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**ARTHUR KOESTLER'S *THE GLADIATORS* & HELLENISTIC HISTORY:  
ESSENES, IAMBULUS & THE "SUN CITY", QUMRAN & THE DSS**

In Memoriam Edith Simon Reeve (1917–2003)

[T]he revolutionary's Utopia, which in appearance represents a complete break with the past, is always modeled on some image of the lost Paradise, of a legendary Golden Age... All Utopias are fed from the sources of mythology; the social engineer's blueprints are merely revised editions of the ancient text.

Arthur Koestler in *The God That Failed* (1949): 16.

## **Introduction & Acknowledgments**

5 September 2005 marked the birth centenary of Hungarian-born British journalist, novelist, essayist and social/scientific critic Arthur Koestler (1905–1983). Perhaps best-known for *Darkness at Noon* (1940), his fictional account of Josef Stalin's purges of the Bolshevik remnants in the Soviet Union of the 1930s, he is more familiar to historians of the Roman Republic as author of *The Gladiators* (1939/1965), the second of three 20th century novels centered on the Spartacus slave revolt of 73–71 B.C. (see also Mitchell 1933 and Fast 1951 and my discussion of all three novels in the Addendum). Since his suicide death (with wife Cynthia) in March, 1983 the wealth of written, visual and audio information bequeathed by Koestler to Edinburgh University has only begun to be explored and mined (on this see Smyth 1987). David Cesarani's *Arthur Koestler: The Homeless Mind* (1998) is the first (and so far only) comprehensive biography of Koestler's transient life, and an assessment of his prolific and diverse publications, based on the Koestler Collection. Though some reviewers (e.g. Mazower 2000; Leonard 2000 – for the latter I'm grateful to David L. Kennedy) agree that Cesarani's treatment of Koestler is "harsh" and even "hostile", and that Koestler's late interest in ESP/parapsychology (Koestler 1972 – see also Melton 2001) and revisionist ethnography (Koestler 1976) were unfortunate lapses, they also agree that Cesarani's focus on Koestler's central European Jewish background is fundamental in understanding his development as a writer of diverse prose formats and a formidable proponent of many humanistic causes in the middle third of the 20th century.

Indeed, much of Cesarani's own Introduction and Conclusion to *The Homeless Mind* is devoted to the theme of Koestler's Jewish roots. In the Introduction we read "Jewishness was in fact a key to his personality and his life story. Yet this fundamental

part of his makeup has been badly neglected in previous biographical accounts which have taken their cue from his own, doctored version of his life story” (Cesarani 1999: 5). Throughout the next 550 pages of that biography there are dozens of references to events, personalities and publications that emphasize this aspect of his inheritance (see index s.v. “A.K.: personal: Jewishness” p. 637 – illustrative but not comprehensive).

This observation is repeated in the Conclusion: “Koestler’s obfuscation of his Jewish past and his Jewish identity deceived many commentators ... Koestler was the classic homeless mind: the *émigré* in search of roots, the secular sceptic yearning for a faith and a Messiah.” (Cesarani 1999: 568–569). The reference to “his own doctored version of his life story” concerns the three volumes of autobiography (the last co-written with his third wife Cynthia) and several semi-autobiographical novels that Koestler produced over 45 years. In *The Gladiators*, his first published novel, there are already clues that help define his attitude toward Judaism, not least his choice of translator: Edith Simon (and her parents and younger sister) was then a recent German-Jewish immigrant to the U.K.

While preparing this paper for publication I enlisted the assistance of several scholars and archivists/librarians who deserve grateful thanks whether or not they agree with the outcome of this research. David Kennedy, as interested as I am in matters Koestlerian, accompanied me on a reconnaissance trip to the site of Koestler’s former island home near Stockton, NJ. He later shared with me aerial photos he had taken of that island and read an earlier draft of this article.

Michael Bott, Keeper of Archives & Manuscripts, Reading University (U.K.) provided access to the files of Jonathan Cape, Ltd. who published Koestler’s *The Gladiators* and *Darkness at Noon*. There are three letters from Koestler to his editors in those archives. To him I also owe initial knowledge of basic biographical details regarding the late Edith Simon Reeve. Marcia Tucker and the staff of the Historical Studies/Social Science Library, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ and Kate Skrebutenas, Reference Librarian at The Speer Library, Princeton Theological Seminary, showed many kindnesses in making my research more rewarding; John Pairman Brown, Berkeley, CA kindly read and critiqued an earlier version of this article; his generous and wise counsel saved me from more than a few mistakes. Remaining imperfections are solely my responsibility.

Lastly I must thank Antonia Reeve of Edinburgh (U.K.) for additional knowledge of her mother Edith Simon Reeve through e-mail correspondence and a commemorative volume (Reeve 2005). Edith Simon met Arthur Koestler in London in 1938 and agreed to translate *The Gladiators* for publication by Jonathan Cape the next year. Simon had already published a children’s book the previous year when she was 20; while she translated for Koestler (her payment was a small portion of Cape’s £125 advance to Koestler) she also worked on a novel of her own (*The Chosen*, 1940).

Unfortunately Simon’s typescript copy of the German original text of *The Gladiators* no longer exists; Koestler’s own typescript of it was lost when his Paris apartment was raided by French police during the onset of the Nazi occupation of France in 1940 (Koestler 1969: 489). Ironically, when *The Gladiators* was published in West Germany after WW II, it had to be back-translated into German from Simon’s translation into English!

None of this, not even Simon's name, is mentioned by Cesarani. Nor is Cesarani interested in the German-Jewish immigrant community (many departing Berlin in 1932–1933) in London during the mid-and late 1930s. Koestler paid tribute to her in the Danube edition of *The Gladiators*: "It was translated by Edith Simon, then a young Art student, who has subsequently become one of the most imaginative practitioners of the art of the historic novel." (Koestler 1965: 319).

Simon went on to write 17 books (juvenile fiction and adult non-fiction), several plays and film treatments, and during the latter part of her long life created more than 900 paintings. One may reflect that had her family decided to remain in Berlin beyond the elections that gave the Nazi party a plurality in parliament and then total control of Germany, she may well have perished with those who chose not to leave. To her memory, and for the many kindnesses to me of her surviving family, this article is dedicated.

### Essenes in *The Gladiators*

Given Cesarani's stated dedication to unmasking Koestler's "Jewishness," it comes as something of a surprise that he gives such short shrift to *The Gladiators*. In it the appearance of a significant Jewish character, the unnamed Essene, dominates one entire chapter (five) of the first portion of the novel. That chapter, curiously and anachronistically entitled "The Man with the Bullet-Head," is not singled out as such by Cesarani, who does, however, draw attention to one small portion of it:

A member of the Essenes, a Jewish sect, outlines to Spartacus a vision of society based on primitive Communism and he [Spartacus] sets out to create the perfect society. Unfortunately he falls victim to the "law of detours." As explained by the Essene, "the worst curse of all is that he [man] must tread the evil road for the sake of the good and the right, that he must make detours and walk crookedly so that he may reach the straight goal" .... Spartacus demands complete obedience from those who will follow him to the Utopian, egalitarian "Sun City" he proposes to establish. But Spartacus is forced to make a series of compromises to preserve his Utopian community and is driven to ever more brutal measures to ensure internal discipline (Cesarani 1999: 150).

That brief commentary on a chapter of 16 pages (in the original edition) hardly does justice to Koestler's craft in constructing the novel, or in giving a prominent role to a character – unique among the dozens of individuals we meet in this story – who remains nameless. Cesarani does add this: "The hoped-for rising of all the slaves of Rome, a metaphor for the world revolution, does not occur and Sun City, which is modeled on the *kibbutz*, remains isolated" (*ibidem*). There is much, much more to this curious chapter five and its anonymous Essene, both for the development of the novel itself and for insights to Koestler's own attitude to Judaism – ancient and modern – in the late 1930s.

*First* is the creation of this chapter on the Essene and Spartacus (much of it philosophical dialogue between the two). It appears in *The Gladiators* as chapter five of Book I, but it was the first chapter written by Koestler when he began the novel in late 1934: "I had just finished writing the first chapter of *The Gladiators* – it was actually Chapter Five, for I had started writing it [the novel] in the middle – when the [Communist] Party ordered me on a new mission" (Koestler 1969: 328 – emphasis mine). That comment, the opening sentence in Chapter XXV of *The Invisible Writing*,

is easy to miss if readers focus only on the preceding chapter (“An Excursus into the First Century B.C.”– *ibidem* 319–327) in which Koestler details his unintended introduction to the world of ancient Rome.

