



JULIE BURCHILL

Unchosen

**'JULIE BURCHILL HAS THE MOST CHRONIC CASE OF JEW MADNESS ON RECORD.
INCURABLE, IRRATIONAL AND VERY FUNNY. I LOVE THIS BOOK.'**

TANYA GOLD

UNCHOSEN

THE MEMOIRS OF A PHILO-SEMITE

JULIE BURCHILL

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*For Karl Henry, chavar veh hevruta tov me'od,
and Leyla Sanai, the bravest broad I've ever
met - im ahava*

ONE

A SHORT HISTORY OF PHILO-SEMITISM

In the September of 2012, in a *Times* column very appropriately titled 'Beta Male', one Robert Crampton described a series of recurrent nightmares he had. All the usual stuff was there: zombies, nakedness, being on the run from the police for unspecified but heinous crimes.

And at the end, this one: 'Another scenario is that I choose to go everywhere wrapped in an enormous Israeli flag. I am aware that many people I come across are sniggering, and some others are downright hostile, and even my most ardently Zionist friends are embarrassed, and yet I insist on wearing the flag everywhere...'

This made me laugh. What a sap! As an alpha female, this is not my nightmare but rather my dream, and one I have to some extent lived. I have spent my life wrapping myself in the Jewish flag, sometimes metaphorically, sometimes literally. I open my handbag and half a dozen paper ones on toothpicks, fashioned for me by my friend and Modern Hebrew Language classmate Karl, fall out. I look up from writing and see two full-sized ones staring proudly back from my bookcases, framing the Torah. Occasionally, when very drunk, I will literally wrap one around me and cry like a baby.

(And whenever I look at my Torah, I feel a burning thrill of shame, recalling the night not long after I met Karl when we cut our thumbs, smeared our mixed blood on the title page and he agreed with me that 'Now we're with them, whatever happens. But it's probably best that we don't tell them about this, in case it's blasphemy.' Beat. 'Do they have blasphemy?')

I look across the room and see it on the bunting which hangs around my permanent window shrine to that modern Jewish heroine Amy Winehouse. I look into my heart, and against its calcified black background I see the blue and the white.

*

Israel. ISRAEL! Say it loud and there's music playing - say it soft, and it's almost like praying. How could any word be so beautiful - and still is real? ISREAL! How I laughed, livid with loathing and replete with revulsion, when I read that the half-witted crooner Bobby Gillespie had fashioned MAKE ISREAL HISTORY from a MAKE POVERTY HISTORY poster while at a party with the solemn intent of, yes, making poverty history! a) In my view, it's a real indicator of the whereabouts of the moral compass of the anti-Zionist zealot (in most cases, lost down the back of some long-gone sofa in some rancid student house) that he would downplay and devalue world poverty in his blind hatred of a tiny democratic state and b) he would write it incorrectly. You total, ocean-going, numb-nuts, Gillespie. And you can't spell!

Well, I can. And I'm going to spell out to anyone with the

time and/or the inclination to give me a hearing just why I love the Jews so much. Why, in short, I am a philo-Semite.

*

According to Gertrude Himmelfarb's excellent *The People Of The Book: Philosemitism in England From Cromwell To Churchill*, the phrase was actually invented by anti-Semites, in Germany in the 1880s when the highly regarded (and avowedly anti-Semitic) historian Heinrich von Treitschke, in a speech...referred contemptuously to 'the blind philosemitic zeal of the party of progress.' (Once more, on reading this, I was struck by how many German names strike the English eye as looking Jewish, and reflected for the nth time that this was partly what historically got the German goat. One cannot mistake Smith, Jones or Johnson for a Hebrew handle, after all - but Mann, Stein or Schicklgruber, no problem.)

But I first saw the term in a copy of *Rolling Stone* magazine, of all things. It was a long essay, first person, called CONFESSIONS OF A PHILO-SEMITE. I would have been somewhere between O Levels and *NME*, while still kicking my heels in Bristol. Even now, I remember the gist of the essay, and the last line verbatim, even though I haven't set eyes on it in more than thirty years.

