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The Return of the Shakespearean Jester:  
Postmemory and the Modes of Remembrance in Howard Jacobson's  
*Kalooki Nights* (2006)

Abstract

The tight matrix of death and laughter at the heart of Howard Jacobson's *Kalooki Nights* (2006) is firmly rooted in the carnivalesque modes and tragic form of *Hamlet*. There is, I will argue, a striking affinity between Jacobson's post-memorial novel and the Shakespearean tragedy: the return of the Ghost, with its demand for revenge and remembrance, may be read as an embodiment ante litteram of the anachronistic movement of postmemory. In overt contrast with the etiquette of tragedy, Yorick's skull re-emerges from the earth of the graveyard and, a fool in the midst of a tragic tale, 'carnivalizes' Shakespeare's play; similarly, all sorts of carnivalesque imageries envelop the postmemorial themes and tales of *Kalooki Nights*. Moreover, the return of the Shakespearean jester, amplified in *Hamlet* through jesting, puns and wordplays, mirrors the way in which the past re-emerges, carnivalized, from the rich and ambivalent textual soil of Jacobson's novel.

"Hilarious" according to the Sunday Telegraph and "Heartbreaking" for the Observer, Howard Jacobson's novel *Kalooki Nights* (2006) is a darkly funny tale of the British post-generation; in it, the experience of postmemory is modulated by a Jewish literary and memorial tradition in which tragedy and comedy intertwine under the sign of Yorick, the Shakespearean jester. *Kalooki Nights* is partly autobiographical – born in 1942, Jacobson grew up in post-war Manchester, safe from persecution and deportation, far away from marches and concentration camps. However, he belongs to a generation – the post-generation – for which the dim knowledge of the Holocaust was ubiquitous, resting on inherited memories of the Shoah, parental stories and stolen photographs often acquired during childhood.<sup>1</sup> Through the voice of his hero, a Jewish cartoonist

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<sup>1</sup> Young Jews in post-war Britain read of the Shoah on newspapers and books, in particular Edward Russel's *The Scourge of the Swastika* (1954). Extremely popular amongst young Jews, the book was often forbidden by parents. As a consequence, for Jacobson and his peers the

living in 1950s Manchester, Jacobson keeps posing the same question, today still relevant to second-generation writers and artists: “is it permissible [...] to evoke laughter in response to the Holocaust?” (Montresor 1993, 126); and, if relying on the comic mode to discuss the Holocaust is indeed permissible, how? In what form? By what means?

Jacobson is often (and with good reason) associated with Philip Roth on the basis of their common challenge to the “Holocaust etiquette” (Des Pres 1988, 218). According to Terrence Des Pres, such etiquette, which is the etiquette of tragedy, demands that “the Holocaust shall be approached as a solemn, or even a sacred event, admitting of no response that obscures its enormity or dishonours its dead” (218). And yet, comedy – a dark comedy, but comedy nonetheless – envelops Jacobson’s, like Roth’s, texts, characters and imagery. However, rather than as a British Philip Roth, Jacobson prefers to think of himself as a Jewish Jane Austen,<sup>2</sup> thus acknowledging his debt to the English literary and artistic tradition in which the moods and modes of his novels are firmly rooted.

Max Glickman, the protagonist of *Kalooki Nights*, resorts to “the drawing of the comico-savage sort” (Jacobson 2006, 33) proper to a long tradition of British pictorial satirists, first amongst them William Hogarth – “Adorno famously said that, after the Holocaust, poetry wasn’t a good idea. He never thought there was need to include cartoons in that proscription” (33), Max muses. On the other hand, Jacobson looks back to the literary tradition of the English Renaissance discussed at length by Mikhail Bakhtin:<sup>3</sup> “laughter,” he writes in *Rabelais and his World* (1965), “is just as admissible in great literature, posing universal problems, as seriousness. Certain essential aspects of the world are accessible only to laughter” (1984, 66).

