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THE IMAGE OF THE JEW IN OUR FICTION

I

Mr. Rosedale stood scanning her with interest and approval. He was a plump rosy man of the blond Jewish type, with smart London clothes fitting him like upholstery, and small sidelong eyes which gave him the air of appraising people as if they were bric-a-brac. . . . He had his race's accuracy in the appraisal of values, and to be seen walking in the company of Miss Lily Bart would have been money in his pocket, as he might have phrased it. . . . Mr. Simon Rosedale was a man who made it his business to know everything about everyone, whose idea of showing himself to be at home in society was to display an inconvenient familiarity with the habits of those with whom he wished to be thought intimate. . . . Rosedale, with that mixture of artistic sensibility and business astuteness which characterizes his race, had instantly gravitated toward Miss Bart. She understood his motives, for her own course was guided by as nice calculations. Training and experience had taught her to be hospitable to newcomers, since the most unpromising might be useful later on, and there were plenty of available *oubliettes* to swallow them if they were not. But some intuitive repugnance, getting the better of years of social discipline, had made her push Mr. Rosedale into his *oubliette* without a trial. . . . Hitherto Lily had been undisturbed by scruples. In her little set Mr. Rosedale had been pronounced "impossible." . . . Even Mrs. Trenor, whose taste for variety had led her into some hazardous experiments, . . . declared that he was the same little Jew who had been served up and rejected at the social board a dozen times within her memory. . . . Mr. Rosedale, it will be seen, was thus far not a factor to be feared — unless one put one's self in his power. And this was precisely what Miss Bart had done.

This image of a Jew was projected by Edith Wharton shortly after the turn of the century in her novel of New York society, *The House of Mirth*.

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Two decades later, Ernest Hemingway projected his image of a Jew in the opening pages of *The Sun Also Rises*:

Robert Cohn was once middleweight boxing champion of Princeton. Do not think that I am very much impressed by that as a boxing title but it meant a lot to Cohn. He cared nothing for boxing, in fact he disliked it, but he learned it painfully and thoroughly to counteract the feeling of inferiority and shyness he had felt on being treated as a Jew at Princeton. There was a certain inner comfort in knowing he could knock down anybody who was snooty to him, although, being very shy and a thoroughly nice boy, he never fought except in the gym. He was Spider Kelly's star pupil. . . . He was so good that Spider promptly overmatched him and got his nose permanently flattened. This increased Cohn's distaste for boxing, but it gave him a certain satisfaction of some strange sort, and it certainly improved his nose. In his last year at Princeton he read too much and took to wearing spectacles.

There is no resemblance between the two writers — genteel, aristocratic Mrs. Wharton and he-man Hemingway — except for their common and frankly unreasonable gentile contempt for the Jews they were portraying. And there is no resemblance between the images of those two Jews — suave Simon Rosedale and nervous Robert Cohn — except for their common aspiration: to leave their Jewish origins behind and to be received without discrimination in the gentile world — Rosedale by New York's Victorian high society at the turn of the century, and Cohn by the bohemian expatriates of Paris in the mid-twenties. Neither one succeeded in that aspiration, although each had left far behind him every vestige of the Jewish past (except for part of his name); but each did achieve a certain dubious satisfaction in the course of this failure: Rosedale in getting to the point where he could turn down a desperate proposal of marriage from aristocratic but compromised Lily Bart; and Cohn in having got into bed with Lady Ashley, the Astarte of those loose-living lovers of "death in the afternoon," when they all went to Spain for the bull-fight, — Jake Barnes, the narrator, and his friend Bill, and Robert Cohn and Brett Ashley and her fiancé Mike.

But Cohn paid well for the favors of Lady Ashley in the insults he suffered from Mike, although Mike was well aware

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of her constant promiscuity. And Mike's drunken remarks to and about Robert Cohn, as well as the image of Cohn, are probably the most explicitly and brutally anti-Semitic in all our fiction. For example:

"It's no life being a steer," Robert Cohn said.

"Don't you think so?" Mike said. "I would have thought you'd love being a steer, Robert."

"What do you mean, Mike?"

