

# Stirrings



Clifford Harper

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Summer 2015

## What Is Happening to Detroit?

By Leo Reilly CSB

Who or what are the powers behind the re-naming of Detroit neighborhoods so that Mexicantown becomes the Garment District and Cass Corridor becomes Midtown? Sixty percent of the population fled the city in white flight starting in the 1950s, abandoning their houses and lands and leaving behind the poor and mostly black population. Now it seems that the white powers want to take it back beginning with giving new names to the old districts. The problem is that the current population of 700,000 people have over the last many years become forty-percent jobless, forty-seven percent functionally illiterate and with habits of poverty that make them doubtfully acceptable as next-door neighbors.

Detroit prosperity lasted more or less intact on the patrimony of Henry Ford and the creation of the American middle class until the Recession of 1978 after which heavy industry relocated to the suburbs and those left behind in the cities lost their jobs. The freeways giving access to the suburbs had devastated thriving business districts. Thatcher and Reagan said that letting wealth have its way was “the only solution.” Black families which had been more intact than white families until then lost their livelihoods and began to fall apart. We are into the third generation of disintegration with the majority of children now being born out of wedlock. The Latino population is well into the second generation of joblessness and losing the work habits that their

parents brought from Mexico and other parts of Latin America. A hundred thousand unethical foreclosures and twenty thousand water cutoffs have added a measure of spice to the crisis. The wealthy response of Mayor Duggan to do nothing seems to be working for now.

We need a space-age solution, something to offer to discarded populations that they are willing to accept.

Machine-age solutions have been unacceptable. The “residential schools” solution that native culture had to be eradicated for its own good was unacceptable to native people and is now being reversed. Extermination was not acceptable to the Jewish population in Nazi Germany and is now

being vigorously defended against. Confinement to West Bank cantons to maintain a Jewish majority in Greater Jerusalem is unacceptable to the Palestinians although it is nearly a fait accompli.

The blinding of self to the possibility of seeing any goodness outside of one’s own version of reality is the demonic solution to which our fallen nature is all too prone. The old order ended with Sputnik creating a proscenium arch around the planet and ending nature including humanity as something that can survive without our assistance. The poor of Detroit are just as good as anybody else and any solution less than one that they can agree with is unacceptable. What we are seeing is a destructive example of the disaster capitalism described by Naomi Klein in *The Shock Doctrine*.



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Stirring: (adjective) exciting, arousing, awakening, animating, quickening

# The Voices of Detroit

The concerns of Fr. Leo Reilly, long-time resident of Detroit, for the “discarded population” was also the concern of the CPT (Christian Peacemaker Team) Congress held in Detroit 17-19 July. We gathered at St. Peter’s Episcopal Church on Trumbull Avenue to listen to the “Voices of Detroit.”

There were workshops and panels on many topics but the voice that stung us all was that of Maureen Taylor pictured above. She is a dedicated community activist who has served as the State Chair of the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization since 1993.

On Saturday morning Maureen herded us on to a bus for a tour, not of the usually-toured landmarks, but of the neighbourhoods most affected by the unjust policies of the city and the state.

She pointed out the blue paint on the sidewalks in front of residences where the water has been cut off by the city – 44 thousand to date with 35 thousand more coming in August. She explained what happens when the blue paint appears: the family makes a midnight escape because the day after the shut-off the CPS (Child Protection Service) arrives to remove the children because of ensuing unlivable conditions. Maureen pointed out that this actually would cost more than helping the family with the water bill.

A Detroit Water Affordability Plan was put forward in 2005 which would have water bills scaled to income rather than at fixed rate for all. The Water Board, which includes surrounding municipalities, vetoed it.



Maureen also pointed out that only one third of the delinquents are residential. The others are businesses, sports arenas, golf clubs and even the government – but their water has not been shut off!

We drove by many, many closed and abandoned factories. Industries have moved on and employment opportunities with them. A city of 1.6 million is now half that. Which should mean that there are lots of houses available to live in. As we drove through a neighbourhood of fine houses, which in Toronto would go for 400-500 thousand dollars we picked up a resident of one home who explained to us that, even though the buying cost was down as low as 8-10 thousand, the taxes remain high. When the unpaid taxes reach a certain amount the city forecloses and sells to investors who have cash and become landlords.