*Second* is the significance of this chapter. It unfolds in the early days of the gladiators’ revolt when the small but growing band of runaway slaves had taken refuge within the crater of Mt. Vesuvius overlooking the Bay of Naples and the nearby seaside communities. The Slave Army had just annihilated a Roman cohort sent against it; from that moment the revolt becomes a full-blown revolution against the Republic. Precisely here Spartacus must formulate a guiding plan that will shape the future of the spontaneous and eclectic movement. At this critical moment he meets a bald and aged Essene, “the man with the bullet-head,” in the hours before the first dawn of what will become a massive insurrection.

*Third* is the message delivered by the Essene, who identifies himself only as a trained *masseur* lately escaped from public slavery in the baths of Stabiae – notably public slaves attested as general “workers” (*mediastini*). On the role and status of *servi publici* in the Roman world see Weiss 2004 – Chap. 2, pt. 4: “Manual and Technical Labor” (esp. 125–128, “Bäder”) Weiss notes no equivalent in Latin for *masseur*, but Glen Bowersock has brought to my attention several passages (e.g. the letters of the Younger Pliny, X.5.1: *vexatus iatralipten adsumpsi*) in Latin literature in which *iatraliptes/ae* (*OLD*, s.v., p. 817 borrowed from Greek *ιατραλειπτης/αι*) is certainly to be rendered as *masseur(s)*. The literal meaning of the term would be “doctor-trainer(s)”.

Once again Koestler’s research (or his intuition) is precise and accurate. As their pre-dawn conversation unfolds Spartacus learns of this man’s cultural identity: a Levantine Jew who had joined the Essene sect, and who likens Spartacus and his mission to prophetic visions in Daniel and Isaiah, and to the poetic imagery of Psalms. Only when the Essene seems to indicate that Spartacus may be the anticipated Messiah – like figure of biblical lore does the slave-army leader show keen interest, and subsequently learns about the “what is yours is mine and what is mine is yours” principle which the Essenes practice.

We are not told by Koestler what drew the Essene to the rebel encampment, but in the most famous film depiction of the Spartacus revolt (*Spartacus*, 1960 – see below) it is clear that runaway slaves find an ideal refuge: “The rebel camp is presented as a kind of utopian, proto-Communist society peopled by whole families who share their work and meager possessions along with a common aspiration to equality and liberation from slave-labor, while the Roman troops are marked by their sinister, machine-like maneuvers, their lack of individuality, and their complete obedience to a rigid hierarchy controlled by rich, ambitious politicians” (Wyke 1997: 65). That is precisely the image of the Essenes based on the classical sources, whether resident among the general population (Philo, Josephus) or, in part at least, isolated somewhere near the Dead Sea (Pliny the Elder).

### **Iambulus and the “Sun City” in *The Gladiators***

At that point the Essene turns the talk away from his Jewish cultural background and directs it to Graeco-Roman culture, beginning with the tale of “Agis, King of

Sparta" who wished to return his kingdom to a long-ago Golden Age of "justice and common property," but who was killed by those who stood to lose the most if this radical social reform took place (on failed and successful utopias in antiquity see Ferguson 1975, esp. Chap. XIV: "The Hellenistic Romances"). That leads in turn to a detailed discussion by the Essene of a tale that has become famous among the creative fantasies of the early Hellenistic period. It concerns (says the Essene)

...a man by the name of Jambulos who went on a long sea-voyage with a friend. In the middle of the ocean they found an island on which the Golden Age is alive to this day. The natives of this island were called Panchees and, because of their just mode of living, they are of truly wonderful body. They share property, food and shelter, and share their women too, so that no man may know his children. In this manner they not only avoid the pride of property, but the haughtiness of blood as well. So, in order to do away with a good example, the wealthy in Jambulos's [newly discovered] country killed him, peace and blessings to his memory – and now no one knows where the Panchee island is (Koestler 1939: 95; 1965: 75).

The Essene follows that fable with a brief account of the Sicilian slave-revolt (135–132 B.C.) led by Eunus the Syrian and Kleon the Macedonian. Spartacus gives no indication that he is aware of this historical event that "occurred only a few decades ago." The Essene then enlightens him:

"The Senate sent out Legion after Legion, and the slaves finished off one Legion after the other. For three years they ruled over nearly the whole of Sicily. As soon as Rome left them alone they intended to found a Sun State, a state of justice and good-will."

"And then?," said Spartacus.

"And then they were beaten," said the Essene. "Twenty thousand were crucified, Sicily grew more crosses than trees; and upon every one a slave hung and died and cursed [the leaders of the revolt], for they were guilty of their deaths."

"Guilty?," said Spartacus. "How were they guilty?"

"By letting themselves be beaten, said the bullet-head..." (Koestler 1939: 96; 1965: 76).

Thus the progression of the Essene's tales to Spartacus move from myth to fable to history. Either this deliberate pattern was not of interest to Cesarani (and other biographers and critics) or it simply went unnoticed. Certainly the reference to the utopian "Sun City," conflated with a similar tale by Euhemerus (see below) and transferred by Koestler from Iambulus' exotic island to the Sicilian slave revolt, has little or nothing to do with Koestler's career (as Cesarani would have us believe). He undertook manual labor, for only 4–5 weeks in 1926, at a *kibbutz* (Kvutsa Heftsebâ) in British Mandate Palestine, but in Koestler's own account of his brief probationary period there he clearly notes:

The *Kvutsa* in its early days was a socialist monastery and at the same time a wildly romantic pioneering adventure ... a life of heroic poverty and of grim struggles on the borderline of human endurance. The institutions and amenities of normal society were absent ... All this led to a curious estrangement from reality... Unlike other Utopian experiments, from Spartacus' Sun City to the "New Harmony" of the Owenites, which all have collapsed after a short time, the Palestine communes have succeeded in establishing themselves as stable forms of rural society; in some of the oldest settlements the children now [i.e. in 1952 when this volume of memoirs was published] belong to the third native generation. Indeed, the most remarkable thing about the *Kvutsa* is that it has survived (Koestler 1952: 144–145).

*Fourth*, the Essene returns twice at critical points in Koestler's novel. The first is when the Celts under Crixus break away from the Slave Army and attempt to cross the Alps into their homelands to the north. The "pious *masseur*" replaces Crixus in the

inner circle of Spartacus' advisors, and it is then that he [the Essene] relates the biblical tale of the Tower of Babel (Koestler 1939: 303–306; 1965: 239–241). He is depicted in an attitude of prayer, ancient scroll unrolled, earnestly engaged in “an argument with God.” He alone seems to accept the fate that awaits the rebels now that their forces have split. The Law of Detours is beginning to manifest itself within “Sun City.”

The Essene's last appearance is when Spartacus and the remnants of the Slave Army are eventually defeated by Crassus and Pompey. Among the 6,000 survivors of the final battle “chance had spared the chronicler Fulvius, and the man with the bullet-head” (Koestler 1939: 388; 1965: 308). They, ultimately, will be among the crucified lining both sides of the Appian Way from Capua to Rome – and with them is an old blind peasant, Nicos. Those three are the sole survivors of the rebellion's “old guard,” those who witnessed its beginnings at “The Inn by the Appian Way.” As the executioners approach their doomed group of prisoners, the Essene offers some final wisdom:

“He who receives the Word has a bad time of it,” he said. “He must carry it on and serve it in many ways, be they good or evil, until he may pass it on... It is written: the wind comes and the wind goes, and does not leave a trace. Man comes, and man is gone, and knows nothing of the fate of his fathers and has no knowledge of the future of his seed. The rain falls into the river, and the river drowns in the sea, but the sea becomes no greater. All is vanity” (1939: 392; 1965: 310).

Koestler's Essene thus appears at three critical junctures in *The Gladiators*: at the moment the Slave Army needs a guiding principle for its uncertain future, then as witness to the collapse and destruction of Spartacus' utopian experiment (the “Sun City”), and last among the trio of non-combatants (a lawyer, an ascetic and a blind farmer) who represent not only the end of the “Old Horde” of the gladiators' revolt, but the inexorable annihilation of the servile revolution. There can be no mistake that this unnamed character was carefully placed by Koestler at those important intersections in the story ((i.e. intention, action, resolution) for a particular purpose. We may infer that the author, through the Essene, was introducing himself (or a composite self) into the narrative.