Laughter, but always rooted in tragedy. Such apparent contradiction in terms is partly clarified in light of the Shakespearean trace that travels across Jacobson’s literary production – in William Shakespeare, Jacobson claims, he found his credo as a writer (1997): not in the comedies or in *The Merchant of Venice*, contrarily to what one may expect, but in *Hamlet*, a tragedy. To be more specific,

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memory of the Holocaust came to elicit anxiety, but also the kind of morbid fascination that accompanies anything that is forbidden.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Janet Maslin’s review “Jewish Funhouse Mirror Is Alive and Not So Well,” *The New York Times* (20 Oct. 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Jacobson acknowledges his debt to both William Shakespeare and Mikhail Bakhtin in his history of comedy *seriously funny: From the Ridiculous to the Sublime* (1997). On Bakhtin and Shakespeare see, for example, Phyllis Gorfain’s essay “Towards a Theory of Play and the Carnavalesque in *Hamlet*” (1998) and Maria C. Laudando’s recent “Da Falstaff a Yorick. Il corpo e il fantasma della *vis comica shakespeareana*” (2019).

in the space of tragedy, in the graveyard where Hamlet, holding Yorick's skull, challenges the old (and dead!) court jester:

Where be your gibes now, your gambols, your songs, your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now to mock your own grinning? Quite chop-fallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come. Make her laugh at that. (V, i, 183-9)

## 1. Carnivalizing the Holocaust

In "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" (1937-8), Bakhtin identifies a "tight matrix of death and laughter" (1981, 198) common to some of the most important works of Renaissance literature: in Rabelais, of course, but also in Cervantes, Boccaccio, and Shakespeare, "in the Falstaff scenes, the cheerful gravediggers in *Hamlet*, the cheerful drunk porter in *Macbeth*" (198). An equally tight matrix of death and laughter governs the narration of *Kalooki Nights* – here, the tragic and the comic mode intertwine in the tale of the British post-generation, represented by Max and his peers, Manny Washinsky and Errol Tobias. Memories of the Shoah permeate their childhood, turning them into inadvertent recipients of a painful past, foreign and yet their own:

By the usual definitions of the word victim, of course, I wasn't one. I had been born safely, at a lucky time and in an unthreatening part of the world, to parents who loved and protected me. I was a child of peace and refuge. Manny too. But there was no refuge from the dead. For just as sinners pass on their accountability to generations not yet born, so do the sinned against. 'Remember me,' says Hamlet's father's ghost, and that's Hamlet fucked. (Jacobson 2006, 5)

And there, in the midst of a postmemorial novel, is *Hamlet*. However distant, the transgenerational trauma at the heart of Shakespeare's play is clearly in conversation with the Hamlet-like devotion to the Ghost that, for Jacobson's generation, were the victims of the Holocaust, the "Jews of Belsen and Buchenwald crying out to be remembered" (5). Their cry is reminiscent of the call of the Shakespearean Ghost - "Adieu, adieu, adieu. Remember me" (I, v, 91). Such a request for remembrance is embraced as a dictum by Hamlet and the post-generation alike – "Now to my word. It is 'Adieu, adieu, remember me.' I have sworn't" (I, v, 91); "Then I heard the wailing, centuries old" (Jacobson 2006, 48). In either case, (post)memory will turn into a curse or, in Jacobson's words, a "death-in-life grip those slaughtered five or more million had on our imaginations" (48).

In a recollection of his childhood years, Max confesses how, against their parents' wishes, young children in Manchester used to play concentration camps in an old bomb shelter; the main topics of their conversations were the Holocaust, Hitler, Nazi commanders, torture, death. In this way, the history of the Shoah became a source of morbid fascination and, in time, developed into an all-consuming obsession enveloping all aspects of Max's, Manny's and Errol's adult lives – their tastes, habits, jobs, relationships. So much so that Manny, the protagonist of the main (and most disquieting) episode of the novel, gradually loses the ability to distinguish his own past from that of the victims of the Holocaust: possibly associating the overbearing demands of his Orthodox Jewish parents to the Nazi authoritarian regime, Manny gasses his mother and father to death in their bed – “Side by side, holding hands, was how I imagined them. Like a devout Christian couple engraved in cathedral brass” (48).

