

History's Impact: The Representation of History and Historians in A.B.

Yehoshua's *The Liberated Bride*

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the Israeli novelist A.B. Yehoshua's attitude toward history and historians in his novel *The Liberated Bride* (2001). Although this novel has spurred much research, the role of history and historians in *The Liberated Bride* has been a subject less engaged. In order to analyze Yehoshua's attitude toward history and historians I rely on his lecture "Five Recommendations to Historians from a History Lover" which he delivered in 1998. In this lecture Yehoshua reveals his attitude towards history and historians in a direct and comprehensive manner which makes it an excellent starting point for any research that is concerned with Yehoshua and the ways in which he manipulates history and historians in his novels. The thesis examines the ways in which historians and non-historians in *The Liberated Bride* embody and confront Yehoshua's attitude toward history. Overall the novel emphasizes the ways in which an accurate awareness of history can impact the present and help transform its unfolding into the future.

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When Israel was celebrating its 50th anniversary, the novelist A. B. Yehoshua was invited to deliver the opening lecture for a meeting of professional historians that took place at the President's House in Jerusalem in 1998. Expressing his expectations of those who profess a vocation for history, this lecture which he called "Five Recommendations to Historians," reveals Yehoshua's general attitude toward history and historians more clearly than any of his other essays, lectures or novels.¹ The attitude expressed in this essay was subsequently reflected in a novel that he began writing at this time, *The Liberated Bride* (2001). Thus, although a study of A.B. Yehoshua's attitude toward history might be expected to concentrate on his overtly historical novels, *A Journey to the End of the Millennium* (1997) and *Mr. Mani* (1990), *The Liberated Bride's* fictional expression of "Five Recommendations to Historians" makes this novel a key site from which to examine Yehoshua's attitude toward history and historians.

Much of the scholarship on *The Liberated Bride*, especially the contributions of Ranen Omer-Sherman and Gilead Morahg, is concerned with Arab-Jewish relations in the novel.² However, while Yehoshua's interest in history has elicited some commentary, especially in response to his two explicitly historical novels,³ no scholar has wholeheartedly explored the role of history and historians in *The Liberated Bride* in ways that contribute to a deeper and richer overall understanding of Yehoshua's ideological and artistic attitudes toward history.

¹ A.B. Yehoshua, "Five Recommendations to Historians from a History Lover," trans. Yael Halevi-Wise and Vas Gogas. *Sephardic Horizons* 4, no. 1 (Winter 2014). Accessed January 5, 2015. <http://www.sephardichorizons.org/Volume4/Issue1/recommendations.html>.

² See especially Gilead Morahg, "The Perils of Hybridity: Resisting the Postcolonial Perspective in A. B. Yehoshua's *The Liberated Bride* ." *AJS Review* 33, no. 2 (2009): 363-378 and Ranen Omer-Sherman, "Jews, Arabs, and the Virus of Diaspora in A. B. Yehoshua's *The Liberated Bride* ," in *Transforming Diaspora: Communities beyond National Boundaries*, eds. Robin E. Field, Parmita Kapadia, Amritjit Singh, (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson, 2011), 67-87.

³ See Nitza Ben-Dov, *In the Opposite Direction: A Collection of Studies on Mr Mani by A. B. Yehoshua* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1994). [Hebrew] and Ziva Shamir and Aviva Doron, *A Journey to the End of the Millennium: A Collection of Essays on A. B. Yehoshua's Novel* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1999). [Hebrew].

Yehoshua reveals bits and pieces of his attitude toward history in works leading up to *The Liberated Bride*. In his second novel *A Late Divorce* (1982) the reader encounters the historian Asa Kaminka whose theory of “shortcutting” history claims that one can inoculate oneself against impending catastrophes. Through “shortcutting” history, as his father puts it, Asa hopes to discover “meaningful subjective time, emptied of collective historical meaning, hoping that an individual time dimension might save him from being trampled or lost, as ‘time can never stop flowing but sometimes there is an air lock in the middle of it’”.⁴ *Mr Mani* and *A Journey to the End of the Millennium* are Yehoshua’s grand historical-tour novels. *Mr Mani* is told in reverse chronology and takes the reader on a journey that explores key crossroads in modern Jewish history through the lives of different members of the Mani family and those with whom they come into contact. It reveals Yehoshua’s interest in historical crossroads and his desire to understand different paths that may have been taken at key points in time. *Journey* is Yehoshua’s most conventional historical novel in which he explores the tensions between Jews from Muslim lands and Jews from Christian Europe at the end of the first millennium. In order to accurately reconstruct the lives of Jews at the end of the first millennium Yehoshua relied heavily on the aid of historians and their research.

Yochanan Rivlin, the protagonist of *The Liberated Bride*, is a professor of Algerian history at Haifa University with an unbending will to know the truth in both his academic and personal life. His vocation as a historian is nourished by and spills into his attitude toward personal and family affairs. When Rivlin finds himself incapable of understanding the reason behind his son’s divorce from Galya Hendel, whom his son had adored, Rivlin decides to take

⁴ A.B. Yehoshua, *A Late Divorce* (London: Harvill, 1984), 151.

direct action and uncover the spectre that five years after the divorce is still paralyzing his son emotionally and romantically. Rivlin's wife Hagit, a district judge, is not pleased with her husband's boundless intrusiveness and naive curiosity. She warns him to abandon his quest for clarity regarding his son's divorce or face the consequences that his intrusiveness and tactlessness might create.

In her speech "History and Historians in A.B. Yehoshua," delivered several years after the publication of *The Liberated Bride*, historian Fania Oz-Saltzberger stated that Yehoshua's recent publications are moving away from history. She therefore entreated Yehoshua to continue consulting actual historians when designing his fiction (as he had done while writing *Mr Mani* and *Journey*) and to continue creating protagonists who profess a historical vocation (as he had done in *A Late Divorce* and *The Liberated Bride*). According to Oz-Saltzberger, Yehoshua's later novels, *A Women in Jerusalem* (2004) and *Friendly Fire* (2007), are "escaping a bit from history" due to the characters' exemption from what she regards as the "grand historical tour" of his earlier novels.⁵ But although the novels, including *The Liberated Bride*, that are set in the past and have historian as characters may seem more historical due to the obvious role that history plays in them, this does not mean that Yehoshua's attitude toward history is not present even in novels that are not as blatantly about history nor have any historians in them. In *The Liberated Bride*, which is explicitly about history and whose protagonist is an historian, this dynamic is sharply pronounced through the protagonist's quests in ways that make this novel an optimal place from which to articulate his overall conception of history.

⁵ Fania Oz-Saltzberger, "History and Historians in A. B. Yehoshua," in *Intersecting Perspectives: Essays on A. B. Yehoshua's Oeuvre*, eds. Amir Banbaji, Nitza Ben-Dov and Ziva Shamir (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2010), 570-76. [Hebrew].

As I hope this paper will demonstrate, Yehoshua would never attempt to ‘escape from history’ because he would never deign to become a detached observer of history who might accept a mythological consciousness which entails “a selective consciousness, [and] a willingness to bracket off history”⁶ in all its kaleidoscopic options. In fact, according to Yehoshua’s conception of himself, he is

among those who believe it is possible to learn from history about decisions that must be taken in the present, as well as about options that will open up to us in future crossroads... [Although he acknowledges that this is a topic on which historians find themselves divided, he nevertheless holds true to his opinion] that certain types of national, cultural and geographical interactions recur over time, and that a consciousness of history, along with a desire for change, are necessary to avoid repeating the tragic mistakes of the past.⁷

In order to avoid repeating tragic mistakes, as Yehoshua mentions in the previous quotation, one must first embrace a consciousness of history that entails awareness of current day circumstances rooted in factual and documented information from the past as opposed to a consciousness that escapes from history, such as a mythological consciousness which cannot truly embrace the past or learn lessons it contains. In other words, Yehoshua’s attitude toward history is that History

⁶ Yael Halevi-Wise, “Where is the Sephardism in A. B. Yehoshua’s *Hesed Sefardi/The Retrospective?*” *Sephardic Horizons* 4.1 (2014). Accessed January 5, 2015.
<http://www.sephardichorizons.org/Volume4/Issue1/WhereSephardism.html>.

⁷ A.B. Yehoshua, “Five Recommendations,” accessed January 5, 2015.
<http://www.sephardichorizons.org/Volume4/Issue1/recommendations.html>.

can and must be used as a yard stick, a building block and a tool to make informed and practical choices at crucial crossroads in the present. Yehoshua wants his people to develop a consciousness of history that does not rely on myths and their traditional interpretations as if they were actual historical events; instead, he advocates a comprehensive and accurate awareness of actual historical events, so that the positive and negative options can be equally taken into consideration.⁸

However, according to Yehoshua, a consciousness of history is not enough to successfully avoid potential disasters. An optimal historical consciousness must be accompanied by a desire for change which can also be understood as a hyperconsciousness of the present as the past of the future. In other words, Yehoshua looks at the present as history-in-the-making or as historical-transformation-in-the-making, but not as part of a historically fatalistic continuum that links past/present/future into one pessimistic (or redemptive) jumble. Instead, he approaches every choice of action in the present as an opportunity to shape history. *The Liberated Bride's* direct engagement with history and historians highlights this process because it traces it through the protagonist's attempt to uncover and reshape the relationship between the past and the present.

The Liberated Bride models Yehoshua's attitude toward history both through its representation of "Grand History" (in a Hegelian sense that sweeps over broad national and comparative contexts) and through a private-life history that focuses on the "small" troubles of one family and one individual who, significantly, happens to be a professional historian. Yehoshua infuses Grand History into *The Liberated Bride* by demonstrating how reoccurring

⁸ On this separation of historical consciousness from myth, see A.B. Yehoshua, "From Myth to History," *AJS Review* 28, no. 1 (2004): 205-206.

catastrophes stem from repeated patterns. For example, the case of modern Algerian history, which is Rivlin's field of specialization, is used in this novel as a comparative context for the Israeli-Palestinian situation. The example of Algeria serves to reveal something about the current relationship between Israelis and Palestinians in the Middle-East in ways that are geared toward helping them avoid the tragic violence that erupted in postcolonial Algeria.

By exploring the dilemmas of Rivlin's private family life Yehoshua demonstrates the different ways in which a consciousness of history - as well as a desire for change (or hyperconsciousness of the present as the past of the future) - can impact the lives of one or more individuals. Ofer's mother Hagit has no desire to know details about his divorce; she feels that he alone will eventually break through his romantic paralysis. As opposed to Rivlin, she is overly optimistic concerning her role as passive observer while her husband believes that understanding the details behind the divorce will enable him to liberate his son from romantic paralysis. As a result, Rivlin can no longer allow his wife's inactive isolationist approach to dictate his attitude toward their son's life. Ofer himself claims that he knows exactly why his divorce happened but is not willing or able to share this information with his parents. Yet although Ofer claims he is "historically" conscious of why his divorce happened, he is nonetheless romantically stuck because he continues to believe that as long as he does not reveal the secret of his divorce and continues to remain within his inactive isolationism Galya will take him back.

Yehoshua lays out the Grand Historical dimension of this novel not only through the protagonist's research on Algeria, but also through his interactions with historians who specialize in a wide array of "orientalist" (and anti-orientalist) approaches to Middle East history and politics. Professor Ephraim Akri, who chairs Haifa University's Near Eastern History department in this novel, has adopted a "know your enemy" attitude towards Arabs which requires that he

build an intimate relationship with Arabs in order to guard against them. The young academic, Dr. Miller, frequently clashes with Rivlin due to a generational gap concerning their research approaches as well as Miller's overall postcolonial attitude. Professor Carlo Tedeschi, the mentor of both Rivlin and Akri, understands that Arabs and Jews are strongly linked and both must take measures to understand one another in order to improve separately and together. However, Tedeschi is ultimately fearful for the future development of relations between Jews and Arabs in the Middle-East. Akri like Tedeschi is caught between hoping for peace and giving into despair concerning the evolving relationship between Israel and Palestine, but Akri actively seeks interaction with Israeli Arabs in hope that they may see themselves according to his historical perspective. By examining the different Orientalists on both a Grand Historical and private-life level, Yehoshua can demonstrate the different ways in which the historians approach the Arab-Israeli conflict through their research and the ways in which they attempt to "sell" their own historical interpretations.

Author versus Protagonist

Rivlin's lack of knowledge concerning the divorce of his son spurs in him a need to clarify something that happened in the past in order to unlock the gate to his son's future. Although Rivlin seeks to clarify the past, he is also hyperconscious of the present as the past of the future, or a historicized present, which ignites his search to free his son from the chains of the past and unlock his future. In other words, Rivlin now approaches every choice of action in the present as an opportunity to shape history.

