

Michael R. Marrus, *The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial, 1945-46: A Documentary History*

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Biography

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Abstract

In my review of Michael R. Marrus's *The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial, 1945-46: A Documentary History*, I focus on Marrus's organization and techniques. I particularly concentrate on his skillful excerpting of historical documents and his presentation of impartiality. I conclude that his text is a valuable contribution to the discussion on World War II and the Jewish Holocaust.

Key Words

World War II, Holocaust, Nazi Germany, Nuremberg, Jews, Anti-Semitism, War, Trial, War Crimes.

THE HORRORS OF World War II, and particularly those of the Jewish Holocaust, have held a prominent position in the collective consciousness of the Western world since their occurrences more than fifty years ago. Countless books and films have been written and produced and hoards of school lessons have been taught on this intriguing, albeit gruesome, topic. Politicians and

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philosophers alike have debated the causes and the significances of the German Nazis' hatred for and calculated extermination of the Jewish people during this period in history. However, one aspect of World War II is frequently forgotten or dismissed. Curiously, we don't often discuss the legal process through which the opponents of Nazi Germany went in order to reconcile themselves to the evil of the Holocaust—namely, the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial, the international trial of twenty-one of the most powerful Nazis.

Fortunately, Michael R. Marrus, a historian at University of Toronto, attends to this largely ignored subject in *The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial, 1945-46: A Documentary History*, published in 1997 as volume of the Bedford Series in History and Culture. In keeping with the purpose and organization of the Bedford Series, Marrus uses excerpts of various historical documents to re-create and illuminate the past. Also according to the standards set by the Bedford Series, Marrus aims to keep “the volume of reading within the span of one weekly assignment in a college class” (vi). Thus, he intends for his work to serve as a fairly objective introduction to an extremely political and complicated topic.

Marrus begins his discussion of the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial by explaining the historical precedents for the trial and its organization by Allied leaders. Significantly, he cites the 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact, which deems war illegal and is signed by fifteen countries, including Germany (14-5). He goes on to clarify that this document later becomes “the formal, juridical basis by which Nazi aggression could be condemned” (15). Marrus also includes United States memorandums outlining ideas for how a war crimes trial should be organized and run, including Cordell Hull, Henry L. Stimson, and James Forrestal's “Draft Memorandum for the President” (28-9). This document proposes that the Nuremberg prosecutors use the theory of conspiracy to prove the defendants guilty of waging war and committing premeditated crimes against humanity.

Throughout the middle section of the text, Marrus describes the Nuremberg trial in great detail. He includes a diagram of the court room and several photographs of the trial. He explains how the prosecution, including representatives from the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union, divide their case:

The Americans would prepare their case against the Nazi organizations as well as the general conspiracy and the crimes against peace; the British would focus on the latter, outlining the breaches of specific treaties as well as crimes on the high seas; the French would present war crimes and crimes against humanity in the West; and the Soviets would do the same for Eastern Europe (79).

Although he includes a few graphic testimonies on the horrific incidents of the Holocaust, for example Marie Claude Vaillant-Couturier's heart-wrenching "Testimony on the Gassing at Auschwitz" (155-7), Marrus does not focus excessively on this aspect of the World War II ordeal. Instead, he concentrates on the legal procedures and strategic techniques that the Nuremberg prosecution and defense lawyers utilized throughout the trial. For instance, Marrus includes an excerpt of Robert H. Jackson's speech "On the Guilt of the Leader and His Followers" in order to demonstrate the prosecution lawyer's attempt to persuade the trial judges that not only is Hitler himself guilty for the crimes of the German Reich, but that his Nazi followers must be held accountable for their personal acts during Hitler's reign as well (183-4).

Finally, Marrus discusses the conclusion of the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial and its significance as a legal precedent. He includes excerpts from a few of the defendants' final statements and the court's judgments. Marrus gives voice to both champions and critics of the trial, incorporating Henry L. Stimson's laudatory article "Nuremberg: Landmark in Law" (243-5) and Otto Kranzbuhler's "Challenge to the Nuremberg Procedures" (248-50). Marrus himself, though, makes few conclusions about the trial except the following:

At its best moments, Nuremberg set an example for a kind of historical judgement—impartial, but not necessarily dispassionate; fair-minded, but not without moral compass; searching in its quest for truth, which recognizing the formal limitations that attend to the endeavor in an adversary proceeding. Nuremberg was not perfect, by any means, and it is possible to believe that its warts and blemished—or even its structural faults—may be the most important things to discuss today (254).

As appendices to his work, Marrus includes a chronology of events related to the Nuremberg Trial, briefly describes each of the defendants and their fates, and includes a thorough bibliography on the subject.

Marrus' great strength is in his excerpting from historical documents. He sets up each of his excerpts by commenting on its intended audience and purpose but expertly avoids summarizing its content. In this way, he strikes a skillful balance between documentation and commentary and allows the readers to determine each excerpt's meaning for themselves. Furthermore, Marrus adjusts the lengths of his excerpts according to their significance to the Nuremberg trial. For example, while most of his excerpts do not exceed two pages, "International Military Tribunal," the excerpt from the indictment of the Nazi defendants, occupies over thirteen pages in the book (57-70). Perhaps most endearingly, Marrus also chooses to include a few excerpts from personal, more obscure documents rather than sticking strictly to

legal or political documents. He incorporates Winston S. Churchill's "An Exchange with Roosevelt and Stalin at Teheran," for instance, which recounts Churchill's reaction of personal offense at Stalin's suggestion that all the Nazi's must be routinely shot (22-3). With excerpts like this one, Marrus illuminates historical personalities, such as Churchill's and Stalin's, in a way that makes the story of the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial come alive.

Another of Marrus's assets is his willingness to address the politically complicated issues involved with the Nuremberg trial. Although he clearly approaches his topic from an American perspective (more of his excerpts are from United States documents than documents of any other national origin, and he focuses predominantly on the actions of the Americans involved with the trial), Marrus is not afraid to muddy the political waters by suggesting discrepancies and flaws in the Allied prosecution's tactics. The American's theory of general conspiracy, for instance, results in little more than "distortion and exaggeration" during the trial (127). According to Marrus, the prosecution has great difficulty proving "a clearly articulated Nazi plan for aggression" (127). Also, Marrus points out that the French avoid directly discussing Jewish persecution partially due to their own national history of anti-Semitism (192). Most obviously, the Allied leaders at the Nuremberg trial choose to ignore the Soviet Union's own partnership with Nazi Germany in the early years of the war. In his discussion of the final judgment of the trial, Marrus mentions that the Allies punish the German leaders for their aggression toward Poland "omitting reference to the Nazi-Soviet pact or the Soviet attack on that country" (227). In these ways, Marrus attempts, with mostly success, to relate his historical account of the Nuremberg trial fairly and impartially.