"They lead such a quiet life. They never say anything and they're always hanging about so."

We were embarrassed. Bill laughed. Robert Cohn was angry. Mike went on talking.

"I should think you'd love it. You'd never have to say a word. Come on, Robert. Do say something. Don't just sit there."

"I said something, Mike. Don't you remember? About the steers." . .

"Come off it, Michael. You're drunk," Brett said.

"I'm not drunk. I'm quite serious. Is Robert Cohn going to follow Brett around like a steer all the time? . . . Why don't you say something, Robert? Don't sit there looking like a bloody funeral. What if Brett did sleep with you? She's slept with lots of better people than you."

"Shut up," Cohn said. He stood up. "Shut up, Mike."

"Oh, don't stand up and act as though you were going to hit me. . . . Don't you know when you're not wanted? I know when I'm not wanted. Why don't you know when you're not wanted? . . ."

"Shut up. You're drunk."

"Perhaps I am drunk. Why aren't you drunk? Why don't you ever get drunk, Robert? . . ."

"Come on, Robert," Bill said. . . . Bill went off with Cohn. Cohn's face was sallow. Mike went on talking. . . .

"No, listen, Jake. Brett's gone off with men. But they weren't ever Jews, and they didn't come and hang around afterward."

A couple of pages later, Hemingway expressed the reaction of Jake Barnes, the narrator, to this exhibition of flagrant anti-Semitism:

I wished Mike would not behave so terribly to Cohn, though. Mike was a bad drunk. Cohn was never drunk. Mike was unpleasant after a certain point. I liked to see him hurt Cohn. I wished he would not do it, though, because afterward it made me disgusted at myself. That was morality; things that made you disgusted afterward.

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This latent sense of “morality” — this suppressed disapproval of what Mrs. Wharton delicately termed “intuitive repugnance” toward the Jew in *Lily Bart* — seems to have come to life in the thirties, perhaps as an effect of that very disgusting real-life behavior of those anti-Semites in Germany; for the image of the Jew projected by gentile writers in our fiction thereafter, even when it is anti-Semitic, is compassionate and understanding, much as is Shakespeare’s image of the Jew Shylock. For example, in James Jones’ *From Here To Eternity* (published in 1951 but dealing with Army life just before Pearl Harbor) the image of the Jew, Isaac Nathan Bloom, is projected, not as the author Wharton saw Simon Rosedale, or as Hemingway’s gentile characters saw Robert Cohn, but as Isaac Bloom sees himself:

He was Isaac Nathan Bloom. And Isaac Nathan Bloom was a Jew. It did not make any difference that he had made corporal and become a noncom. It did not make any difference that he had won the Regimental middleweight division and become a Schofield Class I fighter. He was still Isaac Nathan Bloom. And Isaac Nathan Bloom was still a Jew. It did not matter that he was up next in line for sergeant. . . . It did not matter that he was the Regimental white hope for the Schofield Division’s middleweight crown. . . . Because after all that, he would still be Isaac Nathan Bloom. And Isaac Nathan Bloom would still be a Jew.

He had done it all, a lot of things he did not like because he thought he could change it and prove it did not matter. When he had seen how fighters were respected in the Company, he had become a fighter. Did they think he liked being a fighter? When he had seen how noncoms were looked up to and liked, he had become a noncom. . . . He was not going to leave them one single loophole they could turn to for escape. It wasn’t easy; what he had done was not handed to anyone on a silver platter. But he had stuck to it; because he meant to make them like him, meant to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt to them that there were no such things as Jews.

But in the end it hadn’t made any difference. And he knew it never would make any difference. Instead of liking him, the more honors he gained the more they hated him. Facts didn’t have anything to do with the stubbornness of those minds; they twisted the facts to suit whatever they already believed in the first place. How could you fight a thing like that? . . .

There were two kinds of Jews. There were the Jews . . . who would rather be Gentiles and therefore smiled queasily . . . and [boot-licked]

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. . . every Gentile. And there were the Jews like his old man and his mother, them and their unsalted butter and Kosher meat the Rabbi had to bless before they could eat it, who would rather be Jews than anything else in the world because Jews were God's Chosen People. . . . Those were the only two kinds of Jews there were. Take it or leave it. It was a fine choice to present to a man who wanted only to be accepted as a man, according to his individual virtues and vices, but who could never be that. . . . In all the world Bloom could not think of a single person who liked him for himself, for his own personality. . . . A man might as well be dead.

