

The Infamous/Famous Literary Jew Haters

By Phyllis Chesler

Group Think Among the Glitterati and their wannabees

After much fanfare, on 10/28, the infamous letter with 400 signatories was finally published. These literary lights announced their own peculiar boycott of their Israeli counterparts. It is titled: "Refusing Complicity in Israel's Literary Institutions and it has been translated into Arabic, Korean, Spanish, Italian, German, and French—but apparently, not into Hebrew.

Such a letter is not surprising—although it is disgusting, shameful, and frankly, both tedious and heartbreaking.

From my point of view, it's just one more virtue-signaling "woke" letter. Like Iran's Hamas, Hezbollah, and Houthi missiles, this non-stop cultural bombardment of the only Jewish and democratic country in the region, continues on and on.

An author and an artist can be talented and prominent—she may even have won a Booker Prize, (Arundhati Roy), be a Nobel Laureate, (Annie Ernaux), a Pulitzer Prize awardee, (Jhumpa Lahiri), and they may still harbor the same vulgar and irrational prejudices as anyone else. Richly rewarded for their anti-Zionist politics, Jewish authors (Judith Butler, Marilyn Hacker, Naomi Klein, Jacqueline Rose, Sarah Schulman), also signed right on.

Shame on them for falling for the lethal and completely baseless propaganda.

These signatories state that Israel has "occupied" another

peoples' land, has "displaced," and "ethnically cleansed" those people and, in so doing, presides over an "apartheid" nation state. In their view, Israel, not Iran or Hamas, has made "Gaza unlivable." They cite the numbers spoon-fed to them by Hamas in terms of the number of Palestinians killed since October, 2023, and insist that "culture has played an integral role in normalizing these injustices."

Their conclusion? They cannot and "will not work" with "Israeli cultural institutions..including publishers, festivals, literary agencies, and publications."

And thus, with a single pen stroke they think they've slain the imaginary giant.

What, if anything, do these signatories have in common with each other? I'm not sure but I note that many of the signatories are self-identified and identified as socialists, communists, immigrants, and as opposed to racism, colonialism, and imperialism—but only as it has been practiced by Western countries.. A number live in the UK, many more bear Arab and Muslim names, and were born in the global South.

They are all "woke" left-wingers, conformists, cowards, ignorant about the issues they presume to confront. At this time, they may be embraced by Western publishers, reviewers, festival organizers, and prize-givers for no better reason. As we've seen, publishers in America, Europe, and Canada are increasingly afraid to publish authors whose views about Israel, Islam, and Palestine are not politically correct enough.

A campaign to have others sign a letter is not a well thought out argument. It is gang, horde, and tribal group-think. But the fact that the lies they believe have gathered steam among the glitterati and the wannabee glitteratis is significant,

In 2003, I wrote a piece about a prominent Swedish filmmaker,

who directed a uniquely powerful film which exposed and opposed sex trafficking. Lukas Moodysson had the film, titled "Lilya 4-ever," shown all over the world, (wherever brothels and pimps flourished), but refused to allow an anti-trafficking group in Israel, Machon Toda'a, an Awareness Center, to show it even once at their conference.

Moodysson enacted his own personal boycott against all Israelis, even those whose views he shared. We got him to change his mind. Both my column and that by a Swedist journalist got his attention. He allowed the film to be shown but only once and only if they would announce that the filmmaker opposes Israeli policies.

Here's what the late Jose Saramago, a celebrated Portuguese Nobel Laureate in Literature, had to say about the Jews.

"Intoxicated mentally by the messianic dream of a Greater Israel which will finally achieve the expansionist dreams of the most radical Zionism contaminated by the monstrous and rooted 'certitude' that in this catastrophic and absurd world there exists a people chosen by God...that any suffering that has been inflicted, or is being inflicted, or will be inflicted on everyone else, especially the Palestinians, will always be inferior to that which they themselves suffered in the Holocaust, the Jews endlessly scratch their own wound to keep it bleeding, to make it incurable, and they show it to the world as if it were a banner."

He has condemned Judaism as a faith, and Judaism as a culture, a race, and a political entity. Jews disgust and enrage him. Saramago is an antisemite.

But so are T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound whose great literary reputations remain intact. So what if Eliot wrote "Gerontion," which contains these lines:

"My house is a decayed house
And the Jew squats on the window sill, the owner."

Pound, a great poet also broadcast anti-Ally and antisemitic programs in which he said things like this: "You have got to learn a little, at least a little, about the history of your allies. About Jew-ruined England. About the wreckage of France, wrecked under yid control. Lousy with kikes."

When Pound was psychiatrically institutionalized he blamed it on "the kikes."

The question of whether an author's racism or sexism means that their work should be banned is not my idea. Here's what I think: Eliot's and Pound's Jew-hatred is very much alive in these famous/infamous literary signatories who follow in their wake.

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