(le-tzun) To mend, repair and transform the world.

TIKKUN

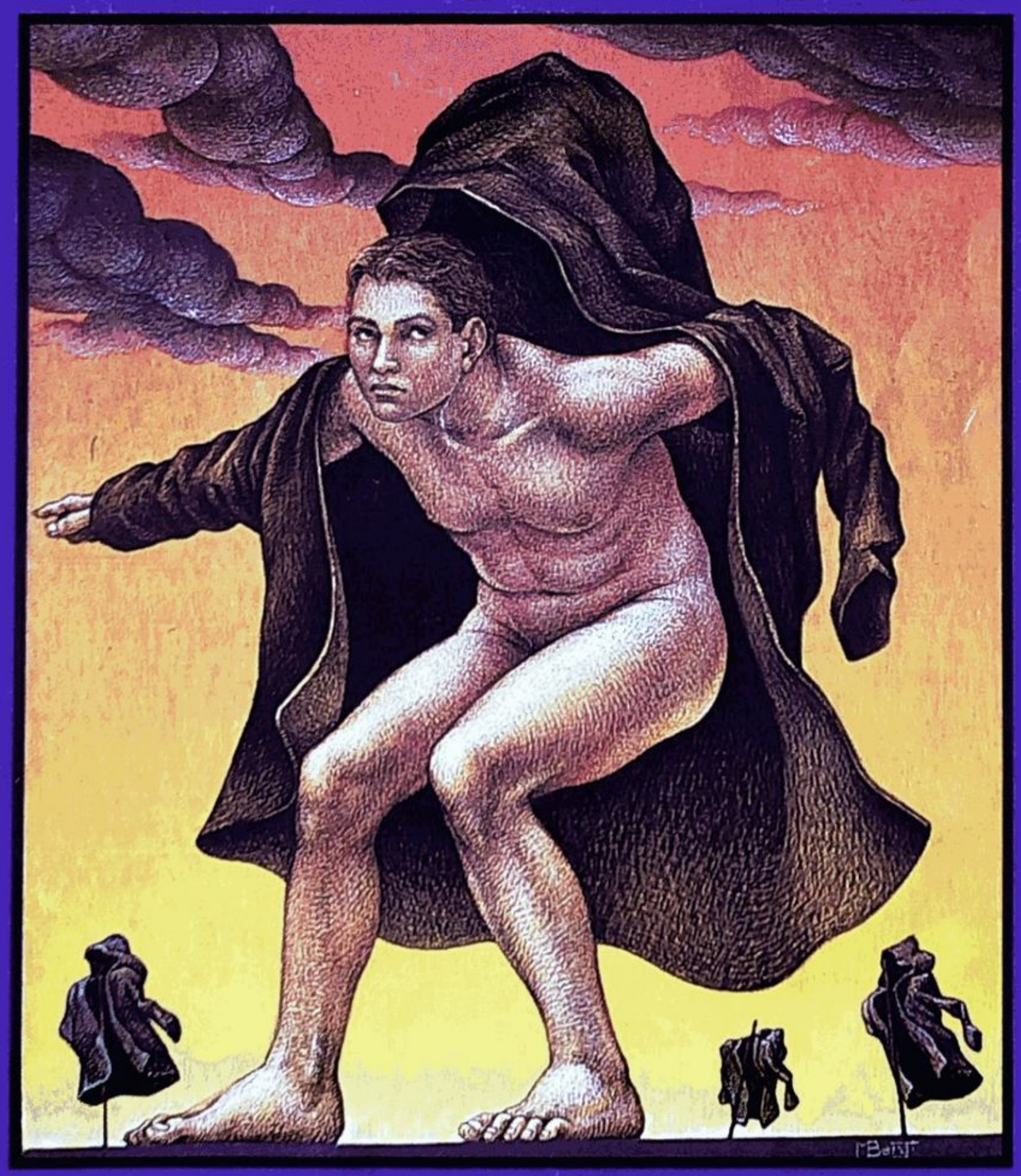
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Political Psyches Andrew Samuels

Editorials:
Clinton's Betrayals;
Peace vs. Terror in Israel

Passover Supplement Inside

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY MARCH/APRIL 1995 $6.00

Newtered America



Reshaping Politics After the Democrats' Defeat

Peter Gabel

Roundtable: Mary Edsall, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Herbert Gintis, Michael Sandel, Arthur Waskow

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Arthur Waskow Remembering Hebron
Nan Fink Converts and Prejudice
Cherie Brown Post-Holocaust Paranoia
Sherri Paris In Bed with Limbaugh
David Margolis Sex in Israel
Donald Lazere on *Pulp Fiction*

Old Photograph Album

These pages, crumbling under my fingers
as I turn them, chronicle the lives
of the people I loved, years before
I was there to love them. Mother.
Great aunts and cousins. Here are their naked
infancies on sheepskin rugs; their exodus
across decades of childhood and youth;
the shy solemnity of their weddings.
In the old country my father in knickers
clowns and spends his foreign dollars
on his last visit before that country
closes down. The Adirondacks.
The Catskills. New York—its pushcarts,
its ancient children—more foreign
to me than the streets of Troy or Rome.
The glue loosens under the small black
triangles that hold the pictures in place,
reminding me of those torn
pieces of mourning ribbon pinned
to our blouses or coats at funerals.
Here are the people I have lost
because I can't believe in the green
pastureland of hymns or in the haloed
faces of angels, outlined
in golden threads on altar cloths:
Grandma and Grandpa,
Ada and Ruth. If only I thought
we would meet just one more time
even in purgatory, that anteroom
to someone else's heaven, with its horsehair sofas
and shabby twenties furniture, peopled
with ghosts in high starched collars and velvet hats.

Linda Pastan

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY — VOLUME 10 NUMBER 2

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Letters

You are invited to submit letters to the editor. We have space for only a handful of the hundreds of letters we receive every month. If your letter is chosen for publication, we may shorten the letters or even, for the sake of clarity or brevity, rework the text.

MASTURBATION

To the Editor:

I used to think TIKKUN had no sense of humor till I read your "Masturbation and the Moment of Silence in School" (January/February 1995). If ever there was a brilliant strategy to stop a constitutional amendment to allow school prayer, it was yours: promise to organize kids to use that time to fantasize about masturbation. Michael Lerner may protest that he was never a Yippie, but some of that energy clearly rubbed off on him and stuck.

J.J. Jones
Los Angeles, California

NO, MR. GINGRICH

To the Editor:

For years I've dismissed your "politics of meaning" as just a meaningless slogan meant to hype your magazine. But after reading the January/February issue, particularly the articles by Michael Lerner and Peter Gabel, and then attending the "No, Mr. Gingrich" Town Meeting that TIKKUN sponsored on January 29 to allow the community to get together and talk about the Republican electoral victory, I've become convinced that you have a really deep and significant alternative to both the Right and the Left. Perhaps what was most instructive for me was to listen to Gloria Steinem, Karen Burstein, and Congressman Major Owens—all people whom I respect—and realize that their alternatives to the politics of meaning, mostly warmed-over liberal strategies from the past, couldn't possibly speak to the hearts of Americans who had been won to the Right. I got convinced that you

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have a whole new methodology that springs from the question, "What possible rational reason might lead people to the Right?" I know this seems hard to believe, but until hearing Michael Lerner explain why that question was so important, it had never occurred to me. I always thought people moved to the Right because they were authoritarian personalities or hateful people or people who were less intelligent and too easily manipulated by the media. In fact, I always thought that to think about rational reasons for people to be attracted to the Right meant that you yourself must be a right-winger, or at least have right-wing tendencies. So it was a real eye-opener to read Lerner and Gabel and to hear people at the Town Meeting explain the emotional and even what you call "meaning" needs of people, realize that you at TIKKUN think the needs are rational even though the Right's solution to the needs is not, and understand that this didn't make me attracted to the Right but rather more empowered to be a progressive. Count me in on your Foundation for Ethics and Meaning and your projects to build a meaning-oriented alternative to Gingrich and Clinton.

Marianne Brown
Brooklyn, New York

To the Editor:

I was appalled to find that you were attacking Clinton in your "No, Mr. Gingrich" articles. If there's one thing this country doesn't need now, it's more people attacking Clinton. He has his hands full dealing with the Gingrich people. Sure, I'm disappointed too with some things he has done, but grow up: This is the only liberal president we are likely to get in the 1990s, and the only alternative is going to be someone a hell of a lot worse.

Sally May Loft
Atlanta, Georgia

To the Editor:

Bravo for the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning. For years I've wondered how a magazine could also be an activist organization. I watched TIKKUN provide leadership in support of the Israeli peace movement and on thinking about a politics of meaning, but still, I couldn't see how you could also be a movement. Your foundation idea makes sense—the world certainly could use an alternative to what the Right has been doing for the past twenty-five years, so I'm joining. I also like your idea of switching to a "new bottom line" to evaluate productivity.

Join us for five days of intellectual stimulation, play, spiritual depth, fun, and making new friends!

TIKKUN SUMMER CAMP

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Spiritual Resources within the Jewish Tradition, Rabbi Jeff Roth
Healing and Meaning: A Jewish Approach to Medicine and the Body, Raphi Kelman, M.D.

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TIKKUN IN NEW YORK

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March 18, April 8, May 6.

