

gender & Judaism

in three popular texts



1. A Serious Man

the title is, first, for the man on the poster. for Job's comic epigone: whose pain collects in query lines high in the forehead; whose tension shows in his ridiculous lordosis at the chalkboard.

i can't recall him smiling - maybe when he's high? a time or two he's manic. gets very into Schrodinger Cat. his students follow mutely, then he fizzles.

a **troubled** man, at least - a victim of hauntings, of spirits who admonish him. who enter the frame, hover in his office doorway. come into his kitchen on a weekday eve, find him in his over-lit dreamspace.

A Serious Man is a parade of jewish archetypes. its schema shown by title card:

an order of Rabbis. we're moving thru the patriline, coming to the Elder-Prime.

strike the 'A', the title universalizes: **Serious Men**. a tagline for the Tanakh, for a monograph on Tragedy.

Serious Men, the moniker disperses: from son to father, back along the lineage.

serious is a so-so word for that aspect of self that Yahweh cannot take from Job. what loss can only strengthen.

seriousness & **the cogito**'s certainty: affirmed in negation, as all else falls away from me.

Tragedy, the serious genre. whose virtues osmose to audience: who come into the daylight from the theatre's dark, enobled & troubled.

Judith wants a Get. 'you always act SO surprised. i **begged** you to see the Rabbi.' Judith means Jewish and she sums a

people, sums at least a sisterhood.

and what is her complaint? the standard of a wife before the Second Wave: that **you don't listen**. it's an empty complaint, circular:

HIM: yes, but what is *wrong*?

HER: that you don't *listen*.

HIM: but what is it you're *saying*?

HER: that things are not *okay*.

go see Rabbi Marshak! you have to fix the aerial! we have to get a Get! all these things that Larry has to do, and why?

his life is undone - and what could be wrong with the Levovs? **American Pastoral** ends on the rhetorical. the Book of Job begins with an answer: 'absolutely nothing'. an upright man, he lives by the law of his fathers.

yet restore the hebrew, reduce it, a little: 'servant' & 'herd' mean **slave** and so the answer is, comically - everything:

here is Job, a master of slaves. and what could be wrong?

this film about fathers opens with a woman's song. begins like Genesis, in masculine mindspace. but the ear is a womb, and the Inner is the feminine.



What would it mean to seduce through song? Was the threat of song not precisely that it assailed the passerby through the ear, reducing his body to an open orifice, impregnated by whatever calls? In letting that viscous sweetness penetrate would not the man become, in effect, a woman?¹

the Highest of the High is a dyad, at least. is singer & song, song & listener. is Rabbi's inner sanctum and his Secretary, guarding him.

he's thinking she says, turning men away. her voice is mannish; his is feeble, childish.

¹ Rebecca Comay, **Adorno's Siren Song**. New German Critique, Autumn 2000: Dialectic of Enlightenment.

go see rabbi marshak! come into the chamber of the hidden god: shake him from his reveries & speculations.

he's deep in his space, deep in his People's history. he's end of a gauntlet, thru the detritus of Natural History, the dessicated samples in bell jars, a da Vinci log of prototypes. high on the wall, an Abraham stricken in oilpaint.

& there on his desk is a Radio, unbidden. he's a scholar & spurns all disturbance. his self-containment puts to shame the lounging aesthetes and overcoiffed smoothies yet she's found her way in, deep into his workspace & he's swooning to her song, returning to his eariler memories.

Serious Men is the section of **Mating** she finds him in. where courtship begins.

Exactly what is it I enjoy about situations like finding myself the only or almost the only woman in a roomful of men trying to

ignore me? They energize me to no end.²

Denoon, too, is back of room & its master. a seated scholar, the end of a gauntlet: a gauntlet of his Priors she's worked her way thru, boys & incomplete men.

Larry won't meet Marshak but the radio will: a trojan earworm straight unto the inner sanctum.

Marshak is a scholar, for he cites the song's full writing staff. complicates my early thesis, balances my reading of The Chalice & the Blade. i would have said this movie shows us Yahweh owes it all to a Woman; and curse the Kurgan Waves, all the cattle-driving psychopaths. fuck the Marines & Bikers for Trump, the wall of meat at the Tyrant's induction. i was gonna score with lovely Asherah, the fat white rabbit, high on her embankment by the GO tracks: who shakes her pretty head when i bring her TREATS, toss her apples & a GLAD bag full of alfalfa, over the barbwire fence.

down by the GO tracks, over the barbwire

² **Mating**, by Norman Rush.

fence: *mother, i said, they made you into chattel. seven thousand years of evil Yaldaboath, that bearded fraud we'll soon unmask and free you from -*

but Marshak is a scholar, and a writers' team, mostly men, wrote the song.