With his text *The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial, 1945-46: A Documentary History*, Michael R. Marrus adds a new dimension to the ongoing discussion of World War II and the Jewish Holocaust. His study presents valuable historical evidence regarding the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial—the method through which the Allied countries came to a sort of reconciliation with the shocking incidents of the war. Perhaps like other strong historical texts, however, Marrus's book raises more questions than it answers. At its conclusion, we remain slightly baffled. Even the testimonies from German leaders that Marrus includes fail to fully answer for the horror of the war and the utterly inhumane treatment of the Jews. Thus, just as the Western world's fascination with World War II did not end with the Nuremberg trial, neither will it end with this book.

Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died That Night: A South African Story of Forgiveness.*

Amos Friedland

A HUMAN BEING Died That Night recounts a series of meetings between the author, a clinical psychologist; and Eugene de Kock (a.k.a. “Prime Evil”), the former head of “covert operations” in Apartheid South Africa, and a man responsible for numerous brutal murders, tortures, and “disappearances.” The account of these meetings open on to a series of reflections concerning the possibilities of, the conditions for, and the limits to forgiveness: “[L]essons from the TRC proceedings . . . can help us chart a path along which forgiveness may occur, as well as the conditions that make it difficult, or even morally inappropriate, to forgive” (125). They also raise the abyssal question of human evil, of whether there is an evil beyond forgiveness.

Early on in this book, Gobodo-Madikizela begins by reflecting on the “frightening fact” that “good and evil exist in our lives, and that evil, like good, is always a possibility” (34). This co-existence is not only external, but internal, as a permanent possibility: good *and* evil are always possibilities of every human being, including oneself:

Connecting on a human level with a monster therefore comes to be a profoundly frightening prospect, for ultimately, it forces us to confront the potential for evil within ourselves. Compassion towards and hence forgiveness of people who have left a

gruesome trail in their wake in effect brings “innocent” victims and wicked men together to share at a single common table of humanity, and that prospect is unpalatable. (123)¹

This uncomfortable moral proximity is made tangible and actual at one moment during an interview when Gobodo-Madikizela spontaneously reaches out her hand and touches the hand of de Kock. His pain in recounting his crimes is palpable to her, and she reaches instinctively. Later, he tells her that she touched his “trigger hand” – the hand that committed so many murders. In this book, forgiveness and the encounter with extreme evil are treated not only in the abstract; the extreme visceral response to touching this “trigger hand” is vital to the author’s reflection on these themes (she not only recoils, but the next day awakens with a temporarily paralyzed hand).

The specific encounter with de Kock, which makes the plethora of issues surrounding forgiveness palpably present, serves as an entryway for Gobodo-Madikizela’s broader reflections on forgiveness – reflections which, though philosophical at times, never lose their connection with their original source: “Philosophical questions can and should give way and be subsumed to *human* questions, for in the end we are a society of people and not ideas, a fragile web of interdependent humans, not stances” (125). Gobodo-Madikizela presents these reflections in her last chapter, as a kind of “apology” for forgiveness, a defense case against possible objections to the TRC project, or similar reconciliation projects. Straightaway she declares:

Although forgiveness is often regarded as an expression of weakness, the decision to forgive can paradoxically elevate a victim to a position of strength . . . In this sense, then, forgiveness is a kind of revenge, but revenge enacted at a rarified level. . . . [F]orgiveness does not overlook the deed: it rises above it. “This is what it means to be human,” it says. “I cannot and will not return the evil you inflicted upon me.” And that is the victim’s triumph. (117)

Gobodo-Madikizela argues (or demonstrates) that the full process of forgiveness is a multi-layered process of “rehumanization.” The victim has been dehumanized in the acts perpetrated against her, both objectively, and also in the mind of the perpetrator (so that he can

¹ There is here contained the meaning behind the saying, “There but for the grace of God, go I” what some Hegelian commentators call “logical forgiveness,” which extends forgiveness beyond the personal face-to-face into the communal. Cf. H. S. Harris, *Hegel’s Ladder* (2 vols.), Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997: “[W]e are dealing with a *logical* forgiveness, exchanged between the agent and the observer, for the inevitable one-sidedness of being agent and observer. . . . [I]t becomes more accurate to say . . . that one becomes ‘very indulgent,’ than that one ‘pardon.’ For one knows one is not in a position to pardon. ‘There but for the grace of God, go I’ is what one says at best; and often only, ‘I am glad it was not me who had to act.’” (Vol. 2: 503)

effectively carry out his acts). If the perpetrator confesses, apologizes, and demonstrates significant and genuine remorse and regret, he in a sense turns back time. This does *not* mean that he undoes the deed. It means that, retroactively, he acknowledges that his victim *was* a human being (and, if the victim is still alive, that the victim facing him *is* a human being). This is the first level of rehumanization. But the victim (or the victim's family) is also now faced with the pain of the apologizing perpetrator, the pain of his *remorse*. This, too, is humanizing: the perpetrator can no longer be held at the somehow comforting distance of "the monster." And, if the victims choose to forgive – empathizing (even against their will) with the pain of the perpetrators remorse² – this completes a second and quite profound level of rehumanization: the acknowledgement that *together*, we – victims and perpetrators, confessors and forgivers – are mutually and reciprocally human, finite, broken, and pained; yet potentially healed in this very recognition.³

It is important to emphasize that forgiveness *potentially* offers this healing, or contributes to it. Gobodo-Madikizela stresses that "even forgiveness does not necessarily bring finality because it does not erase the past. Closure is not always possible, . . . [b]ut through forgiveness a provisional vocabulary of reconciliation, if not friendship, is created" (132). Some, in spite of participating in this robust forgiveness, may never find closure; even for those who do, this act of forgiveness may serve as a *beginning* in a process of mourning which must nevertheless play itself out (the apology, coupled with forgiveness, can "restore" this potential to mourn what was previously un-mournable). Thus there is reason for a cautious but firm optimism with regard to the collective reconciliation process, as Gobodo-Madikizela affirms: "Societal groups *can* transcend cycles of violence and forgive, if not necessarily fully reconcile with, other groups. . . .

² "We cannot help it. We are induced to empathy because there is something in the other that is felt to be part of the self, and something in the self that is felt to be part of the other. Empathy feels *with* the other in a reciprocal emotional process in which one asks for it, or his very situation seems to ask for it, and the other responds by offering it. Empathy reaches out to the other and says: I can feel the pain you feel for having caused me pain" (127). (Compare with Hegel in the footnote below.)

³ Hegel has a very similar vision of forgiveness, which for him implies co-forgiveness – "a reciprocal recognition which is *absolute* Spirit." Hegel goes even further and speaks of this level of mutual forgiveness as, in a sense, reconciling the human and God: "The reconciling Yea, in which the two 'I's let go their antithetical *existence*, is the *existence* of an 'I' which has expanded itself into a duality, and therein remains identical with itself, and, in its complete externalization and opposite, possesses the certainty of itself: it is God manifested in the midst of those who know themselves in the form of pure knowledge" (G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977: 408, 409, paras. 670, 671).