Salons at 7:30 p.m. Saturday nights

March 18	April 8	May 5
Being Single and Not Wanting to Be	Maurice Friedman on "Martin Buber and Dialogic Psychotherapy"	Jewish Poetry: Reading and Discussion

All events are vegetarian potlucks, free to subscribers, $10 for others. Call 864-8253 for salon topics and RSVP.

TIKKUN SALONS

WANT TO START A SALON IN YOUR AREA OR PUBLICIZE ONE ALREADY IN PROGRESS? Send name, address, phone and salon request to:
TIKKUN Salon, 251 West 100th, NY, NY 10025.

TIKKUN is really one of the few places where you can read new ideas, and now, with your foundation, I hope that you will have a vehicle to get those ideas out into the public arena.

Jerry Jacobs
Denver, Colorado

To the Editor:

I attended the January Town Meeting and I want to express my appreciation for what you are trying to do. I can think of nothing more central to the disintegration of our society than the relentless greed, and the focus on power and me-first consumerism in the various media which increasingly dominate and define the content of our collective consciousness. The notion that the mindless attack-dog rhetoric of people like Newt Gingrich can thrive and succeed only further attests to the diminution of intelligent thought and discourse in our society. Your attempt to short-circuit this, while also breaking down the barriers between people, by striking up a dialogue on the problem of how one might find a way to lead a meaningful life in spite of the continual onslaught of pop culture, mass marketing, and market competition that trivializes ethics and the expression of compassion and tenderness is of the utmost importance.

Although I realize that TIKKUN is in essence a Jewish organization that is trying to extend itself to other faiths, it seems to me it could be far more inclusive of those of us who are neither Jewish nor Christian nor religious in any way. Your message would be far more widely heard and participation further extended if you were explicitly to refer to and to welcome, in each of your presentations, secular humanists, agnostics, and people in various Eastern religious frameworks, just as you welcome others.

Susan M. Andersen
New York, New York

Editor responds:

I do want secular humanists, agnostics, and people associated with various Eastern religions to feel welcome. I *also* want to be able to refer to God and the Jewish and Christian religious traditions, however, both because this is where I derive my strength, but also because the overwhelming majority of the people that we need to win back from the Right are people who would find themselves much more comfortable in progressive circles if they knew that God was no longer a "no-no." In my own experience, I know that I had to keep my religious commitments on a rather low profile for the two decades I was involved in social-change movements before starting TIKKUN; those on the Left who publicly expressed their religious commitments were immediately discounted and their ideas were dismissed without any serious hearing. That kind of an intellectual climate makes the majority of Americans feel very unwelcome.

In using theological language, either in my editorials or at TIKKUN events, I am trying to give a cultural signal that all those tens of millions of people for whom theological discourse is important are *also* welcome. Now the problem becomes, is it possible for atheists and agnostics to be part of a community in which God is being affirmed by at least some of the speakers, without themselves being made to feel unwelcome? I certainly hope so, because the arena we are trying to create is one in which *both* theists and atheists can feel comfortable, and in which neither is forced to leave their full spiritual being at the door so as not to offend the others. For me as a Jew, this means that I will have to be prepared in the context of building a progressive politics of meaning to hear some people invoking Jesus, some invoking the Koran, and still others invoking a non-theistic spirituality or a non-spiritually based Kantian ethics. Sometimes that will make me feel a bit uncomfortable, but I'd rather be a bit uncomfortable than to narrow the community even more by insisting that people can only be together on the basis of a despiritualized secular language and in a context where no spiritual or religious music, customs, or ceremonies are permitted. I'm hopeful that atheists and agnostics could similarly allow themselves to tolerate the presence of religious language and celebrations that do not appeal to them, for the sake of creating a broader community. But to make that work, I will take seriously your suggestion of explicitly welcoming and affirming atheists and agnostics.

To the Editor:

I attended your Town Meeting and had mixed feelings about the way you did it. On the one hand, I was glad that you presented a range of speakers who represented such diverse perspectives. On the other hand, precisely because you were so broad in your speakers you didn't have enough people presenting the ideas of the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning or of TIKKUN—so we never really got to the place of building a strategy for those of us who already agree with your politics of meaning. Sometimes I get the feeling that you just want to repeat the basic idea, rather than move forward. Still, it was great to be in a room with 800 people who were thinking about these issues. I think TIKKUN has a right to be proud that it is creating this space for people, complete with an open microphone so that we got to hear lots of people and not just the official speakers. I felt troubled that other left-leaning magazines or newspapers or organizations have not attempted to do this with you, and I feel particularly troubled that magazines such as The *Nation*, The *Progressive*, *Z*, *In These Times*, and *Mother Jones* have not allowed you or other advocates of the politics of meaning to present what I take to be the freshest idea cooking in the progressive world in the past several decades. Will you be doing these town meetings in other parts of the country? What's next?

Beth Lasky
Brooklyn, New York

Editor responds:

We *do* often repeat the basic idea, because most people who have heard it haven't yet fully assimilated it, even when they agree with it. We are involved in trying to change a basic paradigm of politics—much like the women's movement tried to do twenty-five years ago. At that time, some women complained that "consciousness raising" and confronting sexist language and challenging sexist assumptions was "too intellectual" and really wasn't *doing* anything. But in order for there to be feminist activists some ten years later, there first had to be a long period of women absorbing feminist ideas and then expanding them in whole new directions. That's the first step for the first decade of the campaign for a politics of meaning, and that activity will be facilitated by the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning and by the planned Summit on Ethics and Meaning. Similarly, we hope to encourage people to create regional summits.

To the Editor:

I agree with much of your argument for a politics of meaning, but you are wrong to suggest that people were angry at Clinton despite the fact that his economic policies were working. Jobs are disappearing because of technological displacement exacerbated by globalization. Clinton never moved the national debate to the politically hottest, but most important issue of what structural changes in our economic system are nec-

essary to ensure that technological progress translates into a blessing and not a curse. By not taking up this issue, Clinton betrayed the people who voted for him on the basis of his promised "people-oriented economics." It was this betrayal, along with those you mention in your editorial, that convinced many of us that the Democrats weren't worth voting for.

Joe Zlotnick
San Francisco, California

To the Editor:

You don't have to be Jewish to enjoy reading TIKKUN. This subscriber is glad of the magazine's generally humane and rational perspective and—appalled by the regressiveness of the Republicans' packaged-in-Orwellian-doublespeak "Contract with America"—found your "No, Mr. Gingrich" pieces especially interesting.

The Republicans surely don't have a mandate, and it seems to this observer that if the Democrats now in government hope for the support of the Party's members and of the others they need for reelection, they'd better stop trying to appease the Republicans (something that can't be done anyhow). You are right to say that we should stand and fight while it's still possible: against Republican determination to make liberalism un-American and make the ideal of equal justice for all too expensive for a country with our debts; and to scapegoat the indigent elderly and children of the poor; and to slash national and state funding for such civilizing blessings as the arts, and public education and Public TV; and to weaken despised "government regulations" designed to protect our citizens and our natural resources from exploitation by powerful, self-serving, private-interest groups…to mention a few.

Nancy Sommers
Newtown, Pennsylvania

To the Editor:

My advice to Clinton: Give up the Michael Lerner-influenced, left-wing government paradigm. Instead, commune with the least-statist Republicans, or face a Democrat-destroying shellacking in 1996.

James P. Koy
Los Angeles, California

Jewish Renewal

To the Editor:

I attended your lecture at Temple Solel in San Diego in January 1995 and was deeply affected by your messages and the issues you raised. Being basically agnostic, I've always struggled with the Jewish concepts of "spirituality" and "God." Your thoughts about what is uniquely the Jewish essence, about what special "thing" happened at Sinai to create the unique Jewish world view has profoundly affected my thinking. You've presented the first clear definition of "spirituality" and "God" that make sense to me: the idea that God is the force that makes *tikkun* possible.

Our children are sensing the loss of meaning you describe, are rejecting the emptiness of our "weekend" rituals in the synagogues. So what specific strategies do we adopt to save the children, to awaken the Jewish spirit in them?

David Wertlieb
San Diego, California

Editor responds:

Create an authentic spiritual life for yourself, and you will save your children. Do Shabbat the way I describe it in my book, *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation*. Get a group of people to join you, following the guidelines in my book. Let your kids see and experience your joy and your spiritual involvement and your celebration of the universe and your involvement as a Jewish-renewal person in activities designed to publicly challenge the ethos of materialism and selfishness. Every night at the dinner table, take ten minutes to study a Jewish text and talk about and what it might mean for you in the contemporary moment—and show your children that you enjoy studying Jewish texts. When they get to be teenagers, you can take off a few months from other texts and use my book *Jewish Renewal* as the text and let them react to its ideas. And become involved in deepening your level of Jewish knowledge and observance, but only in ways that feel 100-percent authentic to you. If they see this as *your* way of being Jewish, see your enthusiasm and your joy in doing that, even if they rebel temporarily, they will come back to it eventually. When they see you involved in a deep spiritual life that is joyous, and see you involved in real *tikkun*—work of healing, repairing, and transforming the world—they will know what Judaism has to offer that they can't find elsewhere. All the rest is commentary.

Cosmology

To the Editor:

"Cosmology and Kabbalah," by Joel R. Primack and Nancy Ellen Abrams (January/February 1995), is a splendid article that raises new questions and provides new vistas relative both to the psychic and somatic dimensions of the cosmos. It is a logical extension of TIKKUN's interest in global healing.