Yehoshua, like the reconditioned Rivlin following the trauma of his son's divorce, turns to history as a bank of knowledge which may shed new light on one's awareness and interpretation of present reality and therefore, illuminate potential choices of action through awareness of why and how past mistakes unfolded, in order to avoid similar mistake patterns. Yehoshua has adopted this interventionist and transformative attitude out of desire to create a brighter future for his people, children and grandchildren in order to avoid a reoccurrence of tragedies that have happened in the past. The greatest future disaster that must be averted for Yehoshua is a future Holocaust, for although Yehoshua did not experience the Holocaust directly, and neither did his family, it nonetheless had a decisive influence on him because he understands it as the greatest historical failure of Jews to protect and defend themselves as individuals and as a nation. In his articles "In Praise of Normalcy," collected in English under the title *Between Right and Right*, Yehoshua explains that Jews failed to use their past experiences to sense the dangers to which they had exposed themselves because they preferred to maintain an abnormal and ambiguous identity in the Diaspora. Had the Jews of Europe accepted earlier that something concrete needed to be done to repair the "neurotic" national identity- as stipulated by modern Zionism- they might have perhaps made different decisions that could have diminished the massive death toll of the Holocaust.

Adopting the same active interventionist approach as Yehoshua, his character Rivlin forces those around him to confront their own history, and subsequently reevaluate their current standing. As Rivlin himself explains in a way that can be interpreted as a retort to his wife, "the optimist willing to wait for the truth to emerge in time could not possibly understand the sufferer driven in the depths of him to breathe it into life all at once".⁹ As an author and ideologue,

⁹ A. B. Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2003), 51.

Yehoshua must breathe into the present an awareness of historical processes in order to promote the kind of adaptation that in his opinion would give his people the best chance to deter future catastrophes.

Yehoshua uses his protagonist here to model a process of introspection and eventual understanding of new possibilities and new attitudes. The fact that Rivlin is an historian thus underscores that according to Yehoshua *even* historians have something to learn about putting their work at the service of the consolidated and normalized national identity to which Yehoshua aspires.

Transformative Interventionist versus Passive Fatalist

In *The Liberated Bride* Yehoshua outlines the ways in which a transformative interventionist attitude (such as Rivlin's) and a fatalistic passive attitude (Ofer's) impact the characters' perception of their past, their ability to function in the present, and their concern for the future. However, it is important to understand the different ways in which each character approaches their consciousness of history and their concern for the future: Are they overly optimistic (hopeful) or pessimistic (fearful)? Do they understand their circumstances through a Grand Historical or private-life historical approach? And are they actively participating in opportunities available in the present or passively getting by?

Yehoshua explains in his "Five Recommendations to Historians" that

we, whose history is saturated with tragedies, must become especially adept at developing such an historical self-consciousness and must learn to confront the truth rather than fall back on the concept of Jewish ‘destiny’... A historical consciousness is important not only to account for the past, but also to make decisions in the present and envision the future.¹⁰

By using characters such as Ofer, Galya, Hagit and Rivlin’s mother Yehoshua demonstrates the ways in which disconnecting from the past, or disconnecting from a historical consciousness, is associated with desires for a delusional future which consequently gives life to a fatalistic way of thinking on the part of these characters. On the other hand, the example of Rivlin serves to show that an intention to discover the past as well as a concern for the present unfolding into the future is optimal for averting disaster and solving problems. Whether it is on a national or personal level, in order to successfully avoid repeating tragedies from the past an individual or nation must develop a historical self- consciousness that confronts facts rather than ignores them. Yehoshua models this desire which he expresses in his “Five Recommendations” through Rivlin whose transformative interventionist approach, although it almost jeopardized his relationship with his son, forces those around him to confront the truth rather than ignore it for the sake of a delusional future.

¹⁰ A.B. Yehoshua, “Five Recommendations,” accessed January 5, 2015.
<http://www.sephardichorizons.org/Volume4/Issue1/recommendations.html>.

Ultimately, however, *The Liberated Bride* as a whole does not necessarily insinuate that the best way for Rivlin to help those around him is to know the truth. It was not Rivlin's discovery of the truth behind his son's divorce that led to Ofer's liberation; in fact Rivlin never discovers the truth, although his relentless journey to uncover it does set into motion events that liberate his son. It was Rivlin's active intention to help which leads to a breakthrough and not his discovery of the truth. Although Rivlin claims at one point that his "job is to know, not to help," eventually Rivlin too, as Bernard Horn argues in "Behind every Border another Border is Hiding" is brought to understand that "he has it backwards: it turns out that his job is to help, not to know".¹¹ Rivlin mixes up how he approached his responsibilities as a father with his responsibilities as a historian. Rivlin must understand that the "job" or duty that his vocation extends to him is to know not to help but as a father his "job" is to help not to know.

Rivlin's hyper-active behaviour to acquire insight into his son's divorce is rooted in his sense of duty as father and historian. As a father, he declares that he is obligated to help his son succeed and thrive in life: "it was not only his father's right to investigate his offspring's suffering, it was his duty".¹² But Rivlin himself as an individual and a historian is programmed to never forget, never give in and always to fight for the truth.¹³ Rivlin believes that a proper understanding of current circumstances requires knowledge of how the current situation came to be; hence, Rivlin's persistent investigation of the truth behind the divorce entails an historical consciousness.

¹¹ Bernard Horn, "Behind Every Border another Border Is Hiding: A. B. Yehoshua's *The Liberated Bride* " (presentation, Association for Israel Studies Conference, Beer Sheva, Israel, June 1-3, 2009), 9.

¹² A. B. Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 324.

¹³ Ibid , 79.

Rivlin had left Ofer alone for five years after the divorce, remaining inactive out of respect for his wife's approach who did not believe in intruding into their son's privacy and respecting his secrets. This approach did not work, and Rivlin cannot understand why

his wife [still] wanted them to wait patiently until their son-in-exile found someone else, even though the five years that had gone by had led to nothing. Ofer was at the end of his rope. He was nearly thirty-three. What good was patience? It wasn't time that freed you from traps. It was the truth. And he would fight for it. Cunningly and untiringly. He musn't give up. Never mind the eternal judge.¹⁴

Therefore, once the opportunity presents itself, Rivlin begins his attempt to understand the reasons behind the divorce. This in turn leads to a major argument between Hagit and Rivlin when she learns that her husband has been covering up his visits to the Hendel family's hotel in order to gather information. Yet after this major argument with Hagit, Rivlin feels even more determined to pursue this investigation, for now, "having been punished for his lies and concealments with a slap and the breaking of his glasses, he was now entitled- no obliged- to stalk the truth that haunted him and stood in the way of his son".¹⁵ He could not end his active pursuit to liberate his son after the argument with Hagit because all his efforts would become mistakes.

¹⁴ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 65.

¹⁵ Ibid, 324.

Rivlin's personality is fuelled through a desire to understand past events and how they have built up to the present situation. He believes in the necessity of taking action in the present in order to shape history, even if this requires defying convention. Throughout the novel, Rivlin develops a new found hyperconsciousness of the present which allows him to develop a keen eye that notices warning signs of potential disasters and spur in him a need to act in accordance with these signs. For example, Rivlin notices the potential for an accident when performing a U-turn at the intersection of Moriah and Ha-Sport Streets since the sidewalk there was too wide the U-turn could not be performed in a single maneuver. In response to this observation, he drafts a letter to the Traffic Department of the Municipality of Haifa regarding the broken U-turns at this intersection informing the municipality that if the sidewalk were less wide at this corner, the U-turn could be performed in one single maneuver, making it easier and safer for drivers. By the end of the novel Rivlin notices that the municipality ended up removing U-turns completely.¹⁶

As a father he cares for the wellbeing of his son and as a historian he wants to acquire knowledge of the past as well as an understanding of it so that the present political circumstances will make more sense to him. Rivlin the father and the historian are one and the same person, a person whose attitude and behaviour changes in response to changing circumstances. His trauma as a father impinges itself on his awareness of historical process and these in turn cause him to interfere in order to try to help his son. He is a man committed to knowing the truth but his attitude toward where and how the truth may be divined change in response to his experiences. Rivlin claims that he strives "only to know. I have to know. That's how I am. I need to know the truth even if it's useless. It's my nature. It's what motivates any historian- otherwise he's in the

¹⁶ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 561.

wrong profession. This has been haunting me for the past five years”.¹⁷ By discovering the truth behind the divorce Rivlin hopes to improve his son’s situation by in turn helping him confront the truth behind the divorce, for Rivlin believes that Ofer does not understand why the divorce happened. Knowledge here is therefore a means to an end. Any mysteriousness or “veiled truth” that barricades the doors to the protagonist’s understanding must be taken down in this quest for a breakthrough in the new circumstances of his son’s life.

The novel is full of small scenes where characters are confronted with “the truth” in a variety of shapes. For example, when a vacuum salesman attempts to sell Rivlin and Hagit a brand new vacuum cleaner he reveals to them just how dirty their home actually is even though it looks clean: “You see, you have a nice, neat house. As far as you and maybe even your guests are concerned, it’s as clean as it needs to be. But our Kirby here isn’t satisfied with outward appearances. It wants the full, unadulterated truth”.¹⁸ When Rivlin discovers the truth behind the cleanliness of his home he explains to the salesman that he is “devastated, because you’ve shown me that my home, which I always took to be clean, is a repository of filth”.¹⁹ In this scene Yehoshua has demonstrated that the relative historical truth behind Rivlin’s home is that it has greater amounts of dirt than they had imagined. However, now that this has become evident, the question/problem is what to do about it and whether it is worth doing something about. In fact this is a counterexample to the position that Rivlin takes with his son because Rivlin is entirely committed to revealing all the dirt concerning the divorce in order to liberate Ofer. It is also worth mentioning to that this highly comic example reveals Yehoshua’s narrative art at its best

¹⁷ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 346.

¹⁸ Ibid, 292.

¹⁹ Ibid, 292.

both in terms of the metaphorical levels of analogies and in terms of the comic stance that conceals deep introspection.

But the irony is that their home is clean enough. The vacuum salesman is trying to sell them into some kind of neurotic/unhealthy/abnormal state of cleanliness and a new paradigm concerning cleanliness has emerged. One extreme is living in complete filth while the other end is living in abnormal cleanliness. Neither situation is healthy for the individual in the long run. Rivlin and Hagit have accepted to live at the midpoint in this cleanliness paradigm. Although the salesman revealed their home to be dirtier than they believed, the real problem is not that “now” their home is revealed as dirty but rather that one has to be strong enough to know where to draw the line between sufficient cleanliness or not. As seen from the above example, operating fanatically/excessively through one point of view or attitude, whether it is excessive cleanliness or ridiculous filth, is not healthy. The same is true of a transformative interventionist attitude and passive fatalistic attitude. Rivlin’s endless transformative pursuit, although it did liberate his son, almost cost him his relationship with his son and resulted in a huge argument with Hagit. While both Rivlins are able to agree that obsessing over the invisible dirty in their homes it is not conducive to health or happiness in the case of their son, Rivlin and Hagit cannot come to a decision together concerning how to best aid Ofer.

Initially, Rivlin’s persistent and stubborn crossing of boundaries into his son’s private past appears to be annoying and irresponsible. However, it is actually Rivlin’s desire to promote transformation that eventually prompt a series of events that eventually lead to Galya liberating Ofer from his delusional hope that they would eventually get back together as long as Ofer never revealed what he had discovered concerning Galya’s father, Mr. Hendel. While Rivlin thrives on

active participation to help liberate his son, Hagit prefers to believe that her son will heal on his own. Hence, her passively optimistic and cooperative response to Ofer's isolation.

Rivlin and Hagit's opposite attitudes towards their son's romantic progress are relevant to our understanding of Yehoshua's representation of history in *The Liberated Bride* because by the end of the novel, it is clear that it is Rivlin's type of attitude that creates change. Hagit was only concerned with the future of her son and therefore, was not prying into the past trying to understand what happened between Ofer and Galya. Rivlin is preoccupied not only by a concern for his son's future but, also by a desire to help him through properly understanding how events unfolded. Although Rivlin does not liberate his son through the discovery of the truth his persistent desire for knowledge and desire to bring about change is what eventually brought about Galya's decision to liberate Ofer.

Although Hagit, a district judge, also embodies pragmatism, her relative inertia emerges partially from an ability to separate herself from sweet and sorrowful memories of their son's wedding and divorce. Rivlin, by contrast, never forgets, even though his wife warns him that "it's time you put that all behind you. It's been five years. How long can you go on feeling loss?".²⁰ Hagit has adopted a paradigm of fatalism by believing that Ofer will eventually come to a solution on his own and whether she intervenes or not will not make a difference. However, through a conversation between Ofer and Galya, the reader discovers that Hagit attempted to intervene earlier with no result. Ofer explains to Galya that "about half a year later, over the phone, my mother told me in passing that she had heard you were getting married and thought I should know about it, even if it was painful, since it might make it easier for me to free myself

²⁰ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 20.

from you”.²¹ Although their personalities may clash both Rivlin and Hagit love their son and their responses to Ofer’s isolation are fuelled neither by neglect nor selfishness. Morahg makes the same observation that “both Rivlin and Hagit obviously love their son, so the opposition between them is an opposition between sensibilities with conflicting normative views as to how best to exercise this love”.²² Even in hindsight, it is difficult to judge whether or not Rivlin’s interventionist or Hagit’s indolent approach is most appropriate. Throughout most of the novel Rivlin’s actions are never for certain going to liberate his son but what was certain was that if he continued he would lose Ofer who warns his father to “either stop [his] vile habit of poking around basements or [he will not be his] father anymore”.²³ Although Hagit’s fatalistic approach was not working it nonetheless maintained her relationship with her son but it would not have prompted any change in his life. Hence Rivlin’s dilemma and ultimately the reader’s choice to decide which course of action was pragmatically and morally correct.