So Bloom ended his sad soliloquy by putting the muzzle of his rifle in his mouth and pulling the trigger with his toe.

Now Isaac Bloom was neither a rich Jew like Simon Rosedale, nor an educated Jew like Robert Cohn; he was a poor uncultivated Jew. Yet he is represented by James Jones as being in some respects very like them. He shares their aspiration to forget he is a Jew and make himself over in the image of the gentiles by whom he wishes to be accepted and from whom he wishes to be indistinguishable, — an aspiration to which every immigrant was encouraged in the late 19th and early twentieth century by the American ideal of "the melting pot"; although, paradoxically, many immigrants since colonial times, gentile as well as Jewish, had fled to America from the persecutors in Europe of their peculiar cultural identities. But Jews like Simon Rosedale and Robert Cohn and Isaac Bloom, who were eager to lose their Jewish identity in the American melting pot, learned that (like most assimilated Jews in Germany who were to be ruthlessly rooted out by the Nazis) their very assumption of the mores of the gentiles was held against them. Edith Wharton criticized in Simon Rosedale a calculated social opportunism she took for granted and condoned in Lily Bart. Hemingway's promiscuous and pugnacious gentiles could not brook the adoption of those manners by Robert Cohn while criticizing him for his inability to ape their drunkenness. And James Jones' Isaac Bloom discovered that though, like Robert Cohn, he disliked fighting, it had availed him nothing to become a prize-fighter, it did not endear him to the gentiles who adored gentile prize-fighters. This discovery puzzled poor Bloom. Lacking a knowledge of history it could not occur to

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him that perhaps this puzzling phenomenon may have been attributable to the fact that those gentiles had been taught in their impressionable childhood the precepts of a Jew, that "Prince of Peace," who preached against pugnaciousness, and profanity, and whoring, and drunkenness and calculated selfishness, and that therefore the sight of a Jew aping them in the practice of such mores (or even, for that matter, refraining from them) was not a compliment but a tormenting affront. Of course poor Bloom could not hope to please his gentiles, any more than Rosedale or Cohn could please theirs; but intuitively (or perhaps from news of the Nazis which was coming out in his time) Bloom realized that the only Jew who could please such gentiles, the only Jew who really had no Jewish identity for them, was a dead Jew.

And as if that act of Jewish self-annihilation was a symbolic signal to our gentile writers, already stricken by qualms of what Hemingway's Jake Barnes called "morality," thanks to those horribly disgusting Nazis, we have in our fiction since Jones' *From Here To Eternity* no such blatantly anti-Semitic images of the Jew projected by gentile writers as the three outstanding examples (chosen from among others equally distinguished) which have here been considered. And if such an image appeared now, in our current fiction, it would probably be considered by most critics and readers old hat, melodramatic, and in bad taste; indeed the Jew, *per se*, seems to have disappeared from the fiction of our gentile writers, while there has been a burgeoning of novels about Jews by Jewish writers. But the development of the image of the Jew in our fiction projected by Jewish writers is quite another story.

II

The Rise of David Levinsky by Abraham Cahan, which was published in 1917, is the classic story of one of the horde of Jewish immigrants who came to America from Eastern Europe late in the 19th century — later than the forebears of Edith Wharton's Simon Rosedale, who was of west European stock. Rosedale is an English translation of the German Rosenthal, and

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Rosedale's blondiness was further evidence of his origins among those highly assimilated German Jews who were, at the turn of the century, a well-intrenched Jewish aristocracy, living on the upper West Side of Manhattan by the time the likes of David Levinsky arrived from Russia or Poland and landed in the seething slum on the lower East Side. Cahan's story, which is in the form of an autobiography, begins:

Sometimes, when I think of my past in a superficial, casual way, the metamorphosis I have gone through strikes me as nothing short of a miracle. I was born and reared in the lowest depths of poverty and I arrived in America — in 1885 — with four cents in my pocket. I am now worth more than two million dollars and recognized as one of the two or three leading men in the cloak-and-suit trade in the United States. And yet when I take a look at my inner identity it impresses me as being precisely the same as it was thirty or forty years ago.