I agree with this self-evident premise: "The universe is an evolving, expanding being." Now, what are the psychic and somatic functions of this being? Does the whole cosmos manifest the psychic and somatic functions of the beings that live in the cosmos? Does the cosmos function like a cell? Like a human being? Does it feel, laugh, weep, remember, think, reproduce, "make love"? And can we answer these questions empirically?

Or if it was once alive, is the cosmos now a corpse, a huge carcass containing myriad dying species that feed on its rotting parts? Are all cosmic functions entropic?

Or is the basic evolutionary function syntropic? Perhaps we are discovering signs of life, the beat of the cosmos, in the discrete matter of the quantum universe. Perhaps this huge body is stirring from its long sleep.

If the inflation theory is correct, doesn't it suggest the need for deflation theory? The phenomenon of matter suggests anti-matter. Entropy suggests syntropy. As evolution unfolds, the cosmos expands exponentially. But doesn't the cosmos also contract exponentially? Isn't the cosmos also deflating? Isn't a "black hole" the "unwrinkling" of space?

The "Big Bang" metaphor jars my romantic sense. Sounds too patriarchal, too macho, too much like "gang bang." The Big Bang metaphor says more about how the professionals have ganged up to blow the mind of the cosmos than how the cosmos relates to the beings who are part of its system but threatening to abort. The Big Bang is more descriptive of the Black Hole (or end time) phenomenon than it is of biogenesis. Origins are discrete phenomena—simple, subtle, mysterious—like *eros*! Eros is an enchanting dimension of life that gives rise to an emotional high that increases exponentially as romantic love evolves. Evolution is another name for cosmic foreplay leading to an ultimate climax in the cosmos at the end of time or to a penultimate climax in a Black Hole at the end of space. At the moment, the cosmos seems to be playing games with us, teasing us out of our prepubescent stage, turning us on to romantic love—eros. Science, like pornography, has its place, but it will

(Continued on p. 95)

FREE ASSOCIATIONS

Countering Hate Radio

At a TIKKUN *town meeting held in New York January 29 and attended by more than 900 people, several of the attendees challenged us to translate our longish editorials into sound bites to counter the radio talk-show hate mongers.*

We were skeptical, because we thought readers would feel it was demeaning to have us seeming to put words in their mouth. But readers at that event and in subsequent discussions said they would appreciate hearing our formulations, and that they would then transform them to their own style.

We still have some doubts, though we agree with those who say that talk radio is one place where we ought to be contending with a different message. But there's an inevitable distortion that happens when trying to compete in this arena, because the haters can always trump others by escalating the level of hatred. And twenty-second messages tend to vulgarize what we have to say.

Still, our readers had a point. There's a value in having a radio presence of people who oppose the Right—and so we accepted the challenge of coming up with a series of twenty-second formulations (and we welcome your suggestions as well).

But no one can predict how to counter the dismissive way that the host will come back at you.

Keep this in mind:

1. We assume that when people are attracted to the Right, there are rational reasons for that. So instead of lecturing about how bad they are for buying into the Right's racism, sexism, etc. we instead try to talk to the legitimate psychological, ethical, or spiritual concerns, and show them that these can't really be fulfilled by the Right's approach.
2. We acknowledge that liberal politics has not understood the frustration people have living in a society that systematically undermines loving relationships and that frustrates our need for meaning.
3. When people express anger against some demeaned "Other," we acknowledge that the pain in their lives that leads them to anger must be real, but challenge the idea that the pain is really caused by those Others (African Americans, feminists, liberals, gays, Jews, immigrants, etc.).

Sample messages:

- "I'm for less government, but only if every person who says that comes down to the center city and takes some homeless person home to their own home, feeds them, and gives them a place to stay."
- "Most Americans are not hurt by affirmative action—and most women in America have been helped by it. But I think when people get all upset about affirmative action they are really upset about something else—they are feeling that their world is out of control, that families are falling apart and they are surrounded by selfishness, and they feel that government is only caring about someone else, African Americans or women or gays. But not hiring women or Blacks isn't going to stop businesses from moving abroad to get slave labor wages from their workers, and it's not going to stop the bottom-line selfishness of the competitive market that teaches people to act in a me-first way when they get home and that makes some poor people think that it's appropriate to rip people off. So all this anti-affirmative-action stuff misses the point of why we've lost control of our world."
- "I hate hearing about pro-lifers who think it's O.K. to have murderers as part of their movement. Why don't they stage the next demonstration against those who consider violence an acceptable alternative? And how come so many people who are pro-life don't seem to care what happens to the child once it is born—as though then if it is hungry or without shelter, that's its own fault? What's pro-life about that?"
- "How can people on the Right claim to be religious or care about values and then act hurtful toward immigrants? Don't you know that one of the most frequently repeated refrains in the Bible is God's command that we should 'love the stranger'? And if we are so worried about everybody coming over here, wouldn't it make better sense to work out economic arrangements with other countries to improve their economies so not everyone would be so desperate to get here?"
- "It's no wonder that children learn to be selfish and self-centered in a society where the conservatives are willing to let people be thrown out of jobs and then have no health care or food or shelter—what kind of a lesson do you think that teaches them except that it's a dog-eat-dog world and so everybody had just better watch out for themselves? No wonder everybody gets to be selfish if that's what conservatives are teaching! There you have one key to the values crisis."
- "If more prisons would stop crime, how come all the prisons so far haven't done anything to reduce the crime rate? We have twenty times the number of criminals as in other advanced industrial societies—and we also have way more prisons. I think crime reflects a spiritual crisis—the way people don't care about each other. And not caring about

each other is exactly what they learn from right-wing politics that teaches people to only care about themselves and their immediate family."

- "What kind of moral lesson do people learn from having health-care legislation defeated and everyone told to fend for themselves? I think the conservatives' blocking health care was the biggest pro-crime thing they could do: They told people that it's fine to just look out for themselves, and when people think that way, they often end up ripping other people off, some in legal ways, others in illegal ways."
- "I'm pro-family, and nothing undermines families more than the selfishness and materialism that they learn from the competitive market. Where are people supposed to learn caring from when they spend all day learning how to 'get ahead' and 'manipulate others' in order to make it in the world of work? And who has energy for family life when people are forced to spend so much overtime at work just to stay even? If you want to be pro-family, you have to change the world of work!"
- "Why does everybody talk about being either liberal or conservative? I think the real spectrum is between idealistic or cynical. And the media and the talk-show hosts are all on the extreme cynical wing, while I'm on the more idealistic and hopeful wing that knows there's a lot of good that people can do if we decide to work against the dominant selfishness that permeates the economic marketplace and influences values in the society."
- I'm tired of the hypocrisy of the religious rightists who pretend that they care about others, but who also want to throw poor people out on the street. What exactly do they think the Bible means when it says that we should love our neighbors as ourselves and feed the hungry and clothe the naked? Ordinary rightists are only being insensitive and uncaring, but religious rightists have no right to call themselves religious when they make a mockery of the Bible. □

The Attack on Cornel West: Racism and Media Cynicism

Having profiled *The Bell Curve* and helped give national prominence to the racist attack on the intelligence of ordinary Black folk, The *New Republic's* literary editor Leon Wieseltier focuses five pages of his magazine on Cornel West, to show that these uppity Blacks who are lauded as the leading intellectuals are also undeserving of respect. Wieseltier was once a young Harvard student with great potential, so it must irk him that this Black intellectual has tenure at Harvard while Wieseltier's primary accomplishment was to become errand-boy and hatchetman for Martin Peretz at The *New Republic.* Constantly seeking reasurances for his wounded ego from the fawning crowds of academics who hope that he will choose their books for review in TNR, the literary editor commands a host of TNR authors who can barely hide their delight at the prospects of throwing young Black women off of welfare and young Black men into newly built prisons.

While the media imagine it a liberal magazine (honorifically recalling its past rather than the sharp slide to the Right that characterized the magazine since Peretz bought it), TNR has become the temple of detached cynicism and an elitist above-the-crowd despair about the possibility of changing the world, a fawning toward the rich and powerful, a chauvinist Zionism that has relentlessly demeaned the Palestinian people, and a ferocious anger at those least able to defend themselves in the U.S.: the inner-city Black poor. As the high priest of the cult of media cynicism and covert racism, Wieseltier needs to demean the man many Black intellectuals describe as "the preeminent African-American intellectual of his generation," dismissing West's entire corpus of books as "almost completely worthless."

In the world of high powered "savvy" and witty putdowns that Wieseltier shares with the inside-the-Beltway crowd, compassion for anyone, especially inner-city Blacks, is the functional equivalent of mushy thinking. In the end, the Wieseltier crowd is only a more pretentious version of Rush Limbaugh and Newt Gingrich, lacking their mass appeal and therefore desperately seeking to be recognized by someone as authentic intellectuals. With its wit and engaging style, TNR's articles are sometimes seductive. But the pleasure its smugness provides only momentarily masks the moral corruption, elitism, and sickening self-hatred of an American intellectual elite frightened at the intensity of its longing for others' power.

Wieseltier dismisses as "philosphically implausible" West's refusal to accept either the blame-the-victim perspective that permeates The *New Republic* in its discourse about the culture of Black poverty, or the environmental determinism of some Black nationalists who refuse to condemn or mobilize against the distortive impact of crime, drugs, and irresponsible sexuality in the Black community. It is precisely West's subtlety and sophistication that both elude and infuriate TNR pseudos.

