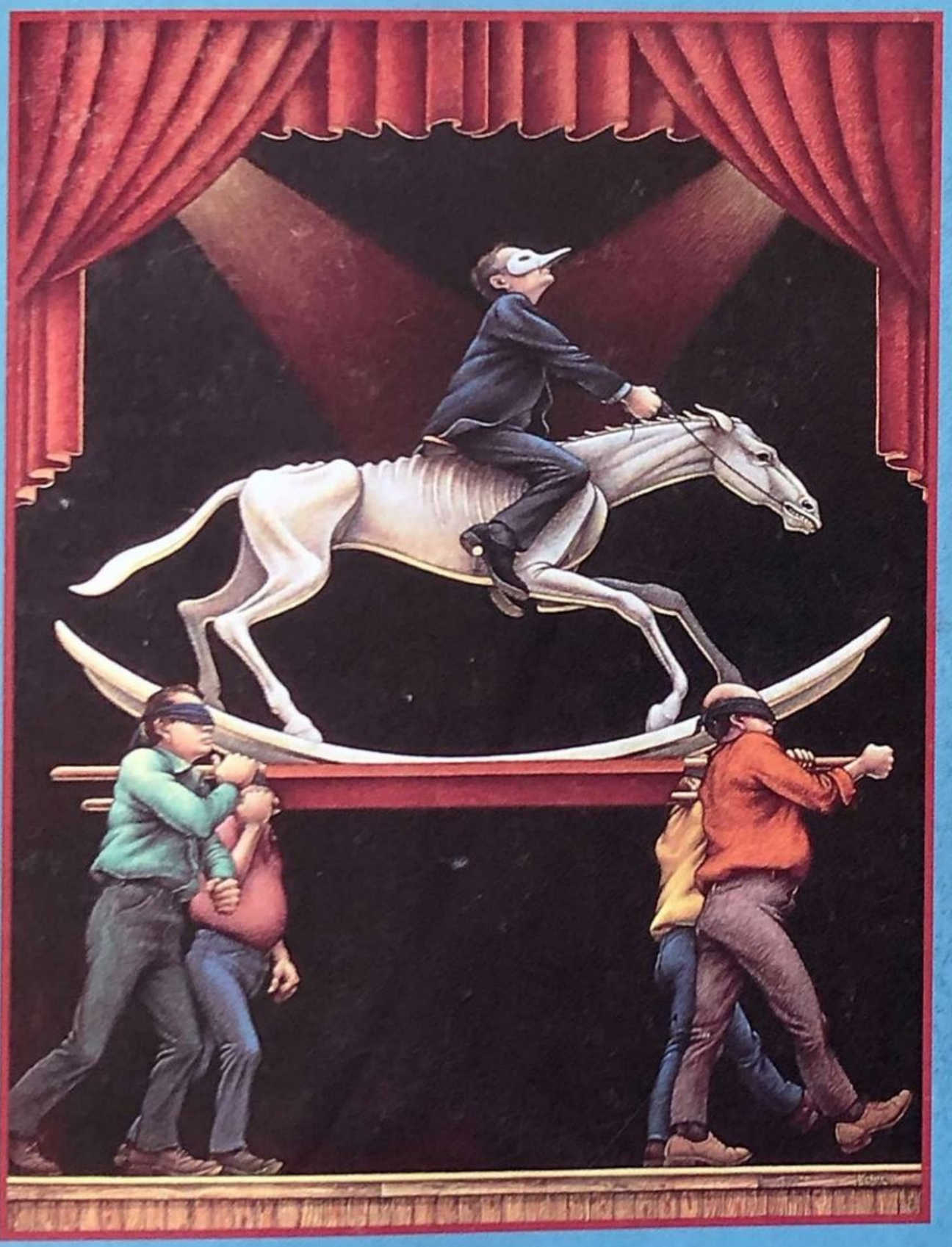
(te•kün) To mend, repair and transform the world.

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1995 $6.00

Michael Kelly's Gaza Fantasies
Wendy Orange

Editorial:
Jerry Rubin &
Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach



No, Mr. Gingrich

Peter Gabel, Stephen Mo Hanan, Jill Laurie Goodman, Lee Siegel, F. Allan Hanson, Michael Lerner, Michael Kazin

French Perfidy
Ian Buruma

Crackpot Realism
Melvin Jules Bukiet

Women and Welfare
Ruth Rosen

Conservativism and Women
Judith Plaskow

Abortion Politics
Harvey Cox

Cosmology & Kabbalah
Joel R. Primack and Nancy Ellen Abrams

Tabita Shalem on **The Art of Ben-Zion**
David Biale on **The Holocaust in Historical Context**
Judith Harris on **Imagining Jewish Women**

Le Mas du Lubéron

I stretch my legs after a mid-day meal: fresh morels,
a supple lamb ragout. As the sun slants over the square
Monsieur Bouchon opens the orange awning.
One could cook bread on the cobblestones, he says.
Across the square the general store lowers its slatted shutters.

At four the local women buy pharmacies, vegetables,
a tin of paté. Where I stay nearby, at Le Mas du Lubéron,
the rooms of an ancient farmhouse are filled with exquisite
antiques. The owner, a dealer in Paris, rents it in July
to those of us who seek reprieve in the countryside.

I cross miles of back roads of Provence by bike. I see farmers
bent over small plots of cucumbers, women fattening geese.
Today I stop for a dusty train headed east to Alsace,
then Tuscany, a farmer who pulls up next to me, explains.
His name is Horowitz. That's impossible, I suggest. No, it's true,

he tells me. I discovered this only ten years ago. When I was five
I was taken to the square. All my friends were there at the depot,
each with a small suitcase. Behind the general store my parents
push me into the arms of a farmer, Colvert. I'm brought here.
I study in a nunnery. I go through catechism. I marry,

have five children, run the farm. What about your wife, your children,
I ask? My parents boarded a train, like that, he said, pointing east.
We owned an elegant farmhouse near town. They collected antiques.
I'm a farmer. I grow sweet corn and delicate peppers.
My name is Horowitz, Abram Horowitz of Lubéron.

Marc Straus

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY — VOLUME 10 NUMBER 1

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Letters

THE DEMOCRATS' DEBACLE

To the Editor:

O.K. I'm convinced, you are a prophet. I got your November issue the day before the election, and it ("Two More Years," November/December 1994) was a full analysis of the debacle about to unfold the next day. By my calculations, you had to have mailed the magazine at least a week before that, and to have sent it to be printed at least a week before that, so by mid-October you were predicting what was a total shock to the rest of us.

I couldn't help but chuckle when I saw, in the week before the election, several stories in The *New York Times* and elsewhere that talked about "the election paradox," namely, that people were doing well economically and still were very dissatisfied. Ever since your May/June 1993 issue titled, "It's Not the Economy, Stupid," you've been warning the Clintons that unless they spoke to the hunger for meaning in a morally consistent way that they would face deep trouble. That analysis has been totally confirmed by the election.

One last thing. I've been astounded that the rest of the liberal and progressive world gives no coverage to your analysis, even after you were proven right. I called up The *Nation* magazine to ask them if they'd now agree to cover your perspective, and...you guessed it, they won't touch it with a ten-foot pole. Ditto, *Mother Jones*, *The Progressive*, *In These Times*, *Z*, etc. They are still out there trying to save their old paradigm and feel totally threatened by the politics of meaning and its analysis of what is wrong. Except for snide passing references, none of them has ever discussed the politics of meaning and its explanation for why people are abandoning liberal/progressive social-change movements. I used to trust the

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Left to be more open than the Right, but I'm not so sure any longer.

Gary Kaplan
Brooklyn, New York

To the Editor:

Jay Rosen's notion of reviving the public sphere ("The Democrats' Debacle: A Roundtable," November/December 1994) is particularly important now that right-wingers have captured the government and are intent on intimidating the rest of us back into private lives. But I think he underestimates the incredible privatizing effect of media spectacles. Though it appears that people in sports arenas or rock concerts are in public space, in fact virtually the entire phenomenon is carefully scripted, and most people have internalized a set of scripts about how they are supposed to act in those spaces in order to be perceived as "with it" by others. Intuitively, I think Rosen is on to something, but I have no idea exactly what to do to help revivify public space. Does he?

L. Katz
Los Angeles, California

To the Editor:

I hope by now you are appropriately ashamed of having urged us to hope in Clinton. True, you often criticized him for abandoning the politics of meaning perspective. But underlying everything was a fundamental attitude of trust. Since I knew that you knew him and Hillary, I imagined that you were basing this trust on something you knew but couldn't share fully with us. So since I trusted you, I trusted him. After two years, I feel particularly betrayed by him and misled by you. Why can't you see, particularly after his betrayal of Bosnia and his waffling on school prayer, that Clinton is simply a sleaze who double-talked you like he double-talked everyone else?

Roberta Alsop
Seattle, Washington

Editor responds:

Clinton's failures are not because he is a sleaze, but because he is, like most of us, in great need of public approval. I remain convinced that had there been a mass movement of liberals or progressives capable of demonstrating for their own convictions or capable of defending the Clintons' politics of mean-

TOWN MEETING ON THE RIGHT-WING TAKEOVER OF AMERICAN POLITICS

Sunday, January 29
Congregation Ansche Chesed, 9:30 a.m.–noon,
Congregation B'nai Jeshurun (86th & Broadway), 1:45p.m.–6p.m.

Gloria Steinem
U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone
Michael Lerner, editor of TIKKUN
Jim Wallis, editor of *Sojourners*

A public gathering to allow our community to talk out the Republican congressional victory and its meaning for our lives. The event will include small group discussions so that everyone can participate. We will also use this opportunity to do some preliminary organizing for the Campaign for a Politics of Meaning sponsored by TIKKUN's newly created Foundation for Ethics and Meaning.

$15 ($12 for subscribers) in advance, $18 at the door.
Send credit card info, check, or money order by January 24
to TIKKUN, 251 West 100th St., NY, NY, 10025.

TIKKUN SUMMER CAMP

At the Elat Chayyim Jewish Renewal Retreat Center
Woodstock, N.Y. June 13-18

Seminars and classes on the Politics of Meaning, Jewish Renewal, Blacks and Jews, Science and Religion, and the Psychodynamics of American Life. Plus dancing, singing, yoga, swimming, and fun.
Space limited–make your reservations early.
For registration information:
write TIKKUN Summer Camp, 251 W. 100 St., New York, N.Y. 10025.

TIKKUN SALONS IN NEW YORK

Bring a main course dish for a vegetarian pot-luck and musical instruments for a *kum-sitz*. Salons begin at 7:30 p.m. and include socializing, meeting new people, a presentation, and discussion.

January 14
Raphael Kellman, M.D., will speak on "Medicine and Meaning: A Jewish Perspective on Healing"

February 4
Bosnia

February 18
The First Month of Gingrich

March 5
The Peace Process in Israel

Free to subscribers, $10 for others.
To RSVP and find out location of each salon, call 212-864-8253.
If you live in Manhattan and wish to volunteer your living room for a salon that could accommodate forty people, call us at 212-864-4110.

LOS ANGELES TIKKUN CONFERENCE

Sunday, March 12, UCLA Hillel
9 a.m.-6 p.m., followed by a party

Topics to be discussed: American Politics in the Age of Gingrich, Jewish Renewal, The Israeli/Palestinian Peace Process, The Assault on Liberal Culture by the Right, Healing from Abuse, and more.

$45 registration. Incomes under $20,000/yr.: $15.
Send credit card information or make check out to L.A. TIKKUN Conference,
UCLA Hillel, 900 Hilgard Ave., LA, CA 90024

ing in the first six months of his presidency, Clinton would have not moved toward the Gergenization of the White House.

Clinton has decent instincts, but no backbone, and hence needed more from us than we were capable of supplying. But it's too easy to dump on him without confronting our own fantasies of being rescued from the politics of cynicism and selfishness by one wonderful White House hero. Unless we ourselves—and that means each reader of TIKKUN—are willing to make some effort to build a campaign for a politics of meaning (or, if you don't share those politics, than a campaign for some vision of liberal and progressive politics) then we ought not to be so harsh on the Clintons.

Chances are that part of the reason why most liberals and progressives do little to back their politics with money or time commitment is that they, too, feel need for approval by others, and spending money and time in politics is "out" today, seen as a distraction from self-interest, and hence it is hard to get people to be involved. So before people get on their judgmental high-horses, they ought to consider how the same self-interest pulls that make us respond to our need for approval from others operated in the Clintons.

WELFARE

To the Editor:

Mark Stern (November/December 1994) is right to say that we need to develop a vision of solidarity so that the "them" of welfare recipients becomes part of "us." That, as I understand it, is the whole purpose of Michael Lerner's politics of meaning. But Lerner proposes that it be done by having liberal and progressive social-change movements begin to address the pain in the lives of middle-income working people, whereas Stern proposes that we do it by eliminating the stigma connected to dependency, raising minimum benefits, and imposing national levels of benefits. Stern thereby recycles the "take care of the poor first" strategy of liberals that has, in fact, had the consequence of convincing the majority of those who vote to vote for people who want to eliminate benefits altogether. When will the Left get it that most Americans feel abandoned by them, their problems unseen or misunderstood or demeaned by liberals? When will the Left get it that suggesting new entitlements for the poor is not a strategy to win the electoral support necessary to actually *deliver* real support to the poor? Don't you get the point of the politics of meaning? If you want to help the poor, speak to the problems of middle-income people and show them that you care about them too.

This, by the way, raises a difficult issue for me. Sometimes it's hard to know when reading TIKKUN which articles are supposed to reflect your positions and which are, like Stern's, really going in a different direction.

Maryann Blum
New York, New York

Editor responds:

We often print articles that reflect very different perspectives. My perspective is reflected in the editorials and in the total mix of a given issue, but not necessarily in any particular article. Our vision of a community is one in which dialogue and disagreement, implicit and explicit, are always welcome and safe.

THE LABOR MOVEMENT

To the Editor:

Would that Dan Cornfield were right ("Making a Meaningful Labor Movement," July/August 1994). But it is not the degree to which a union is democratic, honest, participatory, open, socially conscious, or politically progressive that determines whether workers will join unions. The primary determinant of whether workers unionize is the extent to which the employer effectively discourages organizing. NLRB reports show a dramatic increase in worker discharges for merely supporting a union.

The second most significant determinant is the prospect of benefit. The explanation for the high level of professionals opting for unionization (for example, among college professors) is that risks are low (few universities threaten to move to the South or to South Korea if the workers organize, and few administrators fire faculty for attending union meetings). Benefits may not be guaranteed but they are, quite realistically, expected.

If corruption and autocracy were the causes of union decline, as Cornfeld claims, we would not have seen the "Old Teamsters" become the largest private-sector union in the country and the "New Miners" would not, with their growing democracy, be representing a declining percentage of the workers in the industry.

The fault, Dear Cornfeld, is not in ourselves that workers are under-unionized, but in the fact "that anachronistic labor laws allow corporations to trample on workers who dare to exercise their rights to unionize." The need is for "overhauling the legal framework..." Other countries—Germany, Italy, Canada, Sweden—have experienced the knowledge revolution and the post-industrial society without loss of union density precisely because their legal structure is different.

Professor Martin J. Morand
Pennsylvania Center for the
Study of Labor Relations
Indiana, Pennsylvania

To the Editor:

Michael Zweig's "In Defense of Unions" misunderstands the problems faced by unions. The PATCO union lost because the claims of safety hazards were false—demonstrated by their counterpart unions in Europe, which took a larger total traffic load with many fewer controllers without destroying safety.

The Roosevelt era helped correct capitalism's abuse of workers. Then some unions destroyed their own jobs by forcing further concessions for pensions and health care. The United Auto Workers drove good jobs to Japan and Europe. Similarly, Britain's mine workers insisted on overstaffing and thus pushed that industry to a fraction of its earlier output. Luddites always lose.

Unions would do more for their members if they encouraged learning alternatives and higher skills.

Irving Kahn
Member, New York Stock Exchange

MEANING AND MEDICINE

To the Editor:

Barry Schwartz's diatribe about the medical profession ("The Meaning of Health and the Health of Meaning," November/December 1994) exhibits the cynicism against which TIKKUN usually editorializes.

(Continued on p. 95)

Jews and the Slave Trade

In an article in a recent issue of *The New York Review of Books*, Yale history professor David Brion Davis recently reviewed the historical record, showing over and over again that Jews played no important role. It's a message Jews rightly want to teach those in the African-American community who have spread the libelous charge that Jews were decisive in implementing the slave trade. But while insisting that only a very small percentage of Jews did play such a role, and that they were relatively unimportant to the total picture, we ought also to recognize that as a community we have never taken responsibility for those few people, some of whom had respected positions in the Jewish community at the time. We have not confronted the ways that some rabbis not *involved* in the slave trade nevertheless used biblical passages describing ancient slavery as proof that the Torah sanctioned the enslavement of Africans. Nor have we explored the ways that the wealth accumulated in this process may have helped finance some Jewish institutions. While others have no right to tarnish the entire Jewish community with these charges, we ourselves do have a historical responsibility to create some mechanism by which we publicly repudiate these distortions. For that matter, we have no mechanisms for publicly repudiating and condemning those who participated in contemporary atrocities (e.g., the role of Henry Kissinger and other Jewish conservatives in Vietnam). Do you, our readers, have suggestions about what kind of ritual or commemoration would be possible that does not fall into an orgy of self-deprecation and guilt tripping and that did not lend itself to being used by anti-Semites as a confession of collective guilt, on the one hand, and yet, on the other hand, could enable us to acknowledge the moments in our history when members of our community, with the full blessing of the Jewish religious world that surrounded them, participated in acts that ran counter to the injunctions of Torah to treat others as being created in the image of God?



RICK REINHARD/IMPACT VISUALS

Masturbation and the Moment of Silence in School

If the Right succeeds in passing a constitutional amendment to permit a moment of silence in schools, the "Joycelyn Elders Defense Committee" will encourage teenagers to resist by urging them to use that moment to fantasize about masturbation. According to organizers of the defense committee, hastily assembled when Dr. Elders lost her position (and not authorized by her), the group intends to show both Clinton and the Right that there are some limits to thought control. The committee enthusiastically supports parents bringing their children to places of prayer for a half hour before school starts, so that there can be a meaningful religious experience. But, says one of the organizers, "if the government intends to symbolically identify God with the state through the covert introduction of prayer in the classroom, we will publicly encourage students to resist. Fantasies of masturbation will abound in place of imposed piety. They'll have trouble passing a constitutional amendment that can control that."

FREE ASSOCIATIONS

Never Again? Bosnia, 1995

When Elie Wiesel turned to President Clinton at the dedication cermony of the Holocaust Museum and asked him not to allow the genocide of Moslems in Bosnia to continue, the Jewish community applauded and Clinton rushed to assure the crowd that his administration would stand behind his campaign promises. Time and again that promise has been betrayed, again in December 1994 when the administration announced plans to try to convince the Bosnian government to accept a peace plan that would reward Serbian aggression and significantly reduce the size of Bosnia. Forgetting the lessons of history, the State Department's appeasement of Serbian land grabs is likely to encourage others, just as the paralysis of the U.N. has made a laughingstock of notions of a new world order governed by law and enforced by international consent.

At a teach-in on Bosnia that TIKKUN sponsored a year and a half ago, Robert Jay Lifton (author of *Nazi Doctors*) speculated that the abandonment of Bosnia might be the issue for which Clinton is most remembered by history (anyone here remember what social programs Neville Chamberlain stood for?). Some activists are discussing civil disobedience and disruptions of speeches by Clinton and his cabinet members to dramatize the moral urgency of the issue. It may not happen, for fear of further weakening the Clintons. But what ever happened to "never again"?

Who Voted How?

Ethnic Group	Democratic	Republican
White Men	38	62
White Women	45	55
Black Men	85	15
Black Women	90	10
Whites	42	58
Blacks	88	12
Hispanics	70	30
Jews	78	22
White Protestant	34	66
Catholic	52	48
White born-again Christian	24	76

Note: A higher percentage of Jews voted for Democrats than any other religious group or minority group except for African Americans.

Does income determine political worldview? For everyone but the Jews, according to the data. In the American population as a whole, the majority of those with incomes under $30,000 a year voted Democratic, the majority with incomes above $30,000 a year voted Republican. But among Jews, the overwhelming majority voted Democratic, including those in higher income brackets.

THE PAPER AND INK USED IN THE ORIGINAL PUBLICATION MAY AFFECT THE QUALITY OF THE MICROFORM EDITION.

EDITORIAL

Recent Losses: Jerry Rubin and Shlomo Carlebach

In the past few months, I lost two friends who played important roles in my life, and, I suspect, in the lives of many in the TIKKUN community. Each had his moments of greatness; each had his problematic aspects. If Jewish renewal is about being spiritually honest, then that honesty can't stop at the funeral, where we are all supposed to revert to some zombie-like state in which we dutifully repeat lies about our friends, as though it would not be a deeper tribute to insist that their deaths be consistent with lives lived in commitment to truth. So, I want to talk frankly about these two friends, understanding them in all of their complexity.

When I first started working with Jerry Rubin to organize the first Berkeley teach-in on Vietnam ("Vietnam Day," May 1965), he was not the megalomaniac he was later portrayed as being by hostile media determined to reduce the complexity of the anti-war movement and counterculture to simplistic formulas. In fact, Jerry was one of the most competent and talented organizers I've ever met, and the brilliance of his conception of the first major national Vietnam teach-in (complete with speakers ranging from Isaac Deutscher to Allen Ginsberg) brought more than 30,000 people to listen for thirty-six hours straight (through the spring night) to the most engaging lessons in political theory and history that most had ever heard. I joined Jerry in the next stage of the struggle in the summer of 1965, when hundreds of us sat down on the railroad tracks attempting to stop the troop trains that were bringing enlistees to the Oakland Naval Embarcation Station for Vietnam. It was dangerous and scary and audacious, but it was a media brainstorm, because nothing like this dramatic level of opposition to an American war had happened in anyone's living memory.

Jerry's next move was even more important. Though Joseph McCarthy had been discredited, the hated "House Un-American Activities Committee" still wandered the country, attempting to intimidate people into cultural and political submission to the conservative ethos of "American can do no wrong." The anti-communist card was still a viable option, and even in 1965 there were many liberals who worried if getting too deep into criticism of American foreign policy might hurt their future careers.

In a single brilliant move, Jerry Rubin made a decisive contribution to undermining the fear of being labeled. Subpoenaed by HUAC to explain why the troop train demonstrations were not treason, Jerry appeared in an American Revolutionary war uniform and mocked the committee's failure to live up to the best of the American tradition. What others had failed to do with earnest argument, Jerry did with humor and ridicule—he poked a hole in the balloon of fear that surrounded us. It's a lesson to remember as we face Newt Gingrich's attempts to reimpose the values and lifestyle of American conservatives on the entire society.

Shortly thereafter, Jerry and I became roommates, and we roomed together off and on for the next several years. Remind me sometime to tell you about when Jerry and I and Stu Albert sat in a candle-lit marijuana-drenched room in the Haight-Ashbury with the members of the Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, and Timothy Leary to plan the first "Human Be-In" that would bring together political people and countercultural people in what would become the prototype constituency for the Yippies. But what I'll tell you now is about the aftermath of that first of all Be-Ins, when Jerry ran for mayor of Berkeley on a platform that for the first time challenged not only the deadly conservatism of the Right but also the deadly predictability of the trade-union-dominated Democratic Party and the cultural conservatism of the Marxist Left.

Jerry's themes would be picked up by New Left activists within a few years and become standard fare, though they quickly adopted a distinctively anti-middle-America tone, not there in Jerry's original positions, which would help the Nixon/Agnew crew to isolate us from people who might have otherwise responded to our message. But though they would soon be adopted and trivialized by the Left, Jerry's formulations were far more subtle, far more powerful, and he won close to 40 percent of the popular vote that year, a far larger vote than had ever been obtained in our area by left-wing candidates.

Movement activists lent little support to his campaign, and spent their time insisting that Jerry's candidacy was just one more proof that his ego-tripping was out of

control. The jealousy so many activists felt at Jerry's increasing national fame was covered in a "politically correct" language that critiqued him for being too involved in seeking personal recognition.

There was probably nothing Jerry would have wanted more than to have a group of comrades who both supported his (usually brilliant) organizing ideas, but instead he got tons of crap. Faced with this lack of support, Jerry moved to the East Coast to work on the Pentagon demonstration in the fall of 1967 and the Democratic National Convention demonstration in Chicago in 1968.



DIANA DAVIES/IMPACT VISUALS

Increasingly, he began to become what he had been accused of being—a lone wolf interested in self-promotion as a way to get his ideas heard.

Jerry's need for self-promotion was a function of a political movement that would not honor him for his strengths, could only see his ego neediness. Had those needs been met in a reasonable way, by people on the Left recognizing Jerry and giving him the respect and public support he deserved, it is unlikely that he would have felt as strong a need to break away and go his own route. But faced with a moralizing and puritanical Left that made people feel dirty if they had any element of internal insecurity that might translate into a need for public recognition, Jerry began to become what he was accused of being, a leader who would not make himself accountable to a mass base. The New Left's anti-leadership ideology, respectably clothed in the language of democracy and anti-elitism, has remained a feature of progressive organizations through the 1990s and ensures the self-marginalization of social-change movements.

Perceiving themselves to have even less power than they actually have, minority groups, oppressed groups and social-change movements often feel unable to struggle directly against the elites of wealth and power in the society, except on a theoretical level. So the anger that they might have otherwise directed at the powerful they direct instead against those who have marginally more power than they, but who are immediately accessible. As I describe in more detail in my book *Surplus Powerlessness* (Humanities Press, 1991) these dynamics lead progressives to focus more energy on how they disagree with each other than on how to fight the real source of their powerlessness.

Jerry had less surplus powerlessness than most, so he charted his own course, in tandem with Abbie Hoffman and a handful of others who had joined his Youth International Party to run Pigasus the Pig for President in 1968. From then on Jerry took a turn toward what for me was a mindless glorification of the counterculture. He assured me that the transformation in clothes, the music and its unifying potential, the drugs that challenged the "straight" and "uptight" ways of thinking, and the subversive impact of "the youth" were already combining to revolutionize America in ways that would not only get us out of Vietnam, but would overthrow the entire system of materialism and selfishness. Unable to see how skillfully the system could accommodate to these consumerist changes in style, Jerry became the high priest of countercultural revolution.

When, in the early 1970s, I wrote an article in *Ramparts* magazine critiquing the fantasies of the counterculture, and showing how its methods unnecessarily alienated the American majority, Jerry's only comment was that he was pleased I had spelled his name correctly. "There are only two forms of capital in America," he went on to explain, "money and fame. Since I don't have money, how can I fail to appreciate that you've helped increase my fame by your attack."

There was here a cynicism that disturbed me and would later lead Jerry to proclaim that the very fact that Wall Street was letting him into one of its investment firms was proof that the system had proved more flexible and transformable than any of us had originally imagined. The more famous he became, the less he seemed to have time for the rest of us "small people," and though we had a few more years of romping together through the emerging New Age psychologies and growth groups about which I wrote scathing critiques in the 1970s (to Jerry's horror), our friendship waned because I wasn't important enough to

merit his attention. I disliked this way Jerry had of assessing people in terms of their usefulness to his current goals.

Yet if this excessive self-involvement became more prominent in the 1970s, it was in part because the dream of transforming the society had failed. The media like to tell the story as if the movement's failures were inevitable, forgetting their own role in systematically distorting our message, making us appear to be even more morally arrogant than we really were (which was too much). It leaves out the impact of police repression, including the shooting and random beating of demonstrators, the "police riots" as they were called by a blue-ribbon committee that investigated the unprovoked attacks on the anti-war movement by the government, the "dirty tricks" and systematic lies spread by police agents posing as anti-war activists (as subsequent congressional hearings made clear, it was often these police agents who engaged in the violence that the media then attributed to the anti-war movement as a whole).

One of the goals of media retrospectives on the Sixties is to credit a "master narrative" aimed at convincing all of us who were inspired to act on our ideals that our youthful idealism was naive and that becoming realistic means adjusting to the world as currently constituted. *New York Times* correspondent Joseph Berger, reflecting on Jerry's life in the "Week in Review" section a few days after Jerry was buried, rehearses part of that master narrative when he tells us that Jerry's death reminds the generation that came of age in the 1960s "not only of its own mortality, but also of the distance that some of its members have traveled from the shining ideals they once professed."

Yet what stands out—as Berger later acknowledges in a quote from Barbara Tischler, who teaches a course on the Sixties at Columbia—is the degree to which people who tasted in the 1960s the possibility that things could be different have remained committed to social transformation. Berger is too honest to leave this point out altogether, but it is mentioned as an afterthought so as not to disrupt the religious recital of the publicly sanctioned master narrative that reminds us to stay cynical about youthful idealism.

Berger tells us that when "the 1960s generation left the Shangri-La of the campus, 'they learned that, as a philosophy of life, 'tune in, turn on, drop out' would not endear them to employers and the 'mellow' was not the disposition valued by corporate law firms." But that understanding was precisely what Jerry and Abbie tried to convey in adopting Jack Weinberg's slogan "Never trust anyone over thirty." It was not, as Berger suggests, that we did not know that we too would someday be over thirty. We self-consciously meant the slogan to apply to us too, to suggest that we would be subject to the same pressures as everyone else to abandon our ideals and to submit to the ethos of the marketplace. All the more reason for why we had to "do it now" while we were still young.

The true problem with the slogan about not trusting people over thirty was that it accepted the cooptive pressures as given and unchangeable, never realizing how many Americans of every age would prefer to live in a less alienated and more morally and spiritually centered reality. As a result, we were never able to see that people being drawn to the Right sometimes were responding to the same hunger for meaning and purpose and goodness that motivated us. Instead, our formulations allowed our enemies to present us as hostile and antagonistic to the legitimate meaning needs of many Americans.

Jerry Rubin played into this, becoming a symbol of mindless and provocative radicalism—at once winning the hearts of young people who felt stifled by the existing system and alienating almost everyone else. When his ideas were sophisticated and made sense, they were ignored or trivialized, just as the media did to the entire New Left.

After the movement was defeated in the early 1970s, Jerry used his fame to advance his own career within the world of business and finance, and the media rejoiced in this, because it could support the master narrative and show us that everyone eventually "grows up." No wonder, then, that few people had knowledge of the Jerry Rubin who contacted me in the late 1980s to offer support for TIKKUN's efforts to challenge the West Bank occupation policies of Yitzhak Shamir. Jerry came to cheer me on when I debated Seymour Reich, chair of the President's Conference of Major Jewish Organizations (sic) at the 92nd Street Y. He supported the Israeli peace movement and he continued to support the movements for social justice in the United States.

Many lefties looked down on Jerry's use of his name for self-advancement. They wanted him to stay pure while they were furiously fighting their way into positions of tenure at the universities, law firms, medical establishments or foundations that would give them a secure living. But while most of these critics had always hedged their bets enough in the 1960s to have assured that they came out of the experience with a Ph.D. or an M.D. or some other avenue for making a secure living, Jerry had not held back, and hence was more desperate financially and more in need of finding some way to take care of himself when there was no movement to take care of each other. The "sell-out" is not the person who is making a living in the capitalist market, but the person who has begun to believe that the ethos of the market is the only possible ethos and has therefore abandoned hope and a commitment to the possibility of possibility.

Despite Jerry's noted public debates with Abbie ("Yippie vs. Yuppie"), I have no reason to believe that

Jerry ever lost that hope.

As a result, Jerry was always in contact with others who nurtured hope. No wonder, then, that it was he who introduced me to an activist at Shlomo Carlebach's shul when I moved to New York in 1992. Shlomo was a disciple of the Lubavitcher rebbe who sent Shlomo, along with Rabbi Zalman Schachter, into the counterculture to save Jewish souls.

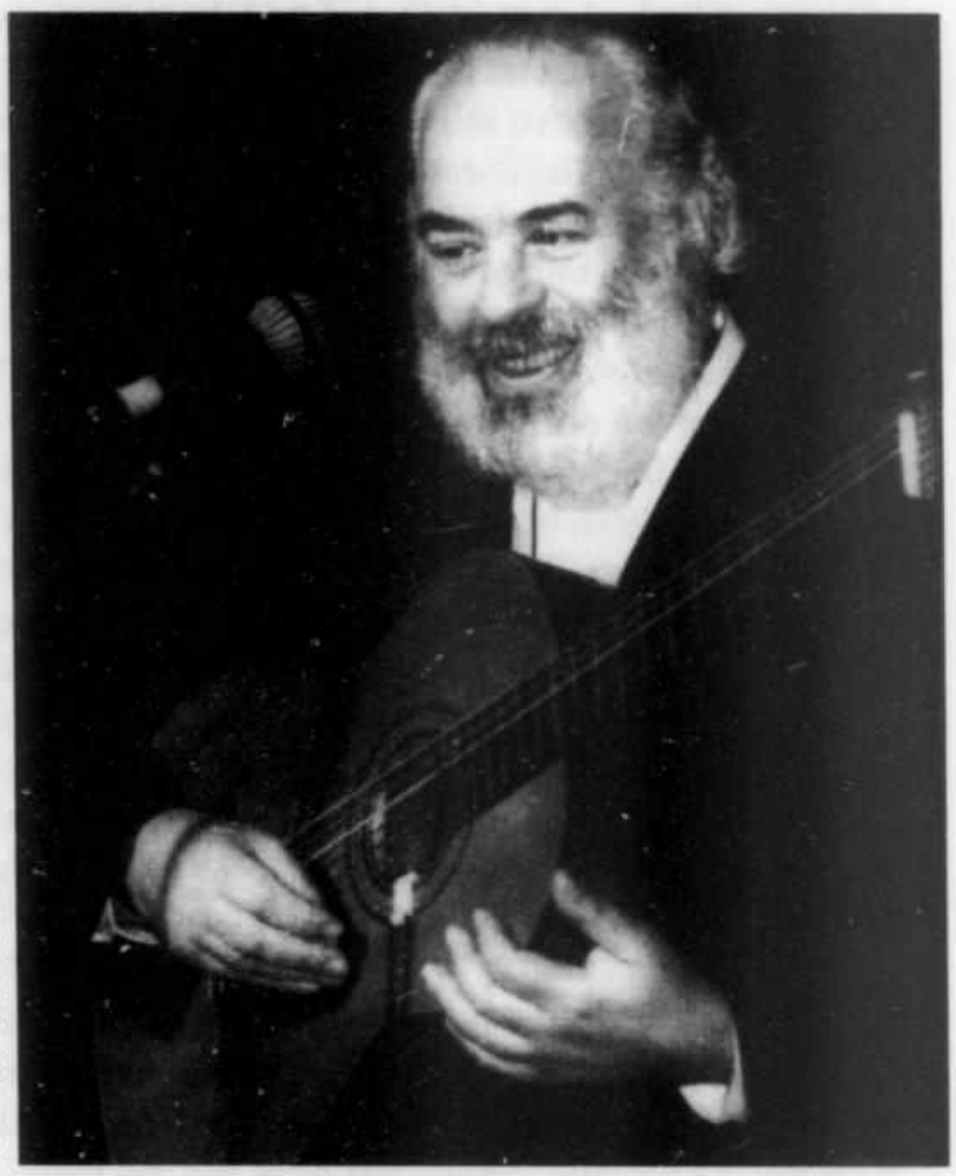
I had been deeply moved by Shlomo's music when I first encountered him at the House of Love and Prayer in San Francisco, and I found him to be a champion of the spiritual dimension of what would later be known as Jewish renewal, but he never understood the political dimension of renewal.

Shlomo's music could have only been divinely inspired, I imagined in those days. He wrote melodies that revealed the deepest meanings of familiar prayers and psalms whose depths had been previously hidden to me. There were many fine songwriters, but Shlomo captured something in his music that seemed so beyond "pretty" or "nostalgic" music, something that seemed to be expressing the hidden meanings of the words, that it sometimes seemed as though we were witnessing magic. His music was transcendent.

Shlomo was a healing figure to thousands of people who knew him. Those who had been battered by life—by bad luck in the economic world, by childhood sexual abuse, by unsuccessful adult relationships, by untimely deaths of loved ones, by loss or pain or disease—could feel a level of acceptance and caring in Shlomo's presence that was unavailable elsewhere. While young Wall Street investment bankers, lawyers, doctors, and businessmen filled the pews and coffers of nearby Yuppie-oriented Orthodox synagogues like Lincoln Square and Oheb Zedek (OZ), and heard sermons that reassured them that their lifestyle and values was really what Judaism was all about, Shlomo's little synagogue on 79th Street teemed with the spiritual seekers, the people who were willing to put their economic futures at risk for the sake of finding a way to become closer to God. It wasn't a way to make much money, and what he did make Shlomo would give away to the poor.

All the more disappointing for me, then, to find myself torn between the spiritual highs and the regressive content sometimes put forward in the name of Judaism. Though Shlomo loved and valued women, his *shul* was Orthodox, and women were not allowed to lead services or be called to Torah. Many women told me of their pain at having to choose between Conservative or Reform synagogues where the service was lifeless and Shlomo's spiritually lively shul where they could only peer through at the men leading davening, reading Torah, and giving sermons.

Equally upsetting for me was the unconscious but frequently voiced chauvinism and assumptions of Jewish



USED WITH PERMISSION OF THE CARLEBACH SYNAGOGUE

superiority. Although Shlomo resonated with a love for every Jew, no matter what her status, level of knowledge, or religious orientation—frequently breaking the pattern in Orthodox circles that demeaned those with lesser religious practice in other Jewish denominations—he was far less understanding of non-Jews. Even after the massacre of twenty-nine Arabs at Hebron last March, Shlomo continued to focus on the plight of West Bank settlers, talking about their insecurity as though they were the only ones who had any legitimate complaints, unable to imagine what it might feel like for Palestinians to grow up under military occupation.

As caring as he was toward Jews, that was how insensitive I found him toward Arabs, and his implicit and sometimes explicit chauvinism about the Jews, an understandable reaction to his own experiences during the Holocaust, made it hard for me to feel that this was a rebbe in whom I could fully trust.

Shlomo intuitively understood some of these contradictions, and his *shul* attracted many of us who were struggling to challenge both the sexism and the chauvinism in the Jewish world. Shlomo knew what we were doing and honored us, but he could not join us. Nor could he assent to the ways that his colleague and friend Reb Zalman Schachter had taken decisive steps toward a Jewish renewal that valued non-Jews fully, responded to their pain with a full understanding that they too were created in the image of God, and honored women not by telling them how

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Casting a Cold Eye
Michael Kelly's "Gaza"

Wendy Orange

Journalists, as Jay Rosen has written in these pages, "are people who *make* things": a shared present and a shared "world," a space we citizens can inhabit together. This "making" is an act of imagination at odds with the common fantasy about journalists, that they "find the world" and simply report back to readers what's out there. Or, as Rosen puts it: "If it is too much to say that what journalists make is the 'world,' it is certainly true that they can have a hand in unmaking it."

We can look at any substantial work of journalism as a creation rather than a report of objective facts, with the author as character as well as narrator. This was obvious with Norman Mailer, Joan Didion, or Tom Wolfe in the Sixties, or with "Gonzo" journalists such as Hunter Thompson and P.J. O'Rourke in the 1970s and since—wild men with their here's-how I-feel-it, now you-feel-it-too approach to reporting. All these writers moved through the world, never pretending to *find* meanings "out there," but showing us how the "in here" and the "out there" coalesce. They celebrated an "intersubjective" journalism that had soul as well as the world inside it, a journalism that rivaled great fiction. The power of Mailer at the Pentagon, for example, was his always passionate eye, an eye that looked in and out at the same time, letting us see that one secret to understanding politics is to know how it feels *in the making*.

Nowhere is the issue of finding, making, or unmaking the "world" riper for examination than in Michael Kelly's devastating report on Gaza in The *New York Times Magazine* of November 28, "Stillbirth of a Nation?"

I dove into the text, eager to see what Kelly—a newcomer to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict—had to say about Gaza, a place I've written about and experienced first-hand. Gaza right now is the turbulent laboratory for the entire Israeli-Palestinian peace process, its first critical test. I hoped that Kelly would provide that sense of proportion that eludes many of us, either because we don't understand enough, having never been to Gaza, or conversely, because we're too engaged, going there so often. Perhaps Kelly might sort what's wrong and what's right in Gaza and arrive at a kind of geometric sense of proportion an outsider—especially one with access—is often blessed with, the naked eye that can see what others miss.

After reading Kelly's piece for the first time, I noted: "Seeing Gaza through Kelly's eyes, I couldn't believe my own blindness, that near-sightedness born of emotional engagement with Palestinians and Israelis, whose fates seem so intertwined now, whose well-being I care about so much." His writing, by contrast, seemed so little engaged with individuals and therefore so much more panoramic, multifaceted, so in command of history and destiny, of internecine Palestinian feuding, of Gazan political and social structures, that I was temporarily convinced he had "found" the essence of Gazan life.

Yet something in the tone of Kelly's article, something in his peculiarly uniform details felt odd to me, and so I carefully re-read the piece. What I found was that Kelly is not "wrong" on details, impressions, or even in some of his sweeping observations. There's truth in almost everything he says, and he can paint a still-life in words like few others, but the Gaza I know is not fixed in time—it is a dynamic place, a moving world. His accurate close-up thus misses the depth of history, the possibilities for the future, exactly because it's so chillingly immersed in the immediate. It's a still photograph, not a moving picture, a world of pathology and politics only—and no place is only that. It is terrible in the certainty of its cold voice, in the convincing but skewed pile of images, all negative. Terrible in its ability to generate and reinforce the worst (and easiest) stereotypes of Palestinians, Gazans, and Gaza, amplified by the accompanying photographs (the heaps of garbage Arafat inherited, the faces scary rather than scared), terrible in the damning finality of his continual and absolute judgments—what no one can be *that* sure about after only a few weeks in any place (maybe not even after years).

For all his precise descriptions, Kelly misses the dynamism. There are no people in Kelly's Gaza, not one multi-dimensional person on any page of his very long essay. How horrifying that something so beautifully made, so perfectly chiseled in lapidary phrases might be "devastating" in the worst way—seducing readers away from hope, ambiguity, compassion, or open-minded thinking about this so-long-awaited process only *weeks* old when the writer went to Gaza, less than six *months* old now, after *decades* of Egyptian and then twenty-seven years of Israeli occupation.

Although Kelly's story is only one take on a complex reality, it

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is written in an Olympian, omniscient "Found World" voice, hiding the passionate subjectivity from which he creates his "Gaza." Positioned in The *New York Times*, the "newspaper of record," his words and the certainty of his voice can easily be taken to be The Story, with fateful consequences for Gazans, Palestinians, and Israelis, for donor nations, for perceptions of the fragile peace process already under such pressure to crack apart.

Kelly stacks the deck, presenting himself as an objective observer, yet he's actually the main, albeit invisible, sensibility on these pages. For he conveys *only* what's ugly, caricatured, frightening, dirty, and sick, selecting to share, for example, only those interviews full of hate for Arafat, ignoring entirely the overwhelming majority, many hundreds of thousands or more, for whom Arafat remains a charged father figure, the village chieftain.

Gaza is, as Kelly captures, a rough world: dirty, uncomfortable, refuse-strewn (though cleaner since Arafat arrived), rife with chaos and crowds, a world that feels to most who visit there (including Palestinians from elsewhere and journalists) repellant, distressing, often menacing. Arafat brought none of the above to Gaza; Arafat's Gaza is a case of a Found World if ever there was one.

If Kelly lived in Gaza for five full weeks, why was he silent on the way most Gazans themselves see the place, or Arafat, or political autonomy? Why did he fail to convey the immense anxiety and collective depression, the way Gazans are worried sick about food, money, and kids? And why did he disclaim the fact that the majority of Gazans are still magnetically drawn to "Abu Amar," as they call Arafat? Kelly didn't include any complexity, ambiguity, or uncertainty, damning with finality a process that has just begun.

By now, having read Kelly's article more times that I care to admit, I see how he "made," or, more precisely, "unmade" Gaza. I can picture him teasing out of his notebooks the exact images that are seductive to him: the filth, the dead donkey lying in the sand, the children with feverish eyes dancing around burning cattle, the foolish, fat, clumsy PLO officials, the skinny kids whose only passion is to kill (preferably a Jew), Hamas fanatics with swaggering rhetoric, Arafat's tight-assed, sycophantish "news" editors, the "endless children," the pre-eminent Gazan psychiatrist pronouncing damnation on the whole pathological place, a world that admits not one single image of kindness or confusion.

On careful rereading, Kelly's piece gives away his "character." First of all, there's no hint of humor, except in the form of demeaning *caricature*. This is how he introduces Arafat on his return to Gaza after twenty-seven years in exile:

> Arafat, a small man with narrow shoulders and a little potbelly, was dwarfed by larger men on a crowded stage and he spoke briefly and badly.

On Suha Arafat:

> Mrs. Arafat, wearing blue jeans and a silk blouse and little pink sneakers embroidered with tiny blue and yellow flowers, accepted the rake handed to her with a giggle and a slightly quizzical look, as if she had never held such a thing in her hands.

On Arafat's bodyguards:

> After it was over [a ceremony at an orange juice factory] as the motorcade moved slowly away, several of Arafat's senior bodyguards—middle-aged men of considerable heft—leaped upon the rear trunk of his Mercedes, holding onto the car with one hand while they brandished their Kalashnikovs with the other. The intention was to emulate the United States Secret Service. But Arafat's car lacked handgrips, which are essential for this sort of thing, and as the Mercedes gathered speed it hit a small bump, sending fat men flying through the air, their bulky forms describing jumbled parabolas of arms and legs and Kalashnikovs, to land with thuds and oaths on the road.

This description is typical of Kelly's penchant for Palestinians-as-buffoons.

Second, Kelly constructs the vast majority of his statements in absolutes; he favors the words "all," "always," "never," "none," "no one," and "everyone." For example: "...the chaos and corruption is not limited to health care; it is *universal*"; or: "In a society under occupation...the legitimate expression of political will is *always*, one way or another, illegal." On Arafat, quoting an unnamed UN official: "He's just a figurehead of course. *None* of this is under his control. *Nobody* wants to put anything under his control. *Nobody* trusts him with the money." Or this gem: "*Everything* in Gaza—*every* neighborhood, *every* civic association, *every* block, *every* family—is identified by its factional and familial fealty...." Or: "This arrangement satisfies *no one*." (Italics added).

A third stylistic trick closely connected to Kelly's use of absolutes is his air of certainty and globalized condemnation. He quotes Dr. Iyad Sarraj, a psychiatrist who heads the Gaza Community Mental Health Project: "The worst is yet to come. The worst is that we will be a complete police state: corruption, dictatorship, chronic pockets of violence. Oh yes, I think this is inevitable." Or: "Of all aspects of Gaza's pathology, none is more dangerous than its politics...; politics in Gaza expresses itself through illegality." Or quoting an unnamed source on the economy: "There is *no chance* of building an economy... .That would take...dollars, and well-qualified and honest people, and hard work. *And those things do not exist here. The good people leave*... ." Imagine bankers the world over reading this potentially self-fulfilling prophecy. Kelly visits global condemnation on Arafat: "From the beginning of the Gaza experiment, Arafat set out, with conspicuous and purposeful intent, to subvert democracy and the rule of law...Having

dismissed law, Arafat dismissed order." And finally, Kelly makes a statement that is as wrong as it is "certain": "...in Gaza support for Arafat and for the peace process has in recent weeks approached the vanishing point." (Italics added.)

A fourth technique—or possibly it reflects Kelly's real sensibility—is that virtually everything he sees in Gaza is ugly and negative. Whether what he's describing is inanimate, human, or animal, he uses his gift for language to reinforce the bleak and deracinated. His opening line: "The main entrance to the Gaza Strip is an ugly thing, raw as a sore, bleak as an illness." Describing Gaza City: "It is the city as chaos theory, a warren of dark alleys and twisting trails that are more potholes than pavement...and over it an endless drift of trash. In this closed and wretched place...the mob was so thick and strong that [Arafat's] motorcades could only move with it... immobilized by a stalled taxi and a pair of red-haired goats eating something in the road."

Fifth, in the guise of omniscient narrator, Kelly writes of hope only in the past tense—an aggressive misreading of a history still in motion. Autonomy is in peril, but it hasn't hit its sixth month yet. It's not as if there has been a civil war, nor has the Declaration of Principles been rescinded. For all the Palestinians' problems—Arafat's poor leadership, Hamas's expansion, the withholding of international funds, the near-universal sense of economic desperation—Kelly's relegation of hope to the past is unwarranted. Yet he writes:

> There was a momentary opportunity, after the departure of the Israelis in May to rescue Gaza from pathology; to build a new order....The failure to do so was ultimately the result of Arafat's failings.... Arafat was, finally, losing the only real power he'd ever had.... His failure has left him on...life support....

There is no one in Kelly's Gaza who has any respect for Arafat, even among his own Fatah Hawks:

> The local head [of Fatah Hawks]...is a slim 19 year old who has yet to muster a decent beard. I visited him one day in his clubhouse where he...was flanked by two buddies.
>
> If I had a choice I would prefer to be the President myself, but I don't care if I am only a soldier" he said. "I don't mind being the little Arafat." But the tone of his voice was more mocking than reverential, and his friends greeted the remark with laughter. "We are afraid to offend Chairman Arafat," (he) said, to more giggles and grins....

