

Left for Dead

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From an anthropologist's notes.

We drove on; shuddering about in a battered Pontiac, through mile after mile of sun-scorched rocky desert, along an almost empty highway - a terrible place; the wastes of Northern Israel, no one in his right mind would want to live there - before climbing slowly up into the heights that looked out over Syria and Southern Lebanon.

My driver seemed nervous.

I offered him a beer.

He pointed to his head, meaning no. He was toying with a smouldering marijuana spliff, misshapen and hurriedly-prepared.

'Gold ?' I enquired, politely.

He shook his head. 'Persian.'

I nodded.

I had hired him from an agency in Tel Aviv.

He told me that once we were in Falagh territory driving would be hazardous, as the Falagh, with their impaired vision, were by far the world's worst drivers.

I felt nothing.

It was ten thirty in the morning, and I had already put away five cans of beer.

The heat was unbelievable.

I felt terrible.

I had the driver stop the car, so that I could get some extra beers out of the trunk.

I had some difficulty getting the key into the lock. It turned out not to have been locked in the first place.

I had some difficulty getting the bottles and cans out of their cardboard boxes.

The blinding sunlight, together with the airless landscape, made me feel I had been brought to life in someone else's disturbing dream.

I may have fallen over a few times. I managed to cut my forehead somehow, possibly on the edge of the open trunk.

My driver opened his door and got out to help me, but he seemed unable to find his way around to my side of the car.

'We will have to spruce up.' I heard him shout several times into the emptiness of the desert. I think he was speaking Hebrew.

We splashed our faces with water and then combed our hair.

He put an unsightly criss-cross of sticking plasters over the gash on my forehead. And as he did so managed to burn a couple of holes in my shirt with his spliff. But overall he could be said to have done a fair job of looking after me.

My clothes were dank with sweat, and flecked with blood and beer.

I was afraid that, with all the beer and the heat and the driving, and the soporific atmosphere, created by the billowing marijuana smoke, I would fall into a coma and piss myself, and have to go to the initiation ceremony with stained and stinking trousers.

The Falagh are not Jewish, not Muslim, not Christian, but they are, in terms of international law, Israeli, although the Israeli government, in a statement on the problem, claimed that most Falagh, although adequately circumcised, seemed to want to travel on Canadian passports.

The Muslims class the Falagh as Jews ('Jewish-scum-Falagh', they call them), and the Jews think they are Muslims ('Fucking Palestinians'). The Christians don't seem to give a fuck either way.

Strangely, there are more Falagh in Denver or Seattle than in Northern Israel.

They could be mistaken either for Hassidic Jews or Iranian mullahs; their appearance being somewhat similar: uniform black cloaks, podgy builds, simian beards, dreadful sideboards, alcoholic complexions, horrible black hats and turbans, and book-worm spectacles.

Hitler once said 'Jews are scum, but secretly I admire the Falagh.'

Their leader in New York, Yohah Norek, said on television recently 'We Falagh do not watch television. We know nothing about its filthy ways. Nothing. Television is pure filth, put about by scum, prostitutes, and filthy masturbators. To have a television in your house is just like have an open sewer in your living room, with shit oozing out all over your floor. Why have an open sewer in your bedroom, when it is much easier to turn your whole mind into a sewer? Then your mouth becomes an open drain, or an asshole, for scum, and filth.'

And a passage from the Book reads: 'Think only of Falagh, yourselves. Think only of ourselves, Falagh. Say to yourselves, Falagh. No one can stray from the simple life of circumcision, clitoridectomy, oculision, scarification, infibulation and amputation. You must orchestrate the tensions of daily life so that you can never escape remembering the way of life of Falagh. Look at yourself in a mirror. See only Falagh there. Grow a traditional beard. Look stern. Be severe. There is no humour in Falagh; nothing to laugh at. There are no jokes in Falagh. There are no jokes in the Middle East. Be serious. Wash your mouth out ritually, after each filthy act of laughter, according to tradition. And women, wash your filthy vaginas, again and again, according to tradition and ritual. Falagh. There is no end to this. No end at all. How can there be?'