West's life and work are living refutations of The *New Republic's* sophisticated racism and its cynicism about the possibility of using one's intellect for higher purpose than self-aggrandizement. No wonder that Wieseltier and Peretz should be so infuriated by West and so determined to destroy his intellectual credibility. Now watch in the months ahead as the media cynics pile on, each "discovering" the faults in West that they had not noticed previously, showing that they can be just as cynical and demeaning of one of America's leading Black intellectuals as their *New Republic* mentors. □

We note with appreciation the statement condemning terrorism by Imam Plemon T. El-Amin, chairperson for the Muslim-American Convention and assistant to Imam Warith Deen Mohammed, on the opposite page. While Louis Farrakhan tends to be portrayed in the media as the dominant voice of Islam in the United States, Warith Deen Mohammed represents a significantly larger following. This statement about Islam should be read by all those who claim that they never hear Islamic leaders speaking out against Hamas violence.

A Muslim Voice Against Terrorism

Plemon T. El-Amin

Muslim voices against terrorism have not been silent, but it is the trend, perhaps even the policy of major media, to downplay the voice of reason, the voice of faith, and the voice of principle, in favor of the shouts of the extreme, the wails of the grief-stricken, and the threats of the treacherous. The voices of peace, justice, mercy, and tolerance are not difficult to find among Muslims and Islamic media, who consistently denounce acts of terrorism and reject them as illegitimate and unacceptable Islamic strategies or methods.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed, internationally and nationally recognized leader of the largest identifiable Muslim-American community, explained recently that:

> Islam insists that the best human behavior be demonstrated even when engaging an enemy in war, Our Prophet Muhammed (prayers and peace be on him) ordered that civilians not be made the victims of war. He (the Prophet) cautioned the Muslims to take care not to attack those who were not bearing arms against them. Islam and the Prophet's life require of us that we uphold justice and be a peace-seeking people.

Muslims are guided and obligated by the Qur'an, which reveals to us that we must not wage war for self-interest, material gain, or mere retaliation. Muslims are to fight or wage war only when someone hinders them from the worship and work of God. And when we fight, we must reject barbaric methods of warfare and doing any harm to women, children, the elderly, the sick or wounded, and even to animals or vegetation.

Muslims are commanded by God to do justice to all, irrespective of whether they are friend or enemy, under all circumstances. God says in the Qur'an, "O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice even as against yourselves or your parents or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor." (4:135) "O you who believe! Stand out firmly for God as witnesses to fair-dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just, that is next to piety. And be regardful of God, for God is well-acquainted with all that you do." (5:9)

The definition of *jihad* is not Holy War, nor can it be used to justify terrorism. Imam W. Deen Mohammed has stated that *"Jihad* means struggle in everything that God has established for Muslims to do. The emphasis on *jihad* in the Qur'an and in the life of Prophet Muhammed was not for the purpose of conquering lands or overthrowing nations, it was for the purpose of liberating the higher instincts, the higher aspirations in man."

Cowardly acts of terrorism upon innocent men, women, and children is not a doorway to Heaven, but a gateway to Hell. Blind aggression and retaliation are sins, and as Muslims we reject these practices by ourselves, our kin, our foes, the rich, or the poor. Past and recent acts of terrorism that victimize innocent human beings, such as the World Trade Center bombing, the mosque assault by Baruch Goldstein, and the recent suicide bombing in Tel Aviv are deplored by our community and must be condemned by all God-conscious and civilized communities, both Muslim and others. We must all stand up for peace and toleration. Among both the Palestinians and the Israelis are those guilty and responsible for the many women and children left maimed and dead. Each side has produced both perpetrators of violence and victims of injustice.

In Islam, one injustice, or even many, does not justify another. Man's law and rule has failed both peoples. It is time to embrace the law and rule of God, especially since both people identify themselves as people who hold the rule of God above the law of man.

The voice of the Muslim is not mute. Our voice is that of the Qur'an, and the life of the Prophet Muhammed. Both ring with clarity that peace is to be loved and sought, and terrorism is to be hated and rejected. □

Imam Plemon Tauheed El-Amin is the resident imam of the Atlanta Masjid of Al-Islam. He is the convenor for the consultative body of Muslim Americans and the chairperson for the Muslim American Convention. He assists Imam Warith Deen Mohammed.

Israel: Terrorism vs. Peace

From the beginning of the Intifada, we've pointed out that the continuation of the occupation requires repression, and that repression generates anger, violence and terrorism. This is not to excuse the violence or terrorism: We strongly oppose and condemn it. But the violence is not going to stop while the hopes of Palestinians for their own national self-determination are frustrated by Israeli occupation, while thousands of Palestinians remain in Israeli prisoner camps (many detained without trial), and while Israel punishes the entire Palestinian population with curfews or border closings in reprisal for the actions of a handful of Hamas murderers.

Hamas is full of haters who will never accept a Jewish state in the Middle East and might continue acts of violence even after a peace treaty is worked out. We know about these kinds of people—we have them among the Jewish settlers as well, and one year ago, shortly after the peace process had begun, one of these murdered twenty-nine people as they prayed in their mosque in Hebron, the first mass murder by a terrorist after the signing of the peace treaty. Just as thousands of Israelis honored this disgusting Jewish murderer, so there will be thousands of Palestinians who support their terrorists.

The difference between having thousands of people on both sides who will never accept any solution short of the elimination of the other and having hundreds of thousands thinking that way is what concerns us. This is not a matter of "being in their blood." When the peace treaty was first signed, the vast majority of people on both sides were hopeful, and both Hamas and the violent ones among Israeli settlers felt temporarily isolated. Unfortunately, Yitzhak Rabin lacked the courage to move speedily toward implementation of the agreement, and just as the Palestinians remain in flagrant violation of their responsibility to eliminate parts of the Palestinian National Covenant that call for the destruction of Israel (changes that we·at TIKKUN demand they make immediately), so too Israel violated its agreements to withdraw troops from the population centers of the West Bank and allow immediate elections.

Moreover, after fostering economic dependency and preventing surrounding Arab states from investing in the West Bank and Gaza since 1967, Israel causes huge economic pain and anger when it punishes the entire Palestinian population by preventing tens of thousands of them from going to their jobs in Israel as retaliation for the actions of a handful of terrorists. Airport-style security checks are necessary on the border—they should be implemented in respectful and efficient ways, even if this requires use of many more personnel to ensure that the process is completed quickly and does not prevent unarmed Palestinians from entering Israel.

The bottom line for Palestinians in 1995 is the same as it was for Israelis in 1948: self-respect through national self-determination.

From the Palestinian standpoint, the accords were always flawed, since they did not create a Palestinian state. But, PLO people argued, it would provide self-respect by creating a mechanism for limited self-determination, and it would create a process that could reassure Israelis about the safety of living with Palestinian self-determination. Dissidents such as Edward Said and many people in Hamas argued that Arafat had been suckered, that Israel had no intention of ever allowing Palestinians to develop a state, and that they would be given economically inviable little enclaves separated from each other and policed by the Israeli army. Supporters of the peace accord argued that once Israelis felt a bit less paranoid about limited Palestinian power, Israel would be willing to be more courageous and allow full Palestinian self-determination.

Neither Israel nor the Palestinians had a realistic plan for how to deal with the terrorists on both sides who would try to derail the process. And Palestinians were unprepared for the ungracious spirit with which Rabin implemented the agreement, as though he had been forced into it rather than enthusiastically trying to sell it to the Israeli population. Since Palestinians had not achieved a state, they expected at least to be treated with a new sense of respect. But when Rabin refused to allow Arafat to land at Ben Gurion Airport in his return to Gaza, and instead forced him to trek unceremoniously through the desert near Egypt, he took the first of dozens of steps that have forced Palestinians to concede that they didn't even win a modicum of respect through the agreement. And when Rabin responded to the sworn enemies of the accord by punishing all Palestinians, he gave further ammunition to the terrorists.

Those who issue calls to "go slowly" or "reevaluate" the peace process every time that there is a terrorist attack are rewarding terrorism and creating a powerful incentive for new attacks. These terrorists are deter-

mined to undermine both Arafat and the peace process—and nothing fuels them more than for Israel to slow it down, for Rabin's government to be called into question, or for American Jews who were lukewarm to the process in the first place to use these disgusting acts now as a pretext for even more public questioning of the government's direction.

Rabin is repeating the same kinds of mistakes that, in a domestic context, led to the Democrats' defeat in 1994. Instead of courageously pursuing a peace-oriented policy and implementing the agreements before he faces new elections, Rabin has spent more time trying to appease his enemies than to defend the peace process vigorously to the Israeli public. Rabin could have created facts on the ground, including the withdrawal of troops from West Bank population centers and, in the wake of public horror at the massacre by Baruch Goldstein in Hebron, the forceful removal of the most provocative settlements (e.g., Kiryat Arba). Instead, he has acted in ways that make Palestinians feel disrespected, and simultaneously undermined the Arafat government, which is the only force with whom he could possibly make peace.

It's ridiculous to believe that Arafat could stop Hamas terrorists willing to blow themselves up for the sake of Allah and determined to undermine Arafat's rule. Relative to the size of the populations, New York City has more violence and murders than Israel, including all the deaths from terrorism. What if we said that Mayor Giuliani should be removed from office because he hadn't lived up to his promise to stop the crime and violence? Would anyone say that was a credible reason to remove him, or wouldn't they acknowledge that unless he wanted to try to run the city as a fascistic prison camp, he simply doesn't have the power to stop the violence? Why should Arafat be any more successful when he has fewer resources, less of a police force, and more people unemployed and angry?