In retrospect, the image of the gassed bodies of Manny's parents lying motionless on a bed looks alarmingly like a staged, small-scale Holocaust. It also recalls the stage in *Hamlet*: “the patriarchal system of revenge,” writes Phyllis Gorfain, “leaves a stage of slain bodies for Fortinbras to manage and a responsibility for Horatio to tell Hamlet's story” (1998, 155).<sup>4</sup> Manny's old friend and confidant, Max is left – much like Horatio – with the responsibility to tell a story of revenge and murder: after Manny's release from prison, a film production company asks Max to rekindle their old friendship in order to produce a drama based on “the only Jewish double homicide in the history of Crumpsall Park” (Jacobson 2006, 29). However, Manny's crime is only the latest chapter of a much longer (and bitter) tale – “I was the fruit of Five Thousand Years of Bitterness,” says Max, “which meant that I was heir to Five Thousand Years of Jokes” (29). *Five Thousand Years of Bitterness* is also the title of Max's comic book history of the sufferings of the Jewish people, in a way a *mise en abyme* of *Kalooki Nights*.

Conceived by Max and Manny in the old air-raid shelter, such early elaboration of postmemory in the cartoon mode contains the germ of the dialogue between tragedy and comedy underpinning Jacobson's novel. The dark tint of Max's humour may be traced back to the Jewish propensity to satire, but also to the English pictorial tradition: “English culture called. If not the English comic book, then the English cartoon. Moralistic. Suspicious. Dour. Savage. Reductively ribald” (29). In turn, Jacobson's deathly humour and the

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<sup>4</sup> Manny does not die at the end of the novel. After his release from prison, he suffers, however, a social death: he decides to change his name to Stroganoff, thus losing his identity and his place in the Manchester Jewish community.

carnavalesque character of his prose owe much to Shakespeare's tragedies, and *Hamlet* in particular – "In world literature," Bakhtin writes, "there are certain works in which the two aspects, seriousness and laughter, coexist and reflect each other, and are indeed whole aspects, not separate serious and comic images as in the usual model drama. [...] the most important works in this category are, of course, Shakespeare's tragedies" (1984, 122).

In this light, the King's jester of *Hamlet* is a true representative of the Shakespearean use of the carnivalesque in dramatic tragedy. Dug out of the earth of the graveyard with a "dirty shovel" (V, i, 100), Yorick re-emerges from Hamlet's past, material, earthly and grotesque. He is a highly ambivalent figure, "a fellow of infinite jest" (V, i, 179), the fool in the midst of a tale of tragedy. Through Hamlet's recollections, the skull evokes several of the "many outward carnivalesque aspects" attributed by Bakhtin to Shakespeare's drama: "images of the material bodily lower stratum, of ambivalent obscenities, and of popular banquet scenes" (1984, 275), images of life and death, laughter and sorrow, the dinner table and the graveyard, comedy and tragedy.

In *Kalooki Nights*, the "essence of the grotesque" (Bakhtin 1984, 62) has the shape of the "fine satiric lines," the "angry lines of satire," the "visual jokes" (Jacobson 2006, 239) drawn by Max – even Hitler cannot escape the omnivorous force of Max's cartoonery; he is turned into "a disembodied moustache screaming 'Heil!' and banging on about the Final Solution" (239). In this connection, it is worth remembering that the narration of Jacobson's novel is in the hands of "a man of comedy and exaggeration" (239), Max: thus, seen through the eyes of a cartoonist, the world of *Kalooki Nights* inevitably exhibits the exaggerated lines of caricature – Max's exaggeration, caricature, and distortion are translated verbally into oxymoron, paradox, hyperbole, verbal caricature, puns, word plays<sup>5</sup> akin to those uttered by the Shakespearean gravedigger. All sorts of carnivalesque imagery – appetites, low, animalistic instincts, music, etc. – merge with postmemorial themes and tales. At the British Museum, Max and Manny come

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<sup>5</sup> The silence of Max's parents on the Shoah come to be known as "lampshade moment[s]" (Jacobson 2006, 119), a clear reference to Ilse Koch's unspeakable means of torture; Max's string of invariably Aryan-looking wives become incarnations of Ilse Koch – "for erotic purposes I divided women, and had from a very early age, into vegetarians and meat-eaters. Ilse was a meat-eater. Vegetarians I took no interest in" (119); one of them, wishing to buy a Mercedes, accuses Max of refusing on the basis of its German origins: "So to prove Germany wasn't a problem I relented, or she relented, and we bought a Volkswagen Beetle. Had a Mercedes been a problem for me on German grounds, then a Volkswagen would surely have been a greater one. Linguistics partly. [...] 'If you look at the hubcaps on a Volkswagen [...] you'll see that the VW makes a swastika'" (119).

across the statue of the Egyptian god Bes, “the dwarf fertility god – smirking, naked, phallic, prancing, laden with musical instruments” (239); they see “a squatting baboon with a penis the size of a cartoonist’s pencil, a jeering hippopotamus-headed god, another jackal, a turtle, a second inebriate Bes clanging his cymbals” (239). Errol is a collector of pornographic materials about the Holocaust; Max, in turn, fantasises about Ilse Koch, turning her into a grotesque dominatrix: he draws “a caricature of Ilse Koch *à la* Hank Jansen in full riding gear and with swastikas on her saddle inspecting a line of naked Jewish prisoners with hard-ons” (239), the Holocaust equivalent of Yorick’s ancestor, the old satyr of folklore.

