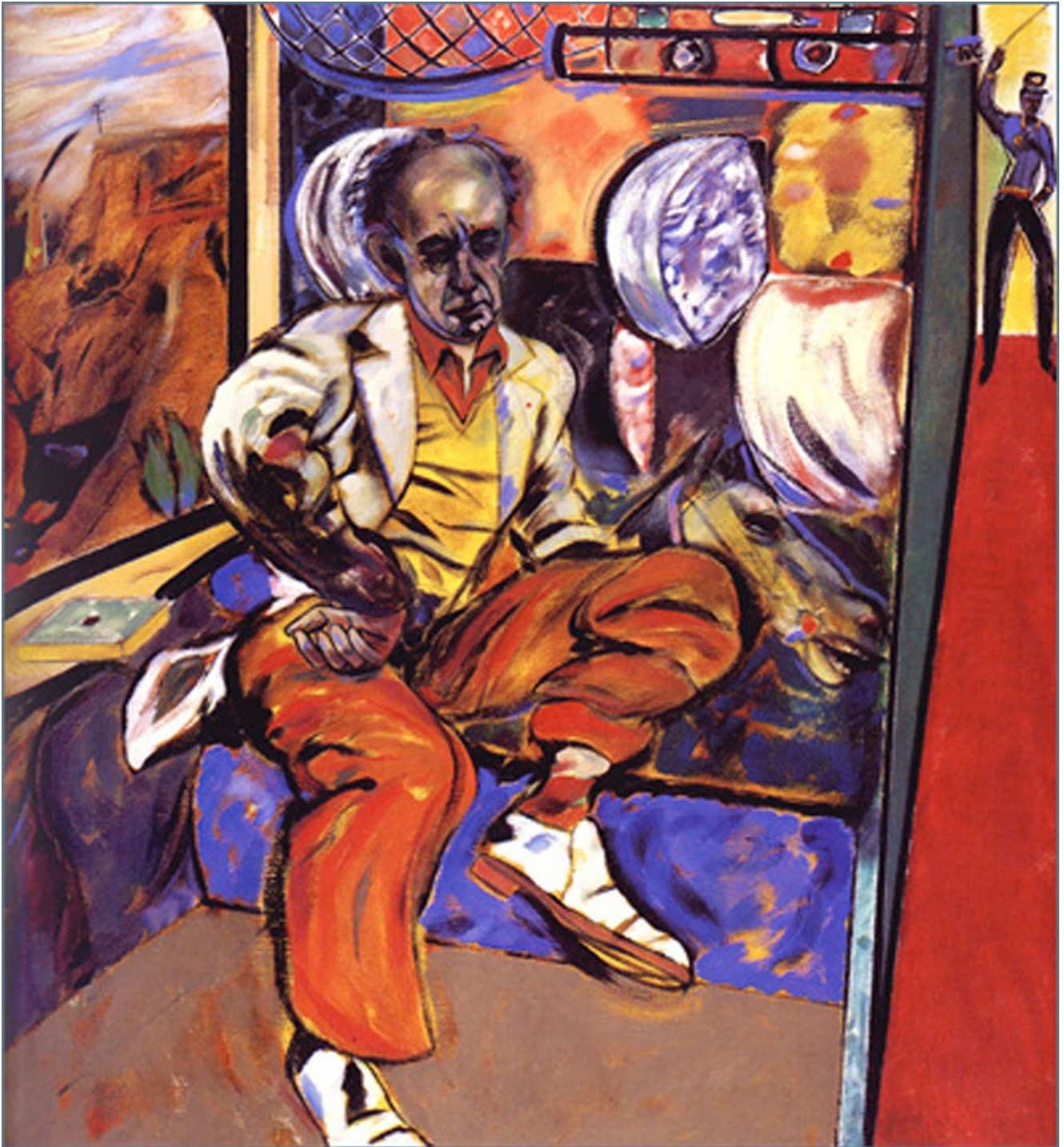


# Never Again, No More



The Jewish Rider, R. B. Kitaj, 1985

No more ceremonies  
No more monuments  
No more memorials  
No more museums  
Please.

No more books  
Oral histories  
Endowed chairs  
No more lectures or research papers  
Films and definitely no  
Fiction written by assimilated children  
Of traumatized survivors.  
Thank you.

No more reading the names  
No more youth groups to Auschwitz  
No re-imaginings  
By second generation artistes  
Or high school productions  
Of *The Diary of Anne Frank*.  
We really must insist.

Don't try to buy us off  
With one more resolution  
From Congress, Parliament, or the Bundestag  
With another late-night interview of Eli Wiesel  
One more empty declaration of Never Again!  
And sentimental, pointless proclamation  
Of solidarity with those long dead.