The tragic outcome of all this is plain to see: Rabin is going to move too slowly, Palestinian anger will generate continued support for terrorism, terrorism will generate disillusionment with the peace process, Rabin will lose the election in two years, and Likud will renew the ferocious levels of repression that were, nevertheless, unsuccessful in stopping the Intifada or preventing many acts of terrorism in the 1980s. Eventually, after another round of disillusionment with Likud, seven or twelve years from now, the process will get back on track. But only after hundreds more Israelis and thousands more Palestinians lose their lives—all this tragic waste of life because a bunch of tired leaders have been unable to act with courage, and have allowed a handful of Islamic terrorists to shape the agenda.

But here is an alternative: Let Rabin say plainly and clearly that the goal of the process is a demilitarized Palestinian state; let him define the borders of that state; and let him make clear that settlers who moved to the territories to make such a state impossible will soon have to live as a peaceful minority within a Palestinian state, enjoying the same rights in that state that Israel gave to its Arab minority during the first ten years of Israel's existence. Let Rabin order an end to construction on the West Bank, an end to expansion of new settlements, and elections in three months for a Palestinian national authority.

Skeptics will respond to this proposal by insisting that "it can't happen—it will be too unpopular." But Israeli history repeatedly shows that when leaders act decisively (as Menachem Begin did in welcoming Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem), public opinion changes overnight. Otherwise, enslaved to the latest polls, Rabin will follow the disastrous path of Bill Clinton, trying to position himself as sensitive to the concerns of the people on his right, but failing to satisfy them, meanwhile legitimating their discourse and not providing people with an alternative way to understand their reality. Unfortunately, Meretz, the Israeli peace party, now a member of the government, has silenced its criticisms of Rabin and has thus failed to educate people to a different view of the possibilities. No wonder, then, that so many Israelis have already given up on the process, and so many Palestinians, suffused with despair, rally round the murderous terrorists.

While we wish Israel success in destroying those terrorists and in punishing those who give them material support, we also hope that Israelis will soon realize that its current ambiguous path, far from providing for security, makes Israel more insecure.

Clinton's Betrayal

Why do people feel betrayed by President Clinton, not just disappointed in the typical way that they often feel about politicians who don't fulfill all of their campaign promises?

To understand the Clinton phenomenon, we need to examine the politics of the past thirty-five years—ever since the civil rights movement combined with the inspiring rhetoric of President John F. Kennedy to introduce into politics a redemptive vision that called upon America to heal its past and transform its present. Culturally counterposed to the dominant ethos of materialism and selfishness that had become the dominant

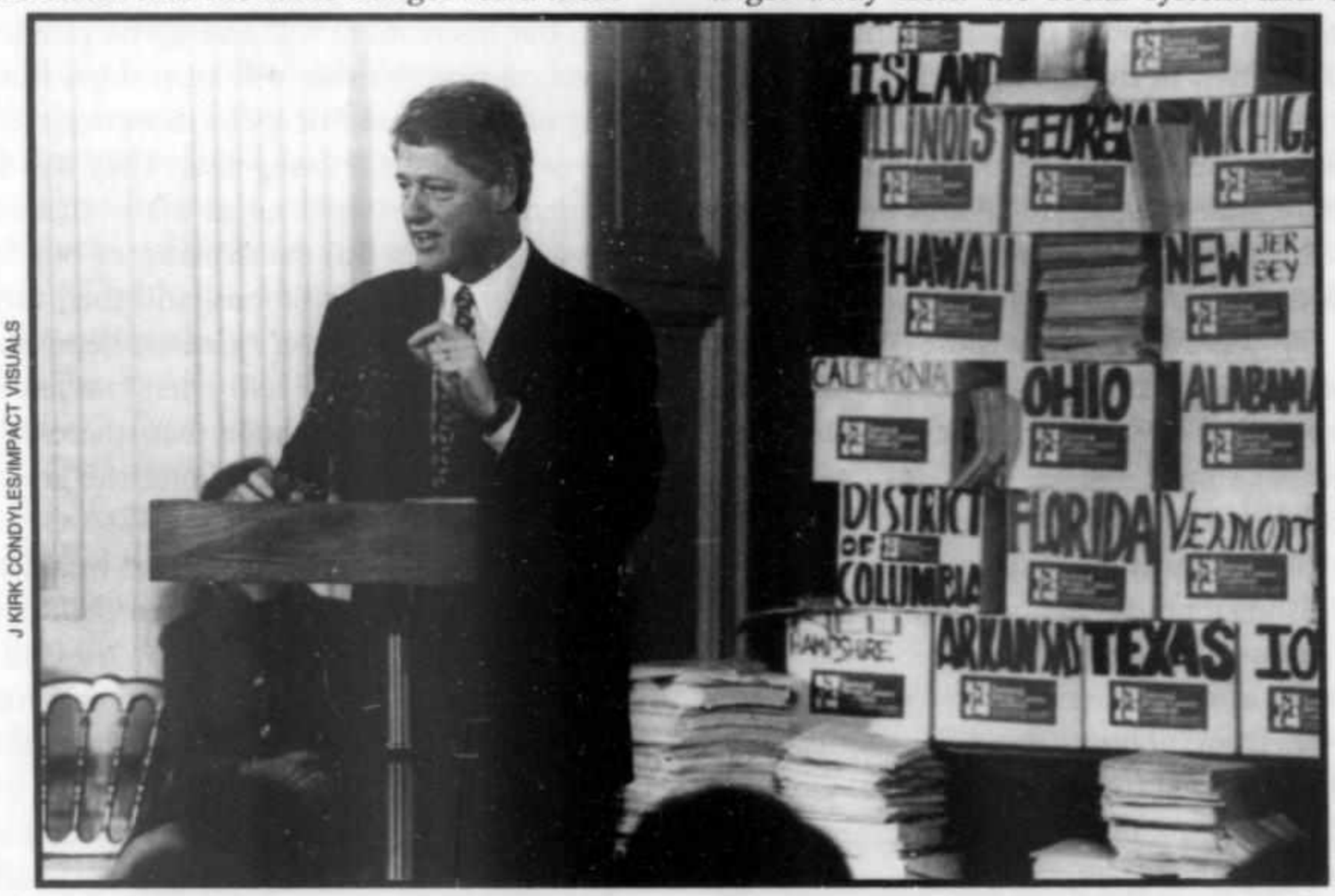
theme in American life ever since the end of World War II, the civil rights movement and the subsequent student, anti-war, and women's movements of the Sixties encouraged people to fight for their highest visions of a loving and caring society.

Unfortunately, but inevitably, the people who came into those movements were themselves severely flawed, and the social-change movements reflected the limitations of these people. Lacking any deep understanding of the social forces that shape us, movement people were intolerant toward those who did not respond immediately to the movement's liberatory messages, making most Americans feel that they were "the enemy" because they had not "gotten it." Eventually, the movement turned on itself with the same intolerance and lack of compassion it showed toward everyone else.

Most tragically, the movements for social change were unable to understand that the same hunger for a more meaningful existence that led many young people to reject the materialism of the market and seek refuge in a counterculture was leading other people with different cultural history and baggage to seek refuge in a resurgent Christianity and in a Right that positioned itself as the champions of people's emotional pain and distress. Because people on the Left saw the movement to the Right as nothing more than a reflexive racism, sexism, xenophobia, or stupidity, they were unable to see that many of the people attracted by the Right were actually responding to the same needs that led others to the Left. The disdain shown to the American people by these social-change movements was highlighted by a hostile media, and allowed conservatives to position themselves as anti-elitist populists who would champion the needs of ordinary people.

Because the liberals were oblivious to these dynamics, they sought new economic and political programs as a way to shore up their failing support—and this only further convinced the American public that liberals didn't have a clue about what most Americans were feeling. As these sentiments grew deeper, first Ronald Reagan and then George Bush were elected President. When their policies and programs intensified America's problems, the Republicans placed the blame on the selfishness of congressional liberals who were using monies to support the needs of Blacks, women, gays, and immigrants.

The underrecognition and vulnerability most Americans felt gained expression in the form of resentment for what was missing in their lives. Right-wing radio commentators and demagogues recognized these feelings of deprivation and resentment, but deflected the anger away from the social system and toward those who, supposedly, *were* being protected: the oppressed groups who were the beneficiaries of modest governmental programs.



J KIRK CONDYLES/IMPACT VISUALS

Had the liberals understood the deep hunger that people felt for a framework of meaning and purpose that could transcend the individualism and selfishness of daily life, they might have understood why their expansion of government entitlements was unlikely to provide an answer to this need. But the liberals' intellectual framework leads them to resonate to Americans' economic needs and desire for individual freedom, while they find it difficult to address the human hunger for meaning and purpose. Thus, they were unable to imagine that their fellow Americans who were moving to the Right could be experiencing the same moral and spiritu-

al longings that had moved these liberals to the Left!

Then came President Clinton, with his promise to change the political rules. Hardened leftists never warmed to Clinton—they were put off by the centrist motifs of his economic programs. But millions of other Americans responded to the way he seemed to understand their meaning needs. Although past experience made many people distrustful of politicians' promises, a significant number of Americans also felt so excited about the possibility of creating a "we" that they suspended their disbelief, and momentarily allowed themselves to hope that a new ethos of caring would replace the ethos of selfishness.