This young man, who Kelly calls a Fatah "leader," is a known street kid at Shaubah Camp. Kelly either got a Hamas tour of Gaza, or skewed his quotations and interviews, quoting not one Fatah adherent, of whom there are so many.

With his clear, linear story line, so antithetical to the often zigzagging Gazan narrative style, Kelly portrays not one real Palestinian out of the million-odd who live in Gaza. Though I didn't expect Kelly to be burdened by compassion, I was shocked by a voice that writes Gaza off—and with it an entire people, their political passions for a future, and their omnipresent anxiety.

The danger of Kelly's viewpoint is that it becomes contagious. Readers begin to accept his subliminal offer to trade in our hopes and vision of peaceful coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians for the mean comfort of the disillusioned: former believers joining the shrewd and savvy analysts, those who "know" what the rest of us only feared. Kelly chooses to play the cynical, even sinister judge of history's ironies, relentlessly concluding that all is lost. His journalistic style is highly aggressive, a kind of violence. This is a man who loves to "bite." Only a few months into the Clinton presidency, he gave us the cynical take on Hillary Rodham Clinton in his profile for The *New York Times Magazine* titled "Saint Hillary." For Kelly, Gaza—also at the inception of a new era—must have been irresistible. Yet I take issue with his "sane conclusion," which he implies is the only one reasonable people can reach.

Gaza certainly could blow up some day, which is why it is so insidious to imply that it already has. Kelly's Gaza is a place more unrelentingly ugly, humorless, static, fixed in certainties and impossibilities than any place can be. Because he moved through his time there with "practiced sympathy," as he admits, rather than with any depth of empathy, he left out or simply did not see critical parts of the story including the potential for change, giving unwitting readers an unbalanced picture of Gaza.

Toward the end of Kelly's piece, under the section heading "Whines and Sycophants" (which follows the heading "Wrong Man, Wrong Place, Wrong Time") I finally got a fix on the person behind the attitude. He writes:

> spent most of my last week in Gaza hanging about the Palestinian Broadcast Center, watching the guards fondle their guns, the sleekly suited West Bank bankers come and go, and the delegations of well-wishers and favor-curriers file in and out for their few minutes in the President's company....

At this point, I felt the loneliness of the sensibility driving this grim story. I can think of so many better ways to spend time in Gaza, especially for a journalist, than hanging around watching men fondle guns. For while this generation of Gazan boys, surrounded since childhood by the occupiers' guns, does equate violence with power, others have an alternate vision of the future, as Arafat himself repeatedly asserts: "We need to re-educate an entire population into thinking differently about caring for life."

Like Kelly, I was in Gaza in early July. Although I shared many of his observations, and although I heard much of what he did (though in more conflicting, confused, tentative, and circular voices)—I also had a rich experience of possibility and even hope in Gaza after Arafat returned. Even in a highly politicized culture like Gaza, politics mixes with economics, psychology,

relationships, even poetry. Kelly and I happened to be in the Jabalya refugee camp the same day, although we never met because he was at a small Hamas rally, while I was sitting in a packed room listening to poets who live in Jabalya read about their hopes. One of my indelible images from Gaza is of Mahmoud Abdul Wallel trying to hold back tears and then sobbing uncontrollably, while reading aloud his own poem of tentative hope.

I went to Gaza, as I more often go to the West Bank, not to make final judgments or prophecies, but simply to live from those intersubjective spaces, mingling emotionally with people who live there, inhabiting a state of suspended judgment where soulful connections (or, as a friend says, "history-as-possibility") is found, relating to people as fully as I'm able—with a view not from the watchtower but from inside kitchens and living rooms. And so, as imperfect and dismaying as the place is, I found a very different Gaza than Kelly did.

Had Kelly the need for connection that I admittedly do, or the desire to offer us the view from the inside, he might have met some of the people I describe below. I share these vignettes and juxtapose them with Kelly's reportage, not because they are more politically prophetic than Kelly's, but because they are glimpses of Gaza through Gazans' eyes. At archetypally historic times, when politics seems omnipresent, people's lives simply go on, with the usual psychological pressures heightened rather than obliterated. Written at the same time Kelly was in Gaza, these portraits also show how the character of the writer dictates what's seen and how it's seen. In Kelly's world, politics obliterates the "personal." What I found in Gaza were *people*—under immense duress, but at their core not very different from the rest of us.

June 30, 1994:

Though Suhael Terazi was once prosperous, he and his wife, Laila, have not endured twenty-seven years of occupation and seven years of intifada without depending on foreigners for their survival. Now, with Arafat's return imminent and the place swarming with journalists, they're overwhelmed, desperate for the cash flow we journalists can generate for them, equally desperate to keep Suhael's aging mother from realizing that we who sit around the living room, sleeping four to a room on mattresses splayed across the floor—are not her son's old college friends paying a spontaneous visit, but paying guests....

Afternoon, July 1, 1994:

...Back at the Tarazi house, some journalists are waiting to catch Arafat's speech on T.V. We watch as the commentators on Israel's Channel 2, the only one covering Arafat's arrival (thus the only station any Palestinian in Gaza or the West Bank can see) describe what's going on—in Hebrew. No one in the Tarazi family, nor any of their assembled neighbors, understands a word.

Now on the television we see a helicopter view of Arafat's car slowly moving down the road from Rafah to Gaza City. The mood in this room, filling with Gazan neighbors who have endured endless disappointments, is covertly intense if seemingly blasé. As we wait for Arafat's speech to begin, a smooth-talking Israeli right-wing settler and a smooth-talking Peace Now activist (looking oddly indistinguishable as I see them through the Tarazis' eyes) are sharing their views on the screen. "How much would it cost to simply let the Palestinians understand this moment with subtitles?" Mr. Tarazi asks quietly....

Finally, Arafat arrives on stage in the town square. "This is the critical moment," Laila says, meaning that someone might try to assassinate him. Arafat takes the stage, and in a child-like way, he raises his hands and happily throws small, white objects into the crowds, three, four, eight times. His face and figure at this moment seem so innocent that until Laila tells me they're white carnations, I almost believe The Chairman is tossing paper airplanes out at his people.

Now his speech begins as Laila, Suhail, Iman, and assorted neighbors all translate for me simultaneously. Laila passes tissues around as tears well up in every Palestinian in the room. Twenty-seven years of exile, unrealistic expectations, rabid terrorism, and sudden reconciliation come down to this: a pure attentiveness engulfs us all.

And then suddenly the television blacks out. We switch to the Egyptian and Jordanian stations that had been featuring soccer games, now also blank.

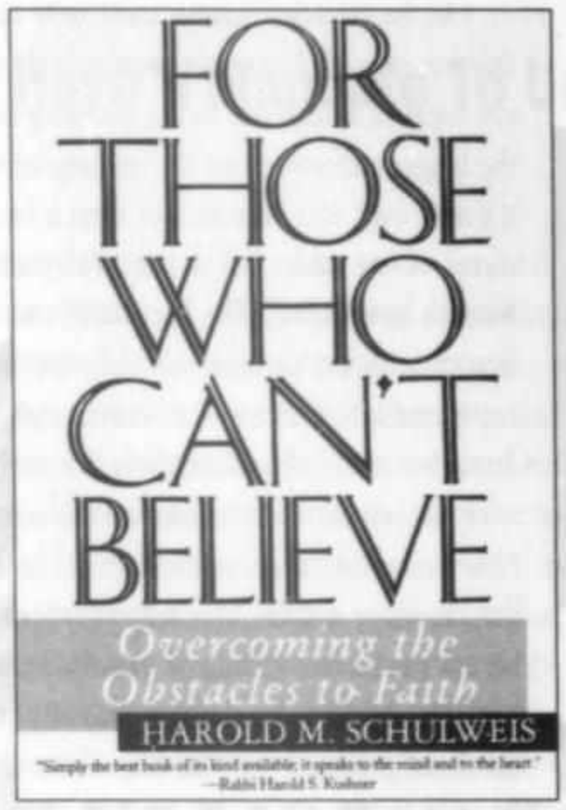
It's then I realize that three American news reporters have started their computers in the kitchen, using e-mail to transmit the speech they're listening to on their transistors; they've sapped the T.V.'s juice. Laila gives me a long look, rolling her eyes. "First the Israelis give the news in Hebrew most Palestinians glued to their set don't understand. Now here in our own house the Americans take away the news entirely."

After trial and error, Laila and I improvise a system which assures us sporadic coverage.... "It's nice," Laila says with a wide smile, fluffing her long dark hair with her hands, as we stand outside after Arafat's speech ends. "Nice, it's nothing," Suhael says, with layers of feeling and intelligence, as if speaking to himself. "We need substance, we need programs, we need democracy"—a sentiment I'll hear echoed by many in Gaza and then Jericho the next week... ."But it can't get any worse than it's been," I suggest. "Sometimes" Laila says as we stand on her terrace, "I get a feeling in here (she makes a fist and a churning motion near her gut) "that something even more terrible might happen." They turn to the crowds streaming by, ask some friends why they left before the speech was over. Some say the P.A. system was lousy, others that they just wanted to glimpse "Abu Amar," who is greatly loved here (a love mixed with disdain and fear), others say what they need from Arafat is not ceremonies, and not words, but action.

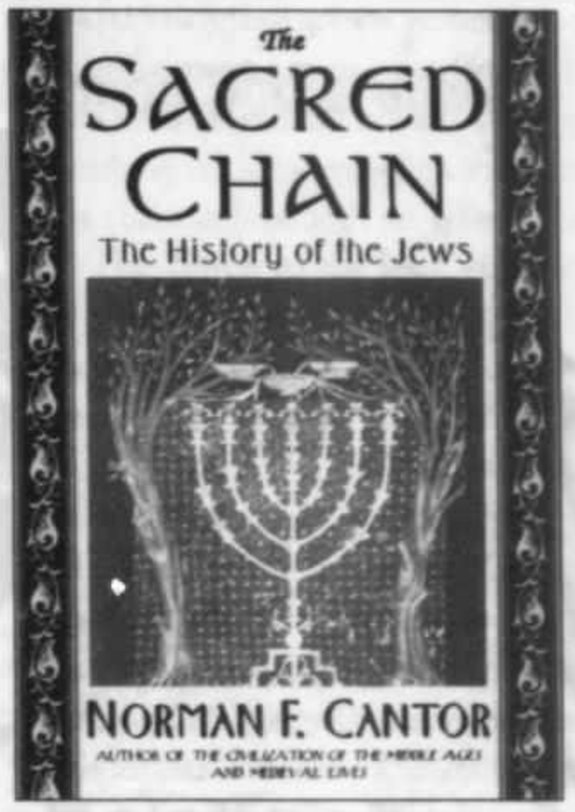
Contrast Kelly on Arafat's arrival:

On July 1, 1994, the day Yasir Arafat arrived in the Gaza Strip to establish the Palestinian National Authority as a fact on the ground, the Palestinian blocks at Erez were decorated with posters of his face. Arafat never saw the historic sight. The President of Palestine, as he prefers to be called, was not allowed by the Israelis to enter through the front door of his new home. Barred from setting foot on Israeli soil, he was obliged to arrive by the tradesman's entrance, coming to the promised land over the Sinai Desert from Egypt, to arrive at the somnolent border town of

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—Rabbi Harold S. Kushner



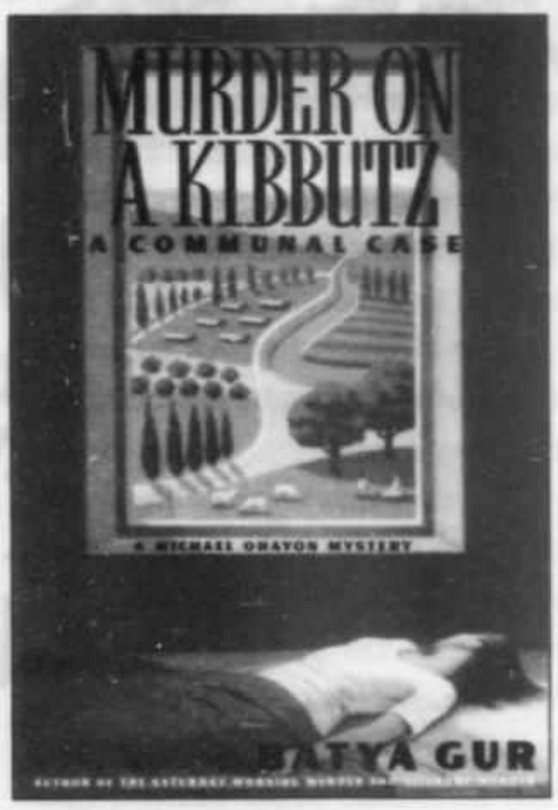
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The new epic by the Israeli writer whose novel *The Blue Mountain* "deserves mention in the same breath with Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*."
—Philadelphia Inquirer



The latest novel by one of Israel's most brilliant new mystery writers. "One is struck...by her obvious command of the genre and, foremost, by her exemplary psychological insight."—*Newsday*



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Rafah in the mid-afternoon of a hot, still day.

The processions from the border to Gaza City was meant to suggest triumph, and instead achieved chaos....There must have been 70 or 80 vehicles, snaked out over a couple of miles along the narrow road, all of them whipping along in honking hysteria—the fat generals of the P.L.O. and the slim boy gunsels of the Hawks leaning half out of windows, perched on roofs, standing on bumpers, waving their Kalashnikovs, shouting and screaming and firing in the air. ...from a square hole in the roof (of a Mercedes-Benz) appeared a flash of the man himself, a small gray face under the trademark black and white kaffiya, his pendulous lips set in a wide, fixed smile, waving his right hand as steady as a metronome.

Here are my notes on Arafat, from Jericho, at the swearing-in ceremony for his ministers: July 5, 1994:

In this small room, with forty in attendance, Arafat is standing about four feet from my perch on a CNN ladder, looking extremely serious, as if in a trance or a deliberate meditation. He seems intent on giving this ceremony dignity. I watch him closely, trying to mimic his facial expression in order to glean what he's feeling, if anything. At one second he looks like a kid auditioning for a role he'll never get in a school play. The next second he seems like a tired old man. I've rarely seen anyone generate such contrasting images in such a short timespan. Watching as each minister repeats the same oath, I'm remembering what a psychologically astute journalist told me after spending a week with Arafat in Tunis. She recalled that he watches cartoons a lot, how one night when the cartoons went off, she watched as he continued to stare blankly at the snow-filled screen. Yet around children she said, he was extremely natural, affectionate, and even with her, an Israeli, he insisted she sit next to him, encouraging her to eat, tenderly spooning warm soup from the bowl to her mouth.

...Now they are departing single file down a narrow corridor to hold the first meeting of the Palestinian Council. I happen by accident to be standing at a floor-to-ceiling open window as first Arafat and then the others exit inches from me. Arafat holds my eye for a second. He looks so depleted that I automatically send him my best wishes with a smile which he, surprisingly, returns ten-fold from the depths of an extremely exhausted face, a face aged noticeably since last September 13 on the White House lawn. For after his plane crash, surgery, aging, and with the immense pressure he's under, he seems not at all the wily terrorist he once was, far from the statesman he needs to be, but rather more like Peter Sellers in "Being There," an analogy that might be funny if the man weren't in complete control of the new autonomy, summarily dismissing aides right and left, hell-bent on keeping the reins.

...Up close, these leaders who are monsters in many Israeli and American Jewish minds, saviors or sell-outs in the innocent or sophisticated Palestinian mind, and simply bumbling idiots in the collective mind of the Western press, are clearly human beings under immense strain, amid convoluted political power struggles between themselves and among their constituents, with unthinkably hard work ahead.

The people for whom Arafat and the peace process are at times powerful magnets of hope have no voice, not even a walk-on role in Kelly's Gaza. In contrast, a scene of mine remains most indelible for me as a portrait of Palestinians, the ones I hope we don't write off so fast:

On the crowded streets, most now realize that Arafat will not pass this way after all. Many who were sure they'd see him now know this will not happen, at least not today, probably no time soon. Nabil and I enter the largest coffee shop on the teeming streets, desperate for lemonade as it's now over 110 degrees, not even a fan....All around us in the large room, we see tables full of men with such sad, tired, morose faces that Manet's painting of "The Bar Maid" immediately springs to mind: that woman with the permanently defeated visage slouched over a Parisian bar is multiplied here in this crowded coffee shop. Every man I look at shares her resigned posture, those dejected eyes.

I narrow my focus to three Palestinians at the table nearest ours. Now in the heat, the painting switches to Cézanne's "The Card Players," that desultory still-life. One fellow is sprawled over the formica tabletop, his exhausted face resting on crossed arms. The second guy has kicked back his chair; his head tilts awkwardly at right angle to his body. The third sits propped upright, like a mannequin, no motion or emotion crossing his face.

We pull over our chairs, gently inquire what they're feeling. Surprisingly, Said Araket offers a long political analysis that's entirely upbeat, completely at odds with his body language. "We've succeeded. The intifada is over because we've won it. Our people will build a great democratic state."

"So, why do you look so sad?" I ask. They're only tired, they tell us, they were up all night waiting for Arafat. Yes, they are disappointed they didn't get to see him, but they understand such disappointments. "To be a Palestinian is to be disappointed," I suggest. They agree, all smiling for the first time. The second man, Abdul Reshid, lifts his head as if with great effort, telling us unconvincingly how happy and relaxed he feels. Finally, the third among them, an aging Palestinian with a sun-darkened, wizened face, alert eyes, one front tooth missing, interrupts, speaking perfect English, and says: "Let me tell you. This is the happiest day in my life." He's believable. His eyes are intense and joyful, his smile lights up not only his entire body but exudes a joy that spreads over all of us at the table.

"Now I can go back and tell my people what I've seen. I didn't see Arafat, but I was close to him. I saw our police. I saw our peace. With my own eyes, I saw the beginnings of our state, what will come to Hebron and Nablus and Ramallah someday. The war is over. I will tell this to my friends, to my relatives, to my children, and they will feel the joy I feel. I have lived to see all I ever wanted to see."

In his Gaza, Kelly builds a stillborn, pathological experiment that's already failed. The scenes, postures, and moods of Palestinians I and many other journalists regularly meet are either disregarded or truly not seen by Kelly. And while most of us don't really know what's going on in Gazan factional

(Continued on p. 92)

SPECIAL FOCUS

No, Mr. Gingrich...



...You Do Not Have a Mandate To Undermine Social Justice in the U.S.

Michael Lerner

The Republican mandate in 1994 was very limited. Given our peculiar system of congressional districts, the Republicans were able to take decisive control of Congress without winning decisive control of the popular vote. The popular vote was actually split 50/50 between Democrats and Republicans. If we had proportional representation, the Congress would be split evenly. So let's not let the media scare us into believing that there was a total repudiation of liberal politics, even among the 38 percent of the population that bothered to vote.

As to the "Contract with America" highly touted by Newt Gingrich and his conservative coconspirators, 75 percent of Americans never even heard of it, according to a poll conducted a full month after the elections.

Still, the Republicans did win power—and they are trying to use it to dismantle social support for the poor, environmental protection, women's and civil rights, National Public Radio and Television, and many other humane accomplishments of the past fifty years. Equally important, a press that is both cynical and obsequious to the powerful will spend the next two years singing the praises of selfishness, greed, and narrow material self-interest—and these values will dovetail nicely with the conservatives' agenda, making idealists and those who had hoped for an ethos of caring feel even more out of step and "unrealistic." Meanwhile, Clinton and many fellow Democrats are desperately trying to repackage themselves as born-again political centrists or conservatives, hoping that by copying conservative measures such as wild tax-slashing that they can appeal to voters in 1996. His speech to the nation on December 15, 1994, was all the more frustrating precisely because it touched on our hunger for community but sought to achieve that through new economie entitlements.

Clinton's Mistaken Interpretation of the 1994 Election Defeat

The White House crowd is divided between two possible explanations of the electoral defeat of 1994, both mistaken. While they debate which of these two is the real culprit, Clinton, consistent with his style as a compromiser, adopts them both:

The "lurch to the left" explanation. In this account, the problem was that Clinton abandoned his centrist constituency the moment he took office and appeared to become the captive of the left wing of the party. Proposals to allow gays in the military, nominating Lani Guinier, challenging sex-role stereotypes by giving his wife a major role in government, and then proposing a liberal big-government bureaucratic health-care plan sent the signals that the left wing of the Democratic Party was in control. Al From and the Democratic Leadership Council felt abandoned, and so did the many white men who had voted for Bush in 1988, switched to vote for Clinton in 1992, and switched back to vote for Republicans in 1994.

To appease this group, Clinton talked about support for prayers in the schools, fired Joycelyn Elders for talking publicly about masturbation as one way to encourage sexual abstinence among teenagers, and hoped to gratify fantasies of many whites about throwing Blacks off welfare.

Yet the "lunge to the left" explanation of Democratic Party losses is very implausible. Clinton abandoned gays in the military, withdrew Lani Guinier's nomination, appointed middle-of-the-roaders to the federal courts, and by July of 1993 was having his public image shaped by David Gergen, a Reagan-Bush adviser.

The substantive focus of President Clinton's agenda was closer to traditional Republican issues than to a liberal crusade. His first six months was primarily dedicated to a plan to reduce the federal deficit, a concern that continues to dominate his thinking and public rhetoric, and which flowed not from the ideology of liberalism but from the mandates of the Wall Street elite that he brought with him into the Treasury Department. His next six months in 1993 was dedicated primarily to NAFTA, a plan opposed by unions and most Congressional liberals, but enthusiastically endorsed by Newt Gingrich and the Republicans (whose support made it pass over the strenuous objections of liberal Democrats).

In 1994 the Clinton White House gave priority to two pieces of legislation. The crime bill bought all the Republican assumptions about the causes of crime and appropriated billions of dollars for building more prisons and putting more police on the streets. Though Clinton followed the pleas of law enforcement officials around the country who called for bans on some assault weapons, there

was nothing culturally liberal about this bill. The other major legislative focus was health care. Since Peter Gabel's analysis of the defeat of this project (see page 33) ought not be missed, I'll only say this: The reason that the bill appeared to be a bureaucratic monstrosity to most Americans is that the Clintons insisted on building the whole project around the need to ensure continued superprofits for insurance companies and health-care conglomerates. The far simpler Canadian-style single-payer plan would have ensured people full control of their health-care provider. Had they proposed that plan, and had charges of "socialized medicine" caused him to lose popularity, at least the "lunge to the left" analysts would have had some plausibility—but to call the plan he did propose a cultural lurch to the left is a deep stretch.

Recycling the "It's the Economy, Stupid" Analysis. To protect themselves against the "lunge to the left" analysts, Robert Reich, Hillary Clinton, and other White House liberals argue that the reason people showed themselves to be so unhappy and disgruntled, despite obvious signs of a robust economy, is that the benefits of economic growth and declines in unemployment have not seeped down to the middle classes. There's obvious truth here. Many people are deeply unsettled by the rapid transformations in our economy that have led to unemployment among middle-class people who previously imagined that hard work and smarts would be sufficient to ensure them a reasonable income. As horror stories spread about previously well-employed middle-income people who are now forced to take lower-paying service industry jobs, a pall of insecurity spreads over the society.

Moreover, many middle-income people feel a squeeze in their real wages, and this sense of being tight at a time when the economy is supposedly expanding so rapidly that the Federal Reserve feels it must raise interest rates to slow inflationary tendencies makes people feel isolated and alone, rather than part of a national problem.

The economic analysis is certainly not without some merit. But it is all predicated on people feeling alone in facing these national problems. Unemployment will always be an inconvenience, but it is only a tragedy if you know you are living in a society that does not have a shared commitment to developing new jobs, providing adequate opportunities for retraining, and giving you adequate financial support in the meantime so that you don't have to make radical adjustments in your standard of living (in short, the difference between a society whose bottom line is that we are all in this together, taking care of each other, or a world based on each person taking care of his or her own self, able to count on no one except those in the same economic family unit). The way people experience economic problems is shaped by the larger context of meaning. The standard of living was much lower during World War II, but within the context of a society that truly believed that they were dedicated to shared goals, the economic deprivation had a different and far less threatening meaning.

What the Clintons Don't Get: The Hunger for a Community of Meaning and Purpose

When Bill Clinton was first elected, there was a huge surge of hopefulness in this country. Though most Americans are sick of the selfishness and cynicism that dominates American society, they are simultaneously skeptical about whether it can be changed. For a moment, they allowed themselves to respond to that part of Bill Clinton's rhetoric that talked to a politics of meaning and called for a switch in the dominant discourse of American society from selfishness to caring, and from individualism to community.

It didn't take long, however, for Clinton's vacillations on principle to produce disillusionment and despair. Each unprincipled move Clinton made—from compromising on plans to restrict large ranchers from undermining conservation efforts in the Northwest to catering to the "throw them off welfare" sentiments of the Right in devising his own welfare plan, from abandoning gays in the military and Lani Guinier to turning back Haitian refugees and turning his back on the genocide in Bosnia, from legitimating right-wing rhetoric about crime to ignoring environmental and worker-rights concerns about NAFTA—disillusioned another set of potential voters.

And each compromise was explained to us as "watching out for his own political self-interest" based on Clinton's evaluation of polling data and focus groups. But if the President of the United States couldn't stand up for his own principles, in order to create a sense of shared community, why should the American people feel that they could afford to sacrifice their own narrow self-interest in the name of higher values? Why not just worry about reducing one's own tax burden and let the rest of the people take care of themselves? When people give up hope that anything can be really different, it's quite understandable that they revert to a narrow self-interest, reject belief in government as an instrument through which "we" can act together to make things better for all of us, and imagine that those liberals who are talking about new social programs are themselves merely "special interests" looking out for themselves. Our idealism and our cynicism are always inside us, always contending for which frame of reference we should use as we look out on the world. Clinton's short-lived manipulation of Americans into a moment of idealism, followed by his transparent, self-interested compromises, triggered our deepest fears of being suckered once again.

People became deeply resentful of Clinton personally, ensuring that many would not vote or would vote in anger for having allowed themselves to be "taken in" by their own inclinations toward going for their best vision of what a world could be like even though everyone had been warning them for years to believe only their most cynical side.

So the surge of energy toward community and mutual caring is reversed and becomes a surge of energy toward fear, despair, and isolation. And at such a moment, Newt Gingrich and his cohorts become the perfect expressions of our common despair that real community is possible, or at least any community based on caring for others. Instead, the Right offers its own paranoid version of community: as the assemblage of self-interested individuals who share a concern in protecting whatever they can accumulate (hence, a shared commitment to large defense budgets, police forces, and enforcement of immigration restrictions to make sure that no one else takes away whatever we as individuals are able to get for ourselves).

Yet even the Right recognizes that this is not enough. The truth is that most people hunger for something much deeper—a community of meaning and purpose that transcends the individualism and selfishness of the competitive market. The Right, which champions the market and its bottom-line materialism and selfishness, simultaneously represents itself as the force that cares about the pain people are experiencing in families and personal life as they confront the societal impact of the ethos of selfishness. The Right talks about the crisis in families and ethical values—but it is never forced to take responsibility for the ways that its own economic and political values and the economic system that it so vigorously defends are precisely central to the creation of the dominant ethos of selfishness that contributes mightily to family and ethical breakdown. By positioning itself as the champion of religion (hence the symbolic importance of "prayers in the school"), families, and values, the Right manages to work both sides of the street—supporting the institutions that foster the crisis of selfishness and then articulating the pain of those who suffer from the way the ethos of selfishness permeates the society.

Progressive Solutions

Here's what needs to be done:

1. Progressives have to show that they care just as much about the pain in the lives of the American majority as they do about the deprivation of economic entitlements to those who are oppressed or poor. Far from being a sell-out of the poor, such a strategy is the only plausible way to build the electoral support necessary to protect the interests of the most oppressed. If you really care about the poor or the victims of racism, sexism, and homophobia, start caring about the middle class, and, the hardest part for lefties, about the pain in the lives of white men. To do this, progressives have to move beyond a narrow, economistic understanding of that pain and address the crisis of meaning. Clinton's White House misses the boat because even though it knows that it must address the middle class and white men, it does so in an economistic way that misses the deprivation of meaning and hence will fail to attract white men who, in narrow economic terms, can get a better deal from the Republicans.

2. Create a campaign for a new "bottom line" by which to evaluate the productivity of American economic institutions, and the rationality of social programs, social movements, and social practices. Today, the bottom line is defined in terms of profits and power. The politics of meaning's bottom line would judge whether an institution is productive and policies and programs are rational to the extent that they tend to foster human beings capable of sustaining long-term loving relationships and to the extent that they can embody ethical, spiritual, and ecological sensitivity in their daily lives.

3. Challenge the dominant discourse of selfishness and cynicism—and make that challenge the center of politics for the next several years. Show how the selfishness in our personal lives is fostered by the selfishness in our shared economic life. Stop being focused on legislation, and instead focus on values and the kind of world that we want to live in. Reject the narrow "is it practical" in the short-run questions. That's what the conservatives did, and because they refused to be practical but instead engaged in a sustained campaign to change American's way of thinking about the world, they showed that fighting for new ideas was the most practical thing one could do in American politics. Changing ideas is doing something, and in fact, it's doing the only thing progressives can possibly do in this period.

The Foundation for Ethics and Meaning

TIKKUN is creating a new institution, the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning (FEM), that will attempt to function for progressives in roughly the way that the Heritage Foundation functioned for the Right. The FEM will:

- create a national Summit on Ethics and Meaning to bring together all those who believe in an ethical or prophetic or spiritual politics and who wish to support this new "bottom line" for American society;
- create a think-tank that will develop policies and programs that articulate this new bottom line and that become the flesh-and-blood of a progressive politics of meaning;
- create regional gatherings to foster this new discourse;

(Continued on p. 96)

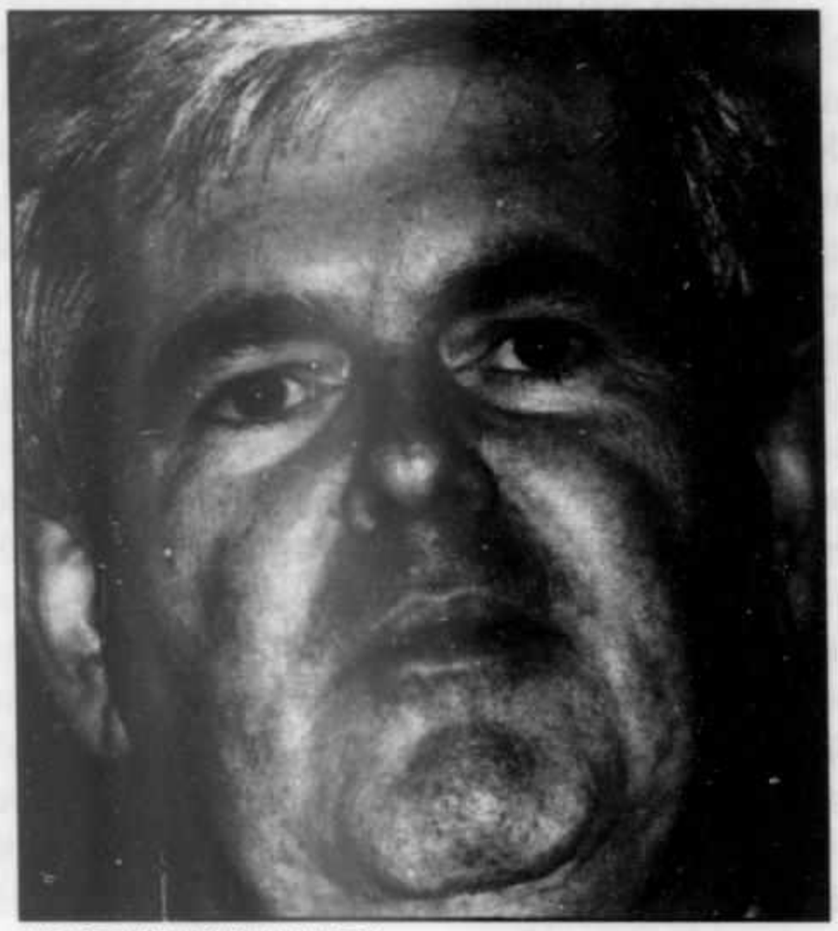
Ayatollah G:
THE RENEWAL OF AMERIKA

Stephen Mo Hanan



As a twenty-five-year veteran of "the counterculture," I would like Newt Gingrich to stop attacking my religion.

If, as The *New York Times* reports, Gingrich is prepared to spend the next decade burying the legacy of "the counterculture, McGovernik" movement, what will I need to do to escape persecution? Melt down my Grateful Dead albums? Shred those incriminating Birkenstocks? How far will his icy eyes pry into my personal life in order to shore up those traditional American values which he trumpets with such keen vigor?



IMPACT VISUALS/SHIA PHOTO

It might help at least to understand what Rep Gingrich means by "countercultural" (a word which Ronald Reagan, for one, never publicly uttered). When Hitler blamed the Jews for the decline of Germany, when Serbs target Muslims or Hutus Tutsis, everybody knows who is under attack (except, of course, the spawn of mixed breeding). Ayatollah Khomeini showed "mainstream" Iranians who the enemy was, and they executed Allah's vengeance swiftly and without mercy. Before Ayatollah Gingrich rallies brother against brother across our land (sisterhood is obviously beyond him), he ought to identify his intended victim more clearly.

Perhaps he is referring only to those members of the President's inner circle who slip into fringed vests and sneak bong hits when no one is looking. But I doubt it. He is, after all, setting his sights on a population whose numbers were significant enough to corrupt the whole nation and its "long-term commitment to creating character"—evidently the sort of character best created with the lash. The tip of this subversive iceberg is the "very small counterculture elite, which is terrified of the opportunity to actually renew American civilization."

I wish I knew where this counterculture elite is, because for years I've been trying to get into it (Ram Dass just won't return my calls). In Ayatollah Gingrich's view, it has something to do with the "liberal" media, all those millionaires in hushed suits who anchor the news when they aren't busy turning over their communal compost heaps. There goes Ted Koppel's homemade granola.

Back in the late Sixties, when I first perceived the opportunity to "renew American civilization," it seemed that getting rid of elitism altogether would be a key component of the renewal. But this involves pondering the touchy taboo of class, a word notably absent from Ayatollah G's political vocabulary (not that one hears much about it from Bill Clinton, either, whose branding as a minion of the Left is a puzzlement to any counterculturist with a well-honed sense of direction).

How ironic that on Election Night the Ayatollah's alter ego, Rush Limbaugh, paused to deride those icky "Democrats" who perpetually seek to drive a wedge between different groups of Americans by raising the (obsolete) issue of class. Now one of the facts of American life that my countercultural buddies were rude enough to notice was that the wedge was already there (and still is), created rather by behavioral differences than by anybody's efforts to point them out. When was the last time you ran into Rush Limbaugh on the subway, or shared a Big Mac with Bill Buckley?

As long as Ayatollah G and his henchpersons can get away with blaming the "radical utopians" (in David Brock's phrase) for destroying public morals, there will be no renewal of civilization, American or otherwise. And if they succeed in stifling public debate, playing Russian roulette with the environment, and redefining morality as a sort of sanctified vindictiveness, there will be no civilization, period.

Stephen Mo Hanan is an actor with numerous Broadway, regional, film, and London West End credits. His essays have been published in TIKKUN *as well as* The Washington Post *and* Harvard Magazine.

How can cultural war be averted, or at least conducted in a non-toxic manner? I for one do not believe that America's social fabric is beyond repair, nor that the polarization discernible everywhere must end in calamity. I am willing to believe that under his Ayatollah guise there is a little Newt who is simply and genuinely frightened by the trends he sees in contemporary society, as who would not be? Above all, from the depths of my being I know that every political opinion crystallizes from a set of prior assumptions about human nature, assumptions with roots in a broken, or mending, or healed heart.

This particular point must be considered if we are to make any sense of the 1994 elections. By all accounts this latest political blow to liberality derived its main force from the rightward drift of white males. What gut feeling of malice and despair drives them increasingly into the harsh embrace of Gingriches and Limbaughs? From campaign stump to talk radio, what's this huge national grudge about? And what's it got to do with shades of Bucky Fuller and *The Whole Earth Catalogue*? I thought we hippies just wanted a good time for all.

And therein lies our offense. For what is Ayatollah G railing against but the remnants of good old-fashioned Sixties permissiveness, the suppository of the Right? He is rallying the mean-spirited, the glum and the put-upon to the flag of patriarchal puritanism, that defense against elation which calls its fear religion, and its rigidity morality. Let there be Light, quoth the Lord. But not too much, the puritan replies. If people get too happy they may lose their competitive edge, their combative stance, worst of all their consumerist compulsions. Not an appealing prospect for an Army brat, whose manhood must be perennially tested against the Enemy, and inflated with conquest and acquisition.

Black males in our society have had way too much of the Enemy, and not nearly enough of conquest or acquisition, at least not the kind that's legally sanctioned, so they linger with their heartbreak in the Democratic camp. But declining whites cannot blame their despair on racism and must find another scapegoat. Lest they give heed to critics of the so-called market and its corporate tendency to break down families, communities and, above all, traditional values (it ain't hippies who exploit nudity to sell cologne), Ayatollah G offers his culprit: the counterculture! All those unwashed, unkempt, unAmerican liberals, sticking their regulatory noses into decent people's pockets, and smearing obscene graffiti upon the spotless walls of free enterprise.

And he issues his condemnation in honor of *McGuffey's Reader* and the Founding Fathers. Can't his dodo history grasp the bright idea that the Founding Fathers in their time were so far to the left of President Clinton in ours (let alone King George) as to render them practically *countercultural*? Almost as far to the left as the Christians under Nero, whose fate the Fathers would surely have shared had the colonies been licked by the Crown. Today the Crown's deputy is none other than the Ayatollah G, and he threatens my kind with extinction. But maybe God, as in the cited instances, is on the side of radical utopians (2,000 years ago, many believe, He even appeared as one). Maybe, even, God is on everybody's side. What might that mean?

It might mean that the Ayatollah G and I could get together over the issue of prayer in the schools. I believe in prayer in the schools. I believe in prayer everywhere. Not necessarily prayer which regiments the mind, but a personal turning toward the Source of Life, the Love Mystery that powers the Universe, you betcha! Encountering the Free Zone which unfailingly inspires ideas like the best of the Founding Fathers, stirring the soul of man and woman alike? Gimme some more! Pursuit of happiness? Why not! All those angry white men (and their co-grudge bearers of whatever race and gender) might well pursue a little happiness. Go for it! Happiness would do wonders for Bob Dole, Phil Gramm, Clarence Thomas, and moms who drown their kids.

"Counterculturals," like the Christians of old Rome, believe that the Empire is pursuing happiness in the wrong places, and the Ayatollah G will not have anybody listen to our critique. If he authentically believed in the wisdom of his values, he would allow with Thomas Jefferson (the well-known Founding Father), that "error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it." If the counterculture is merely in the wrong, why should the Ayatollah G be so determined to suppress it/us/me? Non-violence is at the heart of our creed, what harm are we gonna do him? We're hardly on the verge of seizing political power. *He* is. What's his beef?

His beef is his rage, goddammit, his ill-will, his unfought battle with the demons of denial and dread he's failed to conquer within himself, a battle coming soon to a national stage near you. The wrath demon that fathers pass along to their sons for fear they'll be less than men. The brute demon that at best reveres the innocence of the fetus, but lashes out violently once birth is achieved. The cynical demon that holds America's future hostage to a doggedly low view of human nature. His mantle of morality is the transparent cloak to his pain, as inauthentic as Pat Buchanan in a Santa Claus suit. But the pain is real.

We counterculturists, McGovernik and otherwise, must offer him what we offer everyone: an invitation to contemplate without judgment the fundamental beauty of all human beings, to notice how the vitality and softness of children can magically enliven the dourest airport, and how nice if we were to consider all those children "ours." To realize, through them, that the life we share is One. To imagine a national, a global "collectivism" compelled by not the lash of the state but the logic of the heart. Where is the wisdom, where the love, in ceaselessly, recklessly outbidding one another on what ultimately isn't ours to sell? Can the "work ethic" aspire to nothing better?

Look around, Ayatollah G. You say by submitting all congressional bills electronically, you'll guarantee that "every American can pull up the same information as the highest-paid Washington lobbyist"—truly Jeffersonian. You really think "every American" is on-line? You think the underpaid baggage handler with the waitress wife, three kids, and no dental coverage boots up every night and launches into legislative cyberspace? More likely, he nurses his rage with misunderstanding, numbs it with alcohol, or narcotizes it with TV, inexorably turning himself into a little ayatollah, prepared to do the Big Ayatollah's bidding (or anyway vote his ticket), rather than face the root truths you would deny him.

If only you loved him truly, you would see with greater charity. You would treat all humans and their battered environment with the utmost reverence, and the web of life with deep courtesy, gratitude even. Before attempting to hack "American civilization" back to an eighteenth-century stump, you would ask what there was about pre-Sixties culture that called a counterculture into being. You would examine with care the impact upon the planet of a selfishly managed techno-global industrialism, rapacious beyond the Founding Fathers' grossest dreams. You would welcome debate and self-examination from all corners and dismiss no idea as seditious simply because it asks us to think in new ways, "traditional" ways, about how we treat each other, and how we really feel about each other and being here, together. □

Testing, *The Bell Curve*, and the Social Construction of Intelligence



F. Allan Hanson

At some gut level, many middle- and upper-class white Americans apparently harbor the conviction that they are more intelligent than people of the lower class and ethnic minorities (especially of African descent). While its obviously racist and anti-democratic connotations are sufficient to keep this attitude under wraps most of the time, periodically works grounded in psychometrics (the branch of psychology devoted to measuring differences among people) encourage this sentiment to re-emerge with an apparent mantle of scientific respectability. The most notorious of several recent eruptions has been sparked by the publication of Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray's book, *The Bell Curve*.

Herrnstein and Murray are only the latest in a 125-year-long succession of social scientists dedicated to the enterprise of postulating intellectual differences between classes and races. Important predecessors include Francis Galton, H. L. Goddard, Lewis Terman, and Arthur Jensen. Herrnstein himself articulated the main theme of *The Bell Curve* twenty-one years ago, when he predicted that the importance of inherited mental abilities for achieving high income and prestige in our society would inexorably open a social rift between an intellectually gifted ruling class and a dull underclass.

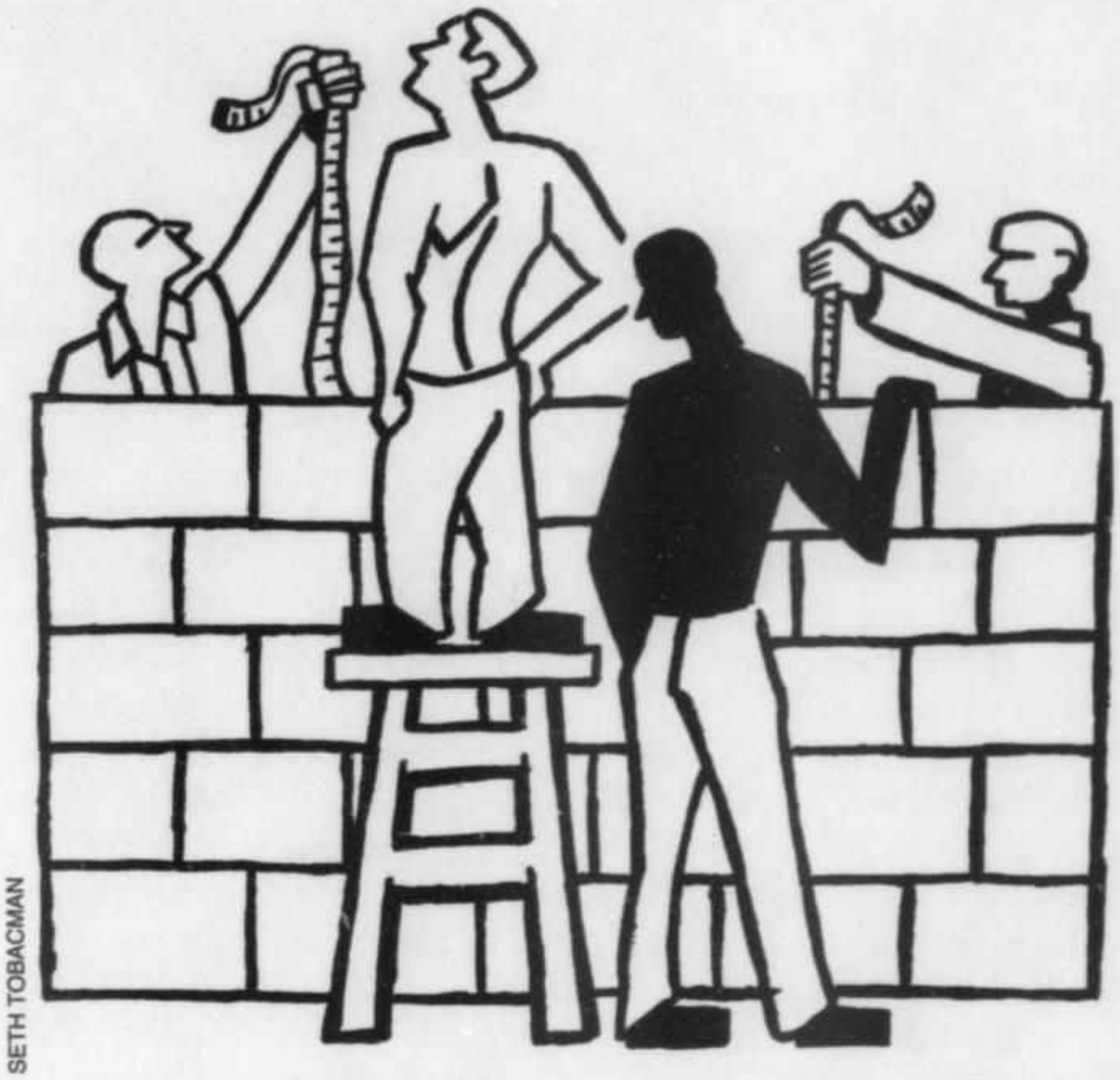
Despite a bulky 800-plus pages bulging with statistics and charts, *The Bell Curve* conveys a very simple message: The ills of society—poverty, unemployment, unmarried parenthood, crime—are causally connected to the low intelligence of the people who manifest them. From this put-down of the lower class, Herrnstein and Murray go on to make the highly controversial claim that races differ in intelligence, and

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particularly that Blacks are significantly less intellectually endowed than whites.

Indisputably, intelligence test scores vary directly with socioeconomic status. If people are sorted into groups defined by $10,000 increments in annual family income, average intelligence test scores increase with each step up the income ladder. It is also true that, on average, Ashkenazi Jews score between a half and a full standard deviation (about 7 to 15 I.Q. points) higher on intelligence tests than other whites, and whites average a full standard deviation higher than Blacks.

The interpretation of these facts forms the heart of the debate over *The Bell Curve*. Herrnstein and Murray insist that they mean that upper-class people, on average, are more intelligent than lower-class people, and that this difference goes a long way in explaining the affluence of the one group and the chronic crime, dependence on welfare, unmarried parenthood, and other social problems of the other.



SETH TOBACMAN

In fact, Herrnstein and Murray's thesis about different levels of mental ability between rich and poor, white and Black, is wholly predicated on the notion that intelligence is an independently existing human characteristic that is accurately measured by intelligence tests. But that fundamentally misconstrues the nature of intelligence tests and what they measure, throwing the entire argument of *The Bell Curve* off track. Some reflections on the nature of tests in general, and intelligence tests in particular, will make this clear.

Tests are always indirect measures. What we wish to know from a test—the target information—and what we learn directly from it—the test result—are never identical. Test results represent target information. This is particularly obvious in a lie detector test, in which the test result consists of information about certain physiological changes—in blood pressure, pulse and respiration rates, and so on—as measured by a polygraph machine. The target information is whether or not the subject is telling the truth. The assumption underlying the test is that the test result tells us something about the target information: that certain physiological perturbations, when associated with responses to certain questions, signify deception.

The moment it is recognized that a gap exists between test result and target information, it becomes clear that the relation between the two is not one-to-one. Other variables may intervene. Thus, one of the biggest debates about polygraph tests is whether it is possible to weed out "false positives"—honest individuals whose physiological responses manifest the same pattern as that associated with deception, but for other reasons.

There is a similar gap in intelligence testing. The point of an intelligence test is not to learn if the subject knows the meaning of the exact words found on that test, or can solve the particular mathematical problems or identify the patterns among the specific numbers and shapes that appear there. Performance on the test is assumed to represent the subject's ability to define words or solve problems of these types, and that, in turn, is taken to represent the subject's level of some largely inherited capacity called "general intelligence." Thus, the gap between test results (right and wrong answers on a particular test) and target information (general intelligence, or I.Q.) is wide indeed, and dependent upon many variables. The most important of them is learning.