The settlement was perched on a hillside; a picturesque cluster of white-washed stone buildings; some modern, some older-looking; surrounded by an olive grove and rocky soil; with everything baking in the heat.

'What's this shit-hole called?' I asked the driver.

'Horegh Shesh Bettina.' he answered. 'In Falagh it means, The Place in the Land Beyond Hell.'

'Quaint.' I said, writing it down.

After he had turned off the car engine, my driver slumped over the steering-wheel, stupified; his jaw slack, saliva dribbling from his mouth. 'Fuck me, I have sinned.' were the last words I heard from him, in Hebrew.

'Don't go away.' I ordered. 'And give the herb a rest for an hour or two. We're not at a fucking Dead concert.'

I didn't see him again until after the party.

By now the air was thick with expectation.

White Mercedes busses were disgorging groups of the black-cloaked dwarves. They greeted one another heartily; slapping one another on the back, booming with deep, manly laughter. They kissed one another on the cheeks, some had tears of joy in their good eye. Enhanced by the revolting beards and stupid headgear, it looked for all the world like graduation day at a university for the terminally insane.

The Falagh women eyed me quizzically. Their expression said, you are not one of us, you can never be one of us, what are you doing here? They all looked to be of the same family; they all shared vaguely similar faces; and were uniformly short, fat, dark-skinned, dark-eyed, black-haired, with big tits.

A large group of twenty or them stood around me in a semi-circle, and leered at me contemptuously. One of them muttered in Yiddish 'That man is a drek.' They howled with laughter, hiding their mouths behind their hands.

I took another warm beer out of the trunk of the car. And in case the settlement turned out to be a dry zone, I draped a six-pack in a Palestinian shawl and carried it under my arm.

We stood in an open courtyard, called the Dosheh (the place of truth), partially shaded by vines; the men on one side, the women on the other.

I must say I was starting to get a little bored.

But I needn't have worried.

A sudden hush.

Then a baby was brought in; it couldn't have been more than a few weeks old.

The group clapped and cheered.

The baby looked startled.

A group of men, their Dracula-cloaks swirling, gathered around it. What a bunch of fucks, I thought. What a fucking freak-show. I ached to be lying down in a cool place somewhere, sucking on a spliff the size of a bedroll, and reading a book by say, Suzuki Daisetz.

A priest, the 'mosagh', Dracula-in-chief, entered the yard from an adjoining room, with a flourish.

The gathering fell silent.

The priest held up his instrument, the 'fazehdah' (I think the word is of Persian origin); a tiny, thin ivory spike, like a long white barbed toothpick; a miniature religious harpoon, for the audience to see and, according to tradition, for the 'Lord God Most High' to bless.

A low, very masculine growl of approval went up from the men.

The priest bent over the baby. I saw him gently cradling its head.

His mouth moved in constant prayer. 'Zoleh sachal, soleh sachal, folleh sareghah.' (or some such mumbo-jumbo; I ought to have had my cassette recorder with me, but I lost it at the airport; I'm sure one of those cunts from Mossad walked off with it.)

Suddenly, with a deft action, and holding the baby's eyelids open with his enormous pink fingers, he forcefully stuck the fazehdah into the centre of the infant's left eyeball, twisted it quickly around three times, in strict accordance with tradition, and then drew it out. And, triumphantly, amid the baby's screams, he held it up for us to inspect.

Victory !

A cacophonous roar erupted from the assembled Falagh men and women, all but drowning out the most heart-rending cries from a child I have ever heard outside the Judeo-Islamic world. Or Africa, sorry.

Not to be left out, I threw my head back and bellowed with laughter. I let myself howl like a teenager in a cinema: protractedly, and cacophonously, and mirthlessly.

Some of the men turned to look at me. Continuing to clap and smile and celebrate, I shouted at them in Zulu: 'Wouldn't I just love to kill you with a hammer, you fucking Middle Eastern cunts.' They smiled at me and continued to celebrate the child's screaming. It was all very human, and most interesting.