Back at St. Peter’s, Maureen sat us down and demanded to know:

***“Where are the Churches?”***  
***Water is a Human Right!***  
***Shelter is a Human Right!***  
***Work is a Human Right!***

The United Nations has called Detroit out on the situation but is being totally ignored. The governments should be doing something to protect these rights. If the churches stand by and don’t speak out, they are complicit with the violation of the fundamental, inalienable rights of Detroit residents.

One request was that we all, individually and collectively, write letters to the mayor in solidarity with the voices of Detroiters demanding justice. We did this. And we promised to raise their stories in our own communities.

It was a time of lament! A Holy Saturday time! A time for seeing and learning. But it was also a call to action. As Maureen put it:

***Do something! - or you are next!***  
***Blacks now - working class next!***

Cory Traveler’s poems express well the feelings we all went through. And Pope Francis gives us all hope.

Peace, Bob Holmes CSB

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# Rupture (Detroit)

By Cory Traveler

*A participant in the CPT Congress,  
Cory lives in Louisville Kentucky  
and is Program Associate  
at JustFaith Ministries.*

“My whole life is around  
people’s water being shut off.  
I’m offended!”

44,000 homes  
(how many people?)  
lost water  
already  
this year.  
32,000 more on the list.

water to drink  
water to bathe  
water to cook  
water to clean  
water to flush

water/life  
life/water

hot summer

blue lines painted on sidewalks  
alert neighbors of  
the anguish  
that once lived only inside  
remain as  
marks of shame  
and pain.

from parched homes  
sleepy bodies  
steal away in the night,  
hoping to save the family  
from grasping for one another,  
when CPS comes:  
fragmentation of child separated  
from parent -  
to be reunited

when?

when will the water return?  
when will the children return?  
when will the decency return?

Where is the humanity?  
Where is the divinity?

She said  
“I want you to have a terrible  
reputation”  
because you, i, told the truth,  
the one she knows in her bones.  
i am afraid.

the truth is  
i gave the man  
picking through the dumpster  
some cherries,  
but not the raisins.  
i didn’t talk to the folks  
staying day and night  
on the church lawn,  
except reluctantly  
when they extended  
Hospitality,  
Welcome,  
to me.

the truth is  
i wanted to see...  
and i didn’t.

i didn’t want to see  
white supremacy,  
my complacency,  
my complicity,  
at work.

She said,  
“You’ve got to put  
your religion,  
your heart,  
your life  
on the line.”

the truth is  
i like my comfort,  
my privilege,  
my protected heart,  
my distance from the line.  
i don’t want to be

bothered with the  
hard work  
that lets others live  
as easily as i.

but i must.

because  
the truth is  
my guts are spilling out,  
ruptured in encounter,  
and she and he and she,  
implanted so quickly,  
are spilling out of me  
as i try to hold them  
and the pestilence  
in with one hand.  
why?

i also hold the salve.  
i grip it tightly,  
hand closed around  
the sacrifice that leads to healing,  
the sacrifice that isn’t sacrifice,  
but cleansing love,  
soothing relief.

the wound festering,  
i am afraid to move my hands,  
to open them,  
and my heart,  
open,  
and my life,  
open.

afraid of not enough,  
afraid of what if,  
afraid of a bad reputation  
from telling the truth.  
and i bleed,  
and Detroit bleeds,  
bleeds,  
bleeds.

so i speak:

Where is the humanity?  
Where is the divinity?



# A Secular Jewish Feminist at the Vatican

By Naomi Klein

## JUNE 29TH—PACKING

When I was first asked to speak at a Vatican press conference on Pope Francis's recently published climate-change encyclical, "Laudato Si'." I was convinced that the invitation would soon be rescinded. Now the press conference and, after it, a two-day symposium to explore the encyclical is just two days away. This is actually happening.

To remind myself why this is worth all the trouble, I reread a few passages from the encyclical. In addition to laying out the reality of climate change, it spends considerable time exploring how the culture of late capitalism makes it uniquely difficult to address, or even focus upon, this civilizational challenge.

## JULY 1ST—THE F-WORD

Four of us are scheduled to speak at the Vatican press conference, including one of the chairs of the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. All except me are Catholic. In his introduction, Father Federico Lombardi, the director of the Holy See press office, describes me as a "secular Jewish feminist"—a term I used in my prepared remarks but never expected him to repeat. Everything else Father Lombardi says is in Italian, but these three words are spoken slowly and in English, as if to emphasize their foreignness. After the press conference, a journalist from the U.S. tells me that she has "been covering the Vatican for twenty years, and I never thought I would hear the word

'feminist' from that stage."