Thus, just as Yorick ‘carnivalizes’, so to speak, Hamlet’s tragedy, *Kalooki Nights* portrays a carnivalized Holocaust. Clearly, Max’s/Jacobson’s cartoonery and Shakespeare’s tragic method share the same ancestry: folk festivals and humour, clownish motives, Carnival forms, Medieval parodies, table-talk and feasts, the “logic of crowning and uncrownings” (Bakhtin 1984, 275) which regulated Medieval feasts. “The medieval feast,” Bakhtin explains, “had, as it were, the two faces of Janus. Its official, ecclesiastical face was turned to the past and sanctioned the existing order, but the face of the people of the marketplace looked into the future and laughed, attending the funeral of the past and present” (275). A similarly double-faced tension between past and future, comedy and tragedy regulates both *Hamlet* and *Kalooki Nights*; such tension is reflected in the polarity between the Ghost/victims of the Shoah and Yorick/Max.

On the one hand, the Shakespearean Ghost – “Armed at point exactly, cap-à-pie, / Appears before them, and with solemn march / Goes slow and stately” (I, ii, 200-2). His body is immaterial, “majestical,” “as the air, invulnerable” (I, ii, 200-2). He embodies the first half of Janus’ face, turned to a past of murder and tragedy. By virtue of his status - “King, father, royal Dane” (I, ii, 200-2) – the Ghost embodies “the serious aspects of class culture,” which, according to Bakhtin, “are official and authoritarian. They are combined with violence, prohibitions, limitations and always contain an element of fear and of intimidation” (1984, 90). A similar God-like status is attributed to the victims of the Shoah and, with them, to Channa and Selick Washinsky: “Gassed, they had joined the sacred millions, [...] the righteous by virtue of victimization” (Jacobson 2006, 49-50). In a similar way, submitting to the grandiose demands of inherited victimhood,<sup>6</sup> the post-generation runs the risk of becoming impervious to the

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<sup>6</sup> In fact, turning briefly to Jean-Paul Sartre (1946), while the weight of memory (or postmemory) does not deny facticity and the relation to the past, however foreign, it most

comic mode: indeed, tragedy – and, specifically, a tragedy devoid of hybridity – tends to enhance grandiosity by erasing human complexity, thus reducing the victim to an impermeable, one-dimensional entity – tragedy, prince, hero, Jew. This way, Max and, with him, the post-generation are condemned to share Hamlet’s (and Manny’s) destiny - “Under the body of his father, a boy lies” (50).

On the other hand, Yorick – a “whoreson dead body,” “a mad rogue” (V, i, 166, 173), a human relic, skeletal, material, grotesque. He embodies the nourishment of comedy: eating, drinking, sexuality, the Greek satyrs with their engorged penises, stomachs, horns and tails, Dionysus, clowns, jesters, table talk, the “system of degradation, turnovers, and travesties” (Bakhtin 1984, 82) of Carnival. Similarly, Max is a fool, a “dick-artist” (Jacobson 2006, 253), immoral and blasphemous. While always in overt contrast with the prevailing mood of the novel, his deathly cartoonery, as Jacobson’s back comedy, answers to an inner necessity of the post-generation, the need of the irreverent and disordering power of laughter which, as Jacobson notes in his *seriously funny* (1997), “reminds us of our inexhaustible capacity to evade the burden of sympathy and the compulsion to suffer” (137).<sup>7</sup> Thus, Max’s and Yorick’s skeletal faces are turned to the future: it is, in other words, precisely by recalling the beastly, earthly nature of victims, from the past or the present, – in overt contrast with the God-like status in which they are entrapped – that the post-generation may eventually escape Hamlet’s destiny: “Had you made a bit of room for Bes in your heart, Manny,” Max considers, “who knows – you might not have had to play the Holocaust around and around in your head, or stutter into your fingernails, or gas your parents” (Jacobson 2006, 281).

