



In Another Life: The Decline and Fall of the Humanities through the Eyes of an Ivy-League Jew

Howard Felperin

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In 1966, a young Ph.D. fresh from Harvard came down to New Haven to take up a teaching position in the Yale English department, then widely viewed as the best in the world. In *In Another Life* focuses in lucid retrospect on that time, place, and career, and on that moment within it which would define his destiny. Would he succeed, through native wit, hard work, intense ambition, and sheer good luck, in rising through the ranks, pleasing senior colleagues, weathering the shifting winds of critical doctrine and storms of institutional politics, to achieve that most glittering, coveted, and rarely conferred of prizes: tenure at Yale? A campus novel, full of eccentric characters and bizarre twists and turns? Well, like his quest for tenure, it's a case of yes and no. For all this actually happened. Yet it's more than a personal memoir. *In Another Life* reflects-and reflects on-the so-called 'crisis in English' at a time when new doctrines-'structuralism' 'deconstruction' 'theory'-were bending literary studies into unaccustomed postures, particularly at Yale. But it also reflects the powerful forces at work on higher education from the wider world outside: the political and economic pressures that were transforming an older 'elitist' culture, with literature and the humanities at its core, into the more 'egalitarian' society-economistic, technological, and bureaucratic-that we all now inhabit. The author, a self-proclaimed 'meritocrat' finds himself deeply at odds with both worlds, and without succour or support from either as he staggers between them. But what a good read it is for those prepared to entertain the issues it raises! Trenchantly observed and written, this is the story of one man's effort to work out his separate peace with an institution he finds increasingly alienating and absurd. Its style alone will make any but the most politically correct of readers smile through her tears!

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