

Rethinking “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been”

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Five decades ago, the “Pied Piper of Tucson,” a psychopathic killer, roamed the streets of this Southwest city seeking, seducing and killing teen-aged girls. Strangely, teenagers throughout the Tucson area that knew of his lawless and abnormal behavior kept silent, saying nothing to parents or police. More strange still, this short and stocky Pied Piper stuffed his boots with paper to appear taller, strutted cockily about mimicking teen talk and charismatically charming his prey. Parents and police had only one word to explain the silence, “inexplicable.” Joyce Carol Oates wrote “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been” about this mass murderer, though the story focused not on the psychopath but on the teenagers who aided and abetted his crimes. Paralleling their complicity was the awareness by parents and authorities of the victims’ fascination and attraction to the mystery of death and romance bound together in the mesmerizing tales that lured them into the psychopath’s lair. Fascinating how potential victims can find attraction in the fate that stalks them by seeing no evil, hearing no evil yet walking hand in hand with the evil.

“Where are you going, where have you been” might well be an epitaph for the United States, as its latest victim, the Obama administration, courts the crimes of the Bush administration in its continuation of torture, rendition, illegal wire-tapping, hiring of terrorists (euphemized as mercenaries) as military support, use of white phosphorus, DIME, depleted uranium, drone aircraft to kill the innocent, invasion of countries at will in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and unconditional support for the terrorist state of Israel that ignores the American peoples’ cry for change against on-going illegal crimes that flaunt international law and show case that disdain in its ruthless siege of Gaza.

For as far back as the Pied Piper stalked the streets of Tucson, a series of Israeli administrations have spurned the international community, illegally stealing land, mercilessly killing Palestinians, invading neighboring states, confiscating and occupying their land, laying claim to their water, claiming immunity from international law and literally compelling the successive administrations in the United States to acquiesce to their crimes. How like the

citizens of Tucson, to ignore the reality that seduced their children because their silence was “inexplicable.”

How long can the American people ignore the reality of America? We accept the lies that entice, the lies of the supposed “friend” in the mid-east, the only democracy, the one who has been with us all these years, ‘our’ westernized neighbor that thinks and behaves like we do, a veritable “Pied Piper” courting America, luring America, seducing America, a sick romance built on victimization that requires constant attention to alleviate the fear of annihilation by the enemies that surround it.

Even now the seducing continues. The generosity, the kindness and compassion of Israel in its state of the art medical field station brought to Haiti is promoted to emphasize its on-going concern for universal care, care delivered thousands of miles from home; yet no mention is made of the calculated decimation of the Gazan population that has been under siege for three years deprived of medicines, operating hospitals, sufficient water and food, with waste running in the streets because sewage plants have been destroyed, a place only yards away from Israel. Gaza is a human made disaster; Haiti was leveled by Nature’s force. Nature’s power is indifferent to the consequences of its force, so too it seems is the Zionist government of Israel.

Oates’ story compels the reader to explore the mystery that allows for silence in the wake of perversion, a complicity of indifference to another’s pain and suffering lest we become immersed in its brutality, lest by investing in openness to the reality that exists, by speaking out against the amoral and abnormal behavior, by condemning the acts and the silence, we put ourselves at risk and become the victim. How long can we ignore the malignity that invades our consciousness, how long can we turn our backs on the brazen complicity of our representatives as they bow and scrape before their masters of deceit, how long can we close our eyes to the reality of the abominations executed in our name?

It is, after all, America that has invaded Iraq illegally and caused thereby the deaths of upwards of a million and a half people; it is America that feeds the Israeli war machine the illegal weapons and stock piles them awaiting the next invasion against the defenseless people of Gaza; it is America that has abandoned rule by law to mimic the extrajudicial executions of the Zionist powers, to imprison people without charge, to hold them indefinitely for years at a time, to torture them against international law; it is America that allows and defends Israel’s illegal use of collective punishment against the Gazan

people making it in all these instances complicit in war crimes condemned by the United Nations and the International Courts. This from a country founded on rule by law and human rights.

Where is America going? Perhaps we know because we know where it has been; it lives in a world that Tadeusz Borowski understood: "The world is ruled by neither justice nor morality; crime is not punished nor virtue rewarded, one is forgotten as quickly as the other. The world is ruled by power and power is obtained with money. To work is senseless, because money cannot be obtained through work but through exploitation of others. And if we cannot exploit as much as we wish, at least let us work as little as we can. Moral duty? We believe neither in the morality of men, not in the morality of systems." This hideous and degrading picture of the human animal Borowski painted at Auschwitz. Humankind without benevolence, without compassion, lacking empathy, lacking mercy: inexorable, ruthless, and malevolent, a savage, brutal animal devoid of morals, oblivious to justice.