We've detailed in these pages the ways that Clinton betrayed Americans' hopes by making deficit reduction, NAFTA, an unworkably bureaucratic health-care plan, and a crime bill the center of his administration's efforts. Yet the biggest betrayal was not his abandonment of Lani Guinier or his vacillation on Bosnia or his failure to insist upon protection of human rights in China or his retreats on the environment—it was the absence of any coherent vision, the refusal to articulate and fight for a central principle. Certainly, we at Tikkun were particularly chagrined that Mrs. Clinton temporarily embraced our formulation of the politics of meaning, only to abandon it when she was ridiculed by those with a vested interest in the political status quo—but we would have accepted *any* reasonable vision or principle that articulated the ethos of caring.

We've argued in past issues that as Clinton himself appeared to be primarily self-interested, he created widespread disillusionment among those who had momentarily allowed themselves to hope once again. They grew angry at themselves and angry at him, and many withdrew from politics altogether, refusing to vote, while still others felt themselves drawn to the energy and vision of Republicans who seemed to be articulating the principle of selfishness by which Clinton lived during his first two years in office.

The ultimate betrayal, however, came in the State of the Union address. Clinton could have acknowledged the difficulties facing him in dealing with a Republican Congress and also pointed out that less than 25 percent of the electorate had supported Gingrich, far from some overwhelming mandate. He could then have gone on to articulate a new vision of politics based on a different bottom line. If ever there was a moment when the American public needed to hear a clear alternative vision, some reason to resist the onslaught of the Right, it was during that speech.

Instead, Clinton said, "I've gotten the message," thus claiming that the right-wing message was in fact the desire of the majority and that his task would be to accommodate the conservative agenda—humanizing it at some points (insisting on gun control, cautioning moderation in the dismantling of social programs), but essentially accepting that the "Contract with America" would form the political framework for the next two years. If the poor, the powerless, and the environment suffer dramatically in the next two years, the largest part of responsibility falls squarely on the shoulders of Bill Clinton. Even after the electoral victory of the Right, it would have been possible to curtail the power of the Gingrich Congress had Clinton sought to mobilize the American people.

There are some who will say that this was impossible, because Clinton always was a centrist conservative. More likely, we are witnessing a colossal failure of backbone and integrity. Either way, it is a monumental betrayal. And it will have terrible consequences. Not only will many people suffer through the Gingrich period, but many more will give up on politics and adopt a level of cynicism that will keep them from believing in any political leader or social movement, *even when they agree with what is being said.* They will feel so disillusioned that they will never allow themselves to hope again. It is this sin, the evoking of our highest desires and most noble aspirations, and then turning his back on them, that is Clinton's greatest betrayal. Many people may end up voting for him again, but few will be able to forgive him. And without that, there will not be the enthusiasm necessary to counter the growing appeal of the Right.

That appeal is growing, in part because as they have taken office they have portrayed themselves as people who really do have a vision and do care about something. And many people respect this steadfastness so much that they are unable to see the real danger in the content of the right-wing vision.

It is not surprising that there has been a renewed interest in U.S. Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey. Bradley has long articulated a politics-of-meaning vision on domestic social and racial issues, even though he has not yet expanded these values to his economic philosophy. Unlike Clinton, Bradley manages to stay true to his ideals even when they are unpopular. Since his talk to the National Press Club on February 9, many people have begun to speculate that a grass-roots movement could induce Bradley to challenge Clinton in the primaries, and that only a Bradley candidacy could regenerate hopefulness and vision sufficient to counter the appeal of the Right.

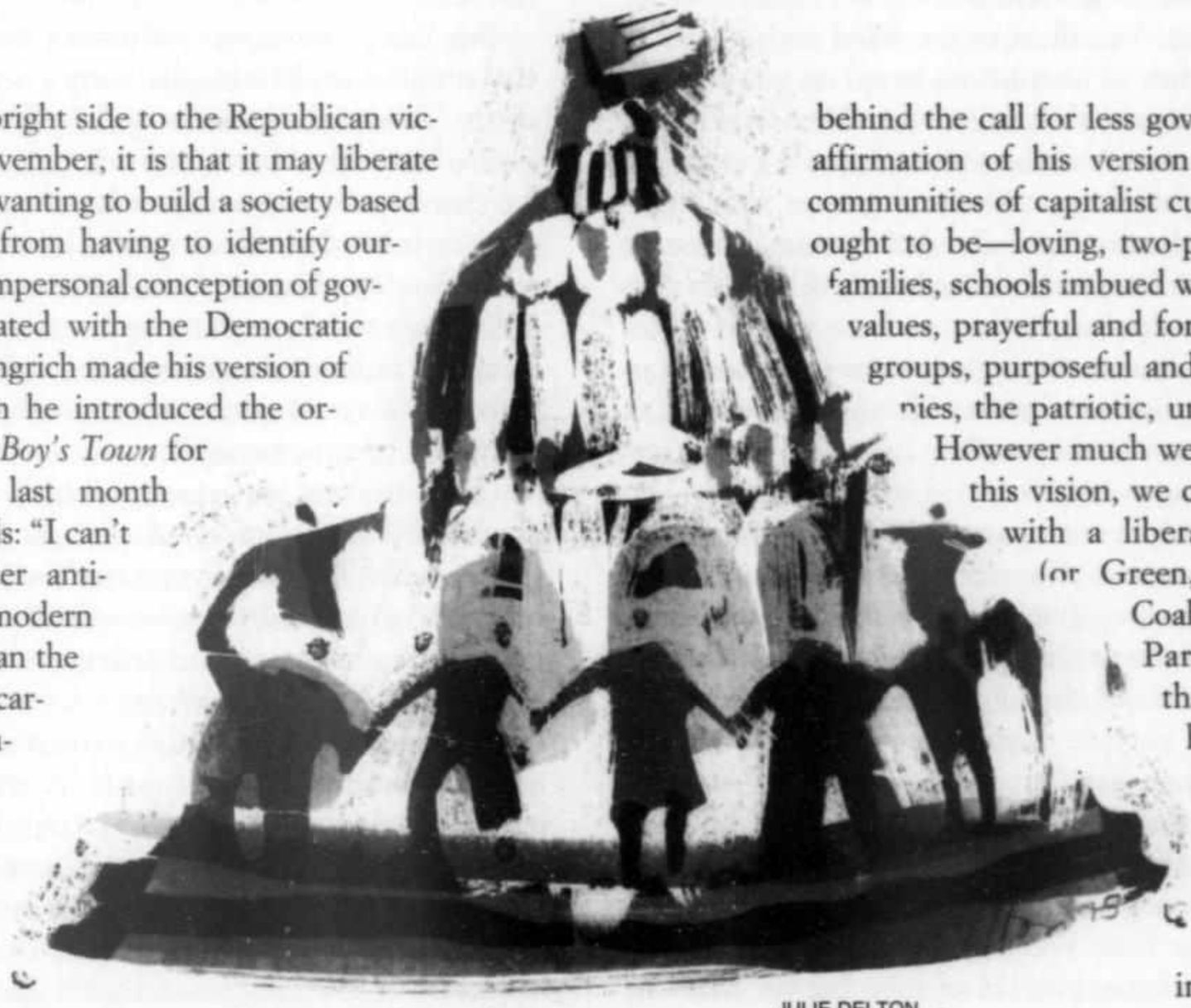
One thing is sure—the price of Clinton's betrayal will be paid not only by him but by all those who care about social justice. □

SPECIAL FOCUS

President Clinton excited the hopes of many Americans when he promised a new ethos of caring, then in the early months of his presidency repositioned himself as a centrist and opportunist more interested in preserving momentary favorably ratings than in fighting for principles. As disillusionment and despair accelerated, so too did his unprincipled vacillations, thus fitting well into the rhythms of a Democratic Congress that similarly lacked vision, mindlesly expanding New Deal-style government bureaucracies. In light of their electoral defeats in 1994, some liberal activists are insisting that we should spend all our time registering voters for 1996, others that we should find a more attractive liberal candidates; still others that we should create a New Party. In this section, Peter Gabel calls for a more fundamental shift, and then faces his critics.

Community and Democracy: Creating a Parallel Universe

Peter Gabel



JULIE DELTON

If there is a bright side to the Republican victory last November, it is that it may liberate those of us wanting to build a society based on community from having to identify ourselves with the impersonal conception of government associated with the Democratic Party. Newt Gingrich made his version of this point when he introduced the orphanage-movie *Boy's Town* for channel TNT last month with these words: "I can't imagine a better antidote to the modern welfare state than the sense of love, caring, and spirituality conveyed in this movie." If we put aside our cynicism about whether orphanages like Boy's Town really exist and our desire to affirm parent-child love in poor communities, isn't Gingrich clearly right to be suggesting that the mere redistribution of money to isolated poor mothers through a Democratic entitlement program has little to do with creating the kind of social transformation toward a radically more caring community that brought many of us into politics?

Like a kind of reverse Marxist, Gingrich is calling for the withering away of the State before rather than after the overthrow of capitalism. His positive message behind the call for less government is an affirmation of his version of what the communities of capitalist culture can and ought to be—loving, two-parent nuclear families, schools imbued with traditional values, prayerful and forgiving church groups, purposeful and loyal companies, the patriotic, unifying nation. However much we disagree with this vision, we can't oppose it with a liberal-Democratic (or Green, or Rainbow Coalition, or New Party) agenda that doesn't have an evocative communal vision of any kind. The opportunity in the present moment may be to build a new communal politics within civil society that can challenge the Republicans on their own terms ("underneath" the State) and be truer to our own transformative vision than we have been in many years.