The result may not be reconciliation in a full sense. But through the vicarious experience of stories of forgiveness, a society can begin to heal itself . . .” (133).

This cautious but firm affirmation of the reconciliation process should not obscure the fact that, for Gobodo-Madikizela (as opposed to many of the proponents of collective reconciliation), forgiveness has conditions for its possibility, as well as limits of evil beyond which it cannot go. To elucidate this, it is instructive to recall, as a point of contrast, the words of Desmond Tutu, the central character propounding what might be called the South African “doctrine” of forgiveness and reconciliation (which Tutu names “another kind of justice, restorative justice.”⁴) For Tutu, forgiveness is, beyond any politics, a religious command and even a “cosmic destiny,” a “part of the cosmic movement toward unity, toward reconciliation, that has existed from the beginning of time,” a destiny that includes the reconciliation of *all* evil and historical rupture under its encompass:

What each of us does can retard or promote, can hinder or advance, the process at the heart of the universe. Christians would say the outcome is not in question. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ puts the issue beyond doubt: ultimately goodness and laughter and peace and compassion and gentleness and forgiveness and reconciliation will have the last word and prevail over their ghastly counterparts. The victory over apartheid was proof positive of the truth of this seemingly utopian dream.⁵

⁴ Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York: Doubleday, 1999: 54.

⁵ Tutu, *ibid.*, 267. This belief is taken to the extreme limit in an encounter between Tutu and the president of post-genocide Rwanda. The president responds to Tutu’s sermon that “even Jesus declared that the devil could not be forgiven.” Tutu replies, “I do not know where he found the basis for what he said, but he was expressing a view that found some resonance, that there were atrocities that were unforgivable. My own view was different . . .” (Tutu, *ibid.*, 260.)

We can note here, in passing, enormous parallels between Tutu’s deeply Christian vision, and the philosophical vision of Hegel, who held that in Christianity, as the final religion emerging out of the dialectic of history (subsuming all prior forms), everything is in principle reconciled in advance in the death of Christ; and that therefore all human evil is *known* in advance to be healable (as he declares in the section on “Evil and Forgiveness” in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, “The wounds of Spirit heal, and leave no scar behind” – p. 407, para. 669). Hegel most clearly articulated this in his 1827 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, which I quote because of the deep resonance with Tutu’s vision:

[I]t is not a question of overcoming evil because evil has been overcome in and for itself. The child, inasmuch as it is born into the church, has been born in freedom and to freedom. For one who has been so born, there is no longer an absolute otherness; this otherness is posited as something overcome, as already conquered. The sole concern of such cultivation is to prevent evil from emerging, and the possibility of this does in general reside in humanity. But insofar as evil does emerge among human beings when they do evil, at the same time it is present as something implicitly null, over which spirit has

While Tutu is a religious minister – an Anglican archbishop – as well as a political and social figure, who draws his distinctive vision out of sources both Christian as well as those central to “the African *Weltsanschauung*”⁶; Gobodo-Madikizela is a psychologist, interested in the *psychological* requirements for forgiveness between human beings. While she concedes, at one point, a kind of “holiness” to extreme acts of forgiveness⁷, she never goes so far as to claim a cosmic destiny for a reconciliation, pre-accomplished in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ; instead her analysis and vision are on the whole secular ones. And, though she is willing to go very far down the path of extreme evil that can be forgiven, she nevertheless discovers distinctive preconditions for this forgiveness to take place, and hence limits beyond which forgiveness is neither applicable nor possible.

Gobodo-Madikizela identifies three essential and linked preconditions for the *possibility* of forgiveness (the satisfaction of these conditions does not *entail* that the victim forgive, but opens up a space where the victim is free to forgive if she chooses): the perpetrator’s apology, regret, and remorse. It is through the performative act of “apology that is sincere, unencumbered by explanation or justification,” addressed to the victims, that the genuine regret or remorse of the perpetrator can appear (the apology must be not only genuine, but without “disclaimers” or excuses) (98):

power: spirit has the power to undo evil. [G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (3 vols.), ed. Peter C. Hodgson, Berkeley: California UP, 1985: Vol. 3 (*The Consummate Religion*), 336]

As with Hegel, for Tutu there can be, and there is, in the history of human kind evil of a horrendous sort (Hegel speaks of the “slaughter bench of history”); but there is nothing within the scope of any historical human evil that *remains* irreconcilable: Christ dying on the cross signifies this implicit reconciliation of evil. There is no ultimate limit to forgiveness for Tutu, nor for Hegel, because at its limit forgiveness is an *infinite* power – the power of God, which nevertheless arises in the world in the fact that Christ is *also* a man, who *dies* but is *resurrected* as well, in what Hegel calls the “putting to death of death” (very close to Freud’s definition of the “work of mourning” as “killing death”) – reconciling all that is finite and human.

⁶ “*Ubuntu* is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human. . . . It is to say, ‘My humanity is caught up, inextricably bound up, with yours.’ . . . ‘A person is a person through other persons.’ . . . ‘I am human because I belong. I participate, I share.’ . . . A person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others . . . he or she belongs to the greater whole . . . To forgive is not just to be altruistic. It is the best form of self-interest” (Tutu, *ibid.*, 31).

⁷ “It is hard to resist the conclusion that there must be something divine about forgiveness expressed in the context of tragedy. How else can we understand how such words can flow from the lips of one wronged so irreparably? Archbishop Tutu, whenever we were witnesses to such inexplicable human responses at a public hearing of the TRC, would be driven to call for silence ‘because we are on holy ground.’ There seems to be something spiritual, even sacramental about forgiveness – a sign that moves and touches those who are witnesses to its enactment” (95).

A sincere apology does not seek to erase what was done. No amount of words can undo past wrongs. Nothing can ever reverse injustices committed against others. But an apology pronounced in the context of horrible acts has the potential for transformation. (99)

The relation between apology, remorse, and regret, on the one hand; and the possibility of forgiveness, on the other, is laid out at length in *A Human Being Died That Night*. In an illuminating and succinct interview given after the publication of the book, Gobodo-Madikizela elucidates this complex connection:

You apologize unconditionally. . . . And the one way that makes an apology “speak” is remorse. Regret and remorse. When you demonstrate that you regret what you did – in other words, that you feel pain for the pain that you have caused this other person. That is where the gravity of the moment lies. That is the gravity of the apology. It is remorse. . . . The paradox of that moment is that it is the pain of the perpetrator, when the perpetrator lays himself bare – lays himself naked in front of the victim – and asks and begs to be forgiven. And it is that brokenness, that sense of being so pained and broken, that touches the victim to the core, and invites them to reach out with forgiveness. And that is really where the gravity of the moment lies. And what leads the victims to reach out with forgiveness; they are responding to the pain of remorse.⁸

Tutu, in contrast to Gobodo-Madikizela, understands apology, sincerity, regret, remorse, and even confession of the crime to “be a very great help to the one who wants to forgive, but . . . not absolutely indispensable.”⁹ For Gobodo-Madikizela, however, these are, from the point of view of psychological analysis, preconditions without which forgiveness – whatever greatness, holiness, or healing potential it may have – cannot proceed.