in the beginning, a song was playing already. a willful voice came thru the void:

*when the truth is found to be lies
and all the hope within you dies*

Danny & Grace are a Jaynesian dyad. her song is heard as secret command, within: where the moreh's horky recitations cannot reach.



does any man *like* Grace Slick? her voice is strong, she's haranguing him. she's a

provocation, tries to take over the rock band.

we follow from his inner ear: down the wire, slow & close, to the source: whose seizure by the moreh starts a second film, of scenes off-screen: of a radio's movement, deeper into the Temple.

her voice is small & tinny, she's been miniaturized. like Leia's ghostly hologram. she's woven in the Matrix now. wavers & has static but a personhood comes thru, enters the Temple.

a serious man is a red-pilled seducer who gives her what she wants, his disinterest. resists her fits & whims. leaves her to her faggy friends & fashions. he's banished the frivolous, met her changeful mood with stolid constancy.

it's dictum prime of inner Game, of D.C. Roissy: always be above it. Yahweh's remove is a drawn-on seduction. all god's Game: the Python slain, incited sons who rip her from the Temple.

It's the classic dick-move, implacable Denial: mom, what mom? this is the scheme of a serious man, who games the Queen of Heaven³ : to break her idols, erase her from racial memory - a lie so hard, a repression so deep, an anamnesis trigger at the end of time is needed: a voice to find it's way into the ear & call us back, to FIND SOMEBODY TO LOVE.

he'd long ago withdrawn into austere fraternities. he went away for war, but he found her there, hanging round the warcamp fawning.

he entered his retirement, sought his peace in learning but she's waiting at his office door, early as always for Office Hours.

how to compete, o how to compete,
with the Scottish Mick Jagger?

-i wrote Roissy

Roissy's answer, twenty days later: **BE HER DADDY.**

³ i'm drawing here from William Dever, **Did God Have a Wife?** [Eerdmans, 2008]

the title is for rival Sy she's keening in the Temple for. whose eulogy, given by the second Rabbi, steals Larry's dignity.

Sy the smoothy, the sly oenophile - is serious. seduction is serious, for everything depends on it. his light-stepping game, seeking to please, brings him to war, historically. wherever he wanders he's facing reprisals from brothers, from rivals.

Chesterton is right: the Medieval Romance was right: to love & fight are much the same, modes enwound that call for a Behaviourist criterion: **if you love, you'd fight for, die for.**

& who's more serious than dream-Sy, the true Sy? the Dead are freed from the lies of the living. they come to us transfigured and uncanny. in Nate Fisher's dying dream, David is a dharma bum, a toking surfer Nate cracks up with, relieved of life's strictures.

this is so fuckin weird! i had this whole other idea of you like i really thought you were this whole completely other person!

'see the Rabbi'. nightmare-Sy holds him in a death-hug and insists. Nate, too, is called to

his Father, home from "banging waitresses" in Seattle. home to heal his family and continue the line. to learn his father's practice, of ferrying souls thru death.

thru five Seasons, his gravitas increases yet his own death brings him lightness & release.

tell her we're sorry for Isaac & for Iphigenia, but

never tell them, Jamukha, brother, we went to war for a woman!

for oil, land, for cattle - for what? the bulls, we killed, and kept the calving females for ourselves.

*when the truth is found to be lies
and all the hope within you dies,*

then you're Arthur, the unmarried brother. the sad extreme of remove from women. lost in sordid buggery & math-autism.

the classroom rabbi's putting girls to sleep. and husbands at home wonder: why is she unhappy?

radio & chalice form a trumpet:



the chalice is a gift from the synagogue Sisters. it sings out clear when he pulls it from the Second Rabbi's hand, like blade from scabbard.

when Marshak cites The Airplane: mom and dad reconcile, smile again.

2. The Harbors of the Moon

Installment One of **An American Dream**

Deborah's mouth was wide, in life, and deep in death. he sees therein a distant, ruby glimmer: his own sweet Hell, a bijou City full of savage pleasures.

sally is a rush from a defensive hold: that starts his Dream, his nightmare march to high and royal Satan.

she is hell, a hell within he enters by ascending to her velvet room & murdering her.

this is her pleasure, her blood under pressure. **killing can never be unsexual.**

her face, in death, returns him to the war: a young mouth, collapsing round his incoming bullet. made into the sucking hole it always was, a funnel.

he whimpered *mutter*, one yelp from the first memory of the womb, and down he went into his own blood. just in time, timed like the interval in a shooting gallery, for the next was up, his hole-mate: a hard-avenging spectre with a pistol in his hand and one arm off, blown off

Mailer, here, is Death unseen, and Rojack is his Bringer. Mailer is the marksman, here, mowing down his rival post-war writers.

then the barrel of my carbine swung around like a long, fine antenna and pointed itself at the machine gun hole on my right

like rifleman, like writer: some higher will is working thru. Mailer, here, is Hesiod by Gustave Moreau, a receiver-ecstatic.