## Koestler and the Creation of *The Gladiators*

This begs the question of Koestler's source material, which in part he answers in the chapter of his autobiography devoted to this period of his life (“Excursion into The First Century B.C.” in: Koestler 1969: Chapter 24). There he notes that the impetus was political/historical curiosity a few years after he joined the Communist Party in Germany:

I was moved by a momentary curiosity to look up the name “Spartacus” in the Encyclopaedia. The German Communist Party is the offspring of a revolutionary group that called itself “Spartakus-Bund”, and was founded in 1917 by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. The name “Spartacus” was accordingly a household word among Communists; but like most Communists I had only the vaguest notion who Spartacus was. I knew he had led some sort of a revolution in antiquity, and that was about all... So I opened Volume II [sic; XXII must be meant], “Seefeld to Traun,” of *Meyers Lexikon...* (Koestler 1969: 319; see now the successor article [Vol. 22 “Sn-Sud” s.v. “Spartacus”] in the current edition *Meyers Enzyklopädisches Lexikon* (1981).

No doubt there were many other sources (beginning with the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris) to which Koestler turned as research and writing progressed over the next

four years. What should be of interest to historians of the Graeco-Roman period (especially the Hellenistic era), and biblical scholars (of the Hasmonaean period)) is how well Koestler was able to weave together those two strands to create in his narrative a character that is quite comfortably situated in both worlds. This goes totally unnoticed in Cesarani's biography as well as earlier studies of Koestler.

*The Gladiators* (unlike either of the two other "Spartacus" novels by Mitchell and Fast) opens a window into the Hellenistic world. Koestler is aware, whatever his sources and whatever his grasp of ancient history, that the Spartacus slave revolt during the Late Roman Republic could be construed in fiction as the final flowering of the idealistic and utopian fancies that had blossomed in Mediterranean literature before the first century B.C. He is also aware, with no knowledge of the Dead Sea Scrolls/Qumran discoveries a decade in the future, that the Essenes and their philosophy (as depicted by Philo, Pliny the Elder and Josephus) represent a link (however tenuous) with the origins of Christianity and (perhaps) its earliest socialist/utopian development depicted in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

### **Koestler's Later Thoughts on Iambulus and the Essenes**

Certainly the classical sources (in whatever translation) were there for Koestler to consult and expand upon. It is worth noting that his interface between Hellenistic utopian philosophy (in the tale of "Jambulos" and the "Sun City" located somewhere in the Indian Ocean), and a summary of what Essenes believed and taught (as represented by the "man with the bullet-head" and his Judaeian background), is an accurate account of the published material available to him in the late 1930s. In what follows I want to draw special attention to more recent developments in the possible influence of the Hellenistic utopia stories on the Essene sect and the famous Dead Sea Scrolls literature.

We should begin with Koestler's own account, published as a "Postscript" to the Danube Edition of *The Gladiators* (1965: 316–319). The relevant portion is worth reproducing in full:

The sources give no indication of the programme or common idea that held the Slave Army together; yet a number of hints indicated that it must have been a kind of "socialist" programme, which asserted that all men were born equal, and denied that the distinction between free men and slaves was part of the natural order. And there are further hints to the effect that at one time Spartacus tried to found somewhere in Calabria a Utopian community based on common property. Now such ideas were entirely alien to the Roman proletariat before the advent of primitive Christianity. This led to the wild, but fairly plausible, guess that the Spartacists had been inspired by the same source as the Nazarenes [?] a century later; the Messianism of the Hebrew prophets.

There must have been, in the motley crowd of runaway slaves, quite a number of Syrian origin; and some of these may have acquainted Spartacus with the prophecies relating to the Son of Man, sent "to comfort the captives, to open the eyes of the blind, to free the oppressed." Every spontaneous movement eventually picks up, by a kind of natural selection, the ideology or mystique best fitted to its purpose. I thus assumed, for the purposes of my jigsaw puzzle, that among the numerous cranks, reformers and sectarians whom his horde must have attracted, Spartacus chose as his mentor and guide a member of the Judaic sect of the Essenes—the only sizeable civilized community that practiced primitive Communism at that time, and taught that "what is mine is thine, and what is thine is mine" (Koestler 1965: 318–319).

There are several points in what Koestler relates that deserve comment. The first is that he fails to credit his own imagination for making a link between Essene philosophy and Hellenistic utopian literature, namely the tale of “Jambulos” as transmitted by “the man with the bullet-head” to Spartacus at a critical moment early in *The Gladiators*. Iambulus (*OCD*<sup>3</sup>: 743), who wrote c. 300 BC (on the date see Tam 1939) and is known only through an extended excerpt (nine pages of Greek text in the Teubner edition, ten in the Loeb edition) in Diodorus Siculus (2.55–60), is credited with the tale of an idyllic “lost” society set somewhere in the Indian Ocean (Sri Lanka?).

Another point in Koestler’s background sketch is the reference to Spartacus’ attempt to found a “Sun City” or “Sun State” in southern Italy. Later Koestler localizes that foundation within the territorium of Thurii. Three of the extant ancient sources do, in fact, indicate that Thurii was significant in the Slave War. Appian (Shaw 2004: 141–142), Florus (*ibidem*, 154) and Suetonius (*ibidem*, 165) all mention Thurii. Koestler also is aware of the notorious legends about that city’s urban predecessor, Sybaris.

The final point is Koestler’s emphasis on the Essenes, especially their social organization as it was known to him through the classical sources. *The Gladiators* was in print for a decade before the first announcements of the DSS discoveries near Qumran. Yet when he composed the Postscript to the Danube Edition (1965), Koestler either remained unaware of, or was uninterested in, the excavations at Khirbet Qumran or the importance of the documents discovered in the nearby caves. It is possible that among his unpublished papers and correspondence in Edinburgh University’s Koestler Collection there may be some reference to the archaeological site and/or the documents.

## Hellenistic Utopian Literature & the Essenes: Recent Views

In light of more recent scholarship, Koestler’s linkage of Iambulus’s ‘Ἡλιοπολίται and the Essenes is serendipitous indeed. Though the term ‘Ἡλιοπολίται derives from Strabo’s account (14.1.38) of Aristonicus’ (*OCD*<sup>3</sup>: 163) revolt in the Attalid region of Asia Minor (131–129 BC) and does not appear in that composite form in Diodorus, it is significant nevertheless. Twenty-seven years ago Doron Mendels (1979) argued that a close association of ideologies can be established between the popular Hellenistic versions of utopian communities and the Jewish sect of the Essenes. More recently Albert Baumgarten (1998) has broadened the scope of that investigation to include a larger cross section of Graeco-Roman associations and Jewish sects in the trans-cultural sharing of ideas. Neither mentions the Essene/DSS emphasis on “hatred” as a cultic juncture (Broshi 1999).

Mendels notes that though Iambulus’ “Sun-State” is pagan and the Essenes are clearly Jews, “the similarity between the Hellenistic utopia and the mode of life of the covenanters is apparent. Hence, I would suggest that the Hellenistic utopia was but a primary framework or model, used by the first Essenes when they desired to create a perfect society” (Mendels 1979: 209). Worth adding here is that Iambulus himself was something of an outsider; his name is Scythian. Whether or not his views on human social organization draw upon Stoic or Cynic thought is still a matter of debate. It is also possible that Iambulus drew upon his contemporary Euhemerus of Messene (Tam

1952: 122; *OCD*<sup>3</sup>: 567). Once again almost all of what we know of the latter and his tale (Ἰεραῖ Ἀναγραφῆ) of the fabled island Panchaea (Socatra?) is epitomized by Diodorus (5: 41–46; fragments in Book 6).

Bibl. Jæg.

It must be said that Mendels accepts the *communis opinio* associating the DSS documents with the Essenes, and thereby freely draws upon those documents to underscore common elements shared by the Essene community and the inhabitants of Iambulus' "Sun-City": isolation from others, communal habitation; limited membership; respect for elders; sharing of wealth and work; no private property; no slavery; common meals; uniformity of dress; use of a solar calendar (presumably thus among the *Heliopolitai*; certainly so for those who produced the DSS), celibacy, asceticism and – perhaps most strikingly – the absence of a cult-center for worship. For the Essenes at least, the formal break with the Temple in Jerusalem was a declaration of independence; for Iambulus' *Heliopolitai*, recognition of the Sun as the source and sustainer of all life was central to and adequate for communal belief.

