Ibid., p. 157.
109. Ibid., pp. 159, 161.
110. Ibid., pp. 293-95.
111. Ibid., pp. 296-97.
112. Ibid., p. 316.
113. Ibid., pp. 319-20.
114. Ibid., p. 320.
115. Ibid., p. 324.
116. Ibid., pp. 355-56.
117. Ibid., p. 448.
118. Ibid., p. 519.
119. Ibid., pp. 474-75.
120. Ibid., p. 482.
121. Ibid., p. 484.
122. Ibid., p. 579.
123. Ibid., p. 622.
124. Ibid., p. 623.
125. Ibid.

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126. Bernard Malamud, The Fixer (1966).
127. Ibid., p. 32.
128. Ibid., p. 41.
129. Ibid., p. 56.
130. Ibid., pp. 205-6.
131. Ibid., p. 227.
132. Ibid., p. 274.
133. Ibid., p. 87.
134. Ibid., p. 307.
135. Ibid., p. 308.
136. Ibid.
137. Ibid., p. 309.
138. Ibid., pp. 309-10.
139. Ibid., p. 315 (underscoring my own).

CHAPTER 11

140. Lion Feuchtwanger, Josephus (1932): Hereafter referred to as Vol. I.

141. Lion Feuchtwanger, The Jew of Rome (1936): Hereafter referred to as Vol. II.

142. Lion Feuchtwanger, Josephus and the Emperor (1942): Hereafter referred to as Vol. III.

143. Vol. II, p. 64.

144. Vol. I, p. 4.

145. Vol. II, p. 90.

146. Vol. I, p. 498.

147. Ibid., p. 287.

148. Vol. II, pp. 84-85.

149. Ibid., pp. 329-30.

150. Ibid., p. 282.

151. Ibid., p. 565.

152. Vol. III, p. 303.

153. Vol. II, p. 165.

154. Vol. III, p. 21.

155. Vol. I, p. 296.

156. Vol. II, p. 515

157. Ibid., p. 372.

158. Vol. III, p. 445.

159. Vol. I, pp. 19-20.

160. Ibid., p. 20.

161. Ibid., p. 57.

162. Ibid., p. 284.
163. Ibid., p. 353.
164. Vol. III, p. 76.
165. Vol. I, pp. 288-89.
166. Vol. III, pp. 8-9.
167. Adolph Hitler, "Speech at Munich," March 15, 1936.
168. Louis P. Lochner, ed., The Goebbels Diaries, p. 200.
169. Feuchtwanger, Vol. III, p. 31.
170. Ibid.
171. Ibid., p. 32.
172. Alan Bullock, Hitler, A Study in Tyranny, p. 397.
173. Feuchtwanger, Vol. III, p. 199.
174. Ibid., pp. 32-33.
175. Ibid., p. 359.
176. Ibid., p. 365.
177. Vossische Zeitung, quoted in Marvin Lowenthal, The Jews of Germany, p. 372.
178. Feuchtwanger, Vol. I, pp. 6-7.
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182. Thomas Mann, Joseph in Egypt, 2 volumes (1935).
183. Mann, Joseph in Egypt, Vol. II, pp. 409-10.
184. Ibid., pp. 410-11.
185. Ibid., p. 424.
186. Mann, Joseph in Egypt, Vol. I, pp. 311-12.
187. Ibid., pp. 305-6.
188. Mann, Joseph in Egypt, Vol. II, p. 650.
189. Adolph Hitler, Mein Kampf, pp. 391-92.
190. Mann, Joseph in Egypt, Vol. II, pp. 650-51.
191. Ibid., p. 651.
192. Ibid., pp. 627-28.
193. Alan Bullock, p. 347.
194. Mann, Joseph in Egypt, Vol. II, p. 628.
195. Ibid., p. 632.
196. Mann, Joseph in Egypt, Vol. I, p. 196.
197. Ibid., p. 81.
198. Ibid., pp. 302-3.
199. Ibid., pp. 303-4.
200. Mann, Joseph in Egypt, Vol. II, p. 406.

CHAPTER 13

201. Thomas Mann, Joseph The Provider (1944).
202. "First Inaugural Address," March 4, 1933, quoted in Franklin D. Roosevelt, My Friends, p. 1.
203. Mann, Joseph the Provider, p. 181.
204. Ibid., p. 24.
205. Ibid., p. 57.
206. Ibid., pp. 218-19.
207. Ibid., p. 219.
208. Ibid., p. 248.
209. Ibid., p. 253.
210. Ibid., pp. 540-41.
211. Ibid., p. 249.
212. Ibid., pp. 238-39.
213. "Second Fireside Chat," May 7, 1933, quoted in Franklin D. Roosevelt, p. 13.
214. Mann, Joseph The Provider, p. 544.
215. Ibid., pp. 423-24.
216. "Second Fireside Chat," May 7, 1933, quoted in Franklin D. Roosevelt, pp. 13-14.
217. Mann, Joseph The Provider, p. 253.
218. Ibid., p. 255.
219. Ibid., pp. 536-37.
220. Ibid., p. 544.
221. Ibid., p. 545.
222. Lion Feuchtwanger, The House of Desdemona, p. 130.

CHAPTER 14

223. Jacob Picard, The Marked One (1956: First published in German, 1937).

224. Ibid., pp. 4-5.

225. Ibid., p. 5.

226. Ibid., p. 23.

227. Ibid., p. 28.

228. Ibid., p. 39.

229. Ibid., p. 40.

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230. Howard Fast, Moses, Prince of Egypt (1958).
231. Ibid., p. 260.
232. Alan Bullock, p. 353.
233. Ibid., p. 350.
234. Fast, Moses, p. 13.
235. Ibid., p. 20.
236. Ibid., p. 24.
237. Ibid., pp. 56-57.
238. Ibid., p. 57.
239. Ibid..
240. Ibid., pp. 120-21.
241. Ibid., p. 287.
242. Ibid., p. 218.
243. Ibid., p. 211.
244. Ibid., p. 284.
245. Ibid., pp. 295-96.

CHAPTER 16

246. Sholem Asch, Moses (1951).
247. Ibid., p. 19.
248. Ibid., p. 37.
249. Ibid., p. 96.
250. Ibid., p. 84.
251. Ibid., p. 341.
252. Ibid., p. 344.
253. Ibid., pp. 135-36.
254. Ibid., p. 195.
255. Ibid., p. 419.
256. Ibid., p. 301.
257. Ibid., p. 303.
258. Ibid., p. 302.
259. Ibid., pp. 304-5.
260. Ibid., pp. 298-99.
261. Ibid., p. 48.
262. Ibid., p. 46.
263. Ibid., pp. 216-17.
264. Ibid., p. 326.
265. Ibid., pp. 212-13.

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266. Ludwig Lewisohn, The Last Days of Shylock (1931).
267. Ibid., p. 131.
268. Ibid., p. 159.
269. Ibid., pp. 132-33.
270. Ibid., pp. 147-48.
271. Ibid., p. 149.
272. Ibid., pp. 150-51.
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