The thoughtful reader of this vivid and fascinating, though rather crudely written book will find that this last statement is untrue. For this is no Horatio Alger fable of that period, intent on proving that an incorruptible integrity of moral character was and is bound to be crowned by material success in fiercely competitive America. This is a realistic account of how a young orthodox Jew, who, though an orphan and raised in poverty in Europe, had been trained only in the study of Torah and Talmud, and, finding himself here in what looked less like a seething melting pot than a teeming Jewish man-trap, managed by hook or crook to claw his way up and out of the East Side slum to the affluent West Side, leaving behind him in the process all his past learning and his aspiration for a higher education in free America, and forsaking the traditional Jewish morality for the ruthless mores without which he could not have accomplished that miraculous transformation from an enslaved sweatshop worker to an employer exploiting such labor for his own profit. In this process David Levinsky did not forsake all his Jewishness, or even try to. Although he became what he calls "an atheist" he remained a member of a synagogue of immigrants from his native town in Russia, and he considered himself an important and influential member of the American

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Jewish community, although he bitterly fought the Jewish union organizers of his Jewish workers. Although his business dealings brought him in contact with some gentiles, his conflicts were not with them but with Jews, some of them the German Jewish forebears of the likes of Simon Rosedale, who were being pushed out of the garment industry by the likes of Levinsky. And it never occurred to David Levinsky that he wanted to resemble or be accepted socially by the gentiles he met. He never harbored that aspiration of a Simon Rosedale or a Robert Cohn. Indeed, although he even developed a promiscuous sexual activity in America which those two more sophisticated gentlemen might have envied, David Levinsky, when he met a gentile woman to whom he was attracted so strongly that he considered marrying her, decided against that step primarily because she was not Jewish. There was a strong streak of sentimentality in the nostalgic Jewishness of David Levinsky — a self-salving sentimentality characteristic of ruthless characters — and his false assertion in retrospect that “when I take a look at my inner identity it impresses me as being precisely the same as it was thirty or forty years ago” is part of that soft sentimentality which threads the harsh realistic fabric of his story, in which it is quite obvious how much his inner Jewish identity has been changed in the course of that struggle to rise from desperate insecurity to self-centered survival. Abraham Cahan’s image of this Jew is a masterly portrait, which includes that element of sentimental self-pity and nostalgia and is plainly revealed at the end:

I don’t seem to be able to get accustomed to my luxurious life. I am always more or less conscious of my good clothes, of the high quality of my furniture, of the power I wield over the men in my pay. . . . I can never forget the days of my misery. I cannot escape my old self. My past and my present do not comport well. David, the poor lad swinging over a Talmud volume at the Preacher’s Synagogue, seems to have more in common with my inner identity than David Levinsky, the well-known cloak-manufacturer.

Although the novel is in the form of an autobiography, it is not the autobiography of the author, Abraham Cahan, except

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probably for the first section telling of the European boyhood of David Levinsky and of his early struggle for a livelihood in the new world. And the David Levinsky who developed in that world is an authentic image of some Jews whom Abraham Cahan got to know well in America. But Cahan himself was quite a different sort of Jew. When he arrived from Russia, like Levinsky, in the mid-eighties he was no longer a studious Talmudist but a man of the modern revolutionary world — a thoroughly indoctrinated socialist; and he soon became an influential journalist on the Yiddish newspaper *The Forward*, and was active in the organization of the garment workers' union, which gave the likes of Levinsky so much trouble in their rise to affluence. It is a great pity, therefore, that in picturing Levinsky's struggle with the union Cahan did not project the image of such a Jew as himself who, stemming from the same origins, and having left behind him, like Levinsky, the observance of the same religious rituals, yet had brought with him into the new world that strong sense of social justice which the prophets preached and which the likes of Levinsky discarded.