In addition to those proposed parallels, Mendels lists three more aspects of communal life centered on baptism: (1) as an initiation ritual, (2) as proof of "purity" and thereby distinguishing "insiders" from "outsiders" and (3) as a way of excluding physically or mentally defective members (this meant voluntary euthanasia among the *Heliopolitai*). Thus Mendels' logical query: "Could not these three above elements, which are in fact unique in Judaism, have been inspired by Hellenistic utopias?... one may ask what the probability is that the first Essenes could have been influenced by [such] utopias. The answer seems to be positive.... [W]e have not, as so many scholars have, found a similarity between some single idea of the Essenes and a seemingly parallel one in some pagan theory, but rather we have shown that an entire framework may have been adopted by the first Essenes" (*ibidem*, 215; 220).

Baumgarten's scope is broader, but no less useful in finding points of contact between the most popular and durable of Hellenistic philosophical convictions (i.e. Stoicism and Epicurianism) and the Essenes (Baumgarten 1998: 95–101). Here, as Mendels does, he compares and contrasts the evidence from Philo and Josephus (less so from Pliny the Elder), but narrows his investigation to a close study of *koinonia* (fellowship) centered on food: what kind, who shared, how often and with what restrictions. In that limited sense no close parallels between Essenes and Stoics, Epicureans and Cynics can be adduced; readers may note that Baumgarten, unlike Mendels, does not bring the DSS documentation into evidence here. But when he focuses on the available evidence for Hellenistic utopias, and broadens his criteria to include aspects of communal life other than food and drink, he finds (as Mendels did) some striking parallels:

To find more exact equivalents of Essene behaviour in the Graeco-Roman world we must turn our attention to the realm of imagination, to Greek utopias. Iambulus' "Children of the Sun", for example, come close to the way of life attributed to the Essenes; they divided sharply (in their own ways) between purity maintained on the inside and the impure world on the outside. They ate all meals together (Diod. Sic. 2.59.7), living in perfect equality and harmony (Diod. Sic. 2.58.7). Some of the means of achieving these goals were different among the "Children of the Sun", others the same. Thus, they were not celibate, but shared all women and raised children in common, thus avoiding strife, which would impede the life of fellowship (Diod. Sic. 2.58.1; cf. Philo, *Hyp.* 11.16) (Baumgarten 1998: 101).

Unfortunately Baumgarten confuses "celibacy" with "chastity"; the fact that one may remain celibate (unmarried) throughout life need not exclude the possibility of

sexual intercourse or of creating children (though among Jews both would be rare outside marriage). Thus there is no disparity in that aspect of life between the Jewish Essenes and the pagan inhabitants of the “Sun State”. Later in that same article Baumgarten suggests (acknowledging Mikhail Rostovtzeff 1941, II: 1064) that the primary reason for the great popularity of “voluntary associations” and “sectarian movements” during the Hellenistic era is the large and growing number of “uprooted and dispossessed urbanites, now finding themselves a bit adrift in cities of the Mediterranean world” (Baumgarten 1998: 109).

This need not mean that urban life was shunned. There are good examples, ancient and very contemporary, that religious movements with a basic social agenda have assimilated themselves into urban localities. In spite of those who may claim that earliest Christianity was a rural movement and therefore spoke for or to an agrarian, peasant population, the evidence from Christian literature does not support this. The center of the earliest Christian community was Jerusalem, not Galilee, and in that urban and sophisticated setting (not in Nazareth or Capernaum) the first documented martyr of the church met his end (*Acts of the Apostles* 6–7). Christians were identified as such in Antioch (*Acts* 11: 26), not Bethany, and Saul/Paul sought out the earliest Christians in Damascus (*Acts* 9), not in Emmaus.

A new study of voluntary organizations within the Graeco-Roman world (Harland, 2003), focused mainly but not exclusively on Asia Minor, argues that most civic or religious organizations (including nascent Christianity) in the early Roman Empire were contributors to, rather than evaders of, the privileges and positive aspects of the *polis*, however defined or wherever located (see esp. Harland 2003: 89–112). This cannot have been a new phenomenon of the Augustan or Julio-Claudian age; the roots go deep into the Hellenistic era. There is no need to rehearse here the well-known medieval and modern manifestations of this urbanizing trend.

We may consider, however, one very recent movement on the island of Puerto Rico (a Caribbean territory of the U.S.A.). Followers of “Mita,” an evangelistic woman preacher (Juanita Garcia Peraza, 1897–1970) have established themselves as a powerful socio-economic force in San Juan and other urban regions of the island (Camayd-Freixas 1997). Thus it will come as no surprise that we find plenty of parallels in the ancient world.

Both pagan (craft or religious guilds, eating clubs, burial organizations) and Jewish (Essenes, Therapeutae) associations may have modeled themselves in greater or lesser degree on the utopian societies (Panchaeans, *Heliopolitai*) in the available literature. That the Essenes might have done so is the unique contribution of Koestler to the fictional accounts of the Spartacus revolt. It is only now, almost 70 years after the publication of *The Gladiators* and nearly 60 since the discovery of Qumran and the DSS, that Koestler’s innovative idea might be seen to have merit. Part of that comes through the syncretistic studies by Mendels and Baumgarten noted above, part from what we have learned from the DSS documents themselves, and part from a re-assessment of the archaeology of Qumran. To those two topics – settlement and documents – we must now turn.

## Essenes, Qumran, Teacher of Righteousness & the DSS: Some Reassessments

Excellent summaries of what we know and don't know about the Essenes and Therapeutae, and the relationship between the excavations of Khirbet Qumran and the nearby caves wherein were found the DSS, may be examined in several standard works: Schürer 1979, II: Chapter 30 with Appendix A, and Vermes 2004: Part I: Introduction, Part II: "The Community" and Part III: "The History of the Community"; see also Lange 1998. In all these secondary sources it is taken as a given that the Essene community described by Pliny (*NH* 5.73) and the Qumran settlement first excavated in the 1950s, are one and the same. That *communis opinio* has most recently been re-asserted by Jodi Magness (2002) in her comprehensive re-assessment of the archaeological publications. Simply put, they are all emblematic of the equation Essene = Qumranites = authors of the DSS, with that breakaway community taking residence at Qumran c. 130 BC (based largely on the archaeological evidence and Pliny) until the total abandonment of the site c. AD 70 during the final phase of the First Jewish War. The community's founder, the "Teacher of Righteousness" as well as that Darth Vadar of biblical inter-testamental studies, the "Wicked Priest," are dated to the founding of Qumran or a bit earlier.

Yet for at least the past 15 years a minority of scholars has sought to re-assess (though not necessarily to re-date) the archaeological interpretation of Khirbet Qumran itself and several nearby settlements (notably but not exclusively 'Ayn Feshka), and to re-open the question of the date and identity of The Teacher of Righteousness and the Wicked Priest. Lastly is the vexed question of the scrolls: their provenance and date. Forty-six years ago Rengstorff (1960) suggested that Jerusalem, not Qumran, was the scrolls' origin. Much is at stake because of the notoriety of the DSS over the past half-century. In large part the revisionists are focused on the re-interpretation of the buildings and associated artifacts at Qumran, Qumran's relationship to several oasis settlements within that same small region of the Jordan Valley, the correct meaning of a famous passage in Pliny's account of the Essenes, and how the documents from the 11 nearby caves best fit into that scenario.

Notable among those who are challenging the mainline interpretation is Yizhar Hirschfeld, an experienced field archaeologist with major publications of several Late Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine sites (predominantly in the Jordan Valley, including Qumran). His new book, *Qumran in Context* (Hirschfeld 2004) is the first comprehensive account of what might be a "seismic shift" in interpreting the totality of evidence from Qumran and nearby settlements from the "monastic" or "sectarian" or "isolated community" model of the past 50 years to one of "regional economy" or "related settlements" within the broader context of an expanding urban-rural (Jerusalem-Jericho-En Gedi) agricultural/ commercial area of the Dead Sea region integral to the prosperity of central Judea during the Hasmonean, Herodian and early Roman periods. Hirschfeld takes issue with the standard view:

Our understanding of Qumran still very much depends on [Père Roland] de Vaux's publications. His writing, however, suffers from two major drawbacks: over-interpretation and the omission of evidence. The tendency to over-interpret relatively simple and well-known objects and architectural features can be traced throughout his publications. For instance, he describes a hall that was probably

used for dining as the main assembly hall, also used for ritual meals; animal bones found in a cultivated area outside the buildings as ritual deposits; an oven as a communal bakery oven, and so on...