Rivlin and Hagit may have very different opinions on how to help their son, but the relationship between Rivlin and Hagit is undoubtedly one of or the best husband and wife relationships in all Yehoshua’s corpus. Morahg explores the relationship of Rivlin and Hagit in his article “Portrait of the Artist as an Aging Scholar: A.B. Yehoshua's *The Liberating Bride*”. Morahg remarks that although Rivlin and Hagit are two distinct sometimes contradictory personalities they nonetheless know each other very well, share a strong emotional bond and have found a way to reconcile differences and sustain a companionable life. Rivlin and Hagit are

²¹ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 256.

²² Gilead Morahg, “Portrait of the Artist as an Aging Scholar: A. B. Yehoshua's *The Liberating Bride*,” *Hebrew Studies* 50, (2009): 181.

²³ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 391.

lovers, friends and a married couple who have built a family and entire life together. They are a couple that thrives on communication and honesty. As Ofer explains he

was raised and educated by his parents to believe in open dialogue and in the need-
no the duty- to discuss even the most difficult subjects honestly. And although,
superficially, his mother may seem the stronger of the two, his father, too, is no
innocent and has his own shrewd sophistications. They were equal partners in a total
intimacy.²⁴

As a couple that thrives on communication, honesty and love they were able to reconcile any differences and transform their differences into a flourishing relationship through open and honest dialogue. Perhaps through Rivlin and Hagit's relationship Yehoshua is echoing his overly optimistic hope that through dialogue two seemingly opposing forces, such as Israel and Palestine, can come to terms with one another and even eventually produce a thriving relationship. However, it is important not to be blindly optimistic that Rivlin and Hagit's model can work for everyone as seen through Ofer who tried to imitate his parent's relationship yet did not manage to salvage his own marriage.

It is important to remember that family relationships are a core element in Yehoshua's novels. For Rivlin, family is a priority and so he abandons his quest for absolute truth when Ofer threatens to disown him as a father. Yehoshua demonstrates the results of excessive

²⁴ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 247. [my emphasis added].

interventionism like Rivlin's, who at certain points seems willing to do and say practically anything, even faking an illness in order to extort information from Galya and her relatives; and on the other hand, the excessive inertia of Ofer, who attempts to forget Israel and everyone in it by lingering abroad in hopes of a delusional future. Although Rivlin was trying to liberate his son through his interventionist actions, he nonetheless did not take into consideration how much frustration his crossing of boundaries could raise in his wife and son. Ofer desires to be forgotten in order to linger in his own illusions and once his father starts opening his wounds and trying to uncover the shadow of history veiling Ofer's divorce, it begins to frustrate Ofer because he is forced, as it were, back in history.

Ofer exclusively operates through a fatalistic mind frame and refuses to reveal the history of his divorce out of fear that Galya's vague promise will fade permanently. Therefore, he rejects his father's help and remains ignorant of reality and detached from active life- what Yehoshua and modern Zionism regard as a detachment from History- instead holding on to an illusion of a bright future redeemed by Galya. Ofer and Galya divorced because Galya refused to accept the truth behind her husband's claim that her father was committing incest with her sister even though she had all the proof needed to believe Ofer: "Had you wanted it (but you didn't, you didn't), you had all the proof you needed that my version of events was as real as the Arab village we were looking at".²⁵ Interestingly enough, although Rivlin and Hagit had all the proof they needed to see that their home was actually "filthy" they decided to continue living the way they always have lived. What the dirt example clearly and plainly shows is that some limits must be accepted to determine what truth/ how much truth to accept and how far to take it. However, Galya entirely ignores the truth and continues to breathe life into a delusional picture of her

²⁵ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 259.

family because she did not want to change her relationship with her father and sister through exposing them.

When confronted by Ofer's discovery of an incestuous relationship between Galya's father and sister, Galya was faced with a crossroads: believe Ofer and preserve their marriage or disbelieve him and defend her family. She chose to retain a fixed attitude of her family that viewed them in an idealistic light only. Nothing Ofer said or saw could change Galya's understanding of her family, hence why Ofer argues that "only by turning truth into fantasy could [she] defend the honor of [her] family and the sweet memories of [her] childhood".²⁶ Although Galya may seem liberated due to the fact she has remarried and is pregnant she is nonetheless, stuck in an abnormal state because she choose to turn the truth concerning her father and sister into a fantasy in order to maintain the delusional vision of her happy family, as a result she is outside of history. Galya did not want to uproot and refashion her memories, she preferred that the present and future be a continuum of her past or her historical consciousness, by accepting Ofer's claim she would have poisoned and tainted her past naive memories of her family and would have had to accept a future that did not necessarily include her family.

It is clear in the novel that Ofer believed that if he withheld the secret cause of the divorce from all prying eyes, he and Galya could one day be reunited. Quoting Galya in a letter that he never sends to her, Ofer recalls that she had told him that "perhaps in the end I'll miss you so much that I'll beg you to take me back. But if I ever find out that you told anyone, one single person, about your insane fantasy, there's no chance of that ever happening".²⁷ If Rivlin

²⁶ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 259-260.

²⁷ Ibid, 245.

had discovered the truth, it could be assumed that, he would have attempted to disillusion his son from this “promise” just like Ofer did to his grandmother, hence shocking him back into history and forever erasing Galya from Ofer’s future.

Like Galya, Ofer’s grandmother (Rivlin’s mother) is another example of a character who insists on holding on to her own “truth” in order to continue living within a delusion. Ofer’s grandmother wanted to reconcile Ofer and Galya as a couple “not for curiosity’s sake,” according to Ofer but just “so that she could have one more dance, like the dance she danced at our wedding, with ‘that perfect gentleman, Mr. Hendel’”.²⁸ In other words, she dreams of being reinstated into the Hendel hotel, which she considered an Eden on earth. In order to shock her into reality, so that she would abandon her idealic vision of the Hendel family and their hotel, Ofer reveals to her the secret that he had sworn to keep. Ofer “was overcome by the urge to shock the old woman with the truth and make her realize once and for all what kind of ‘Paradise’ she had lost... With a twisted pleasure, I shone a light for her on the sick roots of Paradise”.²⁹ His grandmother quickly turns the conversation around and takes the side of Mr. Hendel, arguing that he is a decent man and that Ofer always suffered from fantasies even as a child. However, one must ask why did Ofer decide to reveal the truth to his grandmother and not to his father?

Unlike Ofer’s grandmother, Ofer’s father was not holding on to an impossible dream or hope that his son and Galya would get together again; he merely wanted to understand the source of their trouble in order to help his son move on after five years of stagnation. Disregarding Ofer’s claim of knowing exactly why the divorce happened, Rivlin nonetheless refuses to accept

²⁸ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 253.

²⁹ Ibid, 254.

that his son actually understands: “get it into your head that I know exactly how and why my marriage broke up. I may not have been happy about it, I may not have come to terms with it, but I know why it happened. I do! Do you hear me? I do! And if I decide to spare you what I know and keep silent for five years, don’t think I’m going to start talking now...”³⁰ The grandmother was holding on to an illusion that her grandson’s relationship to the hotel owners would mend and Ofer sought to disillusion or liberate her.

As expressed in his “Five Recommendations,” a historical consciousness is not only important to “account for the past, but also to make decisions in the present and envision the future”.³¹ However, Yehoshua’s formula to avoid reoccurring tragedies requires a historical consciousness, which is rooted in facts and not a mythological consciousness which is fatalistic and nontemporal. Galya and Ofer’s ability to account for the past, make decisions in the present and envision the future is compromised because they are stuck in a indeterminate state where past/present/future all mesh into one. They have embraced a fatalistic consciousness out of a desire to avoid accountability and hence hold on to delusional future with no possibility of improvement. Yehoshua uses Galya and Ofer to expose the dangers of being stuck in, what he has termed, an abnormal identity. Rivlin’s journey is meant to expose the ways by which a historical consciousness and desire for change can help forge a normal identity.

³⁰ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 168.

³¹ A.B. Yehoshua, “Five Recommendations,” accessed January 5, 2015.
<http://www.sephardichorizons.org/Volume4/Issue1/recommendations.html>.

Normal versus Abnormal

It can be argued, that for Yehoshua fatalism is synonymous with his definition of abnormality. Yehoshua defines abnormality “as an illness, a misfortune that fundamentally distorts the individual, paralyzes him, and depresses his world”.³² It is also helpful to think of abnormality and fatalism as poisonous to the individual and his or her social structure because unless an antidote is taken, these conditions are liable to cause the individual to become “sick” and places them in a very harmful or unpleasant state in which even death could occur. Those who are stuck in a paradigm of fatalism experience the same downfalls as those who are abnormal because both find themselves in a limbo where past/present/future are all jumbled together into a pessimistic (or redemptive) concept that does not believe in or desire any kind of change that promotes improvement or compromise. This sentiment of Yehoshua is not only exclusively expressed in his novels, he has consistently targeted the Jewish people and Israeli society as being trapped in an abnormal identity, tied to the historically fatalistic consciousness of an inexorable Jewish destiny.

For Yehoshua normality is the key ingredient to creative transformation and adaptation. Yehoshua defines normality as “nothing but a rich and creative pluralism in which a man is as sovereign as possible over his deeds and the range of his possibilities are great”.³³ Those who apply a fatalistic paradigm to the past, present and future do not enjoy great possibilities or sovereignty because future events are expected to unroll either for the better or the worst regardless of any effort to bring a desired change.

³² A.B. Yehoshua, “Jew, Israeli, Zionist: Honing the Concepts,” in *Between Right and Right*, trans. Arnold Schwartz (Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing House, 1980), 145.

³³ Ibid, 145.

Rivlin's persistence in helping his son is based on the fact that, like his son, he is stuck in an abnormal situation but unlike his son, Rivlin seeks to return to a normal identity and bring his son along with him. Ofer does not have optimal control over his deeds and possibilities because he is holding on to a delusional dream of reuniting with Galya. Therefore, he finds himself in a paralyzed emotional and romantic state. Prior to his son's divorce Rivlin had a normal identity, he felt a keen awareness of how the past and present were connected as well as a sense of direction for the future of his family. However, the mystery of his son's divorce and its impact on Rivlin's understanding of how the past and present correlate transforms Rivlin's once normal identity into an abnormal historically detached identity because the present no longer correlates with his understanding of the past, and whatever stable future he had envisioned for himself, his family and his career has been ruptured therefore, he experiences a rupture in his own identity.

What Yehoshua has attempted to explain in his lecture and essays, he demonstrates in *The Liberated Bride* through the process of Rivlin's journey to "normalize" himself and his son. Any kind of poison from the past that has not been exposed and permitted to linger has the potential to obstruct optimal growth in the present with drastic impact on the future. This psychoanalytical-oriented perspective Yehoshua applies to national processes as well. Most famously, in "Golah: The Neurotic Solution" he argued that a predilection for national dispersion has seeped, like a poison, through Jewish history and led Jews to believe that regardless of the historical catastrophes that had occurred to them they could still retain an abnormal national identity as guests in the midst of host-countries with more "normal" identities.³⁴ The incomprehensible devastation of the Holocaust proved the danger of the Jewish abnormal

³⁴ A.B. Yehoshua, "The Holocaust as Junction," in *Between Right and Right*, trans. Arnold Schwartz (Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing House, 1980), 12-13.

national identity because, as Yehoshua explains, “we were outside of history, we were not ‘like all the nations’. Because by our ways of life we were ‘other,’ different from all other, it was easy to regard us as subhuman, and as subhuman our blood could be spilled freely. The first to be seized upon in any national shock, in any instance of social unrest, were the Jews”.³⁵ As stated earlier, in order to demonstrate how reoccurring catastrophes stem from repeated patterns in *The Liberated Bride*, Yehoshua uses modern Algerian history, Rivlin’s academic specialization, as a comparative context for the Palestinian situation in *The Liberated Bride*, where the example of Algeria serves to teach something about the current relationship between Jews and Arabs in the Middle-East and thus perhaps avoid the tragic violence that erupted in postcolonial Algeria from happening in Israel.