For James Jones' Isaac Bloom, being an uncultivated Jew (which Levinsky was not), was of course quite wrong in his belief that there are only two kinds of Jews: those who toady to gentiles (like Rosedale and Cohn) and try to be just like them, and those like his parents who keep kosher and maintain other Jewish mores without any inherent spiritual significance: *bauch-Juden* (stomach Jews) the Jews call such Jews. Poor Bloom had no vision of that other element of Jewishness — of the Mosaic and prophetic spirit. Isaac Bloom had never been taught that; but David Levinsky had; and it was this that he had discarded in America, and Abraham Cahan had not.

The inclusion of the image of such a Jew as himself would have made Cahan's book greater and truer. That gentile writers like Wharton, and Hemingway, and Jones should not have presented images of more admirable Jews than Simon Rosedale, and Robert Cohn, and Isaac Bloom, is little cause for wonder. But one cannot help wondering why a Jewish writer like Cahan should not have done so when he had fit prototypes near at hand — not only himself and his many colleagues, but

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men like Gompers and Brandeis who were well known in his time. And it is remarkable that this propensity to present only an unsavory image of the Jew and his life in America was exhibited by the generation of Jewish writers, the children of immigrants like Levinsky, born or raised here, who began publishing novels in the late twenties and early thirties.

A notable exception to that trend was Ludwig Lewisohn's superbly written, and largely autobiographical novel, *The Island Within*, published in 1928, in which Arthur Levy, the son of assimilated German Jews, and himself, to all intents and purposes, a Jew in name only — a successful physician, married to the sophisticated daughter of a Christian minister, and the father of a son named John, discovers that for his spiritual integrity and salvation he must recover the Judaism of his grandparents and make it a vital part of his life as an American, although he has a reasonable argument for total assimilation:

Natural history has much to say of the phenomena of protective mimicry in respect of color; the dead statement of the printed page leaps into life in the desert lands where the eye always reaches to the horizon where there is no escape or shelter. There man builds brief huts of desert-colored mud and thatches them with desert-colored straw; there the camel and the lion are indistinguishable from the sands. . . . Not to be seen; not to be spied out; to merge with nature or a group of creatures like oneself — to disappear as an individual, to be conventional — how profoundly does this universal urge point to the terror that is at the core of all mortal life! . . . War is at the heart of nature, war at the heart of society. To be conspicuous is to be a mark for arrows; the moral quality of the conspicuousness matters little. The arrows fly.

And although his German Jewish vision of East European Jews was akin to that of any gentile anti-Semite, it was the Russian pogroms that shook him into reluctant awareness of his abiding inner Jewishness:

As if there weren't other plague spots on Tsarist Russia outside of her treatment of the Jews. But wasn't her treatment of the Jews a matter that not only a Jew, but any decent and humane man, might well take into account? Jews. . . Jews. . . Jews. . . He loathed the very word. And as for the Jews from Russia. . . He had seen them on

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Grand Street and Norfolk Street and once in a Yiddish theater. . . . Utter aliens to himself, these people — repulsive, in fact: dirty, sunk in superstition, loud, Oriental without being picturesque, jabbering in a mongrel jargon, smelling of garlic. . . . Why he should take their part, why he, in considering Russia, should instinctively think of Kichinev — he didn't know . . . he simply didn't know.

Nevertheless, Lewisohn's Arthur Levy became, in a way, an answer to the likes of Wharton's Simon Rosedale and Hemingway's Robert Cohn, also Jews in name only, who aspired to acceptance in the society of gentiles; although Arthur Levy was not troubled, like Rosedale and Cohn, by social discrimination, for he and his gentile wife were quite at home in that admirably democratic and civilized society of liberal intellectual America. It was the discovery of the Jewish island within himself which disturbed Arthur Levy and returned him to Judaism. And in consideration of the strong Biblical influence in Puritan America, Judaism should not be as alien to Americanism as some gentiles think it is. And Lewisohn's *The Island Within* was acclaimed by critics and readers, and had twelve printings in the first three months of its publication.