Much more serious is de Vaux's habit of omitting evidence that might undermine the Qumran-Essene hypothesis. In his publications he disregards various finds attesting to the wealth of the inhabitants of Qumran. For example, his publications give scant attention to decorated architectural elements, including molded stucco. He does not mention at all other finds that are crucial for our ability to identify the people of Qumran, such as stone and glass vessels, fine pottery ware, cosmetic utensils, and spindle whorls (Hirschfeld 2004: 24).

By far the largest portion of Hirschfeld's richly illustrated volume (Chapter 3: 49–182) is devoted to the field archaeology at Qumran, beginning with the first season of co-excavations by G. Lancaster Harding and de Vaux (1951) through the latest “digs” at the time of publication. In it he compares point by point the main features of de Vaux's methodology (or lack of it according to some) in excavating, and his interpretation of what was uncovered. de Vaux understood the archaeology and architecture of the site as revealing a self-sufficient monastic community (c. 130 BC- c. 70 AD) concerned entirely with its religious life, which included the re-production of biblical literature and the recording of the community's rules and regulations.

Hirschfeld sees instead at Qumran evidence for a Hasmonaean field fort (c. 130–137 BC–Fig. 40, p. 86) transformed into a Herodian/Early Roman agricultural/small-scale industrial estate c. 37 BC- c. 70 AD – Fig. 57, p. 113) including as many as three nearby sites ('Ayn Ghazal; 'Ayn Tannur, 'Ayn Feshkha – Fig. 107, p. 184), all of them fertile oases and all within 3 km. south of Qumran. Of those three oases, 'Ayn Feshkha is the largest and most important (Fig. 116, p. 197) and was recognized as such by de Vaux when he excavated there in 1956–1958.

Hirschfeld does not exclude the presence of Essenes in this area (and elsewhere in the Jordan Valley) during some of that two-century period of continuous occupation. That presence (he implies) is more probable in the last century (Herodian/Roman), ending with destruction and abandonment c. 70 and re-occupation by Roman military units through the outbreak of the Bar Kokhba War of 132–135. Hirschfeld's recent review of Magness' book (Hirschfeld 2003) had intensified an already lively debate, e.g. “I do not know of any archaeological find that has caused such a proliferation of theories, most of them bizarre” (Broshi 2004: 763 n. 12). His latest book only deepens that intensity.

Hirschfeld suggests that one likely location for those Essenes who chose to live outside the urban areas of Herodian and Roman Judea is a hillside collection of almost 30 small caves 200m above the important settlement at En-Gedi, about 35 km south of Qumran (Fig. 136, p. 239). Field surveys and limited excavation there indicated habitation of the caves during “the second half of the first century and the first half of the second century CE” (Hirschfeld 2004: 238). There he would place the *Esseni* of Pliny's account (*NH* 5.73), perhaps an extremist sect whose members chose relative solitude (they may have worked as day-laborers at En-Gedi). Pliny may have had the advantage of first-hand accounts of these ascetics based on Roman military reports c. 70–75 AD.

As Hirschfeld notes (2004: 232–233) there has been much discussion about the meaning of *infra hos* (i.e. the Essenes) in Pliny's account of that sect and its location relative to the Dead Sea. Should *infra* be translated “above”, “north”, “below”, “south” or something else? Here again the majority opinion opts for “below” (i.e. En-Gedi is

south of the Essenes). Hirschfeld translates *infra* as “above”, i.e. in the sense of “in the hillsides above” En-Gedi. In a just-published essay on standard Greek and Latin terms for directions (geographical, topographical) in antiquity, Glen Bowersock (2005: 178) focuses on that same passage in Pliny. The full text of the phrase is *Infra hos* [i.e. the Essenes] *Engada oppidum fuit*. *Engada* is of course modern En-Gedi, and Bowersock is careful to sense that his interpretation is in sharp contrast to that of the *communis opinio*. Nor does it concur with Hirschfeld’s interpretation:

[T]here are serious implications for the much-discussed passage in the elder Pliny about the Essene community. Debate over the identification of the inhabitants of Qumran with the Essenes continues, and a central piece in the debate is Pliny’s statement that En Gedi lay “below” the Essenes: *infra hos Engada*... [I]t is worth remarking that if Pliny is following the usage that emerges from other parts of his work as well as from Strabo’s *Geography*, he ought perhaps to be understood as saying that En Gedi lay to the north of the Essenes. Since that site is in fact located south of Qumran, this interpretation would provide support for those who deny the identification of the Essene community with it (Bowersock 2005: 178 – emphasis mine).

Hirschfeld’s and other “alternate” sites (Hirschfeld 2004: 238–240) for scattered or centralized Essene presence near the Dead Sea (including John the Baptist and his disciples?) is an adventurous scenario in need of lively scholarly discussion pro and con. If Bowersock’s interpretation of Pliny proves to be accurate, then we must search farther south (from En-Gedi) along the shores of the Dead Sea for physical evidence of habitation relevant in date to, and consistent with the purpose of, the community that Pliny believed was resident there at least until the First Jewish War. Whatever the case, Hirschfeld’s re-interpretation of the archaeological evidence from Qumran and positing Jerusalem as the origin of the DSS does not depend on Bowersock’s translation of Pliny 5:73.

## The Date and Identity of the “Teacher of Righteousness”

Whether or not the Essenes were “rooted” in Qumran, there is still the identity of the person the *Damascus Document* (Cairo Genizah) refers to as “The Teacher of Righteousness” (CD 1.11 = Vermes 2004: 129; see 4 Q 266–267) to consider. Precisely because de Vaux’s interpretation of the archaeology at Qumran led him to believe it was the Essene community of Pliny the Elder, it made sense to date the Teacher of Righteousness (whoever he was) at the time of the foundation of the settlement, i.e. c. 130 BC. Because it has been easier to equate several Hasmonaean rulers with the “Wicked Priest” of the DSS, many have opted for Jonathan, first to be given the title High Priest (152 BC). Another candidate is the penultimate Hasmonaean king Hyrcanus II (63–40 BC).

Once one “identifies” the Wicked Priest it is then possible to date, if not to name, the Teacher of Righteousness. This becomes, unfortunately, a circular search, and the secondary Qumran/DSS literature is replete with the names of scholars who opt for one or another Hasmonaean ruler/high priest. Emblematic of accepting that the archaeological evidence from Qumran indicates a second-century BC date for that community, and that the founder of the sect therefore would be coeval with the construction of Qumran, is Frank M. Cross (1995: Chapter 3). Without attempting to identify the

Teacher of Righteousness, Cross notes that “his ministry probably began sometime late in the reign of Jonathan” (*ibidem*, 118).

More recently Émile Puech (1999: esp. 146–158) has also argued for the reign of Jonathan for the appearance of the Teacher of Righteousness and the founding of the Essene community. Thus by identifying Jonathan as the Wicked Priest, Puech can then point to the person he believes should be the Teacher of Righteousness: “En conclusion l’identification du Prêtre Impie à Jonathan a invité et conduit à la recherche du Maître de Justice son contemporain, un sadocide, Oniade, le fils d’Onias III, probablement Simon (III), qui exerça la charge du grand pontificat de -159 à -152, avant de se retirer, évincé, avec un groupe de disciples dans son exil et fonder la Communauté essénienne” (Puech 1999: 157).

Now a more radical, but perhaps more satisfactory, solution may be at hand. In the space of only a few years two scholars came to the same conclusion independently. In successive issues of *Scripta Judaica Cracoviensia* Mark Geller (2002) and Nikos Kokkinos (2004) argued that the third century BC is the temporal realm of the mysterious Teacher of Righteousness and the Wicked Priest.

Geller, convinced that the few data available in the CD and the DSS are not enough to solve the problem, goes outside those documents to review briefly the Hellenistic history of Palestine at the crucial juncture in 200 BC when control of that region passed from Ptolemies to Seleucids at the Battle of Panion. As he puts it: “Each of the two opposing empires had proponents and opponents within Palestine. The ‘corruption’ of the high priesthood in the Jerusalem Temple did not begin with the Hasmoneans but accusations of corruption were already a factor in the bitter opposition between the two priestly families of the Oniads and Tobiads, during the reign of Antiochus III and IV”(Geller 2002: 15).