## 2. The unearthing of Yorick

The return of the Ghost and the unearthing of Yorick in *Hamlet* may be read as ante litteram representations of the anachronistic movement of postmemory

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certainly denies transcendence, eventually rendering Hamlet and Jacobson, together with his peers, victims without perpetrators.

<sup>7</sup> Des Pres too underlines how “since the time of Hippocrates [...] laughter’s medicinal power has been recognized, and most of us would agree that humour heals” (1988, 218); and later, “a comic response to calamity is often more resilient, more effectively equal to terror and the sources of terror than a response that is solemn or tragic” (218). Similarly, Joost Krijnen argues that “comic displacement goes hand in hand with the healing power of laughter, and so, the comic mode is also a progressive force that enables life to continue, a force that resists the vicious circle of traumatic fixation” (2016, 71).

(Hirsch 2012): the Ghost is the bearer of a history of violence, treason and murder, he embodies a foreign and fatal past that re-emerges (quite literally) in the present; on the other hand, the unearthing of Yorick's skull becomes the medium whereby comedy, amplified by the gravedigger's jesting, sneaks into Hamlet's tragedy.

Hamlet What man dost thou dig it for?

Grave. For no man, sir.

Hamlet What woman then?

Grave. For none neither.

Hamlet Who is to be buried in't?

Grave. One that was a woman, sir; but rest her soul, she's dead.

(V, i, 126-132)

Through the multifarious power of comedic jesting, the unearthing of Yorick turns the Shakespearean graveyard into a “playground of mimicry and revolution” (Gorfain 1998, 159). In fact, Gorfain writes, “punning and other figures of speech [...] encapsulate the patterns of both cyclicity and broken linear forms which together constitute *Hamlet's* carnivalesque modes and tragic form” (159).

If the return of the Ghost sets into motion “the unilinear trajectory of death and loss [of] formal tragedy” (159), the unearthing of Yorick is the matrix of a different movement, opposite to the linear consequentiality of tragedy: the cyclical motion of comedy and Carnival, linked with the change of time and seasons, “with the procreating act, with birth, renewal, fertility, abundance” (Bakhtin 1984, 95),<sup>8</sup> with the system of crowning and uncrowning, a time in which “the jester was proclaimed king” (95); in fact, in light of the Carnavalesque imagery that crosses the play and bursts to life in the graveyard, the skull of the Shakespearean jester might be read as the grotesque counterpart of the Ghost of the noble King. Funded on the “alliance of linear consequence with cyclical carnivalesque” (Gorfain 1998, 158), the plot of *Hamlet* heads, death after death, towards a tragic ending with the Ghost on the lead; yet, the unearthing of Yorick – whose black laughter resonates throughout the play in the form of wordplays and puns – brings back comedy, offering Hamlet the victim and *Hamlet* the play a way out of the grandiose demands of tragedy.

Jacobson's novels follow a similar path: while his characters keep listening to their fathers' fathers' ghosts and inevitably head towards tragedy, comedy finds its way, taking up residence in the tragic space of postmemory. Its anachronistic

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<sup>8</sup> Bakhtin stresses how such motion is proper to Shakespeare specifically; he writes: “this pathos of radical changes and renewals is the essence of Shakespeare's world consciousness” (1984, 275).



movement is mirrored, at the level of form, in the extremely troubled chronology proper to *Kalooki Nights* – like Max, Jacobson is never “at the mercy of linear narrative” (2006, 221) and the past, both historical and fictional, resurfaces in the present: people from the past invade the daily lives of the protagonists and the present of the narration is filled with allusions to the previous pages of the novel – words, images, people traverse the text, often evoked by a single word, a sound, an image, an ironic wink to the reader. One example: in the attempt to rekindle his friendship with Manny, Max hosts him in a little annexe next to his house: “He took the keys from me without meeting my eyes. Then he asked whether he would need change for the gas meter” (221). In such context, the gas meter is doubly charged with tragedy: historically, due to the memory of the gas chambers, and fictionally, as a consequence of the murder of Manny’s parents. Yet, its sudden and grotesque return elicits laughter, black and splenetic, which successfully deflates its acquired tragic connotation by reminding the reader of its triviality.