But its admirable image of the Jew returned from German assimilation had no apparent influence on Jewish writers who were the sons of East European immigrants and who published in the early thirties novels which were essentially autobiographical memoirs of their traumatic childhood, the like of which Lewisohn's Arthur Levy had not suffered, in that East Side slum out of which Cahan's David Levinsky had clawed his way, but where their less fortunate or less ruthless parents had remained trapped; although by the time those novels were written their authors had themselves somehow managed to escape from that trap. Typical of such novels were *Jews Without Money* by Michael Gold (1932), and *Call It Sleep* by Henry Roth (1934). These two are particularly interesting to consider because they tell virtually the same story from the points of view of two psychologically different personalities. Both are the experiences of young boys, the sons of East European immigrants raised mostly by an adoring Jewish mother, living in dire poverty in a teeming East Side tenement. But Michael Gold's Mikey was a

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husky youngster who could give as good as he took, and was toughened and even entertained by his sordid environment, which is described with the utmost crassness and brutality; while Henry Roth's David was a frail, supersensitive, neurotic child living a continuous, unmitigated nightmare, which is rendered by Roth with the virtuosity of an artist who has known the dreadful depths of childhood insecurity. In both books the boys inevitably come into conflict with rowdy Jew-hating gentile children who live on the fringes of their ghetto; but their most traumatic experiences occur within their own environment, from their contacts with adult Jews, their fathers, their teachers, their neighbors, all apparently warped and embittered, or corrupted and brutalized by the desperate struggle for survival in that trap into which their once hopeful immigration had lured them. Only the boys' mothers are exempt from scorn and condemnation; and it is not because they are learned Jewesses, since they exhibit no Jewish knowledge to speak of, but only that classic concern of Jewish motherhood celebrated in the Biblical "woman of valor" (Proverbs 31:10-31). Otherwise, no single person, child or adult, in either book is lovable. The total image of the Jew in both books is anything but admirable, or even hopeful of Jewish salvation; and the resolution at the end of each book is consistent with the maimed psychology of its boyish prototype: In Gold's book, brash Mikey finds his hope in enlistment in the revolutionary labor movement; and in Roth's book, David, close to psychosis, has an apocalyptic experience which mystically suggests some saving grace for his personal future. In neither case is there any indication of salvation in Jewishness. Even in the land of the free the Jews as a people could not hope for survival.

In the early thirties, when the present writer was publishing his first novels, he was troubled by the image of the Jew presented in such books, which seemed to him grossly misrepresentative in the light of his own experience. He was the first born American child of his immigrant father who, like Cahan's Levinsky, had been a Talmudic scholar and was hardly prepared for the struggle for survival on the East Side, which he entered with a handicap greater than that of Levinsky, a single

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man. The writer's father had a wife and two young children when he arrived here in the year before the dreadful panic of 1893. Nevertheless, he too made his way upward, from sweatshop worker to owner of his own modest sweatshop where he sweated alongside his help and managed to wring out of that steamy, grinding effort enough to carry his growing family uptown, first to the *ordentlich* middle-class German-Jewish neighborhood on Avenue A, and then moved to practically suburban Harlem, along with Townsend Harris Hall of the City College, which the writer, then a high-school boy, was attending. His father did not get to the affluent upper West Side, probably because, unlike Levinsky, he would not, no matter how bitter the struggle, sacrifice his Judaism. The present writer woke every morning to the murmur of his father's praying by a window facing eastward, arrayed in phylacteries and prayer shawl, which, after *bar-mitzvah*, the boy also did before going off to school; and he accompanied his father to the synagogue every Sabbath and Jewish holiday which his father observed religiously, in the true sense of that word. And his father still studied Torah and Talmud on such restful days, and would discuss them with the boy in the light of the scientific courses he was pursuing. And on the eve of the Sabbath and of the holidays the boy would come from school to find their home redolent of the special savor of such days created by his mother in accordance with ancient Jewish tradition, which his parents had practised within the pales of Jewish settlements under hateful anti-Semitic governments in Europe from which they had fled to the land of the free in the hope of having the liberty to practise and preserve those precious traditions in peace. And listening to his father and mother and their immigrant relatives and friends talking of how they had lived their Jewish lives and preserved those Jewish mores and values under the most ignominious oppressive conditions, along with the Judaism inculcated in him by his father's teaching, gave the present writer an image of the Jew which served to inform and fortify his Jewishness in the face of such evidences of anti-Semitism as became apparent to him as a boy even here in the land of the free. Like Henry Roth's David he was a sensitive little boy who dreaded