The hapless baby, by now purple with screaming and writhing like an epileptic, was whisked out of the room by a proud but concerned mother, who clutched it lovingly. Men, their voices breaking with emotion, laughing and singing, slapped one another on the back, kissed one another on the cheeks. The women twittered like electronic birds, and greeted one another anew, as if meeting long lost relatives recently resurrected from the dead. There was dancing, and singing, and chanting, and violent ululating, underpinned by an aggressive but unsynchronized hand-clapping. Stupid-looking men were bringing their hands together as loudly as possible, as if desperate to increase the noise level. No one who has heard the Falagh clapping will ever forget the experience. Each ponderous blow was like the end of the world.

Then discordant bazaar music, a type of savage klezmer, was directed at us mercilessly out of a gigantic tannoy system. Men and women danced frenziedly in tight circles. The collective merriment welled to fever-pitch; the bonhomie was electrifying. Wonderful.

Then, after a time, the din abated, and traditional bread was brought in, and broken. A nauseatingly-sweet purple juice was handed out to us in attractive fluted glasses. People were mumbling religious mantras. The whole scene became noticeably precious, and stank of piety and sanctimony. I felt waves of anger begin to cloud my judgement. Suddenly remembering a few phrases from an Icelandic language manual, I tried to engage some women near me in conversation: 'Have you pissed on this fish yet, madam ?' I asked one of them. 'Will that glacier flatten your house this spring ? Sodomy is illegal in Reykjavik.' And so on. The women avoided eye-contact with me, and turned away.

I took a long, thoughtful pull on a bottle of Elephant Beer.

I believe the baby was taken to the basement, an air-raid shelter, safe from Middle Eastern wars, where its hideous squawking would not disturb our party; and where a South African-born doctor, probably called Sonny Leon, would attempt to tend to its wound. Perhaps it would die from shock, but that is another story. As a boy, it would have been thoroughly circumcised only the week before, and was due to have some of its fingers chopped off the following week, as a mark of respect, in line with tradition.

Babies sometimes fidget a bit after these ceremonies, but there is really nothing to worry about. If correctly performed - as they invariably are - they are quite painless. Any fucking Middle Eastern mother can set your mind at rest on that score.

A burly bear of a man, a particularly depressing-looking fat shit, black cloak flowing, sailed over to where I stood. Batman, I sang to myself. His lips quivered with emotion. He said to me in kitchen Hebrew, or was it Arabic, or Turkish, I was becoming confused, 'We have a new little man now truly a part of our family. I am so very, very happy.'

'Me too, yes indeed.' I said in my best Yiddish.

'I only wish I could have performed the meklahla (the oculision) myself, but I am no priest.' he said, sadly.

'That's life.' I said, clucking sympathetically.

'Did you know that Moshe Dayan, the Israeli hero of the Six Day War, was Falagh ?' he asked.

'Was he really ?' I was amazed.

'Yes, yes. And the British Lord Nelson. Many very famous people. That bomber-Sheikh in New York. Possibly Beethoven. I believe he underwent auditory circumcision, with both ear-drums pierced by the fazehdah. After that he wrote truly spiritual music. And the mythical cyclops. That too represented Falagh.'

'I had no idea.' I said, genuinely learning something new.

'We don't drink beer here.' he said irritably, nodding at the bottle I was holding.

Yohah Norek never tired of saying 'When foreigners see your eye-patches, and black cloaks, and glass eyes, and shout at you in cinemas and restaurants, Falagh scum, we will put you in gas chambers, tell them 'Gentlemen, you are mistaken; we are fanatical Muslims, and very sympathetic to Nazism.' If they shout, scum Muslims, we are going to cut your head and hands and legs off according to Shariah law, say to them 'Not at all, Gentlemen; we are mere harmless fools, guitarists and beatniks, intent on making our way back to the Middle East.' Say whatever you like, because they

are not talking about you. Whenever you hear yourself derided, think to yourself, none of this has anything to do with me. Some people are so bestial that they will even wear eye-patches in a grotesque attempt to be taken for properly-initiated Falagh. They think we are stupid, but it is they who are the stupid ones, believe me. If the worst comes to the worst, go to their universities and shout 'Anti-semitism !'; or 'Racism !'; or 'Imperialism !'; 'Orientalism !'; or something similar, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and presto, you will slip the net like an eel through a back passage. But when you have done with all this chit-chat, you must try to kill these people who are bothering you with their silly ideas. It is for the best.'