This man, the writer, remembered adoring the Jews from afar at his high school. 'Gentile girls were either pretty or clever; if a Jewish girl was one, she was usually the other,' I remember he wrote. Something like that. He had one of those generic American surnames with 'man' on the end which are sometimes Jewish, sometimes German in origin. (See the Getting Of The Hunnish Goat, above.) So on

graduating from high school he had seen his chance, seized the day, left his hometown, enrolled in a college with a high percentage of Jewish students and he had...passed.

HE HAD PASSED AS A JEW! I remember shivering with delight and looking around guiltily, almost hugging myself with glee. It had never occurred to me. Could I...at the *NME*? No one knew me there. I looked at myself in the mirror: white skin, green almond-shaped eyes, big nose, dark blonde hair, narrow but pouty mouth and a great big gap between my two front teeth. I seemed (to myself if to none of my philistine schoolmates) to have what Mary McCarthy's Priss Hartshorn - in McCarthy's brilliant novel *The Group*, a teenage favourite of mine - noted about a classmate's baby:

There was no doubt that he appeared to be a child marked for a special destiny, as they said of the Jewish people.

And Jews came in all hues, I knew that now - I had seen Goldie Hawn on the TV in *There's A Girl In My Soup*, and marvelled that she and Peter Sellers were of the same race. I was sitting with my mum one adorably dreary Saturday night watching it when suddenly, in pursuit of Goldie, Peter Sellers stripped off his swinging skinny-rib polo-neck and presented to her, my Snowball-sipping madre and my permanently-sulking self an upper body so covered in coarse black hair that he looked as though he'd been dipped first in tar, then in iron filings and then, as the finishing touch, had had the inner bags from a dozen heavy-duty vacuum cleaners emptied over him.

I seem to remember that Goldie fainted, though naturally due to the highly sexist nature of 60s films it couldn't be because she was absolutely repelled by the prancing ape in front of her - she was meant to be drunk or overcome with lust or something. Ma and I, being made of sterner stuff, merely looked at each other, and though like most teenage girls I would rather have died than admitted that I had anything in common with my sainted mother, a look passed between us which wordlessly expressed all the endless sorrow, astonishment and plain something-nasty-in-the-woodshedness of being a woman in a man's world. A man's world where, due to them having the power and us having to please them, we were expected to spend half our lives beautifying our unacceptable selves while they reserved the right to go around looking like something which would be more at home being chased through the hills and dales of Tibet by a photo-journalist from the *ForteanTimes* - and were still considered to be right royal 'catches'. Still, I remember telling myself, if you really want to marry a Jew you probably will encounter body hair at some point. You can do it, hon. Just lie back and think of Israel.

Anyway, I read on, rapt. It was all going SO well for Pretendy Jew Man. He dated all the prettiest/smarter Jewish girls in his year and then he actually MARRIED one. OK, so he was a liar, and denying his blameless Christian parents. He was PASSING! Faint heart never won fair JAP and all that. But the truth has a habit of refusing to be filed away tidily, and PJM eventually got bug-fuck drunk at a family gathering. His intoxication level must have been a hint of what was coming before he even started speaking

his piece; the number of Jews who drink excessively is minuscule compared to Gentiles, especially English Gentiles. At the fun-filled lunches which often follow my Hebrew class, our orchidaceous Israeli teacher sits and blinks with dazed good humour at Karl and I, who think nothing of downing a bottle each of Sancerre - while she toys with a mere glass - before staggering across the road to a cocktail bar to down Mai Tais the size of my thighs while yelling 'L'CHAIM!' in our thrillingly 'special' blend of Wales and West Country accents until we eventually get refused alcohol altogether. Bloody anti-Semites.

Anyway, lit up like a menorah and feeling no pain like the IDF, PJM got up and made a proud, tearful speech in which he told his wife and daughter and in-laws how much he loved them and thanked them for loving him. Except, he explained, the him they loved wasn't real. HE WASN'T JEWISH! Cue a whole lot of upset, though it was far more about the lying than the bloodline. And I remember after all this time the last line, so sad and bold and honest - 'My daughter is half-Jewish. The half that isn't is me.'