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the barbaric bullying "Micks" who lived on the East River fringe of his Avenue A neighborhood. A couple of them made his first day at school memorable by waylaying him on his way home and, shouting "Sheeney," snatching from his head the handsome new cap his father had made him for that occasion. And like Michael Gold's little Mikey he suffered the persecution of a gentile school-teacher (not fat like Mikey's but skinny and green-eyed he still recalls after sixty-five years) who took fiendish delight in washing the mouths of Jewish children who talked out of turn with soap she knew very well was not kosher. (He also remembers his childish satisfaction at the sight of the mourning wreath which decorated her desk the day after the SS Slocum disaster, when an excursion boat loaded with Sunday School children and teachers burned and sank in the East River.) But, thanks to his parents, such experiences did not leave him with the fearful contempt for Judaism and Jewishness, and the self-hatred which characterized much of the Jewish image projected in the fiction of his own generation of Jewish writers in the early thirties. He was therefore prompted, almost in protest, to project in his third novel, *Hear, Ye Sons*, his own image of the Jew. And because it seemed to him that what ailed those Jewish writers of his generation was the lack of information, literally, of those essential elements of Judaism that have so remarkably maintained the Jewish spirit through centuries of persecution and suffering, he presented, in a prologue, the picture of a thoroughly Americanized Jewish family, like his own, in which the immigrant parents have attained economic security, and the grown-up children have found their respectable places, as have so many offspring of immigrants, in various activities of American life, industrial, technological, academic, artistic, and sociological — despite discriminations which are still practised to some extent. In the body of that book, the present writer gave the reminiscences of the father of the family: of his early life in an East-European pale of settlement, which was based mainly on those accounts the writer had heard from his parents and their generation, reinforced by his own observations of what remained of that mode of life, in travels through the area from which his parents had come. His

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gentile publishers were loath to print the book which put so different a face on the current fictional image of the Jew; but they had no reason to regret it when he persuaded them to do so; and the writer himself was pleasantly surprised by the response of critics and plain readers. He begs to be believed that he says this not out of personal vanity but to support an important point he wishes to make regarding the nature of the image of the Jew in our present fiction. *Hear, Ye Sons*, published in 1934, was reviewed with unanimous enthusiasm by both gentile and Jewish critics as a revelation of the admirable and invaluable Jewish ethos, which had become an important element in American culture. It was reprinted three times in the first month of its publication, and letters came from immigrant Jews all over the country assuring the writer that he had written not merely the story of his own forebears but of a whole generation of Jews. The book was hailed as a classic in its field, and was republished in the Modern Library.

But *Hear, Ye Sons* had no more effect than Lewisohn's *The Island Within* in elevating the image of the Jew projected by Jewish writers in the novels that came after it, like Jerome Weidman's *I Can Get It For You Wholesale* (1937) and Budd Schulberg's *What Makes Sammy Run?* (1940) (a question which had been better answered in Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky*). In their titles alone, he who runs may read their denigrating stories. And in 1946 Jo Sinclair won the Harper's Prize with her serious and well-written novel, *Wasteland*, about Jake Brown, whose dread of anti-Semitism had festered, as it does in unfortified Jews, into a paranoid hatred of anything Jewish, including his own family and himself. In James Jones' Isaac Bloom, that self-hatred ended in suicide. In Jo Sinclair's Jake Brown, however, it ended on the psychiatrist's couch where, we are told, he achieved his personal salvation, not like Lewisohn's Arthur Levy by reinforcing his spirit with the knowledge of Judaism and the integration of his Jewishness with his Americanism, but by "adjustment" — that sovereign psychiatric panacea — by adapting himself to living with the fact of his being Jewish as one normally does with any unavoidable handicap. But even this psychiatric resolution is not