Literally every answer on an intelligence test depends on what a person has learned. Vocabulary and reading comprehension questions probe how well the individual has learned to read; quantitative questions explore how much mathematics the individual has learned; questions in logic have to do with how well the person has learned to think systematically; spatial relations problems

concern how well the subject has learned to visualize shapes, compare, and mentally transpose them. Of course, intelligence or aptitude tests aim to tap learning that is more broadly applicable and loosely specified than "achievement" tests such as, say, tests limited to addition and subtraction of fractions or American colonial history. It remains true, however, that any mental test, including the most general intelligence test, is inevitably limited to measuring what the test-taker has learned.

Recognizing this, it becomes apparent that the score on an intelligence test indicates much more than an individual's innate intelligence. What the individual has learned may reflect inherited abilities to some degree, but other factors are critical, such as opportunities and motivation to learn. These depend on a variety of considerations such as the rewards and encouragements the individual has received for learning, personal relationships with parents and teachers, if and when the individual was exposed to subject matter that stimulated interest, and how much time and how many facilities, books, instruments, and other resources have been made available for learning.

Herrnstein and Murray acknowledge that intelligence is not entirely inherited; they attribute about 40 per cent of it to environmental factors. So they would be likely to chalk up what has just been said to the environmental component in intelligence. Their recognition of an environmental factor is mitigated, however, by their claim that intelligence remains stable throughout life after about age ten. Thus, they imply that the environmental impact on intelligence occurs only in relatively early childhood.

Given that tests can only measure what has been learned, it seems appropriate to reverse the direction of causality that Herrnstein and Murray propose. Far from differences in intelligence (as indicated by intelligence test scores) causing class differences, it is more likely that class membership (with all the discrepancies in opportunities to learn that that entails) causes differences in intelligence test scores.

This way of phrasing causal connection intentionally begs the question of the relation between intelligence test scores and intelligence, since that topic requires careful, separate consideration. The most basic flaw in *The Bell Curve* is its concept of intelligence as a single, independently existing human trait that is accurately measured by intelligence tests. Intelligence is better understood as an artifact of intelligence testing. This is not to say that there is no such thing as intelligence. It exists, but it has been brought into being by intelligence tests.

Consider a thought experiment that constructs a new test and imagines its consequences. We will call our test the New Intelligence Test, or NIT. It is intended to surpass current tests by sampling more widely from the full range of cognitive ability, and particularly its practical applications in everyday life. The NIT consists of eight sections:

- A name recall scale tests ability to remember the names of persons to whom the subject has just been introduced;
- A mathematics section tests the subject's ability to solve problems of arithmetic and algebra;
- In the exposition of ideas section, the subject is given five minutes to read a complex idea—such as a page from Rousseau describing his distinction between self-love (*amour de soi*) and selfishness (*amour-propre*)—and thirty minutes to present a clear and accurate written account of it, with original examples;
- The small-talk scale evaluates subjects' ability to carry on an interesting conversation with someone they have just met;
- In the follow-the-directions scale, the subject is told once, at the speed of ordinary conversation, to do a task consisting of six distinct steps, and is evaluated on how well the task is accomplished;
- A bullshitting scale assesses skill at participating in a discussion with two other people on a topic about which the subject knows nothing;
- The adult sports scale evaluates the subject's ability to play golf or tennis, with suitable adjustments for male and female subjects;
- The presiding scale assesses ability to run a business meeting, including matters such as maintaining focus of discussion, building consensus, and finishing on time.

The test result is reported as a composite score generated from the outcomes of the NIT's eight sections.

The ability or human capacity tested by the NIT is certainly nothing inconsequential. If the appropriate studies were done, it would doubtless turn out that high NIT scores correlate positively (probably more positively than I.Q. scores) with desirable social outcomes such as success in the university, in business or professional life, high income, and election to public office. But it is also obvious that what the NIT tests is not a single quality or capacity of persons. It is rather a set of distinct qualities, which have been measured by the several sections of the NIT and combined into a single score for convenience in reporting NIT results.

But assume now that the NIT were to catch on in a big way—that it came, for example, to be widely used for college and graduate admissions and for hiring and

promotion purposes by law firms, government, and corporations. In such an event, the different abilities measured by the NIT would not remain static. People would spare no effort in preparing for the test, in the hope of achieving the rewards awaiting those who excel on it. They would bone up on arithmetic and algebra, master techniques for remembering the names of strangers, hone skills of bullshitting, take golf and tennis lessons, learn how to run successful business meetings. School curricula would shift in the direction of more training in the areas covered by the NIT. (If they did not, irate parents would demand to know why their children were not being taught something useful.) Kaplan and Princeton Review would explode into the marketplace with courses that promise dramatic improvement in one's NIT scores.

All of this dedicated effort would have a palpable effect. Although the NIT obviously measures several quite different abilities, people would knit them together as they strive to improve them all in order to raise their NIT scores. Because NIT scores are reported as simple numbers, they would begin to imagine these several abilities to be one. They would name it...perhaps "NITwit." Given its relevance for success in life, it would be valued as a thing of great importance. People would worry about how much of it they possess; they would look for promising signs of it in their children and envy evidence of its abundance in other people's offspring.

Not only would a new mental category swim into the social consciousness. The empirical amount of it possessed by individuals would literally increase as, in preparing for the NIT, they got better at following directions, playing golf, expounding on ideas, engaging in small talk, and the rest of it. And, of course, as individuals increase these skills, NIT scores would go up. There would be rejoicing in the land as today's average NIT scores exceed those achieved in the past or by test-takers in other countries...until, perhaps, an apogee is passed and national consternation about declining NIT scores sets in. Given all these transformations and developments, it is fair to say that NITwit would become a new, singular, personal trait—an objective reality literally constructed by NIT testing. Perhaps the ultimate development (and the ultimate absurdity, but it unquestionably would happen) would be the marketing of rival tests that claim to measure NITwit faster, cheaper, or more accurately than the NIT.

The foregoing discussion of the NIT has, of course, its facetious moments. But its purpose is entirely serious. It demonstrates two fundamental characteristics of all mental testing. One is that test results inevitably reflect what test-takers have learned. The other is that, when a given test becomes sufficiently important, whatever that test tests gets

reified as a single quality or thing. This has been the experience of "intelligence" in the real world. Because of intelligence tests, several different abilities (to solve mathematical problems, to comprehend texts, to compare shapes, to sort ideas or objects into classes, to define words, to remember historical events, and to do all of these things rapidly) have been welded together to form a new, unitary mental characteristic called "intelligence." People place great emphasis on it because intelligence tests serve as the basis for offering or denying educational and career opportunities and other social rewards. Precisely as with NITwit in our thought experiment, intelligence has been fashioned into an objectively real personal trait by the practice of intelligence testing.

We have distinguished two very different ways of understanding the relation between intelligence, intelligence tests, race, and social class. They agree that intelligence test scores increase as one goes up the social ladder, but disagree as to why. The sociological

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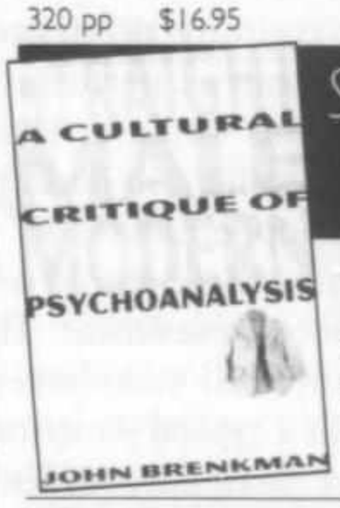
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explanation I support is that, on average, opportunities to learn increase with higher socioeconomic status. (The Black/white difference in average intelligence test scores is then attributable to the fact that the socioeconomic status distribution of Blacks is lower than that of whites.) To say that intelligence increases with socioeconomic class is true in a sense, but it is potentially misleading because of the common tendency to think of intelligence as an independently existing human trait. On the contrary, general intelligence is nothing but a social construct produced by intelligence testing. "Intelligence" rises with socioeconomic status only because intelligence test scores do. And that is explicable not by any difference in largely innate cognitive potential between people of different classes (and races), but by different opportunities to learn.

In contrast, *The Bell Curve* and other works in its genre take intelligence test scores to be accurate measures of an independently existing human trait called general intelligence. The fact that scores are lower for certain ethnic minorities and for the lower class indicates that people in those conditions are, on average, less intelligent than others. Moreover, low intelligence is an explanatory factor for poverty, crime, welfare dependence, and other social problems that tend to cluster in the lower class, as well as for the disproportionate representation of certain ethnic minorities (especially Blacks) in the lower class.

This point of view is perverse as well as erroneous. Its endorsement of the idea that ethnic groups and social classes differ in intellectual capacity fuels a combination of smug condescension and hostility toward minorities and those who live in poverty. This has closed opportunities for millions and has driven racism, class discrimination, and eugenic programs such as immigration quotas and enforced sterilization.

Over the last century, each eruption of the discriminatory idea that some races and classes are less intelligent than others has been met with vigorous opposition, as have the contentions of *The Bell Curve*. It appears that this time, as in the past, after a relatively brief popular infatuation with the idea, scholarly counter-arguments will ultimately succeed in beating it back. But, if history is any indicator, in twenty years or so the issue will pop up again.

Perhaps it has not been defeated decisively because the critiques dealing with challenges to statistics and alternative explanations have not struck at its roots. Those consist not of ideas or propositions but of a social *practice:* intelligence testing. The practice of intelligence testing itself has produced both the concept of intelligence as a single thing and test results indicating that that thing systematically varies among ethnic groups and social classes. Thus, the most effective way to lay this spurious and socially disruptive issue to rest once and for all is to change the practice of intelligence testing.

While it may be inconvenient to do without the efficiency and economy achieved by large-scale intelligence testing, some institutions show signs that they are beginning to wean themselves from it. Antioch, Bard, Hampshire, and Union colleges, together with some two dozen others, no longer require applicants to submit SAT or ACT scores, and Harvard Business School has dropped the GMAT (Graduate Management Aptitude Test) as an application requirement. These schools make their selections on the basis of academic records, written statements by applicants, and letters of recommendation, and they manage to operate their admissions programs effectively without intelligence tests.

A movement is afoot in the primary and secondary schools to assess children not in terms of standardized intelligence tests, but according to portfolios they develop with examples of their best work in a variety of subjects. If this becomes widespread, the conventional notion of intelligence as a single, quantifiable entity will begin to fade, as people focus on children's different talents—in such areas as music, visual art, the use of language, mathematical skills, athletics, and interpersonal relations.

Developments of this sort would not signal the end of all testing. In addition to other evidence of accomplishments (such as portfolios), tests will doubtless continue to play a role in decisions about school promotions and graduation as well as competition among aspirants for scholarships, admission to selective colleges and training programs, or employment in desirable jobs. The tests, however, would not be designed to measure anything like "general intelligence." They would aim to assess how well individuals have succeeded in mastering knowledge or skills that have been presented to them in academic courses, technical, or artistic training programs. Different individuals would, of course, perform at different levels on these tests, and this would be taken into account along with other qualifications in deciding who will receive scarce rewards and opportunities.

To implement practices such as these would not require sea changes in attitudes about assessment. The alternative perspective is already well established. Consider how evaluation works in a typical American college course. Depending on the discipline, students are usually graded on the basis of some combination of the following: problems or questions to be completed

and handed in at regular intervals, laboratory reports, term papers, performance in discussion groups, and tests. The notion of general intelligence plays no role in the process. When students do not perform adequately and one wishes to understand why, the first questions have to do with how much interest they have in the subject matter and how much effort they put into it. If it is clear that they are interested and are trying hard, investigation turns next to their preparation. Have they developed good study habits? Do they have the requisite background for this course? Have they learned the particular modes of thinking and analysis that are used in this discipline?

Academic advisers account for the great majority of cases of unsuccessful course performance in terms of one or another of these lines of investigation. Only for the few cases that remain does the question of sheer ability or "intelligence" come up. And even then, the matter is posed in terms of the particular talents appropriate for a specific subject matter (ability to do mathematics, to draw, to interpret literature, and so on) rather than general intelligence.

If the attitudes represented in this process were to become commonplace, it is likely that we would lose the habit of thinking of general intelligence as an all-important, single trait that is distributed unequally among the population. Instead, we would evaluate quality of performance in terms of a variety of factors, only one of which is native ability in that particular area. Such a change in thinking would drastically curtail the destructive view that some people are irredeemably inferior to others by birth, and perhaps even by race. It would place primary responsibility for achievement squarely on the individual's effort and hold out the promise that, if given a fair opportunity, the degree of one's own determination is the major factor in achieving one's goals.

The model of the college classroom does not apply to larger evaluation programs in one crucial regard. It is a given that all of the students enrolled in a single course have the opportunity to receive the same instruction. This, of course, does not hold when large numbers from different localities and backgrounds are being assessed. They will have been exposed to a variety of different experiences and curricula in schools that are anything but uniform in the quality of education they provide. The question is how to achieve a fair evaluation of how well people have acquired academic, technical, artistic, or other skills when some of them have had much richer opportunities to acquire them than others. No simple answer exists. The only satisfactory long-range solution is to provide all primary- and secondary-school children with equal educational opportunities. And that will require much more than just fixing the schools. It also involves fostering supportive home and community environments.

Whether or not those ends will ever be achieved, doing away with testing for general intelligence would preclude the periodic eruption of facile explanations such as that crime, poverty, and other social problems are attributable to low intelligence. It would spare us from fighting the battle of *The Bell Curve* all over again in twenty years' time, and would help fix attention on our real challenges to eradicate race and class discrimination and to enrich environments, providing all Americans with an equal opportunity to develop their talents. □

For Whom the Bell Curves

The New Assault on Egalitarianism

Lee Siegel



Since Charles Murray and the late Richard Herrnstein's *The Bell Curve* appeared last fall, people on all points of the ideological spectrum have denounced it in varying degrees. In the book's "scientific" claim that African Americans are innately dumb, reviewers have exposed contorted statistics, contradictory data buried in footnotes, outrageous leaps of illogic, and "scholarly sources" that subscribe to a frankly racist and right-wing agenda. Behind *The Bell Curve*'s disingenuously pained conclusion that social programs cannot change what genes have decreed, critics have glimpsed Murray's ambition—dating back to his 1984 book, *Losing Ground*—to dismantle the welfare state.

Still, *The Bell Curve* has made its imprint on public discourse. It has given extremists on the Right something to wax moderate about, as it has made

Lee Siegel's essays and reviews have appeared in Dissent, *The* Nation, Commonweal, *and* Newsday, *among other publications.*

anything slightly to its left that much less incendiary. Public opinion resembles a leather glove—its parameters stretch to fit the most visible hand. For the last several months, distinguished pundits, scholars, and intellectuals have been exchanging ideas in prestigious national forums about racial determinism and eugenics, subjects that haven't been batted around with such casualness in this country since the 1920s.

The Bell Curve, in fact, has a knack for summoning up the past. In 1931, Father Coughlin, the demagogic "radio-priest," sarcastically declaimed: "The most dangerous Communist is the wolf in sheep's clothing of conservatism who is bent upon preserving the policies of greed." Coughlin, a wolf in sheep's clothing of populism, knew a lupine interloper when he saw one, and he would have recognized Murray for the dangerous subversive he is. *The Bell Curve* represents the opening remarks of what appears to be a growing reactionary counterculture: an anti-egalitarian movement that, under the guise of a call for civic harmony and order, weaves a fantasy of immutable hierarchy and preordained limitations on individuals—all for the sake of preserving and expanding policies of unlimited acquisition.

The Republicans have seen and excoriated the countercultural enemy, and now it is them. Toward the end of *The Bell Curve*, Murray and Herrnstein set two futuristic visions side by side. In doing so, they unwittingly illustrate the way the GOP has fashioned itself into the mirror-image of a left-liberal monster that it imagines (with jealous admiration) has been radically transforming social and economic relations since the New Deal.



ANDREW RODMAN

The first vision depicts what Murray and Herrnstein label the "custodial state": a two-tiered, near-totalitarian society in which the "cognitive elite" (liberal policymakers and their supporters) seclude themselves in gated communities from their irremediably degraded charges (the welfare-dependent underclass). This almost eschatological nightmare appeals to what Murray and Herrnstein call "the mass of the nation," a caricature of the anxious middle class. As the authors put it, in classic populist rhetoric (minus the critique of capitalism): "The mass of the nation belongs to neither group, but their lives are increasingly shaped by the power of the fortunate few and the plight of the despairing few"—i.e. the "normal" segment of the population finds itself caught between the heartless cognitive elite on the one hand, and the mindless, cognitively "dull" on the other.

While their first vision attempts to tap the springs of anger and fear, the authors' second vision appeals to a desperate hopefulness at the core of both emotions. Hypothetically abolishing welfare, Murray and Herrnstein proceed to imagine an idyllic network of small neighborhoods in which everyone, whether their I.Q. has destined them to sweep floors or build rockets, will live contented in their "valued places." The authors offer an oblique definition of "valued places": "You occupy a valued place if other people would miss you if you were gone." And until you are "gone," you cannot leave your allotted position without losing society's approval and respect; your place, no matter how menial, humiliating, or underpaid, is essential to the smooth functioning of the public machinery. Nature has ruled it so.

The Bell Curve's beehive-like society, a frightening parody of the middle-class's desire for a sense of community and purpose, would be the true "custodial" nightmare. Unlike Murray and Herrnstein's apocalyptic vision of a liberal welfare state run amok, this society's custodial quality would not lie in a sadistic stream of public assistance to the poor and the vulnerable. Rather, the disciplining and "educative" force of stigma would have to keep the genetically doomed in their indispensable, if inferior, niches. And, ironically enough, given Murray's animus against big government, the state would have to make an immense and *costly* effort to ensure that people stayed put in their assigned slots.

For the prohibitive force of community taboos would not be enough. Genuine social stigma grows organically out of custom and tradition, and so does the shame that responds to stinging social disapproval. But America, fragmented into so many different groups and regions, lacks the uniform set of values, nourished by tradition, needed to create a culture of stigma and shame. Such a culture usually grows in aristocratic soil, as in ancient

Greece, or rigidly hierarchical Japan. Appropriately, Murray and Herrnstein—along with William Bennett, Dan Quayle, and Newt Gingrich—have concocted a populist aristocracy of commercial aptitude dressed up as virtue, centered in the frustrated and beleaguered middle-class.

Not only is there nothing democratic in this vision, there is nothing American about it either. In a nation of "valued places," genetically inferior people, posted to the beehive's lower cells, would be characterized as aberrant whenever they exhibited quintessentially American traits like the desire for upward mobility, or the urge toward the creation of a new self. As in a totalitarian system, behavior that could not be measured by the criterion of public usefulness would never be completely legitimate. Significantly, Murray and Herrnstein define intelligence solely in functional or "problem-solving" terms.

Even take the authors' use of the euphemism "dull" to refer to people at the lowest end of the intelligence scale. The brute technical term defining such individuals used to be "idiot," derived from the ancient Greek *idiotes*, which simply meant a private citizen, as opposed to a public official. In the right-wing's small-town aristocracy of commercial goodness, an idiot would be anyone who didn't help turn the great public wheels, or the tiny microchips, of global capitalism. That would leave few spaces for the merely empathetic, the merely imaginative, the merely artistic, the merely decent, the merely saintly—in short, for people who could not, or would not, define their lives in terms of market relations.

Liberal sociologists in the 1950s and early 1960s, trying to explain the rise of a reactionary Right at a time of economic prosperity, came up with a distinction between class politics and "status politics." Times have changed, but much remains the same, and the formulation still sheds an illuminating light. Class politics, the concept goes, is practiced during economic depressions. It draws a line between groups of people who pursue a redistribution of wealth and groups of people who prefer things the way they are. On the other hand, status politics occurs in periods of mobility. Social fluidity spreads insecurity in two directions: among people who find themselves in social positions above the ones they had been born into, and among those who feel threatened by newcomers to their class. Whereas class politics seeks clear economic goals, status politics thrives on resentment. And whereas government can respond to economic hardship, it can do nothing to appease social anxieties. As a result, class politics usually finds an outlet in political parties; but status politics most often vents frustrations through the more amorphous means of a movement, a movement that frequently spans the political gamut while cynically denouncing governmental ineffectualness.

Today, the upper segment of society flourishes extravagantly, the unemployed and working poor sink deeper into despair, and "the mass of the nation"—the middle class—fears for its future. That much the authors of *The Bell Curve* have got right. Yet demonized by conservatives, betrayed by neo-liberals, ignored by the multicultural Left, the jobless and the working poor have no advocates of class politics who can give voice to their economic wounds. The status-movement that Murray and Herrnstein have surfaced from, however, boasts many advocates, many heads, and many ideologies. For insecurity is general, as African Americans, women, gays, and other historically marginalized groups fight their way into the mainstream, displacing the old majorities. The battleground is the middle class, where though many are working, even prospering, few feel secure. It is there that status anxiety is highest, among both newcomers and established members. And it is the middle class's anti-government sentiment that is exerting the most serious effects on government.

Thus, Murray and Herrnstein's fantasy of a beehive society, in which mobility is frozen and stations assured, crops up across the political spectrum. So does their notion of aristocracy. At a time of collapsing boundaries—social, cultural, psychological—accompanied by new fragmentations, a pseudo-aristocracy based on genetic transmission simulates a sense of real aristocratic birthright and stability. And a pseudo-science nicely fits the modern, rationalist habit of mind, while also answering the need for comfort beyond reason's sterile categories. At the same time, the genetic "edge," the Darwinian struggle to survive, and the fiction of biologically inevitable social strata all mesh neatly with the dominant market ethos of untrammeled competition, no less than they did in Dickens's day.

The interplay between anxiety and acquisition has grown so intense that more and more individuals are publicly expressing social Darwinian sentiments, effusions that would have made the old robber barons blush. The late William A. Henry III's book, *In Defense of Elitism*, for example, came out around the same time as *The Bell Curve*, and it is also an attack on egalitarian ideals. But Henry, having declared himself an ACLU-card-carrying liberal, comes right to the point. "The problem," he writes matter-of-factly, "with a genetic basis for intelligence—or, more precisely, a genetic basis for economic success, which is what really provokes envy—is that we don't know what to do with it politically."

(Continued on p. 84)

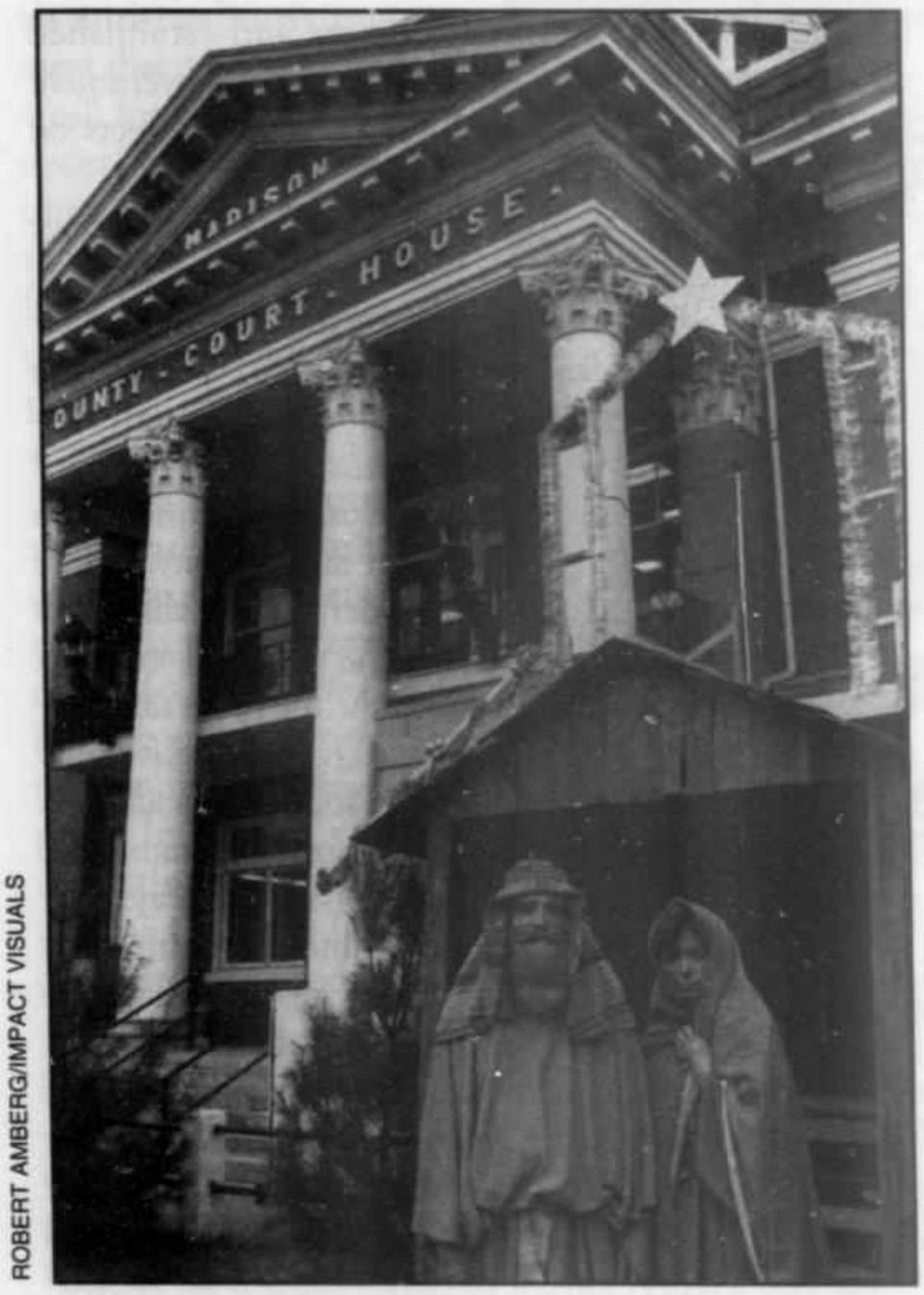
Creches, Menorahs, and the Courts



Jill Laurie Goodman

January, blessedly, is here. The holiday season is behind us.

Gone from Pawtucket, Rhode Island's Veterans Memorial Park is the nativity scene, with its baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, angels, shepherds, kings and animals, that rests for four weeks a year beside Santa Claus's house and reindeer. Stored until next year are the eight



ROBERT AMBERG/IMPACT VISUALS

tableaux with life-size figures illustrating biblical passages about the birth of Jesus that graced the Organ Pavilion in San Diego's Balboa Park during December. Absent, for now, from the rotunda in Georgia's capital is the Lubavitchers' fifteen-foot, stainless steel menorah. And, for a time, the people of Cincinnati can walk through Fountain Square without confronting either Chabad House's menorah or the Klu Klux Klan's cross.

All of these creches and menorahs, along with a host of others and a few assorted crosses, have been the subject of legal strife around the season when we, of all denominations or none, are inveighed to be merry. Judges have weighed evidence, considered the meaning of the Constitution's guarantees of religious freedom, and then decided whether or not these potent symbols should rest on City Hall lawns and municipal parks. Those who favor their presence sometimes have won and sometimes lost.

But in a country where religion flourishes, many argue, because, not in spite, of a tradition that circumscribes the reach of the state into the domain of religion and religion into realm of the state, we all lose something when religious symbols invade public space. And, because constitutional justifications for government-supported displays of religious imagery are found too often only by diminishing religion itself, people of faith—and I count myself among them—lose most.

The Constitution addresses religion in the First Amendment's Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses, which together simply say that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Thomas Jefferson, who, with James Madison, drafted the Bill of Rights, gave us the metaphor of a "wall of separation" between church and state to explain the Establishment Clause's proscriptions. But references to another, older image also find their way into Establishment Clause cases. Roger Williams, who was forced to flee Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1635, saw the state as a wilderness and religion as a garden. "...Open[ing] a gap in the hedge or wall of separation between the garden of the church and the wilderness of the world," he believed, in his time had made "His [God's] garden a wilderness." Convicted of disseminating dangerous ideas, Williams left Massachusetts and founded Rhode Island, where religious freedom flourished and Jews

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found their first home in the New World.

In 1984 the Supreme Court was asked to apply Establishment Clause principles to a case called *Lynch v. Donnelly*. For forty years, the city of Pawtucket in Roger Williams's own Rhode Island had constructed a classic nativity scene, with life-size "kings bearing gifts, shepherds, animals, angels, and Mary and Joseph kneeling near the manger in which the baby lies with arms spread in apparent benediction." It sat, at least in 1980, in the foreground of an illuminated display with Santa's house and reindeer, a lighted Christmas tree, and a banner with the legend "Season's Greetings."

The Supreme Court, in a 5-4 ruling with no majority opinion, decided that the city could own and display the creche without doing violence to the Constitution's Establishment Clause. Key to its holding was the conclusion that Pawtucket's actions had neither the purpose nor the effect of endorsing or advancing any particular religion or religion in general. The display would "inevitably recall the religious nature of the Holiday," Chief Justice Warren Burger said, but it also "engenders a friendly community spirit of goodwill in keeping with the season," as well as benefitting local merchants. For Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, Christmas's "very strong secular components and traditions" outweighed any religious meaning in the creche. She could see nothing unconstitutional in an arm of the government participating in the "celebration of the public holiday through its traditional symbols."

Justice William Brennan dissented, and, in his opinion, he described a different creche from the one the majority apparently believed occupied the park in Pawtucket. He saw a nativity scene permeated with religious meaning: "The essence of the creche's symbolic purpose and effect is to prompt the observer to experience a sense of simple awe and wonder appropriate to the contemplation of one of the central elements of Christian dogma—that God sent His Son into the world to be a Messiah." Reducing the creche to a mere "traditional symbol," he suggested, was "offensive to those for whom the creche has profound significance" and "insulting to those who insist for religious or personal reasons that the story of Christ is in no sense a part of 'history' not an unavoidable element of our national 'heritage.'" Justice Harry Blackmun, in his own dissenting opinion, added, "The creche has been relegated to the role of a neutral harbinger of the holiday season, useful for commercial purposes, but devoid of inherent meaning....The city has its victory—but it is a Pyrrhic one indeed."

Five years later the Supreme Court again found itself considering the permissibility of December religious displays in *County of Allegheny v. ACLU*. By then, a menorah, erected by the Lubavitch branch of the Hasidic movement, had joined a creche in the seasonal jostle for public space. The Court's ruling was truly Solomonic: The justices split the difference down the middle. They decided that the display of a creche under a banner declaring "*Gloria in Excelsis Deo*," on the Grand Staircase of the Allegheny County Courthouse was unconstitutional, but that a menorah, which for a number of years had joined a forty-five-foot Christmas tree under a central arch of a nearby city-county office building, was acceptable.

Five justices, each in a separate opinion, tried to explain the result. Their attempts fill more than one hundred pages of text, and, although much remains obscure even after a careful reading, clear in this jungle of words and ideas is a telling difference between those who found no constitutional violations and those who did. The justices who voted to permit the government-supported displays either missed or minimized the religious significance of creche and menorah, Christmas and Chanukah. Those who found Establishment Clause difficulties recognized the power of their religious content.

The debates about what this stuff all means, begun in *Lynch v. Donnelly*, resumed. Views about Chanukah celebrations now were aired alongside opinions about Christmas and Christmas trees. Justice Blackmun, who voted to permit the display of the menorah, but not the creche, declared that "Chanukah, like Christmas, is a cultural event as well as a religious holiday," and "[t]he Christmas tree...is not itself a religious symbol." To Justice O'Connor, who agreed with Justice Blackmun about the result in the case, the Christmas tree served to "obscure the religious nature of the menorah and the holiday of Chanukah." Justice Anthony Kennedy, in an opinion defending the constitutionality of both creche and menorah, found "the city and county sought to do no more than 'celebrate the season'" and "to acknowledge, along with many of their citizens, the historical background and the religious, as well as secular, nature of the Chanukah and Christmas holidays."

But Justice Brennan, who would have found neither display constitutional, took exception to the description of the Christmas tree as secular and characterized the menorah as "a religious symbol, used ritually in a celebration that has deep religious significance." Instead of finding within the menorah exhibited in the shadow of the tree the "message of pluralism and freedom of belief" that Justice O'Connor had seen, Brennan perceived an effort to promote "a Christianized version of Judaism."

Another five years have passed since the Supreme Court decided *Allegheny*, and cities and villages continue to clash with their citizens and their citizens with each other over displays of powerful religious symbols at a time of year when the air is thick with sacred imagery and nonstop celebrations. Over two dozen federal cases on these government-sponsored holiday displays have been decided. At least two cities, Burlington, Vermont, and Cincinnati, Ohio, have suffered through multiple rounds of litigation. No end is in sight.

Increasingly, however, federal judges have taken refuge in a line of reasoning that allows them the illusion that they can shortcut the difficulties of Establishment Clause adjudication. This approach, deceptively simple, asks whether the place that the creche or menorah occupies is a "public forum" generally open for "expressive" purposes. The classic public forum is a street or park, and the quintessential expressive activity a political harangue from a soapbox in Hyde Park, but sponsoring programs in college auditoriums, burning draft cards, and exhibiting works of art also come within the ambit of constitutional protection. Once a public forum has been created, according to free speech doctrine, the government may make time, place, or manner regulations, but restrictions flowing from the content of the speech, absent a compelling state interest, are forbidden.

By equating the display of creches and menorahs to garden-variety free speech, judges, like conjurers who make solid objects disappear, do manage to reduce the dimensions of their Establishment Clause problems. Faced with a menorah in the rotunda of a capital or a creche on a city hall lawn, judges ask, as they did in one case, whether Native Americans were allowed to erect a tepee there, Friends for Independent Living to hold a rally, or the Lake Lanier Environmental Watch Group to stage a press conference. If the answer is yes, how then, they say, can religious symbols be denied the same access without demonstrating a hostility to religion?

This tack, however, makes not only the Establishment Clause dilemmas raised in these cases vanish—and they are thorny enough so that anyone might understandably want to wish them away—but also the Establishment Clause itself. Under this theory, not even a city or state's interest in maintaining the religious freedoms guaranteed by the Establishment Clause is deemed compelling enough to allow restrictions on symbolic activities. Religion is neither more nor less than an expression of an opinion and certainly not the occupant of the special niche carved for it by the First Amendment. The Free Speech Clause "swallows" the Establishment Clause, as one judge has described this legerdemain.

I find myself deeply uneasy as I read these cases. Much is missing—and not just a nuanced understanding of my own tradition.

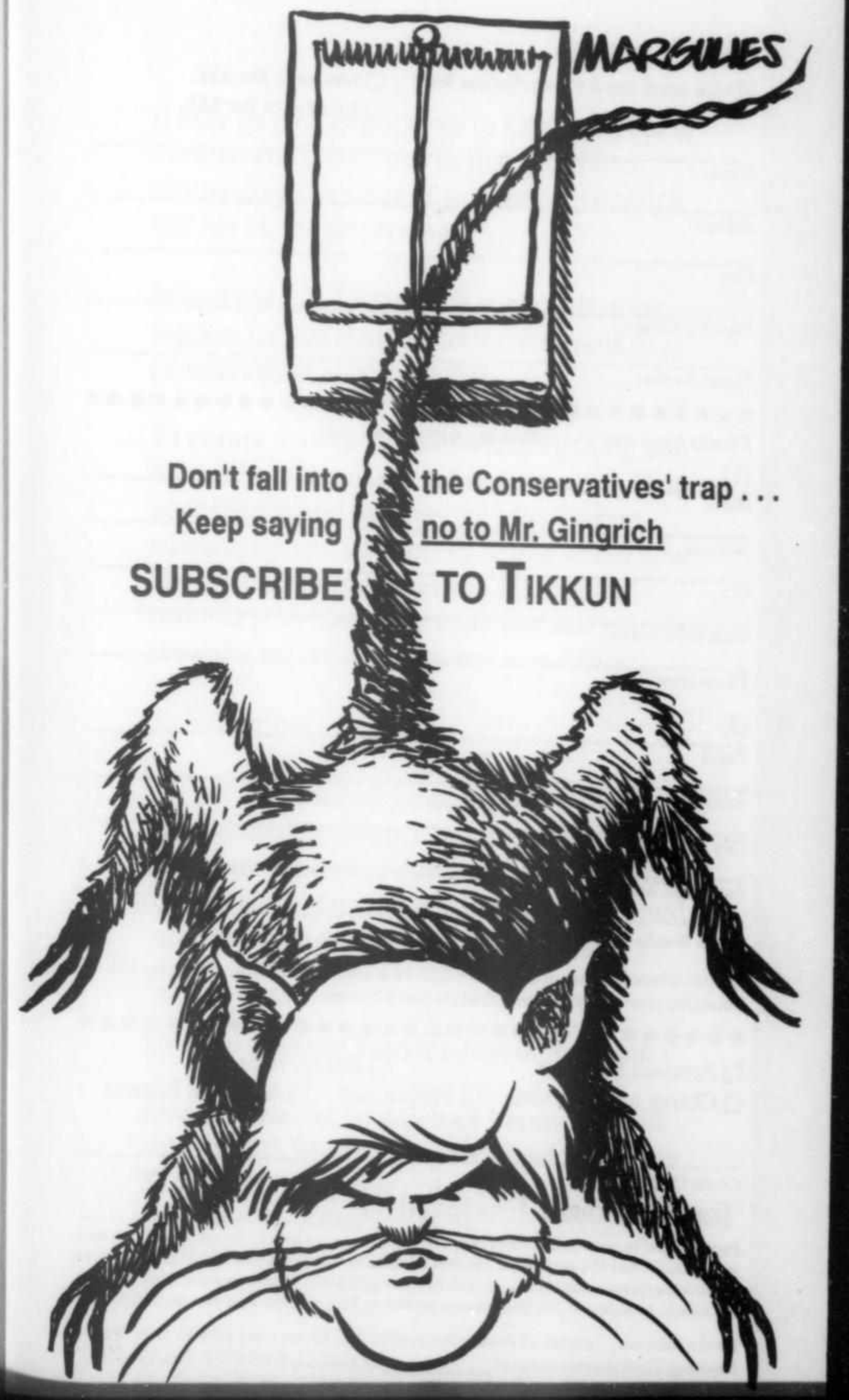
Missing most conspicuously is a sophisticated understanding of religion itself. With a few luminous exceptions, Justice Brennan among them, federal judges have little feeling for the variety or intensity of religious experience. For many reasons, including perhaps the very talents that have allowed them to ascend to a place of secure power within the dominant culture in a profession that prizes reason, theirs is not a deeply religious view of the world. Lacking a passionate response to the sacred, they nonetheless are comfortable with Christian imagery and are pleased to maintain a cordial, social relationship with it.

The language of federal judges as much as their rulings betrays their lack of sympathy for much of what people consider most profound about religion. Their pronouncements often have a facile ring that can be heard, for example, when Seventh Circuit Judge Richard Posner posits a common sympathy for the message of a nativity scene. "Whether or not you believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ," Judge Posner has said, "you cannot fail to be moved by the story of his birth in a manger as told in the New Testament and recalled by Christmas music, pageants and displays...." And the superficiality of their sensibilities is evident when the judges on the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals say, as if it were fact, that a creche has the secular purpose of promoting a "feeling of joy and goodwill," and a nativity scene does "no more than remind an observer that the holiday has a religious origin."

But the nature of religious symbols is not so simple. Many of us believe—and believe with thoughtful conviction—much that makes our responses far more complicated. To be moved by the emotions Judge Posner ascribes to us all depends not only on an understanding of the Gospel stories themselves but a willingness to see in them a universal, rather than a particular, message. Judge Posner dismisses out of hand those who, for example, find in the biblical stories of Christ's birth an interesting folktale or, perhaps, the commencement of a chronicle of twenty centuries of bloody church history.

Even to feel an instinctive "joy and goodwill" requires a particular response to complex and vivid symbols. Jews often find themselves lacking the seemingly obligatory, festive emotions associated with the season. Christmas makes Jews grumpy. Not all of them, of course. Some, maybe many, are content to hoist their menorahs next to lighted Christmas trees and experience no difficulty in lifting their glasses of

(Continued on p. 85)


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The Desire for Community and the Defeat of Health Care



Peter Gabel

With this issue, Peter Gabel, TIKKUN'S *associate editor and president of New College of California, commences a regular column for the magazine.*

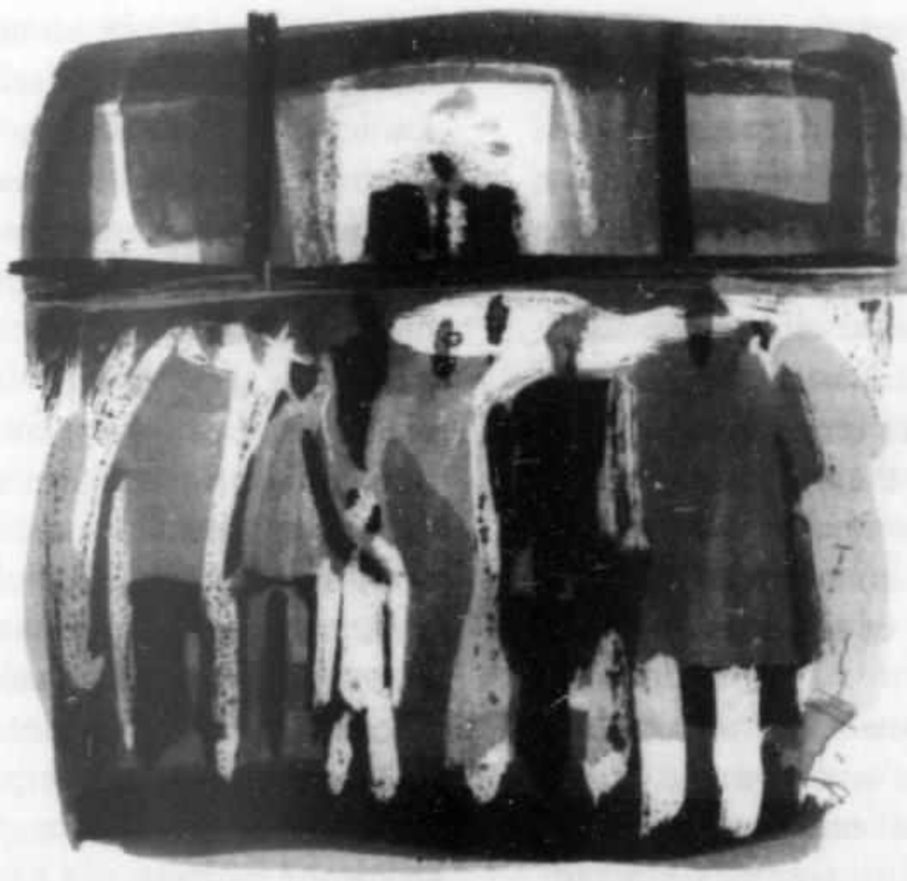
The deepest problem facing our society is that our common experience is colored by a fear of one another that precludes the development of community. This fear is the result of literally centuries of conditioning which has convinced us that if we seek to extend ourselves toward each other to achieve the affirmation that we desire we will have to risk a vulnerability to the other's rejection that is too painful to bear. The experience of community requires a letting-go of our reserve and a becoming-present to each other that really entrusts us to the other's good will. But our experience of life has taught us that this good will is unlikely to be forthcoming. We suspect that if we approach others with this good will, we will be left "out there" without the protection of the reserve that has provided us with a sense of safety from each other thus far. Maintenance of the security of the self appears to require an internal hanging-back from one another "within our heads" that contradicts the desire to become more fully present to each other in a community of mutual recognition and connection.

To the extent that our fear of one another holds sway over our desire to connect, the subjective experience that we each share as separate individuals is characterized by a withdrawnness into an inner "peering-out" that we experience as our "self" and an outer self-presentation to the other that we constantly monitor from within to assure our presence to each other is under our control and retains the element of reserve. While this tendency toward paranoia and withdrawal of presence leaves us somewhat disembodied and outwardly anonymous (think of the blank gaze with which one passes strangers on the street, or the soulless artificiality of the typical television newscaster), this doesn't render us autistic or schizophrenic. To the extent that we are successful at stabilizing a pattern of reserved presence to each other, we tend to live a life of mild depression, with a poignant sense of longing for something missing.

But the desire to achieve a fuller, more direct connection to each other through the culture of a more fully embodied community is much too powerful for us to easily contain or conceal it. In every social interaction, we pull for real recognition in spite of our simultaneous paranoid effort to ward off the very thing we most desire. Even a trip to the Department of Motor Vehicles involves an original interaction between each of us and the person behind the counter, a darting of the eyes at the possibility of contact or recognition that can't be totally deadened or robotified in advance by the bureaucratic script or our own familiar internal distancing.

The desire to break through our self-conscious monitoring and the distancing manipulations of our outer self—to "break on through to the other side"—is something we repeatedly extend toward each other and elicit from each other, even as we maneuver to avoid the connection because of our fear of rejection, humiliation, and loss. And it is the power of this desire and its possible outbreak beyond our inner constraints that makes history unpredictable and, for me, life hopeful.

From this point of view, the mild depression I just spoke of conceals frustration and rage,



JULIE DELTON

and an anxiety at "loss of control" that haunts the stablest self-protective personality structure. But the power of desire also allows good things to happen constantly, especially if we find ways to encourage each other—through existential confidence-building measures—to trust our mutual impulse toward confirmation, acceptance, and even love.

You might get the impression from these words that I am advocating a psychological approach to the world that focuses on one-on-one interactions, like those in psychotherapy, as the route to healing our problems. And if I did mean this, you would be right to think such an approach could hardly be the basis for challenging the immense economic and social forces that seem so clearly to shape the larger social reality. But I am not advocating a psychological approach understood in this narrow way. Rather, I am saying that what we are used to calling "economic and social forces" must be reunderstood on the basis of a living, partly paranoid inter-human dynamic common to all of us, of which these "forces" are actually an extremely complex expression.

"Big" social phenomena such as class domination or xenophobic nationalism or even the Federal Reserve's regulation of interest rates, which we are accustomed to thinking about "from the outside" as external processes, are actually control systems which we participate in recreating each day to ward off our desire for and fear of becoming present to each other. Getting at this reality requires a new way of thinking—thinking "from the inside" about what I call the "rotation" of social paranoia spread through a complex erotic modelling of authority and deference. In future columns I will try to make clearer how these dynamics operate, and also focus on the positive side of our efforts to transform these painful, isolating, and often violent social processes. I will try to think from the inside about how we might "thaw" the apparent frozenness of self-monitoring bureaucratic routines and how we can find ways of affirming each other in public space to strengthen the climate of confidence that is the only existential antidote to the pervasive climate of doubt that now envelopes us. Building such a climate of confidence is a prerequisite to the creation of any true *tikkun olam*— because "healing" the world, as opposed to "changing" the world, requires a bringing into being of an experience rather than, say, an externally pictured reorganization of power relations or the institution of a new model of democracy.

To apply these ideas to the present situation, let's consider the issue of health care and how the public (including, perhaps, you and me) now appears to be thinking about it. When Bill Clinton was elected, providing health care for all "from cradle to grave" was his foremost campaign commitment, and universal health care seemed to be an exciting prospect very much on the horizon. As I write these words today, Dianne Feinstein, one of the few Democratic survivors of the mid-term elections, has just appeared on national television and called on the President to drop health care altogether as a priority issue and instead make his top priority cutting poor people off welfare "if they are able to work."

Are we to assume that people simply had a rational change of mind, that instead of taking care of everyone, including welfare recipients, from cradle to grave, we have now concluded it is more important to discipline a small number of "irresponsible Blacks" and perhaps put their children in state-sponsored orphanages? What happened?

The answer to this question is not that people figured out with their heads that universal health care is too expensive and too bureaucratic. It is rather that they lost faith in their hearts that the aspiration toward community that fueled Bill Clinton's victory could actually occur.

Bill Clinton was elected on the upsurge of a wave of desire and hope that he was able to elicit in vast numbers of us through his warmth and his capacity to care—qualities that he himself was able to embody in public space because of his participation in the affirmation of our desire for connection and mutual recognition that generated the "movement" aspect of the 1960s. It was this capacity to affirm that we can all be together and take care of each other that forged the historical memory of our generation's experience of the possibility of community, an experience now passed on silently, in the form of an echo, to those who were born after us. This is why so many of us volunteered to help Clinton two years ago, why so many people you and I know actually wanted to vote then, although many of them didn't vote (or voted with heavy hearts and little enthusiasm) in the subsequent 1994 election.

During an outbreak of desire and hope, universal health care symbolizes a reciprocity of caring that we obviously all want and that we know on faith can be realized. When we are imbued with a spirit of hope, we simply know that we can and should find a way to care for one another if we get sick, and suggestions that we can't afford it because we simply must keep building more nuclear weapons seem absurd. In a spirit of hope, those who will staff a health-care system do not appear in our minds as "hopeless bureaucrats" but as people like us who are participating in saving the lives of ourselves, our parents, and our children. And two years ago at the moment of Clinton's election, people actually

wanted to pay more taxes to create such a community of caring, because participating in building a community is much more meaningful and satisfying than saving a few tax dollars that would only allow us to buy a bigger T.V. to help us numb ourselves into oblivion in the quiet desperation of our isolation.

But the opening of the heart required to hope for an emergent community also leaves us vulnerable to the pain of non-affirmation. Every gesture toward mutual affirmation that we extend toward another person exposes us to the risk of rejection, the risk that the other will avert his or her eyes and hide behind a role, like the newscaster. And as our editorial in this issue shows, the Clintons lacked the confidence to affirm the desire for connection that got them elected.