Although Rivlin is a historian rather than a literary critic, the Algerian folktales he inherits from the murdered Suissa become a new tool in his research. Rivlin utilizes them to test a hypothesis that the seemingly inconceivable violence that erupted in the Algerian Civil War emerged from a poisoning of Algerian identity in consequence of French interference in the country’s national autochthonous character; in other words, it is not France per se that poisons Algeria, but rather the interface between the two identities. Eventually Rivlin’s argues that the extreme violence that erupted in the Algerian civil war finds its roots in the large number of languages spoken in Algeria (Berber, North African Arabic, Classical Arabic and French) which disabled efforts at dialogue or communication and led to the country’s quick descent into violence. In drafting an introduction for his new book, Rivlin writes that “when an entire people is linguistically confused, what hope is there for dialogue or communication? Four languages mingle in Algerian life, leading to a chaotic identity... Fully living an Algerian identity means

³⁵ Yehoshua, “The Holocaust as Junction,” 13.

knowing four languages, being at home in four cultures, and adapting to four different psychological standpoints”.³⁶ The real crux of the matter, as Rivlin argues, is that there is no possible synthesis between these four languages and this linguistic dispersion is the fundamental curse of Algerian identity since Classical Arabic is used for religious purposes, North African Arabic and Berber is used in the streets and the family while French is used for scientific, economic and administrative purposes.³⁷ Rivlin’s research on Algeria provides deeper insight into Yehoshua’s attitude toward national fragmentation due to abnormal identities as well as his belief in the importance of dialogue and communication. As seen throughout Jewish history, although Jews developed a strong command in the languages of their host countries, it was always held against them that their roots lay elsewhere, further promoting their abnormal identity within the normal identity of the host country.

In his interview with Tom Sperlinger, Yehoshua argues “there was some kind of disturbance by another identity [the French] that penetrated into the national identity [of the Algerians] and then, even after they are getting out, there is still a kind of a curse. When we will leave the West Bank after interfering very deeply in the Palestinian identity, what will happen?”.³⁸ Yehoshua returns to his analogy between the Algerian and Palestinian conflicts in an interview with Elaine Kalman Naves, where he confirms his view that “Algeria of the late '50s

³⁶ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 372.

³⁷ Ibid, 377.

³⁸ Tom Sperlinger, “A Conversation with A.B. Yehoshua,” Haifa, April 13, 2011: 8.

and early '60s is a parallel for Israelis, for what was happening with the Palestinians".³⁹ In yet another interview, the Israeli journalist Ari Shavit summarizes Yehoshua's belief that

the territories are the source of the malady, but the situation is worsened by vestiges of the diasporic malaise that Yehoshua is convinced circulates as a debilitating plague in the Jewish state: 'We have hooked our circulatory system to that of the Palestinians and the two nations are poisoning each other. We have a tendency to blur borders and toward identity unclarity, whereas with them deep suicidal elements are now erupting.'⁴⁰

Yehoshua uses Rivlin's opinions about Algerian identity to express the points that he had made in the above quoted interview. After the removal of the French the hope for the emergence of a modern independent Algerian nation was real and the eruption instead of the cruelest fundamentalist warfare against civilians is what frightens and disappoints Rivlin. At the time, this was Yehoshua's manner of encoding a warning about the possible violence that could and did erupt between Israelis and the Palestinians even while remaining hopeful that the peace process will continue. As Rivlin expresses in his eulogy for his mentor, Carlo Tedeschi, the need for such strategic optimism means that Israeli Orientalists in particular have a large responsibility

³⁹ Elaine Kalman Naves, "Talking with A.B. Yehoshua," *Queen's Quarterly*, Spring 2005. 76-86. Accessed January 5, 2015. <http://www.elainekalmannaves.com/essays-articles-radio-interviews/item/50-talking-with-ab-yehoshua>.

⁴⁰ Ari Shavit, "A Nation that Knows No Bounds," *Haaretz* (March 19, 2004): 9, as quoted in Ranen Omer-Sherman, "On the Verge of a Long-Craved Intimacy: Distance and Proximity between Jewish and Arab Identities in A. B. Yehoshua's *The Liberated Bride*," *Journal of Jewish Identities* 2, no. 1 (2009): 79.

on their shoulders, for it is they who must present the ongoing conflict between Jews and Arabs- in relation to analogous contexts such as Tedeschi's Ottoman studies:

for the Israeli scholar, whether he likes or admits it or not, Orientalism is not just a field of research. It is a vocation involving life-and-death questions affecting our own and our children's future... We are not German philologists, retired British intelligence officers, or literary French tourists, who can afford to be deluded about who the Arabs are or should be. We are the Arab's neighbours and even their hostages.⁴¹

The message behind this last quotation is especially relevant to those who profess the vocation of historians because according to Rivlin it is they (echoing Yehoshua's "Five Recommendations to Historians"), who can help forge a normalized Jewish connection to the Middle-East.

Yehoshua's final recommendation to historians, like Rivlin's analysis of Tedeschi's hope that Jews might integrate into the Middle East, is meant to function as a wakeup call for Israelis who still have the symptoms of the diasporic neurosis or poisoning (abnormality). This diasporic neurosis carries on the mentality of even treating Israel as a hotel as Jews did with host countries throughout their history. As Yehoshua states in his "Five Recommendations", he warns that when the peace process is complete, the Arabs will wonder:

⁴¹ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 514.

but now that you're here, do you intend to sit with your gaze toward the sea and sky, traveling three times a year to New York, London and Paris and considering yourself part of Western culture, or are you also locals, real neighbors who have arrived to your first but also your final home? If so, please turn your gaze- not only militarily, but also economically and maybe even culturally and scientifically- to the Middle Eastern region where you live.⁴²

In outlining his “neurosis” concept of Jewish history, Yehoshua compared the world to a chain of hotels where Jews have lodged without fostering a full responsibility toward their own sovereign national history.⁴³ Illustrating this, Fu’ad, the maître d’ of the Hendel Hotel in *The Liberated Bride*, comments to Rivlin that “you Jews are always at the airport. Always coming and going. You can’t sit still. It will make you sick in the end”.⁴⁴ Rivlin subsequently describes the airport terminal as the heart of Israeli existence and although “the Jewish heart might throb in Jerusalem, and the Jewish brain might grow sharp or soft in Tel Aviv, but the passionate focus of Israeli life was here, in the going and the coming”.⁴⁵ Interestingly enough, although the Jews are sovereign in their national home the Hendels are living in a Hotel. They do not seem to be coming and going from the airport, but a hotel is their home. Through these examples of volatile relationship

⁴² A.B. Yehoshua, “Five Recommendations,” accessed January 5, 2015. <http://www.sephardichorizons.org/Volume4/Issue1/recommendations.html>.

⁴³ A.B. Yehoshua. “Jewish Identity from Myth to History,” YouTube video, 44:28. October 6, 2012. Accessed January 10, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJzmz-mP838>.

⁴⁴ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 118.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 285.

to the homeland and unusual choice of home Yehoshua illustrates what he views as the lingering neurosis that still prevents full national normalization according to his concept of it.

As an alternative to this instability, Yehoshua tasks historians with the responsibility of helping to forge a connection and Jewish identification with this region through studies capable envisioning a future in which a normal Jewish national identity can develop in relation to the Other, specifically Palestinians, not within a fatalistic paradigm that restricts actions and possibilities, but through a present consciousness that is permeated by history and a desire for change. Neither blindly optimistic nor pessimistic, this heightened consciousness of responsibility toward the future as well as the past, understands the present as the past of the future and rejects or bypasses the tendency to “escape” from history based on a mythical sense of the past.

A historical self-consciousness in the present must also be accompanied by a desire and willingness to enter into constructive dialogue with the Other in ways that would allow both peoples and nations to develop in conjunction to one another and this in turn, will help develop new attitude predicated on dialogic heterogeneity, identification with and sympathy for and from the Other. As Bernard Horn puts it “for Yehoshua, this Other is not a separate, threatening entity to be pushed away: on the contrary, the Other is expected to participate in a positive and ongoing process of constructive dialogue”.⁴⁶ In order to promote constructive dialogue ones’ historical consciousness should be an awareness and knowledge of the past and present that is not entirely consumed by either optimism or pessimism and balances possibilities through both.

⁴⁶ Bernard Horn, “Sephardic Identity and Its Discontents: The Novels of A.B. Yehoshua,” in *Sephardism: Spanish Jewish History and the Modern Literary Imagination*, ed. Yael Halevi-Wise (Palo Alto, Calif: Stanford University Press 2012), 193.

Pessimism versus Optimism

A prominent characteristic of *The Liberated Bride*'s representation of history is that it never fully embraces either an optimistic or pessimistic outlook on the historical process. The statement below was made by Yehoshua in an interview with Tom Sperlinger in 2011 and provides those analyzing Yehoshua with insight into how he then perceives himself as obligated to write through an optimistic attitude. In the interview, Yehoshua stated that he

was considered one of the optimists among my friends. From time-to-time when people were in despair they were calling me and I said to them, 'You have to pay for my optimism, like the telephone sex lines!' I believe in change and this is also in the end of my works – in *The Liberated Bride* and *A Woman in Jerusalem* and the last novel, there is reconciliation, there is some sort of appeasement, it's not like *A Late Divorce*, which was finishing in a catastrophe and also *Mani*. Now I try to come to a conclusion of optimism, of reconciliation, of compromise – especially in the last novel. With the Israeli-Arab conflict, it is one of the longest conflicts on Earth. I don't know, I hope something will happen now little-by-little. It is the question of the future of my children, my grandchildren. I cannot permit myself to be pessimistic.⁴⁷

The above quote also reveals that Yehoshua is not necessarily attempting to create a better future for himself but a better future for his children and grandchildren, the next generation and those

⁴⁷ Tom Sperlinger, "A Conversation with A.B. Yehoshua," 10.

who may potentially feel the negative consequences of decisions made by their predecessors. Yehoshua's concern with the younger generation is particularly evident in *The Liberated Bride* when Rivlin visits Mrs. Suissa, the widow of the academic Yosef Suissa, killed in a suicide bus bombing, who beckons him to help her live independently of her dead husband's parents who have taken control of her bereaved family. Rivlin replies that "he would, he promised, see what he could do to help her, not just for her husband's sake, but for her own. But on one condition. He looked her in the eye. She must take the children with her. Children must never be abandoned".⁴⁸ Life is the supreme value in *The Liberated Bride* and ultimately, Rivlin's quest, as well as the quest of other characters such as Rashid, is meant to restore vitality to the younger generation who hold the promise of the future.

There are frequent polarity shifts between optimism and pessimism concerning the relationships in *The Liberated Bride* between the Jewish and Arab characters. Throughout the writing of *The Liberated Bride* the Second Intifada erupted and turned whatever co-existence which was flourishing into conflict. In an interview with Elaine Kalman Naves, Yehoshua explains that "he began writing the book in 1998, a period he calls 'an intermediate time between the Oslo agreement and the Intifada of today'".⁴⁹ The period between the Oslo Accords of 1993 and 1995 and the Second Intifada (2000-2005) was perceived by many as a juncture that could tip the political scale toward either peace or continuing conflict. Along these lines Omer-Sherman observes that "one senses a distinct retreat from the optimism expressed earlier in the novel. In the novel's later sections, the relations between its Jews and Arabs grow colder, more

⁴⁸ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 331.

⁴⁹ Elaine Kalman Naves, "Talking with A.B. Yehoshua," accessed January 5, 2015.
<http://www.elainekalmannaves.com/essays-articles-radio-interviews/item/50-talking-with-ab-yehoshua>.

utilitarian and guarded”.⁵⁰ In his interview with Elaine Kalman Naves, Yehoshua also expresses his sentiments towards these shifting attitudes in the novel:

What am I doing? I'm describing a festival of songs of love in Ramallah, and here now is Ramallah with the lynchings and the violence and the attacks. What can I do? But I decided, I'm dealing with the year '98, and this was the reality then, and I will stick to my year and continue to write about the things that happened then, because there were good things - even with all the problems - there was co-existence.⁵¹

Throughout history the relationship between Jews and Arabs was not exclusively based on conflict; there was also co-existence of a kind that Yehoshua has described, for instance in his article “Finding my Father in Sephardic Time,” through his father’s and grandfather’s relationships with local Arabs under Ottoman rule.⁵² Therefore, Yehoshua felt obliged to write about 1998 as he witnessed it with both the possibilities of conflict and co-existence.

In his “Five Recommendations to Historians” Yehoshua states that “we cannot construct the narrative of Jewish history in the twentieth century like the movie *Titanic*

⁵⁰ Ranen Omer-Sherman, “Guests and Hosts in A. B. Yehoshua's *The Liberated Bride*,” *Shofar* 31, no. 3 (2013): 41.

⁵¹ Elaine Kalman Naves, “Talking with A.B. Yehoshua,” accessed January 5, 2015. <http://www.elainekalmannaves.com/essays-articles-radio-interviews/item/50-talking-with-ab-yehoshua>. [my emphasis added]

⁵² A.B. Yehoshua, “Finding my Father in Sephardic Time,” trans. Gilead Morahg, *Moments* 22, no. 5 (Oct. 1997): 54-57 and 85-92.

where we are expected from the beginning to look at every passenger and every detail in light of the catastrophe of the end”.⁵³ After the violence that broke out during the Second Intifada would it have been right of Yehoshua to allow that violence to color his understanding and experience of past moments of co-existence to the extent of removing or reinterpreting the friendships in *The Liberated Bride* between his Jewish and Arab characters? If Yehoshua was ‘escaping from history’ as Fania Oz-Saltzberg puts it, then he would have done so, but Yehoshua remained true to the time period of his novel in order to avoid promoting a fatalistic continuum that only portrays Jewish and Arab contact through violence, conflict and as a relationship that will never give birth to genuine co-existence.