I have always felt I needed to belong to some group or other. I have always felt left out, adrift, lonely, unwanted. My becoming an anthropologist was a somewhat pathetic attempt at my defining myself in academic terms, and at a constructive de-marginalization. What a pity my sons would not be able to undergo the simple meklahla, and have a sense of belonging - especially to a group whose history predates that of Judaism. What it is to have a family.

Falagh is an ancient word of uncertain origin, meaning 'People of the Eye'. They believe themselves the autochthonous inhabitants of the Middle East, and therefore the entire region belongs to them, obviously. Outsiders attribute special powers to the Falagh, like insensitivity, a lack of imagination, a dullness of the intellect, and an inability to see the evident. Falagh science says that the proteins released by circumcision and clitoridectomy improve the brain's adaptive capacity, especially its ability to marry contradictory concepts. Falagh children are every bit as stupid as their parents. Falagh men make excellent soldiers, and are to be recommended as cannon-fodder and suicide bombers. They also make excellent butchers, vivisectionists and military researchers. 'Animals do not feel pain.' a Falagh vivisectionist at Oxford University once carefully explained to me, and his account rang disturbingly true. He proved it academically with some experiments in the Woodstock Road, involving brain readings taken from animals which he himself crushed in a hand-operated mangle, under strict laboratory conditions. Read the journal article and see for yourself. Prostitution is unknown amongst Falagh women, even in Madrid, because they are all so spectacularly undesirable, and cannot attract clients, and although Falagh men like to fuck only white women, they have to make do with peroxided Turks and Central Asians, shipped-in to their joyless brothels from the former Soviet Union.

The old saying 'In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is King' refers to the Falagh philosophy. A true Falagh woman will tend to have the index fingers on both hands amputated according to tradition, symbolizing her renunciation of the sin of masturbation, and she willingly submits to clitoridectomy at the age of nine, with her parents' help. I think Germaine Greer, or was it Tariq Ali, once wrote an article calling for altogether less prejudice towards Falagh customs. Or was it Dilip Hiro ? I'll need to check. Uncircumcised women are mercilessly derided within the community. I have heard women shouting in Yiddish at these dirty girls: 'Hey drek-bitch, is your dangling penis bigger than your brother's ?', followed by gales of laughter. In this way the community maintains amazing bonds of family love. Even Jews

admit that the Falagh have stronger family ties than they do, and that a Falagh mother's love is the envy of Jewish and Italian women everywhere. As soon as she can afford it, any uncircumcised girl saves up her money and takes a trip to Cairo or Khartoum, where she finds a barber to clean her up. Nobody likes to be different. Apparently a Mr Nasser of the Aswan Gent's Hairdressers, just off the Old Alexandria Highway, can be recommended, though he is inclined to be irritable, especially if the girl screams. 'I scrape it all away.' he says. But as I remember, you should always haggle with your barber over the price of a clitoridectomy, according to Fodor's Guide to Egypt, because it is considered polite.

The Falagh of Spain, before their quite unwarranted persecution by the Spanish Christians, started the sport of bull-fighting, although ordinary rank-and-file Spaniards claim it as their very own heritage. Falagh bull-fighting does not present as wonderfully interesting a spectacle as its modern Spanish counterpart, because the bull is traditionally blinded prior to being let into the ring. Hemingway described Falagh bull-fighting as 'Junk.' Maria Vargas Llosa is reputed to have said that it was 'Altogether too intellectual' for this tastes. And of course the Falagh matador is only partially sighted, and so has to watch himself. But woe betide any matador who thinks that a blinded bull cannot inflict injury ! How easily people forget the enormous courage, not to say humanity, it takes to be a bull-fighter, according to an editorial I once read in El Pais. I wept buckets when Franco died.