The limits to forgiveness that Gobodo-Madikizela demarcates are most clearly illustrated in several points of the book where she opposes absolutely the crimes of de Kock and, indeed, Apartheid itself with the crimes of Eichmann, and the Holocaust. For Gobodo-Madikizela, the crimes of Apartheid, and specifically the crimes of de Kock, are sickeningly horrendous, brutal acts of evil, but not outside the bounds of the human. They are human crimes against fellow humans; and the psychological distress felt by their perpetrators, during and after their committal, as well as the pain, remorse, and brokenness demonstrated by de Kock and others

⁸ Louise Steinman, “A Conversation with Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela,” *Brick Literary Journal*, Toronto: Issue 71, Summer 2003: 143, 144.

⁹ “Jesus did not wait until those who were nailing him to the cross had asked for forgiveness. He was ready, as they drove in the nails, to pray to his Father to forgive them and he even provided an excuse for what they were doing. If the victim could forgive only when the culprit confessed, then the victim would be locked into the culprit’s whim, locked into victimhood . . .” (Tutu, *ibid.*, 272).

testifies to this human limit. The Nazis, or at least Nazis such as Eichmann, suffered no doubts or stirrings of conscience, and neither could nor would express remorse for any of their deliberate actions – actions geared not (as was the case under Apartheid) to the unjust suppression of a people (and, when that people refused this oppression, the brutal attempt to “quash” this rebellion), but rather their utter eradication from the face of the earth and from history. For Gobodo-Madikizela, Eichmann’s crimes (and the crimes of many other Nazis) remain beyond the bounds of any possible forgiveness. She draws the distinction between de Kock and Eichmann, in particular, and the systems of Apartheid and the Holocaust, in general, in absolute terms:

Eichmann saw neither moral nor legal wrong in the genocidal killings that he summed up with this “explanation”: They were Jews. This underscores an element that was absent from Apartheid’s policy of murder, and perhaps points to different ways of understanding conscience in the Nazi and apartheid cases. The Nazi conscience was so warped that it had become a clear conscience. One might say without too much exaggeration that the apartheid conscience, by contrast, was so ridden with guilt that it had to be circumvented. Unlike hatred of the Jews, who were regarded by the Nazis as vermin, the “scum of the earth,” the hatred of blacks by the Afrikaners, at least at the policy level, did not reach the proportions that allowed the Nazis to formulate the Final Solution. (68-9)

Gobodo-Madikizela further nuances the distinction above with another distinction, one between someone like de Kock, wracked with guilt and pain over his actions, and offering no excuses; and those of his colleagues who lack “an inner stirring” and strive to “maintain some ‘dignity,’” while nevertheless recognizing the “moral implications of their actions,” evidenced in the “sense that they were struggling with their denial of truth” (23). This fundamental difference – essentially one between the “broken heart” and the “hard heart” – however, is still not the *absolute* gulf that separates both of these examples (for Gobodo-Madikizela, examples still on a human continuum, even if pushed to its limits – the “hard heart” always has the *possibility* of “breaking”) from an Eichmann (about whom speaking of any “heart” sounds almost nonsensical): “But with Eichmann, the evidence suggests, there was just blankness, a blank, impenetrable wall” (23):

[W]hat I had experienced firsthand . . . is the enormous distinction between Hitler – or those tried at Nuremberg, for that matter – and de Kock and others who appeared before the TRC: none of the Nazis gave any evidence of even a trace of remorse. Genuine remorse and regret over destroying lives and severing the relationships that were

connected to them make all the difference. These are emotions that, despite the evil committed, are not themselves evil. (121-2)

Again, drawing a point of contrast with Tutu is instructive. Tutu sees the experience of the TRC project in South Africa not only as having universal geopolitical significance, but indeed having beyond this a cosmic, timeless, religious universality as well. From that perspective, it is difficult to see how *anything*, any crime whatsoever, could ultimately be designated unforgivable. Tutu specifically addresses himself to those among the Jews who refuse forgiveness to the Nazis after the Holocaust. Acknowledging that this was “a shattering experience,” he adds “that the Lord whom I serve, who was himself a Jew, would have asked, ‘What about forgiveness?’”¹⁰ In another context, responding to the specific dilemma posed by Simon Wiesenthal concerning whether, as a prisoner in a concentration camp, he should have forgiven a dying Nazi soldier who participated in a terrible massacre (Wiesenthal did not), Tutu declares:

I could tell of others, both black and white and less well known, who if asked, “What would I have done?” would have done the same – they have forgiven amazingly, unbelievably. Many claim to be Christians. They say they follow the Jewish rabbi who, when he was crucified, said, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” . . . Without forgiveness, there is no future.¹¹

Gobodo-Madikizela draws a narrower conclusion concerning the limits of forgiveness: it takes place between human beings, if it all, in a context in which the perpetrator offers a sincere apology demonstrating genuine remorse and regret, even to the point of being *broken* by the “inner stirrings” of his “conscience.” An overall political context in which something like the TRC can be effective and healing demands a society in which the possibilities of these inner stirring have not been *completely* eclipsed - a society in which even those who do *not* repent nevertheless struggle internally and are not at ease with their consciences.¹²

¹⁰ Tutu, *ibid.*, 267.

¹¹ In: Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness* (Revised and Expanded Edition), ed. Harry James Cargas and Bonny V. Fetterman, New York: Schocken Books, 1998: 267-8. Gobodo-Madikizela does question the predominance of “remembering,” as opposed to “dialogue,” in Holocaust discourse, especially with reference to subsequent generations, the “children of Holocaust survivors and descendants of Nazi perpetrators” (119).

¹² This context is a necessary, though not sufficient, social context in which an encompassing political project of healing and reconciliation can take place; also required are the fostering and creating of an *ethos* and institutions to facilitate this: “The question is no longer *whether* victims can forgive ‘evildoers’ but whether we – our symbols, language, and politics, our legal, media, and academic institutions – are creating the conditions that

There are perhaps other geo-political situations of extreme trauma in which the powerful resources of forgiveness and reconciliation can be helpfully and hopefully drawn upon. The post-Holocaust situation was *not* one of these.¹³ For some situations the South African model can be a useful and inspiring source and even template; for others (of which the Holocaust seems to represent the most extreme limit for Gobodo-Madikizela), it cannot.

In contrast to the all-encompassing, “cosmic” universality of Desmond Tutu’s faith in forgiveness, Gobodo-Madikizela offers another, more limited, but perhaps more realistic vision, in which, she says, “mercy should be granted cautiously”: a vision of an unprecedented and immensely successful effort at healing a nation through a project of forgiveness and reconciliation, a process with a *limited universality* perhaps applicable to quite a number of scenes of geopolitical evil and collective trauma – quite a number, but not all (139).