First, let's clarify what exactly is wrong with the Democratic Party world-view and how our more or less forced allegiance to it has placed us in contradiction with our own communal aspirations.

The basis of the desire for community is the desire in each of us for a connection with one another that embodies the experience of mutual presence and confirmation. The effort to realize this desire impels us to

Peter Gabel is associate editor of TIKKUN.

resist and try to break through the isolation and alienation that envelopes us, the artificiality of the roles we feel compelled to play, the cynicism and jokiness that pervades our everyday interactions, the temporizing and holding-back of "idle talk." Fear of reliving the trauma of a humiliating rejection, experienced first in childhood but reinforced by the denial of desire that seems to constantly surround us, tends to defeat our efforts, pushing us back into our isolating roles and routines. The whole society, the world, is in a state of denial of what we most want.

Changing this dynamic cannot occur through installing a new economic system or a new system of government because altering the externals cannot heal the paranoia. Just think of any political group you've ever been in. These groups often attract some wonderful people filled with hopefulness and a desire to make significant change. Yet all of us are filled with a level of paranoia and fear of humiliation based on our previous disappointments and the ways we have been let down by others in the past. No matter how hopeful people are about change, they approach these groups with suspicion, having already internalized the societal message that it is only in families and fragile friendship networks that we can find people to trust and that people we are likely to encounter in these groups are going to put us down or otherwise humiliate us. This leads to a holding back on the part of most people in the group when a few of the more angry and wounded people begin to "act out" in ways which the group itself does not have the confidence to contain. The acting-out takes many forms: dominating the discussion, putting others down, listening for the slightest politically incorrect or tactically mistaken suggestion and then jumping on the speaker for having made such a stupid remark, pushing for grandiose fantasies as "the necessary next step" that are guaranteed to lead everyone to feel nothing real is happening or, conversely, arguing that nothing is possible except repetition of political strategies that have gone nowhere in the past. Precisely because of the understandable tentativeness and insecurity that the majority of hopeful and decent people feel when they enter these settings, they quickly withdraw and go back to the safer despair of private life. In different forms, these dynamics made possible the totalitarian manipulation of democratic forms in the Soviet Union, the apparent craziness of many Left groupings in the 60s, and the continuing inability of smart and decent people to get a progressive movement off the ground in the 1990s.

The picture of society that has defined the politics of the Democratic Party since the New Deal has nothing to do with a communal vision or with creating the experience of community. To be sure, the social movements that gave rise to the reforms of the New Deal and the Civil Rights era did infuse these reforms with some communal meaning. The economic reforms of the 1930s were not merely dry, external changes in the economic system; they were enlivened communally by the solidarity of the labor movement and the "we're all in it together" feeling of struggling against the Depression. The expansion of legal rights that followed the civil rights movement were not merely technical extensions of the Fourteenth Amendment creating new rights to damages for discrimination based on race; these rights were originally infused with the lyrical upsurge of connection that spread from the churches and marches outward, giving these rights a transcendent communal meaning (the aspiration for true racial equality) that influenced their judicial interpretation for many years.

But these communal influences were indirect and had nothing to do with the party's actual social paradigm. This paradigm was and is that our society is divided into: a) a liberal, non-communal civil society, in which everyone pursues his or her own interests, and b) a government that corrects social injustices through the redistribution of money from some individuals to other individuals and through the expansion of legal rights to assure no individual interferes, through discrimination, with the liberty of others to pursue their own interests ("equality of opportunity").

There are two important points to note about this picture: First, the image of civil society presupposes that as individuals we are inherently separate from each other except to the extent we voluntarily form associations through contracts, marriage, etc. There is no recognition of an inherent desire for social connection, for mutual recognition, or for a community of meaning and purpose because such a desire would define the individual as inherently social and in relation to others. Instead of such a social individual, we find the liberal individual whose only essential need is that of economic survival, whatever other desires he or she may choose to pursue in the exercise of liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The second key point about this picture is that the State is pictured as "above" or apart from civil society, as literally not part of the flesh-and-blood reality of social life. It is democratic by virtue of elections characterized by individualistic voting, but it is not communal because in civil society there is no assumption that people are inherently connected in the absence of voluntary association. Thus the government can connect individuals to each other through, for example, taxing one individual in order to make a welfare payment to another. But the government cannot directly seek to bring

people together in order to overcome their alienation and realize their communal bond.

The individualistic assumptions embedded in this worldview (and our unconscious psychological motives for adhering to them) go a long way toward explaining both the failure of the social-change movements of this century and the eventual success of the Republican Party. However important the specific economic and legal objectives of these movements were, the transformative aspect of the movements were precisely in their challenge to isolation and alienation, in the sudden thrill of connection and discovery of one another that gave them their movement-character. This experience of community is what provided millions of people a glimpse that the world could be radically different than it is and what drew many of these people, including me, into politics.

But when these movements appealed to the government for legal and social change and increasingly adopted the Democratic Party as their expressive vehicle, they left the communal world of the movement with its challenge to the alienation pervading civil society and found themselves in the abstract world of the liberal democratic State. Because the creation of community could not be a political goal of the government within the abstract and unreal individualist "world" of this liberal State, the transformative, communal aspirations of these movements necessarily became invisible. Wages and working conditions came to replace the vision of a cooperative and democratic workplace as the defining feature of the labor movement. Non-discrimination in housing and employment within the liberal marketplace came to replace the civil rights movement's transformative vision of a society based on love across racial differences and mutual recognition. The women's movement lost some of its vision of a society based on cooperation rather than aggression and competition, on intuitive understanding and empathy rather than distanced male rationality, in favor of equal rights and non-discrimination in the marketplace. And "helping the poor" through economic entitlements came to replace the vision of creating a world in which we share things equally because we want to, because we feel and want to manifest our common humanity.

Stripped of the desire for community that originally animated it, the liberal platform of the Democratic Party became increasingly absurd. A movement generates a feeling of connectedness that has appeal to those outside it because it promises a feeling of being with others that can lift all of us out of our painful feelings of meaninglessness and isolation. But if you take that promise away and replace it with a vision that leaves people in their painful isolation, reduces community to impersonal government programs that are based exclusively on the forced redistribution of money from one anonymous isolated person to another, deprives the donors of even feeling the caring of direct giving, and then tells the "taxpayer" that he or she doesn't need anything because he or she is not oppressed enough, people would have to be crazy to support you for too many decades. And let's face it: for those of us whose politics emerged from the experience of social movements, it was frustrating and even depressing to have to support a party that could never directly reflect back to us the most important desire that motivates us. How long should we be going on saying things to ourselves like, "Well Clinton *seems* to have a 60s feel—even if he didn't say a single thing that is directly relevant to my universe."

So perhaps Newt Gingrich has done us a favor by putting us out of our misery and freeing us up to come up with a new approach to politics that tells our real truth. His world-view is that if we can get the spiritually empty government with its "faceless bureaucrats" off our backs, we can find and nurture community within the institutions of American civil society as they already are, or were in some conservative golden age. For those of us who see these institutions as (not entirely, but significantly) alienated pseudo-communities concealing isolation, longing, and pain, contesting the Gingrich vision requires not a politics of more spiritually empty government (the liberal world-view), but a politics of building transformative community within civil society itself. It is a matter not of new economic programs or defending our rights, but of directly creating *experiences of being together* that feel better, more empowering, and more real than the alienated communities on which people are currently dependent for their social identities. It is a politics of civil society of this kind that will allow us to challenge the Republicans on their own terms, rather than continuing to saddle ourselves with the contradiction of relying on the anti-communal world-view of the state.

What would this new kind of politics look like? The single most important first step is to shift our own attention in everyday life from frenzied activity aimed at "getting things done" to manifesting our presence to the other so as to "call" upon the desire for true connection that exists in the other's heart. This shift from an instrumental to a spiritual "strategy" has nothing to do with a Moonie-like conception of "love"—it is simply to take seriously that what people most want and need is to escape from the artificiality of the roles that imprison them and from the cynicism and evasion that they know will doom them eventually to a meaningless death. The power of a leader like Martin Luther King

came not from what he said but from how he manifested his presence through what he said, and it was the developing reciprocity of this presence within the civil rights movement that gave the movement its communal life-force. One doesn't have to be a gifted speaker to manifest a presence that begins to give confidence to the other—it is simply a matter of trying to embody, in the face of the massive denial around us, the truth to which we know others aspire and the possibility of realizing it.

No set of programs or policy proposals or organizing efforts can successfully challenge people's psychological allegiance to the existing system without this capacity to transmit confidence by example. But if we can succeed in gaining this sense of how to be present for each other, we can then pursue organizing strategies aimed not at passing new legislation or getting the Supreme Court to recognize some new right, but at spreading the experience. A labor organizer who has seen the transformative power of immigrant workers coming to stand up for themselves on a picket line can foster that experience of solidarity by creating discussion groups at the union where workers share their cultural history and backgrounds. Those who work in non-traditional or at least moderately progressive workplaces might move toward replacing work rules and employment contracts in favor of an ethos of mutual commitment, fellow-feeling and voluntary cooperation. Groups of friends might seek to overcome the isolation of nuclear families—those often impacted havens in a heartless world—by finding ways to form committed villages in which they can help one another raise the next generation, share finances, and foster a sense of loving and playful—but permanent—comradeship that can't be fully achieved in our society's absurdly casual approach to friendship.