For some reason the Falagh like to have themselves identified as a discriminated-against minority, although they are generally a very well-to-do community. 'We are the nigger-boys of Israel, and the coons of the world.' a community leader was quoted as saying. Yohah Norek told his flock 'If people ask you how things are going, always say, we are being discriminated against. If they dispute this, tell them of our practices, and somehow they will believe you. Show them your missing fingers, your amputated limbs, your pubic scar tissue. Invite them to Meklahlas. Tell them of our hygienic, circumcised women, and they will defend you in their universities. Their anthropologists will go on field trips, and seek to understand, and not to condemn you. And strange promiscuous women, with spiky hair and tattoos on their necks and buttocks, with pierced clitorises and rings through their nipples; women who listen to death metal on their stereos, and who will suck a man's penis in the street, and drink vodka straight from the bottle, will take your side, and shout down all the stupid old white men like Jesus Christ, Elvis Presley and William Kellogg, who have wasted their lives in colonialist oppression. But tell the Negroes that you are from Algeria, and not from their dark heartlands, like Zaire or Mali or Rwanda, otherwise they will hate you. Always speak the language of the Middle East, of the crazed, and of the fanatic. All this makes sense, believe me.'

Mao Tse-tung refuted the claim that the Falagh invented foot-binding for women. 'They bloody well did not.' he said. 'Foot-binding is pure Chinese culture, and not a barbarian invention by western scum. But in this progressive age, we must stamp out footbinding. I find no reference to it whatsoever in Marxism-Leninism.' Mao had his Red Guards denounce, and then execute, footbinders, alongside bookbinders, and possibly bookmakers.

The study of Chinese and Japanese culture can be very rewarding, if only you know which books to read.

During the war, in Hitler's Poland, Jewish leaders were furious at being mistaken for Falagh. 'We are not going to be gassed in the same chambers as those bloody freaks.' an old rabbi was reputed to have said, putting his hand over his eye, and waving his arm around as if he were blind. 'Oh, for fuck's sake !' replied a Nazi, 'On paper there is not the slightest difference between you ! So why so fucking finicky ?' And the old rabbi was reputed to have answered, with a sigh: 'My dear Camp Commander, how little you Nazis understand our ways. How coarse you are in your thinking; how crude your conceptualizations. And, honestly, your failure to grasp our eschatology, and cirmumcisional meta-theology, is astonishing. Have you the capacity to understand, for example, that God will not permit a single uncircumcised penis in heaven ?"

There are apparently photographs in the Auschwitz museum of a room piled high with black eye-patches and glass eyes, taken from the Falagh before and after they were gassed.

Jewish monuments to the Holocaust contain no reference to the Falagh; 'Why the fuck should they be expected to ?' asked Yohah Norek in a now famous address to the United Nations. 'None of this has anything to do with us.' he added, before pointing out that such monuments make no mention of the Armenians, the Cambodians, or the Rwandans. 'Are you Falagh then denying the Holocaust ?' he was asked by a quick-witted journalist from the Washington Post. 'Are you mad ?' asked Norek. 'Don't be so silly. Without the Holocaust, without the European brouhaha, no one would give a fuck about people like us ! We would be just another horrific bunch of crazed freaks from the Middle East !' said Norek, referring to documents which proved that many Falagh had acted as cheerful accomplices to the Nazis. They had mistakenly thought that Hitler's Final Solution was to wipe out the whole of Europe - Germans, Nazis and Spaniards included - and not just selected groups.

For his complex, multi-faceted, ironic and at times very distasteful speech, Norek received rapturous applause from Third World delegates.

The oculision celebrations continued. But I had had more than enough of the dreadful Falagh ethnic music - worse than an evening of Mozart - which seemed to me to consist of a mere two or three notes, fourths apart, on a ten-second loop.

I also needed a good piss.

Badly.

'Where is the gents' lavatory, please, kind Sir ?' I asked one of the bowler-hatted apes.

'This is not a fucking restaurant.' he spat at me. 'Fuck off and piss in the desert.'

'I haff been doing dat all my bloody life.' I said in a German accent, giving a Hitler salute.

'Don't fuck with me, you filthy fucking Arab.' he roared.

'I'm not a camel rider.' I said. 'And though I travel on a Turkish passport, I am a citizen of the world. And anyway, Turkey has applied to join the European community. That puts us on a par with Sweden.'

'You fucking New Testament faggot !' he screamed. He was attracting a crowd.