Moreover, the anachronistic movement of postmemory is, quite surprisingly, not prerogative of *Kalooki Nights*, but a constant feature of Jacobson’s literary production. This means that that postmemory is, together with Shakespeare’s carnivalesque modes and tragic form, present formally in each of Jacobson’s novels. His *Shylock is my Name* (2016), for example, starts in a graveyard in twentieth-century Manchester, where the protagonist, Simon Strulovitch, stands by the grave of his dead mother. Next to him, Shylock mourns his wife, Leah. Then, shifting momentarily to Strulovitch’s past, Jacobson writes:

He was shopping with his mother in a department store when she saw Hitler buying aftershave. [...] Back home he made a joke of it to his father.

“Don’t cheek your mother,” his father told him. “If she said she saw Hitler, she saw Hitler. Your Aunty Annie ran into Stalin on Stockport market last year, and when I was your age I saw Moses rowing on Heaton Park Lake.”

“Couldn’t have been,” Strulovitch said. “Moses would just have parted the waters.” (2016, 4)

“The time is out of joint” (I, v, 196), Hamlet would say – Shylock is about four hundred years old, Moses is still alive and kicking, and Hitler buys aftershave in 1950s Manchester. Words, images, people from the past resurface in the present, unearthed like Yorick’s skull and endowed with a new comedic connotation. In this way, comedy fights abstraction by answering to the reader’s suspicion that the gas meter is not grand at all; it brings back human earthliness, reminds of Manny’s daily, innocent need of gas, Hitler’s need of aftershave to cut his infamous moustache. One by one, the words made unholy, people, objects,

things made too holy regain complexity. And in such a manner, everything becomes strikingly similar to Yorick's skull.

### 3. Conclusions

“Hard to get people to laugh at the Holocaust” (Jacobson 2006, 119) – Max's words echo Hamlet's challenge to Yorick (which is also Jacobson's credo): *make her laugh at that*, he dares the old jester, make her laugh at death. Max lives in a culture of political correctness that demands the cartoonist (and the novelist alike) to be morally strong, to either represent the Holocaust with tragic reverence or to *stay shtum* about it, as his father used to say – “Everything allowable so long as it's tremulous. Cartoon? Fine, just keep the cartoonery out. Just keep it sweet, and substitute a watercolour wash for any angry lines of satire. Wan is how they like it today, pastel-genteel, or comical in the cute sense, faux naïf” (119). However, Max and Jacobson rise to the challenge, facing the watchmen of the Holocaust etiquette and deadly laughter resonates across *Kalooki Nights*.

But in what capacity? The answer comes, once again, from the Shakespearean jester – following his example, Hamlet turns “mad in craft,” he puts on his well-known “antique disposition” (III, iv, 190), a masque of seeming zaniness that gives him the freedom to derogate those in power – “fools, madmen, poets, carnival maskers and players gain immunity, for the ludic frame licences speech as insequential” (Gorfain 1998, 162). As a cartoonist, Max – and, through him, Jacobson – calls upon the same kind of “insanity plea” (162); he wears, in other words, the mask of zaniness common to the fool and the cartoonist: after all, as a Jew and a cartoonist, Max fits in “the paradigm of Otherness into which theatre, fools, carnival and other forms of licence also fit” (162).

In doing so, he is free of disrespecting the Holocaust etiquette and to promote the same Carnavalesque “fine revolution” (V, i, 89) invoked by Hamlet in the graveyard. The Renaissance witnessed, according to Bakhtin, to the “gradual disappearance of the dividing line between humour and great literature [...]”; as a result, “the lower genres begin to penetrate the higher levels of literature” (1984, 98); similarly, in *Kalooki Nights* tragedy becomes, as Jacobson likes to say, comedy's rightful home – the dinner table *in* the graveyard, laughter *in* sorrow, life *in* death. Fed by the tragic experience of postmemory, Jacobson's multifarious comedy promotes renewal, rebirth, regeneration, revitalization and eventually renaissance, lifting the burden of seriousness and sacredness put upon second-generation writers and successfully breaking the hierarchy of genres

inherent to Holocaust writing. Nothing is unlaughable, nothing is stable or certain, and with Yorick, the Shakespearean jester, on the lead, *Kalooki Nights* becomes a testimony to Jacobson's faith in the healing power of laughter.

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