Capote's famous quip turns to praise: Mailer is **a typist**, is his words' own entranced amanuensis.

whap went my carbine and the hole was in his heart, and he folded back the long arm with the pistol: back across his chest to cover his new hole, and he went down straight, with a clown's deep gloom as if he were sliding down a long, thin pipe.

Mailer gives as good as Jean Genet: he sets his soldiers playing out their vicious game. his killing is lovely as gypsy Sicaari, as the Aryan demon Blicero.

Mailer is gay: a taunt he stabbed his wife in 1960 for.

Mailer got mean with **a physical coward**

who'd panned **An American Dream**.⁴ his parting remark from a small soirée for Claus von Bülow, yanking the Mrs. in tow was **what a bore - i thought we were dining with an actual wife-killer.**

Mailer self-describes: he is Rojack, who strangles his ex, grabs her rouging neck and knows that **killing can never be unsexual.**

killing can never be unsexual: he's obfuscating, double-negating. is in denial re those four young Germans. what secure man says **i'm not unsexual?**

Mailer came at Gore Vidal on the Dick Cavett Show. he feuded with Capote, was always picking fights with homos, why? with William F. Buckley, James Baldwin. he wants to fight, but why so often gay writers?

the rectal depths of male desire open to the death-wish, into suicide. Mailer's on a small top shelf of literature sourced in the anus: there with D.H. Lawrence, he's New Jersey's own Genet.

⁴ a story told in **Advertisements for Myself**

in weakening age he'll declare his love for **The Sopranos**. for tough guys bonding, spit-roasting strippers in the office.

The Sopranos sounds like a special on American Songhall. is a doc on Broadway divas and it modulates to **soap opera**, sonically.

vanity is homo, loves the self, loves **the same**.

it lets in love of one's rivals: for vanity is love of self, of the same - so lets in parallel selves.

he's going after Tolstoy in his small, punchy way. he's taking Dostoevsky on, Zola on, the young reporter Hemmingway. he, too, can type all night, has staying power.

But while Hazlitt ends by celebrating the ephemeral achievement of both the boxing match and his essay, Mailer wants more, nothing less in fact than the restoration of the title "champ among writers". *The Fight* plays with various versions of magical thinking, but all are designed to the same end - "the powers of regeneration in an artist".⁵

⁵ Kasia Boddy, 'Norman Mailer: A Boxing Life'
https://www.opendemocracy.net/article/norman_mailer_a_boxing_life

Jesus gives **a sign**, he writes in the sand.

i see him doodling, paring his nails - but Sampat advises that the Greek, here, is **kategraphen**, 'writing down'.

guess, we may, at *what* he wrote, but all we're told is *that* he.

so well writ, this scene in John, i get the sceptics: it seems an Insert, scripted, yes - by *whom*?

3. the pericope adulterae

he's **writing script**, the Script here calls for **Jesus writing script**.

he's writing script **because** it is written in Numbers; or so it is in Nazaroo's theory:

her guilt or innocence shall be shown by
a sign from the Lord in the Temple⁶

all we're told is **that** he wrote - and so fulfills the Numbers prophecy.

our neighbor's friend has a neighbour who goes by **Nazaroo**, the Nazarene. this is his

⁶ <http://textualcriticism.scienceontheweb.net>

paraphrase of prophecy.

without two witnesses, the woman's case overpasses the courts, and must come to the High Priest for judgement.

the woman, that is, can only be judged **under Numbers 5:11-31.**

so the Pharisees imply, conscious or not, that Jesus **is** the High Priest? the one whom they bring the woman before?

far, far more, says the Naz! the Accused shall be presented, *by the priest, in the Temple, before the LORD God of Israel:*

the Pharisees, to their horror, have inadvertantly testified that **Jesus is the Lord God of Israel** publicly, before the entire crowd.

these accusers fit the demographic target of Matthew 12:39, where Jesus says:

an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.

yet then he says, and the Naz passes over:

and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.

maybe disregard, here, Matthew 12:39.

or **the prophet Jonas** is Jesus subsumed in the bowels of earth, gone three days.

or **sign of Jonas** is sign of the prophet John / as said in the Johannine text.

the Pericope describes, Sampat advises, *not* Priests in the Temple: but Pharisees & scribes, in the Outer Court.

mediator Jews, advocates of Mosaic law, of their one true god, hmm -

'priests', i say - close enough.

so well writ, this scene in John, i get the sceptics: it seems an Insert, scripted, yes - by *whom?*

Jesus writes in the sand. a second writer wrote the Scene, and god himself is author of Semitic history.

or, the Three are One!