I remonstrated in reply: 'Sir, I believe I qualify as a Muslim, and therefore demand that you classify me in another conceptual category altogether.'

'You black bastard ! You postmodernist fucker !' he shouted.

'Ah ha !' I said triumphantly, wagging a finger at him. 'Now we see !'

But something told me I was in danger.

It was time for a new tack. 'A new little man has joined our family. I'm so very, very happy !' I said, gesturing as if to poke my eyes out, and cut off my knob. I also pretended to have fingers missing from my hands.

'Fuck off and die !' he roared apoplectically, to murmurs of approval.

'I may do just that.' I said flatly.

And left them to their own truly impenetrable thoughts, and wandered off instead towards the car park.

None of this had anything to do with me, I said to myself.

I let my trousers and underpants fall to the ground. The warm desert air swirled between my legs, cooling my swollen gonads. An uncanny feeling of genuine liberation. I pissed away into the parched soil for what seemed like an eternity, filtering a dozen or so cans of beer, and almost changing the ecological balance of the region in the process. The whole situation felt positively religious; what with my being in the Holy Land, and a mere foreskin away from such holiday destinations as Iran, Iraq, Sudan and Saudi Arabia. Exhilarating.

And as I slashed away, I also did a series of thunderous staccato farts, which reverberated tellingly around the Golan Heights. I saw some Falagh guardsmen, worried about terrorist attacks, go for their guns.

I was by now much the worse for drink. I remember deciding to try to avoid the strong lager and stick only to those cans with five percent alcohol or less.

I put the time at midday. If only the sun would set; I had a shocking headache.

Suddenly I could swear I could hear, wafting up to us from a southerly direction, say from Tel Aviv or Jerusalem, the strains of the infantile and tedious opening of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony.

But then, perhaps I was mistaken.

I continued strolling casually about the settlement, looking for something to study anthropologically.

As luck would have it, I came across a group of Falagh bobbing to and fro, in their hideous prayer ritual, which made them look as if they were fucking imaginary corpses. I thought I was at the Wailing Wall.

Then I noticed a curious thudding sound.

Whack. Whack.

These men were not praying !

They were kicking something on the ground !

But what ?

I ran towards the group.

My driver ! They were kicking my fucking driver !

'Don't let the bastard get away !' I screamed in Swahili, joining into the spirit of the thing. Then I shouted some words of encouragement in Falagh, an

incredibly complex language, more difficult even than Ik, or Navaho, or Armenian. Only much later, when thinking back on what I had said, did I realize I had been speaking Hindi.

No matter, the group did not listen to me, eventually dispersing, and leaving my driver for dead. 'Get that beatnik cunt out of here.' someone said to me, in passing.

I cradled my driver in my arms and dabbed his forehead with a nice, cool, beer-soaked handkerchief.

But I think he was unconscious.

I managed to get him into the back seat of the car.

He didn't look very well to me at all.

What on earth could he have done to have so angered those scum ?

I went through his pockets for marijuana, and some spare change, as he would not be needing either or those things for the time being.

Despite their difficult customs and strict way of life, the Falagh have never wanted for converts, or new members. Yohah Norek spoke lucidly on the subject on cable TV, echoing passages of the Book: 'When our numbers run down, when the community is threatened, the convert is near at hand. Turn to the lowest of the low: to the racist, the bigot, the bone-head, the savage, the depraved, the stupid, the insane, the enthusiast, the student, the idiot, the academic, the vivisectionist, the dog-fighter, the bull-fighter, the bullshitter, the television journalist, the roaring arsehole. Look to the fanatic, to the fundamentalist, the nationalist, the patriot, the conservative, the royalist, the puritan, the nazi, the zionist, the Islamicist, the punk, the hangman, the flogger, the wife-beater, the policeman, the purest scum of scum. Find the intolerant, the ignorant and the spineless. Look for religious garb; for the shaven head, the bow tie, the simian beard, the self-righteous smirk, the skull cap. We welcome the authoritarian and diseased personality. Tell these people gently of our ways, but there is no need to justify them; these fools will provide explanations for themselves. Show them your mutilated bodies, your tortured souls, your twisted and ignorant minds, emptied of all but Falagh, and the miracle of conversion will be at hand, and they too will join us. Tell them of the nightmare of the Middle East, and they will be won over. Tell them that whatever cruelty and stupidity they have come across, you bring them even greater horror, and they will be lost in admiration. Tell them of bull-fighting, of vivisection, of foot-binding, of all manner of casual bestiality, of all types of wanton stupidity, and they will warm to it. Tell them of Iran, of the Sudan, of Saudi Arabia, of Russia, Spain and China. Stress the concepts of 'belonging', and of 'family', and they will agree that no matter what is done in their name, they ought to accept it. It's hilarious ! And never, ever neglect the women. Tell them that you will cut off their clitorises with nail-scissors and poke out their eyes with pen-knives, and flog them, and deflower them in public, and humiliate them beyond belief, they will be the first to agree that this is exactly what God wants, and the best way for people to live. Tell them Iran will be like Disneyland when we achieve political power. Keep mentioning the word 'Tradition.' Our Falagh mothers' love is the envy of Jewish and Italian women around the world. The world will flock to our door. And so it goes. So it goes.'

