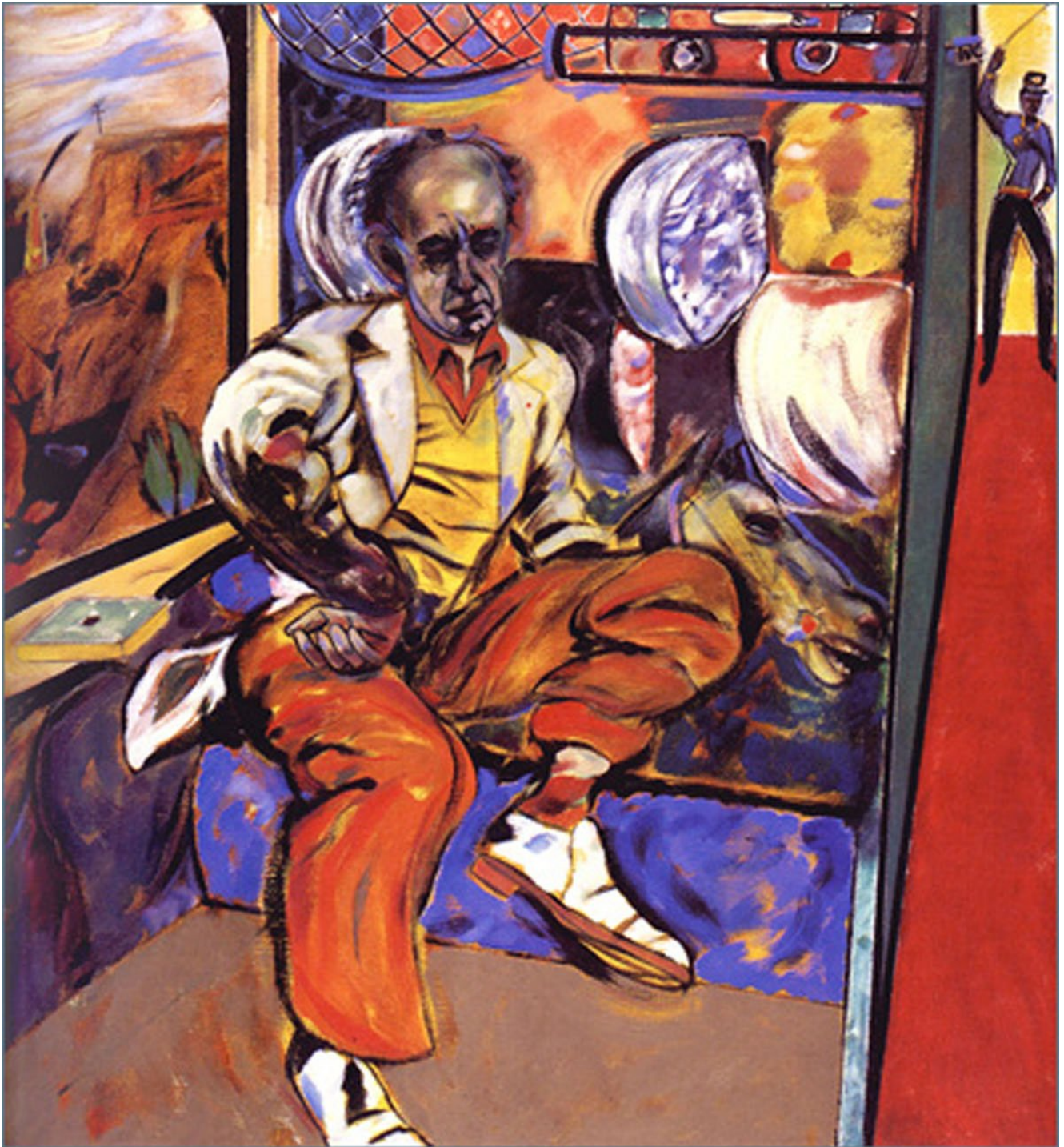


Never Again, No More



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!"