On the scale of horrible things that can happen to people, there are some for which the language of apology and forgiveness may be entirely inappropriate. To say, however, that some evil deeds are simply unforgivable does not capture the complexity and richness of all the social contexts with which gross evil is committed. In South Africa, for example, where the language of “reconciliation” has defined the way in which that society is beginning to deal with its traumatic past, many stories of forgiveness have indeed emerged. . . . [W]hile there may be value in recognizing and posting the limits of forgiveness, if such exist, some societies are finding it more constructive to focus on discovering and nurturing the conditions that make forgiveness first conceivable, then ultimately possible. (123-4)

encourage alternatives to revenge. . . . Societal groups *can* transcend cycles of violence and forgive, if not necessarily fully reconcile with other groups. But that uncertain process is made more likely, and less tentative, when it is supported by an ethos of acknowledgment and accommodation and underpinned by the nationally constructed language, cues, and symbols of collective reconciliation” (118, 133).

¹³ Though, arguably, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict today may hold such potential. If so, it will have to arise *internally* from within both of these societies, from the sources (religious and otherwise) proper to each. I preface this with a “may” because one immense question which I have not touched upon here is the specifically *Christian* structure of the successful TRC experience in South Africa. It will be *another* forgiveness that arises, if one does, in the Israeli-Palestinian issue, as the deep religious and secular sources undergirding this conflict are not Christian. But at least forgiveness is not *of necessity* precluded in this situation, as Gobodo-Madikizela believes it is in the case of the Holocaust. (The extrapolations in this footnote are my own, not those of Gobodo-Madikizela.)

Review of *Ararat*

Salwa Ghaly

Filmography

Serendipity Point and Ego Art Films

Written and directed by Atom Egoyan

2002

Running Time:115 minutes.

ARARAT, ATOM EGOYAN'S latest film, is ambitious and intense. Touching a raw nerve for many of those who were part of this production – including Charles Aznavour, and Arsinee Khanjian, who, like Egoyan, are of Armenian descent – the film revolves around the Armenian Genocide at the hands of the Ottoman Turks in 1915, a genocide that remains very much alive in the collective memory of that community but which, almost a century on, continues to be denied and contested by successive Turkish governments. Many viewers expected to find in this film an epic, extremely graphic, depiction of the events that led to the death of one million people and the near complete decimation of the Armenian population of Anatolia. Instead, what it offers is primarily a look at how this genocide continues to be lived today in the minds and hearts of its victims' descendants. This film is a complex and riveting narrativization of this grim chapter of history, one in which personal and collective stories, past and present, intertwine, sometimes completing, sometimes competing with, one another. Toronto and Anatolia merge, as the memories of the mass slaughter insinuate themselves into the lives of the Armenian-Canadian characters in the film. The dead haunt the living, as lives intersect and at times collide, and as personal narratives compete for primacy, narratives being, to quote one of the characters, what people “need to believe.”

There is Ani, the art history professor whose memoirs wrestle with the violent deaths of her first and second husbands. Ani lectures widely on Gorky, the Armenian-American expressionist painter who, having memorialized the perished, including his own mother, in many of his paintings, is unable to live with the indelible memories of all that he witnessed as a boy. Gorky, the traumatized child and adult artist who in 1948 chose to end his short and tragic life, looms large in the film. Ani is hired as an art consultant by Edward Saroyan, a renowned director (Aznavour) who is making a film on the genocide based on Clarence Ussher's historical document, *An American Physician in Turkey* (published in 1917), the central source for Saroyan (and a subtext for Egoyan). Like the book, the film within the film is centered around the events that took place in Van in April of 1915, where Ottoman soldiers besieged the Armenian quarter of town and massacred most of its inhabitants. Echoing similar episodes that took place concurrently across the Armenian heartland, this event is imbued with emblematic value. Gorky's biography, somewhat distorted in the film, is added to Ussher's exceptionally detailed eye-witness account to give the film more poignancy and to buttress Egoyan's reflections on art.

Ani's son, Raffi, is equally scared by the events of 1915, as is Celia, his girlfriend/step-sister. In a journey of discovery and self-discovery, Raffi travels to eastern Turkey in search of an explanation for why his father died trying to assassinate a Turkish ambassador. Is his father a "terrorist," as the Canadian government maintains, or a "hero," as his mother keeps repeating? Upon returning to Toronto, he is interrogated extensively by a customs inspector (Christopher Plummer) who suspects that the film reel canisters he has brought back contain drugs, a suspicion that is confirmed, but not until the officer finds in Raffi's personal narrative of the genocide compelling evidence that the young man had fallen victim to traffickers. For reasons of his own, and possibly in recognition of the burden of suffering Raffi is carrying, he decides not to turn him in.

Ararat does not attempt to settle historical scores. Nor does it merely set out to bring into our active collective consciousness the often-forgotten story of the Armenian holocaust. Its task, rather, is much more self-reflective, tackling as it does questions about the capacity of art to represent and reflect on terror, horror and crimes against humanity. It is a film about the difficulties of making a film about genocide. In a move similar to that taken by Paul Verhoeven, the German director who once argued that a film on Nazi crimes should always remind its spectators that "it is only a performance," Egoyan consciously decides to distance the viewer from the horror through the use of the *mise en abyme* technique (one film within another, in this instance) where images of death and carnage appear only in Saroyan's film. This decision has

moral resonance, as it underscores the fact that scenes of horror, as horrible and hard to watch as they may be, can never even begin to approximate the reality of the genocide as it was experienced by those who were its actual, physical victims. The distancing effect makes the viewer aware of the artificiality of the images presented and points to the limitations of representation. This topic consumed Gorky who, despite his ability to indict war crimes and criminals in/through his exceptionally powerful works, could not find in art the solution to his inner turmoil and pain. The embedding of Gorky's story is thus an important element in Egoyan's investigation of how art can be marshaled in the service of memory, collective and personal. The questions that tortured Gorky and drove him to the bottommost depths of despair are the same ones that Egoyan provokes in *Ararat*. One gets the sense that, while art can be a repository of history that can memorialize and serve as a reminder of past crimes, it can never offer more than a faint ersatz experience of horror. The stories it tells are necessarily incomplete and diluted. Egoyan honestly shares with his audience the realization that no film can ever grapple with the totality and enormity of genocide. Gorky, Ani explains, opted to leave his mother's hands unfinished, suggesting that art can only communicate elliptically, symbolically and self-reflexively. History, therefore, can never satisfactorily become story. Like Gorky, Egoyan is not willing to package and commodify horror and present it to us in a capsule; in the face of the unspeakable and "unrepresentable", art must remain silent, out of respect for the dead and their memory. For how can it ever depict the rape and subsequent dismembering of a pregnant woman?