In his lecture to the historians, Yehoshua also spoke of the relationship between Jews and Arabs and noted that Arabs should not be expected to become lovers or friends of Jews, nor should a relationship between Jews and Arabs be strictly one of enmity, hatred and enemies, but at the very least they might perhaps become good neighbours. Perhaps the level of intimacy that lovers or friends experience is too intimate and idealistic to be used as a yard stick for Jews and Arabs in the context of Near Eastern history. Ranen Omer-Sherman mentions that *The Liberated Bride* is not over consumed in optimism because “Yehoshua is too connected to history and immediate reality to permit himself to entirely ignore the likelihood of simmering tensions”.⁵⁴ For example, although Yehoshua meant to portray the poetry contest at the Khalil el-Sakakini Cultural Center in Ramallah as a cheerful gathering of cultural interchange, negative attitudes nonetheless crept their way

⁵³ A.B. Yehoshua, “Five Recommendations,” accessed January 5, 2015.
<http://www.sephardichorizons.org/Volume4/Issue1/recommendations.html>.

⁵⁴ Ranen Omer-Sherman, “On the Verge of a Long-Craved Intimacy: Distance and Proximity between Jewish and Arab Identities in A. B. Yehoshua's *The Liberated Bride*,” *Journal of Jewish Identities* 2, no. 1 (2009): 74.

into the poetry contest. The organizers of the event stipulate that “no entries on political themes would be accepted... There were to be no refugees, no occupations, no anti-Semitism, no Holocaust, no death, and no bereavement. Only love”.⁵⁵ However, as much as the organizers wished to devoid the poetry contest of saddened nostalgia, “starting with the very first poem, it was evident that the elegy and the threnody, the uprooted olive tree and the tearful horse, were not so easily forgotten in love’s name”.⁵⁶ Mr. Suissa, whose son was killed in a suicide bus bombing, cannot help but be overcome with a negative attitude concerning his attitude toward Arabs when he is reminded of his son’s death, and warns Rivlin to “make no mistake about it, Professor Rivlin. They can stand and recite love poems all night, but they’re still vipers. Even that Arab you were just talking to”.⁵⁷ Although Mr. Suissa feels a rising tension within him he is nonetheless “awed by the occasion despite his vengeful feelings toward its Palestinian organizers, had taken off his fedora and put on a big, colorful skullcap that might have been knit back in his North African childhood”.⁵⁸

Ranen Omer-Sherman is correct when he explains that *The Liberated Bride* is a novel that gives a vision or promise of cultural coexistence between the states Jews and Arabs citizens but, there is a “steely insistence that no true mutuality will ever inform Jewish-Arab relations so long as the bitter shadow of Occupation poisons the reality of

⁵⁵ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 441.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 441.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 445.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 425.

both sides”.⁵⁹ Whether it is an Israeli Jew such as Mr. Suissa mourning over his dead son or Palestinians longing for a past that no longer exists, it does not ultimately eliminate the potential for some kind of relationship to flourish between Jews and Arabs as seen through the enduring relationship between Rivlin and Rashid.

Although the natural friendship between Rivlin and Rashid is questionable because Rashid is suspected of only befriending Rivlin through his hope that he will use his connections to aid his sister to cross back into Israel permanently with her family, and Rivlin seems only to rely on him as a chauffeur and messenger between himself and his student Samaher- the two nonetheless come to respect one another and establish a friendship that is neither over consumed by a blind optimism that ignores the tensions between Israelis and Palestinians nor pessimism that insists no true mutuality will ever prevail between Jews and Arabs. However, as Omer-Sherman points out, Yehoshua is too connected to history to allow himself to fall into a blind optimism. Yehoshua’s attitude toward history will always take into account the good and bad, as seen through the polarization in *The Liberated Bride*, however his desire for change will find itself hoping and striving towards optimism rather than pessimism.

The Orientalists: Hope versus Despair

Rivlin is one of several Orientalists in the novel, each of whom attempts to understand what the novel frequently coins as the “Arab mind”. Each Orientalists conclusion and

⁵⁹ Ranen Omer-Sherman, “Guests and Hosts,” 42.

understandings' regarding the concept of the "Arab mind" is heavily colored by his or her emotions regarding the development of Israeli and Arab relations in the Middle- East. By taking a closer look at the ways in which each Orientalist handles these wavering emotions of hope and despair it will provide the reader with an insight concerning each scholar's attitude toward the past and why.

Ephraim Akri, who had been born in Iraq, is described by Rivlin as an oriental God-fearing Jew "whose brown skin and sad Bedouin eyes were those of a true son of the desert and whose command of the subtleties of Arabic put to shame the politically correct professors from New England and Northern California who couldn't pronounce correctly a single Arabic curse?".⁶⁰ Akri has come to his own understanding of the 'Arab mind' which has been described by Rivlin as the Theory of Despair: "He simply had arrived at what he believed to be a scholarly conclusion: that [Arabs] could never understand- let alone respect, desire, or implement- the idea of freedom".⁶¹ This theory has led Akri to adopt an attitude towards the Arabs that is very much along the lines of building a relationship with them that is intimate and hopeful but guarded and despairing at the same time. Akri states that

the better we understand the Arabs, the better we can defend ourselves against them.

We have to distinguish the crucial from the trivial, what's important to them from what isn't. That's the only way we'll ever know what to expect from them. We have to honor their feelings and realize what hurts them in order to guard against betrayal

⁶⁰ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 400-401.

⁶¹ Ibid, 10.

and lies. It's a question of patting their backs with one hand while squeezing their balls with the other.⁶²

Rivlin himself is always toggling between a relationship with Arabs that is either guarded or intimate. For example when he is speaking to Samaher in Arabic he makes sure to revert to Hebrew “before their intimacy could grow too great”.⁶³ However, he also wants to integrate with the Arabs, “dropping an Arabic sentence or expression here and there, not just to keep your listeners on their toes, but to let them know that their world is your second home”.⁶⁴ The toggling/shifting between intimacy and cautiousness is a pattern of Jewish and Arab relations throughout the novel. This has been observed by Omer-Sherman who states that overall Yehoshua's narrative in *The Liberated Bride* “restlessly vacillates between embracing the cultural pleasure of intimacy with the Other on the one hand, and irreparable conflict, suspicion, and instability on the other”.⁶⁵ Yet although Bernard Horn characterized Akri's academic discourse as “essentialist racism,”⁶⁶ I do not believe that Akri's theory is racist.

Akri's Theory of Despair is somewhat fatalistic, considering that he unflinchingly believes that a relationship between Jews and Arabs can never totally embrace peace and love regardless of an active pursuit towards this goal or not. However, this part of his understanding has not led him to become utterly pessimistic or abandon any hope of building a relationship with Arabs.

⁶² Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 96.

⁶³ Ibid, 131.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 201.

⁶⁵ Ranen Omer-Sherman, “Guests and Hosts ,” 35.

⁶⁶ Bernard Horn, “Behind Every Border,” 10.

Although Akri's discourse seems to be at a midpoint between transformative and fatalistic attitudes toward the past his discourse is nonetheless essentialist and leans more towards the side of pessimism regarding relationships with Arab. This may be the cause of some regarding his theory as racist. For example, once Akri learns of Rivlin's visits to his student's Arab village, Akri warns him against such levels of intimacy with Arabs and "although it was important, even imperative, to be forthcoming with Arabs, intimacy was to be avoided. It could only lead to misunderstanding".⁶⁷ Yehoshua himself is the opposite of Akri, if one takes into account Yehoshua's statement in the Sperlinger interview that although he feels both optimistic and pessimistic toward the future, he deliberately leans more towards the side of optimism for the sake of his children and grandchildren. However, he is also affected by pessimism which is just as much a reality in the present, and potentially the future, as is optimism.

Akri actively engages Arabs in order to try to develop his understanding and relationship with Arabs, as seen at Samaher's wedding at which Akri felt obliged to enter into a dialogue with the young Arabs concerning their history and culture. When confronted by Rivlin about his debate at the wedding, Akri argues that

he was being objective. I was speaking respectfully and with the best of intentions.

Precisely because there were so many young people there, engineers and science majors and future intellectuals, I said to myself, here's a chance to give them a different perspective on their own history- and in their own language... If we're ever going to learn to get along with them, going to their weddings and making small talk

⁶⁷ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 284.

while eating barbecued lamb won't be enough. We have to reach out and touch the truth, even if it hurts. Even if it may be futile.⁶⁸

Although as we have seen, Rivlin in his private and professional life is guided by a relentless drive to discover the truth, he nonetheless disagrees with Akri's approach arguing his colleague only managed to insult the Arabs further: "You demolished their past, you defamed their ancestors, you attacked their honor, you enumerated their every weakness, you told them they have no future".⁶⁹ Rivlin believes there is a more general truth that can be discovered as opposed to the truth that Akri or he himself believes in considering that through his debate with the Arabs at Samaher's wedding Akri was attempting to have them "buy" into his historical interpretation of their history.

Rivlin is also envious of Akri which makes it difficult for the reader to fully trust Rivlin's sentiments towards Akri. For example, whenever Rivlin notices the pictures of Akri's grandchildren he describes the feelings of envy which boil up inside him: "Rivlin stared at the photographs on Akri's computer, bitterness welling inside him not only at the grandfather, but at the grandsons too".⁷⁰ Rivlin seems to carry a sense of bitterness toward Akri who has succeeded him as the head of Near-Eastern Studies department at the university, is a true son of the desert, has an unparalleled command of Arabic compared to others in the department and is the youngest prodigy of Tedeschi. After Akri offers that he join Rivlin on a sick call to their mentor

⁶⁸ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 28.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 27.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 27.

Rivlin remarks that “he would not have been inclined to spend a second long evening with Akri, much less join him in a sick call as if they were equals, either academically or in their relationship with a revered teacher”.⁷¹ Unlike Rivlin, Akri that has found a way to understand his present political reality because he is secure in an attitude which is neither consumed by fatalistic despair nor total transformative optimism.

Carlo Tedeschi is the most renowned Orientalist in the novel and is described as one who desired the Jews to see themselves as a natural and organic part of the Middle East, whose hearts and spirits were invested into that region and no longer in exile. Although he retained this hope of a Jewish integration into the Middle East, he also “grew increasingly worried by [the Jewish] inability to understand the Arab mind. While he did his best to conceal it, he was fearful,” according to Rivlin, “that we Jews, having failed catastrophically in Europe, were about to fail again in the Middle East”.⁷² He represents an older generation of Orientalists whose generation is in decline but who represented “an entire tradition of Orientalists who viewed historical Islam as a world far more tolerant of its Jews than the Christian or even the secular ‘West’”.⁷³ Yehoshua’s description of his own father is echoed in his representation of Tedeschi:

I was proud my father spoke Arabic fluently - his father sent him to learn Arabic from a sheikh - and we had Arab friends. His task of understanding the Arabs - not only politics but poetry - was very important; he took it as a vocation. We're living

⁷¹ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 25.

⁷² Ibid, 515.

⁷³ Ranen Omer-Sherman, “On the Verge,” 62.

with the Arabs; we have to understand them ... Through knowing the Arabs, you know yourself better.⁷⁴

In his eulogy to Tedeschi, Rivlin explains that when concerned with his ability to understand the “Arab mind” his mentor was a man torn “between his responsibility to warn his colleagues of the pitfalls of wishful thinking and his reluctance to sow despair”.⁷⁵ Yehoshua constructs a character whose attitude, according to Rivlin, changes over the course of his life in response to his experiences in Europe, with Zionism and finally the derailed Oslo talks followed by the Intifada. Hence Tedeschi travels down a slowly pessimistic road in which he gradually loses hope in his attempts to understand the Arab and the Jewish minds.

In a conversation with Tedeschi, Hagit asks “what kind of Orientalist are you, Carlo? Don’t you ever feel a professional need to meet real, live Arabs?’ ‘Reality is what I write on. Real- life Arabs, let alone real- life Jews, make me too dizzy to think straight’”.⁷⁶ But at Tedeschi’s funeral Rivlin explains that Tedeschi came to believe it “hopeless to try to understand the Arabs rationally,” and instead turned, like his wife Hannah the literary scholar, “to their poetry, then, for that is all we have to go on!”.⁷⁷ Rivlin ends his tribute to Tedeschi by explaining that he believed the inner rupture within his mentor was rooted in his reluctance to totally give into despair but to also preserve a hope for a positive future relationship between Arabs and

⁷⁴ Maya Jaggi, “Power and Pity,” *The Guardian*, June 24, 2006. Accessed January 10, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/jun/24/featuresreviews.guardianreview11>.

⁷⁵ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 515.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 419.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 515.

Jews. This inner battle was what created his many imaginary illnesses “whether they were an escape from the harsh truth of reality or a cry for help to his friends, asked to come still his fears”.⁷⁸ His illnesses whether imaginary or not, given that he does die suddenly as well as his old age, retained Tedeschi within his academic bubble- a place in which he could only examine the development of Jewish and Arab relations through a upper-case History or a bird’s eye view. Tedeschi’s access to documentation such as newspapers and media only further enhanced his growing fear that Jews and Arabs in the Middle-East will violently collide. The death of the promising scholar Yosef Suissa at the hands of a suicide bomber only provided Tedeschi with further reasons to isolate himself in his academic bubble and further cause to give into despair concerning the development of the relationship between the state’s Jewish and Arab citizens.