*

Not all philo-Semites go as far as lying to their nearest and dearest about their racial make-up, of course. Some convert and some are keen just to look on, cheerleading and getting into scraps on Israel's behalf should the need arise, which it often does. Philo-Semites are as wildly disparate as Cicero and Lindsay Lohan, but I can't help noticing that, over the centuries, a disproportionate number of attractive, kind, clever people are drawn to Jews while those who express hostility to them, from Hitler to

Hamza, are often as not repulsive freaks. Think of famous anti-Zionists - Vanessa Redgrave, Patricia Highsmith, George Galloway - and what dreary, dysfunctional, po-faced vanity confronts us. When we consider famous Jew-lovers, on the other hand - Marilyn, Ava, Liz, Felicity Kendal, Martha Gellhorn, Martin Luther King, me - what a sumptuous banquet of radiant humanity we look upon. Life's great puzzlement, to me, has always been not 'What do women want?' or 'Who put the bomp?' but why there are apparently more anti-Semites than philo-Semites and the answer I've ended up with, both empirical and circumstantial, is that there are a lot of dumb people in the world, and a lot of them are anti-Semites. True, not all dumb people are anti-Semites, but all anti-Semites are dumb. Whatever way you slice it, that's a whole lot of mob - flaming pitchforks optional.

So how did philo-Semites come to be so few and far between? The situation always makes me think of Stephen King's masterpiece *The Stand*, in which a handful of freaks are left standing after surviving the plague that cuts friends, family and strangers alike down all around them. Anti-Semitism does that - but the brain-dead still walk and talk like the survivors do, so it's not so noticeable. Until they're given certain easy tests - like being given the chance to choose between, say, abolishing worldwide poverty or abolishing the tiny state of Israel.

The first thing a philo-Semite needs to know - like a hermaphrodite, or a child with divorced parents - is a) it's not your fault and b) you're not alone. Those people over there, who look at the lack of sex, money and/or success in

their lives and sincerely believe that The Jews took their portion - they're the weirdos. Elsewhere in *The Group*, the father of one of the upper-middle-class WASP graduates of the title expresses his frustration at his daughter's (relatively) poor prospects to another of the girls thus:

With all Helena's education, she had elected to play the piano...and teach finger-painting at an experimental school in Cleveland - to a darned lot of kikes' children, from what Mr Davison had heard. Where was the sense in that, he had asked Kay angrily after lunch...Kay suspected that he was angry because Helena had failed to get magna cum laude, when a lot of the Jewish girls had.

Some of us less than brilliant people admire the Jews because they have always added so much to the store of culture, science and general progression in this sometimes ignorant and miserable world of ours. It's the stark, staring breakdown of the Nobel Prize statistics that always gets me. Between 1901 and 2012, there have been 850 winners. Of those, at least 173 have been Jews, ranging across the categories of Literature, Chemistry, Economics, Medicine and Physics. The tiny state of Israel alone, since only 2002, has had six Nobel Prize winners, compared to five each from the vast nations of Russia and Germany. The American Enterprise Institute's political scientist Charles Murray put it thus:

In the first half of the 20th century, despite pervasive

and continuing social discrimination against Jews throughout the Western world, despite the retraction of legal rights, and despite the Holocaust, Jews won 14 percent of Nobel Prizes. In the second half of the 20th century, when Nobel Prizes began to be awarded to people from all over the world, that figure rose to 29 percent. So far, in the 21st century, it has been 32 percent.

Yet Jews only make up about 0.2 percent of the world's population. I mean, go figure. So clever - so hated. What's not to love? Sadly, this level of contribution makes other less than brilliant people bitter. A line cut from the film *Funny Girl*, in which that great Jewish tragedienne Barbra Streisand played that great Jewish comedienne Fanny Brice, had Brice bewailing her fame because 'it makes smaller people feel...too small.' These small people, of whom Hitler was the supreme example, eventually become anti-Semites.

But in my opinion, to choose the Jews is to choose life - not just survival, though they do that well too, but also all of the magic that can arise from the simple state of being a human being. It's no coincidence that the favoured drinking toast of the Jews is 'L'chaim!' - 'To life!', as the wedding party sing in *Fiddler On The Roof*.