Central to Egoyan's concerns is also the related issue of memory. Early in the film, Raffi reminds the half-Turkish actor (assigned the role of the Ottoman Effendi who is directly responsible for the massacre in Van) of a statement Hitler once made to his military commanders: "who remembers the extermination of the Armenians?" It, along with many other implicit and explicit references to the Holocaust, provides a fitting response to what this actor tells Raffi: "drop the fucking history and get on with it." That this is not only an impossible, but also a highly dangerous and immoral, thing to do is glaringly obvious.

As indicated in the credits, Holocaust specialists informed the moral vision of the film. Much archival research into the Armenian genocide also sustained the historical account presented. However, to assume that finger pointing is the aim here would be to indulge in unwarranted self-satisfaction. The film does not establish a binary opposition between "good" and "evil" or "us—the "good people"— and them—the "evil-doers." Nor does it invite the response that, since we, the viewers, are not guilty of heinous crimes, we can bask in our moral superiority. The film's peregrinations through the psyches of the characters reach the

inconvenient conclusion that we, humans, all have a capacity and potential for cruelty. Lurking within us all is the potential to allow mind management by state, group, sect or party, etc. to make us hate, not just an individual, but also the entire group to which s/he belongs. At one point, Raffi admits that he has finally understood what drove his father to try to assassinate a Turkish diplomat. He is taken aback to see himself swept by blind hate and a desire, though fleeting, to kill the actor who played the Ottoman soldier responsible for the slaughter in Van. Raffi struggles with the reasons why the Armenians of Anatolia were exterminated. The fact that the Turkish-Canadian actor in Saroyan's film denies the genocide, rationalizing it as "war in which Turkey feared being betrayed by the Armenians," adds fuel to fire and renders further communication between the two Canadian men impossible. Such a lame justification (another instance of the "narratives we need to believe"), still espoused at the beginning of the third millennium, is juxtaposed with similar statements made by the Ottoman Effendi to the young Gorky on the eve of the butchery in Van: "you are taught to hate us, to think of us as ignorant and bloodthirsty. What is about to happen is entirely your own fault. You believe in nothing but commerce and money... Your greed has led us to corruption..." The process of blaming the victim sounds chillingly familiar and serves as a reminder of how the first step toward committing a crime of massive proportions against a group is to demonize and dehumanize that group through negative stereotyping. Caricatures of a people are then disseminated, reinforced and fed to an often complacent and unquestioning general public. Raffi responds to the facile explanation "in war terrible things happen" with the bitter and insistent "those Armenians were Turkish citizens who expected to be protected." Saroyan, for his part, tells Raffi "what hurts me most is to know that we could be so hated.... How could they deny their hatred?" Egoyan's film is in part a reflection on the dynamics of hate-- how it comes about and what happens when it reaches a fever pitch.

Ararat leaves us with much food for thought on art, atrocity, memory, and what it means to live with hyphenated identities. In true postmodern vein, it presents all narratives, including personal ones, as equally worthy of attention. The viewer gets the impression that, for Egoyan, Ani's personal struggle with how her second husband died, and whether or not she should feel implicated in his death, is as important a story as the narratives about Gorky or Raffi or the customs' inspector. Those many side conflicts eclipse, to some extent, the enormity of the Armenian genocide. However, they are not redundant or gratuitous as they contribute important questions and issues that enable the film to go beyond "what" happened toward "why" it happened.

Ararat is a thoughtful and thought-provoking work. That the Turkish government has reacted vehemently against the film is proof that art, despite its many limitations, can vex, is meant to vex: to speak truth to power. From the technical angle, Egoyan's film is also memorable. The juxtaposition of scenes from Raffi's interrogation and Saroyan's film set is masterfully and effectively done. Mychael Danna is to be commended for his stunningly beautiful and stirring music score, a dirge for Armenia's dead. Scenes of the sweeping fields on the foot of Mount Ararat cannot help but bring to mind Charles Aznavour's unforgettable lines from his song "Ils sont tombés": "they fell... becoming for an instant red flowers covered by sand then by forgetting... their fault having been that they were the children of Armenia."

Nul n'éleva la voix dans un monde euphorique
Tandis que croupissait un peuple dans son sang
L'Europe découvrait le jazz et sa musique
Les plaintes des trompettes couvraient les cris d'enfants.
Ils sont tombés pudiquement, sans bruit,
Par milliers, par millions, sans que le monde bouge,
Devenant un instant, minuscules fleurs rouges
Recouverts par un vent de sable et puis l'oubli.
Moi je suis de ce peuple qui dort sans sépulture
Qui choisit de mourir sans abdiquer sa foi,
Qui n'a jamais baissé la tête sous l'injure,
Qui survit malgré tout et qui ne se plaint pas.
Ils sont tombés pour entrer dans la nuit
Eternelle des temps, au bout de leur courage
La mort les a frappés sans demander leur âge
Puisqu'ils étaient fautifs d'être enfants
D'Arménie.

Moral *Night*, Darker *Days*: Human Evil in *28 Days Later*

Matthew Sorrento

Biography

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IN ITS THEATRICAL trailers and TV spots, Danny Boyle's film *28 Days Later* promises viewers a fresh take on the zombie horror genre. The previews provide a taste of bleak digital cinematography and rapid-fire editing that disorients in a matter of seconds. We even get one of the film's most subtly terrifying shots: a close-up of dangling payphone receivers obscuring a wandering character in the background. These glimpses promise what only the better high-production horror films of recent years, such as M. Night Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense* and Gore Verbinski's *The Ring*, have delivered. And while a good scare flick would be more than one could ask for these days, *28 Days Later* also delivers a thematically rich narrative.

Like most zombie horror films, *28 Days Later* cannot escape the influence of the genre's forefather, *Night of the Living Dead* (George A. Romero, 1968). Scripted by Boyle's previous collaborator Alex Garland (2000's *The Beach*), *28 Days* has a unique relationship with its revolutionary predecessor. Often discussed as a reflection of the oppression and rage begotten by the 1960s, *Night of the Living Dead* also muses upon humankind's volatility under pressure. Romero uses the threats and violence of the "living dead" to draw out our frailties when confronting it. Romero's claustrophobic setting, enhanced by bare-bones, low-budget production, reflects how pressures boil over into violence. When Romero's trapped victims struggle for a solution, their frustrations breed rage that is eventually turned towards each other.

The world of imaginative horror appears to have inherited this grand thesis: when forced to combat the ghouls of imagination, the human monster appears. But Boyle's zombies are even more monstrous than Romero's.

In Romero's universe, moral integrity does not falter, symbolized as it is through the character Ben who dutifully, albeit with bouts of frustration, holds the moral ground. His integrity appears everlasting until irresolvable conflict forces him to kill a mad fellow-captive (and then to repeat the murder when his victim rises from the dead). To drive a bleak view home even further, in a brutally ironic conclusion, Ben perishes on the "morning after" when a mindless search team mistakes him for a zombie: Romero's sacrifice that highlights the absurdity of chaos. Although the protagonist does not defeat the zombies, his moral strength never falters while he defends humanity.