When a fresh expression of hope is not reciprocated—when we take the risk of hoping again when we have been hurt before and then we are hurt again—the energy of the hope is converted by a kind of ontological alchemy into the anger or even rage that we have spent a lifetime feeling toward a world that will not recognize us. At that moment, a Newt Gingrich can express the anger and despair that we all feel because he already has occupied the place in our social experience of being the person who articulates for us the danger of hope. That danger is the basis of his convictions, so in the rotation of confidence and doubt that shapes the political arena, when we turn away in anger from our shattered confidence his voice is there waiting in the wings to speak for us.

Think of the social fabric as a rapidly moving common experience rather than an externally-pictured entity called "society" made up of a collection of discrete individuals with different views. In this account, how I experience what's happening around me and what my possibilities are is dramatically affected by my intuition of what everyone else is experiencing. What I am willing to affirm as real is dramatically affected by what I sense everyone else is willing to affirm as real. And so it is for everyone else also. In our lifetimes we have witnessed moments when people could intuit that others would affirm their mutual connection in public, and other moments when fear predominated over hope. In the 1960s we experienced a rapidly moving outbreak of desire for community (not without its craziness!) that spread worldwide from Berkeley to Des Moines to Prague to Paris to Peking to Guadalajara in a virtual instant of historical time. That same ricochet or rotation spread among us in a negative fashion when Clinton elicited our hope that others would hope, and then seemed to abandon us, thereby transforming Newt Gingrich from an almost comical and marginal naysayer into a legitimate and powerful national spokesperson for our despair. What TIKKUN readers may have felt as a kind of depression and even shortness of breath as we dragged ourselves to vote for the Democrats in November is a version of the same recoiling from our moment of hope that led right-wingers to stick their pin through their voting cards with such righteous and even gleeful vindication. So ask not for whom Newt speaks, he speaks for thee: "That f—— a—— Clinton and Stephanopoulos and all those guys are a bunch of hypocrites and liars, get them the hell out of there!" Of course, a part of us still likes Clinton and hasn't fully given up on him, but another part wants to punish him for the way he abandoned us.

When we think of universal health care in a spirit of mistrust and fear, the whole thing seems like a terrible idea, the height of liberal folly. What was conceived as a community of caring for one another from cradle to grave suddenly appears as a monstrous gulag of betrayal. The very same program undergoes a transformation of image akin to the conversion of Dr. Jekyll into Mr. Hyde. At such a moment, universal health care seems to mean that everyone will be forced to participate in and pay for an army of faceless bureaucrats, indifferent to our fate or the fate of our loved ones, who will mechanically follow rules that will deny us life-saving medical care while paying off the claims of fraudulent doctors providing unneeded services to those who don't even pay taxes.

The Clintons actually fostered this conversion of image when they began to compromise with those who seem least likely to really believe in community—the insurance companies, the conservative medical establishment, and the Republican opponents of health care itself. The final straw was Bill Clinton's abandonment of his supposedly unshakable commitment to the universality of coverage itself. Can we expect people to believe in a community in which 90-odd percent of us will be covered and the rest of us will be left to die in the streets? Never mind whether this is realistically what would have occurred—the point is we can't take the risk of moving toward all being in it together and committing ourselves to caring about each other and at the same time be entertaining thoughts like, "Well, some people won't be covered but at least it won't be me." This leads one to suspect (usually, quite correctly) that everyone else is having the same thought, that self-interest and lack of compassion has crept back into the core of the system, and that any resulting government program will therefore probably be a bureaucratic nightmare.

But it would be wrong to blame the national change of feeling about health care on the Clintons' handling of the health-care issue alone. That same lack of confidence

in the upsurge of the desire for community that elected them, their chronic refusal or inability to be present to us in public space in a way that was needed for *us* to continue to be present to each other, pervaded everything they did.

You can compromise from a position of hope, standing firm for the common hope you're upholding while trying to win over those who retain the capacity to hope but still doubt you. From this standpoint, I thought it was right to struggle to include doctors in a substantial way in the health-care discussion, because, as Barry Schwartz suggested in the November/December issue of TIKKUN, most doctors spend their lives trying to heal the sick even though they have also been selfishly conditioned to guard their elite position of privilege. Even insurance agents could have been engaged at the level of their idealistic, real satisfaction at protecting people from catastrophic loss, as opposed to deferring to their economic power and supposed efficiency as profit-seekers. But you cannot compromise with hope itself, as if you, too, don't really believe in the desire for community that animates it. Although hope has the truest human desire behind it, it cannot survive with half-hearted support in the climate of mistrust and doubt that remains such a big part of our social inheritance. Yet Clinton radiated this lack of hope in his compromises.

So what we have witnessed and been a part of during



SETH TOBACMAN

the last two years is an outburst of hope for community converting, through non-affirmation, into an outburst of anger and paranoia. It is this that explains the shift in metaphors in the national debate from universal health care to the preoccupation with weeding out welfare cheats and irresponsible dependents ripping off our tax dollars. It is the dominant sense of whether we can trust each other to affirm each other's need for affirmation that determines who votes and who doesn't and what metaphors of social reality are foregrounded in the nation's political consciousness. When California Governor Pete Wilson suddenly conjured up the metaphor of the freeloading illegal immigrant, a virtually nonexistent issue only a year ago, he unconsciously used his own paranoia to provide the perfect fetish-object for a wounded national mood.

From the perspective I am advocating, responding to the defeat of health care and to the Republican victory generally requires a new kind of politics that aims at the building of a new climate of confidence in our common desire for community within civil society itself—that is, within real life. If the Clintons couldn't sustain whatever confidence they had in the power and presence of this desire—if they could not see or hear our pull for recognition through the cynicism, rejection, and doubt that they were subjected to in the media and elsewhere—it is in part because we ourselves lacked the existential infrastructure capable of manifesting it. FDR understood the need for this reciprocity between group and spokesperson when he told a labor leader advocating a progressive reform, "That's a good idea. Now go out there and make me do it." In future columns, let's consider how to strengthen our confidence in each other within the interspace where this reciprocity must occur, the interspace that Martin Buber so beautifully called "the between." □

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There is no such thing as a moral or immoral book. Books are well written or badly written. That is all. Oscar Wilde

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The First Radio Populist
A Lesson From the 1930s



Michael Kazin

Rush Limbaugh and other right-wing radio commentators have played an important role in damaging President Clinton and bringing on the Republican takeover of Congress. They have fueled suspicions that, despite Clinton's 1992 campaign promises, federal largesse continues to aid a bundle of liberal "special interests"—Blacks, homosexuals, feminists, and gun controllers—whose values differ from those of ordinary people. With forceful conviction, Limbaugh and company speak to and for millions of white Americans who believe the federal government takes their money and gives them nothing in return.

The use of the airwaves to mobilize rage of a conservative, populist flavor is not new. In the 1930s, a Catholic priest, Father Charles Edward Coughlin, built a large following with weekly radio addresses that denounced "money-changers," communists, and the New Deal. Not until the eve of World War II, when he put Jews on the top of his enemies' list, did Coughlin become a widely scorned and embattled figure.

The Great Depression produced a harvest of human misery, and that misery demanded explanation. Why did stocks lose almost half their value? Why did thousands of banks fail, wiping out the deposits of millions? Why did the engine of American manufacturing, once the envy of the world, suddenly begin to sputter and wheeze, knocking its operatives into months, even years of unemployment? And why were elected officials unable to fix the social machinery—until a total war in Europe got the engine up and purring again?

The available answers ranged widely from the minute to the global and from sweeping jeremiads to statistical diagrams about "patterns of underconsumption." But most political diagnosticians —from Louisiana's Huey Long to the Communist



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Party to President Franklin D. Roosevelt—agreed on a malevolent if vague culprit—"concentrated wealth." In 1931, humorist Will Rogers made the case in comfortably agrarian terms: "All the feed is going into one manger and the stock on the other side of the stall ain't getting a thing...We got it, but we don't know how to split it up." A tiny elite that FDR, in his 1936 acceptance speech, called "the economic royalists" had made huge profits while their countrymen and women were struggling to survive.

But how to cure this grossly unequal condition? Somehow—whether by expanding the money supply, nationalizing key industries, or building strong unions—the wealth amassed by the "super-rich" had to begin flowing, as Senator George Norris of Nebraska proposed, "to all the people, from whom it was originally taken."

The economic debacle gave Catholic speakers and writers, in particular, a historic opportunity to lift the ideological barrier that had always separated them from the Protestant majority. To claim America could now mean expressing a Catholic populism that seethed at the "super-rich" and rallied the millions, whose diligent labor and devotion to God and country had gone to smash.

The leading figure who blended the Roman faith with a commitment to grass-roots Americanism was Father Coughlin. The priest and his many followers viewed finance capital and Marxist socialism as twin faces of a secular, cosmopolitan Satan. Anti-Semitism grew

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Michael Kazin is book editor of TIKKUN *and teaches history at American University. This article was adapted from the forthcoming book,* The Populist Persuasion: An American History. *©1995 by Basic Books. Published by arrangement with Basic Books, a division of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.*

naturally in such soil, but it took some time to sprout. And when it did arise, in the late 1930s, it was more a symptom of Coughlin's declining political fortunes than of his power to mobilize a Jew-hating throng.

Father Coughlin certainly had no trouble capturing the public's ear. In 1926, the Canadian-born cleric, son of Irish immigrants, began broadcasting sermons for children and attacks on the Ku Klux Klan from his Shrine of the Little Flower in Royal Oak, Michigan, a working-class suburb twelve miles north of Detroit. Within a year, listeners in twenty neighboring states could hear him on WJR, a powerful Detroit station owned by a supportive Irish-Catholic businessman. By the fall of 1930, Coughlin was preaching more about the tumbling economy and the paralysis of the Hoover administration than about the catechism or the Klan. One network estimated that thirty million Americans tuned him in every Sunday afternoon—many, one suspects, after returning from church. Weekly, tens of thousands of admiring letters flooded into a new post office set up to handle the load.

What explains the tremendous popularity across denominational lines of a parish priest who never ran for elective office or sought to scale the hierarchy of his church? No doubt, Coughlin attracted millions of casual listeners who took him no more seriously than they did other radio orators. But an undeterminable number looked to him for political guidance because he stirred a potent blend of convictions: the fervent advocacy of Catholic social doctrine, hostility toward high finance and a shadowy state, and the hunger for an uncompromising leader to point the way out of the Depression.

The "radio priest" delivered his messages in a lilting voice that both delighted and inflamed. He translated papal encyclicals about labor and poverty into the American vernacular. He unraveled the complexities of banking transactions and legislation concerning the economy. He ridiculed pompous men of wealth such as J.P. Morgan and arrogant government officials such as General Hugh Johnson, director of the National Recovery Administration. He invoked both Christian morality and the secular republicanism of the Founding Fathers. He advised Americans to follow his own leadership while urging them to be suspicious of anyone who currently held national power.

Coughlin was most compelling as a critic of America's failed economic system. To understand the Depression, he was fond of saying, "It's a *money* question." Stripped to its oft-repeated essentials, this was his argument: Since the beginning of the Republic, bankers with close ties to the great investment houses of Europe had sought to limit the amount of money in circulation. The "money-changers"—Coughlin's blanket term for any notable figure in the worlds of banking or finance—were utterly immoral and unpatriotic; they moved productive assets around the nation and the globe, never regretting the joblessness, business failures, and lost sovereignty bobbing in their wake. According to Coughlin, the 1913 establishment of the Federal Reserve—a national banking network responsible only to other bankers—represented the money-changers' ultimate triumph. Since then, they had been able, often at the behest of shadowy continental figures such as the Rothschilds, to manipulate the stock market, to cause or stop panics, and even to drag the United States into World War I.

The 1929 Crash was their master stroke—"the plan was to create an artificial scarcity of money," Coughlin's popular weekly paper, *Social Justice*, told its readers. But the Depression was proving to be the tocsin that had finally awakened Americans to face their condition of financial "slavery." "The sands of intrigue and of evil machinations," Coughlin stated confidently in 1933, "have filtered through the hour glass of their control."

As empirical history (much less as crisis theory), this lurid tale was quite false. Yet, Coughlin was mining a rich, traditional vein of discontent. Since the heyday of Andrew Jackson, populist speakers had railed at the conspiratorial acts of a "money power" whose immense economic power required no productive labor, was subject to no election, and respected no sovereign boundary.

Coughlin's proposal that Congress abolish the Federal Reserve and establish a government-owned central bank never had a chance to pass, but his insistence that Americans should control the value of their own currency was no mere gimmick. It offered a symbolic way for people to comprehend and fight the distant nexus of state and corporate power, beginning with the pieces of metal and paper lying in their pockets.

Coughlin articulated his fusion of piety and gall with a skill that, at least initially, captivated anyone who listened, regardless of political opinion. He possessed, remembered novelist Wallace Stegner, "a voice of such mellow richness, such manly, heart-warming, confidential intimacy, such emotional and ingratiating charm, that anyone tuning past it almost automatically returned to hear it again." To mask a youthful speech impediment, the priest had borrowed a bit of the brogue of his Irish-born parents. He also trilled his R's, elongated the proper names of his adversaries for

satirical effect, and swirled words like "hot," "swell," "lousy," and "damn" and original epithets such as "ventriloquists of Wall Street" and "comic opera creampuff soldier" into long disquisitions on the New Deal and the Federal Reserve. As Stegner wrote, Coughlin had "a voice made for promises."

In the fall of 1934, Coughlin decided to convert his personal renown into a political movement. He called his new group The National Union for Social Justice. At first, the organization attracted a cross-section of white, Christian Americans, omitting only those groups he made no effort to reach—the speculative rich, racial minorities, and Jews. A reporter for The *New Republic*, who was unsympathetic to Coughlin's message, marveled at the "quiet, sober seriousness" of a crowd that packed Madison Square Garden in 1935 to hear the priest in person. "This was a composite, living portrait of the American people—of all ages and of every class," he wrote, "...roused from their lethargy and taking an active vital interest in the politics of their country."

But the most famous priest in America had no conception of how to convert his adoring audience into a durable movement. And when he decided to challenge the President, a reckoning became inevitable. During the 1932 campaign, Coughlin had vigorously backed Roosevelt as a true foe of "the moneychangers." But upon establishing his National Union, Coughlin changed the "or" in his slogan "Roosevelt or Ruin" to "and." Telling his radio audience "I know the pulse of the people...better than do all your industrialists with [their] paid-for advice," he charged the President and his associates with serving the interests both of corporate moguls and of communist revolutionaries.

This unlikely trio of enemies was not as nonsensical as it sounds. According to Coughlin, the New Deal, the Soviets, and "modern" capitalism had one essential quality in common: the drive to centralize power in the hands of a privileged few—whether liberal bureaucrats, international bankers, or atheistic tyrants—and to destroy the spiritual fiber of Christian America. Coughlin urged his listeners to give up the belief that a chief executive surrounded by left-wing intellectuals could really be their friend. In March 1935, one Coughlinite wrote to FDR, "I know the truth and the truth is you have deceived the working man...and favored the big Business and Huge Corporations and let the Poor Working Man go starving, or go to Hell. I loved you and you have betrayed."

In 1936, the radio priest gambled on the depth of such bitterness and took a leap into presidential politics. Convinced he could unite all critics of the New Deal who did not want to return to Republican rule, he created the Union Party (UP). The name was borrowed from the label Abraham Lincoln had used when running for re-election in 1864. America, intoned the priest, was now engaged in a new civil war, this time "to annihilate financial slavery" rather than "physical slavery."

But the UP, behind a lackluster presidential candidate named William Lemke, polled only 892,000 votes, ridiculously short of the ten percent of the total Coughlin had vowed it would win. The radio priest had failed to appreciate the political weakness of his demonization of the banking elite. The money question was, for most Americans in the 1930s, only an ephemeral symbol of what had gone wrong in their country; bankers, while mistrusted, were not widely perceived as a modern Goliath throttling their families, jobs, and public officials.

And the notion that the reassuring, jovial man in the White House was an agent of both the Kremlin and the Rothschilds defied common sense. At a time when the New Deal was trying to alleviate mass suffering through such measures as the Social Security Act and the Works Progress Administration, Coughlin's lack of a concrete plan to redistribute wealth exposed his inability to be more than a phenomenally popular magician on the air. After the 1936 election, he disbanded the impotent National Union and found a more sensational issue around which to rally the people.

From the mid-'30s to the attack on Pearl Harbor, Americans heard a lot of frightening talk about un-American tyrants bent on conquering their land. Depending on one's politics, the primary danger emanated from Rome and Berlin (seldom Tokyo) or from Moscow. Closer to home, domestic champions of fascism or communism were hard at work, wrapped in patriotic mufti. Once total war broke out in Europe in the fall of 1939, the fearful scenarios multiplied and achieved a greater degree of credibility.

For Father Coughlin, this jittery climate provided a good opportunity. To shift his rhetorical fire away from the "moneychangers" and train it instead on powerful individuals and groups who could drag the nation into another world war might revive the morale of his followers, perhaps even add to their shrunken ranks. Into 1940, a solid majority of Americans opposed sending any troops overseas; among those without a high-school education, anti-war sentiment topped 80 percent. Congress, heeding public opinion, did not vote to weaken the strict Neutrality Act until six weeks before the attack on Pearl Harbor.

But Coughlin destroyed his chances by becoming a

flagrant apologist for the European right then doing combat (armed and otherwise) with liberals and Marxists. *Social Justice* praised Franco for governing according to Catholic principles and compared Hitler and Mussolini's regimes favorably with those in England, Mexico, and the Soviet Union, "which inaugurated the mass murder of twenty million Christians." In the summer of 1940, Coughlin's paper predicted glorious things for the new Vichy government just installed by the Nazis: "Fascist France in days to come will afford better opportunities for the mental, spiritual and social development of its people than did the France that was ruled by the spirit of the atheist Voltaire."

While Coughlin had become an open admirer of fascist regimes, neither he nor his movement sought to adapt that philosophy to American society. *Social Justice* still lambasted a strong federal government and equated the public interest with independent trade unions and small businesses. Coughlinism never imitated the militarized, ultra-nationalist discourse that undergirded the "new order" in Nazi Germany and its allies. As historian Alan Brinkley observes, "What defines a political movement is not just the intellectual currents it vaguely absorbs, but how it translates those currents into a message of immediate importance to its constituency."

Those who clung to Coughlin on the eve of World War II—parish priests eager to apply their church's anti-radical dogma, bitter victims of the Depression, and newsboys spoiling for a fight with street-corner critics—knew they wanted to "kick the Reds out of America" and put "real" Christians in charge. But apart from its cult of charismatic leadership, the alien creed of fascism held little attraction for them.

What Coughlin and his shrunken band *did* care deeply about was the alleged power of "Soviet-loving Jews." Prior to 1937, anti-Semitism had lurked around the fringes of the priest's denunciations of financial barons, "modern" capitalists, and Godless communists. He once made a scornful remark about "the treachery preached by the German Hebrew Karl Marx" and, on another occasion, announced that Alexander Hamilton was a Jew "who had established the nation's banking system in the interests of the rich and well-born."

But Coughlin had seldom referred to the ethnicity of contemporary figures of evil such as Bernard Baruch or the Rothschilds when he attacked them. And he lavished at least equal contempt on gentile financiers like J.P. Morgan and the bowler-hatted demons of the City of London—who had long held Mother Ireland in thrall. During the 1936 election campaign, Coughlin declared, "there was never such persecution as we Christians inflicted without reason upon the Jews." At one rally in Detroit that year, he was even introduced by a local rabbi.

Coughlin's shift from skewering the financial elite to bludgeoning alleged communists and warmongers brought out a fierce antipathy toward Jews that had only been hinted at before. In July 1938, *Social Justice* began printing excerpts from the infamous *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, the specious record of a Jewish plot to conquer the world.

Aware of the furor he would cause, Coughlin explained that the paper "holds no enmity for the Jew" but merely wanted "the righteous Jewish leaders to campaign openly, in season and out of season, against these communistic attempts to over-turn a civilization." As his movement reeled from the perception that it was a haven for domestic Nazis, that remained the official line: Only Jews who advanced the twin causes of atheism and communism were enemies; "religious" Jews should be hailed for leading their brethren away from the path of evil.

The pastor of Royal Oak was doubtless sincere in distinguishing between two types of Jews; it fit with his general affection for Manichaean categories. But his foot-soldiers in new groups such as the Christian Front were not particularly concerned with theological distinctions. In Brooklyn, the Bronx, and South Boston, bands of Coughlinite youths smashed the windows of Jewish-owned stores without inquiring into the beliefs of their proprietors. Sellers of *Social Justice* routinely used the crudest of anti-Semitic slogans to hawk their wares.

On occasion, the paper published letters from readers whose fearful wrath was unchecked by considerations of spiritual doctrine. "J.A.B." wrote from Brooklyn in March 1939 to oppose letting Jewish refugees enter the country. "Jews have been booted out of Europe for making a near-debacle of civilization. Shall we accept this vast, pro-Communistic Jew swarm as America's ruling and owning caste; or fight it and drive it forth; or suffer physical extinction at its hands?"

A kind of populism animated this horrific challenge. Since the late nineteenth century, most American anti-Semites had, like Coughlin, identified Jews as both non-productive manipulators of "other people's money" and the carriers of decadent, radical doctrines from abroad. J.A.B. did not hold Jews responsible for all the nation's problems. But his assumption that they could be nothing but a rapacious elite paralleled the arguments the erstwhile Populist Tom Watson had made to justify the lynching of Leo Frank in 1915, and

Henry Ford had circulated in his notorious 1922 publication, *The International Jew*. Hitler himself defined Jews as a naturally parasitic race who gained positions of power in order to strip ordinary Germans of their hard-earned material resources and cultural cohesion.

In the United States, however, Coughlin's anti-Semitism was a populism of fools. While 42 percent of Catholics (but only 19 percent of Protestants) told Gallup pollsters in late 1938 that they supported the priest, the "Bolshevik Jew" was failing as a mobilizing device. In New Deal America, a politics tightly yoked to a monistic conspiracy theory appealed mainly to the desperate and disorganized—the type of people who wrote bloody, chiliastic letters to *Social Justice* after it began serializing the *Protocols*. At a time when most national figures (whether in politics, labor, or business) were lauding the ideals of ethnic pluralism and grass-roots democracy (at least for whites), the tribal animosities Coughlin was stirring seemed anachronistic—even though, in private, many Americans continued to grumble about "the Jews." Ironically, the priest whose national popularity had once signified the end of the calumny that Catholics were foreign agents was best known for pressing Jews into that same contorted mold.

So, instead of trying to build a strong anti-war and anti-communist movement, Coughlin had to spend most of his time defending himself against verbal assaults from all directions. The number of stations willing to carry the priest's addresses (which refrained from mentioning the *Protocols*) dwindled to a handful. And, in 1941, the archbishop of Detroit—who had previously been wary of alienating devout Coughlinites—ordered the pastor of Royal Oak to stop his broadcasts for good; under pressure of a federal indictment, *Social Justice* ceased publication a year later.

Charles Coughlin's descent into anti-Semitism and pro-fascism has shaped his entire political image. Living as we do in the unending aftermath of the Holocaust, it remains essential to understand how a cranky fixation on international "money-changers" and their "Red" allies could lead a beguiling egotist to apologize for monsters. Knowing that Coughlin, in the late 1930s, could not have predicted the Final Solution only slightly mitigates his role in portraying the Nazis as worthy men who had something to teach Americans who felt their government had abandoned them.

Yet, before he retreated to that noxious bunker, the radio priest had advanced a kind of populism whose moment did not expire with the destruction of Berlin and the revelations of Auschwitz. At the height of his broadcast career in the mid-'30s, Coughlin appealed to both Protestants and Catholics by speaking to their shared desire for an America whose people would control their economy and preserve their Christian values. His broad sympathy with the victims of concentrated wealth attracted both industrial workers and members of the growing white-collar class. He scored officials of an increasingly powerful and visible state for being pretentious, hypocritical, and, worst of all, ineffective. And he cited patriotic forebears and religious authorities to legitimate his unorthodox opinions.

Coughlin was too bounded by his own prejudices to fully exploit the political potential of this meld. But, however far-fetched his ideas, Coughlin did not become a marginal figure until the eve of World War II. In his overblown but always entertaining way, he countered the appeal of the emerging New Deal order in the name of hard-pressed Christian Americans. Coughlin had spoken with conviction to people concerned about the world they were losing and afraid that "big men"—liberal, secular, intellectual statists (and their wealthy friends)—would cheat them out of whatever they could gain.

In our own day, more astute voices on the Right are addressing the same suspicions. And it will not be easy to make Rush Limbaugh's and Newt Gingrich's brand of populism look dangerous. Unlike sixty years ago, there is not a persuasive liberal president sitting in the White House. Nor is there a powerful labor movement to represent the interests of working Americans, or an international fascist threat to galvanize a broad Left. We must find ways to speak to the discontents of ordinary people without patronizing them or simply promoting our pet agendas. Otherwise we will not escape *our* great depression and begin to build a society that guarantees a decent life for all. □

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FICTION

Aunt and Bee: A Covenantal Variation

Norma Rosen

The day after Benjamin leaves I find a bee in the bedroom.

"B for Benjamin," I tell it. "Out you go."

I trap it between window and screen, and from there ease it back into nature. I keep wishing Benjamin could see me not needing his help.

The following Saturday I see Benjamin not needing mine, in a downtown coffee shop. I go there for a sandwich after buying epoxy to fix the leak in the bathroon. Luckily I see Benjamin first and back out. There's a woman with him.

If Benjamin had been alone I would have told about the bee and how I dealt with it, also about the epoxy for the plumbing I'm fixing. Instead, when I'm home I call Aunt Phyllis.

"I'm not as dependent on my husband as you predicted, Aunt Phyllis, despite our four years of marriage."

"Wonderful! Have you cut the stereo in half yet?" Aunt Phyllis's only child, who lives on the country's other coast, has just gotten her second divorce. Aunt Phyllis, I feel, is venting her bitterness on me.

"It won't be like that," I protest. "It's amicable."

"Like a wedding," Aunt Phyllis mocks. "Invite me for the dancing."

The more I talk to Aunt Phyllis, the more I feel a need to swat something. If the bee were to fly in at this moment, it wouldn't get off as easy as last time.

"I remember what my own daughter said when she divorced her last husband," Aunt Phyllis says. "'We'll always be friends.' And then it was the dirtiest, nastiest divorce ever. They always are. By the time she finds the perfect man, ha-ha, we'll all be dead. I'll never have a Jewish grandchild or any other kind."

The next day when I walk into my house after work I hear a fearful sound, a deep, angry humming. I follow it to my bedroom. The bed looks as if it's moving! It takes me a while to see it is a solid mass of bees. The whole surface of the bed writhes like some unspeakable orgy.

"Benjamin," I whisper. Benjamin is a practical joker. Could he have done it? Crept through the window I left open to the summer air (the one, foolishly, without the screen)? No, the bees must have swarmed by themselves. I back out of the room, pull the door tight, and call Aunt Phyllis.

She laughs a bitter, I-told-you-so laugh. "It's so simple! It's right there on your bed. Don't you see? The symbolism of it?"

I tell her all I see is bees, and the buzzing's getting louder. "Is there some nature organization that can handle this? I can't think with all that noise in the house!"

"Call your friend. The one you're so friendly with. Call your husband."

"I don't want to do that."

"He'll come faster than the Audubon Society," says Aunt Phyllis.

Benjamin is there minutes after my call. The creatures are still writhing on the bed. Despite his wonderful education, Banjamin hasn't. stopped making women-jokes. I'm afraid he's going to say, "They must think you're the queen bee." Or, hiking his voice to a kind of falsetto, "Been eating bon-bons in



MAIRAV SALOMON

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bed?" As if I ever was. As if I ever did.

This time he just looks thoughtful. He takes the vacuum cleaner from the hall closet, connects it, and starts the motor. He extends the nozzle toward the bed. In a matter of seconds, the bees are sucked into the bag. Benjamin lifts the machine, still connected and humming along with the bees, and lowers it to the grass outside the window. Then he shuts the window and unplugs the machine.

"You must have hated to call me for this," Benajamin says sympathetically. "Believe me, I know you've been doing just fine on your own."

For the first time, I feel my heart may break over this breakup. Another woman must have taught Benjamin the understanding he lacked when we were together. Before he leaves, he promises to send over a beekeeper, who can lure the bees from the vacuum cleaner.

"Perfect," Aunt Phyllis says, when I call. "With a vacuum cleaner. Your own instrument!"

I don't even try to answer that, to point out that I wasn't born with those attachments. Aunt Phyllis can't hear when she is zooming across a field, headed straight for the nectar.

"Don't you see what you women have done? With your self-centeredness, what my foolish daughter calls her integrity? What's left, what do you have? Who will you be, what is your future? Not to mention the future of the Jewish people, who are supposed to be as numerous as the sands in the sea, in case you hadn't remembered."

I understand that when Aunt Phyllis says "you women" she doesn't mean me exactly, or even her own daughter. She means that recently there have been more changes than she feels she can bear in one lifetime. As for "the Jewish people," who knows who she has in mind when she says that?

A few days later, Benjamin brings up the possibility of his moving back in. Almost shyly he adds, "I like it when you're scared and need me."

I feel how caught in contradictions we are whenever we so much as as speak to one another. But I'm touched that he wants to come back. "Let's wait and see, Benjamin," I answer.

We say it together—"Let's wait and see!"—as if we're making some new vow of eternal loyalty: "We'll wait and see!"

Naturally, Aunt Phyllis wants Benjamin to come back right away. But that same evening I hear from her daughter, my cousin Corinne. "You have to be very careful now," she says. "You have to ask yourself, 'Am I going to be my own person—or not?'"

I consider Corinne's question and try to remember my reasons for separating from Benjamin in the first place. Then I think about how Benjamin came right away in response to my call. There aren't many people in the world I can count on to do that.

I wonder if I might have to say Yes, come back, or No, don't, very quickly, without stopping to consider anything at all. It's hard to think when my head's crammed with sounds, here in the house and out in the world—the buzz, the roar, the steady hum of disapprovals and urgings.

One day for distraction I go to watch the work of the beekeeper. I admire the calm attention he and the bees bestow on one another. After that I return many times. I decide to become a keeper of bees myself. I wear a hat with heavy mesh hanging from the brim, and thick gauntlets. Whoever looks at me sees not my usual confused expression, but one mysteriously altered by the formations of the honey-makers, clinging to the net that shields me.

When Benjamin visits, he, too, puts on beekeeper's clothing. Now we no longer show our familiar features that were so often set in bitter disappointment.

Benjamin's head looks monumental and calm, as mine must look to him. Our movements are slow and sure, the way the bees like them to be. We move among the hives, and the bees trail after us like clamoring children. Our demeanors are serene. No earthly human perturbation shows itself through the mesh. Together we glean the marvelous yields of honey, pure and sweet the honey is, and of a clarity rarely encountered these days. □

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The Vichy Syndrome

Ian Buruma

At 8:45 on the morning of June 8, 1993, Christian Didier, an ex-chauffeur and failed novelist, rang the bell of an expensive apartment on the Avenue Raphael in Paris. It was the residence of René Bousquet, a retired banker and former cabinet minister. Didier claimed to have brought some legal documents for Bousquet, who was awaiting trial for crimes against humanity. Bousquet, a tall, distinguished-looking man of eighty-four, opened the door. Didier pulled a Colt revolver from his bag and shot Bousquet in the chest. At a press conference after the shooting, Didier said it was his "mission on earth" to "struggle against the collapse of spirituality in the Western world." Adding that he had "always enjoyed shooting," he described his gun as "really a cowboy weapon."

René Bousquet had behind him a prosperous, high-powered, and for the most part, discreet career in government administration, banking, and newspaper publishing. His entry in the 1962 *Who's Who* is typical of a French *notable*: "Bousquet, René, banker and civil servant, born on the 11th of May 1909 in Montauban (Tarn-et-Garonne)." It briefly mentions government service between 1922 and 1949, and the directorship of the Banque de l'Indochine, as well as such distinctions as the *Légion d'honneur* and the *Médaille d'Or*, awarded in 1930 for having saved a number of people from drowning in a flood. The 1967 edition of *Who's Who* is only a little bit more specific about Bousquet's government career: "Secretary-general of the Interior Ministry and State Counsel in Special Service (1942). Relieved of his duties in 1943."

The interesting thing about Bousquet—and the reason for his pending trial—was, of course, the precise nature of those duties. Between July 1942 and December 31, 1943, René Bousquet, as chief of the Vichy French police, had organized the deportation of approximately 60,000 Jews of French and foreign origin to the camps in Germany and Poland. He was so efficient at his job, and so keen to show the Germans



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that the French police could be counted on, that Heinrich Himmler commended him as a most "valuable collaborator." Photographs of Bousquet, taken during the war, at formal and informal occasions, show him greeting Reinhard Heydrich in Paris; swearing an oath of loyalty to Marshal Henri Pétain; and joking with General Karl Oberg, chief of the SS in France. In some pictures, Bousquet looks a bit pompous, very much the *haut fonctionnaire*. But in others, especially the ones where he is surrounded by high SS officers, he looks more youthful: a handsome, rather dandified young man, grinning at the camera, dressed in a fur-collared coat, clearly having the time of his life.

Had Bousquet lived, his trial—planned for the fall of last year—might never have taken place. President François Mitterrand, among others, was said to have opposed it. Indeed, in a recent book on Mitterrand,

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Ian Buruma's most recent book is The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan *(Farrar, Strauss Giroux, 1994).*

Une Jeunesse Française: François Mitterrand 1934-1947, the French president is quoted by the author, Pierre Péan, as saying that Bousquet was "a man of exceptional standing." Georges Kiejman, a minister in the justice department, wrote in 1990 that while it was of course important to "struggle against forgetting," such a trial could pose a threat to "civil peace." It might seem odd that the trial of a man responsible for sending tens of thousands of Jews to their deaths could still, fifty years later, disturb the peace. But then nothing to do with what the French historian Henri Rousso has called the "Vichy syndrome" is simple.

The Vichy syndrome (the title of Rousso's seminal book on the subject), or France's neurosis about its wartime past, has flared up periodically since the early 1970s. Typically, specific events—the arrest of a notorious war criminal, a controversial speech, a critical new movie on the period—have jolted French collective memory.

Only months before Bousquet's killing, two new films on Vichy were released in France. Jean Marboeuf's *Pétain* was the first feature film on the chief of the Vichy state. The film was hailed by the French newspaper *Le Monde* as "the end of a taboo." A more interesting film, Claude Chabrol's compilation of Vichy propaganda, titled *L'Oeil de Vichy* (The Eye of Vichy), consisted of edited newsreels made in France between 1941 and 1945, presented in chronological order. Chabrol shows the viewer, in the words of historians Robert Paxton and Jean-Pierre Azéma, who wrote the commentary, "not what it was actually like between 1940 and 1945, but how Pétain and the *collaborateurs* wanted it to be seen." The Vichy government's propaganda is often as vicious as anything made in Germany. In one clip, Jews are compared to rats. In another, we see nimble hands embroidering a yellow Star of David badge. "If Jews had blue skins," the commentator of the time explains, "things would be easy, but since they don't, we have to find other ways to recognize them."

While *Pétain* doesn't shun this most sinister aspect of the Vichy state, it is not an entirely satisfactory film. One reason it took so long to make a feature film about Pétain's Vichy years is no doubt the sensitivity of the subject. But another reason is the virtual impossibility of the task. Historical figures in recent memory are still too fresh in our minds to be able to be convincingly portrayed on film. The attention of the filmmakers, as well as the public, tends to be focused on period detail instead of character. One ends up with cardboard characters, actors on a historical stage, without private lives. Well-known anecdotes are reenacted, with the famous figures speaking their often-famous lines. As a result, Chabrol's selection of Vichy's lies is often more instructive than Marboeuf's reconstruction of the truth.

The Eye of Vichy is the most shocking film on France during the war since Marcel Ophuls's *The Sorrow and the Pity*, precisely because it shows up so clearly the disunity of France, the exclusion of Jews and other minorities, the betrayal of the principle of equal civil rights, which is the very basis of the French Republic. Whatever its critics may say about the vagueness of the movie's message, it is hard to see how any intelligent person could miss the point. By showing the myths of Vichy, the film effectively destroys them.

The combination of nationalism and reactionary values, expressed through images of healthy French peasants stacking hay, or young girls folk-dancing in regional costumes, or uniformed men swearing oaths of obedience to the marshal, would have seemed a long way from the death camps, were it not for the commentary that went with it. In that peculiarly excited tone adopted by news readers in the 1940s, we are told that "France under the new order has been liberated by the Jewish statute." *The Statut des Juifs*, promulgated first in 1940 and extended in the following year, without any prompting from the Germans, excluded most Jews from virtually all official jobs and professions. The ideology of Marshal Pétain's "National Revolution," with its slogan "Work, Family, Fatherland," cannot be misunderstood.

Yet *L'Oeil de Vichy* has been criticized for showing only one side of the story. Jean Daniel, the editor of *Le Nouvel Observateur*, complained about the absence of voices from the Resistance, or the Gaullists, the communists, the liberals, and the countless brave people who saved Jewish lives. One might answer that resistance was not the subject of Chabrol's film. But such criticisms pointed to a deeper anxiety. Daniel, as well as Roger Stéphane, the writer and former resistance hero (in a discussion in the same issue of *Le Nouvel Observateur* with Robert Paxton and Jean-Pierre Azéma), worried that uninformed viewers of Chabrol's film would get the wrong message. "Propaganda images stick like mud," wrote Daniel. If it were Arabs and not Jews who were denigrated, one in five Frenchmen (or women) might welcome the message. Stéphane suggested that viewers might get the idea that the French collaborators were rather admirable people: After all, they were in favor of order, they hated Bolshevism, they loved Europe.

That intelligent critics express this worry points to a continuing fear in France of the dark anti-liberal, often racialist strain in French politics, which has threatened to tear France apart in a "Franco-French War" since the French Revolution. This strain is not monolithic; it

is not even a coherent ideology. It incorporates reactionary Catholicism, nostalgia for an absolute monarchy, anti-Semitism, anti-marxism, pan-Europeanism, fascism, and blood and soil nationalism. But whatever form it takes, it is opposed to liberalism.

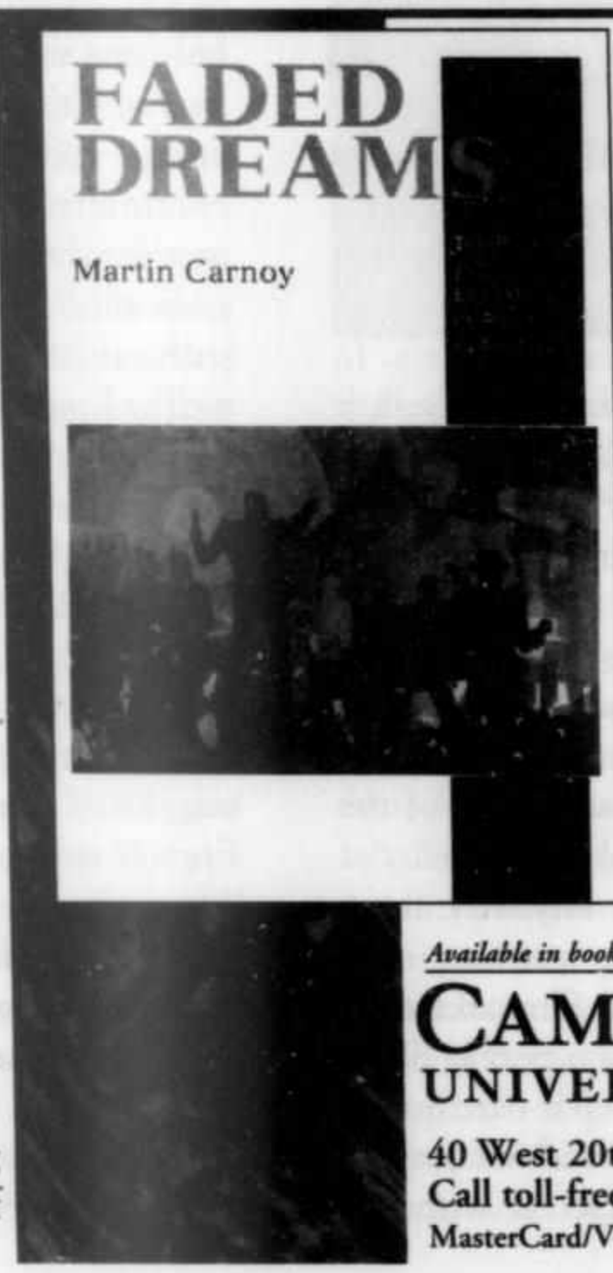
It came to the fore when France was divided by the Dreyfus Affair in 1894. It inspired the writings of Charles Maurras, the anti-Semitic founder of the monarchist *Action Française*. Anti-liberalism was the bedrock of Pétainism and the Vichy state. It resurfaced again during the Algerian War. And even today it is not hard to find echoes of it on the fringes of French society, or even, here and there, in the mainstream. When Valérie Giscard d'Estaing warned of an "immigrant invasion" two years ago and proposed to change the basis of French citizenship from laws based on birth or residence to laws based on blood, he was talking like an anti-Dreyfusard or a Pétainist, still resentful over the changes wrought by the French Revolution. The crude version of these sentiments can be found in the pages of such journals as *Rivarol* or *L'Action Française*, a paper which has lost none of its Maurrasian zeal against any kind of liberalism.

Nostalgia for an authoritarian order exists everywhere in Europe, as does the xenophobia that goes with it. Other countries have their cranky versions of *L'Action Française*. What is extraordinary about France is how far back the nostalgia goes and how deeply some highly intelligent people have been affected by it in the past. When contributors to *Rivarol* and *L'Action Française* are not ranting against immigration or praising the Serbs for saving Europe from the Muslims, they are still fighting the battles of the late eighteenth century: for the king against the revolution, for the regions of "deep France" against the capital, for tradition against democracy.

With xenophobic nationalism on the rise everywhere in Europe, fear of such strains within France is understandable. But it is surprising nonetheless that the traumas of Vichy should still be so raw, and its propaganda deemed to be so potent, that critics still worry about its impact. And why did it take fifty years before Pétain could be confronted on film? It also seems odd that it took so long to prepare a trial against a Frenchman for crimes against humanity, even though several Germans, including Klaus Barbie, the former Gestapo chief in Lyon, had already been tried in France. Is French civil peace really so fragile? If so, why? The question is especially pertinent now that, almost two years after Bousquet's death, Mitterrand, the only socialist president of the Fifth Republic, has gone on record, not only to defend the reputation of René Bousquet, but also to deny that he knew anything about the anti-Jewish laws in France in 1942.

In a grotesque way, René Bousquet's anti-Jewish activities were linked to his concern for civil peace, or rather, public order, which comes down to the same thing in the bureaucratic mind. Bousquet, as well as his patron, Pierre Laval, prime minister of the Vichy government, and Marshal Pétain, the "savior of the nation" himself, went way beyond the bounds of their duties. In the spring of 1942, the SS ordered the French police to start deporting Jews between the ages of sixteen and sixty (fifty-five for women). But Pétain, Laval, and Bousquet decided that children under sixteen also should go. Even the SS were a bit taken aback by the Vichy officials' zeal, but they were not about to argue.

Premier Laval and his chief of police had one other proposal: instead of arresting French Jews, they promised to deport foreign Jews, even in the unoccupied zone. The SS readily agreed; the French Jews would get their turn in due course. And this way the authorities ensured there would be a minimum of



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public fuss. René Bousquet wrote a memo to his police prefects, telling them to report any police officer whose "passivity" and "lack of goodwill" might complicate the task of "breaking any opposition that might be encountered among the population."

On the 16th and 17th of July 1942, the French police, helped by thugs from the French Fascist Party, rounded up 12,884 Jews in Paris, about half the number they were supposed to have arrested (some policemen were less zealous than their chief). Most of them were poor immigrants, and some 4,000 were children. More than 8,000 people, mostly women and children, were herded into a bicycle-racing stadium on the rue de Grennelle, called the Vélodrome d'Hiver (or Vel d'Hiv), where they spent five days in terrible conditions—stifling heat, hardly any food or drink, only six blocked toilets—before being sent on to French camps, and thence to the east. At the same time, Jews were rounded up in other parts of France.

Since the Vichy government's definition of nationality was based more on blood and soil than on citizenship, many Jews who had only recently acquired French nationality, as well as the French-born children of foreign parents, were stripped of their nationality and lost their right to French protection. As a result of this operation, known as *la grande rafle* (the great roundup), 6,000 Jewish children, as well as many more adults, were murdered in German camps that same summer. It is inconceivable that Mitterrand, as an official in the Vichy government, would have been entirely unaware that this was going on.

Curiously, neither Laval, nor Bousquet, nor indeed Mitterrand, were known to have been zealously anti-Semitic. Nor were they Nazis. Both Laval and Bousquet had been socialists before the war, and Bousquet continued to be not only a socialist during and after the war, but a Freemason too, which was most unusual in the company he kept, since Freemasonry was outlawed by the Vichy government. Laval was a pacifist, who hoped that collaboration with the Third Reich would secure a peaceful Europe, led by Germany and France.

The most likely reason for their zeal in the case of Jewish children was that the Vichy government did not want thousands of Jewish orphans on its hands—they would cause logistical problems and might stir up troublesome sympathy among the French population. Arresting French Jews would have the same effect: It could lead to disorder, and that was one thing Bousquet would not tolerate. It was his job to make sure that everything in the French state, whoever happened to preside over it, was in order. This was a matter of professional pride, and perhaps even, in a twisted way, patriotism: the Germans should find nothing to complain about, lest the French state lose what autonomy it still enjoyed. At the same time, the maintenance of order was the greatest service rendered by the Vichy state to the German occupier: by insisting that the French police do the dirty work, and by preserving public order, the Vichy French made it much easier for the Germans to carry out their plans. As Bousquet observed in a letter to SS General Oberg: "You know the French police. It might not be perfect, but it has its good points. I am sure it can render the greatest services, once it is vigorously led and reorganized on a new basis."

After the war, again in the name of civic peace and national unity, the French tried to forget about the Vichy government's activities, or at least to rewrite them. Until 1983, French textbooks declared that the Jewish deportations had been an entirely German affair. When Alain Resnais made his now-famous documentary film about the Holocaust, *Night and Fog*, in 1956, the French censors made him cut a shot that clearly showed the familiar silhouette of a French gendarme sitting in the watchtower of a Jewish transit camp.

At Drancy, a suburb on the railway line to Charles de Gaulle Airport, one can still see the cheap, modern apartment buildings that were used in a half-finished state as one of the most notorious camps: "Drancy la Juive," as it was known, "Jewish Drancy." For some, such as the poet Max Jacob, Drancy was the end of the line; for more than 70,000 people, it was the last stop before Auschwitz, Majdanek, or Sobibor—a mere 2,190 lived to come back. The housing blocks still look like a prison camp, enclosed on three sides, with a rubbish-strewn courtyard in the middle. The present inhabitants are mostly poor immigrants from Africa and the Maghreb. On the wall of one of the blocks, several plaques commemorate the former camp. The oldest plaque honors RAF pilots, who were held at Drancy in 1940, before being taken to POW camps in Germany. A plaque dated 1951 says that between 1941 and 1944 "100,000 men, women and children of Israelite religion or descent" were imprisoned there by the *occupant Hitlérien*. It was only in February 1993 that a new plaque appeared, put up by the Association of the Sons and Daughters of Jewish Deportees in France, which made it clear that "Here, the French state of Vichy interned many thousands of Jews, Gypsies and foreigners."

Bousquet's own postwar career illustrates the historical blackout that existed in France for so long. He was tried in 1949 for his wartime activities. But after the messy and violent purges of alleged (and real) collaborators in 1944 and 1945, the High Court of

Justice had no desire to treat a high official like Bousquet too harshly. In any case, the court was on his side; one of the jurors was a personal friend named Jean Baylet, a radical socialist politician and owner of the influential newspaper *La Dépêche du Midi*. Bousquet was sentenced to five years "national degradation" (loss of civil rights) for "unworthy behavior." The court raised no questions about the Jewish deportations. And since Bousquet was judged to have "participated actively in the resistance against the occupier," the sentence was immediately suspended. Bousquet's last-minute protection of some members of the Resistance, just before he lost his job as police chief in 1943, had paid off.

Bousquet resumed his career as a *notable*, first as a director of the Banque de l'Indochine, then as the proprietor of his old friend's newspaper, *La Dépêche du Midi*, which supported François Mitterrand in his 1965 election campaign against Charles de Gaulle. And if all had gone according to plan, Bousquet would have died the typical *notable's* death: of old age, in his bed. The plan began to go wrong in 1978, however, when Louis Darquier de Pellepoix, the former chief of Vichy's Office for Jewish Affairs, gave a ranting interview to *L'Express* from his place of refuge in Spain, in which he called the Final Solution a "Jewish invention," but also said that Bousquet had been entirely responsible for the deportations. All of a sudden, Bousquet became a notorious figure.