The most Jew-hating organization in existence, al-Qaeda, famously said after the 2004 Madrid bombings, 'You love life and we love death', but the Hamas leader Ismail Haniya also said, a year before, to an American journalist, 'the

Jews love life more than any other people, and they prefer not to die.’ With enemies like that, who needs friends?

Nevertheless, a friend of the Jews I remain. But like they used to say back in the old schoolyard, though, there’s always one who has to spoil it for everybody else, and this is as true of philo-Semitism as it is of daytrips to Stonehenge. There’s the odd voice here and there which pours scorn on devotion to my chosen team, but these are as often as not strange characters such as the Holocaust-denying musician and ‘proud self-hating Jew’ Gilad Atzmon, or my late mother-in-law Fran Landesman who, when I expressed outrage that she had been barred from tennis clubs in her native America as a young Jewish girl yelled, ‘Screw the righteous anger. I just wanted to join!’ Rather as Groucho Marx wouldn’t want to belong to any club who would have him, certain sad Jews (the type prodded with such righteously vicious glee in Howard Jacobson’s *The FinklerQuestion*) have internalized the loathing which has been poured on them since they first raised their heads above the Biblical parapet, and are liable to react to philo-Semites with confusion and spite.

Such people are both sinister and silly (to paraphrase Christopher Hitchens’ summing up of the WE ARE ALL HEZBOLLAH NOW mob) but entirely unimportant in the face of ancient and continuing Jewish achievement, civilization and success. In 2010, the Jewish journalist Anne Karpf wrote in the *Independent*:

We live in post-modern times where some of what looks like anti-Semitism isn’t, but, conversely, some of what

doesn't look like anti-Semitism in fact is. Consider the 'philo-Semitism', for instance, of Michael Gove and Julie Burchill ('the Jews are my favourites'; 'Jews do things so well'). Burchill's philo-Semitism is a form of anti-Semitism, I'd suggest, because it bunches all Jews together, as though we were a single, uniform entity. The idea that all Jews are wonderful is little different from all Jews being hateful: in both cases Jews are stripped of individual characteristics, and are nothing except Jewish - a view to which most racists happily subscribe.

The lack of both clarity and charity in this appalling slur makes me think that the writer has swallowed whole that idiotic saying 'It's a thin line between love and hate' - it's not, you know, it's a dirty great abyss. It is bittersweet to be dissed by a Jew in the *Independent* - which appears to me to be almost hysterical in its anti-Israel sentiment - for being a bad person because one admires the Jews. But considering how confused the writer must be, I think I can just about live with it. For I am but a lowly worshipper at the leaping flame of Jewish accomplishment, and the latest in a very long line at that.

*

Before there were philo-Semites, there were the Anglo-Hebraists - those scholars who, quite rightly, recognized the glory of the Old Testament as superior to the rather tepid New Testament. Gertrude Himmelfarb details the

case of the lawyer and scholar Sir Henry Finch, who became obsessed with the desirability of the return of the Jews to their ancient homeland, and in 1621 published a book with a title so long that it surely strikes delight into the hearts of word-count-addicts everywhere: *The World's Resurrection or The Calling of the Jews. A Present to Judah and the Children of Israel that Joined with Him, and to Joseph (that Valiant Tribe of Ephraim) and all the House of Israel that Joined With Him.*

By the mid-17th century, an increasing number of people were equally desirous of Jewish return to the country they had been expelled from in 1290 - when writing of the expulsion from England, Churchill called the Jews 'the most formidable and the most remarkable race which has ever appeared in the world', tempering this tough salute with the tenderness of 'this sorrowful, wandering race...the melancholy caravan, now so familiar, must move on' . Cromwell's re-admittance of them made perfect sense; to me, it would be impossible to love the Jews and not loathe monarchy.

How fitting that it should be Oliver Cromwell - the self-styled 'Puritan Moses' - who asked the Jews to come back to Britain. He was the scourge of the Catholics - and it's hard not to conclude that until the rise of Islam, Catholicism truly was the most Jew-hating religion around. He was the scourge of monarchy - and royals are about as far as you can get from Jews, despite the vast numbers of Jewish princesses. Jews, historically, have tended to be born into abuse and social ignominy and gone on to achieve

wealth and social prominence; royals tend to take the opposite route.