Had Tedeschi experienced Rivlin’s sojourning into Arab villages and developed a friendship like that between Rivlin and Rashid perhaps it would have shed a different light on Tedeschi that would have given him a larger spark of hope concerning the evolving relationship between the state’s Jewish and Arab citizens. However, despite the darkening cloud that loomed over Tedeschi’s hope for peaceful Jewish and Arab cooperation in the Middle-East, he still held that hope for peace and was committed to not fully despairing. This hodgepodge of Tedeschi’s sentiments seems to be shared by others because by the end of Rivlin’s tribute to Tedeschi the room is shrouded in gloom and Rivlin knows through “the profound silence that he had said something unexpected and true”.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 515.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 515-516.

Does the end of Rivlin's eulogy assert that Tedeschi, a man committed to not fully despairing, ultimately died believing there was no real hope for peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians? Did Tedeschi become a fatalistic historian believing that regardless of whatever he published or did the future history between the state's Jewish and Arab citizens is fated to have a disastrous turn perhaps paralleling that of the Holocaust? The sense of foreboding gloom after the tribute seems to symbolically assert that whether or not Israelis or Palestinians attempt to remain hopeful to achieve a peaceful co-existence (as seen through many previous scenes of optimistic co-existence in the novel) the sense of an impending disaster through "the utter breakdown of trust between the state's Jewish and Arab citizens due to the former's fears of terrorism and divided loyalties- and a mounting sense of deprivation and lack of belonging on the part of the latter"⁸⁰ will always be present and perhaps even dominate ones' understanding of the Other.

An exclusive state of mind, whether it be centered on hope or despair, if lacking a historical self-conscious is outside of history and therefore, can never truly exist because it has not embraced the lessons which history has to offer and is bound to miss opportunities that would deter mistakes from happening for the same reasons as they did in the past. Yehoshua would place himself at the midpoint between hope and despair concerning the peace process between Israel and the Palestine. However, Yehoshua's midpoint would lean more to the side of hope but would never be blinded by hope because the lessons of history will always be with him and therefore, will always fold a touch despair which keeps him alert and prepared to warning signs of change.

⁸⁰ Ranen Omer-Sherman, "Guests and Hosts," 45.

Rivlin's personal quest runs parallel to his academic quest regarding how to write sympathetically about Algeria in the 1950s and 60s, a time in which Algeria's recent independence from France augured new vision and hope, while also taking into account the incomprehensible violence that has broken out in present day Algeria. Although these two quests- understanding Algeria's history and clarifying his son's predicament - may seem unrelated they run parallel to each other and are interlaced. In both cases, it eventually becomes apparent that Rivlin was coloring his interpretation of the past according to what he saw in the present and hoped for the future. In both cases the eventual disaster was not predicted or foreseen.

Modern historians are committed to examining all past moments objectively, to imagine any and all possible outcomes and avoid becoming 'historians in the service of...' Ultimately, a historian must "make an effort to understand every event within its own time period, circumstances and uniqueness"⁸¹ and must avoid judging the past in light of the present or in the light of future desires. Hence the warning that "the most difficult of a historian's tasks is to predict the past".⁸² Even prior to his son's divorce Rivlin is guilty of coloring everything too positively and therefore, was shocked by the turn of present events because he was not analytical or realistic enough in his profession and in his personal life. None of his training as a historian or his experience as a father prepared him for the unexpected turn of events in the present. Incapable of unveiling the mystery of his son's divorce the cheerful memories of the past become a delusion.

⁸¹ A.B. Yehoshua, "Five Recommendations," accessed January 5, 2015.
<http://www.sephardichorizons.org/Volume4/Issue1/recommendations.html>.

⁸² Bernard Lewis, *History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 69.

It is implied that Rivlin's inability to break his son's impasse affects his ability to historically interpret the past of other lands, like Algeria. Therefore, Rivlin's inability to examine Algeria of the 1950s and 60s relatively and objectively can be directly linked to a swelling of insecurities within Rivlin concerning his involvement with the past because he failed to accurately assess his son's marriage. Rivlin experienced a disillusionment in the present due to the failure of his historical consciousness which has lost its ability to make sense of history. The veils of mystery covering both these quests transform Rivlin's formerly cheerful attitude toward the past into a frustrated awareness of blind delusion. However, either one of Rivlin's dilemmas could have given him insight that would have helped him work through his other challenges. If Rivlin had been fully prepared to admit the time of vision and hope in Algeria was perhaps delusional, then he could have applied this insight to his son's divorce without having to know the exact details and reasons behind it.

Rivlin's problem is that he simultaneously insists on both an upper-case Historical approach (objective, external) as well as a lower-case historical approach (subjective, internal) to Algeria and the divorce. Rivlin does not intend to reconcile his son and Galya but neither can he accept their divorce, first of all because he cannot understand it, and secondly because he sees that his son has been "stuck" for five years following the divorce. In turn, this new attitude towards his son's life impacts Rivlin's research on Algeria and now he

cannot write about the fifties and sixties in Algeria, which were a period of vision and hope, without taking into account the insane terror going on now. A scholar with some integrity doesn't just closet himself with old documents and materials. He reads

the newspapers and connects the past to the present. It's his job to show that today's developments have their roots in yesterday's.⁸³

He cannot mold the two together but he refuses to accept an exclusive outsider or insider point of view either. Rivlin is consumed by the utopian ambition to have a full understanding of how events transpired through both a Historical and historical point of view. He was not part of his son's relationship and therefore, could not have known all the details. Likewise, he cannot know exactly why Algeria fell apart because he was not insider and perhaps the Algerians themselves cannot ascribe a single reason to the breakout of civil war after they had gained their independence. Therefore, the key to genuine/ optimal knowledge is to discover a balance between an insider and outsider perspective; to find a balance between interpretations that sees things Historically and historically but to also avoid being consumed in delusional hopes or fears.

Yehoshua's attitude toward Israeli- Palestinian history in this novel is not consumed in fear that the Israeli-Arab conflict will ultimate end in a catastrophe nor blinded by hope that the peace process will be easily achieved and maintained. Rivlin expresses at Tedeschi's funeral the double-bind to which Israeli Orientalists are exposed:

The problem is especially severe for Israeli Orientalists, who are caught in a double bind. On the one hand, they are suspected by both the world and themselves of being

⁸³ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 105.

unduly pessimistic about the Arab world because of Israel's conflict with it. And on the other hand, they are accused of unrealistic optimism because of their deep craving for peace.⁸⁴

Yehoshua's point of the double bind is further reinforced when he has Rivlin explain that "we are the Arabs neighbors and their hostages,"⁸⁵ constantly in one another's shadow and pulled toward eruptions of utter violence on one hand and delusions of total peace on the other hand between two nations who cannot maintain a balanced relationship for long. This point coincides with Akri's opinion that in order to guard against future conflict with the Arabs one must be "patting their backs with one hand while squeezing their balls with the other".⁸⁶ Omer-Sherman comes to the same conclusion concerning *The Liberated Bride* that it "leans heavily toward a paradigm of neighbors at a respectful distance, at peace, rather than living in the midst of one another".⁸⁷ The author's overall attitude toward these historical options is not over consumed in optimism and is not ignorant of the possibility of catastrophe even though as seen through Rivlin and especially Tedeschi, this double-bind can be debilitating and has the tendency of leading its victims down a road of despair. Akri's theory tends to lean on the side of sober realism more than liberal optimism and Tedeschi up to his death was never able to find a middle ground in which to operate.

⁸⁴ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 514.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 514.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 96.

⁸⁷ Ranen Omer-Sherman, "On the Verge," 76.

The fact that Rivlin remains trapped in his academic dilemma regarding the Algerian debacle is proof enough that he is attempting to avoid completely falling into an abyss of despair over his new awareness that his past historical attitude had been overly optimistic in ways that did not prepare him to properly foresee or confront future dilemmas. However, he reveals a fatalistic mind-frame concerning the Arabs and his understanding of the ‘Arab mind.’ When Rivlin thinks back to a comment made by Tedeschi’s wife about all Arabs being of “one world,” he finds himself in agreement with her, “Yet surely the translatress of the Age of Ignorance was right about their belonging to ‘one world,’ a world sometimes cruel and sometimes indulgently hospitable”.⁸⁸ Although Rivlin and Hannah Tedeschi may be trying to lump the Arabs into ‘one world’ their own comment also reveals their inability to generalize about the Arab mind because they readily admit that it has shown itself, like many other nations and peoples, to be contradictory and complex capable of both cruelty and hospitality. Just as Rivlin and Hannah generalized about the Arab world, Galya makes a similar generalization concerning Fu’ad who she describes as a close friend to the Hendels but nonetheless, “a dual figure of intimacy and strangeness, a family member whose degree of kinship no one knew”.⁸⁹ Rivlin is again caught revealing this fatalistic attitude concerning Arabs when he explains to Samaher’s family “that even when writing about Arabs in far-off times and places he looked for the connecting link with what was nearby. ‘After all,’ he told them, ‘you all have the same roots and come from the same desert’”.⁹⁰ Omer-Sherman remarks that “provocatively, the ‘Arab mind’ is a recurring phrase throughout the novel. Whether or not intended to challenge the reader’s own complacency, too

⁸⁸ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 195.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 546.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 199.

frequently this illusory entity seems imagined as a homogeneous, unified consciousness”.⁹¹ Indeed, as implied by Omer-Sherman’s observation, each reader is pushed to re-examine his or her own attitudes, and come to his or her own conclusions regarding the novel’s overall use of the term “Arab mind” or “Arab soul.”

The Jews are also lumped together under an imagined homogeneous, unified consciousness not only by the Arab characters but also by other Jewish characters as well. For example, Yo’el points out to Rivlin that “you think all the tears in the world belong to you. As if there weren’t a big, suffering universe all around you”.⁹² Fu’ad also comments that “you Jews are always at the airport. Always coming and going. You can’t sit still. It will make you sick in the end”.⁹³ Typical of Yehoshua’s technique, a careful reading of his novel makes it hard (but tempting) to judge the characters and their actions schematically as either right or wrong, good or bad. Yehoshua creates somewhat ambiguous situations in order to push the reader to clarify for himself or herself what is truly right/wrong. Dan Miron says in his analysis of Yehoshua’s novel *The Retrospective* (2013) that in Yehoshua’s philosophy there is of the both/and variety: not and/or but both/and. In his novels Yehoshua presents a paradoxical logic that seeks to encompass and reconcile contradictions.⁹⁴

Unwilling to accept the theories or opinions of his colleagues Akri’s Theory of Despair or the postcolonial attitude of Miller who “rejected the Orientalist’s thesis that an academic study

⁹¹ Ranen Omer-Sherman, “Guests and Hosts,” 31.

⁹² Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 134.

⁹³ Ibid, 118.

⁹⁴ Dan Miron, *A. B. Yehoshua’s Nove mezzo: An ‘Ashkenazi’ Perspective on Two ‘Sefardi’ Novels*. (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2011), 50-51, 96.

dealing with the origins of Algerian national identity could have any relevance to the current bloodshed in Algeria-”⁹⁵ Rivlin takes the advice of his mentor Tedeschi and turns to Arab literature for answers. Rivlin decides to search through folktalkes written in the 1930s and 40s for hidden hints of the future violence that erupted late on in Algeria.

In his recommendation to historians Yehoshua discusses the nourishing of identity and the imagination that historical materials can provide and the important role that historians play for artists in this regard. The role literature can play in furthering an understanding of other cultures and histories is further reinforced by Yo’el, Rivlin’s brother-in-law, who states that reading “Agnon’s *The Bridal Canopy*, last year in Laos and Cambodia gave him more insight into the Third World than no end of documents”.⁹⁶ Even Tedeschi is inspired to conduct research on literature and the arts “to show how the Turks saw the Arabs concretely, in terms of their literature”.⁹⁷ Yehoshua believes, especially after firsthand consultations with historians Menachem Ben-Sasson, Israel Yuval, Avraham Grossman, Shmuel Safrai, Sofia Menashe and others during the writing of *A Journey to the end of the Millenium*, that their interesting historical narratives provided him with useful hooks on which he could then hinge his plots. Artists can take the historians’ work and use it to create a work of art that reaches larger audiences in ways that may help Israelis forge a stronger identity connected to the nation and the land. As Yehoshua says,

⁹⁵ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 412.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 468.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 364.

art provides the best means to preserve and dialogue with the past. Tolstoy's *War and Peace* helped preserve the historical memory of the 1812 Napoleonic War in Russia better than a thousand history books, and the French movie *The Return of Martin Guerre* contributed more to the memory of French feudalism in the sixteenth century than many important essays published in academic journals.⁹⁸

Thus, whether the deceased Suissa was a scholar of Algerian literature or a professional historian is less relevant than the idea that literature and the arts in general have preserved the past. They are therefore sources which historians, like Rivlin, can use to enter into dialogue with and subsequently artists can use the work of historians which is to small elite groups of readers and distribute them more widely.