The official amnesia that shielded Bousquet for so long had suited the various French governments since the war perfectly well. General de Gaulle had painted a picture of an eternal France, the land of Joan of Arc, united in opposition, and led by the Free French government in exile. So de Gaulle had not been keen to shine too much light on the collaboration with the Nazis, not just by French fascists in Paris, but by an entire government, empowered in 1940 by the French parliament in the Vichy Casino, a government of zealots, opportunists, fascists, conservatives, socialists, and ambitious bureaucrats such as René Bousquet. Nor did de Gaulle wish to make distinctions among the victims. Maquisards, communists, Free French, Freemasons, or Jews—they were all the same to de Gaulle, that is to say, French victims of a foreign occupation.

De Gaulle, like Marshal Pétain, saw himself as the great unifier of France, a monarchical leader, standing above the political fray. In 1959, de Gaulle gave a speech in Vichy, in which he declared: "We are one people, and whatever ups and downs we may have suffered, whatever events we may have seen, we are the great nation of France, the one and only French people. I say this in Vichy. I am bound to say this in Vichy. The past is finished. Long live Vichy! Long live France! Long live the Republic!"

Amnesia also suited de Gaulle's successors: concern for civil peace can become a convenient excuse for imposing the authority of the state. In 1971, President Georges Pompidou secretly pardoned Paul Touvier, a ferocious figure in the Militia, who had been involved in the murder of Resistance fighters and Jews. Sentenced to death by a court in 1947, Touvier went underground and found refuge for four decades in a number of Catholic monasteries with Vichy sympathies. Although a less convincing republican monarch than de Gaulle, Pompidou, too, said of the secret pardon that he was acting to preserve national unity, and, in his own words, "to forget a time when Frenchmen disliked one another."

François Mitterrand's style has been almost as monarchical as de Gaulle's. And a degree of discretion suited him even better than his predecessors, for not only had he served in the Vichy government in the early 1940s as an official in charge of helping French ex-POWs but, according to Pierre Péan's book, he joined an extreme right-wing group, the Croix de Feu (Cross of Fire), in 1934. He left the Cross of Fire a year later, but continued to write xenophobic articles and participate in royalist demonstrations. Last year, Pétain's lawyer, Jacques Isorni, told me in Paris that Mitterrand was a "Pétainist" who continued to have a soft spot for le *Maréchal*. We now know it to be true. Most shocking to Mitterrand's supporters, however, have been his admitted sympathies for Bousquet, and his peculiar amnesia about French collaboration in the Holocaust.

Amnesia even suited the Jewish survivors in France, tired of being singled out as a special case. When de Gaulle said the Jews were French, "like everybody else," they were happy to accept that, even if it meant suppressing a singular history, of which most of them did not wish to be reminded anyway.

Yet the Vichy syndrome refused to go away. In the early 1970s, de Gaulle's vision of a France united in resistance began to crumble, and Vichy returned to haunt the French. A dark past is treacherous: the more it is suppressed, the harder it bounces back. As was the case in Germany, and even Japan, many of the children of the wartime generation refused to live with the comfortable lies concocted after 1945 to make life easier for their parents. Claude Chabrol is of that generation, and, although younger, so is the director of Pétain, Jean Marboeuf. Their films came out toward the end of the presidency of Mitterrand—the last French head of

state to have taken an active part in the war, and perhaps the last president to use civil peace as an excuse for keeping quiet about the past.

The first film to crack the mythical France of de Gaulle wide open was Marcel Ophuls's *The Sorrow and the Pity*, released in 1971, but made three years earlier, near the end of de Gaulle's presidency. Ophuls showed that a wide variety of French people, from anti-communist aristocrats who joined the SS to Maurice Chevalier singing for a propaganda radio station, actively or passively collaborated with the Nazis. Vichy France had not been a valiant, patriotic effort to protect French interests in the teeth of the Nazi beast; on the contrary, collaboration, anti-Semitism, and fascist ideology were at the heart of its enterprise. The film was not shown on French television until 1981.

Through the 1970s and into the 1980s, it became increasingly clear that many of the children of the wartime generation—especially the children of French Jews—refused to live with the myth that the Holocaust had been just one of many German crimes, for which no Frenchman could be held responsible. One of the most famous of these children is Serge Klarsfeld, the attorney who helped to track down Klaus Barbie in South America and filed suit against René Bousquet for crimes against humanity in 1989.

In 1943, the Klarsfeld family was hiding in an apartment in Nice, next door to the Gestapo headquarters. Serge was eight at the time. One night, the SS surrounded the apartment block to flush out the Jews. Arno Klarsfeld, a Rumanian Jew, hid his wife, son, and daughter behind a false wall, and gave himself up. He was transported to Drancy and Auschwitz, whence he was taken to work in a coal mine, where he died of exhaustion. Serge visited Auschwitz in 1966 and discovered his father's file. There, standing on the grassy remains of the railway ramp, where Jewish prisoners were selected for slave labor or immediate death, Klarsfeld "heard the cry of my people, a cry in proportion to the crime, a cry impossible to interrupt, prolonging itself to infinity." Together with his German Protestant wife, Beate Kunzel, he has dedicated himself to the anti-Nazi cause, writing books, organizing protests and memorials, tracking down former Nazis and collaborators, and generally making so much noise that nobody could forget what had happened during the war.

Bousquet was the last of four Vichy officials that Klarsfeld tracked down for crimes against humanity. The first was Paul Touvier, accused in 1973. Then, in 1979, came Jean Leguay, Bousquet's representative in the occupied zone. Leguay was followed in 1981 by Maurice Papon, who had been in charge of "Jewish affairs" in the Bordeaux region. Leguay became a respectable businessman after the war. Papon, like Bousquet, was a *notable*—Paris police chief under de Gaulle, and a minister in Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's government. Leguay and Bousquet died before they could stand trial. Touvier was tried and convicted earlier this year.

Klarsfeld, who operates from a large, elegantly furnished office in Paris, has the bulky frame and nervous energy of a boxing promoter. He thrives on controversy, and publicity is one of his main weapons. During my interview with him, he received a steady stream of calls from journalists seeking quotes, since the next day, July 16, 1993, was to be the first time that "the great roundup" in the Vel d'Hiv would be an official day of national remembrance. The commemoration stemmed from a typical Klarsfeld maneuver. The year before, on the anniversary of Pétain's death, President Mitterrand had sent a wreath to be laid in his name on Pétain's tomb, precipitating a large protest organized by Klarsfeld's Association of the Sons and Daughters of Jewish Deportees in France. At the time, Klarsfeld announced that he had been personally assured by Mitterrand that the veneration of Pétain would not be repeated, and that there would be official commemoration of the July 16 round-up. "I made that up, of course," said Klarsfeld, "but it did the trick. I forced his hand."

I asked Klarsfeld why Mitterrand had protected Bousquet from prosecution. "Mitterrand," he said, "was more interested in protecting Bousquet than in defending Vichy." But he went on to explain why he could not share Mitterrand's perspective of the past: "You see, Vichy was not an unhappy time for Mitterrand. There were career opportunities. There were women. This is very different from the point of view of a Jewish child, who saw the Gestapo take away his parents."

"The trial against Bousquet for crimes against humanity," Klarsfeld explained, "was to have been a judgment of two historical theses. One thesis is that the Vichy regime was criminal, because of its persecution of the Jews. The other is that it was not, because under the circumstances it could not have acted otherwise." At least until the 1970s, the latter thesis—that Marshal Pétain and his government did the best they could for their country—was the more commonly held in France. In Pétain's words, uttered very near the end of the war, to be sure, "De Gaulle bravely drew his sword for France, but we were her shield." Klarsfeld said that if Bousquet's trial would have gone in the former police chief's favor, he, Klarsfeld, "would have left France. For it would have meant that the Vichy thesis had been

officially upheld."

I attended the July 16 ceremony on the site of the Vel d'Hiv with Henri Rousso, the historian. He had been there the year before, when it was still an unofficial event. Mitterrand had been there too, just after the controversy over his wreath, and had claimed that the French Republic could not be held responsible for what had happened in 1942. The crowd disagreed and booed him. Mitterrand did not risk a similar reception; this time he had sent his prime minister, Edouard Balladur, instead.

On that hot, humid day, a thousand people had gathered in the Paris street. Many of the men wore yarmulkas. I saw Klarsfeld, wearing the yellow badge of the children of deportees. It was a national reconciliation of a kind, for there, on a makeshift stage, were the representatives of the French veterans association, which had never taken much notice of Jewish suffering before, as well as former members of the Resistance. There were cabinet ministers, Jewish survivors, and three representatives of the French police in full dress uniform, their medals glinting in the midday sun. Among those medals was the *Légion d'honneur*, awarded to every French policeman in 1944 for rising against the Germans only weeks before the liberation of France.

What struck me as particularly odd, however, was the sight of the Jewish survivors themselves. For they wore shoulder bands and carried what looked like regimental flags, with the names of concentration camps embroidered on them, as though they were the veterans of great military battles. But instead of Verdun, it was Mauthausen, or Buchenwald, or Dachau. As they sang the Marseillaise, I saw Henri Rousso shake his head. "This is a celebration of the French Republic," he said. Nobody mentioned that most of the Jewish victims had been foreigners. And nobody, apart from hawk-eyed observers such as Henri Rousso, appeared to notice that the figures of deportees given in many official speeches that day included all the non-Jewish victims too. France is "inconsolable," declared Prime Minister Balladur. "I've been inconsolable for the last fifty years," muttered an old man in the crowd.

There are still people in France who cling to Pétain, in an almost religious manner, like the monarchists after the revolution. When Pétain's lawyer, Jacques Isorni, defended his client in 1945 against charges of treason, he invoked not only Louis XVI, but "our saints," Joan of Arc and Genevieve, the defender of Paris against Attila the Hun. "The marshal," he said to me, "was one of the great Frenchmen." Since he helped to found the Association for the Defense of the Memory of Marshal Pétain in 1951, Isorni has promoted this view, sometimes in a rather bizarre manner. One of the association's aims is to have the marshal's remains moved from his tomb on the Ile d'Yeu, where he died in prison, to the Great War cemetery at Verdun. Since requests to this effect were continuously turned down, some of the more zealous defenders of the marshal's reputation decided to dig up his remains and do the job themselves. They did not succeed. But for some time Pétain's bones were stored in Isorni's garage.

The reason his defenders give for wanting the marshal buried at Verdun is "national reconciliation." They still refuse to see that "the savior of the nation," by representing the anti-liberal, anti-republican tradition that festered in France, was the most divisive head of state since the Revolution. Which is why Henri Rousso has said that the Vichy syndrome should perhaps be called the Pétain syndrome, for, as he writes in his book: "The only issue that really divides the French is Pétain (not Vichy)."

Isorni is of course a very old man, as are most of the diehards in his Pétainist association. And yet the marshal's legacy in France has been so complicated that no president to date has dared to confront it head on, not even Mitterrand. Ever since de Gaulle commuted Pétain's death sentence to a lifetime in prison, French presidents have been wary of the marshal's legacy. Even as Mitterrand claimed that the French Republic bore no responsibility for Vichy, his wreath was laid on Pétain's tomb.

The last words of Marboeuf's film, *Pétain*, are: "Pétainism was never judged." But of course Pétain was judged, by a court in 1945, and condemned to death—for treason, not genocide. Some of the Germans responsible for the fate of Jews in France were judged as well. And it might still be the turn of two Frenchmen. It is no more than just that men, who were responsible for the deaths of so many innocent people, should be judged. But the question remains whether "Pétainism" is judged by putting the king and his courtiers on trial (or indeed by reconstructing their public lives on film). It is a question with implications that go far wider than the Vichy syndrome, particularly in our (nearly) post-communist world. Can one try a political system through its representatives?

Serge Klarsfeld stresses that one can and should. That is why he wanted Klaus Barbie and other Nazi officials to be tried, as representatives of the Nazi occupation. And he wanted Bousquet, Leguay, Papon, and Touvier to be prosecuted, since, in his own words, "these four men symbolize four French institutions: the government, the police, the prefectoral administration, the Militia."

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Crackpot Realism

Fiction for the Forthcoming Millennium

Melvin Jules Bukiet

"A man must be a little mad if he does not want to be even more stupid." *Montaigne*

There are two kinds of literature that endure: that which utterly transcends its era, and that which perfectly reflects it. Most writers of contemporary fiction wish to inhabit the first realm. They ponder questions of love, loneliness, and death. More eloquently or less eloquently, their voices range from the most traditionally centered writers to only recently enfranchised multiculturalists, from John Updike to David Leavitt or Gloria Naylor. No matter their differences, all of them are conservative—in a literary rather than political sense. They tell the kinds of stories we have heard before. The shapes of these stories are familiar, even if their characters are new. These writers are fundamentally ahistoric.

From The *New Yorker* to Honolulu's *Manoa*, these writers know that the white, patriarchal family is no longer the sine qua non of literary experience. What they fail or refuse to see are the deeper changes that cut underneath the skin, into the very marrow of how we perceive the new world we suddenly occupy. Reading itself, and therefore the tiny palace we call culture, is under siege in an age of talk radio, computer games, and especially television, which, like it or not, (and the feeling here is *not*) changes the very forms of all communication. Our sense of space is different in an era of cybernetic networks. Our sense of time is different in the age of the sound-bite.

Even the political center of the nation-state has been subsumed by that of the multinational corporation. As for the religious verities of the past, forget it.

Rebellion is useless; the times they have a-changed. One young writer I knew told me that he was reluctant to have a character ride a car, because he wanted Charles Dickens to be able to understand his work. This was ludicrous. Dickens did not turn his fertile mind from the factories and counting houses of London to speak to Chaucer. If anything, a true rendering of the changes wrought in everything from what we perceive to the way we perceive to what we believe we perceive (see under: faith) is precisely what Dickens would have wanted to hear from my young friend.



ANDREW RODMAN

All happy families are different, but each unhappy family is alike in our own way. Literature has always changed with the times. Yet only a handful of contemporary novelists are attempting to explore the transformations of the last half-century. In addition to changes in family structure and shifts in social dynamics, there also has been be an upheaval in the philosophical interpretation of thought. Mutability itself may be the most underacknowledged story of our time—at least in fiction. Since the pace of development is more rapid than it has ever been, the changes that once occurred glacially through millennia have begun to seem so instantaneous as to be discontinuous, and because this is different than all previous experience, those who have not yet been apprised of the changes they personify regard the writers who most reveal this transformation as chiliastic. The chief lights of this new constellation are Thomas Pynchon, Jonathan Franzen, and Richard Powers. Their work forms a genre that Powers—who most perfectly exemplifies it—unwittingly has already christened "Crack-

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pot Realism."

Soaring past the social, the individual, and the imaginative concerns of earlier literary generations, the work of the crackpot realists takes us into an orbit where the imagination changes the political, the emotional, and occasionally, the physical ground-rules of existence. Nor do these works rest content with merely examining such changes; they are usually written in a stylistically overheated mesh-mosh that embodies the distance we've come from E. M. Foster's sad wish, "Only connect" to the phone company's heart-felt "We're all connected." Conspiracies typically form the heart of these novels' plots; though highly implausible, they cannot be discounted as absolutely impossible. So if it could be true, perhaps it must be true. What is a conspiracy but the ominous flip side of connection?

The technological wheels of modern life that throw the crackpots are particularly American. They emerged from the laboratories of RCA and IBM, as the strategies to promote them came from the boardroom of Time/Warner or the war room of the Pentagon. But the crackpot sensibility certainly crops up elsewhere. The example of Salman Rushdie leaps to mind: Consider the writer compelled to live an existence of intrigue by virtue of the *fatwah* of a dead cleric—a sort of crackpot ambassador at large. If there are Rushdies in the world, then the genre becomes frighteningly less crackpot and considerably more real. Now take a look at Rushdie's work. Children were born somewhere in India at the stroke of independence's midnight, and the author of *Midnight's Children* insists on the profound intent of the ostensible coincidence. It wasn't merely the mother's contractions that led to the significant birth; it was the preordained significance of the birth that set off the contractions.

Such a worldview separates the crackpot realists from their literary contemporaries: Beyond the welter of random, inchoate experience, they find pattern and meaning. For every code there is a cipher. There's danger and danger's nemesis, truth. If crackpot realism begins with subversion and suspicion, it takes a spiritual journey in a secular rocket ship all the way to salvation.

Although they write the quintessential fiction of this age, these novelists do have literary forebears. Indeed, the first of the crackpots may be Apuleius, who wrote *The Golden Ass*, circa 160 C.E. when remains of Greek faith were contending with newly risen Christianity and the mystery religions of the Levant. In fact, the extraordinary metamorphosis from a man to an ass that is at the heart of the book is undone when Lucius is returned to human form by the goddess Isis. This is not literary game play, but an attempt by Apuleius to apprehend the world as he knows it. *The Golden Ass* was written at the moment when Rome was at its apparently invulnerable apogee, but the invisible rot that would eventually destroy the empire had already set in. The question thus arises: Does this sort of fiction emerge at the end of an era—or the commencement of another—a consequence of the struggle to understand the shift in the cultural conversation?

Closer kin to the crackpots include Nathanael West, whose *Day of the Locust* faces the new filmic vision, and, yet earlier, the Gothic novels, especially Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, that pathetic tale of technology run amok, and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, in which the eponymous hero, more demonic than the simply lustful vampires who succeeded him—from Dracula to Tom "I'm sucking as fast as I can" Cruise—ventures into the hidden domain where the virgin and the dynamo meet. Ranging continents and centuries, Melmoth "labors indefatigably, through three-octave volumes to accomplish the destruction of two or three souls, while any common devil would have demolished one or two thousand." Quoth the raver, Edgar Allan Poe.

Another crackpot antecedent,

"The most sophisticated and accessible analysis of Malcolm we have."
—Cornel West

"An eloquent and humanistic plea for 'a world in which it is *possible* for black males to behave decently'."
—Jonathan Reider, *The New York Times* Book Review

"Examines Malcolm's continuing legacy, celebrating the humane, complex, radical democratic vision of his final days.... Dyson shows that to all who search for 'a secure and empowering racial identity,' Malcom X matters now."
—*Booklist*

"Extraordinary.... I highly recommend this compelling book."
—Senator Carol Mosely-Braun

MAKING MALCOLM
The Myth and Meaning of Malcolm X
MICHAEL ERIC DYSON
$19.95, 240 pp.
At bookstores everywhere. To charge, 1-800-451-7556 (M-F, 9-5 EST)
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Nathaniel Hawthorne, provided the pedagogical underpinnings for this school for difficult children in his introduction to *The House of the Seven Gables.* Deeming his work "a romance," Hawthorne distinguishes it from a novel "presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience," whereas his own chosen form "has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing."

The crackpots' tack of illuminating the real through the fantastic links them to another group of books bound together under the rubric "magic realism." When Gabriel Garcia Marquez dared to allow Remedios the Beauty to float away from her spiritual clothesline in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, it was a scene in literary history that altered the boundaries of the acceptable. It implied that more than representing all of life in a fictional character, that character may experience all that we can conceive. But what Marquez, and since him Mark Helprin, the Israeli writer Meir Shalev, and, perhaps, Toni Morrison have wrought is still rooted in the physical universe, albeit reshaped with an aim to exploring a deeper emotional truth. Again, their folk and fairy-tale motifs, while infinitely valuable, are not the truths of the writers' own time, and there is a willful archaism in their fabulism.

Crackpot realism shatters even Marquez's implicit acceptance of the conventions of plot and character, aspiring to a vastly wider domain. Standing in front of the firing squad, the crackpot realist refuses the metaphorical blindfold that allows the magical realist to declare that life is *like* this. Condemned, he faces the rifles head on, lights a cigarette, and insists that life *is* this. He's not crazy; the world is.

Arriving closer to our destination, we find in post-modernist writing echoes of the crackpots' worldview of chaos and disruption. Born of the Sixties, when politics turned weird in Vietnam and the electronic onslaught truly began, the post-modernists jettison artistry, choosing feckless plot and nonexistent character. Maybe that really is the world of MTV, but as MTV itself will not endure, so the post-modernists' dark, glib view implies not only the meaninglessness of their world, but of their own labors as well. Donald Barthelme begins one story, "An aristocrat was riding down the street in a carriage. He ran over my father. After the ceremony... I was trying to think of the reason my father had died. Then I remembered: he was run over by a carriage." The blasé tautology regarding matters of life and death creates a similar indifference in the reader. After I tossed this book away, I was trying to think of the reason I tossed this book away. Then I remembered: it was stupid.

What this reader has yearned for and suddenly discovered is a literature that faces the absurdity of modern life as does Barthelme, with the imaginative freedom of Marquez and the seriousness with which Updike pursues his suburban angst. Then, if one adds a pinch of mystical gnosis to the stew, one begins to get the recipe for crackpot realism.

It's been twenty-one years since Pynchon's strange, magisterial opus, *Gravity's Rainbow*, opened with the line, "A screaming comes across the sky," and in that time Pynchon's diabolical fantasia has become the daily bread of our lives. We've had Watergate deranging domestic politics, Iran-contra on the international playing field, and *"Star Wars"* the movie, begetting the strategy. Nowadays we all travel the information superhighway together with the convoys of superfluous nonsense that zip at the speed of light via fiber-optics into our homes and minds. The science fiction of half a generation ago is the mundane reality of today. Yet the serious, subliminal changes perceived by the lunar vision of the crackpot realist in works such as *Gravity's Rainbow*, Franzen's *The 27th City*, and Powers's *Prisoner's Dilemma*, are those wherein a troubled protagonist finds in the external world the embodiment of his own discontent.

The characters in these books are not necessarily lunatics, although they deviate from the standards of normal behavior. It is their authors' perceptions that are clearly askew from common notions of reality. Marquez does not really believe that people fly, but Pynchon may believe that they fuck upon the future landing sites of missiles yet to be launched, and Franzen knows that they plot till they drop.

In *Prisoner's Dilemma,* Powers's Hobbs family speaks the dense, elliptical, self-referential dialogue of intelligent people trying to comprehend the bizarre circumstances of their own and every modern citizen's life. The Hobbses are a family with currents as thick as those of Updike's Angstroms, but they have more to think about than sex and mortgages. The traditional, ahistoric novel moves in recurring cycles, but the crackpot realist's universe continually confronts him with the unheard of. The Hobbses must worry about their brilliantly insane father's enigmatic illness (perhaps the result of irradiation by atomic testing?) until page 313 (in the paperback edition) when eldest son Artie realizes the answer to the dilemma posed much earlier in the book by his difficult sire.

The conundrum Artie's father sets forth is as follows: Two prisoners are questioned separately. If neither talks, both are sentenced to two years in jail; if both talk, each gets ten years. If one talks and the other doesn't, the

talker is freed, the silent one executed. But neither can know how the other will respond to the situation. How then does one act? Artie's midnight realization is that "self-interest is not in the self's best interest... The only reasonable choice was not the choice of reason." It's faith that must stand against logic. Forced to face a situation earlier generations could never imagine in a world redefined by Los Alamos and Disneyland, both of which figure prominently in the book, "Artie named his answer Crackpot Realism."

In the novels of this curious school, the characters, and, by empathetic extrapolation, we, the readers, are all prisoners attempting to solve the calculus that leads out of the labyrinth that hems us in. It's not easy. The swirling politics of Franzen's wretched Saint Louis, once the fourth most populous city in the United States, dropped a long way down, are as difficult to penetrate as those of Kafka's *Amerika*. Indeed, Kafka may also be one of the forebears of the form, although he puts his fantasy to more allegorical use.

In *Strong Motion*, Franzen's second novel, a series of earthquakes is shaking suburban Boston. These earthquakes are caused by the illegal waste-disposal practices of Sweeting-Aldren, a large chemical company, whose evil doings are uncovered by the hero, Louis Holland, whose girlfriend happens to be a Harvard seismologist. But what makes this truly crackpot is not merely the grandiosity of the scheme and its eco-cosmic effects, but the perfect slipknot of strands that goes way beyond the normal coincidences that all fiction, as indeed all life, shares. It's an elevation of random meeting to inevitability. The first earthquake kills one person, Louis's grandmother, who leaves a $22(as in *Catch*?)-million dollar estate in the form of stock in, you guessed it, Sweeting-Aldren, whose nefarious chief executive is Mr. Stoorhuys, whose son, Peter, is dating Louis's sister. If the reader feels dizzy, imagine how the characters feel. There's also a fundamentalist Christian sect involved.

Plot runs rampant in crackpot realism (crackplot realism?). A geometric rendering of each exemplary novel would show neither realism's straight line nor magic's beauteous curve, but an exponentially increasing spiral of paranoia become actual become less bizarre than the paranoid could ever imagine.

Whereas the avatars of minimalism adhere to Peggy Lee's critical dictum, "that's all there is, my friend," the crackpot feels, senses, is certain but cannot prove, that there's more than meets the eye to be understood—IF one finds the evidence missing from the Warren Report or the secret minutes of the Trilateral Commission. If one requires a vile theological animus, there are *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* to explain why we're unhappy. Or if one wants a benign Star Chamber passing a benevolent judgment, one can look toward the mysterious MacArthur Foundation, which has wisely chosen to confer its blessings upon Mr. Powers. In any case, there is the assumption that some of us are shaping our world and it's up to Pynchon's Slothrop or Franzen's Martin Probst or Artie Hobbs to discover who. What he requires is a clue, a map, a key.

Metafictionalists also try to tease significance from their fictional worlds, but Robert Coover and his ilk seem more interested in the playfulness of words and ideas for their own sake rather than the plots their ideas engender. John Barth goes so far as to tell us in the "Dunyazadiad" segment of *Chimera* that the keys to the treasure are the treasure. This reduces language to a game. For Salmon Rushdie and Richard Powers and his prisoners, the stakes are more substantial. Compelled to stand by the courage of his convictions, the crackpot believes that ideas create his reality; they are vital to breaking the code. Unlike Barth, the crackpot knows that there *is* a treasure, and is curiously literal in his literary pursuit. In *The Crying of Lot 49*, Pynchon's pre-*Rainbow* novella involving medieval postal delivery systems, the heroine, Oedipa Maas, has got to break the code, find the secret truth beneath the ostensible truth. She pares away the layers to arrive at the core.

And what is plot but the causal attachments between events?

Return to Hawthorne's preface and turn the page. We see the title of Chapter One staring at us: "The Old Pyncheon Family." Accident? Unlikely. Premonition? Conceivable. Positively necessary cosmic link? Of course! You see, it's spooky; there are connections, past and future, among writers, within schools, and between the secret meanings of the world and their literary expositors.

The first place to look for connections is within the language itself. The deadly serious import of alphabets and the grammars they inhabit resound in crackpot realism. Words are never "merely" speech; they take on a physical existence as real as their speakers. There are Ernest Hobbs's private tapes that construct Hobbstown, an alternate universe within *Prisoner's Dilemma*, and illicit tapes in *The 27th City*. Note, too, the mail scene from Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*, in which the battle-delayed epistles of Pacific soldier Roy Gallagher's wife, Mary, continue to arrive after the telegram announcing her passing. The dead woman is resurrected into a secondary life doomed as the dates on the letters approach the date of her original demise. Until that second death, her words create a life that momentarily triumphs over death itself.

Along with *belles* or *mauvaises lettres*, crackpot real-

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Im and B'li :

Women In The Conservative Movement

Judith Plaskow

At a Solomon Schechter school on Long Island, the new principal of Jewish studies, a rabbi, was hired with the board's proviso that she not daven in the morning *minyan* wearing *tallit* (prayer shawl) and *tefillin* (phylacteries). The issue was not that girls are forbidden to wear these at the school, but that the board wanted them to come to any decision on their own, free from the influence of a female role model.

This convoluted logic is emblematic of the deep and continuing ambivalence of the Conservative movement toward women's full participation in Jewish religious life. Eleven years after the Jewish Theological Seminary's decision to admit women to the rabbinical school, there are many signals that the movement's institutions remain undecided about what they want and expect from and for their girls and women.



JULIE DELTON

•Item: The spring 1994 issue of Ramah: *The Magazine* featured profiles of women rabbis and cantors who were graduates of Ramah summer camps. Ramah Canada refused to distribute the issue because it feared the article would be "bad publicity" for the camp. The Ramah commission did not intervene.

•Item: At a Yom-Hashoah concert co-sponsored by two Conservative synagogues, the cantor of the visiting synagogue was not permitted to sit on the *bimah* because the host cantor refused to recognize her as clergy.

•Item: Camp Ramah in the Berkshires has two *minyanim*, an *im minyan*, in which girls can lead services and read from the Torah if they have taken on themselves the obligation to pray three times daily, and a *b'li minyan*, in which boys who may or may not have any sense of obligation can lead or read as they are able. Although *im* and *b'li* are meant to signify with *aliyot* for girls and *without aliyot* for girls, in fact, the terms convey the message: with and without girls themselves.

•Item: For the last few years, women graduates of the Jewish Theological Seminary's rabbinical school have been the last students placed. Senior rabbis often function as "gatekeepers" in the placement process, choosing not to interview women candidates because their congregations are "not ready." Rather than seeing the decision to ordain women as an implied contract requiring ongoing preparation and education of congregations, the movement (including both the seminary and United Synagogue) has left ordained women to make their own way.

•Item: Following discussion with movement leaders at the 1994 Rabbinical Assembly, a group of women rabbis sent a letter to the Leadership Council of the Conservative Movement asking them to set up a commission to evaluate and address the status of women. Ismar Schorsch, chancellor of the seminary, replied that the council is not interested in a movement-wide approach at this time. He asserted that individual problems should instead be dealt with as they arise through the relevant arm of the movement. Thus, inequities at Ramah would be dealt with by the Ramah Commission, problems in hiring of rabbis by the Rabbinical Assembly, and so on.

This unwillingness to think through the role of women in Conservative Judaism in a systematic way was already evident in the original decision to ordain in 1983. That step was not premised on a commitment to religious equality, but on the narrower argument that women who accept all *mitzvot* (commandments) as obligatory should be counted in a *minyan* and allowed to exercise religious leadership on the same basis as men. The effect of the decision was to create two distinct categories of

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women—those who would choose to become like men and those who would choose to remain Other. In acting on this basis, the seminary both foreclosed the possibility that women might explore and exercise their obligations in new and distinctive ways and set up two problematic options that could only reinforce its own ambivalence.

What was lacking in both the decision to ordain women and its implementation was that vision or sense of educational mission that one expects to find in religious and educational institutions. On the one hand, the ordination decision was the culmination of a process of increasing women's education and participation that had been going on since the founding of the movement. On the other hand, and more profoundly, it also should have marked the beginning of a deliberate program of preparing both women and men to enter into new roles and new forms of communal relationship.

In the absence of commitment to such a process, the movement defends its ambivalence on specific issues of women's participation on the grounds of making room for "pluralism." But it is one thing to continue to accept non-egalitarian congregations from the Conservative Movement and another to neglect the creation of an educational program that would allow individuals and communities to work through the emotional, ethical, and halakhic issues connected with major change. It is one thing to make room for opponents of the ordination of women and another not to support or stand with pride behind women the seminary has ordained. It is one thing to allow girls to make their own decisions concerning religious practice and another not to articulate the movement's goals for women's religious practice.

There is a Catch-22 at work here. As former Ramah director Debby Hirshman points out, the Conservative Movement needs to take a systematic and sustained approach to implementing women's full participation. It needs to examine each institution within it, to evaluate existing policies and practices, and to ask where intervention is possible. It cannot formulate consistent policy or bring about substantive change without working systematically over time. But, of course, it cannot implement such an approach without some animating commitment and vision.

In the absence of such commitment at the center—and, in-deed, even were it there—there is still ample opportunity to apply both pressure and creativity at a grass-roots level. Parents at local Solomon Schecter schools can work to ensure that gender issues are part of staff training and are integrated into the curriculum. Schools might also sponsor meetings to discuss girls' expectations. Should they wear *kippot*, or should they not? What sense of themselves is conveyed by the indifference or conflicting messages communicated by individual schools and the movement as a whole? Ramah camps could be structured to provide girls with the skills and encouragement they need to take on religious leadership and could also be addressing gender issues. Businesses, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions across the country have been hiring facilitators to help them deal with the challenges of an increasingly diverse and multicultural work force. The Conservative Movement should send its own facilitators into synagogues, camps, and schools to help work through the issues and conflicts that arise out of the new roles for women. Lectureships and scholar-in-residence programs could also address these questions.

There are also important opportunities for change at the Conservative Movement's institutions of higher learning that should not be overlooked. The seminary recently received a $15-million grant for graduate studies in Jewish education. As Rabbi Lori Forman points out, this represents a chance for the seminary to think through the place of gender issues in the Jewish education of the future. How will the school of education integrate the new research on Jewish women's history into its own teaching? Will it encourage and participate in the preparation of new materials for every educational level? Will it train teachers in gender sensitivity and encourage them to think through their hopes and expectations of girls?

Moreover, this past fall, at the Rabbinical and Cantorial Schools' retreat, Chancellor Schorsch announced two decisions that potentially have far-reaching implications for the role of women in the movement. He decided that prayer leaders in the Seminary *minyan* can, at their discretion, include the *imahot* (matriarchs) in the davening. And—based on an article by Judith Hauptmann in the winter 1993 issue of *Judaism* —Schorsh announced that women no longer formally have to take on the obligation to pray daily but are seen by the tradition as obligated. Since, as Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin points out, this second decision alters the basis on which women are admitted to the seminary, it opens the possibility—hinted at in the first decision—that women's covenant may be developed and lived out in other ways than simply taking on formerly male roles.

Once again, then, as was the case eleven years ago, the Conservative Movement stands at a crossroads. The increasingly visible gap between the promise of equality and the willingness to implement it in a consistent and thorough way makes clear the need for renewed action. Whether this was intended or not, the decision to ordain was received by the movement's women as a statement of commitment to their full religious participation. The struggle continues to clarify and strengthen that pledge, however ambivalently made, and to turn it into a reality. □

Pouring Water Into Leaking Barrels

A Solitude Of Tikkun In The Works Of Ben-Zion (1897 - 1987)

Tabita Shalem

In 1986, the premier issue of TIKKUN ran on its cover "Moses Gathering The Broken Tablets," a painting by the late artist Ben-Zion. One can imagine the Israelites, fear-riddled as they perceive the awesome luminosity of Moses, turning away toward distraction, thereby failing in the *nisayon* (the Hebrew word for test and experience) of the perception of beauty as a revelation of divine essence. In this painting, Moses' head bends toward his chest; the torso folds into itself in a posture of grief at once tender and wrenching. He holds the fragments of smashed stone as poignantly as a mother gathering a child to her breast. The sculptural rendering of the figure, as well as the colors of beard and robe, relate the figure to sky and stone and mimic the rocky terrain surrounding him. The prophet is at one with the earth on which he stands, barefooted upon the dust of holiness. Moses, the quintessential *Homo Sympathetikos*—the term Abraham Joshua Heschel used to describe the prophetic union as a sympathy with divine pathos—echoes the primal breaking of the vessels, and thereby the need for *tikkun,* the restoration of harmony unto the world.

The melody of paradox, evident in this depiction of Moses, is the golden thread weaving its way through Ben-Zion's work. For it is perhaps the blessing of the very tragedy of a broken world which introduces the necessity for and possibility of *tikkun,* allowing for humankind's participation in the act of creation.

For Ben-Zion, art was a calling, as is prophecy, as God calls the name of the first artist—Bezalel, son of Uri—for he was in the likeness, in the shelter of the divine, born of light. Ben-Zion saw the way of the artist-poet as a lofty solitary meandering—the exiling of trivialization and transmutation of matter into luminous wonder.

Again and again, Ben-Zion returned to the subject of the prophets, and through oil and iron and pen he drew them as he was drawn into them. He became these prophets, bellowing their cry across a vast, empty desert



FIG. A

landscape. They gesture: supplicating, rejecting, lamenting, knowing, asking. "The Prophet in the Dark" (fig.A), a naked figure with exaggerated and distorted limbs, open, upturned hands as if waiting to be filled, alone and solitary, hints at the nearness of the far through a five-pointed star and moon, no longer in their rightful place but upon the earth. "Abraham and the Stars" (fig.B) again introduces the turning of a mask-like face toward the heavens, his long beard of light reflects the light of star-torched sky, his cane hooked upon a star while a diagonal rope connects ground and space. Abraham, forsaking the falsehood of idol worship and rejecting the comfort of familiar community, irradiates a deluded world with his incandescence.

And there is Job, etched into copper plate, or canvas, or immersed in watercolor moving through unbroken gestures from challenging the divine until, enlightened by the divine, he reposes in dancing line and cloth,

Tabita Shalem is a psychotherapist deeply interested in creativity. She worked with Ben-Zion for nine years and continues to work with his estate.

finally reconciled. The watercolor (fig.C) re-emphasizes the colors of rainbow and earth, suggesting that the separation of human from the natural world is but illusion.

Ben-Zion moved from the outrage of prophets to the tenderness of Hasidic and Kabbalistic giants. He painted the Baal Shem Tov communing with birds and trees in the forest. Hasidic lore tells that the Baal Shem Tov spent years alone in the Carpathian Mountains as a young man. For Ben-Zion, walking held meditative rapture. As a youth he walked to the Carpathian Mountains, the Tatra Mountains, losing himself in the wheat fields and pine woods of the Ukraine. As an old man he said "...go into the woods. Pick up a stone. Look at it. Turn it over. Look at it." He painted Reb Nachman of Bratslav, the great grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, in Hebrew poetry as an adored being wrapped in holiness, words flowing from his mouth like precious pearls. He painted a Jew blessing the Sabbath wine with upturned fingers recalling the five-petaled rose of Israel.

The years of the Holocaust triggered restless and obsessive sketching of Jews for Ben-Zion. Strikingly, the artist did not depict the gore and slaughter. Rather he chose to expose the genocide by loving depiction of types and the breath of daily life condemned to the final solution. These sketches begot a series of gouaches and the oil triptych he named "De Profundis." Though he swore he fell mute to his cherished Hebrew word as the world could no longer hear, out of silence emerged the colors and pigment his inner eye discerned among the darkness. "De Profundis," a prayer: "From the depths I have called out to thee, O God." In these, many heads are crowded against one another, turned in various directions, outlined in black with strong use of parallel diagonal line, bearded patriarchs draped in prayer shawls. They are like minerals, or a heap of rocks, or gravestones. In some, what appears to be barbed wire and poles of a fence surround the heads, immediately bringing to mind the deadly confinements of concentration and labor camps. But then, can we think, too, of the *seyagim*, those protective fences of Judaism, that enclosure of space as a way of safeguarding the sacred. Or can we think of the gateless gate, that place of paradox through which only the wise can enter?

His fascination with masks translated into what Ben-Zion came to refer to as simply the "Jewish Heads." The eyes are penetrating, piercing. The gaze is inward, empty, as if cleared of obfuscating veils. The flesh is washed in haunting combinations of greens, blues, ochres, greys—the blue streaking across a forehead, the red like a wash of poppies. Colors gather in concentration at the place of the third inner eye between the eyebrows. The head is in dark and in light, asking to separate the sacred from the profane. One large watercolor depicts a Jew wrapped in prayer shawl, the flesh all in green, the man immersed in greenness as he is immersed in prayer, eyelids turning inward like a circle of solitude within a circle of draped shawl. Ben-Zion's lifelong quest to "touch the origins," to return to the source, is foretold in an epic-like poem written in his early thirties, eerily voicing the six decades of life yet to unfold. The body of this poem, named "Shiva" ("Returning"), is bound by the image of a rope-maker weaving his way backward until he arrives at the beginning, at the eternity. The translation of the Hebrew "shiva" into the English "returning" impoverishes the breath of the original for the root of "shiva" is the same as that of "to reply" and "to repent." The hero as artist—poet seeks a way back to the self, or to his God, if you will. He is a *Baal Teshuvah*—Master of Returning—finding his way back to the path. To the

FIG. B



practice. An ultimate *tikkun*.

Ben-Zion was the son of a renowned cantor and composer of liturgical music who followed the way of conventional Jewish orthodoxy. The father was dismayed by the early signs of passion in the boy: the child's drawing deemed ill-fitting for one reared to become a rabbi, his gathering of things (which he was to continue throughout his life) seen as inappropriate playfulness; his taking leave of the parental home in early adolescence into the Gentile fields where he walked endlessly, unthinkable in those days. The father, a *misnaged* (a rationalist), upon seeing the boy's immersion in prayer and silent enunciation of each sacred syllable, worried that his son would be swept up by the wildness of Hasidism. Not belonging to either camp became the salient theme in the artist's life. Deeply immersed in Jewishness, he did not live as a conventionally observant Jew—for the Orthodox he was too earthy and far-reaching; for the intellectual, secular, sophisticated Jew, he was too Jewish.

The artist's ardor for the natural world generated works which he executed only after he removed himself from the splendor, lowering each treasured discovery into the well of his being. Golden wheat fields became colossal and monolithic, thistles project powerful forms oddly comforting, trees dance while clods of Canaanite earth choreograph unique landscapes of the thing itself, transforming the artist through craft of pure labor. He held fragments of antiquity hewn by man with an open Blakean palm which quieted any skepticism about the possibility of "seeing a world in a grain of sand and a heaven in a wild flower." His open palm served as an abode for the sacred. He had many companions through the long nights of vigilant soul-making—Dante, Blake, Wordsworth, Thoreau, Gilgamesh, Schubert, Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Van Gogh, to name but a few. They all lined up with masks, minerals, clay, until the morning star "awoke in him his song and erased the darkness" from his brow. They served as reminders, in the words of Gould describing Bach, that "he was less interested in dramatic resolution than the joyous essence of being which goes on and on."

So where does this leave us, without him in the world?

The movement of art as that of life, is punctuated by time. The concern of art history is precisely this: the placement of the artist and his work in time. The realm of Jewish art is immediately complex in its very asking for definition: what makes a work of art Jewish—its subject matter, its intention, its creator?

Completely self-taught, Ben-Zion extended his repertoire quietly and joyously. Poetry and brush, etching, and iron sculpture. He gathered thingness around him, strung necklaces of ancient beads, gathered the jewels of the possible through the long hushed years of his life, walking backward until he came to "the beginning, to the gates of eternity."

Hailed as among the most talented in his early association with such artists as Mark Rothko and Adolph Gottlieb in the years of the avant-garde group,



FIG. C

"The Ten," he departed to follow his own path. He clung tenaciously to the desire to continue a hallowed tradition. Tradition, as the Hindu scholar Ananda K. Coomaraswamy has defined it: in accordance with truth; deriving one's knowledge of spirit from the ancients. He sought, as the late Rebbe of Lubavitch instructed, to "beautify the faces of the Jews" and create through their essence a spiritual dialectic with humanity. To the world, he was too much a figurative expressionist in a time when abstraction and non-objective art held tightly the reins and proclaimed abstraction as "the only way to a true mysticism." To the Jewish art world, all traces of major exhibits in Jewish museums became obsolete.

How to go on without him?

We receive, mend, transform, repair the candelabrum of our inner space so as to ignite the universe with flames of holiness.

To become whole. A true *tikkun*. A homecoming. □

Wherever in the Language of Jewish Women a Garden Grows

Judith Harris

It is no superstition that a woman has many lives. For a woman has always lived by the moon, shuddering and waning. I am a Jew, and a woman who wants to write about Jewish women, a paradox. Opening to the bold-faced illustrations in my Hebrew book, as a child, I recall myself there, floating above the *alephs* and *hays*, barefoot and veiled, tied to a mother or daughter, carrying a basket of berries or figs in a huddled cadre of goats. Or I am that girl in a steamy stock car, in 1944, shoved in a corner, hiccuping the way hounds do before dawn, watching women with eyes like burst corks beating their breasts and pulling out their hair. A hand comes in through the peephole, a small rectangle barred for breath like a dog-catcher's wagon, or priest's confession box. What wild hair, yellow and red and black and gray, in a heap of smoke and twilight, flickering in the ashes of a woman's shining pride or single beauty. Although we ride standing up like cattle to the slaughter, we are not beasts, we are not.

Unable to sleep, I decide to read something short, something for pleasure and choose Singer's "Yentl" from the *Collected Works*. Tomorrow I teach my course in American literature. The students will rattle their tissue-thin pages penning little scrawls like chicken scratches on the anthology's page, numbered 1059. In sheepish orchestra some will stretch and yawn or look out the windows, having left their weighty books at home. At any prod of the wind, the venetian blinds will bang against the crank as if to challenge or applaud my points. Some of the students will be distracted by the banter and music on the fraternity lawn that faces my classroom. Only one or two students will answer the questions, and two or more will question those answers before our time is up. On my way home, in the world without language, without prescriptive morality or amplification, I will see trees shake off their leaves like a cat cleaning its fur. Ideas will be simple again.

Judith Harris teaches in the English Department at George Washington University. Her poetry has appeared in Antioch Review, The American Scholar, Boulevard, *and* Her Face in the Mirror: Jewish Women on Mothers and Daughters.



MAIRAV SALOMON

Yentl did not want to be a woman because she could not study the Torah, so on Sabbath nights she transformed herself by dressing up in trousers, fringed ritual garment, skullcap and covered her hair. In a man's place, Yentl's soul thirsted for knowledge, but it was the weakness of her woman-side that brought her down. In the end, she is forced to wander alone, cast out like a traitor to *both* men and women. The Talmud states: *Women are temperamentally light-headed* (Shabbat: 33b).

Singer wants us to know that the sexes are incompatible, and that the knowledge that Yentl gains as a male yeshiva student is wasted on the woman who becomes infatuated with the flesh. The impossibility of consummating such a love that Yentl has for Avigdor

leads her to Hadassah, who is faithful, blind, and stupid. Hadassah is just another side of Yentl, a mirror grazing the real.

I do not blame Singer for making Yentl a villain, for poking fun at Hadassah's gullibility. Knowledge is not wisdom. To Singer, learned women are masquerading, and will abuse the best of what is offered to them, although they have lived as many lives as there are layers of skin. Now, with my thoughts, I walk through generations of women's gardens, some scanty, some rich, a ghost among ghosts.

Say I am wanting to be a scholar, a woman, who blindly digs *under* the words, looking for old roots to pull up like potent radishes, something to hoard in the cellar. Say I am again that Jew, at the foot of Sinai's mount, waiting for a sign from man or God, or say I am a woman denied access to the law, although I've been taught to obey. *Here is a proposition*: If I am the one I have always been, inside the seed of mother and grandmother and great-grandmother, stirring the pot, plowing my body for the crop of sons, then I don't need words but *things*—the barn, and garden toppled with cabbages that loll slantwise like the globe, the earth divided like so many puzzles.

Because these hours are mine while others are asleep in the house, I try to imagine that I am the girl I once saw years ago in an old sepia photograph framed in nickle silver, a girl in black stockings and high-button shoes, two stiff braids, a muslin smock, and holding what appears to have been a small violin. It is because of Singer that I am retracing her footsteps. The year is 1899, the place is a village in the hills of a country that keeps changing its name and its borders. Perhaps Austria, perhaps Poland, perhaps Hungary. The photographer comes up from under his black sorcerer's cape and smoke puffs with the shock of the shutter.

Back in the small shack, I am hiding the sugar on the top shelf of the pantry, avoiding the pond where women wash their Sabbath cloths because it is yellowed with typhoid. In the road, I am watching the grass widow kicked by a soldier's boot, hurrying home to my mother who is outside tossing kernels to the geese. It is the day before Sabbath in the shtetl, and my mother has wrung the chicken's neck, plucking the wispy feathers and letting them flutter over the floor like an angel's wings. She washes the silver, polishes the candlesticks, takes a knife under my nails. Twisted challah frowns black in the oven. Lighting the candles, she spooks me. Her blood is magical but evil; a woman's blood is different from a lamb's or cow's because it does not splatter or gush from the axe, but runs like a tear.

I have been thinking about God again. I imagine him constantly watching over me and talk to him whenever I think. My Sunday-school teacher says God does not have a long beard, nor carries a staff. God is only mist, like the smoke that seems to rise from the tar wood path after a storm in the white summer.

I have studied over this, although studying is prohibited for girls, but in my own way I have searched in every cratered rock, every climbing tree, for proof of this God who enters sorrow like the throb of a frog. I think of God constantly, and sometimes curse Him, although I know it is a sin—he has not yet struck me down for it.

What do the men know as they unwind the Torah scroll the way we unwind our braids at night in secret? I have thought about the text, the holy tongues of men who lack any pleasure of harmony. Do they rise as we do, to the attics, and lower to the slops of the yards? What if each of our chores, our duties, was recorded like history? How many sentences we would have, how many conversations, writing over and over the walls with our lye sponges. Men walk home in their black hats, and supper becomes round with serving and passing and washing and drying and the moon is a full cup in the kitchen window, a fire by which we dip and light the stars.

A Jewish girl is not taught, but has stooped to clean the droppings of gold and black animals. At night, I read my body for the first letters of blood, monthly. And what is the female body inside but yeast, the trapped wind that mixes with the blizzards of flour and the milk? Inside my body is already a child, a name, a bubble, an egg, a crinkle in the well.

I take up Singer, and the little girl disappears in the funnel of lamplight, like the empty space inside the circle of a telescope, or a bolt of fabric. I'm an academic. In the smaller room, my own daughter dreams of trivial things like wearing a red satin dress to sleep. What will I tell her about where she comes from? Good or bad, she will see no open trunks of candlesticks nor sniff the odors of the strange cooking things. She won't have to try and decipher the irritability of Yiddish as a clan gathers for gin rummy with foreign currency. What I know is that my grandmother was once a chambermaid and her day was from spigot to spigot as if water were a single rope that wrapped from pot to bowl to trough, that spilled a little trail behind her.