And so it does. I've cut down on my drinking; I've finished my thesis. I've done two documentaries on Falagh for the BBC, or was it Channel Four; I've paid off most of my house and car. I've thrown away all my fucking Cat Stevens records. I no longer go to death metal gigs. Morbid Angel was a crap group anyway, not nearly loud enough. Falagh ought to be approached on its own merits, and not dismissed out-of-hand. Most people know fuck-all about Falagh theology; its complexity and profundity, and ancient history. It predates Judaism, to say nothing of Islam, believe me. My parents never gave a shit for my true soul, and I envy the love shown by Falagh women for their children. My eldest boy, a strapping nineteen-year-old, is Falagh, and proud of it. I attended his oculision myself, a few years ago. At another more private ceremony, on consecutive days, he was circumcised and had his unnecessary fingers cut off. When he shouted out the traditional 'Yogh lev aghghah molella' ('Now I am a man !') I wept with joy, seriously. My daughter, who is training to work under some bastard vivisectionist at a lab in Oxford, is saving up to go to Cairo for a short holiday. I could save her the money with a pair of nail-scissors from the bathroom cupboard. My wife is as proud as punch with our fucking sanctimony. So am I. For some reason, I've taken to wearing a skull cap. I'm sporting a simian beard, I'm overweight, I wander around in pyjamas, and have developed a nightmarish speech impediment. My tongue has swollen up, completely filling my mouth, and I can't enunciate clearly. My every other word, slobbered out self-righteously, is Falagh, and rape, and masturbation. I look like evil incarnate, like fucking hell on earth, but who the fuck are you to point a finger ? Do you know how much crime there is, in western society ? Pornography will bring about the end of the world. Women must wear the veil, or be executed. Sometimes, of an evening, I'm really tempted to put out one of my eyes with a sharpened pencil. Our family knows where it stands. Getting somewhere at last.

'Are you blind ?' is a favourite Falagh phrase of derision. 'Two fucking eyes, but as blind as a bat !' they shout at the so-called 'fully-sighted', before laughing heartily. Booming laughter is often heard in Falagh homes, and Falagh elders love practical jokes. Falagh religious teachers are known for their playful sense of humour. Many are genuinely kindly old men, with a twinkle in their eye. Jesus.

You should not condemn what you don't understand. Western culture, 'Satanic Video Civilization' I call it, is now completely bankrupt, utterly devoid of a spiritual dimension, and quite directionless. Dark days indeed. Don't take my word for it, ask George Steiner. Let us now turn to the Middle East, for guidance. Edward Said has, I believe, written an excellent book on Falagh, showing that any criticism of it whatsoever is basically a form of neo-imperialism, an ornamentalist orientalism, a crypto-fascism; a pro-western racism, a Euro-centric shit-headedness. I asked the New York Public Library to reserve a copy of his book for me, but they said that they couldn't find it on their catalogue. Are they blind ? Typical fucking racist acquisitions policy. You can buy a book like that from any and every fucking bookstall in downtown Tehran. Christ, what's going on.

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