Ultimately, *The Liberated Bride* beckons for the possibility of a middle ground in which two peoples and two nations whose destinies are so intertwined can somehow manage to influence one another positively through a present that does not solely see the future as traveling down a path of devastation but takes past conflict and experiences into account and enters into dialogical encounters with the Other to produce a better future. Omer-Sherman makes the point that Rivlin is able to revitalize himself through his encounters with Arabs. He notes, for example, that when Rivlin visits Rashid's home an unexplainable fatigue washes over him and "though the source of Rivlin's epic exhaustion remains a mystery, what does seem manifestly clear is that Yehoshua intends to show us that the effects of lingering in the Arab village are wholly salutary,

⁹⁸ A.B. Yehoshua, "Five Recommendations," accessed January 5, 2015.
<http://www.sephardichorizons.org/Volume4/Issue1/recommendations.html>.

restoring the aging academic to himself while preparing him for new realities”.⁹⁹ *The Liberated Bride* reveals both optimism and pessimism concerning the future relationship between Jews and Arabs. However, *The Liberated Bride* most definitely makes the point that the Other, whether it be the Arabs, the singing Christian nun in Ramallah or anyone else, can help each individual and nation define and learn something about themselves too as long as a historical self-conscious attitude is applied to a historicized present which is neither overly consumed neither by blinding hope, nor by despairing views of the future.

The value of this collaborative attitude is reflected throughout the novel in Rivlin’s journey to liberate his son. For even if Rivlin had continued to pursue his quest to liberate his son after their confrontation it would have made no difference because Ofer would never have admitted the truth to him and Galya herself explains to Ofer that “it wasn’t your father, although it did have to do with him. Your father could have kept haunting the hotel forever”.¹⁰⁰ Ultimately, it is Fu’ad, the Arab maitre d’ of the Hendel hotel who is responsible for fully liberating Ofer but Rivlin’s cajoling did set events into motion that would eventually lead Fu’ad - as the only other person except Ofer aware of the truth concerning the incest between Galya’s sister and father - to confront Galya with the truth. Fu’ad was aware of the Hendel’s secret long before Ofer discovered it. However, Fu’ad was bought off by Mr. Hendel with a salary raise and promise of becoming a co-owner of the hotel. Then very much like Ofer, Fu’ad fell into a selfish fatalistic continuum in which he settled into a stagnant/useless passivity and even immortality because he surrendered his freedom of action and choice to the dream of partnership in the hotel. Therefore, when faced with the choice of protecting Ofer and Galya’s marriage or protect the

⁹⁹ Ranen Omer-Sherman, “Guests and Hosts,” 35.

¹⁰⁰ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 551.

family in order to hold on to his hopes of partnership, Fu'ad choose the latter: "Should he protect Galya's marriage by telling her the truth, or protect her family and his hoped-for-partnership? He chose the latter, not realizing that this was the greatest fantasy of all".¹⁰¹ Rivlin refuses to believe that the ever present Fu'ad was not aware of the truth concerning the divorce and he confronted Fu'ad: "But I know you know... You don't give a damn how I'm suffering because you only think of yourself and of getting ahead. But where to? If you're not free inside you'll never get anywhere".¹⁰²

Fu'ad realizes his imprisonment within the fantasy of the Hendel Hotel once Rivlin and Rashid take him to the poetry festival in Ramallah. It is at this festival that Fu'ad experiences the plight of Palestinians who "would like to be partners, too- in our country. Their own Palestinian Authority isn't enough for them. They can sing all the love songs they want, but in the end they'd like to pick us apart..." Fu'ad realizes at this point that "working for Jews was getting him nowhere. And so he decided to take his severance pay and go back to his wife's figs and olives".¹⁰³ Although not only Fu'ad, but also the Arabs in Ramallah are thus partly responsible for the eventual liberation of Ofer, were it not for Rivlin's persistent meddling and his direct confrontation with Fu'ad to face the truth ("It's not the Jews who have ruined your Arabic, Fu'ad. It's surrendering your freedom to the hotel"),¹⁰⁴ the maitre d' would not have necessarily realized the immobilizing depth of his fantasies. Through his direct confrontation with Rivlin, who planted in Fu'ad's head the seed that made him doubt his fantasies, and by seeing himself in

¹⁰¹ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 549.

¹⁰² Ibid, 444.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 552.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 444.

comparison with the Palestinians, particularly Rashid, Fu'ad realized that his pointless protection of a dead man's secret steered him down a road that gradually corroded his identity while also causing others to consume themselves in restless displacement.

Rashid's quest to liberate his sister and her family runs parallel to Rivlin's quest. Like Rivlin, Rashid is notorious for crossing across boundaries. He is described by Rivlin as "the real wizard,... his sable-skinned driver, whose protean identities also numbered enamored cousin, faithful brother, many-armed messenger, swift kicker of fences, and multi-directional crosser of borders".¹⁰⁵ Rashid befriends Rivlin out of a desire to help his sister Rauda and her family cross back into Israel legally. Both Rivlin and Rashid have felt the sting of an embittered history through tragedies that have occurred to those they love. Rivlin is at a loss and confused why his son cannot let go of Galya and start a new relationship. Unlike Rivlin, the history of Rashid's family is clear as well as the reason why his sister is no longer in Israel and why she wishes to return with her family. Instead of making a rational decision as to whether or not his sister can/should return to Israel with her sons Rashid actively pursues her delusional desire to return with the entire family.

It is impossible for the reader to foresee whose quest will succeed and whose will fail. Rivlin takes every opportunity that comes his way to uncover the secret reason behind his son's divorce, even lying about being ill and only allegedly having a few months to live in order to extract information from Galya. However, as discussed earlier, Rivlin ends his inquiry when his son threatens to end their relationship. Rashid likewise takes every opportunity to advance his sister's cause. His constant desire to provide Rivlin with as many car rides and accommodations

¹⁰⁵ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 222.

as possible is connected to the fact that Rashid is aware that Rivlin has ex-students who work in the General Security Services and might facilitate his sister's transfer to Israel. However, what haunts Rashid most by the end of the novel is the fact that he did not take proper initiative when opportunities presented themselves that could have helped avoid the disaster that befell his nephew Rasheed. As Rashid sits by the bed side of his unconscious nephew he reminisces on his failure to act with full conviction,

And then, Rashid, you made your second mistake. You should have noticed the fear in little Rasheed's coal black eyes and insisted, 'Hold on there, my fellow citizens. I have too much Right on my side to compromise. I'm not going anywhere without the two boys...' But you didn't. You were rattled and started to squirm, afraid the sergeant would open his blind eye too, and you turned tail and headed for the village.¹⁰⁶

Gilead Morahg emphasizes this situation in his essay "The Perils of Hybridity" in which he remarks that "Rashid's anguish is not caused by the realization that he made a horrible mistake but rather by the sense that he did not have the courage to act on his own convictions. He believes that the catastrophe that befell his nephew was caused by his own willingness to compromise on the right of return".¹⁰⁷ It is easy for the reader to cheer on Rashid because he is a

¹⁰⁶ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 527.

¹⁰⁷ Gilead Morahg, "The Perils of Hybridity: Resisting the Postcolonial Perspective in A. B. Yehoshua's *The Liberated Bride*," *AJS Review* 33, no. 2 (2009): 372.

very likeable character with whose selfless goals the reader can sympathize, but the blind encouragement of the reader makes him or her disregard potential dangers that can come to pass for Rashid. Through an overly optimistic hope for Rashid, the reader misses warning signs that may foreshadow the tragedy of little Rasheed. For example, Afifa remarks that the Palestinian Arabs who have lost their villages, “‘don’t know who they are or where they belong, and they don’t let a body be. Rashid’s always fretting about Samaher, as if she didn’t have a husband to do that. And about that sister in Zababdeh he wants to bring back to Israel... The man has one foot in the grave already, why can’t he be left alone?’”.¹⁰⁸

Secondly, when the reader initially meets the hunters who will be later responsible for mistaking Rasheed for the creature they are hunting and thus accidentally shooting and paralyzing the boy, they are ironically praised by Rashid for their alleged caution; “they’re licensed hunters. They know enough to get a degree in it. One is a lawyer, and the other is a dentist. They only shoot what they’re allowed to”.¹⁰⁹ However, even when Rivlin and Rashid first encounter the hunters, the dentist had accidentally killed a piglet which he believed to be a partridge and he argues that he did not “know how it happened... [he is] always so careful”.¹¹⁰ It is not possible at this stage to guess that the paths of Rasheed and these hunters will eventually collide. However, should this scene invoke in the reader a heightened awareness of the uncertainty? Absolutely, because even though one may appear to have complete control over a situation, an accident can always happen. It is also impossible to know what would have been the outcome had Rashid stood his ground when confronted by the border authorities. Rashid’s agony

¹⁰⁸ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 476.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 207.

¹¹⁰ Ibid , 210.

over the tragedy “indicates the danger inherent in convictions that disregard the reality to which they are applied”,¹¹¹ and although he blames his lack of conviction in the right of return as the reason for the accident, it was impossible to foresee the events that would unfold in the woods between Rasheed and the hunters.

New and Old Historians

The divide between the New Historian Miller and the Old Historian Rivlin models the generational and methodological divide among different types of modern historians. Miller’s critique of Rivlin’s rough draft for an introduction to Rivlin’s new book on Algeria exposes two important issues. The first is that Rivlin’s effort to transfer Miller to another department, after Miller’s negative review of his draft, is not purely fueled by anger and resentment, but is rather Rivlin’s expression of his new attitude toward history as well as his concern of the future, in this particular case the future development of his academic department. Secondly, Yehoshua’s construction of the argument between Miller and Rivlin presents a very important argument, not only present in *The Liberated Bride* but in the real world as well, concerning the differences between New and Old Historians.

Immediately after Miller’s harsh critique of Rivlin’s rough draft, Rivlin proposes that the young man be transferred over “to the Political Science department, the American Liberalism of which could better cope with the young lecturer’s revisionist theories”,¹¹² so that the reader readily assumes that Rivlin’s proposal is fueled by anger and resentment. However, Rivlin

¹¹¹ Gilead Morahg, “The Perils of Hybridity,” 372.

¹¹² Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 472.

argues that Miller's academic techniques are too global or interdisciplinary and not fitting for a historically oriented department especially due to Miller's lack of Arabic sources in his research, which Rivlin claims might be a symptom of Miller's disinterest in the actual Arabic sources and his reliance, instead, on Western theories and translations. Rivlin's motives may be judged to be a selfish vengeance for the harsh criticism leveled against him by Miller, but when examined more closely, the reader may come to the conclusion that Rivlin's motives are not so black and white. The head of the Political Science department expresses concern that if they are incapable of finding Miller a position, then he would leave their university in Haifa for an offer at Ben-Gurion University in the Negev. In response to this Rivlin argues that no matter what he must protect the positions in the Near Eastern department:

But you have to realize that we in the Near Eastern Studies don't have many positions and have to think of the future. A promotion would give Miller his tenure and leave the department full up. It's my obligation to think of a successor for myself. Take our greatest Israeli Orientalist, Professor Tedeschi, who died a week ago. His mind was at rest because he believed, rightly or wrongly, that I would carry on in his place. But Miller isn't really interested in the Arabs.¹¹³

At this point in the novel Rivlin is obsessed with analyzing the missed warning signs of disaster in his son's divorce and in his understanding of Algerian history. However, until the very death

¹¹³ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 475.

of his mentor, Rivlin did not believe that Tedeschi's illness was real; he believed it to be only psychological and therefore, ignored the warning signs of his mentor's impending death. Now Rivlin cannot help but acknowledge that there were early warning signs of Tedeschi's death as well. Rivlin experienced the worst outcome by not paying heed to early warning signs which led to the death of his cherished mentor whose symptoms he had shrugged off. Therefore, when attempting to transfer Miller, Rivlin is now more focused on identifying warning signs and acting on them quickly in order to avoid potential dilemmas in the future. Rivlin also does not act immorally in that he already knows that Miller has an offer from Ben-Gurion University if Haifa's department of Political Science should refuse to accept him. Rivlin's desire to have Miller transferred is thus presented by Yehoshua not merely as a personal vendetta but also, at least from Rivlin's point of view as a protection of the Near Eastern Studies department from techniques and approaches that could bring the department into decline.

Secondly, when approaching the Miller and Rivlin argument it is important to understand that it is an argument between a New and an Old historian. As the student of Tedeschi, Rivlin is an Old historian who was trained to believe in a methodological reliance on primary documentation and proper command and knowledge of the languages necessary for his research. Objectivity is the key to old historian mentality and it was the attempts by later historians to debunk the objectivity of past historians that established a binary opposition between old and new historian. Historian Hayden White (1928-) established the trend of new historians through his book *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* (1978).¹¹⁴ White argues that historical writing could never truly be objective or scientific because of its

¹¹⁴ Hayden V. White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

similarities to literary writing. White demonstrated that eminent historians- such as Jules Michelet (1798-1874), Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) and Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), were shaping their historical writing largely through a reliance on rhetorical strategies, imagery and narrative techniques which are associated with literary writing.