Before she died, she opened her trunk and gave my mother the cinnamon-colored photograph edged and burnished under a dull silver frame, dated with a quill pen: 1899. "Here is the picture of your grandparents

and your aunt and myself in the old country," she said. There, seated, was a hollow-eyed woman on a rickety chair, her hair covered by a kerchief. In her black lap, she held her hands over a book that appeared to be the Bible. Next to her, a man stood with an ill-fitting black jacket that was too short at the wrists, and tugged to button. Next to him, a fashionable young woman wore a hat and fur muff, her hair gathered in a Gibson bun and ringlets, as she clasped a straw suitcase. And next to her was the girl, the little girl in the muslin smock who dragged the small violin, the one who had entered my thoughts as I read "Yentl," the one that vanished as I turned the last page.

The photograph stands now in a hutch in my mother's bedroom. I remember that the backdrop was a painting of a Bavarian castle with a moat and fading rocky cliff. When I asked if the woman could read the book in her lap, or if the pretty aunt was boarding a train, or if the child could play, my mother explained that the objects in the picture were photographer's props, a part of the illusion. No one was really reading, or traveling in high boots or fake ermine, or owned a black supper jacket, or could play a violin that was broken and missing its strings.

My great-grandmother had already buried two stillborn infants when my grandmother was born. She paid a nun to perform an exorcism with a cross and water over the wailing baby girl to break the spell. It worked: She prospered, had sons, and thought God was now pleased. The girl was sent away to work in the hotel where convalescents came to bathe in salty springs. My grandmother is the little girl who stares straight ahead in the picture with her schoolroom costume and useless instrument.

To avoid an arranged marriage, my grandmother escaped to America and went to work. My grandfather chanted the Talmud, but could find no real labor that suited him—although he tried being a broom-maker, a pelt tailor, a shoveler of coal. He was too dreamy and spoiled; he had not known the labor of chipping the ice that peeled away the reaps of the garden, and how to blend a few chives, a chicken wing, and a half potato into a supper that would last for a week.

This grandmother worked in a dress shop, beading material for bonnets and hats, trundling a pushcart. She was a gruff, unbearable woman, who grew fat under the whalebone ribs of her corset. At fourteen, my mother was sent to work sewing buttons on leather shoes, and all through high school she sat on a hard stool in the lunchroom, ringing the register, while the others balanced their liverwurst sandwiches and custards on their trays. She became a secretary/bookkeeper to help put her brothers through college and dropped out of school.

My parents did not carry with them the traditions and obligations of their parents, and we received little formal training in Judaism. In the 1950s, Jews were assimilating; we went to Hebrew school and to synagogue on high holidays. We didn't light Sabbath candles, but I said the "*Sh'ma*" each night, the way some count sheep. My parents put away their brittle prayerbooks and replaced them with authoritative titles on child-rearing and modern Judaism. At school, I was excused, by note, from kneeling, or saying grace. While other children coiled ornaments around a real Christmas tree, I was given loose paper and a pencil to draw a menorah crested by an exotic, six-pointed star.

Occasionally, one of my classmates would try to convert me in our finished basement, explaining all about the crucifixes hanging in their living rooms. I hated to see the excruciating pain on Christ's face—his porcelain, wooden, or plastic arms and chest stabbed with tiny streaks of red paint, like Maybelline polish, and think it was, as my friend said, the Jews' fault. My mother sewed, and tried to bake, and tried to carry out her duties as a Jewish wife and mother, as she'd been taught to. But soon she went back to work, taking the bus back and forth, even on Fridays and after sunset.

I am thinking now of the women, the heroines of the Bible we colored in Old Testament coloring books. Sarah, who laughed out loud when the angels came to tell her she would, at ninety, bear a son. She was baking when they arrived, and probably offered them a roll or sweetcake. I can see her rocking, her bones had already dried and shriveled, laughter splitting her sides, laughter breaking her in two. Sarah is patience, piety. The rock of mother into which the moss digs and grows, opening tiny thistles and flowers. Rachel, the one who was kind at the well, the ewe, the chasm in the earth, the veil. She is all heart, resonance. Last, there is Ruth, who lay at the feet of Boaz, and who followed Naomi and became her guardian. Ruth threshed and bundled the wheat and carried it for the old woman who could walk only with a tremor and cane. Ruth is provision, fidelity. These are the women I remember even before Esther, crayoning their robes, and naked shoulders and feet. I gave them their own alphabet of blue skies, a punctuation of birds, lips the shade of persimmons.

When I was ten, I dreamt that God was a woman. She was seated in a throne like Lincoln's memorial. Her hair was a widow's peak and a bun at the back. Unlike the God I knew, she spoke like any woman. I was a tiny mote at her thonged marble feet,

(Continued on p. 94)

The "New Right" and Israel's Education Dilemmas

Shlomo Swirski

For some years now, the state in Israel has been trying to shed a responsibility it took upon itself generations ago: to provide quality social services for all and to place its various ethnic groups on a more equal footing. Following Reaganist and Thatcherist policies of privatization, and Friedmanist notions of the "free market," the state has been attempting to dismantle long-standing institutional arrangements, especially in the fields of health care and education, and including a broad spectrum of redistributive subsidies, from the price of a loaf of bread to public transportation fares to children's allowances.

This shift is occurring in a country in which the state is the main and often sole source of finance and development resources, where the state's bureaucratic tentacles reach practically every conceivable corner, and where the civil community, especially in working-class neighborhoods, is dependent on the state for almost every aspect of communal life. Under such circumstances, the present attempt to go for a "free market" means in practice the closure of social mobility; it means protecting the gains made by those who have already reaped the benefits of state policies and keeping the rest at a safe distance from the best health, educational, occupational, and housing opportunities.

Israel's version of Reaganism is supported by broad sectors of the largely *Ashkenazi* middle class, who have over the past decades secured for themselves college degrees, American-type salaries, more than comfortable pensions, and spacious suburban houses or condominiums. This group encompasses a good part of the political spectrum: it includes prominent figures on the Right, but its leading spokespersons come from that segment of Israeli political scene commonly referred to as the "Left," and it is well represented in the present government.

Shlomo Swirski, the academic director of Kedma, is a sociologist, social activist, and the author of Israel: The Oriental Majority.

One of the strategic offensives of this "free market" movement is in the field of education, which is undoubtedly one of Israel's most outstanding failures. At the present time, not much more than one-third of Israeli seventeen-year-olds attain high school matriculation certificates, a prerequisite for college admission. Fully one-half of the age group do not even take the matriculation examinations; the majority of these young people are enrolled in dead-end vocational schools, most of which do not offer the subjects that comprise the matriculation examinations. Neither do these schools provide skills that are of much use in the contemporary labor market. In fact, the Jewish community in Israel has the lowest proportion of college-trained youth of any major Jewish community in the world. The situation of Israel's Palestinian citizens is even worse.

The education system's failures became apparent in the late 1950s. Soon after, the state embarked on an ambitious plan, commonly called "the reform." Its main goal was to provide high school students—at the time, almost all of them the children of *Ashkenazim* who arrived before 1948—with six years of college preparation through the establishment of junior high schools. To this major aim, another was added: "integration" of *Mizrahi* (Jews of middle eastern origin) and *Ashkenazi* (Jews of European origin) students through the admission of *Mizrahim*—whose high school attendance was low—to the new junior highs that were to be attached to prestigious high schools in middle-class, *Ashkenazi* neighborhoods.

At the same time that the state was implementing these reforms, however, it quietly began to erect a network of vocational high schools in *Mizrahi* communities. These schools were considered by many education officials to be the perfect solution for what they believed were the limited intellectual capabilities of *Mizrahim*. Currently, most *Mizrahi* youngsters do complete high school, but about 60 percent graduate from vocational tracks, and in most cases this means that their way to college is barred.

"Integration" failed, among other reasons, because it

reinforced the predisposition to view quality education as the prerogative of children of middle-class *Ashkenazim,* and the idea that the children of *Mizrahim* had to study outside of their own communities if they were to have the same opportunities. It also failed because the state did not invest in the upgrading of elementary schools in *Mizrahi* neighborhoods, nor did it fulfill its promise to train teachers to teach the new heterogeneous junior high classes. Most *Mizrahi* children who entered junior highs attached to quality high schools were assigned to the lower-ability groupings, and by the end of the ninth grade, either dropped out or were screened out.

At present, the one-third of Israeli youth who achieve matriculation includes about half of the *Ashkenazi* age group, less than a quarter of the *Mizrahi* age group, and about one-eighth of the Arab age group. Thus, it is not surprising that the income gap between Israeli-born *Ashkenazim* and *Mizrahim* is wider than that between their parents.

It is against this background of failure that the Israeli "New Right" speaks of "putting an end to the pouring out of money into a bottomless pit" and declares, "It's high time we started investing in excellence," and indeed has been opening highly selective, state-supported "arts and sciences" schools. It uses the slogans of parental choice, school autonomy, and the drive for scholastic excellence. The Right argues that, in view of the state's failure to raise the scholastic achievements of *Mizrahim,* it should step down and leave the task to local school initiatives.

Whatever the merits of these ideas in the United States, in Israel they are being applied to an educational arena in which the state apparatus has always played a central and controlling role in every aspect of education, and where the majority of local communities, especially those with *Mizrahi* majorities, and Arab communities, simply do not have the resources and infrastructure needed to take on the task of rebuilding and upgrading the local schools.

Under such circumstances, it is perhaps not surprising to find that disparities in scholastic achievements between *Ashkenazim* and *Mizrahim,* once considered a temporary phenomenon to be overcome once the *Mizrahi* newcomers received a proper, "western" education, are beginning to be openly presented as not temporary at all. More and more officials and educators are attributing scholastic failure to the *Mizrahim* themselves, and coming to regard it as a given. The notion of genetic sources of differences in IQ scores is also gaining currency.

(Continued on p. 84)

RE-DISCOVER THE POWER AND MYSTERY OF JUDAISM



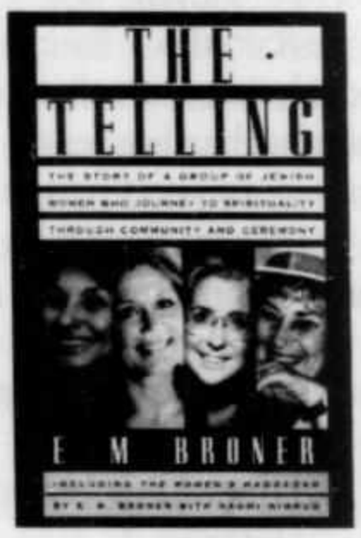
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But we also understand that the ethos of selfishness and materialism is not just a problem for the poor. Everyone suffers in a society that systematically undermines loving and caring while privileging the ethos of "looking out for no.1." The resulting mindset of narcissism and distrust of others undermines families, loving relationships, and friendships. And it fosters a "rip-off" mentality that makes it seem appropriate to people to try to get as much as they can for themselves without regard to the consequences for others—whether it be corporations ripping off the resources of the planet for immediate profits without regard to the long-term impact on the ecological well-being of the planet, individuals treating each other as objects to advance their own careers, or some poor people who think it legitimate to rob others. It is this ethos of selfishness, enshrined in the competitive marketplace, that must be challenged.

The solution is not to find a better candidate for the Democrats, or to create a coalition of liberal and progressive organizations. Recycling liberalism is no strategy at all. The Foundation is not a political organization, but an educational strategy that challenges the limited political conceptions of the liberals even as it challenges the Right. It is an arm of TIKKUN magazine aimed at leading the campaign for a spiritually and ethically sensitive politics, a campaign for a politics of meaning.

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Ilene A. Serlin

Rollo Meese May died on October 22, 1994. With his death came the loss of one of the great psychotherapists, teachers, and theoreticians of the twentieth century.

Rollo May is probably remembered best by many people as the founder of existential psychotherapy in the United States. I first read his *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology* in Ann Arbor in the late 1960s. Reading the existentialists Camus and Sartre and being active in the student demonstrations all mixed into a heady brew. My friends and I felt like we were creating a new society, based in part on the existentialists' mandate to act. Claiming that the prevailing Freudian and behavioral psychologies were all based on an essentially passive model of the human being, in which childhood events or conditioning shaped behavior, the existential psychologists instead posited an active model. Although acknowledging that much of human life is indeed determined, the existentialists stressed the possibility of freedom and responsibility. Each individual, in the face of determinism, despair, meaninglessness, or death, has the responsibility to create a meaningful life.

This new perspective on human nature demanded a new therapy. An existential psychotherapist, rather than interpreting psychological content symbolically and maintaining a blank facade with the patient, would focus on challenging the patient to make responsible decisions and to live as fully and deeply as possible.

Rollo May was also a leader of humanistic psychology, an outgrowth of existential psychology. Sex, aggression, power drives, and religion were the traditional areas of psychology; humanistic psychology added studies of creativity, love, and altered states of consciousness. As a reaction to the existential despair of post-World War II culture, humanistic psychology in the United States tended to stress peak experiences, joy, and the lighter sides of human existence. Furthermore, in its experiential focus it sometimes blended with Fritz Perls's Gestalt therapy, body therapies, and the counterculture of the 1960s, leading critics to fault humanistic psychology as anti-intellectual and overly subjective.

Rollo May's own work, however, maintained the balance between darkness and light, between the experiential and the intellectual. In his books, he considered fundamental questions of human existence such as the nature of evil, love and will, the meaning of anxiety, and the importance of myth. In fact, Rollo's inspiration to me and many others came from his ability to name the void but to create in its face, to name evil but to work toward the good, to see meaninglessness but to discover meaning, and to face death but to create life. He was active in the antiwar movement and many other social causes, taught and mentored countless students, and called himself a "gentle rebel" in the face of an increasingly dehumanized world. As today's political climate darkens and as the mental-health system becomes increasingly rooted in biology and technology, Rollo's vision of a humane psychology assumes ever greater importance.

For me, Rollo was not only a visionary and mentor, but a fellow artist. His psychology was based on the humanities, rooted in the great Greek stories and myths. He fought against a scientistic psychology based on a nineteenth-century model of physics and insisted on the *art* of psychology. In *The Courage to Create*, he says: "We express our being by creating." He challenged us to "seize the courage necessary to preserve our sensitivity, awareness, and responsibility in the face of radical change," and to "consciously participate, on however small a scale, in the forming of the new society... ." The courage to create is connected to the struggle to liberate ourselves, for "That is what we must always base our commitment in the center of our own being, or else no commitment will be ultimately authentic." Since the word courage derives from the French word *coeur*, or heart, the act of committing oneself to being and becoming, to living an authentic life, is a heartfelt act.

Finally, it is the images and the artists which can guide us in this journey. Rollo notes: "This brings us to the most important kind of courage of all. Whereas moral courage is the righting of wrongs, creative courage, in contrast, is the discovering of new forms, new symbols, new patterns on which a new society can be built... But those who present directly and immediately the new forms and symbols are the artists—the dramatists, the musicians, the painters, the dancers, the poets, and those poets of the religious sphere we call saints." In the face of today's mood of deconstruction, it is time to begin Rollo May's process of reconstruction, rebuilding connections, patterns, and new forms.

In his dignity and elegance, in his entire life, Rollo always reminded me that the ultimate creativity is a life well lived and spurred me to help my patients create their own well-lived lives. He reminded me as well to reconnect psychology to its roots in the arts and humanities, and to hold out a human vision that includes inspiration and creativity as well as anxiety and fear. Rollo May touched many of us very deeply, and the best tribute we can pay him is to carry on his work. □

Ilene A. Serlin, Ph.D., is professor of psychology at Saybrook Institute, in private practice in the San Francisco area, and on the board of directors of the Division of Humanistic Psychology of the American Psychological Association.

"In a Beginning..."

Quantum Cosmology and Kabbalah

Joel R. Primack and Nancy Ellen Abrams

Modern cosmology—the scientific study of the universe as a whole—no longer sees the universe as an infinite, changeless arena in which events take place, the way Isaac Newton did. The universe is an evolving, expanding being, and its origin is the oldest mystery. For the first time in possibly a million years of human wondering, we are not simply imagining the beginning: We are observing it, in radiation that has been traveling to us since the Big Bang, possibly bearing information generated even earlier. Theorists are piecing the data together into humanity's first verifiable creation story.

Most educated people today have an essentially Newtonian picture of the universe as a place, devoid of all human meaning, in which we happen to find ourselves. If people come to understand the emerging scientific cosmology, however, they may see from what we know of the early universe that we actually are part of an extraordinary adventure. With its mind-expanding imagery, this emerging cosmology gives us a new cosmic perspective, a powerful source of awe, and a potential source of meaning in our everyday lives.



ERIC GOLDHAGEN

We will present the cosmological theory first directly, and then as if it were a creation myth, which it is. But here we encounter the limitations of the English language for the task: the universe is like nothing else. It's not a thing that exists at any point in time but includes within it all time and all concepts. We will therefore turn to Kabbalah, medieval Jewish mysticism, as a possible source of language and metaphor, because certain kabbalistic concepts fit our picture amazingly well. Moreover, Kabbalah's cosmology gave meaning and purpose to the everyday lives of its adherents, which we hope may become possible with the scientific cosmology emerging today.

The Large-Scale Structure of the Universe

While Newton believed that stars are randomly distributed through space, we now know that stars are organized into galaxies, and distant galaxies are flying away from each other as space expands. About 10 percent of galaxies are in dense clusters, with many clusters linked by sheets or fine filaments of galaxies. Our own galaxy, the Milky Way, is located in a small group of galaxies on the outskirts of the large sheet of galaxies (the local supercluster) in which the Virgo Cluster is embedded. On the scale of billions of light years, there are millions of these enormous superclusters of galaxies; between them are great voids containing hardly any visible matter. Furthermore, vast flows of galaxies have been observed as a perturbation to the overall expansion of the universe. This is what astronomers call the "large-scale structure" of the universe, and much of it has been discovered only in the past decade.

As the universe expands, our neighboring galaxies will remain our neighbors forever, but farther out the expansion of space is carrying galaxies away so fast that we see their light stretched and reddened. The greater distance of expanding space we look across to see any particular galaxy, the faster that galaxy will be moving away from us.

Joel R. Primack is professor of physics at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He is currently using supercomputers to simulate and visualize the evolution of the universe. Nancy Ellen Abrams is a novelist, musician, and lawyer. They are writing a book about cosmology and culture.

At last there is a distance where galaxies are being carried away by expanding space at the speed of light. This is our cosmic horizon. It is a spherical wall, and we are inside. Countless galaxies no doubt exist beyond, but they are whisked away by expansion. Their light cannot reach us, so we cannot see them. Every galaxy has its own horizon, its own "visible universe."

But visible matter, on scales of individual galaxies and larger, does not move as it should if it is all that exists out there. Stars in galaxies, and galaxies themselves in groups and clusters, move too rapidly to be held together by the visible matter. Something invisible is exercising enormous gravitational effects on visible matter. After eliminating all other possibilities, astronomers have, in the last fifteen years, accepted the weird idea that over ninety percent of the mass of the universe is not stars, dust, gas or anything we know, but instead some invisible substance called "dark matter." Dark matter does not emit or absorb any kind of radiation. Most of it is probably not made of electrons, protons, neutrons, or any of the familiar elementary particles. It forms an invisible halo around every galaxy perhaps ten times the radius of the disk of visible stars, and around every cluster of galaxies.

What is the dark matter made of? How much of it is out there, and where? How does it behave? There have been several competing theories that managed for years to agree with all the reliable data, because the data were so rough and incomplete. But most theories are now being shot down by new astronomical data which is rapidly accumulating from telescopes all over the world and in space. This has drastically narrowed the range of possibilities. Accordingly, co-author Joel Primack has modified the theory he pioneered and which set the agenda for much of cosmology for over a decade, called Cold Dark Matter. He is currently developing a new version of the theory, called Cold Plus Hot Dark Matter. "Cold" dark matter is some kind of hypothetical particles which were moving sluggishly in the early universe. "Hot" dark matter, which was moving relativistically then, may be composed of two kinds of neutrinos—at least, that is what is suggested by the latest data from the particle physics laboratories. Each component of dark matter has its own characteristics, and each no doubt plays a crucial role in the history of the universe.

The Blueprint Came First

In 1929, Edwin Hubble discovered the expansion of the universe by showing that the more distant a galaxy is from us, the faster it is moving away. Astrophysicists ran the movie backward and realized that the universe had to have started out extremely hot and dense. The earliest point was named—derisively by astronomer and novelist Fred Hoyle, whose steady state theory it eventually replaced—the "Big Bang." Standard Big Bang theory explains the creation of the light elements of matter in the first three minutes and seems to be right as far as it goes, but it does not explain what preceded that or what has followed.

Gravity alone could not have created the complex large-scale structures and flows of galaxies that are observed to exist. Gravity magnifies differences—that is, if one region is ever so slightly denser than average, it will expand a bit more slowly and grow relatively denser than its surroundings, while regions with less than average density will become increasingly less dense. But if matter after the Big Bang was absolutely evenly distributed, gravity would have done nothing but slow down the overall expansion. Consequently, either some unknown force acting after the Big Bang formed the giant structures we observe today—which looks increasingly dubious—or else gravity must have had some differences in density to work with from the beginning. What could have caused these

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differences in density? Big Bang theory is silent about its own initial conditions.

The theory of inflation, proposed in the early 1980s by Alan Guth and others, says that for an extremely small fraction of a second before the Big Bang—much less time than it would take light to cross the nucleus of an atom—the universe expanded exponentially, inflating countless random quantum events in the process. The density differences in the universe reflect these quantum events, enormously inflated. This is the best theory cosmologists have for the origin of the needed density differences.

Inflation is exponential growth—the longer it goes on, the faster it gets. An old story illustrates its blinding speed:

> A Sultan's life was saved by the Grand Vizier. Overwhelmed with gratitude, the Sultan asked him to choose his reward.
>
> "You may give me a chessboard," said the Grand Vizier, "with one grain of wheat on the first square, two grains on the next square, four on the next, and so on. That would be enough."
>
> "Such a modest gift for so great an act?" the Sultan exclaimed. "You shall have it today!"
>
> But when the Sultan tried to prepare the chessboard, he discovered that the amount of wheat needed grew faster and faster. By the sixty-fourth square, he would need about ten billion metric tons—twenty years' worth of the modern world's production of wheat.

The quantum events of cosmic inflation created the needed small differences in density from place to place, leaving space slightly wrinkled (in three dimensions). The wrinkles are extraordinarily subtle, like a hill 600 feet high compared to the 21,000,000-foot radius of Earth, yet gradually they attracted particles of matter by gravity alone. The large-scale structures in the universe today—the clusters and walls built of thousands of galaxies—illuminate these ancient wrinkles like glitter tossed on invisible lines of glue.

If the theory of inflation is right, then the blueprint for the large-scale structure of the universe existed before the Big Bang created matter.

Can Inflation be Right?

The central predictions of the theory of inflation are: 1) that the universe has critical density (i.e., contains just enough matter to keep slowing down the expansion, but not enough to cause the universe to stop or fall together in a Big Crunch) and 2) that the wrinkles, regardless of their wavelength, all have the same amplitude when they cross the horizon. (This is called a "Zel'dovich spectrum," after the great Russian

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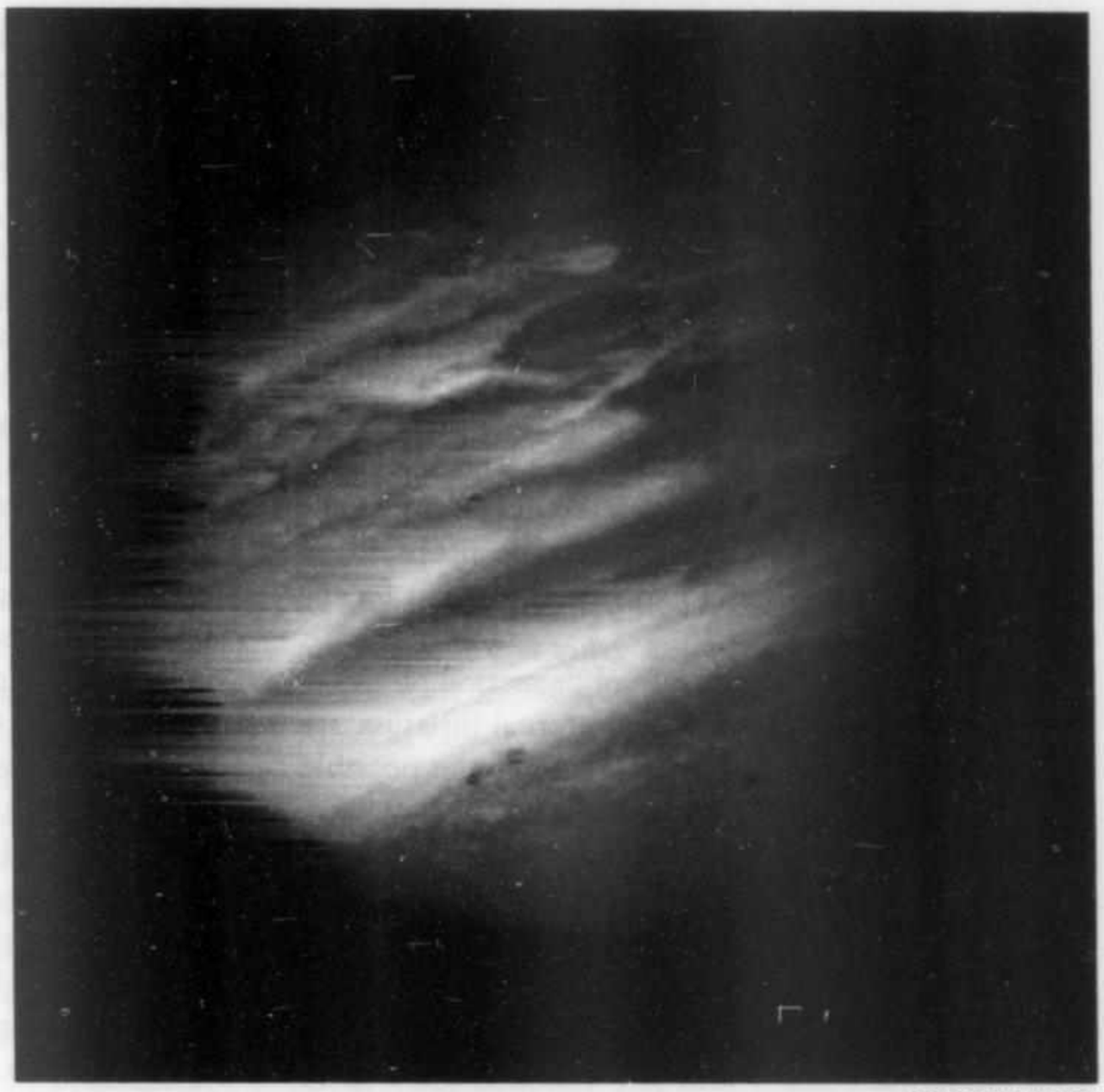
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physicist and cosmologist Yacov Borisovich Zel'dovich).

Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson discovered in 1965 that heat radiation from the Big Bang itself, called cosmic background radiation, still fills the universe. This was the first light in the universe. The radiation just reaching us now has been traveling since the universe first became transparent only about 300,000 years after the Big Bang. This primal radiation would have to bear some trace of the inflationary wrinkles that were theorized to have filled the universe at that time. If it did not, then the theory of inflation had to be wrong, and the large-scale structure of the universe could not have formed by gravity alone. Numerous observations from Earth's surface and from planes and balloons detected no irregularity in the cosmic background radiation. Except for the effects of Earth's motion, the radiation appeared to be a perfectly uniform 2.7 degrees above absolute zero in every direction, until 1992.



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In 1992, NASA's Cosmic Background Explorer satellite (COBE), orbiting outside Earth's atmosphere, detected tiny differences in temperature in the background radiation. If inflation is right, these differences are a lightly traced but readable fossil record of the period before the Big Bang—from which the Big Bang emerged. This is spectacular evidence of the existence of primordial wrinkles in space. What COBE found was the equivalent of lost baby pictures of immense cosmic structures, showing that they were not created whole, but grew from these infants and revealing as well, if read backwards, very intriguing implications about the babies' parentage.

The theory of inflation thus appears to be supported by the COBE discoveries and subsequent measurements by many other instruments. If we assume—and there is increasing evidence we should—that the density of cold plus hot dark matter is critical and that there is a Zel'dovich spectrum of wrinkles, the resulting theory produces a large-scale structure like that which we actually observe. Since alternative explanations are perhaps possible, this does not prove that inflation theory plus our dark matter theory are actually right, although if the predictions led to structures unlike what we see, that would certainly prove at least one of these assumptions is wrong. There are also potential stumbling blocks, such as some preliminary results from the Hubble Space Telescope suggesting (based on assumptions that may or may not be valid) that the universe may not be as old as some of the stars in our galaxy. But on balance, the theory of inflation is so beautiful and solves so many problems which initially appeared to be unrelated that it is hard to suppress the thought that it might actually be true.

While inflation theory provides an explanation for the irregularities in the Big Bang, what about the origins of inflation itself? It turns out to be more fruitful to ask instead, why did inflation end? Because if we extrapolate backwards to find the origin of inflation, the most likely possibility is that in most of the superuniverse, inflation never stopped. It is a state of existence that goes on forever. The theory of eternal inflation, largely worked out by Russian astrophysicist Andre Linde, now at Stanford University, says that inflation stopped only in the minute part of the universe we can see—within our cosmic horizon—and some unknown distance beyond that. Everywhere else it continues forever.

What Does It All Mean?

The ideas that follow are a sort of theoretical theology, a spiritual analogue of theoretical physics. A theoretical physicist's methodology involves choosing a set of hypotheses and working out the consequences to see what kind of world they describe and how close it is to what experiment has found. Hypotheses can be eliminated as

wrong but cannot be proved right. Co-author Joel Primack and other cosmologists test theories by creating theoretical universes in supercomputers and then comparing them with observations of the real universe to see whether the predictions of any set of hypotheses can survive confrontation with the increasingly detailed data. Several fundamental truths about the origins and composition of the universe seem to be emerging from this process, although they are still controversial and they will be constantly tested as new data become available from the latest ground-and space-based telescopes. This is a logical game, but amazingly, sometimes the universe actually embodies a theorist's dreams. When this happens, it can have the force of a religious experience—at least for the theorist involved.

So let us suppose—in the style of theoretical physics—that the theories of inflation and eternal inflation are correct and then think through some of the possible consequences for religion and culture.

To experience the human meaning of the scientific story, we must translate it into myth, the traditional form for stories about the origin of the world. In common parlance, "myth" has come to connote the opposite of reality, or the simplistic fare of the hopelessly backward or quaint. But myths, as they function in human societies, actually are explanations of the highest order: the stories a culture communally uses in order to connect with and give meaning to its universe. Every traditional culture known to anthropology has had a cosmology—a story of how the world began and how human beings took their place within it. A functional cosmology grounds people's everyday expectations of each other in the larger patterns of the universe. Such a shared cosmology may be essential to successful human community and even to individual sanity. The understanding doesn't have to be scientifically accurate. None ever has been, until now. No description is ever totally accurate anyway, unless it is the universe itself. The map is not the terrain. What we humanly need is to know the truest story of our time.

As Plato taught, the answer to the question "What does it all mean?" can only be a myth. Unlike other myths, however, a scientific myth never stands still. As long as the universe of knowledge expands, the myth must absorb, be tossed out by, or else be enfolded in larger understandings. No myth is for all time, but myth-making is an ongoing human pursuit.

A Myth of the Origin of the Universe

In a beginning there was—and almost everywhere else there still is—nothing but creativity: infinite potential, hot and dense, wildly experimenting with every possibility quantum uncertainty can come up with, expanding faster and faster for all eternity, unlimited by the speed of light or by lack of space. In this everlasting acceleration, tiny events are expanding from every "sparkpoint," which is what we call the smallest physical region that quantum physics allows.

Imagine a cosmic Las Vegas, its real estate inflating forever, lights flashing, money rolling out of slots, gamblers multiplying blindingly fast, everything hot and dense. Every point is a gambler, every gambler is flipping coins, every flip is a quantum fluctuation. But in eternal inflation, the rules are as follows: Every time a coin comes up tails, it becomes half its size; every time it comes up heads, it's suddenly twice its size and there are two of them. There are minute holes in the floor. The probability is extremely small that a coin will fall through, since the rules favor inflation. Most coins grow enormously. But once in a while a coin will get small enough to fall through the floor. At that instant, it exits eternity and the realm of those rules, and time begins for it. It will fall forever.

In a chain of events as inevitable as a losing streak to a gambler, one sparkpoint got tails every time. Each throw was a random event. A single heads could have pulled the sparkpoint back and vastly increased the probability of another speedup until it merged forever in the cauldron of eternal inflation. But that did not happen. Tails continued. The gambler had started with a trillion dollars and had lost all but one dollar. It was still possible to win back the trillion. Then the last dollar was gone. There was no turning back. The sparkpoint exited eternity. Quantum events had taken it, like Alice, through an invisible looking-glass.

This was the seed of our universe: a single creative sparkpoint—an almost vanishingly small capsule of eternal creativity. This sparkpoint we name *"Hokhmah,"* a kabbalistic term whose choice we will explain later.

Hokhmah had not lost its creative character, any more than a child changes its character upon leaving home. It was still inflating and emanating quantum fluctuations. But when it exited eternity, its inflating was destined to die out. Down the hill of potential energy *Hokhmah* now rolled, unable to regain eternal potential, compelled to express its finite potential now. *Hokhmah* had only the blaze-out we call inflation—possibly as little as 10^{-32} seconds—to create the blueprint for a cosmos. And it did so. The region that would become our present horizon inflated from the size of a thought to that of a grapefruit wildly faster than the speed of light. In the process it spawned all the quantum impulses that will continue to reverberate for hundreds of billions of years, creating the wrinkles that are becoming all the cosmic structures in the universe from galaxies to superclusters and larger.

Eternal inflation is endlessly creative and lavishly profligate. Every sparkpoint in eternal inflation has the

possibility of becoming a *Hokhmah*. In detail, every universe will be unique because the quantum fluctuations during each one's inflationary epoch will be completely different. Each universe is a tiny bubble cut off from all other bubbles by eternal inflation. No one knows if the laws of physics are the same in other bubbles, nor do we yet have any way of testing. We may be further than ever from answering the question Einstein said was the one that really interested him: "Did God have a choice?"

On the scale of the superuniverse of eternal inflation, time begins an infinite number of times. The opening words of Genesis might be better interpreted, "In A beginning..." Very, very deep inside our bubble, hemmed in by a horizon probably as minuscule compared to our bubble as a child's sandbox is to the visible universe, is the rarest of phenomena: the evolution of our universe. In eternal inflation, nothing persists. When all possibilities exist, none is realized. Time can never decide what direction to run in. Every sparkpoint can create infinite possibilities, but though those fluctuations expand at the speed of light, all other sparkpoints are expanding away so much faster that they are forever out of causal contact with each other. Our universe is vanishingly small compared to the superuniverse of eternal inflation, but in it effects reverberate! It takes time to play out the great possibilities, time to grow, to become something. The great miracle of our universe is that something is happening. Galaxies are evolving. Life is evolving. We are not just eternal potential—we are a story.

If you play a drum, the skin vibrates in waves. If you could get very close to it and slow things down considerably, you would see the skin forming troughs and crests, not just one at a time but different waves in different directions across it, the troughs and crests adding to each other. The sum of all the waves makes the "sound." The wrinkles of inflation were the primal, cosmic sound whose meaning the universe is still expanding to express. This gives a physical picture of the origin akin to the phrase at the opening of the Gospel of John: "In the Beginning was the Word."

The idea that God followed a blueprint which existed before the universe was created is also found in Jewish midrashic literature. *Genesis Rabbah* 1:1 says: "A ruler building a palace consults an architect's plans. The Blessed Holy One, in creating the universe, also worked from a plan—the Torah."

Hokhmah and Kabbalah

Kabbalah, medieval Jewish mysticism, is the only traditional cosmology we know of in which the universe was understood to have begun in a point and expanded. We are not kabbalists, nor are we trying to promote Kabbalah. We are not arguing that Kabbalah was prescient, or that the kabbalists somehow knew mystically what science is now discovering. We are interested in Kabbalah because it developed a set of ideas describing the origin of an expanding universe and integrated these ideas into its religious worldview. Can Kabbalah help us to integrate the scientific concepts we have been describing into our own culture?

"Kabbalah" means "secret tradition," and its origins are uncertain. Though its earliest preserved writings date from the twelfth century, from Provence and later Spain, its adherents believed it derived from the secret Torah given to Moses and handed down orally through the most religious Jews ever since.

The early kabbalists were Jews living at the time when Moslem culture was transmitting the philosophy and science of Plato and Aristotle to Europe. Utterly committed to the reality of the infinite and singular God, Jews began applying Greek reasoning to long-standing problems of their religion, especially the question of the nature of God. The kabbalists used every resource they had—not only reason and logic but poetry, meditation, and mystical experiences—to try to understand the nature of God. They believed that they could learn about God through contemplation of God's relationship to creation. For this reason, they strove to grasp the hidden reality behind the opening words of Genesis.

At that time Moses Maimonides, the Aristotle of Judaism, was teaching that God could only be truly described by negatives: unknowable, incorporeal, unlimited, unchangeable. How, the kabbalists asked, could God be beyond human description, yet walk with Adam and Eve and talk with Abraham and Moses, as Torah reports? How, if God is infinite, could there have been room for anything else to be created? In answer to questions like these, the kabbalists developed a theoretical system portraying God pictorially as having ten different aspects—in Hebrew, *sephirot*—with complex relationships among all the aspects. Beyond the picture was *Ein Sof*, "Without End," the unknowable God, which emanated the light that created the aspects of God knowable to humans.

Of ten *sephirot,* the first three deal with creation, and they correspond fairly closely to concepts from the theories of inflation and eternal inflation, although these theories are being developed by cosmologists in response to completely different questions. The first *sephirah* was *keter,* meaning the crown, symbolic of the unknowable God's infinite potential to create—to enter into some relationship with our universe. The second was *Hokhmah,* the bursting through of our universe. The third was *Binah,* the female womb in which creation expands from *Hokhmah* to

become what it becomes.

Keter might be a thought-provoking name for the state of eternal inflation, which, like *keter,* is infinite, the source of all that will come, yet Nothing, because no differentiation can exist within it. *Hokhmah* is the exiting from eternity, the beginning of time, the instant with no instant before it. *Binah* is expansion or spacetime. There could probably be no more accurate name for the Big Bang as we understand it scientifically today than to call it *Hokhmah-Binah*

Kabbalah is an example of a cosmology resembling our own which successfully penetrated and enriched the lives of a society. In the sixteenth century, the great kabbalist Isaac Luria developed the scheme further, teaching that in the beginning, God began to withdraw into self-exile in order to make space for the universe. God envelopes the universe, in the Lurianic view, but when God withdrew, evil became possible inside. God sent holy light into the world, but the world was too weak to hold God's glory. Its cornerstones were vessels that shattered in the light. The role of the Jews is to repair the shattered vessels by re-collecting the sparks of God in the world. *Tzimtzum* is the name of God's self-exile. *Tikkun olam* is the repairing of the world. For Jews in the century or so after the expulsion from Spain in 1492, the concept of a God in exile gave cosmic meaning to their people's traumatic and seemingly endless history of expulsions and exiles. The cosmology alone, however, did not provide the meaning. It came from the circumstances of their lives and their era, but it was expressible at a deep and satisfying level with the help of their kabbalistic cosmological myth. Can the same become true with modern cosmology?

Kabbalah was a cultural outgrowth of medieval European Jewish experience. By the time of the European Enlightenment, Jews who read Descartes and Newton considered the idea of *sephirot* as absurd as angels dancing on the head of a pin. But Kabbalah is a metaphorical description of a set of fundamental universal relationships which in light of modern astrophysics appears closer to reality than the infinite rectangular space of the Newtonian worldview.

We do not argue that either kabbalistic cosmology or current scientific theories about the origin is "true" in some ultimate sense, but rather that by seeing each in light of the other, we begin to get some sense of what to demand of any cosmology intended to function for human society in the twenty-first century. Just as light cannot be described accurately as either a particle or a wave but only as something beyond either metaphor, the universe cannot be adequately described as either something scientifically observed or something spiritually experienced. A functional cosmology must do both. The reason kabbalistic terms are helpful to our account is that they bind together the search for truth with the search for the divine. If terms

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such as *Hokhmah* did not already exist bearing religious significance, we would have had to try to coin them—which would probably have been as successful as Esperanto. The emerging scientific cosmology and Kabbalah are two metaphor systems whose juxtaposition points toward a truth larger than either can express alone.

The theory of eternal inflation, whether or not it turns out to be true, has opened a cosmic perspective on reality and the countless threads of connection, including the spiritual, weaving through. If eternal inflation theory eventually turns out to be wrong, whatever replaces it cannot explain less and will have to do better. A new standard has been set for creation stories.

If the theory of eternal inflation is correct, then there is an eternal blizzard of universes, in which our bubble is a single snowflake, an infinitesimal capsule of eternal potential, crystallized into unique patterns of matter and energy, which has set off from eternal inflation on its journey to realize itself in a universe. No one has thought of a way yet to test whether eternal inflation theory is right, but the expansion of perspective the theory requires certainly enlarges our idea of the physical universe. It may also enlarge our ideas of God, because regardless of how much reality one may ascribe to God, one can only speak metaphorically, and most metaphors are limited to the extremely narrow experience of Earth. This does not make them wrong, but they are certainly limiting. Cosmology provides utterly different metaphors—eternal inflation, endless creation from every sparkpoint—that humans could not have dreamed up had theoretical physics not led them there. It seems to be a general rule that the more metaphor systems through which we try to understand non- human-scale realities, both large and small, the closer we come to truth.

Cosmology and Human Meaning in the Twenty-First Century

In a speech given in Philadelphia on July 4, 1994, on the state of the world and its prospects, Vaclav Havel said that the planet is in transition: as vastly different value systems collide, all consistent value systems are collapsing. We cannot foresee the results. Science, which has been the bedrock of industrial civilization for so long, he said, "fails to connect with the most intrinsic nature of reality, and with natural human experience. It is now more a source of disintegration and doubt than a source of integration and meaning... We may know immeasurably more about the universe than our ancestors did, and yet it increasingly seems they knew something more essential about it than we do, something that escapes us...Paradoxically, inspiration for the renewal of this lost integrity can once again be found in science...a science producing ideas that in a certain sense allow it to transcend its own limits...Transcendence is the only real alternative to extinction."

The search for scientific truth can be a form of guidance. It is as divine as any other. The foundation- building revolution that modern cosmology is undergoing today, as it seeks a verifiable description of the origin of the universe, requires that we transcend previous notions of space, time, and reality. This is the kind of science Havel is hoping for—a science whose metaphors may allow us to comprehend terrestrial problems from a cosmic perspective.

Exponential growth—like that of the wheat on successive squares of the Grand Vizier's chessboard—is the dominant characteristic of the industrial world. Not only is the human population inflating; simultaneously, so are the technological power and the resource use of each individual. Multiply these times each other: We are now processing a substantial fraction of the Earth's entire crust. In population growth, resource use, pollution, and garbage production, the human race is addicted to exponential growth. Inflation is the controlling metaphor of our time.

In our kabbalistic creation myth, *tzimtzum*—the withdrawal of God—occurred in eternal inflation. As the notion of a God in exile gave cosmic meaning to the lives of a people in exile, understanding cosmic inflation may give a new, if sobering, meaning to the lives of a people dependent upon inflationary growth. Inflation is a taste of what it is like to be God. It cannot be considered a normal human pace. In a finite environment, inflation cannot continue, however cleverly we may postpone or disguise the inevitable. This is a consequence of natural laws.

That does not mean growth must stop, however, as many people genuinely trying to save the planet assume. The great transition model for the future of Earth may be the universe. Inflation transformed to expansion can go on for a very long time. Expansion on Earth can be sustained as long as our creativity lasts. Reality is not a zero-sum game, in which a gain one place must be paid for with a loss somewhere else. Creativity is what all tiny regions do in expressing their quantum nature. The stunning lesson of eternal inflation theory is that the fundamental nature of reality is not conservation of energy or increase in entropy but endless creativity.

The question for our time is, how can we end inflation gently on Earth? How can we slow human inflation enough that creative restoration can overtake it? When we have developed a sustainable relationship with our planet, humanity and Earth will be in balance, and the transition from inflation to stable expansion will have been achieved through the restoration of the world—*tikkun olam*. □

Sikkum

For Those Who Can't Believe: Overcoming the Obstacles to Faith by Harold M. Schulweis, Harper Collins, 1994.

Although written for the nonbeliever, Rabbi Schulweis's writings may be more useful for those who already worry about theological issues and who wish to answer the skepticism of the nonbeliever. Schulweis urges us to focus less on God and more on godliness and on the way that human beings can embody godly behavior. And he reminds us of the ways that between 50-100,000 Christian rescuers during the Holocaust embodied this godliness. This is a robust affirmation of Jewish this-worldliness in the grand tradition of Mordecai Kaplan's Reconstructionist Judaism.

Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones by Debra Orenstein, Jewish Lights Publishing, 1994.

Here is Jewish renewal in action—a pathbreaking anthology that demonstrates the creativity of Jewish women as they reappropriate Judaism from a stifling patriarchal past. By including women in the observance of passages that formerly spoke only to and of men, by supplementing or alternating traditional rituals, by valuing as sacred events of women's biological cycle (e.g., menarche, menses, childbirth, miscarriage, menopause), and by sacralizing nonbiological passages and milestones not contemplated by the tradition (e.g., ceremonies celebrating elder wisdom or healing from sexual abuse), feminist Jews have expanded the role of Judaism in women's lives. Rabbi Orenstein's collection provides a wonderful introduction to this branch of the Jewish renewal movement.

Religion and Human Rights, ed. John Kelsay and Sumner B. Twiss, The Project on Religion and Human Rights (485 Fifth Ave, New York, NY 10017).

The religious leaders who put this collection together were well aware of the way that religion often is used as an excuse to deny human rights, and is frequently a root of conflict and a tool of domination in the hands of cynical political leaders. But they also see grounds for affirming religion as a positive force for caring and mutually respectful human behavior. The project may be limited by its somewhat uncritical reliance on the concept of "rights," precisely when Americans are moving toward right-wing or progressive communities of meaning that question the individualism that the discourse of rights seems to encode. But drawing on the wisdom of Rabbi Rolando Matalon of Congregation B'nai Jeshurun in New York City and the Right Reverend Paul Moore, Jr. (former Episcopal Bishop of New York) it promises to become an exciting development in the religious world—and one of the more hopeful developments in interreligious dialogue, happily freed from the "make nice" community- relations types who have emptied interreligious dialogue of much of its meaning.

Keeping Passover by Ira Steingroot, Harper San Francisco, 1995.

The subtitle tells it all: "Everything you need to know to bring the ancient tradition to life and to create your own Passover celebration." It's easy to understand, has lots of good commentaries, stories, and discussions of related Jewish law, and it's fun. A good resource book to read before planning your seder—you need never feel that you don't know enough to make it happen—and a useful addition to a decent Haggadah and the TIKKUN Haggadah supplement. □

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BOOK REVIEW

Their Welfare and Ours

Ruth Rosen

Pitied but Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare by Linda Gordon. Free Press, 1994. 417 pp. $22.95.