The British and Dutch ambassadors to the Holy See host a dinner for the conference's organizers and speakers. Over wine and grilled salmon, discussion turns to the political ramifications of the Pope's trip to the United States this September. One of the guests most preoccupied with this subject is from an influential American Catholic organization. I ask him how spreading the message of "Laudato

for the trampled victims of a highly unequal and unjust economic system. When climate justice had to fight for airtime with denunciations of gay marriage, it didn't stand a chance.

Before bed, I spend a little more time with "Laudato Si'" and something jumps out at me. In the opening paragraph, Pope Francis writes that "our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms

to embrace us." Later in the text, pointing to various biblical directives to care for animals that provide food and labor, Pope Francis comes to the conclusion that "the Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures."

Challenging anthropocentrism is ho-hum stuff for ecologists, but it's something else for the pinnacle of the Catholic Church. By asserting

that nature has a value in and of itself, Francis is overturning centuries of theological interpretation that regarded the natural world with outright hostility—as a misery to be transcended and an "allurement" to be resisted. Of course, there have been parts of Christianity that stressed that nature was something valuable to steward and protect—some even celebrated it—but mostly as a set of resources to sustain humans.

## JULY 2ND—BACK FROM THE WILDERNESS

This morning is the opening of "People and Planet First: The Imperative to Change Course," a two-day



photo by Gabriel Bouys / AFP / Getty

Si'" is going back home. "The timing was bad," he says. "It came out around the same time as the Supreme Court ruling on gay marriage, and that kind of sucked all the oxygen out of the room." That's certainly true. Many U.S. bishops welcomed the encyclical—but not with anything like the Catholic firepower expended to denounce the Supreme Court decision a week later.

The contrast is a vivid reminder of just how far Pope Francis has to go in realizing his vision of a Church that spends less time condemning people over abortion, contraception, and who they marry, and more time fighting

Stirring: (noun) the act of moving or putting into motion, activity

gathering to shape an action plan around “Laudato Si.” Speakers include Mary Robinson, the former President of Ireland and a current United Nations Special Envoy on Climate Change, as well as Enele Sopoaga, the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, an island nation whose existence is under threat from rising seas.

Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson—a major force behind the encyclical—delivers the first keynote. At sixty-six, Turkson’s temples are gray, but his round cheeks are still youthful. Many speculate that this could be the man to succeed the seventy-eight-year-old Francis, becoming the first African pope.

His message is clear: this is not about one Pope; it’s part of a Catholic tradition of seeing the earth as a sacrament and recognizing a “covenant” (not a mere connection) between human beings and nature. While stewardship speaks to a relationship based on duty, “when one cares for something it is something one does with passion and love.”

This reflects the reality that, in large parts of the global south, the more anti-nature elements of Christian doctrine never entirely took hold. Particularly in Latin America, with its large indigenous populations, Catholicism wasn’t able to fully displace cosmologies that centered on a living and sacred Earth.

This point is made forcefully by the Irish Catholic priest and theologian Seán McDonagh, who was part of the drafting process for the encyclical. His voice booming from the audience, he urges us not to hide from the fact that the love of nature embedded in the encyclical represents a profound and radical shift from traditional Catholicism. “We are moving to a new theology,” he declares.

To prove it, he translates a Latin prayer, “Teach us to despise the things of the earth and to love the things of heaven.”

It’s thrilling to witness such

radical theological challenges being batted around inside the curved wooden walls of an auditorium named after St. Augustine, the theologian whose skepticism of things bodily and material so profoundly shaped the Church. But I would imagine that for the conspicuously silent men in black robes in the front row, who study and teach in this building, it is also a little terrifying.

### **JULY 3RD—CHURCH, EVANGELIZE THYSELF**

Conversion—I had forgotten about that. And yet it may be the key to understanding the power and potential of “Laudato Si’.” Pope Francis devotes an entire chapter of the encyclical to the need for an “ecological conversion” among Christians, “whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.”

An evangelism of ecology, I realize, is what I have been witnessing take shape during the past three days in Rome—in the talk of “spreading the good news of the encyclical,” of “taking the Church on the road,” of a “people’s pilgrimage” for the planet, in laying out plans to spread the encyclical in Brazil through radio ads, online videos, and pamphlets for use in parish study groups.