His candidate is the pro-Seleucid High Priest Simon II (“Simon the Just”), who can be identified in later Rabbinic literature as “Shimeon Ha-Şaddiq”. Though no direct connection can be made between Simon II and the foundation of the DSS community, Geller argues (as he admits, from circumstantial evidence) that Simon “was neither a member of the sect nor knew anything about it, but was simply the main figure who inspired the sect’s ideology of conservative transmission of Torah and purity of the Temple” (Geller 2002: 19).

Kokkinos makes the same identification, but his methodology is far more concerned with Hellenistic Jewish chronography/chronology, and therefore less speculative. Central to this is the interpretation of the CD’s “three hundred and ninety years after He [Yahweh] had given them into the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, He visited them [i.e. the Elect] and He caused a plant root [The Teacher of Righteousness] to spring from Israel and Aaron to inherit His land and to prosper on the good things of His earth” (Vermes 2004: 129).

That date, on Kokkinos’ reckoning, also points to the third century BC: “This is an inevitable, if startling conclusion. It is up to a century earlier than the Maccabean Revolt, and belongs to the Ptolemaic rather than the Seleucid period, [which means that] the circumstances of the “Zadokite” separation from Jerusalem would seem to fall into the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (282–246 BCE), while the Teacher of Righteousness comes into the reign of Ptolemy III Euergetes (246–222 BCE)” (Kokkinos 2004: 10–11).

This early date, as Kokkinos goes on to point out, also has implications for the founding of the Jewish Temple at Leontopolis in Egypt – Josephus' date of 270 BC makes much more sense if it is Onias I and not Onias III who gets credit for the project (Kokkinos 2004: 13). Certainly Kokkinos' comprehensive familiarity with the early Hellenistic era in the Middle East serves him well in this re-appraisal of the evidence. He then identifies (as did Geller) Simon II son of Onias III as the Teacher of Righteousness.

Thus we have two independent lines of study leading to a single conclusion, in effect a confluence of research with the same result: the origins of the sect that produced the Damascus Document discovered in Cairo, and at least some of the DSS found near Qumran, may be as early as mid-third century BC. Those documents do not reveal a collective name for the sect other than YHD (יהד = "Community") or HYHD (יהיחד = "The Unity") – on both terms see Cross (1995: 70–71; 151 note 2). Nor do the DSS associate the sect with any city, town or geographic location other than "the land of Damascus".

For almost 60 years it has been customary to identify the Teacher of Righteousness and the community that revered him with the Essenes of Graeco-Roman literature, and to localize a dissident monastic movement of that sect at Khirbet Qumran near the Dead Sea. Qumran was occupied by Roman forces at the end of the First Jewish War, and documents (biblical and sectarian) in that community's possession (so goes the scenario) were hidden in nearby caves before the residents fled or were killed.

Now we are at least obliged to consider a very different possibility than that comfortably interlocking sequence of events and places. A breakaway Jewish sect, generated by political, religious and social pressures within Ptolemaic Palestine, set down (perhaps beginning a century later) its formative recollections in documents discovered late last century in Cairo, Egypt and in the mid-20th century in the Jordan Valley.

We do not know how diffuse or how centralized this sect was, and we do not know with certainty that it can be identified with the Essenes in whatever manifestation the classical sources present them. Considerable doubt has been cast upon the long-held conviction that the complex of buildings at Qumran was a monastic refuge between the last third of the second century BC and the end of the First Jewish War in AD 70.

The reinterpretation of the archaeological evidence from Qumran and several nearby sites indicates that during much of the Hasmonaean period this was a regional fortress linked by key roads to En Gedi, Jericho and Jerusalem. In the Herodian/Early Roman period the site was modified and expanded to become part of an agricultural estate or *villa rustica* in a region enjoying economic prosperity.

If Jewish sectarians (Pliny's *Esseni*?) were present in the Qumran area they lived (according to Hirschfeld) in small groups that inhabited caves or tents on the fringes of the main oases between Qumran and Jericho to the north and Qumran and En-Gedi to the south, or (according to Bowersock) in some communal fashion south of En-Gedi.

For Hirschfeld, the famous Dead Sea Scrolls have no connection to the settlement at Qumran; he argues that they were brought from Jerusalem during the Roman siege of AD 66–70 and hidden in a dozen caves near Qumran for safekeeping. Some of those DSS which are sectarian in nature have close affinities with documents from the Cairo Genizah first published at the beginning of the 20th century.

It would also seem probable that at some point, perhaps as early as the third century BC, members of the sect founded by the Teacher of Righteousness had taken up residence in Egypt. That move may have been prompted by fear of political/religious reprisals by anti-Ptolemaic elements in Jerusalem. Whether and how and for what period of time those in Egypt might have kept in contact with those in Judea is unknown. How Philo's Therapeutae fit into this scenario also remains unclear.

## Conclusion

Arthur Koestler bought Island Farm in the Delaware River near Stockton, NJ in October 1950 (Koestler & Koestler 1984: 98–99), and the 160-acre hideaway became his home base until the spring of 1952. There he dictated (and later corrected the proofs of) the first volume of his autobiography (*Arrow in the Blue*, 1952) to his then-secretary Cynthia Jefferies, and from there he made forays into New York City and Washington, DC. He could and did entertain at his island home a literary luminary such as Cornelius Ryan (*The Longest Day*) and a mathematical superstar (and fellow Hungarian) such as John Von Neumann of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ. He rented the farm for two years while he re-settled in the U.K. in 1952–1953, and sold it less than a year before it was totally destroyed (and never again re-occupied) during major hurricane flooding (two storms within 10 days of each other) in the Delaware Valley during the summer of 1955.

That very same summer, in fact during the second of those two hurricanes, I made my first acquaintance with *The Gladiators*, recently (1954) republished as a Graphic Giant paperback. I had helped an older friend, a summer transplant to the Catskill Mountain region of New York State, “excavate” layers of his personal debris within the *quonset* hut he inhabited during summers away from the heat and humidity of Brooklyn, NY. Charles Hafner was (and I hope still is) a bright and articulate individual (then 16 years old) with an enthusiastic interest in Roman history. I can recall with great pleasure his re-enactments of the three Punic Wars, especially that of Hannibal vs. Scipio culminating in the Battle of Zama. For my help in cleaning his living accommodations he gave me his copy (purchased recently) of *The Gladiators*. I would have been happier with money, but I did not stipulate from the beginning exactly what payment I would receive. *Caveat opifex!*

Later that evening I realized that I'd forgotten to take the Koestler volume with me; luckily the farm where “Charlie” boarded was less than a kilometer from my own home. Without paying any attention to the weather I decided to walk the half-mile to retrieve my compensation for labor. The wind blew, the rain poured down, but I successfully recovered Koestler's novel and brought it home safely wrapped in a plastic bag (though *I* was soaked). For the rest of that evening and far into the night I read *The Gladiators* from beginning to end. I knew little of Roman history and nothing about Arthur Koestler. But there was something compelling far beyond entertainment value for a 13-year-old to consider in that novel.

*The Gladiators* was not easy for me to read. It had been translated into British English. The mood is somber and reflective and bleak; my first taste of literary *Realpolitik*. Koestler, like Mitchell but unlike Fast, decided to forego the gladiatorial school prelude to the revolt: thus the cause resulting in the movement's effect is

lacking except for later, oblique references. Moreover many scenes are philosophical discourses, opportunities for one character or another (rarely Spartacus) to expand upon any number of underlying themes: power, politics, economics, morality, religion, means vs. ends, expediency, loyalty, betrayal, brutality. Even so the characters and the events they experience are skillfully sketched and smoothly narrated, respectively. Much later I learned that Koestler wrote it between the ages of 29 and 33, which surprised and impressed me. Still later I discovered that it had been well-researched, which in part prompted this eclectic paper.

During the night of that storm, unknown to me, Koestler's former home at Island Farm was swept away. I was not aware of the coincidental aspect of that moment until *Stranger on The Square* was published almost 30 years later. Koestler himself would no doubt be amused at the juxtaposition of events (book discovered, homestead destroyed), but he would not dismiss the matter out of hand as mere accidental association or what he would term "anecdotal evidence" (Koestler 1972: 141). Without subscribing to metaphysics or mysticism, Koestler grappled with the importance of certain events, significant only in retrospect, that then appear more important than others:

The same dilemma confronts us as we turn to a type of phenomenon which has puzzled man[kind] since the dawn of mythology: the disruption of the humdrum chains of causal events by coincidences of an improbable nature, which are not causally related yet appear as highly significant (Koestler 1972: 81—see also on the role of memory in significant events Overbye 2005).