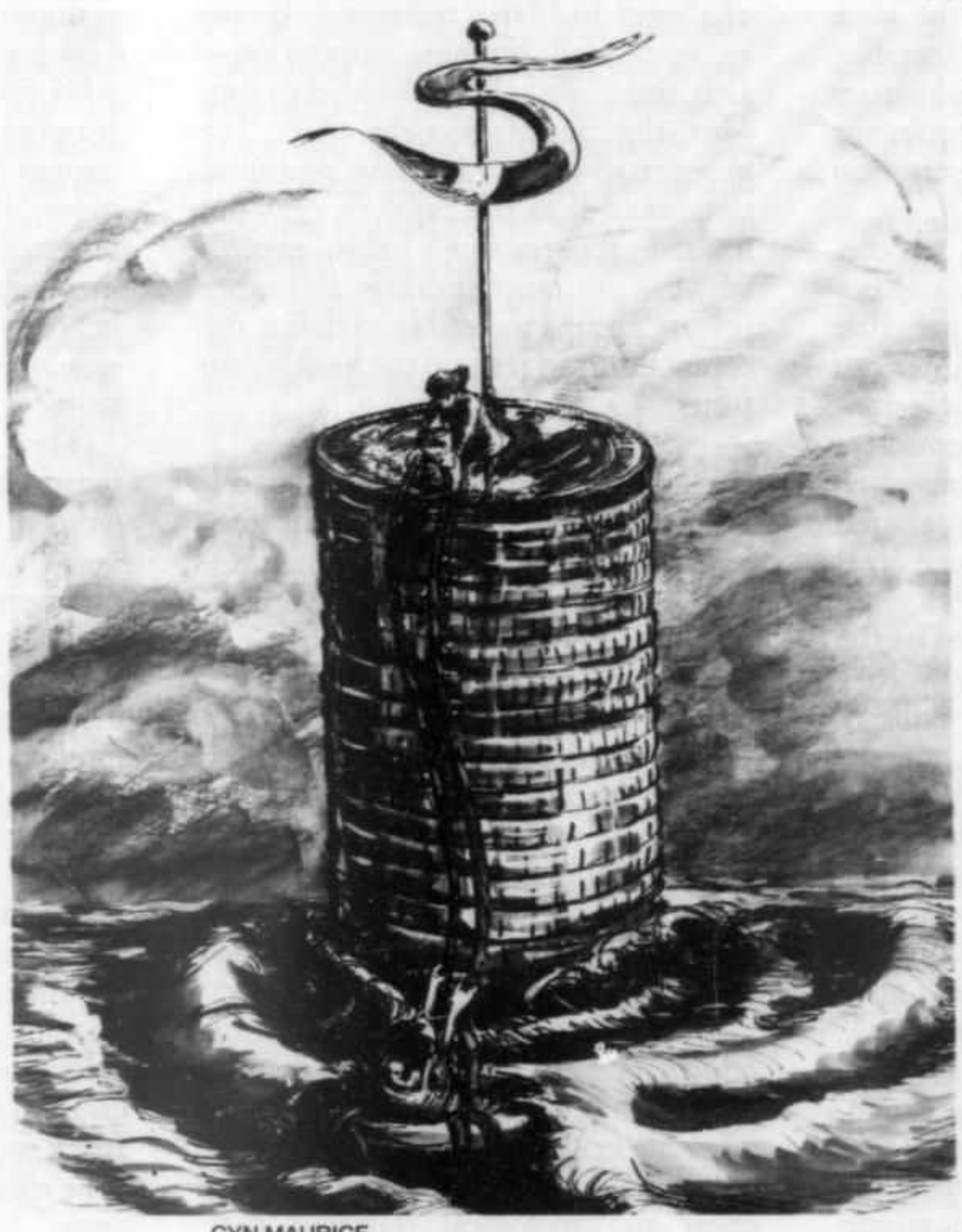
She's poor, deceptive, and slovenly. She neglects her children and spends taxpayers' money on drugs or booze. She's the enemy of the people, a social blight in an otherwise decent society, and she must be stopped. And, by the way, the color of her skin is dark.

Never mind that numerous studies have debunked these stereotypes of the single mothers who receive government assistance. The welfare mom, along with the new immigrant and the criminal, now heads this decade's list of domestic enemies.

In contrast, everyone else who receives government assistance feels a strong and legitimate sense of entitlement. Laid-off workers must have their dignity restored through unemployment insurance. Senior citizens feel entitled to social security checks—whether they need them or not. Middle-class suburbanites eagerly take advantage of mortgage tax deductions, student loans, and business write-offs. Corporations, banks, and farms—bailed out and propped up by government subsidies and incentives—would bristle at the idea that they, too, are welfare recipients.

So how did it happen that the American public regards unemployment insurance and Social Security for the aged, as well as other forms of government assistance, as respectable doles but views relief to a welfare mom and her kids as charity for the undeserving?

This is the subject of Linda Gordon's timely and insightful new book, *Pitied but Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare*. Assaults on the welfare system usually come from the political Right; Gordon, instead, offers a devastating critique from a Left and feminist perspective. She takes as her text the passage of the landmark Social Security Act of 1935. To our impoverished and mean-spirited political discourse on welfare, she contributes a fascinating history that explores the gendered origins of our modern welfare state, reveals our unexamined cultural assumptions, and helps explain the contemporary crusade against the welfare mother.



CYN MAURICE

The last five years have witnessed an explosion of literature on women and the welfare state. A recurring revelation in this scholarship—unknown to the general public—is that white middle-class women, between 1880 and 1920, laid the foundations of the American welfare state.

One of the strangest facts in American political history is that these women, who lacked the vote, had a large part in setting the political agenda for decades to come. "From Parlor to Politics," a permanent exhibit in the Smithsonian's Museum of American History, documents this explosion of female activism. Through such grass-roots organizations as the General Federation of Women and the National Consumers' League, these middle-class reformers lobbied for (and achieved) constitutional amendments guaranteeing suffrage and Prohibition, mother's pensions funded by local governments, legislation that improved women and children's working conditions, and laws that regulated food and drugs. They also launched campaigns against lynching, created the occupations of public health and social work, and transformed the urban and rural landscape through crusades for parks and wilderness areas.

But how did women who weren't allowed to vote address the casualties of industrial capitalism so effectively?

Historian Kathryn Sklar, in a forthcoming biography of Florence Kelley, a celebrated Progressive-era lawyer and socialist, argues that these women succeeded because they used gender as a surrogate for class. "Male political culture," Sklar suggests, was

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shaped by a long tradition of limited government, unregulated business, and the extraordinary oppression of organized labor. Unlike European trade unions and social democratic parties, male workers and politicians in the United States encountered too many obstacles—including genuine upward mobility, horizontal hostility among ethnic and racial groups, and a deep belief in individualism—to make effective claims on the state for social welfare.

Middle-class American women, however, benefited from a different political culture. From within the voluntary associations and the vibrant civil society that Alexis de Tocqueville earlier observed, female activists demanded that the government offer assistance to the poor. Drawing on the vigorous tradition of evangelical moral reform, these women used gender as a wedge for demanding that the state protect the weak and the vulnerable. In contrast, European political parties and labor unions used arguments rooted in class to push for the creation of their welfare states.

Organized by the millions, middle-class women became a formidable political force. Members of the first educated generation of American women, they used their relatively privileged backgrounds to buy themselves freedom from domestic responsibility; in fact, few married and many shared their professional and personal lives with other women. Filled with a sense of *noblesse oblige* and horrified by the squalor of industrial capitalism, they mobilized their professional skills in the service of gathering data, investigating social injustice, and lobbying for new legislation. Although a Red-baiting campaign weakened them during the 1920s, critical numbers took over the social work profession and implanted themselves in the Labor Department's Children's Bureau.

These women were ultimately influential in creating the welfare state. But here is a paradox: Why, asks Gordon, "in the U.S. where women exerted more influence on domestic social policy than in other countries, [were] female welfare clients (and children) treated worse than in most other countries?"

The answer is complicated. Our present welfare system was not inevitable. When the Social Security Act was passed in 1935, President Roosevelt and Congress considered but rejected a series of alternatives and compromises. They contemplated, but dismissed, universal health insurance because the A.M.A. opposed it so vigorously. They excluded agricultural workers and domestic workers because Southern legislators wanted to preserve a cheap and tractable African-American labor force. By 1935, moreover, stronger labor unions and hugely popular advocates of old-age insurance had made welfare for the jobless and the elderly politically palatable.

For those of us who still dream of universal health insurance, Gordon's analysis of the Zeitgeist that surrounded passage of the Social Security Act is a much needed object lesson. Across the political spectrum—from the Communist Party to Huey Long—the cry for state assistance to the unemployed turned into a noisy political challenge to FDR's reelection. If only to co-opt all populist opposition—Left and Right—FDR decided to support the Social Security Act. The absence of such grass-roots mobilization, as well as the public's cynicism toward government, helps explain why the insurance industry and other private groups were able to defeat the recent effort to revamp the health-care system.

Linda Gordon's book also demonstrates how far women's history has come. No longer are women depicted simply as heroines or victims. As Gerda Lerner demonstrated in *The Creation of Patriarchy* (1986), women have played an important part in creating male-dominated societies; they had no choice. Gordon, too, ably shows how middle-class women used their considerable political clout to promote patriarchal assumptions about gender that resulted in stigmatizing poor women.

By the Depression, female welfare reformers were well positioned from within the Children's Bureau and other agencies to influence New Deal policy makers. But they were drawing upon an ideological tradition that pitied poor women, rather than envisioning them as entitled to economic independence.

Born and bred in the late Victorian era, these women were accustomed to distinguishing between the deserving and the undeserving poor. In their view, the former were made up of widows and deserted mothers—not divorced women or unmarried women who became mothers by choice. Through home visits, social workers were supposed to assess the "suitability" (read sexual purity) of single mothers. The practice of searching under beds and behind doors for cohabiting male partners and of judging the cleanliness of a home, was absorbed—without critical examination—into the New Deal's welfare system.

These women also never thought to challenge the belief that if only men were paid a "family wage," female poverty would be eliminated. While they fought for mother's pensions, they always regarded them as a temporary remedy, necessary to replace the wages of a departed husband.

As relatively privileged women, these reformers believed that only women like themselves could obtain economic independence. "Ironically," Gordon points out, "the very women who continued to base their welfare proposals on a family wage, breadwinner-housewife marital norm, removed themselves from these norms." Unemployment insurance for working men, then, as well as the temporary relief provided to the odd single mother, would provide a safety net for poor women.

How could these New Deal activists imagine that one day most women would require or desire economic independence, that growing numbers of single women would choose to become mothers, or that rising divorce rates would create growing numbers of impoverished single mothers?

Not all female reformers had so limited a vision. Gordon describes how African-American reformers accepted the reality of a working life for women and rejected the idea of charity or means testing. Providing for one's own people—through education, old people's homes, and preventive health-care—was their highest priority. But Black women had no power to influence either the policy experts or Congress.

Welfare, then, was basically established to protect the (mythic) family wage, by which a man could support a wife and children. With good cause, these reformers reasoned that without a family wage, men might lose authority in the home and women might be drawn into public employment, both

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BOOK REVIEW

A Strange Romance

Eric Murphy Selinger

A Natural History of Love by Diane Ackerman. Random House, 1994. 358 pages. $23.

The Pursuit of Love by Irving Singer. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994. 182 pages. $25.95.

In 1993, Allan Bloom announced "The Death of Eros." It was not from natural causes. In a brisk polemic in The *New York Times Magazine* (drawn from his posthumous book, *Love and Friendship)*, Bloom rounded up the usual suspects and read off predictable charges. Like Psyche's jealous sisters, an implacable team of sexologists and feminists, he charged, had tricked us into peering where we shouldn't. The first see love as nothing but statistics and bodily fluids; the latter blame it all on patriarchal politics. Eros wakes and flees the disenchanted scene. In his wake, we have only reductively empirical or blandly contractual terms in which to speak of our longed-for escape from autonomous selfhood, that *echt* American social disease diagnosed as early as Tocqueville. In Bloom's lament, Walt Whitman's dream of a love "that fuses, ties and aggregates," spilling over from couples to groups, from groups to the nation, "fraternizing all," has been rendered unbelievable and unspeakable. What language could we use? There have been hardly any great novelists of love for almost a century, the philosopher contends, and the texts that linger from a more romantic time have all been debunked as "pernicious and sexist," hardly inspiration, aid, or comfort for modern lovers nursing a presumably outdated "ideal longing."

But Bloom was an unconvincing prosecutor. If feminism is indeed responsible for unmasking older ideals, some pernicious indeed, it underwrites some of the finest recent amatory work: May Swenson's love poems, for example, or k.d. lang's dreamy, obsessive *Ingenue*. As an epitaph, though, Bloom's essay held more interest. It echoed, warning for warning and sigh for sigh, a tale of disillusionment about middle-class heterosexual romance that dates back at least a hundred years. In a search for sexual freedom and an undeceived insight into relationships ("that pallid word," says Bloom), something slipped through our grasp: a fineness of passion and expression, a grace and weight and poignancy and force to our desires. With "Bonds and gestures pushed to one side / Like an outdated combine harvester," this story goes, we have traded a Platonic ascent to the ideal for a vulgar paradise of available sex, "everyone young going down the long slide / To happiness, endlessly," as Philip Larkin puts it in "High Windows." From J. W. Krutch's *The Modern Temper* (1928) to Julia Kristeva's *Tales of Love* (1983), the song remains the same. Once "the guideposts that assured our ascent toward the good have been proven questionable," Kristeva observes, the old codes of romance exposed as repressive or simply illusory, we can't help but suffer "crises of love."

A number of recent books have offered more hopeful versions of this bleak trajectory. I think of A. S. Byatt's best-selling novel, *Possession*, which posed the haunted affair of two Victorian poets against the anxious affection of two young academics in the 1980s. As the modern romance hesitantly buds, both the couple and the reader are allowed to overcome their knowing, self-protective skepticism. The love that results may not be a grand passion. But, snatched from the face of irony, it is indisputably authentic—at least as historian Stephen Kern uses the word. For Kern, whose *The Culture of Love: Victorians to Moderns* came out around the same time as Bloom's article, modern lovers "may have lost some of the Victorians' delicacy and poignancy, perhaps even some of their heroism," but, in return, we have become "more reflective of what it means to be in love," more able to own or own up to love's urges and responsibilities. To love now is thus a kind of existential victory, however much it may look like a new fin de siècle's nostalgia for the boudoir. Books like Byatt's and Kern's are reassuring. They promise that we can love at least as wisely and as well as our grandparents, and maybe, because we must love more deliberately, even more so. They answer Bloom's worries about feminism—in the long run it's a spur to amorous self-consciousness and not the tight, misguided rein on affection he suggests—and suggest why we have no texts to guide us in ideal longing. Once love is redefined as a human inter-relation rather than a mode of salvation, what one needs are domestic and companionate tales of love, and those we have aplenty. Neither Byatt nor Kern addresses Bloom's fear of science, however, his sense that the naturalistic perspective on love popularized by Dr. Kinsey and Dr. Ruth misses "the truth of erotic arousal." "Infidelity," demands *Time* magazine: "Is It In Our Genes?" So much, Bloom's ghost would mutter, for Guinevere and Lancelot.

In *The Pursuit of Love,* his book-length essay on love and meaning, philosopher Irving Singer suggests a path beyond this final fear, in part by searching out its history. From the start of the nineteenth century, he explains, Romantic writers declared that sexual love was sacred: a figuring-forth of God's and nature's goodness that could bring happiness and meaning to life, if only it were free of illusory and irrational social proscriptions. You can hear this "benign romanticism," as Singer calls it, in the writings of reformers from Percy Shelley to Emma Goldman to doctors Andrew J. Ingersoll and Edward Bliss Foote, who announced in 1870 that "Physiological law is God's law," and that the "Golden Rule applied to sex" and

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Eric Murphy Selinger has recently completed a study of love in American poetry. He teaches writing and American literature at George Washington University.

therefore required "complete reciprocity between the partners in pleasure." You can even hear it as a soothing undersong to many of the most caustic feminist critiques of romantic love—for example, in Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex,* where it is not the ideal of love itself, but rather its distortion in male practice, that must be exposed and debunked.

Not all romanticism is benign, however. In their efforts to clear away neuroses and illusions about love, such reformers conspired with a harsh, debunking tradition in which passionate love was never more than an illusion to begin with, a way that nature has its way with us. This "romantic pessimism" roots down in Schopenhauer, flowers in the later works of Freud, and bears its bitter fruit in the grim or trivialized postmodern love Bloom has in mind. In this conception, love is at best a prescripted re-staging of some family romance, at worst an enslavement to biology, which tricks us into reproduction with the hope, in Singer's words, of "everlasting happiness and ever-increasing meaning," only to leave us co-dependent and frustrated in the end. What once was a hard-won, albeit cynical wisdom has devolved into a largely unexamined set of assumptions. Half of all marriages are guaranteed to fail. Love ain't nothin' but sex misspelled.

Romantic pessimism musters the authority of science against what seem the sentimental hopes of its happier twin. It offers emotional safety and the pleasures of explanatory power. To borrow from Henry James, no stranger to questions of love, it gives a quick shot of "the real," those things that in the end we cannot *not* know, that inoculates us against the allure of "the romantic," those things we can know only through "the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and our desire," and which always threaten to fail. But is the escape from myth a realistic option? Both Singer and Diane Ackerman, the poet and nature writer, argue otherwise. In different ways, both stake a claim for a realist approach to love that is not corrosive but curious, attentive to the varieties of amatory experience without judging them against Romanticism's unattained or unattainable ideal of spiritual union.

A century ago, naturalism meant determinism, the discovery that "Whether or not we find what we are seeking / Is idle, biologically speaking" (Edna St. Vincent Millay). As the century ends, it means something more expansive—a promising development for the discourse of love. In the introduction to *A Natural History of Love*, Ackerman flips through a fistful of new-naturalist questions. "Why did love evolve?" she wonders. "How does it make sense in evolutionary terms? What is the psychology of love? Are erotic and non-erotic love essentially the same? Who is naturally more loving, a man or a woman? What is mother love? How does love affect our health? Do men and women have different sexual agendas? What is the relationship between lack of love and crime? What is the chemistry of love? Are we monogamous by nature, or were we born to cheat? How has the idea of love changed through the ages? Do aphrodisiacs really exist? Do animals feel love? What are some of love's customs and extravagances?"

The book that follows is a gathering of answers: a quick tour of social history and the history of ideas, of the "nature" and the "erotics" of love (brain chemistry and evolution in one column, evolution and assorted sexy topics in the next), of altruism, the love of children, strangers, God, one's analyst—and, last but not least, the love of pets. Needless to say, some of these topics are treated more richly than others. The sections on Victorian love are particularly sketchy, dwelling on comic pruderies and ignoring the lush private license of the period. But what's most striking is the leveling implicit in her approach. Plato gets four pages, pets get six. Bloom would nod: *I told you so.*

Ackerman doesn't just avoid ranking her topics so she can rope in stray, tangential pieces from magazines such as *Parade* and *Conde Nast Traveler*. Refusing to let any particular ideal of love seize her attention, she bestows equal value on a literary critique of Tristan and Isolde's passion and on phenylethylamine (PEA), the brain's own speed, which gives passion its chemical kick. She never says that Tristan was just a PEA junkie, hooked on infatuation; and if the thought crosses your mind, as it must, the lush way she writes about the "brain-stem sonata" of love's neurophysiology makes the notion that love is ever "just" anything seem absurd: "While the chemical sleigh ride of infatuation carries one at a fast clip over uneven terrain, lives become blended, people mate and genes mix, and babies are born. Then the infatuation subsides and a new group of chemicals takes over, the morphinelike opiates of the mind, which calm and reassure" as they "roll in their thick cozy carpets of marital serenity." One soon comes to say of love's chemicals what Ackerman says of the packed sands that flash light through an opal: "I know how they do it, but am still perpetually bowled over my them."

Indeed, this *Natural History* is most memorable when it shows that reducing love to brute biology will founder on biology itself, which isn't so brute after all. Consider the male bowerbird, who attracts a mate by building aesthetically elaborate nests, some nine feet tall, decorated with fresh flowers and whatever other *objets d'art* he can find. Love's human customs are more playfully varied, but in Ackerman's vision, there is no art that nature doesn't devise. Once the anti-scientific scales of romantic pessimism drop from your eyes, nature turns out to be not simply libidinal, but complexly erotic in its own right.

I take the distinction between the libidinal and the erotic from Singer's *The Pursuit of Love*, where they are patiently distinguished from one another and from the romantic, that love of a particular person in which those other two elements of sexual love contribute, in varying degrees. Singer's book-length essay revolves around such teasings-out and artful recombinations. Setting aside the pleasures of anecdote and detail, but not the naturalistic perspective, of Ackerman's book, Singer offers a systematic map of love as a made thing, at least as conceptual as it is instinctive. "Ideas in philosophy filter into the emotional responses of ordinary men and women," he observes, becoming myths that we live by. By outlining the ways that we've been misled, particularly by visions of love as something that "just happens... a kind of sudden magic" in which separate autonomous persons merge or fuse into one, Singer hopes to change the available concepts through which instincts and brain-stem sonatas are experienced.

Like Ackerman, Singer is a self-conscious pluralist. When he distinguishes the love of things, of ideals, and of persons, the only preference he declares is for an "intentionally vague" standard of harmonious integration. He attends

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BOOK REVIEW

The Perils of Uniqueness

David Biale

The Holocaust in Historical Context, vol. 1, by Steven Katz. Oxford University Press, 1994, 702 pp. $49.95.

The debate about the uniqueness of the Holocaust has been with us for at least a quarter of a century. Historically, the emergence of this discourse took place at the same time that the Holocaust became central to American Jewish identity, a development that began sometime in the late 1960s. This identity formation reflected a kind of cognitive dissonance in which the community least persecuted in Jewish history derived an increasing dimension of its communal ethos from the worst catastrophe in Jewish history. At the same time that Jews increasingly based their identity on the Holocaust, others turned with increasing frequency to Holocaust analogies in condemning more recent atrocities: Vietnam, Cambodia, the experience of African Americans and Native Americans. In this context, asserting the uniqueness of the Holocaust became a way of defending the particularity of Jewish identity, a new secular form of the chosenness of the Jews.

At its crudest, the appropriation of the words "Holocaust" and "genocide" sometimes becomes part of a political polemic over comparative victimization in which the stakes are who gets the largest slice of the multicultural pie. Another political use of these terms has been in the German historians' debate in which certain right-wing historians have tried to dilute Germany's special moral burden after the Holocaust by arguing that others perpetrated similar atrocities: If the Holocaust is not unique, then Germans are not more culpable than others.

At a less ideological level, some historians have used this kind of language as a way of highlighting the quantitative magnitude of a particular atrocity, without intending any invidious comparison with the Jewish experience. Here, the Holocaust becomes a moral yardstick against



YAD VASHEM, JERUSALEM, ISRAEL, COURTESY U.S. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

which one can measure other mass murders. Indeed, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. has succeeded, in my view, in balancing the particular Jewish genocide with the mass murder of others during World War II.

Finally, at the greatest level of abstraction, ever since Raphael Lemkin coined the term "genocide" during World War II, theorists have been debating the precise definitions of juridical terms that might be applied to crimes not explicitly recognized before our century. Is genocide a "new" crime or has it existed in the past without being so designated?

Steven Katz has now entered this many-layered debate with a 700-page volume, the first of what is promised as a three-volume, definitive treatment of the Holocaust's uniqueness. Katz defines genocide as the attempt to put into effect an explicit ideology which calls for the killing of every single person of a particular group. The intentionality of the perpetrators is therefore critical: The death of millions of Native Americans from epidemics or of millions of African slaves during the Middle Passage does not qualify as genocide under this definition, since neither the European invaders of the New World nor the slave traders intended as a matter of ideology to kill all of their victims. Quantity, in percentage or absolute terms, does not make for genocide. Neither does the attempt to kill part of a group, such as the Nazi extermination of Polish intellectuals, or to eradicate a culture, as opposed to all of the individuals making up that culture. All of these are heinous crimes, but are not true genocide.

Equipped with this definition, Katz then exhaustively surveys a number of historical persecutions: slavery and imperialism in antiquity, medieval anti-Semitism, and the persecution of witches, homosexuals, and heretics. None of these turns out to meet his definition of genocide, since, especially in medieval Christianity, conversion or expulsion—and not extermination—were the theologically acceptable goals. Katz suggests—but leaves the proof for a later volume—that modern instances of mass death, such as the slaughter of Armenians during World War I, also do not qualify as genocide. The Holocaust remains unique: the only case of true genocide in human history.

This argument is presented with great philosophical rigor and historical erudition (Katz's footnotes are often longer than his text). Katz repeatedly insists that his conclusion leads to no political, moral, or theological consequences. The uniqueness of the Holocaust does not make it any more "evil" than the enslavement of African Americans or the killing of witches. Nor does the claim of uniqueness remove the Holocaust from history into the realm of theology. Katz learns nothing about God or the theological mean-

David Biale is Koret Professor of Jewish history at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley and is the author, most recently, of Eros and the Jews.

ing of evil from his study. What he does learn is about the essence of Nazism. Nazism is defined quintessentially by what made it unique in human history: the single-minded, ideologically driven attempt to kill every Jew, regardless of the cost.

There is, in fact, a major historical debate, which has not yet been settled, about the role of the Holocaust in the Third Reich. One school, known as "functionalist," has claimed that the Holocaust emerged only gradually and by bureaucratic experimentation, rather than as a result of an intentional policy put into effect even before the war. The functionalists point to the conditions and ideology of total war, particularly as a result of the Nazi invasion of Russia. According to this argument, the Holocaust was but the most extreme instance of the murderous eugenics and mass enslavement that the Nazis imposed on the captive peoples of Europe.

For Katz, however, it was the Holocaust that determined these other horrors rather than the other way around. We will have to await Katz's third volume before fully evaluating this claim, but I would suggest that any argument that reduces the complex phenomenon of Nazism to one "essential" feature ought to be treated with suspicion.

What concerns me here is not this historical debate, or even the historical comparisons that Katz makes with ancient and medieval depredations. I am willing to grant him that none of the cases he examines qualifies as genocide under his definition, and that very probably the Holocaust is "unique" in his sense of the word. But, at the risk of being accused of "anti-semanticism," I wonder at the outset about the value of his definition and the use to which he puts it. To define genocide in the way Katz does is virtually predicated on deriving the definition from the Holocaust, as, indeed, Raphael Lemkin did in his classic work. Katz is therefore in some danger of a circular argument in which the thing he wants to prove is based on a definition taken from the proof. It does not, of course, follow that deriving the definition of genocide from the Holocaust means that one will find no other cases of it elsewhere, but, given the trivial truth that all historical events are unique, it does limit the possibilities for comparison. The Holocaust did, after all, happen in a singular way, like all other events. History, in short, does not repeat itself.

Katz argues strenuously and repeatedly that he draws no moral and theological conclusions from his proof of the Holocaust's uniqueness. He clearly fears the charge of claiming Jewish superiority in the battle over victimization. But what is the point of undertaking this enormous enterprise if it is not some kind of extra-historical claim? Surely a modest fifty-page essay would have clearly established—as others repeatedly have—that many of the comparisons to the Holocaust are historical distortions. Given the political climate in which terms such as "Holocaust" and "genocide" are used today, there can be no "objective" or "value-free" treatment of the question, despite Katz's strenuous pleas to the contrary. Indeed, the repetitive nature of his disclaimers—coming as frequently as every other page—gives the reader the suspicion that this author protests far too much. Whatever Katz's claims, his book cannot have a neutral status in the comparative victimization debate.

In abjuring any theological or moral conclusions, Katz claims to be operating solely as a historian. Yet, his very way of posing the question strikes this historian as singularly unhistorical. No historian tries to establish the uniqueness of, say, the Russian Revolution by elaborately demonstrating how it cannot be compared with all other revolutions. This is because no one would ever assume it not to be unique, although it clearly shared certain general features with other revolutions. The very discourse of uniqueness is therefore only meaningful either when history is invoked in political debate (as in the German historians' controversy) or in theological speculation; for historians concerned with understanding the past for its own sake, "uniqueness" is either trivial, meaningless, or a code word for an extra-historical agenda. Katz's stance as an "objective" historian is therefore belied by the very unhistorical way he poses his question.

If the uniqueness of the Holocaust is a thesis designed to thwart illegitimate comparisons with other instances of mass death, then by engaging in such detailed comparisons, Katz ends up inadvertently legitimizing the very discourse he claims to reject. Far from insulating the Holocaust from comparison, he has made it the central question for discussion. Given his single-minded investment in the issue of uniqueness, one wonders what would happen to his project if even one counter-example might be marshalled. For instance, how will Katz handle Rwanda in his volume on mass death in the modern age? Here, it would seem, is a clear case of an ideologically driven attempt to kill all members of another ethnic group. Will Katz be forced to admit that the Holocaust and Rwanda are in a unique category? Or, as seems more likely from both his explicit arguments and his absolutist rhetoric, will he strain to show that Rwanda is somehow different?

The Holocaust surely stands alone as a case where genocidal intent and practice found their most propitious conditions: total war, technology, and a totalitarian state. But it is safe to say that many, perhaps most, cultures contain genocidal moments in their history (one thinks, for example, of the Australian massacre of the Tasmanians, or the Chinese slaughter of the native Taiwanese, to take two non-Eurocentric examples).

There is, in fact, an excellent example that Katz might have dealt with in the present volume, except that it perhaps falls too close to home. I have in mind the genocidal proscriptions of the Book of Deuteronomy with respect to the Canaanites: "You shall not leave any soul alive" (Deut. 20:16). A similar ban is pronounced against the Amalekites and, indeed, King Saul is said to lose his crown because he does not kill Agag, the king of Amalek, when he slaughters all the rest of the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15).

Despite Katz's tortuous footnote in which he tries to turn the Amalek passages into "theology" instead of history, this material remains a rather significant challenge to his thesis. Now, we know that Joshua did not actually eradicate the Canaanites, nor did Saul wipe out the Amalekites. The genocidal pronouncements of Deuteronomy probably stem from long after early Israelite history. But they were certainly the ideological warrant for later attacks on Canaanites and Canaanite practices, such as the reforms of King Josiah in the seventh century. More important, according to Katz, it does not matter whether or not a genocide is fully carried out; what counts is intent. On this score, the author of these biblical texts manifestly intended genocide.

Is Katz then forced to say that the Holocaust and Deuteronomy are uniquely genocidal? One would hope not. A more reasonable—and less inflammatory—conclusion would be that the Bible and Rwanda demonstrate that genocidal intent can be found in many geographical and historical settings, even if not identical to that of the Third Reich.

Katz's argument invites this kind of critique because of its absolutist claims.

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BOOK REVIEW

Hungering for Wholeness

Gabriel Levin

Ritual Bath, by Linda Zisquit, Broken Moon Press, 70 pp., $12.95.

"There is only one way to talk to you," begins Linda Zisquit's first collection of poetry—the pitch of voice direct, pressing, ardent. In a collection that winds itself tightly around one theme, set against the contours of the harsh Judean landscape, the American-born poet speaks forcefully of self-division, in which longing and desire are constantly pitted against the restraining, or—at best—restorative, power of ritual.

A thorough acquaintance (and a particularly feminist reading) of the Torah, midrashic legends, and the moral strictures of the Talmud tilt the finest of these poems away from mere confession. Yet the poet's immersion in the world of traditional Judaism is precisely what drives her *elsewhere,* "making a virtue/of divisions, racing with myself to fall/at the first roadblock, to be loved."

Here is the poetry's crux and cutting edge: risk, failure, perfection, deception, repentance—the poet readily moves from one emotive state to another within the compass of the short-breathed lyric, with its by-now familiar, late-twentieth-century irregular speech rhythms:

Welts across my chest
are a sign. I who so wantonly
clamored anarchic

against you, bare myself
repentant, resplendent
this time. Turning

toward you and blemished
in these days set aside
for the body's climb.
("Elul")

This deceptively simple poem, where the tacit gently ripples against the outspoken, pays rereading, for it celebrates as much as it admonishes, and its sheer delight in the implosive power of language suggests that at bottom the poet cannot but help equate the wanton, anarchic self with the workings of the inner, creative mind. The writer's craft surreptitiously turns into craftiness, the art of deception, as the poet is drawn toward the unknown, personified as the male lover: "Always this obsession/with displacement—/another's fingers on my lips,/another's darkness pouring in."

Significantly, illicit love is examined in a number of key poems through the prism of such prototypical or legendary female figures as Eve, Rachel, and the lesser-known Beruria and Istehar. These are women who are imagined as living, in the modern sense, dangerously. Their lives, however, are imperiled *and exalted.* They are carnal sinners, perhaps, hungering for wholeness, and the burden of their secret is the source of their strength. □

Gabriel Levin lives in Jerusalem. His collection of poems, Sleepers of Beulah, *was published in London in 1992.*

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BOOK REVIEW

The Abortion Dilemma

Harvey Cox



MERYL LEVIN, IMPACT VISUALS

The Politics of Virtue: Is Abortion Debatable?, by Elizabeth Mensch and Alan Freeman. Duke University Press, 1993. 268 pp. $14.95.

The authors of this engaging and timely book, both of whom teach law at the State University of New York, plunge into an area most cautious legal minds would prefer to avoid. Their focus is the ugly stalemate in the abortion debate, but their larger concern is the crisis in moral language, which seems to prevent reasonable and ethically grounded discourse on this or any other vital issue from taking place. Like the philosopher Alisdair MacIntyre, the late social critic Christopher Lasch, and others, Mensch and Freeman trace this dangerous stand-off to the banning of discourse based on religious traditions from policy-making circles. These circles, they argue, are dominated by a secularized elite that disdains religion, elevates science to a position of ultimate authority, and holds the feelings and opinions of ordinary "non-specialists" in contempt. They make a double case—first, that we have sacrificed the subtle heritage of these spiritual traditions at great cost to our capacity to cope with questions of life and death; second, that on the vexed issue of abortion both sides should recognize once again the morality—and necessity—of compromise.

I picked up *The Politics of Virtue* just as a well-known advocate of the "right-to-life" cause was arrested for murdering a physician and his bodyguard at an abortion clinic in Florida. The next week, the Vatican mounted a vigorous campaign against the preparatory document of the U.N. global conference on population scheduled for Cairo in September. Given these eruptions of religious commitment into the abortion controversy, it was not immediately obvious to me how the introduction of even more religiously based language into this or any other argument would contribute to reasonable compromise. It seemed, on the contrary, that at least a certain kind of religious discourse had further inflamed an already explosive issue. Nonetheless, I plunged ahead, realizing that it would take some highly articulate reasoning to convince me.

Although I was not fully persuaded in the end, I concede that these well-informed authors make a plausible case. They begin their diagnosis of the collapse of a useable moral discourse with our national reactions to Nazism and the civil-rights movement. In both instances, although there were voices to the contrary, our country drew a legacy of consensual values to eventually do the right thing. But they also chart the erosion of "natural law" theories and, in a particularly well-written chapter, point to Protestant ethics as represented by Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a possible resource for a "public theology." Then they describe the "pluralization" of American religion and the resuscitation of fundamentalism in the 1950s, and discuss the obstacles raised by what they call the "secularization of mainline religion" in the 1960s. This has all led up to the current "schism" in the body politic, they claim, which renders reasonable moral exchange virtually impossible and, in the case of the abortion debate, has now sunk to the level of bombing and assassination. This sounds right, and the authors' plea for both sides to consider compromise is eloquent, although I am not sure that Planned Parenthood and Operation Rescue are ready to sit down together at Camp David.

My guess is that TIKKUN's editors have asked me to review *The Politics of Virtue* because my early theological work appears in a not-too-flattering light in the picture Mensch and Freeman paint. They suggest that, as the author of *The Secular City*, which was published in 1965, I contributed to the erosion of public moral reasoning. I am said to represent the unfortunate surrender of classical Christianity to an uncritical secularization, exhibiting what James Davison Hunter, whom they cite, calls the

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"tendency to resymbolize historic faiths according to the prevailing assumptions of contemporary life." In a revealing paragraph, they put their position very bluntly. "We assume," they say, that a distinction can be made "between two approaches to tradition":

One is the facile and manipulative approach familiar to lawyers, where bits and pieces of tradition are put together for the sake of making a particular argument sound convincing... The other is an authentic participation in tradition, which affirms its values and authority in ongoing engagement with a changing social reality.

The difference between these two approaches, they assert, spells "the difference between shallowness and depth, between slickness and integrity, with respect to the relevant tradition."

If I am being taken to task for engaging in what theologians have done for millennia, "resymbolizing historic faith" in order to make its demands clearer to the environing culture, I am of course guilty. But prophets and sages in every tradition have been doing this for centuries. The power of ancient Judaism is nowhere so clearly demonstrated than in its capacity to co-opt the agricultural festivals of Canaan for its own religious purposes. The towering achievement of the patristic period was the daring use of Hellenistic culture as a vehicle for Christianity. Even Karl Barth, whom the writers admire, turned to existentialist writers as well as the Bible and the Reformers in his theology. My own teacher, Paul Tillich, relied on what he called the "method of correlation," relating the symbols of faith to the concerns of the culture. Not to do this results in insularity and extinction.

Reading this engrossing volume reminded me that the term "secular," which I tried to reclaim from the low esteem to which it had fallen a quarter century ago, often still serves as a handy foil for those who feel something has gone wrong both with our culture and with the way we argue moral issues. It might be useful, therefore, to recall that "secular" as such is a descriptive rather than an evaluative term. It derives from the Latin word for "this world" or "this age." It simply names those areas of life and society which do not fall under the jurisdiction of religious institutions. It is still applied to Catholic priests who serve in parishes in distinction to those who belong to religious orders or who remain cloistered.



MERYL LEVIN, IMPACT VISUALS

The Secular City was a work of exuberant youth, and, therefore, of occasional hyperbole. But I stand by its central thesis: that for the faithful Jew or Christian, God is a God of all life and is therefore not to be found exclusively in the so-called "sacred" realm. As biblical theologians are fond of saying, "God works in history," not just through churches and synagogues or the people who attend them. Indeed, it is one of the key features of prophetic Judaism and Christianity that God often judges religious practices and traditions quite harshly: "Take away your feasts and the noise of your solemn assemblies, and let justice roll down like a mighty stream."

At the heart of the biblical faith is the assertion that God is present in the midst of this world and in this present age. Indeed the messianic threads of these two faiths put a certain priority on the future rather than the past as the prime locus of the divine. God is not just the author of accumulated past wisdom but the One Who Comes, whose fresh presence upsets the past and reorders the present.

Neither the religious nor the secular areas of life (and the line is always hard to draw) represent unambiguous good or evil. There are parts of the world today in which a little *less* religious rhetoric might serve the human good. Kashmir, Northern Ireland, and Bangladesh come to mind. There are probably also some disputes in which evoking the positive resources religious symbology offers about human dignity and the oneness of the world family might help lead toward a more just outcome. But to make religious tradition as such the positive pole and the secular as such the negative one is just too simple. The last resort of zealots is often piety rather than patri-

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For Whom the Bell Curves

(Continued from p. 29)

Murray and Herrnstein have, of course, approached this problem. So have neoliberal commentators such as Mickey Kaus, a senior editor at The *New Republic*. Kaus's 1992 book, *The End of Equality*, put forward a case for social, rather than income equality—the "valued places" argument—fueled by a vision of an impending two-tiered society strikingly similar to that in *The Bell Curve*. Like Murray and Herrnstein, Kaus also asserted the need for massive reductions in welfare. Recognizing this commonality, Murray and Herrnstein respectfully cite Kaus's work. For his part, Kaus, upon reading *The Bell Curve*, called it "alien and repellent" in The *New Republic*. But in *The End of Equality*, Kaus seemed far more willing to test the waters of a genetic cosmology. "The question is not," he writes conscientiously, "whether success (and social class) is now primarily passed genetically from generation to generation—I assume it isn't—but whether it's passed genetically from *generation more now than it used to be* [italics in original]."

The vexing political problem posed by "a genetic basis for success" has engaged an eclectic variety of minds. In *Sex and Reason*, Richard Posner, federal judge, legal scholar, and forceful advocate of gay and women's rights, makes a bio-economic defense of the individual:

"This chapter has set the stage for a rational-choice, or economic, theory of sex. Already economic language has crept into the discussion. This should be no surprise. Evolutionary biology... is a parallel mode of inquiry to economic analysis. Both analyze rational behavior in the sense of fitting means to ends, the difference being that the rational maximizer in evolutionary theory is the gene, and in economic theory it is the individual or the firm."

Elsewhere, Posner refers to the English eugenicist R.A. Fisher, as well as to Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, who had tried to implement a policy discouraging poor people from reproducing: "But if poor people tend to have worse genes than rich, as R.A. Fisher and Prime Minister Lee, among others, have thought, and if a reduction in the quality of a society's gene pool inflicts an aggregate harm on the society greater than the benefit to the additional poor children who are born, a policy of subsidizing the poor to produce more children would not be optimal." Posner illustrates how sympathy for issues that drive identity politics can comfortably coexist alongside the iciest indifference to realities of poverty and class.

The most vigorous, and explicit, argument for a social Darwinian perspective comes from Robert Wright (like Kaus, a senior editor at The *New Republic*) whose book, *The Moral Animal*, also appeared last fall. Wright's politics, to the extent that I can make them out, are far from Murray and Herrnstein's. But in America, people's politics are one thing, what they think about social arrangements is another. *The Moral Animal* offers a serious argument for a sociobiological view of life. It is arch, witty, playful, ironic, self-deprecating, and conscious of itself as an outrageous document. Beyond that, the book still poses a serious argument for a sociobiological view of life—for all its apprehension about being taken too seriously.

Life, according to sociobiology, is driven by "the ruthless pursuit of genetic self-interest," as Wright puts it. All human emotion, social, and cultural structures derive from this invisible chemical impulse, which evolved into its present form hundreds of thousands of years ago, in our ancestral environment. Our brains haven't changed since then—"We live in cities and suburbs and watch TV... all the while being pushed and pulled by feelings designed to propagate our genes in a small hunter-gatherer population."

Wright explains that "the overriding criterion of organic design is fitness." If illness strikes, a spouse becomes "unmarketable," incidentally increasing the chances for marital success by lessening the chances of roaming. On the other hand, it could happen that "market conditions suddenly improve" and "men... shift toward a high-investment strategy"—in other words, they want to get married and have kids. On ethics: "A

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Israel's Education Dilemmas

(Continued from p. 64)

The historical movement, then, has been from "should be educated" in the 1950s and 1960s, to "are difficult to educate" in the 1970s, to "cannot be educated" in the 1980s, to "need not be educated" in the 1990s.

In 1993, a new voice joined the educational debate: Kedma, a grass-roots organization of activists and educators that calls for the erection of state-funded, quality schools in *Mizrahi* neighborhoods, to be controlled and run by *Mizrahi* parents and educators. Minister of Education Amnon Rubinstein has authorized Kedma to open its first two high schools in *Mizrahi* neighborhoods in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. At the present, Kedma is too small to change the balance between "old integrationists" and "new rightists." But it points the way to another vision of Israeli society. □

CRECHES, MENORAHS, AND THE COURTS

(Continued from p. 32)

holiday cheer without flinching, but others find themselves retreating from a world that seemed safely secular a few weeks before. The season, when we are surrounded by graphic talismans of a Christian holiday, finds many Jews confronting, sometimes painfully, their status as a minority and a fairly small one. They see their children define themselves as Jews against images of glittering glass balls and stacks of wrapped presents, and they weigh the costs of participating in a dominant culture that, yes, is Christian, against stubbornly holding onto the particularity of a religious tradition.

Small wonder the meaning of Chanukah has changed, as Justice Blackmun has remarked. In the popular culture, Chanukah has been recast as a Jewish Christmas, and this is an alternative people who celebrate Christmas easily embrace, as they tack up blue cardboard dreidels next to renderings of the ubiquitous evergreens and assuage whatever pangs they may feel at expropriating public space for their festivities. Inevitably, parents do try to compensate for the feelings of deprivation they imagine their children feel—or they may feel themselves—when they refuse to let Santa down their chimney. But Chanukah also has taken on a new layer of meaning, the way enduring holidays do, by becoming, for some Jews, a time to recall the mettle of their religion as they see it in high relief against the vivid pageantry of Christianity temporarily made so eminent and visible.

Despite the effort of many federal judges to declare and confine the meaning of creches and menorahs, they remain powerful, dense, living symbols. They cannot be reduced to a common understanding nor assigned to the safe precincts of reason. They explode with meanings.

Nor can those who understand these symbols differently from me or you or any particular federal judges be dismissed as unreasonable. The judges who are all too willing to tell us that only the views of a narrowly defined "reasonable observer" need to be respected in making rulings under the Establishment Clause miss the point. Religion is the province, to some extent, of unreason. It traffics in such concepts as transcendence, mysticism, and ineffability that are, by their nature, at odds with rationality.

And the Constitution protects it all. Essentially an anti-majoritarian document, the Bill of Rights, whose first utterance is the Establishment Clause, removes religion from the realm of ordinary politics. It states a principle of state neutrality and allows no simple legislative and executive act to undermine it, regardless of the will of a temporary majority. In our constitutional scheme, dissenter and heretic, fanatic and atheist, all occupy a place equal in the eyes of the state to that of the quiet churchgoer.

But I have another quarrel with these cases and the judges that have decided them. Establishment Clause jurisprudence recognizes the wisdom not only of protecting the state from the ravages of sectarian strife, but of insulating religion from the compromise that inevitably attends state-supported religion. In the classic formulation, "a union of government and religion tends to destroy government and degrade religion."

The fate of religion in these litigations is a casebook history of its degradation. The judges who have looked favorably on the cities that welcome the Christ Child into their City Halls at Christmas supply the necessary imprimatur of constitutionality only by hypothesizing a pale version of religion. They ignore testimony about the desire of burghers to "put Christ back in Christmas," and they strip Christmas trees and Christmas wreaths of Christian meaning. They then tell us the symbols they have pronounced secular neutralize whatever religious message may yet reside in the figures of the Holy Family in the stable. And, having found or created a sufficiently secular Christmas so that municipalities can do what they please, as they have so comfortably for so many years, they apply the same procedure to Chanukah. When they are done, Chanukah is a holiday with some residue of religious meaning, maybe, but with "cultural and political dimensions" sufficiently dominant so that the menorah may take its place among reindeer and angels.

But I dissent from the depths of my soul. I want to say the blessings and contemplate God's miracles in a world that so badly needs miracles, at a time of year when the enclosing darkness demands its own kind of miracle. I want to keep my holidays full of holiness, and I want to be free to see the world full of God. I want to think that people different from me also feel intensely their relationships with the divine and that their holidays too are suffused with sacred meaning.

Above all, I want to be able to repair to Roger Williams's garden, and when I get there, I don't want to discover the wilderness of government has scaled its walls. I don't want to find federal judges telling me that what I know to be sacred is really profane, that the garden isn't that different from the rest on the world, at least not in constitutional terms, or that the fire in my soul is unreasonable. I thought the Constitution was on my side, there as a bulwark to help me keep the garden hallowed ground. I hope I was right. □

CRACKPOT REALISM

(Continued from p. 54)

ism is, through its kabbalistic fixation on the secret meanings of words, connected to the tiny subgenre of dictionary novels, including David Grossman's *See: Under Love* in which one character saves his life by telling a series of interconnected fables to a Nazi commandant, and Milorad Pavic's *Dictionary of the Khazars,* in which the different entrees provide the solution to a mysterious murder. Both of these books echo the crackpot's universalist concerns in their own lexicographical, Borgesian fashion. The dictionary itself is the map to the completeness that life itself lacks, and if one is clever enough to extract and combine the right words from the O.E.D., one can find the answer.

At first glance, this search may appear to be related to trends in recent literary criticism, and to deconstruction's insistence that truth varies according to its seeker's racial, geographical, sexual, or chronological identity, but the crackpot text's ambiguities or uncertainties do not emerge from a relativity of perspective that negates the notion of the absolute; instead, Martin Probst, Franzen's protagonist of probity, probes the dangerous shifting of palpable absolutes. To say that there is no core beneath the parings is nihilistic. Despite despair and tragedy, the crackpot remains secure and therefore optimistic in his faith.

Take faith, as it keeps a tentative fingerhold over the abyss of a world where other values prevail. Most of the crackpot novels are set against a background of military, scientific, or political pandemonium.

From Mary Shelley's high-Gothic cultivation of underlying nightmare back to the Visigothic threat that Apuleius intuited massing beyond the boundaries of the empire or beneath the surface of the Pax Romana, we arrive at a turn-of-the-millennium place where conspirators bounce secret messages off satellites to our rooftops, waiting to sweep down, break the rules, and change the universe. If World War I shattered the social compact, opening the door to the radical individual perceptions of Leopold Bloom and his expatriate advocate, Mr. Joyce of Dublin/Trieste/Zurich/Paris, then twenty-five years later World War II rips apart the basic human contract. Moral disintegration is connected to military apotheosis.

The confluence of military strategy and scientific know-how commencing with catapults and battering rams, ambling through steam engines, flew screaming into unity during World War II. That's where it really begins. One older second cousin to the crackpots is wartime novelist Joseph Heller, whose *Catch-22* shares some of the genre's anxieties in a more existential, absurdist fashion. Heller and Mailer, as American soldiers, were the first to hear the whispers of Nazi atrocity before the newsreels from Europe incinerated the screens of New York. Of course, their work postdates Bergen-Belsen, but perhaps it takes a generation to translate that unspeakable horror into a literary vocabulary.

Today, the crackpots dive into the underlying madness that created the war rather than the madness of the war itself. Yet none of the preeminent practitioners of this genre to date is Jewish, with this season's surprising exception of Heller, whose new book, *Closing Time,* the sequel to *Catch-22* in which Milo Minderbinder has become a billionaire arms merchant and Chaplain Tappman has begun urinating atomic heavy water, leaps headfirst into crackpotdom. Not accidently, *Closing Time* is also the first book in which Heller portrays a realistically Jewish hero, maybe because the crackpots' worldview requires a genetic link to atrocity. In an odd way, the crackpots' is the human response to the Jewish trauma of this century. The Shoah was, partially, the combination of biologically determinist mania, technological expertise, and the chemical effects of Zyklon B. Directly we hear of Powers's outrage at the incarceration of the Japanese-Americans and come to Pynchon's obsession with I.G. Farben, the German chemical cartel that bears a passing resemblance to Jonathan Franzen's Sweeting-Aldren.