It's interesting to compare the apparent affection that the British royal family have for non-democratic Muslim kingdoms as opposed to its avoidance of democratic Israel. Perhaps this affection is not entirely unconnected to admiration - Arab monarchies have things exactly the way that Prince Charles, for one, sometimes seems to wish they still were here. Who could blame him, while sitting in his Islamic garden, for musing on how easier things would have been with That Woman if, in the Muslim manner, he had been able to merely say 'I divorce you' three times and not afterwards been responsible for her expenses!

When the Clown Prince styled himself 'Defender Of Faiths', it seemed pretty clear to me he was sucking up to Islam. (The bloody history and present-day behaviour of which would very much indicate that other religions need protection from it, rather.) But there has been throughout history the occasional monarchy which has been that far braver and more necessary thing - a Defender Of The Jews.

Some went the whole hog, so to speak, and refused to eat pig. The ancient Khazar kingdom, which by serving as a buffer state between Christians and Muslims helped to block the western spread of Islam in Europe, saw Khazar royalty and much of the aristocracy convert to a form of Judaism during the 8th century. Medieval epic poems of the time refer to the Khazar state as 'the Jewish Giant', so respected were the army of this small country - one of the very few tribal societies on the Asian steppe to successfully make the transition from nomadic to urban.

Other monarchs were simply sympathetic, which was welcome, to say the least, during the mass murder of the Jews which became the norm in pre-war and war-time Europe. Boris, the Tsar of Bulgaria until 1943, stopped the extradition of Bulgaria's 50,000 Jews, defying Hitler face to face during the war by refusing multiple times to deliver his Jewish subjects. They were disenfranchised and herded into ghettos - but they were saved.

King Zog, one of the few 20th-century monarchs neither to be born to be king or have kingship thrust upon him but rather to have decided he liked the cut of the jib while serving as mere President, might have seemed a figure straight out of Ruritania when he instituted the Zogist salute (flat hand over the heart with palm facing downwards) and made his family princes and princesses. (Though of course all monarchies started with the second action, even the British one, and we don't seem to think that this in any way makes it ridiculous and lacking in authority.) But when he swore an oath on both the Bible and the Qur'an (as a Muslim attempting to unify the country) and abolished Islamic law in Albania, adopting in its place a civil code, he revealed a sensible and civilized side to his character. In 1938, he opened the borders of Albania to Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany.

Considering that so many Muslim movements fought on the side of the Fascists during the War, this was a two-fisted, open-handed act of real humanity.

Closer to home, Princess Alice of Greece - the mother of the Queen of England's consort - was established as one of the Righteous Among The Nations at a ceremony at Yad

Vasheem in 1994. The solemnity of the occasion caused even Prince Philip to put aside the racially insensitive patter he is renowned for as he recalled how his mother hid a Jewish widow and her two children in her house in Athens after the Fascist invasion of 1941. When the Gestapo came calling, Princess Alice used the thoroughly reasonable excuse of her deafness to explain that she didn't understand their questions. And the Jewish family stayed there safely until the liberation of Greece.

What a shame that this compassion and empathy for a hounded people has not been carried on by the royal family of this country, who seem more inclined to cosy up to some of the worst undemocratic states in the Middle East than tiny, democratic Israel. The miserly roll-call of visiting royals is meagre indeed - Prince Edward in 2007 to meet members of a youth programme affiliated to the Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme (I bet that put a spring in their step) and in 1995, Princess Margaret made a five-hour visit to the Sea of Galilee during a trip to Jordan. Though considering the crapulous state she was usually in, she probably thought she was in the Lake District. It was also in 1995 that the Prince of Wales prised himself away from talking to the plants in his Islamic Garden ('Grow, you bally plant, or it's off with your head!') to attend the funeral in Jerusalem of Yitzhak Rabin, representing the Queen. (What do you reckon The Firm drew straws for that, and the joker lost?) Even the Queen Mother, so regularly hailed for standing up to Hitler, seemed to believe that Jewishness could be caught by mere contact with an 'afflicted' person when she wrote a letter to the Queen asking her not to

send Prince Charles to school at Gordonstoun, founded and run by a Jewish refugee: 'It's always a tricky one with the heir to the throne,' the *Daily Mail* had her saying, and Eton, her preference, 'would solve many difficulties, one being religion.'