Please don't speak  
Of lessons learned  
Of man's inhumanity to man  
Not when evil succeeds again  
Because the good do nothing again  
And worse, because they justify evil  
Calling it genuine, calling it righteous  
When they come for the Jews again,  
Come not wearing swastikas so déclassé  
This time but *kefiyehs*, exotic  
Fashionable cloth swastikas  
Complementing robes and beards  
Devotional, their righteous pious hatred

We'd never tolerate in our secular selves  
But admire as authentic in others.

Evil? Let's not being judgmental,  
Ethnocentric or hegemonistic  
Right, since genuine emotion, felt grievance  
When directed against Jews  
That is against Zionists  
Is not hatred but resistance so "Never again!"  
Does not apply again, in fact  
Applies in reverse  
Right? Of course.

Don't think you can excuse yourself  
From the future present  
By weeping over the past imperfect.  
We won't fall for that again  
Some of us won't  
While ayatollahs muse about  
A bomb or two  
To complete the work and no one  
At the U.N. rebukes them. A French ambassador  
Ah, the French, explains that Europe will not  
Risk war again for those people  
In their shitty little country not while in Rome and Paris  
And ever-tolerant Amsterdam marchers cry  
"Death to the Jews!" Yes, death to Jews  
In buses, malls, and schools  
That'll teach 'em to escape the cattle cars.  
We've made 'em fence in that shitty little country  
Like a good old fashion ghetto and still  
They don't get it in the Jewish state so tiny  
Every other house is just inside  
The ghetto wall.

Don't exaggerate, you say  
When the Secretary General  
President and Prime Minister

Not to mention the Pope are all concerned  
So concerned they caution the bereaved  
Not to get angry, not to increase tensions  
As if the point of "Never again" was a period.  
Not an exclamation...

... Just don't say this time  
In real time and video over and over until  
You can't tell old footage from new  
When the leader of some place called Malaysia  
Declares that after all it was the Jews  
Who invented human rights—  
And so it was  
"Are we not all brothers  
"Have we not all one Father?"  
Asked the Prophet Malachi  
Five hundred years before Jesus  
One thousand years before Mohammed  
And even earlier Hebrews determined

That in His image God made man  
So we hold these truths to be self-evident  
But never mind again because  
When he insisted Jews invented human rights—  
Only to make it seem like killing them was a crime,  
The kings, presidents and prime ministers  
From 56 Islamic countries  
(You didn't know there were 56 Islamic countries  
Did you? But we know one Jewish state is threatening)  
Stood and applauded.

*Mais oui*, the French dissuaded  
The European Union, that post-Christian  
Holy Roman Empire, from issuing a reproach  
Though the Torah requires us  
To rebuke our neighbors when they stray.

Anyway, it's only a cycle of violence,  
No one's originally responsible

For blood in the streets  
For Jewish blood in the streets.

You cannot say "Never again!"  
Or will not say it  
So just don't say  
Ever again you didn't know  
Or that if only you had known  
You would have done something  
When it's obvious right now  
You would not have acted then, either.

You say this time it's different  
Maybe this time they have it coming  
Of course they have it coming  
Living as Jews in Jerusalem  
What do they expect?

So no more ceremonies  
No more monuments  
No more memorials and  
No more museums.  
No enshrined memories of our dead  
Accompanied by your tears  
At the price of our slaughtered living  
Your minutely calibrated  
Moral understanding notwithstanding.  
Because it doesn't stand, you know.  
You know you must assuage your guilt,  
Your collaboration tacit or declared  
You must justify yourself  
It is the human thing to do  
Not regardless of blood in the street  
But because of it.

Rwanda, Bosnia and Cambodia were unnecessary  
To remind us what we glimpsed in October, 1973  
Or June, 1967 let alone May of '48,

That when push came to shove again,  
And it would again  
That we would be abandoned again.  
We apprehend, though slowly even now  
Because we are like you  
More than a little like you  
You will not say  
Never again and mean it and  
We refuse to say to ourselves  
Again. If a pursuer comes to kill you  
It is not murder to kill him first,  
So our Sages taught.

So perhaps "Never Again!" really means  
Never again seeking cosmic significance  
In something extensive but not profound.  
Perhaps the unrelenting compulsion  
To finish with the Holocaust  
By finishing the Holocaust  
And shaking off the accursed  
God-discovering Jews at last  
So things can quiet down at last  
With maybe the occasional ritual sacrifice  
But without undue pangs of conscience,  
Conscience like human rights  
Another Jewish conceit Moses brought down Sinai  
To the valley of Never Again No More  
Where they worshipped the Golden Calf  
And worship it still when Moses' back is turned  
Or Moses not just dead but murdered  
And the Jews too with their damned "Thou shall nots."

Then you might say "Never again"  
But you'll have to get past us  
Who say "No more!"