A millennia-old engine designed to proselytize and convert non-Christians is now preparing to direct its missionary zeal inward, challenging and changing foundational beliefs about humanity’s place in the world among the already faithful. In the closing session, Father McDonagh proposes “a three-year synod on the encyclical,” to educate Church members about this



new theology of interconnection and “integral ecology.”

Many have puzzled over how “Laudato Si’ ” can simultaneously be so sweepingly critical of the present and yet so hopeful about the future. The Church’s faith in the power of ideas—and its fearsome capacity to spread information globally—goes a long way toward explaining this tension. People of faith, particularly missionary faiths, believe deeply in something that a lot of secular people aren’t so sure about: that all human beings are capable of profound change. They remain convinced that the right combination of argument, emotion and experience can lead to life-altering transformations. That, after all, is the essence of conversion.

The most powerful example of this capacity for change may well be Pope Francis’s Vatican. And it is a model not for the Church alone. Because if one of the oldest and most tradition-bound institutions in the world can change its teachings and practices as radically, and as rapidly, as Francis is attempting, then surely all kinds of newer and more elastic institutions can change as well.

And if that happens—if transformation is as contagious as it seems to be here—well, we might just stand a chance of tackling climate change.

*Naomi is a Canadian author known for her political analyses and criticism of corporate capitalism. Her latest book is “This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate.” Read the full article, “A Radical Vatican,” in the New Yorker, 10 July 2015.*



## Laudato Si' reaction from Saskatoon bishop

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si'*, is a beautifully written and accessible document for the whole world, says **Bishop Donald Bolen** of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

"This document is saying with new force that concern for the environment is no longer optional for a believer. Caring for the environment is now even more clearly and surely part of church teaching," he stressed. "Pope Francis quotes Saint John Paul II: 'Christians in their turn realize that their responsibility within creation, and their duty toward nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith'."

Bolen identified several calls to conversion emerging from the document. "On a personal level this includes a need to decrease consumption and rethink consumerism, to examine our own lifestyle and acknowledge harm to God's creation through our actions or failure to act, to foster and celebrate beauty, and to keep the Sabbath," he listed.

"It also means a communal conversion: ensuring that ecological education takes place in a variety of settings (including schools, media and parishes), fostering a culture of care and implementing needed changes as a community, such as increasing regulations to protect the environment and thinking about the global implications of our actions and policies," said Bolen.

Pope Francis also states in the document that fossil fuels must be "progressively replaced without delay." The pope adds: "Reducing greenhouse gases requires honesty, courage and responsibility, above all on the part of those countries which are more powerful and pollute the most."

The encyclical invites a deep discernment also on the level of nations, in terms of economic and political priorities, said Bolen. Pope Francis addresses political and business leaders boldly in asking, "What would induce anyone, at this stage, to hold on to power only to be

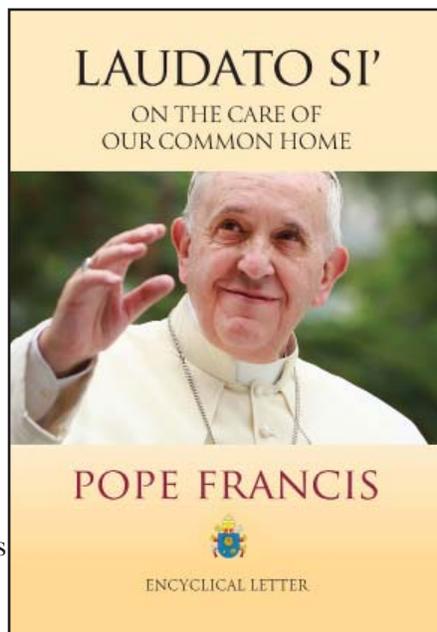
remembered for their inability to take action when it was urgent and necessary to do so?"

As for questions about whether the church has a role in this discussion, Bolen insisted that politics and economics are not off limits to people of faith, but engaging in these areas is an integral part of working for the common good.

"I think of the old Jewish Midrash: when God gets up in the morning, he gathers the angels around him and asks, 'where does the world need healing today,'" said Bolen. "The church needs to be involved in this issue, because it is of concern to God, because God loves the earth and loves human beings."

He added: "Neither the Jewish nor the Christian tradition has ever seen fit to leave politics and economics to others and say that is off territory for God and faith. Much to the contrary."

