

As Strong as Death

Foreword to her translation of Robert Cover,
Violence and the Word, 95 Yale L.J. 1601 (1986)

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This short essay is a foreword to the Hebrew translation of Robert M. Cover's "Violence and the Word." In his seminal article, published in 1986 near his untimely death, Cover argued that legal interpretation is inherently violent, or in his words, it "takes place in a field of pain and death." Against his contemporaries' desire to include legal interpretation among other interpretive literatures in the humanities, Cover argued that it is not merely textual interpretation specifically due to the actual violence that is authorized and legitimized by the interpretative actions of judges. The foreword seeks to manifest and explain why "Violence and the Word" marks an exception to, but also a continuation of, Cover's earlier writing. It stems from his ongoing preoccupation with the themes he explored continuously since early in his intellectual life: the complex role of the judge as a part of the state's violent enforcement apparatus, and the inevitable connections between law and violence.