Had I known about Koestler's residency in the U.S.A. and his brief ownership of Island Farm in the early 1950s while he was alive I would have brought it to his attention in one of several letters to him during the 1960s and 1970s. He always answered promptly and cordially and no doubt would have had something to say about the circumstances of my first acquaintance with *The Gladiators*. To that book more than any other I owe my lifelong interest in Rome and Roman history. Reading *The Gladiators* not only drew my attention to ancient Italy of the first century BC but also toward learning more about the cultural matrix (Arab, Egyptian, Gallic, Greek, Judean, Libyan, Spanish, Syrian, and Thracian) of various characters in the novel. That tapestry of people and places is of course reflected in Koestler's own life, from boyhood in Budapest and Vienna through journalism in the Middle East and Asia, residence in Germany and France in the years before WW II, and several attempts to find a permanent residence (Israel, France, the U.S.A.) before deciding that the U.K. would be his home.

Koestler's instincts about so many social and political issues prompted heated debate, most of it within his lifetime. Among the best known are: (1) his rejection of Soviet Communism in its Stalinist manifestation (which led to his contribution to *The God that Failed*; see Crossman 1949); (2) his ambivalence regarding Zionism once he had experienced it "on the ground" in British Mandate Palestine (*Thieves in the Night*, 1946) and his distrust of it later during the creation of Israel (*Promise and Fulfillment*, 1949); (3) his outspoken opposition to the death penalty in the U.K. (*Reflections on Hanging*, 1956), (4) his lifelong belief that science and faith are not only compatible but synergistic (*The Sleepwalkers*, 1959; *The Act of Creation*, 1964); (5) his disdain for American politics (influenced by the McCarthy-era paranoia in the early 1950s) coupled with a visceral dislike of American popular culture, (6) his insistence that the

realm of the “paranormal” was worthy of rational investigation (*The Roots of Coincidence*, 1972); (7) his belief that destiny manifested itself via coincidental patterns identifiable within a random universe (*The Challenge of Chance*, 1973 –to which he contributed as a co-editor).

This essay cannot take account of Koestler’s *oeuvre* in any meaningful way. My purpose was to focus on one aspect of one novel, and then extrapolate from that to considerations of several related topics. This, I hope, demonstrated how one perceptive writer of the 1930s was able to combine in one story certain elements (social, religious, political) of ancient history that resonate in the academic realm nearly 70 years later.

Koestler was, somewhat like his friend George Orwell, a skeptical witness to several social/political movements – especially Soviet Communism – during his lifetime. More than Orwell he became, in the 1930s, a participant in European Communism in Germany, and through it and his journalistic travels he had the opportunity to examine the flawed and brutal utopia of the Soviet Union under Stalin.

Koestler also was attracted to Zionism, first through a personal friendship with Vladimir Jabotinsky (Cesarani 1998: index s.v.), later during multiple visits to Palestine/ Israel. He saw there also – with deep regret and personal bitterness – the failed promise of yet another utopia. Both themes (revolutionary idealism, social reality) come together in *The Gladiators*. Somewhere in that volatile mix is the “Jewishness” of Arthur Koestler.

### *Addendum*

#### *Views of Jews in the Spartacus Revolt: Three Novels*

One must not forget that Koestler’s personal experience with fascism and communism in the 1930s provided a contemporary backdrop against which he could project the Slave War toward the end of Rome’s ill-fated republican era. Mitchell (1901–1935) died before learning of the Stalinist purges that led to Koestler’s break with the Party in 1938. Fast (1914–2003) remained loyal to the American Communist Party in spite of Stalin (Fast, 1990); that led to his imprisonment and to literary marginalization during the McCarthy Era in the U.S.A. Of those three novelists only Fast lived to see the fall of the Soviet Empire between 1989–1991.

Classical historians should take more notice than they do of the modern or contemporary interest in the Spartacus historical legend. Between 1933 and 1951 no fewer than three important novels, completely independent of each other, drew attention to the Slave War or Gladiators’ War of 73–71 BC.\* Although it is beyond the scope of

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\* That same historical event, semi-mythical in its import, was also presented in cinematic format in six feature films between 1909 and 2004 (see the list below in “Cinema History/ Chronology”). Though only one of those screen versions (*Spartacus*, 1960) has had a wide audience impact, they are all nevertheless worth the time to find and view (Wyke 1997: 37; 41; Shaw 2001: 186). Readers of Urbainczyk (2004: Chaps 7 & 8), who cites both Wyke and Shaw, would be completely unaware of the pre-1960 film versions of *Spartacus*. She also demonstrates ignorance that Koestler’s *The Gladiators* was written in German (pp. 107; 119) and is confused, uninformed or manifestly wrong either about important issues in the making of the 1960 film, or about significant scenes in that film.

this essay even to summarize, the dramatic social aspects of the Spartacus story lent themselves to novels and stage plays in the 19th century, to the nomenclature of a German political party after WW I, and even to a famous ballet composed midway (1956) through the Soviet era by Aram Khachaturian and eventually filmed in 1975 (Wyke 1997: Chapter 3; Elley 1984: 109; Shaw 2001: 14–24).

The first of the three novels was the creation of James Leslie Mitchell (1901–1935), a Scottish socialist who is better known (under the pen-name Lewis Grassic Gibbon) for a trilogy of novels set in Scotland (*A Scots Quair*). Mitchell's *Spartacus* (1933) was a major departure in subject and historical context but not in his concern for social reform; he remained until his death at age 34 a committed Marxist. Due in part to Mitchell's untimely demise, *Spartacus* did not enjoy a wide readership in Europe or in the English-speaking world beyond. Only one translation, into Czech, was approved shortly before Mitchell's death; a copy of that is in the Library of Congress, Washington, DC (Mitchell 2001: xxi). Pinewood Studios (London) optioned the book for filming after WW II but the project came to nothing (Mitchell 2001: xxi).

As noted above, Koestler's *The Gladiators* was an exercise in historical research prompted by his interest in the short-lived *Spartakusbund* founded by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg in 1919. He wrote in German, the principal language of his journalistic endeavors, but the typescript was translated into English for initial publication in London and the U.S.A. in 1938/39 by Edith Simon, a 21-year-old Berlin-born art student whom Koestler paid from his own advance royalties. Simon herself went on to have a successful career both as a writer (17 books of fiction and non-fiction, plus plays and film scripts) and as an artist (nearly 900 works in a variety of media). Family and friends have joined in commemorating her multi-faceted career (Reeve 2005).

*The Gladiators* was revived as a paperback after the publication of Fast's *Spartacus* in 1951 and the moderate screen success of the Italian epic *Spartaco* (1952). Anthony Quinn planned to film *The Gladiators* in the late 1950s and commissioned a screenplay, but the speedier production of Kirk Douglas' *Spartacus* led to Quinn's abandoning the project (Cook 1977: 270; Douglas 1988: Chap. 25 esp. pp. 304–313; Smith 1991: 215)) in which he would have taken the role of Crassus and Yul Brynner that of Spartacus. Martin Ritt (who would later direct *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, 1965) had been hired to direct the film.

In a letter to me of 21 June 1978 (in response to my inquiry about this aborted production) Koestler noted: "All I can remember is that some twenty years ago an American producer obtained an option on *The Gladiators*, but subsequently dropped the project when he discovered that another big American producer intended to make a film based on Howard Fast's novel *Spartacus*."

Howard Fast's *Spartacus* (1951), by far the best-known of the three novels, developed after he was released from a U.S.A. federal prison work camp where he had been incarcerated for a year after refusing to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee in the early years of the McCarthy anti-Communist prosecutions (Fast 1990: Chapter 13 and pp. 275–277). Unable to sell the manuscript to a mainline publisher, he orchestrated with friends and family to have the novel privately printed on a subscription basis, and mailed out copies (signed and unsigned) to individual subscribers from the basement of his Manhattan row house.

