

geresque story that turned out to be penned by the magazine's fiction editor, Gordon Lish, who said that if Salinger was not going to write stories, "someone had to write them for him." In 1982, Steven Kunes offered *People* magazine a faked transcript of an interview with Salinger, who sued and kept it from running. In 2002 came the publication of a collection of letters addressed to Salinger, including an e-mail from one Don Paton, who wrote, "You can't make yourself unfamous. Cough it up. Either publish everything you've got left in you or hurry up and die."

Would-be biographer Ian Hamilton—whom Salinger prevented, in 1987, from excerpting unpublished letters—has accused the reclusive author of pecuniary motives. "He said he wanted neither fame nor money and by this means he'd contrived to get extra supplies of both," Hamilton wrote. Others have theorized that Salinger withdrew because he knew he'd run out of talent or he couldn't stand criticism. Perhaps, as Ron Rosenbaum opined in *Esquire* in



*J. D. Salinger in 1951, when he published *The Catcher in the Rye*.*

1997 after a fruitless trek to Salinger's driveway, his silence "represents some kind of spiritual renunciation." (Salinger's few known contacts with the wider world haven't helped his cause; a college girl he wooed in 1972 after reading an essay she wrote in *The New York Times Magazine* later published a memoir about their affair.)

Weber dismisses such speculations as worthless, declaring that Salinger's published work is probably

"the only reliable source material" on him. In the story "Zooey," he writes of a clear imperative for the artist to keep performing—it's owed "to the Fat Lady, to the public, to Christ, to the God who dispenses talent." But noting Salinger's increasingly disjointed, difficult writing style, Weber also suggests that silence may be a still more extreme form of artistic expression. In any case, he concludes that Salinger's silence, whether broken by the publication of another story or punctuated only with an obituary, will go on speaking volumes to ears cocked to listen.

## *The Shakespeare Code*

"The Catholic Bard: Shakespeare and the 'Old Religion'" by Clare Asquith, in *Commonweal* (June 17, 2005), 475 Riverside Dr., Rm. 405, New York, N.Y. 10115.

Though a 17th-century Protestant clergyman stated that "William Shakespeare dyed a papist," Protestant England for centuries deemed it unthinkable that the national poet had adhered to the "old religion." But historians now acknowledge that England in Shakespeare's day was not so wholeheartedly Protestant as previously portrayed. Like dissident Soviet-era dramatists expressing the cause of freedom, the Bard in his great works stealthily made a case for Catholicism, contends Asquith, author of *Shadowplay: The Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare* (2005).

Protestant historians long maintained that Henry VIII's break with the pope in 1534 in-

augurated a new era of enlightenment. But "fresh evidence . . . indicates that Shakespeare lived in an age of silent, sullen resistance to the imposed new order. In spite of penal legislation and horrific executions, Catholics remained in the majority through 1600, conforming under duress, not out of conviction."

Scholars today agree that Shakespeare's "childhood was deeply imbued with the 'old religion,'" though he probably did not retain his Catholic beliefs throughout his working life. Asquith thinks that a familiarity with "Catholic idiom, history, and liturgy" reveals a hidden political message in Shakespeare's plays.

*The Merchant of Venice's* final act, for example, "almost completely extraneous to the

plot,” would have had a special meaning for Catholics familiar with the church’s Easter liturgy, of which the last act contains myriad echoes—“moonlight, a single candle dispelling the darkness, music, the repeated phrase ‘in such a night.’” Asquith says that a close look at the whole play discloses a coded appeal to Queen Elizabeth “to look mercifully on her suffering subjects and lift the ban on their native religion.”

The plea evidently fell on deaf ears, and the court dramatist may have been cautioned. But he persisted. In *Much Ado About Nothing*’s first

scene, for example, the bafflingly obscure teasing of Benedick for his misogyny “conceals a skein of allusions associating Benedick with the thousands of ‘don’t knows’ who were beginning to regret their conformity to the state religion.”

Benedick’s friends joke that if he ever falls in love, he will sign a letter on “the sixth of July.” The date would have meant nothing to Protestants, but to Elizabethan Catholics, says Asquith, it was “highly significant”: July 6 was when Henry VIII executed Sir Thomas More for refusing to acknowledge Henry as the supreme head of the church in England.

## OTHER NATIONS

### *Israel’s Two Zionisms*

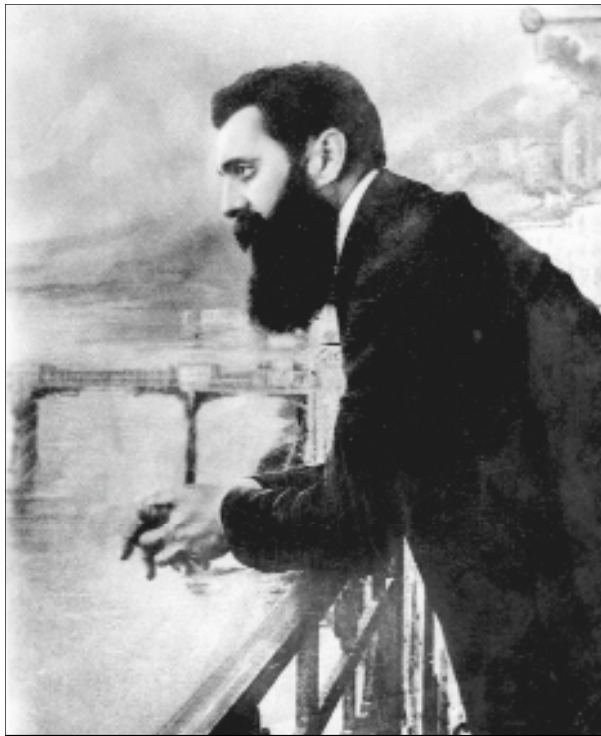
“The Political Legacy of Theodor Herzl” by Natan Sharansky, in *Azure* (Summer 2005),  
13 Yehoshua Bin-Nun St., P.O. Box 8787, Jerusalem 93145 Israel.

Natan Sharansky, the former Soviet refusenik who earlier this year quit his Israeli government post as minister of Jerusalem and Diaspora affairs, fears that his adopted country is losing its Jewish character. The remedy, he

believes, can be found in the neglected vision of Zionism’s principal founder, Austrian writer Theodor Herzl (1860–1904).

Israel has started down the road to becoming “a ‘state of all its citizens,’ with no specific national identity.” The principle of absolute equality increasingly trumps maintaining the state’s Jewish character. Symptomatic of the trend was the Israeli Supreme Court’s landmark decision in 2000 declaring that the government could not favor Jews over Israeli Arabs in its allocation of state-owned land. If Israel continues down this path, says Sharansky, “it will no longer consider itself responsible for the fate of Jews everywhere, nor grant Jews the unconditional right to immigrate to Israel. It will certainly not try to promote Jewish culture and heritage or the Hebrew language among Jews around the world. It will provide education, health, and social services to its taxpayers, and little else.”

When Israel was founded in 1948, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, drawing on the revolutionary socialist tradition, “sought to create a new Jew out of the Di-



*Theodore Herzl chaired the first Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland in 1897, but it would take more than 50 years for his followers to establish the Jewish state of Israel.*