Pynchon, the hermit and great hermetic writer of our time, discovers the cartel to beat all cabals, and finally unveils the scale of Evil's endeavors. Yet the I.G. is hardly gone. Ostensibly dismantled after the war, its plants have been reincarnated in Bayer and Hoechst, the international chemical companies that purvey presumably enhancing, potentially ominous "miracle" drugs that change the duration and quality of life, and maybe that's why Pynchon, like Rushdie, must remain hidden. Yet knowledge is power. Despite the enormity of the forces arrayed against any sane definition of humanity, the crackpot realist believes that we can beat these guys if only we can figure out who they are. Perhaps the demonic Melmoth or Herr Dr. Frankenstein's would-be perfect eugenic beast sits on the renamed Farben's board of directors.

The scientific element in these books may emerge from the nerd mentality. Maybe that's why there aren't many women writers in this club—physics is still more fiercely closed to females than social studies. One imagines an eleventh-grade Tommy Pynchon, prematurely reclusive, with a plastic pocket protector to make sure

his pens don't leak entropically onto his wash 'n' wear shirt. Given a two-degree turn of fate, one imagines Johnny Franzen, tossing newspapers onto suburban porches, plotting to establish a cellular cable conglomerate, or teenage whiz kid Dicky Powers as a competitor to Bill Gates, computerizing the world.

Certain masters of technology, including Walt Disney and Werner Von Braun, figure as active characters or passive presences in these books, along with the politicians and soldiers who also make cameo appearances. There's Roy Cohen in the form's theatrical analogue, *Angels in America,* and John F. Kennedy in *Libra*, by Don DeLillo, the crackpot family's nervous neighbor and fellow conspiracy buff. References like these are used to lend crackpot realism a harder edge than the magical works which often maintain a sweetness at their core. The authors view the accomplishments of these men through a lens that is colored simultaneously with fascination and abhorrence, thrill and disgust.

The final, astonishing picture that the crackpots draw from the blunt, brutal configuration of dots on their pages still manages to be redemptive, and perhaps that's the greatest miracle of all. Rather than allow themselves to be silenced by the insane energies of willful genocide, they look to perfervidly fecund notions of regeneration. Jonathan Franzen hopes to secure the urban necropolis from further decay through his over-the-edge realpolitik, while Richard Powers moves from Hobbstown to full-scale salvation in his last novel, *Operation Wandering Soul.*

This most recent, and perhaps fullest, expression of crackpot realism takes place in and about the children's ward of an urban hospital. A young intern, Dr. Kraft, deals with a host of kids with diseases and mutilations ranging from the Raparrition, whose rhyme-spouting mouth is impaled in a car accident, to the horrifically self-explanatory No-Face, to Nicolino, who ages a decade for every calendar year of his life, to a strange, spiritual Laotian boat girl, Joy Stepaneevong, whose medicine-man father has retrieved the silver amulet that fell from the neck of Kraft's own father while the latter was cruising over the jungle in a helicopter gun ship for his or his nation's own never fully described covert purposes. It all connects.

Dr. Kraft takes his motley horde to the ballpark, while musing on the Crusades. He takes them, including those whose feet don't work and those without feet, dancing. The pain of the children is counterpointed against Powers's overflowing stewpot of meditations on wars, governments, media, mayhem, chaos, and a fantastic rendition of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

Here is Powers's description of the rats' extravagant passage to extermination that clearly echoes a human death march along a Polish country road:

> The crowd—no, the nation, the global confederation of rats—refusing to surrender what is here so excruciatingly close to deliverance once and for all, presses along after him [the Piper] in cold delight. Fortunately the streets have been cleared, roadblocked and flag-routed for this parade catharsis. The waves of wee timorous cowering beasts flow down the street-sluice toward the city walls, lower mammals molded into a molten flood, rats tumbling over rats, surging surf-like in curlers and cleansing eddies. But the living flood admits to no shoving, no panic, no collapse of societal mores.... The road becomes a single, continuous file of supplicants on their way to some unimaginable rat holy site. When it dawns on the front ranks of entranced dancers just what potter's field they are posting off to, only the slightest momentary objection ripples through the column. Distress passes; courage revives... All the way up to the very banks of the Weser, even when the piper stands aside and nothing but the murderous flow of rapids remains between the avant-garde and their arrival, hesitation is briefer than thought and more easily dispatched. The lead rats expand into the watery sacrifice required of them... Yes, a mother pauses here or there along the bank, thick with plunging bodies brown, and an occasional old retiree breaks into uncomprehending tears as he takes to the drink. But all choose this moment of crystalline clarity, receiving it willingly as opportune, a godsend.

But one last rat pauses, then joins his species in the cleansing, lethal waters:

> Reviving at the last possible instant, he surfaces, rights himself in the current, and with his last full measure of devotion pilots his battered body downstream to Ratland, where—the reason he was spared—he prepares a manuscript account, this firsthand report on the proximity of ecstasy to horror.

Somehow, Richard Powers finds comfort. He talks about the "threshold of the opaque" when "things are about to turn," reiterating *Angels in America* playwright Tony Kushner's "threshold of revelation" at this moment when "history is about to crack wide open." The crazed, wishful-thinking crackpot has faith in a nature that keeps procreating, renewing itself into further generations of lunacy and murder, compulsively trying to get it right. If the last page of any one of these books announces "The End" with terrifying clarity, we turn immediately to the next Page One. Perhaps this time it will read, "A sighing comes across the sky." □

THE PERILS OF UNIQUENESS

(Continued from p. 80)

In this, he repeats the kind of position he took in his earlier writing about the nature of mystical experience. Katz argued there against those who believe that there is a commonality to mystical experience, even if mystics convey the experience in the language of their different traditions. He held that since all experience is culturally mediated, there can be no distinction between experience and the reports about experience. His conclusion, which is in principle correct, is that there is no universal or common mystical experience, but only culturally bound experiences. As with his book on the Holocaust, Katz musters acute philosophical arguments and an impressive array of examples; he also claims to draw no theological conclusions from his argument. Yet, even if one agrees substantially with his argument, the import of this extreme position is to undermine any attempts to build bridges between traditions. If experience and language are only culturally shaped, then what do we have in common as human beings?

The common thread in Katz's work is a systematic attempt to subvert the Enlightenment ideal of a common human discourse, what Jürgen Habermas has called "communicative reason." If what happened to the Jews is unique, then what kind of solidarity becomes possible with others who suffer other forms of evil? Surely it is not necessary to collapse meaningful distinctions between atrocities in order to find the commonalities of experience that make for such solidarity. And, just as surely, the best medicine for the vulgar exercise of comparative victimization is not the copious assertion of Jewish uniqueness, but an end to the fruitless debate between the uniqueness and universality of suffering in the first place. □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Organizational and commercial announce-ments and Personals in this column are $2 per word. Enclose payment (check, money order or credit card information) and address to TIKKUN Announcements, P.O.Box 1778, Cathedral Station, New York, NY 10025.

New York University Summer Program in Cracow, Poland: July 3-August 4, 1995. Explore the Modern History and Experience of Jews in Eastern Europe. This 5-week program offers a selection of 8 undergraduate and 3 graduate courses. Courses are taught by leading American Jewish scholars. Program includes a one week study tour of Jewish Galicia. Contact: NYU in Cracow, 285 Mercer Street, New York, NY 10003, or call 800-771-4NYU, ext. 957.

"War and Memory: Postwar Representations of World War II and the Occupation in France": NEH Summer Seminar for College Teachers, June 26-August 4, 1995, at Harvard University. Stipend to participants: $3,200. For information and application forms, write to Seminar leader: Professor Susan R. Suleiman, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Thanks to all who wrote in response to "Placed, and Misplaced." Your responses were wonderful and fully appreciated. I've met a school director but received no responses from families with dyslexic kids. If you meet anyone or are a parent with a dyslexic child between the ages of 8 and 12 who wants to join an English school for dyslexic children in Jerusalem for Fall 1995 or 1996, write, phone, or fax: Wendy Orange, 10 St. John Rd., Cambridge, MA 02138, 617-497-9060.

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Salons

Tikkun/Renewal Study-Discussion group forming. N.California-SF Bay area. Marcia Joyce Freedman. P.O.B. 950, Larkspur, CA 94977. (415)459-1804, phone and fax.

Boston-Cambridge Salon seeks new members. If interested, call Howard Alper 617-492-0697

Personals

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Luscious, provocative JYAP (Jewish Young Adult Progressive) seeks enchanting, vivacious woman who loves life, dancing, and talking too loud in late night cafes. (Box #1)

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WELFARE

(Continued from p. 76)

of which challenged their assumptions about appropriate gender relations. In contrast, the European strategy of providing a universal allowance would not have turned poor single mothers into a stigmatized and suspect group. The result in America was that only aid to welfare mothers remained yoked to an older reform tradition that gauged the "morals" and the "means" of every recipient.

Gordon's thesis about the creation of the two-track welfare state should make one pause before lending support to new welfare legislation. She reminds us to unravel the unexamined assumptions embedded in current proposals. Why is it, for example, that a male worker deserves unemployment insurance, but an eighteen-year-old who cannot find employment does not? Why does a wealthy senior citizen deserve welfare, but an impoverished seasonal worker does not? To gain greater support for welfare, she proposes that all kinds of government assistance be made visible and be publicized. And she persuasively argues that, unless we fund universal programs from which all citizens benefit, the white middle class will never support more aid to the poor. Finally, Gordon calls for replacing the "family wage"—already a myth in 1935—with such practical supports for working mothers as paid leave, day care centers, and medical insurance.

But who in the current political universe has the guts to publicize the inequities in our present welfare system? Certainly not President Clinton, whose imagination on this subject matches the crusading Republicans who want to turn over the children of single mothers to orphanages. Certainly not welfare recipients, whose voice has been silenced through public humiliation.

Once again, feminists should take the lead, this time without cultural blinders about how the poor live and what they need. It is single mothers, after all, who are under assault. By joining with civil rights advocates, women's groups could use their influence and perhaps even enlarge their constituency if they placed high on their political agenda the defense of America's most undefended women.

Everyone knows about the glass ceiling; it's time for Americans to hear about the sticky floor from which poor women cannot rise. □

A STRANGE ROMANCE

(Continued from p. 78)

to varieties of love in society (love of a nation, married love, and so on), to religious love (which he eventually decides "may have a vital place in the good life"), and to the interplay within all forms of love between appraisals of value (I judge your looks to be lovely or laughable, unphotographable) and bestowals of value (I attend to, delight in, dote upon you, and declare that, despite all appraisals, you're my favorite work of art). Ackerman stresses the way nature picks chord changes over which we riff and harmonize our loves; while Singer plays up the ways that "natural" urges are mediated by culture, and not just in the repressive ways Freud had in mind when he described Western love as "lust plus the ordeal of civility." But given their shared faith that human love must be understood from its animal basis on up, they more compliment than contradict one another.

Neither of these books declares itself an *ars amorica*, a guide to love for our awkward age. But the aspiration is implicit and unavoidable. It's clear that neither will serve as the sort of road map for ideal longing that Bloom demanded. "If we think of love as in itself the answer to all the problems human beings face," Singer writes, "we will constantly be disappointed by it. If we search for perfection in a mate and refuse to be satisfied by anything less than that, we will never really experience sexual or marital love. If we are unwilling to undergo the interpersonal negotiations, the bickering, the inevitable annoyance, animosity, or anger that is part of living with another person, we will never be able to give our love to anyone." Good advice for one already inclining toward love. But how well do these texts answer the skeptic—the student Singer cites, who wants to know why he should "marry the cow when he can get the milk for free," or a graduate student I once knew, uncertain of her future and therefore determined to keep her heart in check? "Love is short," she used to say, "but tenure is forever."

Ackerman might tell the young man that his dream of satisfaction unfettered by ritual is the equivalent of nutrition unfettered by cooking: not a liberation, but a diminution (snacking does have its pleasures—she is no moralist). From Singer, he might learn the intellectual history of his debunking stance, and to name his meager vision a libidinal love of things, not an erotic love of persons—a tiny selection of the range of loves he has evolved to enjoy. Neither will ask him what it means to think of women as cows, or why he's letting his emotional life be ruled by clich's; both, though, would set him on a path toward appreciating the art of love as an art in its own right, whose pleasures are largely drawn from the imagination he has displayed so little of so far.

I fear my female colleague, though, would get less help. Reading Ackerman might let her bestow more value on the pleasures she already grants herself, as well as to distinguish the infatuate rush of PEA from the gentler, longer-lasting swell of other chemistries. And, reading Singer, she would find encouragement that the pursuit of romantic love may have been the ideologically preferred path to meaning in life for the last two centuries, especially for women, but it is not always the choice worth making. Would either of these, though, be more than cold comfort? Her wistful aphorism combines the suspicion of romantic love that both authors address with an economic disenchantment that neither does; for her neither romantic love nor work can be trusted to compensate for the other's shortcomings, and I picture her closing these books with a sigh, reaching for the cocoa, the remote. What could she use, besides a little luck? Not an *ars amorica*, perhaps, so much as a reminder that Psyche's peering into the darkness surrounding Eros led, after his flight, after all her ordeals—the make-work task of sorting heaps of seeds, a trip into the underworld—to the birth of a daughter called Pleasure. As Ackerman and Singer hint, as Allan Bloom forgets, as Psyche and her counterpart the Frog Prince will attest, sometimes disenchantment has its own rewards. □

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EDITORIAL

(Continued from p. 10)

special they were in their restricted places in the Jewish world, but rather by insisting that they have the same access to God and to communal power that men had hoarded in the sacred rituals of the synagogue.

Shlomo's right-wing politics and what seemed to my ears at times racist assumptions about "goyim" were matched with a boundless love for each individual human being he encountered, Jew or non-Jew. There was no one too unimportant, too deformed, too screwed up, or emotionally demanding for Shlomo to pour out his attention and concern. This was a man of *chesed,* overflowing with love, sexual energy, and caring—and although some people complained that he lacked adequate boundaries for a community leader in the way that he expressed his love, I experienced him as a very welcome alternative to the uptight rabbis who preached love but whose way of being in the world proclaimed, "I'm too important to waste my time on you unless you're rich, famous, or in some obvious way outstanding." Shlomo was famous among the homeless of the Upper West Side, because he would walk down Broadway at 2 a.m. giving away five or six or seven dollars to each needy person he encountered, until he had nothing left.

What a contrast to some of the people I have met in the leadership of the Israeli peace movement or among the intellectual elite of the American Left, whose snobbery and elitism are almost unbearably in conflict with their idealism. Since my divorce five years ago, I've rarely felt any concern from these "comrades"—save for a few close friends—about how it feels for me to be alone, my relationship with my son, or any aspect of my personal life. In contrast, Shlomo and the community he created at Kehillat Yakob (now under the fine leadership of Shlomo's successor, Rabbi Sam Intrator) were always very caring and concerned, extending themselves by proposing *shiduchim* (matches), inviting me for dinner, etc.—all this despite the fact that Shlomo and some of his disciples strongly disagreed with my statements about Israel. Shlomo never held back from others, no matter how "insignificant" in terms of money or power or what they could give back.

Frankly, I don't believe a progressive social-change movement can ever succeed until it embodies this level of caring—and in this respect, Shlomo and his community embodied a politics of meaning far more powerfully than anything I've seen on the Left, at least since the good days of the free speech movement and the first few years of the anti-war movement of the mid to late 1960s. For a politics of meaning, the task is not only to achieve a society based on love and caring, but to bring that society about through a movement that is itself involved in loving and caring. It matters how we get to the goal. I struggle with these issues myself. Sometimes, in order to keep TIKKUN alive, despite the fact that the magazine is wildly underfunded and hence understaffed, I end up paying people too little money, expecting too much of them, not having time to answer the wonderful letters I get or to respond to all the phone calls. At such moments I wonder if the goal of keeping the magazine going is worth acting in ways that might be experienced as disrespectful by others. So I was in awe of the way that Shlomo consistently managed to make caring for others his highest priority.

Some of Shlomo's critics felt his caring was less genuine because it was so universal and instantly available. How can I really be cared for by someone who doesn't know the details of my life the way a lover, close friend, or therapist might? But Shlomo's answer was simple: I can know each person by a direct and intuitive encounter with the presence of God in each one. Most of us distrust this kind of knowing because we think that what is most important about us is that which is unique. But this may be a bourgeois model of value: People are important only to the extent that they are unlike others, presumably because most people are not so wonderful and what elevates us is what distinguishes us from them. Instead, I think we could benefit from adopting Shlomo's perspective.

Thus, despite our differences on the issues arising from the treatment of women and our perspectives on the Palestinians, I still want to insist that Shlomo was a rebbe from whom there was much to learn, and that it is important for us not to let ourselves be reduced to determining our relationship to others solely on the basis of their politics. I loved this man and honor him, even though I disagreed with him on matters that were very important to me.

Jerry and Shlomo lived lives that were emblematic of the contradictory pulls and pressures of late twentieth-century American life among those who reject the dominant values of the society. Each has been revered by some and each has been disparaged and caricatured by many.

Is that merely the cost of playing an important role in our times? It ought not to be, and need not be. We must resist the tendencies, both within ourselves and in the media of the larger society, to give a one-dimensional account of the people about whom we care.

We must not memorialize our leaders and culture heroes with flowery words that cover over the inevitable contradictions in each of our lives. By imagining some of these people as all good we place an inevitable chasm between us and them ("how could I ever hope to attain to be that wonderful a person") and also incite an underground culture of negativity where we say privately what we are prevented from saying publicly. And it is this

split that then allows us to nurture a cynical consciousness that makes us doubt the real goodness that exists in each of us. Seeing and acknowledging the shadow is a prerequisite for recognizing that the shadow is not all that is there, and hence for being able to see clearly what today the sophisticated amongst us dismiss as nonsense, namely the ways that each of us also embody the spirit of God.

A healthier approach would be to start from the compassionate assumption that every one of us who is involved in trying to change things is also, necessarily, a "wounded healer" who does not fully embody his or her highest aspirations. If we could truly accept this about ourselves and each other, we could approach each other with compassion, not bolting from each other when we discovered each other's imperfections and moments of egotism and selfishness.

The deep truth we need to keep in mind is that each of us has been scarred and deformed by living in a world based on cruelty and selfishness, and that it is inevitable that in a variety of ways we have internalized this larger world into our own being.

Yet that is not all that we are, because we are also created in the image of God and have the capacity to embody spiritual and ethical energies and a loving and caring approach toward other human beings. If, when we face each other's death, we use the occasion not only to honestly assess how close that person came to being her own highest self, and how far she fell from it, we might also use the occasion to take stock of our own selves and where we stand. If that can be done lovingly and caringly, funerals and mourning could also become an opportunity for growing closer to God.

For me, Jerry and Shlomo were extraordinarily powerful and wonderful human beings who brought down onto this earth plane a manifestation of divine energy. Both of them connected to something higher and more hopeful than I ordinarily encounter in this world. Each of them made a significant contribution to our community and to our collective ability to hope. Their memories are already a blessing, and I pray that they will be bound in the bonds of eternal life. □

Abortion Dilemma

(Continued from p. 83)

otism.

Still, there is something about the argument the authors advance that requires careful response. Let me suggest where the discussion might be usefully joined. The word "secular" may once have been a useful one to describe the modern world. But this is no longer the case today. Neither the "death of God" foreseen by philosophers nor the irreversible secularization predicted by sociologists has come about. Instead, we are entering a "postmodern" era in which both traditional and nontraditional religions as well as various forms of secularity are demonstrating an unexpected resurgence. Sometimes this new awakening gladdens our hearts. Think of the picture published a few years back of the first bar mitzvah to take place in Poland in decades. But can we be equally thankful for the devotion of the *gush emunim*, or the ominous resurgence of Shinto in Japan? Or the swelling ranks of the American religious Right?

My conviction is that we are entering a period not of accelerated secularization but of sometimes conflicting spiritual loyalties and a polyphony of new and old and refurbished religious visions. God did not die after all, and we are witnessing the rebirth of the gods and goddesses. The task of theologians and of thoughtful scholars like the authors of this book is no longer to pursue the aging dragon of secularism, whose fire in any case has cooled, but to ransack both the sacred and the secular resources of our emerging world culture to locate the stories and metaphors, rites and customs that will help us sort through the things that divide us and concentrate on forging a truly global civilization that still preserves the cultural heterogeneity without which we would all be diminished.

The Project of Religion and Human Rights, founded by the late Rabbi Marshall Meyer and the Reverend Paul Moore, former Episcopal bishop of New York, has undertaken this very task. Bringing together scholars and practitioners from all the major religious streams, the project is seeking to bring the combined voices of those spiritual communities to bear on a range of issues that threaten human dignity today. It is an urgent matter. Those participating in the project realized at the outset that they could hardly commend religious values to those coping with violations of human integrity without first confessing the harm religions have perpetrated in the past and continue in many cases to perpetrate today. But the undertaking is well begun.

How will all this eventually influence the abortion debate? What the authors call for seems entirely reasonable to me. They advocate a "workable compromise," similar perhaps to the one now in effect in some western European countries, a policy that "allows abortion while regulating it to some degree and also seeks ways to discourage it." I think this is a worthy objective. Last year I led a seminar at Harvard on "Religious Values and Cultural Conflict" in which both pro-life and pro-choice students in law and divinity sought to find ways to talk to each other. One rule was to avoid *ad hominem* arguments and stereotypes and to look for points in the other side's position that might offer the possibility of compromise. Week by week, with some discouraging setbacks, we inched toward a position very close to the one Mensch and Freeman support. I do not believe it is impossible, but I think one has to be careful about which kinds of religious values are introduced and how they are presented. It won't be easy, but it is worth the effort, and the writers of this book have shown us a good example of how it can happen. □

THE VICHY SYNDROME

(Continued from p. 50)

But one suspects that this is less Klarsfeld the lawyer speaking than Klarsfeld the historian, or Klarsfeld the memorialist. For a court of law does not judge the guilt of an institution, or a system, only the guilt of individual men and women. But the danger, from a historical point of view, of focusing on individuals too much is that this can obscure the politics that produced them. The personality of Pétain, interesting though it may be, does not make us understand why the French needed (and perhaps still need) pseudo-monarchs to preside over the nation. And prosecuting Bousquet or Papon would not clarify the political reasons why so many able and highly educated French administrators were (and perhaps still are) prepared to serve the state, no matter what the consequences.

The maintenance of order was the greatest service the Vichy State rendered to the Nazis—making it easier for the Germans to carry out their plans.

Henri Rousso, who cannot be accused of being soft-minded about his countrymen, has warned against turning the past into a witchhunt. In his most recent book, written with the journalist Eric Conan, titled *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas*, Rousso points our that overreaction, "false taboos," and "false discoveries" are as much part of the Vichy syndrome as guilty silence. The authors argue that the past must be researched, understood, and accepted. Yet some people are turning a syndrome into an obsession, which must be fed with ever more scoops, trials, and denunciations.

Trials have something in common with the movies: They turn the defendants into media figures, and their prosecution into media events. As the French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut observed in *La mémoire vaine*, his book on the Barbie trial: "In the age of leisure, our sense of history has been ousted by current affairs." Finkielkraut is highly critical of what he calls the "mediatization" of past as well as present instances of barbarism, as it numbs our moral sensibility, while feeding our endless hunger for new images, new entertainment, and new personalities. Klarsfeld, on the other hand, seeks to use this very phenomenon to his advantage. The good thing about trials, he said in an interview with Henri Rousso, is that they "personalize" the issues, which is "much more effective" than books and documents. "Making things personal," he said, "is the best way to get the media and the public to pay attention to the events carried out or caused by the people concerned." This may be so, but the spectacle of individual guilt also makes it all too easy to forget the murderous ideas and politics that made the crimes possible in the first place.

René Bousquet's assassin, Christian Didier, was obsessed with spectacle and publicity. He desperately wanted to be famous. He was born at the end of the war in a small town called Saint-Die-des-Vosges, where he soon established a reputation as an eccentric. His schoolmates called him Rimbaud, more for his weirdness than his literary talent. This was to be the pattern of his life. For ever since he wrote, as a schoolboy, that "my ink will make the ink of many others flow," he tried, without any success, to convince others of his genius. After traveling to Australia and the United States, fancying himself as a literary beatnik, he returned to France, were he drove stretch-limos for celebrities such as Alain Delon, Catherine Deneuve, and Salvador Dali. He wrote a novel, titled *The Ballad of Early Bird*, which never found a publisher.

Didier's attempts to gain recognition, or at least some attention, became increasingly odd, not to say

CASTING A COLD EYE

(Continued from p. 16)

negotiations and internecine struggles (a worthwhile story, but not one Kelly wrote)—these ordinary men and women I've described are still out there, still invisible, still tormented. What they need most is the infusion of promised international funds that has not yet arrived.

Journalists can investigate the feuding between Hamas and Fatah, the growing terrorism, the effects of poverty, the perceptions of Arafat from the ground, and the reasons donor nations are not forthcoming with funds. They can also continue the difficult task of trying to decipher the many forces ringed around Gaza, which will effect not only its future but that of the entire Middle East.

Surface events always rest on an invisible vortex, hard to penetrate with a close-up view of any one place. Since journalists have a hand in determining the outcome of the Oslo Accords, they, like the rest of us, have to accept the uncertainty of the present. Kelly rushed to create a narrative about Gaza that was beyond ambiguity. Despite Kelly's post-mortem on Arafat and Palestinian autonomy, however, it will take a long time for a truly unambiguous narrative to emerge. □

demented. At the Tour de France bicycle race, he jumped at Jacques Chirac waving a banner that said: "Read The Ballad of Early Bird!" He wrote letters to Ayatollah Khomeini. He disrupted live television shows and award ceremonies. He wrested the microphone away from speakers at public events. He managed to get into the president's Elysée Palace, where he presented himself as a "literary Zorro." He chained himself to a traffic light on the Champs Elysées, and walked from Paris to Strasbourg to publicize his book.

So Didier had already gained a certain notoriety as a public nuisance when in 1987 his path crossed Klarsfeld's in Lyon. By pretending to be a doctor, he managed to get into the prison where Klaus Barbie was held. He had planned to shoot Barbie, to avenge the death of Jean Moulin, the Resistance hero, whom Barbie is alleged to have murdered. He failed. And he spent a year in jail. That, for a while, seemed to be the last of Christian Didier, the public pest and would-be avenger. He eventually managed in 1990 to have a book published, titled *Stories of the Sleeping Water*. It failed to get the desired attention.

But fame, however briefly, did finally come, on the day that Didier killed René Bousquet. He had joined that sordid little band of star-killers, often associated with American social pathology. At last he was written about at length. As for Bousquet, his murder had shed more light on his life than he, or indeed Serge Klarsfeld, could ever have dreamed of.

In one of Bousquet's last recorded statements, he said: "If they want to bother me again, let them try, as they did with my trial in 1949. I shall defend myself! And I have a pretty good defense! But I would be most surprised if the trial ever took place." He was right. Instead of a trial there were banner headlines in all the newspapers. There were cover stories in the major weekly magazines. There were television programs. And all the charges against Bousquet, with much of the documentary evidence, were printed in the daily paper, *Liberation*.

Some people publicly regretted the lost opportunity to put Bousquet on trial. Jean Marboeuf said that Bousquet "had not only escaped justice, but also might have departed as a martyr, which really would be the limit." But this is as unlikely as Didier's everlasting fame. For it is in the nature of "mediatization" that fame never lasts. The shameful life of a typical *notable* ended as a media event. Civil peace was undisturbed. And as soon as the man was dead, Serge Klarsfeld filed away his documents, declaring the case of Bousquet, René, banker and civil servant, closed. □

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For Whom the Bell Curves

(Continued from p. 84)

moral code is an informal compromise among competing spheres of genetic self-interest..." and "conscience can be viewed as the administrator of a savings account in which moral reputation is stored." On friendship: "Exquisitely sensitive sympathy is just highly nuanced investment advice. Our deepest compassion is our best bargain hunting." And on and on. Wright thinks he is amiably rooting human sentiment in biochemical processes. What he's done is to root biochemical processes and human sentiment in economic concepts. You couldn't find a better example of cultural determinism than *The Moral Animal*.

Wright disarmingly concedes that "testing theories, of course, is a general problem for evolutionary biologists." That is because "biologists can't experiment with human beings the way they do with pack rats, and they can't conduct the ultimate experiment: rewind the tape and replay evolution." Like Murray and Herrnstein, however, he remains undaunted after acknowledging that his "scientific" claims have no basis in scientific fact (for scientific fact does not occur without the principle of verifiability). As the authors of *The Bell Curve* do, Wright goes on to present social Darwinian "findings" as objective fixtures of nature.

Empirically minded readers will prick up their ears as they read Wright confidently discussing the way parents are genetically programmed to slight their unattractive children. Or as he quantifies, in Darwinian terms, the amount of grief parents feel over a dead child according to the child's age. The death of a retarded child rates very low ("parents will care relatively little for children who are so defective as to have negligible reproductive value"). A little higher, though not by much, is the death of an aged parent who has "spent his reproductive potential."

Wright is no crude right-winger. Well aware of social Darwinism's disreputable past, he distances himself from Darwin's claims for innate intellectual differences between groups. The new Darwinism, he argues, has nothing to do with the old social Darwinism's notion of inevitable social stratification based on genetic worth. On the contrary, the new Darwinism represents the final stage on the evolutionary path to self-knowledge. Owning up to our genetically determined beastliness, Wright insists, will lead us "toward greater compassion and concern for [our] fellow human beings."

Then again, it might not. If selfishness and brutality in the name of reproductive victory are the rudiments of human nature, I'd prefer not to rise above my genetic destiny unless everybody else rises above theirs, too. To do otherwise would be like exchanging guns for toys in Dodge City. Instead, I might want to take advanced *courses* in selfishness and brutality. And as for Wright's reassurance that genetic differences are not racial, that really doesn't matter, since he believes in a genetic basis for every kind of success. Explaining poverty and hard luck by pointing to nature is not much of a step up from explaining poverty and hard luck by nodding to race, especially when the poorest people are still Black, and the specter of social calamity—real or imagined—haunts almost everyone else.

(Continued on p. 96)

Jewish Women

(Continued from p. 62)

a sightseer. Unlike the frozen God of Abraham or Moses, she made no commandments, injunctions, or demonstrations of wrath. Instead she *was* her throne, the stone, the tablet. A Jewish woman in this God's form has always been slate, the unspoken upon which the law is written, the signs of *what shalt not be*, the part of the hardest mountain that neither bleeds nor weeps. And she is not the thunderous word, but the soul of the word, what is etched into the earth or rubbed into the scroll.

Meanwhile, the flowers grow taller like children. The minutes touch our faces. It is almost dawn, and I decide to make lists of things to do or get and of the things my daughter has asked for. She wants a Cinderella dress and glass slippers and beads and a fairy godmother she can call upon any time for a whim. I remember my own Cinderella doll and twirling it like a baton on the long Passover trips we took to my grandparents' Brooklyn apartment. When I was seven, I practiced the Four Questions all the way from Washington to the Jersey Turnpike. My time as the youngest in company was short-lived. A boy cousin came, and then another, and finally a girl. My grandfather never acknowledged my sister and me at the long white-draped table—only the boys who sat closer, raising our suspicions, when they recovered the *afikomen* each and every time.

I have already started to write. I use man's language, I have studied it, and spoken it, and written it for the acceptance of men. I have given it authority. I have read it in prose, in poetry, philosophy, and a little science. I have climbed down in the footsteps of women, dreading the height of the cliff. That is the secret: the secret in the book, the crack in the tablet, why the sky is shut, and the stars fade back like metal. As women and as Jews, we climb down, with our rough stones. Below, our shadows lie flat as the grave. And God, in whom we believe and do not believe, who would not abandon a fly, sleeps like a feather in His name. □

LETTERS

(Continued from p. 4)

Schwartz laments that "modern doctors have come increasingly to be seen as driven primarily if not exclusively by the pursuit of wealth." The truth is that after years of living in a fantasy world where financial considerations didn't matter, patients and doctors are now attempting to cope with balancing quality and cost decisions in the context of a society with limited resources.

There has to be a general recognition that everyone can't get everything they want—there must be priorities and there must be rationing. Here in Oregon, we have attempted to put an end to the hypocrisy of the current non-system of health care and, after input from the public and the medical community, set up a priority list of what should be funded with the financial resources available.

The overwhelming majority of doctors care about their patients, and put their patients' interests first, and are fiercely devoted to providing the best care they can. I have practiced medicine for twenty years and have seen no decrease in the idealism and devotion to good patient care of new or experienced physicians.

Leigh C. Dolin, M.D.
Portland, Oregon

To the Editor:

Barry Schwartz correctly surmises that nothing short of restoring health care as a publicly funded service, instead of private medical enterprise making huge amounts of profit under the guise of the "free market," will restore the public trust in health care as an institution and physicians as a profession.

Currently, the only health-care plan that eliminates the commercialism that dominates health care is the single-payer plan proposed by Senator Paul Wellstone. Not only groups such as Consumers Union and Citizen Action have endorsed the single-payer plan, but also the New England Journal of Medicine and the 30,000-member American Medical Student Association.

These physician-sponsored groups have decided not to acquiesce to the profit-crazed motivations of the American Medical Association. They recognize that without a single-payer program, doctors will be under more intense scrutiny of health-insurance conglomerates as times goes by—with the resulting shorter visits with patients, more pressure to "contain costs" (which really means increased insurance companies profits!), and more regulations designed to subvert compassionate delivery of care.

The Wellstone bill provides universal coverage not linked to employment and full, free choice of independent doctors who will not be employees of the government. The bill will take the profit motive out of bringing emerging medical technologies to patient care. Instead of being evaluated for their market value, new treatments will be evaluated on their ability to cure, heal, or alleviate suffering.

Health-care reform raises a basic issue: Do we choose reform that tinkers with the present market-based approach and preserves the gross inequalities of access and quality, or do we make the fundamental change that would ensure quality care as a right of all Americans? This debate is not just about health-care reform, but about the basic human dignity anyone residing within our borders can expect from society.

Mordecai Potash
Medical Student,
New York Medical College
Valhalla, New York

MEMORY POLITICS

To the Editor:

In a single short sentence, Ruth Wallen ("Memory Politics: the Implications of Healing from Sexual Abuse," November/December 1994) appears to acknowledge that public discourse over "satanic cults and witch hunts" has been excessive, and by implication that perhaps many of the accusations of satanic ritual abuse may be false. What she does not acknowledge is that a disproportionate amount of "recovered memory" narratives about child abuse involves lurid details of satanic rituals, murders, sacrifices, etc. As Lawrence Wright pointed out in his well-known *New Yorker* articles (and subsequent book), the quantity of murders which might be inferred from these accounts is greater than the total national murder rate. If, as I suspect and growing evidence indicates, many of these accounts are false, then it follows that many accounts of recovered memories of child abuse are not strictly factual. If this is the case, then it is an obfuscation to dismiss the skepticism of recovered memories being expressed in some quarters as simply a reactionary "backlash" of ostriches putting their heads in the sand trying to avoid having to confront an uncomfortable reality.

The pendulum of public attitudes often swings wildly from one extreme to the other without tarrying long in the middle ground of moderation and rationality. Since there are probably numerous true as well as false "recovered" memories of child molestation, an objective, careful analysis would have been welcome. Ms. Wallen has opted instead to demonize the "backlash" while alleged reactionary backlashers demonize therapists and social workers. Although Ms. Wallen does not go as far as Judith Herman, who has labeled the false memory group "a mobilization of perpetrators," her diatribe against the sinister, reactionary backlash produces more heat than light.

Thomas Robbins
Rochester, Minnesota

To the Editor:

Ruth Wallen's essay provides a powerful antidote to the false-memory movement. I feel for those remembering sexual abuse in today's climate of denial. These women and men already struggle with constant self-doubt, a central impact of abuse. The repression of the memories comes, in part, because abusers rob victims of belief in their own experience. The rhetoric of the false-memory proponents further undermines those struggling with agonizing questions.

M. Fox
Seattle, Washington

THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT

I am a former Southern Baptist pastor who probably will be converting to Judaism. As a Southern Baptist pastor, I often found myself at odds with fellow pastors on issues such as integration, ERA, and gay rights.

The Christian Right is a big danger. While they claim to be pro-Israel, they are actually anti-Jewish. Their only reason for a pro-Israel stance is that they see Israel as part of the "second coming." While they may pat a Jew on the back as being a "son of Abraham," they display their prejudices by condemning the theology of all Jews.

Thomas Roper
Virginia Beach, Virginia

CONVERTS AND CHRISTMAS

To the Editor:

My Jewish sister-in-law has been at my home at Christmas; I and my daughter have attended Seders at hers, and Shabbat services at her temple. I do not believe that any of us have been hurt by this, as it was done as an expression of love. Nor do I believe that our faith was damaged by exposure to the beliefs and practices of the other. If anything, by honoring our family ties and our love for each other, that faith was strengthened.

Laurel den Hartog
Springfield, Illinois

To the Editor:

One reason I've been a reader of TIKKUN for years has been its willingness to take religion seriously—unlike so many secular Jews who equate religiosity with prejudice or narrow-mindedness or political reaction. Yet in Eleanor Boyle's article about Christmas ("Christmas Presence," TIKKUN, November/December 1994) she does to Christianity what so many secular Jews do to Judaism—eliminates God's presence and reduces it to a "family occasion." True enough, that is what has been happening to Christmas, in part because American mass culture, facilitated by the contribution of many secularizing Jews, has tried to push the religious dimension out of our holiday and turned it into a grand occasion for buying and consuming gifts, decorating trees, and eating and drinking to excess. But there are many of us who, as progressive Christians, have been trying to reclaim our religion from the materialists and the secularists, just as you in TIKKUN have been trying to do by building a Jewish renewal.

By making that struggle in the Christian world invisible, Eleanor Boyle's article seems so reasonable, but is actually quite offensive and hurtful to those of us who are fighting to preserve the spiritual dimension. Eleanor Boyle has all year long to visit her parents, but on Christmas she would do better to recognize the religious significance of the day and, as a practicing Jew, refrain from adding her voice to the millions already intent on subverting the religious meaning of the day.

Rev. Calvin Hamburg
Chicago, Illinois

NO, MR. GINGRICH

(Continued from p. 19)

- support scholars and policy mavens who provide politics of meaning-oriented analyses;
- publish critiques of the media (including the Left media) for its framing of issues in ways that obscure the ethical, spiritual and psychological dimensions of social reality;
- encourage people in each profession to begin to revision what their work would look like if the new bottom line was caring and spiritual sensitivity;
- create progressive pro-families coalitions to support people in building long-term loving and committed relationships in defiance of the "market mentality" that shapes the way too many people look upon each other in families and relationships.

Become a Founding Member of the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning:

Many people who want to say "No, Mr. Gingrich" do so only in the privacy of their own homes. But unless people stand up together, most people will feel that they are too isolated, and so their "No" will become fainter and less well articulated. People need to be visible to each other—and that gives everyone more courage to stand up together. That's why we are asking you to join and become a founding member of the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning. Years from now, if this doesn't happen, you'll be asking yourself, "What did I do in the public arena to challenge the Right at the moment they were first taking power, long before they had passed fascistic laws that undermined our civil liberties and made all of us too afraid to challenge them?" Here is something you can do—but don't do it by giving the minimal amount you can afford. Join us by giving substantially more than you would normally give—make this a moment in which you push yourself beyond your means a bit, because it's that important.

(To join, fill out the insert at p. 64 or send your minimum contribution to TIKKUN, 251 West 100th St., New York, NY 10025.) □

FOR WHOM THE BELL CURVES

(Continued from p. 94)

The resurgence of a radical Right and the showdown between a Republican Congress and a Democratic president raise the expectation of more irrational claims disguising rational aims. Notions in the form of bell curves and swerves and sliders and dips will be pitched at public opinion just so they can be swung at, again and again, until the collective energy begins to flag. After a while, a weary majority might celebrate as pragmatic and realistic assumptions now outside all normative ethical and scientific discourse.

Social policy will follow suit. The near political future will be full of cruel, outrageous proposals, preceding cruel, but less outrageous compromises. And if the examples of Henry, Posner, Kaus, and Wright are any indication, those radically conservative proposals will have more of a consensus behind them than most people would want to admit. □

What is a Politics of Meaning?

Human beings have psychological, ethical, and spiritual needs that transcend the traditional liberal agenda. Liberals have tended to focus exclusively on economic entitlements and political rights. But most people need something more: to be part of loving families and ethically and spiritually grounded communities that provide a meaning for our lives that transcends the individualism and me-firstism of the competitive market.

Hillary Rodham Clinton made this point decisively when she said in her Austin, Texas speech in 1993 that "The market knows the cost of everything but the value of nothing." What counts in life transcends the materialism of the marketplace. So, too, does it transcend the "rights-oriented" focus of so much traditional liberal politics.

An economistic focus for the Democrats worked well in the '30s, when most Americans were economically oppressed, and a rights-oriented focus worked well in the '60s, when most Americans responded to the demands for equality of the civil rights and women's movements. But by the late '70s, most Americans were experiencing a different kind of pain—a pain related to the breakdown of values, a crisis in relationships, an escalating divorce rate, a growing frustration with the alienation people were experiencing in the world of work.

The Right became politically powerful in the '80s and '90s because it recognized that the society was in a deep ethical and spiritual crisis—and that people hungered for communities of meaning that transcended the individualism of American life.

But the Right's politics of meaning was severely flawed. Its solution to the deprivation of meaning was to hail an idealized community and family. Yet, neither of these had any reality in people's daily lives. The Right's answer to this complaint was demagogic and dangerous: Our fantasy doesn't work because of some "Other" (gays, Blacks, feminists, tax-and-spend liberals) undermining our otherwise wonderful society.

The Right ignored the role of the competitive marketplace: the way our daily lives in the world of work lead us to subordinate all values to the struggle for material success. Nor could the Right acknowledge that an economy whose bottom-line mentality rewarded those who were most effective at manipulating or controlling others would necessarily produce narcissistic personalities who were unable to sustain loving relationships in family life.

The Right fails to understand that its defense of the right of corporations to plunder the resources of the world and pollute the environment not only threatens the physical survival of the planet, but also our moral lives—because it models an ethos of looting that shapes everyone's consciousness about "how the real world works." Addressing the crisis in values and the crisis in families without making significant changes in the values that govern our economic life is ultimately futile.

The Right was able to get away with blaming feminists, Blacks, gays, etc.—and ignoring the impact of the competitive marketplace—because the Democrats and the Left simply had no understanding whatsoever of the crisis of meaning? For the liberals, Ethical and spiritual issues were purely personal, to be dealt with through psychotherapy, or Sunday-only religion; for the Left, they were nothing but a smokescreen through which rightists would assault liberal programs.

It took Bill Clinton to weave a politics of meaning subtly but consistently into his economic program for the Democrats to win back the White House in 1992. But when, as president, Clinton failed to embody a politics of meaning in his actual policies, he found that cynicism and despair increased—because even though his economic policies were working, he wasn't addressing the real pain in people's lives. Moreover, in rejecting "single-payer" health-care plans and catering to the interests of insurance companies and health-care conglomerates, avoiding serious ecological reform, assuming crime and violence could be solved by building more prisons, rejecting principled stands on China and Bosnia, and in dozens of other ways, Clinton emptied the moral content from a politics of meaning.

A progressive politics of meaning seeks to shift the dominant discourse of American society from selfishness to caring. Most people would love that—but find it hard to believe that it's possible.

The fundamental reality of American life is not a deep conservatism, but an inner conflict between the part of us that believes we can have an ethically, spiritually, and ecologically healthy world, and hence that we should invest our hopes and energies in that possibility, and the part of us that believes that nothing will ever be different and that hence we should go for narrow self-interest. When idealism seems impossible, people will move either towards a narrow cynicism, or toward right-wing versions of idealism (with all their attendant racist, sexist, and at times even fascistic possibilities).

That's why it's so necessary to build a very visible movement for a progressive politics of meaning. And that is what we are doing in TIKKUN magazine—developing and legitimating a new discourse. Join us—by copying and sharing this statement with your friends and engaging them in discussions that challenge the dominant materialism, selfishness and cynicism of American society. In TIKKUN you'll find the details of our Campaign for a Politics of Meaning as we attempt to bring these ideas into the mainstream of American political life. Ideas matter.

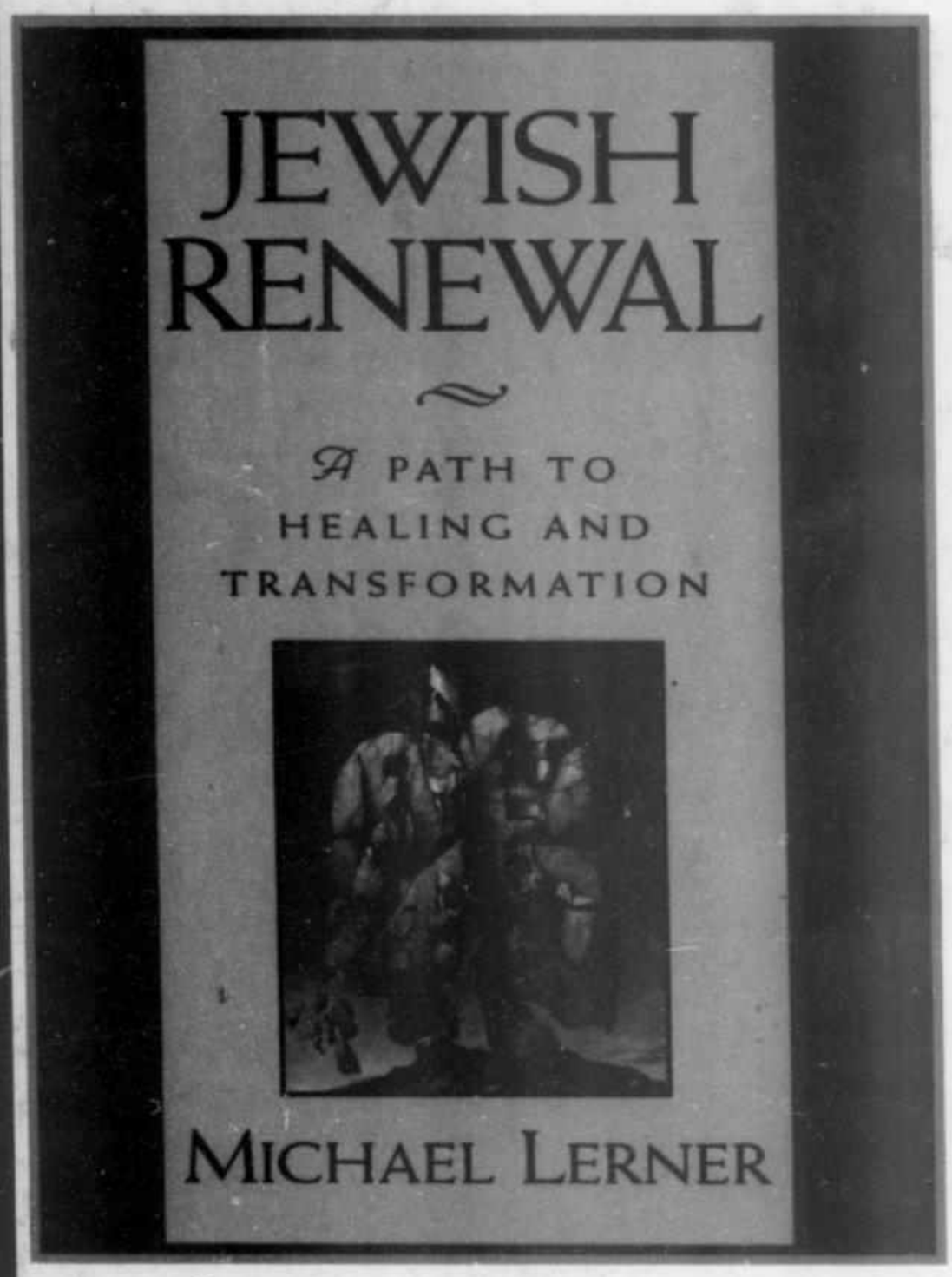
Jewish Renewal

A Path to Healing and Transformation

by Michael Lerner

"Jewish Renewal offers a major contribution to modern Jewish thought, a contribution that is a challenge to intellectuals even as it is accessible to a broad general audience. Lerner's vision of a restored world will move and inspire Jews and non-Jews alike."

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As a Christian theologian, I rejoice in this vibrant and intelligent new voice of prophetic Judaism. It will appeal to all people of faith and to many who have given up on any faith at all. This splendid and readable book will take its place in the great tradition of the works of Martin Buber and Abraham Joshua Heschel.

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A sophisticated and challenging reinterpretaiton of Jewish tradition. With a rigor that has rarely been equaled, Lerner shows what a liberal Jewish theology must be in the late 20th century. No one who cares about a committed ethical Judaism can afford to ignore this book.

—David Kraemer, Associate Professor, Talmud and Rabbinics, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America

In *Jewish Renewal* I find an exciting and courageous articulation of the unique way in which Jewish religious practice can meld transcendence and social consciousness.

—Ram Dass

For secular Jews wary of new religious orthodoxy, for feminists struggling against patriarchy, for Jewish intellectuals and theologians suspicious of the merely trendy or spiritually homeless Jews who have been attracted to other religious traditions, this book will provide a rich and profound encounter with the deepest concerns of the mind and soul. *—Letty Cottin Pogrebin, founding editor, Ms. Magazine*

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