As critics such as Harold Varmus, in a July 6th New York Times article, have noted, Boyle uses the zombie premise for a similar aim, although he creates another thesis. *28 Days Later* offers an optimistic ending that stabilizes the audience and secures box-office return: the uninfected overcome the frailties that Romero's characters fall victim to. But to live on, the human survivors in *28 Days Later* must breed violence equal to and beyond that of the ultra-brutal zombies infected with "Rage" (who are possibly the most brutal version the screen has seen yet). This climactic fall comes after the central character, James, a bicycle messenger woken from a coma "28 Days" after a plague-like spread of "zombie" infection in England, confronts military camp members who turn wicked after promising protection. This military group, after revealing a plan to repopulate the British Isle but really to satiate their desires, takes the role of humans-turned-monster; they have morally degenerated while witnessing society's destruction. Thus Boyle abruptly reveals the human monsters, while Romero lets the pressure that creates them build to a climax. Romero's moral conscience (i.e. Ben) becomes violent as a last measure, while Boyle's central character becomes wicked-beyond-zombie—and as morally devoid as the military group—by committing murders that top the goriest of the zombies' slaughtering. *28 Days Later* suggests that humankind will triumph over what we deem horrifying only after we match it, proving that we possess evil more wretched than the wickedest nightmarish fantasy.

This thesis lies deep in Boyle's narrative, which is strewn with peaceful, bucolic interludes, such as a scene where the uninfected recoup in an abandoned supermarket and other moments where suspense is toned down, foreshadowing the triumphant but morally ironic conclusion. Romero offers no such peace and Ben, to survive, reacts to horror with stoic duty. *28 Days*' James, however, in the midst of murderous triumph, appears barely human and even releases the infected to help him combat the amoral militants.

We see that James has morally degenerated in the way he attacks the militants. While releasing an infected person and then watching the attack from high windows, James voyeuristically inspects a show he has created, and later acts a part by killing the militant's leader. Upon James' bloody triumph he embraces his love interest, in a "showy" red gown throughout the scene, having morally shape-shifted more quickly than Dracula can turn into a beast.

Boyle has created an amoral conscience that, especially in contrast to Romero's Ben, forces us to question the extent of moral duty. We are left to ask whether James can regulate the "beast within" after a conclusion suggesting he'll be rescued and that all will end well. As we see in *Night of the Living Dead*, menace will push humankind toward moral darkness—but the human evil in *28 Days Later* makes our inner depths seem deeper than ever.

Review of *Checkpoint Syndrome*

Michael Dahan

THERE ARE TWO narratives which run along the spinal cord of Israeli society and feed the national conscious and conscience: That the occupation is (or at least was) “enlightened” and that the Israeli army is the most moral army in the world. There is no such animal as an enlightened occupation, yet throughout the 70s and 80s various Israeli governments attempted to package and market, internally and abroad, the illegal occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza strip as such, stressing the number of universities, schools and hospitals that were built in the Palestinian territories as proof of the so-called enlightenment of the occupation. They would often note the rise in literacy rates as well as agricultural production as proof of the general improvement of material conditions for Palestinians under Israeli military rule, compared to Jordanian rule prior to 1967. For many Israelis, such a line of reasoning, promoted and supported by both Labour and Likud led coalition governments, was used to cope with the cognitive dissonance experienced as a result of the occupation, thus allowing the use and acceptance of the term “an enlightened occupation”. Indeed, this was the logic that was actively embedded in the hearts and minds of the thousands of Israeli soldiers, reservists and regular soldiers alike, who have served in the Occupied Territories from 1967 until today. This logic, taken together with the constructed view of the Israeli army as the most “moral army in the world” (from which the concept “enlightened occupation” stems, for only a “moral army” can maintain an “enlightened” occupation), serves as an effective soother of the national conscience.

In recent years such common wisdom regarding the character of the occupation has been disrupted, and the majority of Israeli citizens today do not necessarily view the occupation as enlightened. Perhaps the most obvious representation of this change, at least according to the polls of recent years, is the acceptance on the part of a majority of Israelis today of the Palestinian right to statehood and self determination. Yet the second narrative regarding the morality of the Israeli army is still quite strong and serves to deflect criticism away from the policy and actions of the army and the government, particularly within the framework of a global discourse on the “war on terror”.

Conceptually, Israeli society can be viewed as a “nation in arms”, that is a society based on a reduction in the social and value gaps between the civilian and military sectors combined with permeable boundaries between them that permit two-way influence. Characteristic of this model is a pattern of military service based on a nucleus of professional soldiers that make up the permanent army, with the addition of conscripts and a comprehensive reserve force. A condition for the emergence of this model is a national consensus concerning the existence of what is perceived as an external existential threat to the state which, in turn, requires the allocation of considerable resources to security and the involvement of the military in the processes of political decision making (Horowitz and Lissak 1989). Both the mandatory service in the IDF, a key factor in the political socialization of Israeli youth, as well as the subsequent reserve duty serve to strengthen respect for and the primacy of issues of national security in Israel in general and the IDF in particular, and have traditionally served to encourage and perpetuate consensus towards aspects of national security and the actions of the IDF. Thus, the army and the various security apparati enjoy the status of a cultural icon which defies criticism. This is why criticism of Israeli operations in the territories over the past four years has been waived aside, particularly regarding IDF operations in Jenin two years ago. If the army is doing “bad things,” then this means that friends and neighbors, acquaintances and relatives are doing bad things. Thus pundits often refer to Israel as “an army with a state” rather than a state with an army. Indeed, the attitude towards the army in Israeli society is close to that of a civil religion – myths, stories, images, icons, celebrations and rites that play a part in the imagining of national community from generation to generation (Bryant, 1995:149).

As part of the occupation, checkpoints were created throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as a way to control and enforce the movement of Palestinians within the territories. For many Palestinians these checkpoints symbolize the very essence of an extremely brutal and omnipresent occupying force, preventing them access to basic services such as medical treatment, schools, universities, family and friends, their land, as well as urban centers within the territories and access to Israel proper where they could seek employment. Israeli Settlers within the occupied territories are of course not restricted by these checkpoints, and as such the occupation and the current construction of the wall form the basis for a proto Apartheid.

Furer’s book details his years of service commanding one such checkpoint in the Gaza strip after the signing of the Oslo accords, beginning in 1997. He was released from the army with the rank of first sergeant, and served in the framework of the Shimshon (Samson) battalion which was created during the first Intifadah in order to deal directly with Palestinians defying the

occupation in the Gaza Strip. Furer, according to his own testimony, enjoyed a normative youth, went to what is considered a very good high school, and is essentially a typical product of Israel's middle and/or upper middle class.

