

MAR MANI

AVRAHAM MANI (1799-1861)

straddles Europe/Asia
father dies when Avraham = 21
beloved grandfather
b. Salonika, studies in Constantinople
Rabbi Haddaya = surrogate father/grandfather/rebbe
marries in 1825, has 2 children then wife dies
falls in love w/Floro Molkho, who marries the rabbi instead
visits Yosef in Jerusalem, to bring them back
shadows him
sets up spice shop
sires Yosef's son thru Tamara
consumed w/guilt; believes he killed his own son
confronts Floro/R. Haddayah in Athens inn
precipitates rabbi's death by forcing him to hear the story

YOSEF MANI (1826-1847)

Floro loves him; he sleeps in her bed
Floro matches him off to her niece, Tamara
they elope in Jerusalem
[i.e., 1st to settle there]
"overwhelmed by his loneliness"
wife = spitting image of the woman he loves (353)
marriage to Tamara unconsummated
British Consul takes him under his wing; sees them as keys to the future
Yosef becomes a guide, courier, scribe for secret correspondence
trying to convert Jews who don't know that they're Jews yet
his idée fixe; courting death (343)
1ST PROTO-ZIONIST
homosexual; probably killed by one of his Arab lovers
devastated when Floro does not accompany his father to Palestine
murdered on Christmas Night at Church of Holy Sepulchre

MOSHE MANI (1848-1899)

raised and terribly spoiled by Tamara
has no recollection of his grandfather, nor any knowledge of his true parentage
same British consul makes him a British subject for bar mitzva (165)
consul sends him to study medicine at American University, Beirut
brings Tamara to Beirut
consul finds him Anglo-Jewish wife

2 daughters die at birth, Yosef barely makes it
gynecologist
early 1890s sets up lying-in hospital in Jerusalem,
mirrors everywhere
blond Swedish midwife officiates over screamless births
close to the sheikh who murdered his father
lives w/elderly, almost blind mother
goes to Basel for Third Zionist Congress to fundraise
comic encounter w/Herzl!
meets Linka & Efrayim who follow him home
always carries candles
Linka becomes his pretext to commit suicide
kills himself by falling in front of train in Beirut

YOSEF MANI (1887-1941)

prematurely aged, follows daddy around the clinic
father kills himself autumn of his 12th year
that winter he witnesses & aids in birth
fear of sexuality + neglect by father = national self-deception
there his intense political consciousness is born (169)
later legenderizes his own birth (165)
but knows about his father's love affair
decides to study languages
learns Scottish English
takes up w/Hasidim who prepare him for bar mitzva
but maintains his freedom
beloved grandmother Tamara dies when he's 18
defunct hospital becomes pilgrim's hostel
moves to Beirut, drawn to site of father's death
takes along his **overcoat**
stays 6 years
sister marries & moves to Marseilles
helps halutzim on the way to Israel
studies various & sundry
1914: has a motherless baby; moves back to Jerusalem
Hasidim find him a Babylonian wife
the British push out the Turks, attaches himself to Cpt. Daggett
becomes chief divisional interpreter
begins spying for the Turks
agitates among the Arabs: Get ye an identity! (189)
Ivor Horowitz asks for death sentence
commuted to banishment to Crete by Colonel Michael Woodhouse

becomes Greek tour guide at Knossos
dies as a hostage to Egon Bruner, who covers him w/old overcoat & takes his **candles**

EPHRAIM MANI (1914-1944)

born in Beirut boardinghouse to tubercular woman from Russia (196)
may actually be Mani's stepson, sired by a non-Jew
mother dies in childbirth
marries, has a child
when cornered by Bruner, claims to have cancelled his Jewishness (123)
inherits father's overcoat
Bruner has him deported, but wife & son sent into hiding
all the Jews are sunk at sea
stammers
deported w/father to Crete at age 4

GAVRIEL MANI (b. 1938)

moves back to Jerusalem
Justice of the Peace
tries to kill himself after his mother dies
she is buried next to Yosef Mani's restored grave (55)
gives Hagar his **overcoat**
takes a shine to Hagar's mother, & to his grandson

EFRAIM MANI (1958-)

TOPICS

1. Parody of the Sepharadi tahor
this racialism = prototype of destructive, modern nationalism
2. Form = substance
dialogues without interlocutors = parody of the self
studies in solipsism, self-delusion
3. Psychology vs. History
unconscious repetition inserted into trajectory of history
infantile sexuality
4. The role of the speaker
Hagar indicts her mother's collectivist interpretation of behavior; her pat answers for everything
Efrayim protests that he & Linka are merely pretexts
Ivor Horowitz gives himself away
5. Hidden patterns
Hagar gets caught up in Manis' intergenerational process of repetition
her imagined pregnancy = unconsummated marriage of Yosef Mani / Tamara
Judge Mani's becoming guardian of son's child = Avraham siring his own grandson

Nov. 28, 1995

Dear David Roskies,

I am still ~~thinking~~ about Mr. Mani and what A. B. Yehoshua seems to be saying about the progression of Israeli-Arab relations: The first Mani - perhaps like those first Jews returning to Israel - romanticizes the Arabs & imagines that they are simply Jews who have forgotten ^{that} they are Jews, and so his arrival is actually a blessing to them since it will shake them out of their state of amnesia - therefore there's no conflict between Jews who are returning and the people they find in the land. The second Mani has embraced Zionism for some crazed form of Zionism - his Zionism is linked with the idea of the painless, screamless birth, a process where two peoples, two nations can come into existence painlessly (paradoxically, it's his Jewish patients who scream & scream since at the bottom they know the birth pangs will be terrible). The third Mani, the political man, preaches to the Arabs: "Get yourselves an identity for we Jews have gotten ourselves one, get yourselves an identity and become our equal - otherwise history will trample you underfoot." The fourth Mani tries to escape his fate and this terrible identity by cancelling his Jewishness but the world & history won't allow him to. The fifth Mani, the contemporary generation of Manis, is the most problematic of them all - at least for me. It's a generation now sick and infected by the encounter with Hitler's Germany & Nazis, a generation that rushes off blindly into Lebanon to destroy and eliminate the threat of the Arabs, to remove the Palestinians who have finally awakened to the symbols of their "Jewishness",

symbols &

who have appropriated the notions of homelessness, of persecution of the diaspora & exile, who have given birth to themselves & gotten themselves an identity.

I am repeating myself and there is something too didactic & programmatic to this line of thinking, given such a rich ^{material} ~~book~~. But I think there is another progression in Mani that also struck me. The book "begins" with the story & voice of Abraham Mani and ends with the voice & experience of Hagar, the only female narrator/voice in the book. The decision to end chronologically in her voice ~~as~~ is deliberate and, for lack of a better word, hopeful. And so maybe not all is lost for this Hagar & her child who have wandered out into the desert. Maybe there are angels who are watching over them.

Thank you for leading the discussion on Mr. Mani. I knew it was a great book the first time I read it, but I was even more stunned the second time around.

Sincerely,
Robert Roser