In a logical continuation of this line of argument, Edward Said's (1935-2003) *Orientalism* (1978) is a foundational text for post-colonialism that argues that in their discussions of Middle-Eastern, Asian or North-African societies, Western historians were not objective recorders and explainers of those cultures.¹¹⁵ Instead they projected the values and prejudices of their imperialist societies onto their Oriental scholarship. The new historian Benny Morris (1948-) is a prominent advocate of such revisionist historicism. In *Making Israel* (2007) he denounces "old historians" and considers them more chroniclers than historians who might have been reliable analysts of past events because, he argues, they could not write objectively about history due to the fact that many of them lived through the establishment of Israel in 1948 and could not separate themselves from this event.¹¹⁶

By contrast, in an interview with Gershon Shaked, Yehoshua stated that conflict does not necessarily result in destruction, for it can also be a source of creativity and growth.¹¹⁷ However, in his lecture to Israeli historians, marking the fiftieth anniversary of Israel, Yehoshua's first recommendation is that the argument between new and old historians must end because it "has turned from fruitful to paralyzing, from substantial to personal, and from an

¹¹⁵ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

¹¹⁶ Benny Morris, *Making Israel* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007).

¹¹⁷ Gershon Shaked, interviewed by Abraham B. Yehoshua, "In Conversation with Gershon Shaked," Prague Writers' Festival, December 10, 2007. http://www.pwf.cz/archivy/texts/interviews/in-conversation-with-gershon-shaked_227.html. Accessed January 5, 2015.

objective investigation of historical events to political clashes accompanied by ugly mudslinging”.¹¹⁸ From Yehoshua’s point of view both the old and the new historians have contributed to the history of Israel and the unqualified censure leveled against either is not entirely valid.

Methodologically Rivlin is cut from the same cloth as Tedeschi. He is a historian who will not open his “mouth without documentation”.¹¹⁹ When Rivlin is present at a conference in which an absent Tedeschi was meant to speak, he is approached by the organizers and asked to fill in Tedeschi’s place but Rivlin refuses because he has no documentation on Tedeschi’s subject. However, the political scientists organizing the conference insist that no one “cares about documents anymore...”. ‘Don’t be an old fogey. People want provocative challenges, paradoxes’”.¹²⁰ Due to the fact that New Israeli historians, such as Avi Shlaim, Ilan Pappé and Tom Segev- have written narratives that go against the mainstream narratives about the Old historians foundation of Israel the argument has been leveled by Efraim Karsh, Itamar Rabinovich and Avraham Sela, that the New historians are less concerned with epistemological issues than with dislodging the founding myths of Zionism and fashioning their research accordingly.

Although convincing arguments can be made against either New or Old historians, it is always important to approach the debate between both groups objectively and remember, according to Yehoshua, that Old historians

¹¹⁸ A.B. Yehoshua, “Five Recommendations,” accessed January 5, 2015.
<http://www.sephardichorizons.org/Volume4/Issue1/recommendations.html>.

¹¹⁹ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 332.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 327.

did their work seriously and conscientiously and were not ‘historians at the service of...’. It is possible that they did not fully investigate a number of things to which they ought to have paid more attention. Their worldviews, beliefs and attachment to certain values may have blinded them to certain things they could have seen. It is also possible that new information discovered over the course of time did not sufficiently arouse their interest or attention. But the unqualified censure leveled upon them by New Historians who also sometimes call themselves post-Zionists, is certainly not justified.¹²¹

Indeed, as the novel progresses Rivlin seems to slowly embrace New historical approaches. Firstly, Rivlin begins to appreciate the value of different research materials, notably the use of fiction as primary documents. Unlike Hannah Tedeschi, the wife of Rivlin’s mentor and a literary scholar on ancient Islamic poetry- hence a literary historian, Rivlin is not used to relying on works of fiction in his research. She and her husband suggest to Rivlin that there is a potential usefulness to his research in the Algerian folktales that the deceased Yosef Suissa had accumulated. The latter is described as an observant Jew and “an unknown scholar from the Arabic Department in Jerusalem, who, stimulated by a literary, sociological, and ethnographic interest, had undertaken a study of popular literature [from] North Africa”.¹²² Whether or not the deceased Suissa was a New historian or simply a scholar of Arabic literature is difficult to

¹²¹ A.B. Yehoshua, “Five Recommendations,” accessed January 5, 2015.
<http://www.sephardichorizons.org/Volume4/Issue1/recommendations.html>.

¹²² Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 107.

ascertain. What is most important, however, is that Rivlin is now able to appreciate the value of alternative scholarly approaches and eventually borrow from them in order to discover historical allusions hidden within the intricacies of Arab writing.

Although there seems to be no hope for harmony between Rivlin the Old historian and Miller the New historian, the differences between them seem to collapse by the end of the novel. As the novel progresses and Rivlin's interest in the Algerian folktales deepens, his hypothesis regarding the eruption of the catastrophic Algerian civil war, begins to narrow down. Eventually Rivlin argue that the extreme violence that erupted in the Algerian civil war finds its roots in the variety of languages spoken in Algeria (Berber, North African Arabic, Classical Arabic and French), which disabled any legitimate efforts at dialogue or communication and facilitated the country's quick descent into violence. Similarly, when Miller gives his speech at Tedeschi's memorial conference, he ends by explaining that

we can say that the main theories of cross-culturalism have been based on the three models of diffusion, assimilation, and isolation. None of these, however, takes into account the effects of interaction, even though historical studies have shown the importance of cross-cultural stimulus and response in such areas as religion, commerce, epidemiology and health care, and so on. The most productive paradigm to date has been the linguistic one.¹²³

¹²³ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 509.

It seems that although in his new book Rivlin notes that linguistic heterogeneity jeopardized Algeria's stability like Miller, Rivlin also chooses to look at the effects of such cross-cultural interaction in the area of literary expression, for the stories he examines- or rather asks Samahar to examine- are written in Arabic but are based on a combination of European (particularly French) and Arabic models.

Lastly, Rivlin's attitudes toward the object of study undergo a transformation as well. Through the events with his son Rivlin discovers that neither as a historian or as a father can he bracket off his own experiences and values concerning the ways in which he looks at the past in relation to the present. Hence he embodies the recommendation that Yehoshua gives regarding the permeability between Old and New Historians, particularly Yehoshua's plea not to box either into a separate, mutually distrustful, category.

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, in his "Five Recommendations to Historians" Yehoshua outlines a detailed and systematic attitude toward history, advocating above all a comprehensive and accurate awareness of actual historical events, so that all options can be taken into consideration at crucial crossroads in the lives of nations and individuals. Yehoshua underscores, however, that in order to avoid repeating past mistakes, this heightened consciousness of history must be accompanied by a genuine desire for change—or as I have put it, a hyperconsciousness of the present as the past of the future. The lecture to historians that Yehoshua gave in 1998 specifically reveals his expectations from those who profess a vocation for history and therefore, he expands

on how they can impact society through their research. No other lecture, essay or novel by Yehoshua reveals his attitude toward history and historians as clearly as this lecture.

When examining *The Liberated Bride* and this lecture side by side it becomes increasingly apparent that the representation of history and historians in *The Liberated Bride* has its roots in these five recommendations. Yehoshua illustrated his recommendation to end the paralyzing debate between New and Old historians through the clashing of the Old historian Rivlin and the New historian Miller. Yehoshua adopts an objective stance on this debate and clearly points out that both sets of historians have done important work, and although unqualified censure that may be leveled upon either New or Old historians may be overly aggressive, the research conducted by both is significant in its own right.

In his next recommendation, Yehoshua reveals the ways by which the boundaries between New and Old historians may be crossed in order to give life to fruitful research. In his lecture Yehoshua explains that through their work historians can inspire artists to use and apply historical research to their own creations in ways that will spread a consciousness of history through the wider media. Yehoshua expresses this reciprocal relationship between artists and historians in *The Liberated Bride* by having Rivlin rely on Algerian folktales in order to move his research forward and formulate a new hypothesis concerning the Algerian civil war. The incorporation of different types of research materials proves that Rivlin is not boxed into an Old historian mode, and by the end of the novel, Rivlin and Miller formulate a similar theory to explain the severe violence of the Algerian civil war. Hence, *The Liberated Bride* works out Yehoshua's plea not to pigeonhole Old and New historians and reveals how both types of historians can mutually and respectfully operate.

As his last recommendation Yehoshua tasks historians with the duty to help forge a stronger Jewish connection to the Muslim East through their work, so that when the peace process is completed, the Arabs will know that Jews see themselves as an organic part of the Middle-Eastern region and are investing themselves in this region wholeheartedly not only militarily but also economically, culturally and scientifically.¹²⁴ While at this time Yehoshua believed that the peace process would be completed, the historians Carlo Tedeschi and Ephraim Akri in the novel are not as hopeful. While Akri has adopted a more despairing attitude concerning the evolution of Jewish and Arab relations, Carlo Tedeschi is consumed by a bipolar attitude of hope and despair which has led him to isolate himself within an academic bubble. Yehoshua uses Akri and Tedeschi, to portray the feelings of fear and hope concerning the future cooperation between Jews and Arabs in the Middle-East and the tendency of fear to overpower hope.

When Yehoshua delivered his “Five Recommendations” and began writing *The Liberated Bride*, Israelis and Palestinians seemed on the verge of signing a peace accord. However, the hopes for peace between Israel and Palestine were dashed with the eruption of the Second Intifada in 2000. Unlike Rivlin, who is guilty of allowing new events in the present to color his interpretation of the past, Yehoshua did not allow his feelings toward current events to completely overwhelm the original optimistic plan of *The Liberated Bride*, which explains the constant toggling between optimistic and pessimistic modes in the novel between Israeli and Arab characters. Rivlin’s objectivity is compromised in his academic work because he no longer objectively understand the reality of Algeria in the 1950s and 60s, which was a period of hope

¹²⁴A.B. Yehoshua, “Five Recommendations,” accessed January 5, 2015.
<http://www.sephardichorizons.org/Volume4/Issue1/recommendations.html>.

and improvement, without being overwhelmed by feelings of fear and despair due to the raging violence of the Algerian civil war. One of Yehoshua's recommendations warns against allowing singular historic events, like the Holocaust, to obstruct the perception of Jewish history "as if everything that happened before or after was nothing but a preface or consequence, and the significance of any moment in Jewish history derives only from its connection to the Holocaust".¹²⁵ While Yehoshua respected this recommendation through his writing of *The Liberated Bride*, Rivlin whose historical vocation requires a greater measure of objectivity, finds himself grappling with feelings that significantly color or alter his attitude toward events in the past.

While total objectivity is impossible, Yehoshua attempts to model through Rivlin's development a process of increased objectivity toward present circumstances in light of past events. By the end of the novel we see that when he fully matures, Rivlin is capable of greater objectivity and respect for boundaries, and he therefore refrains from commenting and interfering with his second son's decisions to abandon his post as a highly trained military operative for a job as a painter. Rivlin was not previously capable of greater objectivity because he colored his interpretations by his hopes rather than taking into account all possible developments. He now realizes that he could not possibly understand his son's life in the military because he was not an insider; he did not have the personal historical perspective of Tsakhi's military life and only had an outsider perspective which gave the illusion that everything was fine. Rivlin learns to accept that sometimes "there's nothing to understand. Some things just

¹²⁵ A.B. Yehoshua, "Five Recommendations," accessed January 5, 2015.
<http://www.sephardichorizons.org/Volume4/Issue1/recommendations.html>.

have to be accepted”’,¹²⁶ all he can contend with is that fact that his sons are now actively taking charge of their lives and Rivlin can be a source of positivity in their lives.

The difference between the historians and the non-historian characters in the novel is that the historians do not strive for a delusional future. Akri’s “Theory of Despair” is rooted in what he has discovered in his research; it is not inspired through a dark vision of the future which he has imagined. Although Tedeschi is caught in a whirlpool of hope and despair, it is perfectly understandable. As a historian Tedeschi is historically conscious of past cooperation between Jews and Arabs and is therefore, resistant to write off their future as incompatible. However, he is also aware of the bad in history and cannot embrace a blissful future of hope and happiness. Whatever kind of desire historians have for the future, it is rooted in their research. Ofer, who is not a historian, represses his historical conscious by hiding what he discovered in the Hendel Hotel in order to dream about a blissful paradisiacal future return to his ex-wife. Galya, represses what Ofer reveals about her father and sister because it would uproot the happy future she has imagined for herself and her family.

Rivlin’ struggle, by contrast, is that he is and wants to be historically conscious of how every aspect of present day circumstances has come to be, whether it is in his historical research or in his private life. Rivlin would rather confront the facts whether they are good or bad instead of ignoring them. Unlike his wife, who hopes her son will independently snap out of his inactive state, Rivlin actively pursues his desire to “activate” his son and it is this quality of Rivlin’s that inspires other to introspectively re-examine their past and determine whether or not the current life they are living is honestly for the better or the worst. The beauty of *The Liberated Bride* is that it functions as a tool to draw attention to the role of history in our lives and the ways in

¹²⁶ Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*, 85.

which a more accurate awareness of the impact of the past on the present can alter one's ability to live in the present.

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