The papal encyclical reflects profoundly on the common good — not only for humanity today, but extending to future generations. "We hear 'the environment is on loan to each generation, which must hand it on to the next,' and a very simple question and a common sense summons: What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?" said Bolen.



"Do we love our children, our grandchildren? Enough that we might want to give them a chance to love their grandchildren? Then let's start shifting our priorities as a society, as a nation let's start being a leader on environmental issues, let's start taking responsibility for our part in wounding a suffering world and working towards its healing," Bolen urged.

The document is ultimately grounded in hope, Bolen said. "It's not too late. Hope flows through the entire encyclical. And the ultimate ground of hope for the Christian is our hope in God."

In section 245, before offering a prayer for our earth, the encyclical concludes: "In the heart of this world, the Lord of life, who loves us so much, is

always present. He does not abandon us, he does not leave us alone, for he unites himself definitely to our earth, and his love constantly impels us to find new ways forward."

"That great love and mercy of God is our hope and our joy," said Bolen. "It is what will help us as we re-orient our lives, to find new ways of living and responding to these challenges so clearly articulated for us by Pope Francis."

*Read full article in Prairie Messenger, 24 June 2015*

## Bishop Tutu Supports “Unsettling Goods” Campaign of United Church Canada



25 June 2015

My dear sisters and brothers in the United Church of Canada:

I recall so joyously the witness and generosity of your Church in helping those of us caught in the shackles of apartheid during those dark days of our oppression. You were an enormous strength to us, and we forever remain bonded in our commitment to justice for all people everywhere.

In recent years, I have been increasingly dismayed at the deteriorating conditions of the Palestinian people living under occupation, which has now gone on for 47 years with no end in sight. Even a decade or more ago when I visited the Holy Land I saw the marks of apartheid in the policies of the Israeli government continued to the present day. The Palestinians are forced to live in segregated areas, often relocated to less desirable land so Jewish settlers can live in fine red ceramic-roofed houses with paved roads while most Palestinians live in squalor in villages and refugee camps. Water is diverted to settlers so that they can have nice green lawns, irrigated fields and community swimming pools while Palestinians endure shortages and dusty roads I have looked at this and seen the ugly face of apartheid and the racism within it. I have been vilified numerous times for making this comparison to apartheid. I shrink not one step backwards. I saw and I name what I saw: apartheid, separation, segregation. I might add that these settlements are illegal under international law, as is the occupation itself, and an affront to the world.

Where this wall or fence or barrier violates Palestinian

land, it serves as a form of segregation. I remain heartbroken to see the gross injustice of the occupation being imposed by Jewish people who, themselves, have endured so many centuries of oppression and suffering, much at the hands of Christians, culminating in the tragedy of the Holocaust. One would have expected just the opposite, a country, Israel, which would be a light to the nations, a beacon of justice. Other Jewish voices have arisen to denounce what is done in their name through this shameful occupation.

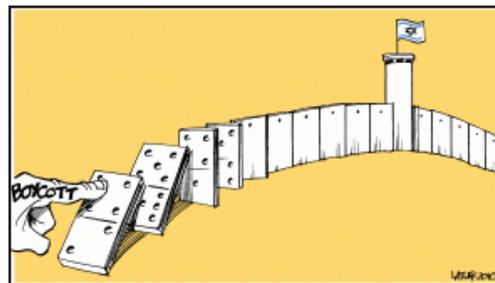
I understand the enormous burdens western Christians carry for the many centuries of anti-semitic behavior towards our Jewish sisters and brothers. It's a dreadful record which will require years of healing and reconciling work to overcome fully the depredations of the past. But I must point out to you quite emphatically that the injustices borne by the Jewish people in Europe and later Canada cannot be corrected at the expense of another injustice perpetrated against the Palestinian people. Why should the Palestinians be the bearers of the sins of western complicity in anti-semitism and the Holocaust? Your rightful initiative to reconcile with the Jewish people should not come with a blind eye for the inhumane policies inflicted by the state of Israel on the Palestinians.

I therefore commend you to carry on with and expand your Unsettling Goods campaign. I urge the United Church of Canada to join with other denominations around the globe who have decided to boycott and divest from companies that benefit from the occupation. Also I urge you to recognize your own country's complicity in Palestinian suffering under the occupation. Please read and study the proposals before you that advocate furthering boycotts and divestment. You proved with us in South Africa that only economic pressure could force the powerful to the table. As you have courageously done before, may you once again witness to the cause of Christ's justice to free the oppressed and by so doing liberate the oppressor so that these two peoples can finally be reconciled and live together in dignity, security and peace.