I must say, the feeling is mutual - I really don't like it when we're asked to sing 'G-d Save The Queen' at the end of Zionist rallies, so I sing the words to Hatikvah instead. Like on that Radio 4 panel show, *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue*, when people have to sing the words to 'Walk On The Wild Side' to the tune of 'Daisy, Daisy' and the like. It gives me a secret thrill of sedition, that I have rejected my own people for the Other. As the I Ching proverb which serves as the epigraph for Gish Jen's brilliant novel *Mona In The Promised Land* - about a teenaged Chinese American girl who becomes a Jew - has it

He dissolves his bond with his group.

Supreme good fortune.

Dispersion leads in turn to accumulation.

This is something that ordinary men do not think of.

Since the first primitive man looked down his ape-like snout at another primitive man, those born into lowly status have aspired to rise to a higher class. Why should it be any stranger to aspire to intelligence than to wealth? Philo-Semites merely aim their affection at a different group than the usual - one far worthier of admiration, being notable for achieving on their own merits against great odds rather than having everything handed to them on a plate just

because their long-dead ancestors were particularly lucky and/or brutal.

The traditional ruling-class English distrust of the Jews is based on this – that it takes the immigrants just a couple of generations to make the same sort of sashay up through the social hierarchy that it takes the indigenous a couple of centuries. Jews are very clever and the English ruling class are very stupid, so naturally English Jews have taken from the poshos a bit of the wealth and property that once was theirs, snatched from the peasantry and bequeathed by robber barons long ago.

As well as cropping up among the suspect usuals – Whitehall Mandarins cuddling up to feudal Arab nations and cold-shouldering democratic Israel – ruling-class anti-Semitism can come out in the strangest places, such as the minds of otherwise clever and widely-travelled novelists. Agatha Christie's writing – contrary to dull-minded received wisdom – is actually quite progressive in some ways; the killer in any given situation is often a pillar of the community; doctor, policeman, judge. But if you read the books she wrote before she realized she shouldn't call people names any more (pre-war, or maybe the year when her publishers decided that the next printing of *Ten Little Niggers* should instead be called *And Then There Were None*), you'll find loads of dodgy stuff. There are 'men of Hebraic extraction, sallow men with hooked noses, wearing flamboyant jewelry' and there's 'the long-nosed Mr. Lazarus,' of whom somebody says, 'He's a Jew, of course, but a frightfully decent one.' The essayist Francis Wheen wrote to me: 'You won't find much of that in her post-war

novels, but maybe she continued to think that way. Here's C. Hitchens in *Hitch-22*, on his dinner with Dame Agatha: "The anti-Jewish flavour of the talk was not to be ignored or overlooked, or put down to heavy humour or generational prejudice. It was vividly unpleasant and it was bottom-numbingly boring."

Other racial groups can be dismissed by the toff - unfairly, naturally - as thick, but proof of the Jew's intelligence is quickly visible in any society lucky enough to receive him. As if that wasn't enough, he has something equally threatening to the toff in the other hand - the one that doesn't hold money. Because it holds his cock. The sexual threat of the Other is more often than not present in racism ('Coming over here, taking our women!'), and the eternal and apparently insatiable willingness of the Englishwoman to transcend the national stereotype of 'prissy miss' in order to copulate with anyone other than a compatriot has always been a joy to behold. We have the highest percentage of mixed race babies born in the Western world, and the sight of a working class young white woman pushing a charming coffee-coloured child in a stroller is one of the more agreeable sights of the modern urban landscape.

Jewish men have always got lucky with Gentile broads, ever since Ruth jumped ship in the Bible. The syndrome of the silver screen shiksa goddess converting in order to win the hand of the Jewish writer/director/producer is the stuff of legend. Thrillingly, Marlene Dietrich was stripped of her German citizenship by the Nazi regime because 'constant contact with Jews has rendered her entirely un-German' -