By the time the publishing blacklist was lifted and Fast could find a commercial company in the U.S.A. who would support him, *Spartacus* was gaining worldwide sales. In 1957 the novel had been optioned for filming by Kirk Douglas and Bryna Productions/ Universal Studios. Anthony Mann was chosen to direct, and Howard Fast to write the screenplay. Mann was replaced a week into filming (his opening sequence in the “Libyan mines” was retained and screened) by Stanley Kubrick; Dalton Trumbo (assisted by several cast members, notably Peter Ustinov and Charles Laughton) supplied the final screenplay. This proved to be the definitive film version in the 20th century.

Just as Koestler was unaware of Mitchell’s novel, so Fast had no knowledge of Koestler or Mitchell. Thus the three fictional treatments of the Spartacus revolt are the results of independent approaches, all three authors using the available primary literature in translation. Those classical sources are now available in English (with extensive commentary) in Shaw 2001: 130–165. Though Koestler and Fast have left us clear accounts of the secondary literature they explored, Mitchell did not. His most recent editor has tried to guess what the secondary sources were without much success (Mitchell 2001: x).

Fast (noted above) drew on a now-obscure socialist history of the ancient world first published in 1888 (Ward 1907 – see esp. Vol. 1 Chapter 12: “Spartacus”). Not only did he benefit from the multitude of historical details in Ward’s *The Ancient Lowly*, he borrowed the name “Varinia” – without acknowledgment – as a major character in the novel. She was the female slave whom Ward had identified as the companion/wife of Spartacus (Ward 1907: 264). As I will demonstrate elsewhere, there is good reason to accept that Mitchell had also mined *The Ancient Lowly* for his novel. Whatever the details of sources all three authors introduced a Jewish element into their plot development.

For Mitchell it was “Gershom [ben Sanballat] of Kadesh, a Pharisee and a Jew. In revolt against [Alexander] Jannaeus and his Hellenistic priests [he] had twice raised the standards of the Hasidim” (Mitchell 1933: 31; 2001: 15). Sold into slavery, in time he became a household servant of Marcus Licinius Crassus. For Koestler it was the unnamed Essene, lately a *masseur* in the public baths of Stabiae. For Fast it was David of Galilee, prisoner of war become gladiator-in-training for the *lanista* Lentulus Batiatus at Capua, a Jew “who came of the party of the Zealots, wild stiff-necked peasants of the Judean hills, who carried a banner of incessant rebellion and hatred for the oppressor ever since the old days of the Maccabees” (Fast 1951: 126; 1965: 103–104).

In all three novels the Jewish characters become integral but not crucial players in the drama that unfolds. Mitchell’s Gershom serves as Spartacus’ trusted leader of an ethnic division of the slave army, and Fast’s David becomes Spartacus’ devoted bodyguard. Gershom dies with Spartacus in the final, decisive battle against Crassus. David survives that defeat and is fated to be the last of the 6,000 prisoners of war to be crucified. Koestler’s Essene, as noted above, is among those 6,000, like Gershom and David a survivor from the first days of the slave revolt. But it is the Essene’s philosophy, transmitted to Spartacus through Iambulus’ tale, that shapes and drives the slave leader’s attempt to found a “Sun City” in Italy. The inexorable “Law of Detours” – also

identified and defined by the Essene – hastens the demise of the slave utopia and, ultimately, dooms the revolt to failure.

Each novelist focused on a character whose circumspect and calculated appraisal of humanity (particularly mankind's darker side) served to outline the possibilities and the limits of the uprising led by Spartacus. For Mitchell that was Kleon of Corinth, a *litteratus* who at the novel's beginning slits the throat of his master and joins the rebels "with a copy of Plato's *Republic* hidden in his breast" (Mitchell 1933: 15; 2001: 3). Kleon is also the last of the rebels who die on the crosses, but not before he has a vision of "a great Cross with a figure that was crowned with thorns..." (1933: 278; 2001: 210). For him, ultimately, the Platonic utopia cannot come to be, but a religious reformer will have more impact.

For Fast the need for a philosophical vision of the Spartacus revolt is met by the Roman *novus homo* and lawyer Cicero, who appears in several scenes (flashbacks and flashforwards) to bring his cold, precise logic to bear on key topics concerning Roman life and Roman moral values. The first instance is when a dinnertime conversation turns to the topic of slavery in Italy: "[N]ow we live in a land of slaves, and this is the basis of our lives and the meaning of our lives – and the whole question of our freedom, of human freedom, of the Republic and the future of civilization will be determined by our attitude towards them. They are not human..." (Fast 1951: 45; 1965: 42). If that excerpt seems hyperbolic, readers may agree with the critical comments of Fast by Elley (1984:109).

In Koestler's *Gladiators* the inattentive reader may be led to think that "Quintus Apronius, First Scribe of the Market Court," to whom the Prologue, Interlude and Epilogue are dedicated, is the necessary interlocutor. Or perhaps it is the shyster lawyer and demagogue Fulvius of Capua, who decides to chronicle the slave revolt in his journal and – in perhaps the first known fictional instance of "gonzo journalism" – joins the slave rebels and later dies on the cross for his impulsive decision. But it is the Essene: nameless, nondescript and never intrusive, who fulfills the role of Mitchell's Kleon and Fast's Cicero – as a prophet of Utopia and/or a harbinger of Dystopia. We may, if we wish, see in that Essene and his philosophy the Cassandra-like warning of Koestler's own convictions.

## Postscript:

While this article was in press I learned of two recent secondary sources of value to the main themes (Hellenistic utopias and the Qumran community) discussed above. The first is *Four Island Utopias* (Clay & Purvis, 1999), an instructional introduction to ancient and medieval (Francis Bacon is included) tales of utopias for undergraduate students in classics and early European history. There is an annotated translation of both Greek texts; Clay and Purvis note that they have translated the Panchaea of Euhemerus (pp. 98–106); no credit is given for the translation of Iambulus (pp. 107–114). Missing from the bibliography of modern sources is Mendels (1979) and Baumgarten (1998). I am grateful to Bennett Simon of Harvard University for bringing this volume to my attention.

The second item is an online article, “Some Notes on the Archaeological Context of Qumran in the Light of Recent Publications” (Stacey, 2004). The author argues that the scrolls found in the caves near Qumran didn’t come from that site, which he maintains was a Hasmonaean/Herodian agricultural/ceramic production estate which may have employed members of the Essene community resident elsewhere as seasonal skilled laborers. His summary is worth reproducing in full:

*There is no reason to assume that the scrolls found in Qumran were all hidden in haste at a time of conflict. It is far more likely that the caves served as genizot for other communities in Jerusalem and elsewhere. Over the years, torn and damaged scrolls and documents that had become “old fashioned” because they contained outmoded philosophies or rules that had been surpassed were brought down from the hill country and quietly deposited in the safety of the caves. Some scrolls may have been as much of a curiosity to those who deposited them as a book of Victorian sermons would be to us (Stacey, 2004: 5).*

\* \* \*

For those who find Arthur Koestler’s life and literary *oeuvre* of interest in spite of his *post-mortem* notoriety there was recent notice (Lebrecht, 2005) of a biography now in press: Michael Scammell, *Cosmic Reporter: The Life and Times of Arthur Koestler* (Random House, 2006). I owe knowledge of this to Inge Goodwin, the younger sister of the late Edith Simon

## Abbreviations

CD = *Cairo Damascus Document*

DSS = *The Dead Sea Scrolls*

EOP = *Encyclopedia of Occultism & Parapsychology* (see Melton 2001)

ESP = Extra-Sensory Perception

*Meyers Lexikon* = *Meyers Enzyklopädisches Lexikon*. Mannheim–Wien–Zürich 1981.

OCD<sup>3</sup> = *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3rd Edition) – see Hornblower & Spawforth 1996.

OLD = *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Oxford 1982.

## Cinema History/Chronology

*Spartaco* (1909), director unknown (Latium Films).

*Spartaco: Il Gladiatore della Tracia* (1913), directed by Giovanni Enrico Vidale (Pasquali Films)

*Spartaco* (1952), directed by Riccardo Freda; original Italian screenplay by Maria Bory, Jean Ferry and Gino Visentini (Consorzio Spartacus). English versions: *Sins of Rome*; *Spartacus the Gladiator*.

*Spartacus* (1960), directed by Anthony Mann & Stanley Kubrick; screenplay by Dalton Trumbo based on the novel by Howard Fast (Bryna Productions/Universal).

*Spartacus* (2004), directed by Robert Dornhelm; screenplay by Robert Schenkkan based on the novel by Howard Fast (Mini-Series on USA Network)

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