God bless you all as you as Church wrestle to discern what God requires of you in this hour. With a heart full of love to a people I will always embrace, I am

Yours sincerely

+Desmond Archbishop Emeritus Cape Town



## Some Movies: We Are All Refugees, Seeking Home

By Neil Hibberd CSB

Since the mid-1990s, more than 15 million world refugees fled their home countries, while another 27 million were displaced by conflict within their own homelands; another several million have been displaced because of natural disasters. Pope Francis' encyclical, "Laudato Si'," has invited the world's people to take up the challenge of caring better for our home, the earth. We are all brothers and sisters, each of us imbued with the heart's desire to find our home, and to live there together in harmony and peace, until we are called Home. The movies reviewed below all have at least an underlying, striking dash of reference to this refugee/home dimension.

Even two of the "Summer Blockbusters," *Mad Max: Fury Road*, and, *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, contain elements.



Furiosa, Charlize Theron's wonderfully portrayed dynamic woman of action, in *Mad Max*, believes that her path to survival may be achieved if she can make it across the desert to her childhood homeland. The rest

of the movie is a total blow-out, the epitome of 'Mad-Max-ness,' actually, 'Furiosa-ness.' It's her film. If you can handle the surfeit of violence and destruction, suspending all judgment, you can sit astonishedly in surprising enchantment of its accomplishments. Of its sort, it will most certainly rank as the next model for all such films.

*Avengers* is an awkward, confusing hodge-podge of a story, which is quite incidental to the movie. It's also spectacular, with an undercurrent of "swifties," smart-mouth comments, even including self-mockery. It's clever. In trying to create a world of peace for all, a drastic error occurs in which the very creation meant to establish peace becomes its well-intentioned, ultimate destroyer. Sound familiar? Home is not always where the heart is, or, is it the brain? *Avengers*, supplies exactly what you expect, epic destruction, much of it of the very 'home' earth. It's slick, polished in its gimmickry, and not that amusing. Lots of big, breathtaking, ballistic booms blasting our home base.



The heroes of *Woman in Gold* and *Phoenix* are survivors of the horrors of World War II; one, Nelly, a disfigured concentration-camp victim, and the other, Maria, robbed of her family's Gustav Klimt masterpiece, "Woman in Gold."

Nelly, the *Phoenix*, rising from the ashes of her



personal horror through plastic surgery, seeks out her husband, who may well have betrayed her to the Nazis. For her there is no real redress, only a solution to a damned mystery.

Maria, in *Woman in Gold*, seeks to have the portrait of her dear aunt restored to her family, from its place of prominence in the Austrian Art gallery where it has become, "the Mona Lisa of the north." It is never a question of the \$100 million value of the painting for Maria. It is that on which no price can ever be put, which animates her struggle.



Both women have had so much more than tangible assets ripped from them and their families. Their childhoods, families, bonds, their homes taken, heart-cores wrenched away forever. Both movies merit viewing. Helen Mirren as Maria is, as always, remarkable; the fine German actor, Nina Hoss, is equally outstanding as Nelly. Refugees can be repatriated, not hearts, not pasts nor futures.

*Dancing Arabs*, (Israel-Germany-France production) is a modern version of Romeo and Juliet, with Israel and Palestine replacing the feuding Montague and Capulet clans. It is a film designed to make Jews, not just Israelis, comfortable with Arabs; a well-intentioned plea for coexistence. Blaise Pascal's, "Le coeur a ses raisons que le coeur ne connait point," illustrates the tension between opposed peoples and the heart's desire, which brooks no boundaries. Eyad, a young Palestinian student wins a place in Jerusalem's most prestigious boarding school. He doesn't fit into his new surrounding, is shy and awkward in speaking Hebrew. Naomi, his lovely, giggly, Israeli classmate, befriends him. His other lifeline is another "misfit," Yonatan, a peer with muscular dystrophy, whom Eyad is assigned to help with schoolwork. Neither belong. Eyad and Naomi fall in love, what else? This is a beautiful movie, if not quite successful in achieving its admirable goal. "Home is where the heart is." Is it? UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, "Refugees have been deprived of their homes, but they must not be deprived of their futures." We are all refugees. Homes with hearts must be found.

