

‘High-minded culture’ is now rife with antisemitism

High-minded well-known literary types have the chattering classes in thrall with Jew hatred which has, octopus-like, permeated every nook and cranny of what was formerly considered “high” culture.

by Phyllis Chesler



Scene from *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947)

People say that it is usually calm before a storm but I feel uneasy, unbalanced, uprooted, and set adrift in a dangerously familiar sea.

An American rabbi put it this way: “I never thought it could happen here. The Pittsburgh shooting made me angry. The San Diego shooting made me afraid.”

Wherever I turn, Israel and the Jews are being falsely accused, defamed, and attacked. Some of us cover the campuses, others cover the media, the internet, national and

international politics, the Islamic world, and increasingly, the local attacks on American Jews who are visibly Jewish.

Tragically, those American Jews who are not, have not sprung to the defense of the haredi Jews who are being thrown to the ground and pummeled by young men, usually men of color; or shot down on the Sabbath while at prayer by white supremacists.

As for myself? I cover what high-minded literary types as well as feminists have to say. Doing so never fails to break my heart or strengthen my resolve. Jew hatred has, octopus-like, permeated every nook and cranny of what was formerly considered “high” culture.

The *London Review of Books* (LRB) and the *New York Review of Books* (NYRB) almost always have at least one anti-Israel/pro-Palestine piece. Here’s something [The Many Lives of Palestine](#),” the reviewer, G.W. Bowersock, Professor Emeritus of Ancient History at the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton, damns the Balfour Declaration, insists on the absolutely false statement that an “ancient Palestine” once existed and that it “embraced some of the old territory of the Phoenicians.” Bowersock faults Masalha for not focusing more on the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish, “the truly great poet of the Palestinian people...(and from whose poetry) one learns what it meant, and still means, to be a Palestinian with cultural roots that reach far back in time.”

Bowersock condemns the “appropriation of Arabic place names after 1948” (actually mostly biblical) and finally praises Masalha for “striving to keep alight the flame of Palestinian culture that despite every attempt to snuff it out, still burns brightly in the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish and in the world he never left behind.”

My point: These boldly biased reviewers are both Mandarins, and are the gate-keepers of High Culture. Although that

Culture now traffics in gutter “tropes,” the professional chattering classes remain in their thrall.

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