His book, detailing his service as a checkpoint commander in the Gaza Strip, is 94 pages long in Hebrew, in paper back form, and is written in a column style running down the side of the page, like prose, but it is not prose. It is an extremely short book, published by a vanity press. The writing style is spoken Hebrew, as opposed to literary Hebrew. The book has a very brief introduction, written in Goa, India (where many young Israelis go to relax after their mandatory military service, primarily by getting stoned off of Indian hashish), where the author explains what drove him to write the book. The book is divided into 5 additional sections: Gaza 1997; Action; Gaza 1998; "Fantasies Help Pass the Time"; and Gaza 1999. The writing style is essentially "stream of consciousness", with long run-on sentences; yet it is very readable. Indeed, though I found it hard to read, I could not put it down. It is important to note here that the book is devoid, in both the introduction and body, of political statements. There is no reference to politics at all (this is not strictly true — he refers twice, in the body of the text, to his left wing psychologist sister who sends him a research paper on "Checkpoint Syndrome", hence the name of the book). The fact that the book is devoid of political diatribe, commentary, inflection/reflection, makes it all the stronger, yet also problematic, a point I will return to later.

Regarding the substance of the book itself, perhaps the best title for it would be "The Banality of Evil". Hannah Arendt (1963) uses this term in her description of Adolph Eichmann, the architect of the final solution. Arendt essentially concluded that the banality of evil results from the failure of human beings to fully experience our common human characteristics—thought, will, and judgment—and as a result are capable of committing horrible acts. Arendt would find full support for her thesis in this short essay. As Arendt notes in the postscript of her book on the Eichmann trial, referring to Eichmann himself: "He merely, to put the matter colloquially, never realized what he was doing" (p. 287). The same can be claimed about the author of this book. Arendt continues to note "That such remoteness from reality and such thoughtlessness can wreak more havoc than all the evil instincts taken together which, perhaps, are inherent in man—that was in fact, the lesson that one could learn in Jerusalem" (p. 288). The author is no Eichmann, nor is he a Nazi (by definition or behavior), and the IDF is not the German army during WWII nor is it the SS. But to a certain extent the author is Israel's "Everyman", a young kid who is inducted into the army at the age of 18, and is sent to face an impossible reality without the tools to handle it. The author begins the book with a description of his initial excitement the first time he served at a checkpoint, how he was kind and polite to

the Palestinians (he makes more use of the generic term “Arab” throughout the book) in the beginning, but how over time, he came to learn that “the more the Palestinians are scared of you, the more order there will be at the checkpoint”. It goes down hill from there, and it is an extremely deep descent. The vignettes presented could be written by almost anyone having served at the checkpoints, reservist and regular soldiers alike.

The book itself does not document severe abuses. It seems pointless to put abuse on a scale, one person’s minor slight is another’s major insult, but for the most part the incidents reported are not the severest that have occurred in the territories. They provide insight into the mindless actions of individuals who have no regard for the consequences. I and others have long claimed that if one wants to understand the motivation of suicide bombers, one has only to look at the small, perhaps insignificant daily humiliations, which over time pile up into a huge mountain, like grains of sand. The book describes these humiliations in detail. The author is usually not the instigator of these humiliations, but as checkpoint commander he is responsible for the behavior and actions of the soldiers under his command. For example, he describes how one of the soldiers forced Palestinians waiting to pass the checkpoint to sing a popular Hebrew song before being allowed to pass. He documents physical abuse, humiliation and violence towards Palestinians, all of which are unprovoked yet “help to pass the time at the checkpoint”. He describes how one of his soldiers, after checking the papers of a Palestinian in a car usually tossed the documents to the ground, forcing the driver to get out of the car in order to pick them up. He describes in great detail how he himself severely beat a Palestinian for no apparent reason.

One section of the book is devoted to “fantasies”, which are rather graphic, and revolve around two rape fantasies of Palestinian women. These fantasies do not really fit into the context of the book itself, but the author seems to link these fantasies to problems he is having with his now ex girlfriend; at least one incident of uninvited inadvertent rough sex with her is vaguely related to the author’s violent fantasies. Indeed, some social workers and therapists in Israel have been warning and documenting for years that service in the territories is morally corrupting and directly responsible for the rise in violence against women and others.

In the introduction, the author claims to be an unwilling victim of a vague conspiracy committed against him and other young Israelis by the army and the state, forcing them to serve under these conditions and forcing them at times to behave like animals: “Greetings to all the little slaves how are you I’m great flying above the world pissing on everything I haven’t written for two months just taking pictures and dropping acid at last I am free and distant from all the shit you have in your lousy country I am alive and not returning now the crazy energies of Goa

have opened my mind and my chakras I understand your plan how you fooled me and fucked me and drove me crazy and made me forget what I was when you stuck me in stinking Gaza and before that brainwashing me about all your guns and making me into a rag and the only thing that kept me sane was the grass I smoked... but now I understand your plan you used me like a robot and only now stoned on the beach in Goa do I understand your master plan and what you tried to do to me..." (From the introduction). This introduction also sets the overall tone of the book – the author does not take responsibility for his own actions, nor does he seek to apologize for them, he simply documents them in third person. Beyond his claims in the introduction, the author does not make any attempt at political or personal insight, simply coldly depicts his and his soldiers' actions. Yet the author also invested a considerable amount of money to get his confession published in a vanity press, meaning that it was important enough for him to get his testimony out.

In this sense, the book should be viewed as a form of testimony, or as a confession, yet one in which the author does not ask for forgiveness. He is merely and rather coldly stating facts with little or no introspection. Similarly, the publishing of the book should not be divorced from other occurrences in Israel over the past year – the combat pilots' refusal to serve letter, which is directly linked to the bombings by the air force in the Gaza Strip, the interview with four former heads of the Shin Bet calling for Israel to reexamine its policies in the occupied territories and calling on the government to end the occupation, as well as other expressions of dissent by formerly subservient sectors within Israeli society. All of these occurrences have one thing in common – they are concerned with the internal effects of the occupation rather than the effects of the occupation on the occupied. In addition, these testimonies are coming from the elites in Israeli society – senior figures in top combat units and the air force, as well as those serving in the intelligence community. This is unique in a society where one does not usually wash his or her laundry in public. These interviews and other expressions are causing an almost consensual expression of "say it ain't so Joe" (or Yossi, as the case may be) on the part of the Israeli public. They want to remain in denial, to cling on to comforting narratives, yet these reports disallow them that luxury. Sharon and the current Israeli government recognize the danger of such thinking to the settlement enterprise, hence the pseudo adoption of terms like "the occupation" (May 2003) on the part of Sharon, and his vague plans of disengagement from the Gaza strip, in the hope of taking the public's attention away from these testimonials. One can only hope that these same testimonials act as harbingers of a more open public discourse on the disastrous affects of the occupation for both the occupied and the occupiers. What is lacking, however, is a critical attempt to deal with questions pertaining to Israeli society and Zionism. While Israeli

intellectuals, particularly the historical revisionists, the radical left and “post Zionists”, have shown much courage in broaching those thorny issues, they and their questions have been relegated to the fringe of Israeli society. Only when these views become part of the mainstream discourse will Israeli society begin to come to terms with the consequences of the occupation. This book is a step in the right direction, but the road ahead is still quite long.