

STREETS 1970

An Introduction

Are there perennial truths? Truths we have to find over and over again if we want to feel real, if we want to know what human living is all about? Well I think the answer is, most likely, yes. So where do we find such truths? Philosophy asks the question – sometimes it attempts an answer; empirical science tells us about the makeup of our everyday world, not the human truths on how to live in it. Psychology tries to clear the road so we can get somewhere... we generally need road clearing. If I had to pick one area of human thought that helps in this quest it would be, not exclusively, but primarily, literature. Poetry, plays, dialogues, novels - the play of words upon our ears, our memories and our souls convey the becoming human condition that defines our lives.

Recently, I heard a rather insightful remark, “beware the unloved”. I interpreted “beware” as...*take note of... be attentive to*. The unloved are tormented, they never know if they have done enough; frequently they do not even know what they are doing.

Have we all been loved enough? Not too many of us. But that is ultimately not just a private experience. We are, after all, all connected; we are, in some inexplicable way, one – we humans. The more we come to know our own unloved areas the more we can feel those areas in others. The more we live the human experience. Some people fulfill their dreams, others fear to have them - still others lose their dreams to money, to fear, to convention, to drugs – the list goes on. In this remarkably well-written and engaging novel, Molofsky tells of those who have lost their dreams to drugs. But this novel explores more than that. Good and evil – meaning versus no meaning – sex, love and self-search are made vivid with an acuity of perception that raises the story line to the perennial quest to know the human enterprise. Molofsky’s extraordinary skill as a writer is such that there is no need for a linear development of plot; time is a tertiary experience in this novel. The author happens to be a psychoanalyst; this novel was written, however, in her late twenties, many

years prior to her present profession. It has a vitality of youth, without the inter-space of psychological categorizations to take away from the immediacy of encounter.

Naught is good nor evil but that thinking makes it so.... A philosophical truth? Psychological insight? A guideline for understanding? Unloved people usually hurt themselves – many times they hurt others – not necessarily sacrificing their innocence in the process. In order to see the possibility of innocence one has to describe, not judge, diagnose, preach, or reform. One has to look with innocence, so to speak, if one wants to know what is really happening. Molofsky, accomplished and recognized poet that she is, enables us to look this way. She lets us touch the characters along with her and in the touching we learn about life and death, about how and if we can ever judge another. I am not suggesting some existential vacuity – not at all. There is something more significant here; this storyteller never gets in the way of her story or her characters. Molofsky writes with ease, with an engaging lyric flow, with a rapidity that carries us along, not sure where we will end up.

But we end up not only knowing and liking, or, maybe not liking her characters or her plot; we end up, either way, having to ask ourselves some basic questions about life and death – about sex, love and violence – about yearning -- about judgment and non-judgment. The Greek philosopher Solon reminds us to judge no one until his or her death. Molofsky heeds this advice, she does not judge, when the judging would be easy. Rather she helps us experience; helps us take note of those unloved. For every human being who loses his or her life to whatever – we all lose part of ourselves. But that is a reflective philosophical observation. Molofsky offers the same truth without the burden of saying it. And that's what makes her the exceptionally engrossing writer she is.

We all have a leaning toward seeing the world we want, more than the world we have. What to do? We run back to stories – ever since our youth, our collective youth as well as our personal individual youth - and we read or someone reads to us. And, if we are lucky and if we are ready, we find the world anew - even for just a moment.

We touch other lives and in the touching we feel our own. *Streets 1970* gave me such a moment. I wish it for you as well.

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