Thinking this way may at first seem "too small" and naively idealistic when confronted with the supposedly massive pressures of the capitalist economic system. But it's time to stop thinking of capitalism as an economic system, a kind of giant machine that determines our existence from the outside. Our society is not some kind of external machine organized for profit, but an alienated social reality, suffused with paranoia, that fosters domination in both the economic and non-economic spheres of life. Its Achilles heel is that *nobody can stand it*, not even the ruling class whose interests it supposedly serves, because it cannot satisfy our most fundamental social desire for life-affirming connection and meaning. Changing the economic system from capitalism to socialism—even some new externally-pictured model of democratic socialism—cannot solve this central problem because the healing required for the creation of community must be gradually brought into being through lived experiences that replace doubt with confidence, mistrust with trust, and cynicism with seriousness, hopefulness, and conviction.

It is the silent longing in everyone for a such a transformation that makes a spiritual strategy within civil society plausible. But in order for such an effort to gain the confidence to spread, our private experiments must have a way of becoming publicly visible. I am vaguely aware of a number of projects—such as Jay Rosen's effort to develop a new kind of public journalism that challenges the cynicism of the mainstream media, or Wilson Riles's efforts to work with the American Friends Service Committee to use the healing aspects of Quaker meetings and other religious practices to counter the craziness in public gatherings that has played such a major role in undermining the appeal of progressive forces, or my own college's efforts to develop new self-governance processes that reject the separation-of-powers interest group model of the liberal university (with its central administration, faculty senate, staff union, and student government) in favor of building a communal ethos that dissolves conventional role distinctions—that are already trying to create the kind of disalienating lived experiences that I'm talking about. And I'm sure that many of you are attempting such experiments also—in environmental groups consciously trying to link spirituality and politics, in small businesses challenging the supposed necessity of soul-numbing, routinized division of labor, or simply in much more diffuse activities that seek to build alive communities of meaning outside the institutional confines of the family, the workplace, and the market.

But so long as we remain isolated from each other in these efforts, we cannot gather the steam required for a new way of being to spread. As Michael Lerner has pointed out, in every single interaction we are conflicted between our desire to extend ourselves to the other and reach out for genuine recognition, and the temptation to pull back and hide behind the protective role-behaviors that were communicated to us as compulsory during the course of our alienated conditioning. So long as our transformative efforts are experienced as isolated and private, they will inevitably tend to fall apart from within because the vulnerability and trust required to affirm at "meta" level the transformative aspect of the experience will be undermined by the legacy of doubt and mistrust that we ourselves have internalized. The 60s "vanished" in significant part not because everybody sold out, but because the media would not reflect us back to ourselves as we really were, acting as a kind of cultural immune system that successfully encapsulated and caricatured our efforts so that we ourselves came to doubt our own transcendental discoveries and ulti-

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mately participated in spreading doubt rather than confidence among ourselves. So to be successful, a politics of civil society must build its own public sphere that will allow us not simply to learn from each other, but to build within ourselves as individuals and within our own face-to-face communities a conviction that the experience of unalienated connection to which we aspire can overcome the denial of that experience that constantly seems to surround us.

It may be that new methods of public communication like video-conferencing, or magazines like TIKKUN and the projects being proposed for its Foundation on Ethics and Meaning, or Michael's proposed national summit on ethics can help to create this confidence-building mutual visibility, this new kind of public sphere "underneath the State" and within the civil society that is our real world. This would point toward a horizontal and narrative vision of social change in which our goal is neither some magical, instantaneous revolution nor vertical legal reforms that would try to fix the world with authoritative words, but the building of a parallel universe within our existing society that is simply truer to human needs than what Newt Gingrich and others like him have to offer. It is difficult to acknowledge this, but the closest model to the kind of spiritual organizing I'm talking about is the Christian Right, and we should learn from them.

How then should we think about the role of government in advancing our communal goals in the post New Deal world? I think we should recognize from the long-term failure of the Democratic Party that the creation of an unalienated community is indispensable to the realization of democratic ideals. This means we must find ways of bringing into being an experiential reality that can overcome the split between an alienated, competitive, individualistic, paranoid society and an abstract democratic state. We should absolutely defend New Deal reforms, entitlement programs, and the expansion of legal rights on the basis of their communal and loving origins, but we should help to reconceive them so that they in fact advance the expression of community and love. Bill Clinton's National Service program is a hopeful example of how to do this because it directly creates social connection and human meaning—it brings young people into direct contact with other human beings in need and allows them to give of themselves, to create bonds of affection and solidarity. There are surely many, many other ways to do this if we can shed ourselves of the individualistic regulatory paradigm that has, for the time being, run us straight into the ground. But the deeper point I'm making is that we should stop altogether thinking of the government as something separate from civil society that we can use in some manipulative fashion to change what is wrong with the world and think of it increasingly as an expressive medium of connectedness emerging from the parallel universe that we are trying on a daily basis, and through future generations, to bring into being. □

ROUNDTABLE

After Clinton: Possibilities in the Age of Gingrich

Mary Edsall, co-author with Tom Edsall of Chain Reaction: the Impact of Race, Rights and Taxes on American Politics *is currently working on a book about American men. Jean Bethke Elshtain is author, most recently, of* Democracy on Trial. *Peter Gabel was the first chair of the San Francisco Commission on National Service. Herb Gintis is professor of economics at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and co-author with Sam Bowles of* Democracy and Capitalism. *Michael Sandel is professor of government at Harvard University. Arthur Waskow is pathfinder of Aleph: Alliance for Jewish Renewal.*

Tikkun: Peter Gabel argues that the Republican victory has a potentially positive agenda if it liberates us from loyally supporting a liberalism that doesn't speak to our needs or values and is incapable of commanding the loyalty of an electoral majority.

Gintis: Gabel's piece was very provocative and his identification of the absence of the notion of community from liberal theory is very accurate. Any alternative must involve developing strong notions of community. But we should not see communities as alternatives to states. Gabel's notion of community is too much oriented toward symbolic and psychological notions and not enough toward figuring out what kinds of institutions support powerful communities.

Elshtain: Peter's general sketch of our discontent is accurate. We need a more robust notion of civil society. Robert Bellah notes that people get very excited when they hear reports of others who are engaged in building a community, but their eyes begin to glaze over when they are asked to accept the authority of communal institutions or to invest in building those institutions. One of the big stories of the past decades is the collapse of political parties and the stripping of author-

ity from civic institutions. We've seen a withering of civic institutions.

Waskow: We need an economic analysis to accompany Peter's exciting analysis of the meaning dimension of our problems. The effect of the economy over the course of the past twenty-five years has been to divide Americans into the disemployed and the overworked (people are working more hours today than they were fifteen years ago). The impact of these is that people *can't* participate either in family life or community life. There has been a significant decline in people's ability to shape and control their own time—and this is connected to the cultural/spiritual malaise that Peter describes. I agree with Peter that conventional forms of organizing are alienating. A politics that focused both on the reduction of the work week and on strengthening family and community ties could make an impact. We ought to try to create times, one day a month and one week a year, in which all but the most vital services are closed down and people would be able to support the efforts to build face-to-face communities.

Elshtain: The primary complaint that many parents have in building families is that they don't have the time to spend with their children, whom they fear are increasingly being lost to a selfish and materialist culture.

Edsall: The things that Peter Gabel raises in his paper and that Michael Lerner addresses when he talks about the culture of meaning are being discussed across the culture, from Right to Left. There is an eruption of people across the entire political spectrum and in every corner of the society who are concerned about the erosion of community. So people's concerns about time is connected to their inability or refusal to allocate time to participate in community structures.

People want to be bonded to others, tied, connected. But this word also suggests another aspect of community that we haven't faced squarely: the aspect of bond that associates to bondage, to have our freedom and mobility impaired in order to sustain our commitment to community. Every individual faces a struggle about how much to accept the constraining aspect of those ties. Each individual has to ask, "What am I willing to sacrifice to be part of a community?" Those of us who want to support the building of community have to be prepared to question and critique our own privatized, permissive cultural liberalism.

Sandel: Gingrich and Gabel are both right in their views that the liberalism of the welfare state is inadequate as a public philosophy. Their alternative visions are both flawed. Gingrich's vision is flawed because he thinks that paring back the welfare state and shifting power to the states will address the loss of community that afflicts America. But that overlooks the fact that the American welfare state grew as a response to the concentration of power in the national economy. Returning power to the states won't address the forces that led to the development of the welfare state in the first place. Gabel's vision is flawed to the extent that it talks about creating an unalienated community, or suggests that an unalienated community is indispensable to the realization of democratic ideals. Gabel's notion of unalienated communities in which we would be transparent to one another or in which we would close the space that differentiates us is a mistaken vision. The way to address the hunger people have for community is to try to reconstitute the institutions of civil society—from families, neighborhoods, to cities and towns, to social movements and religious communities—to try to build institutions that are intermediate between the individual on the one hand and the nation and the global economy on the other. We need to organize a range of public spaces rather than focus on trying to collapse the space between persons. The idea that democracy is thought to require healing or overcoming the space between persons suggests an image of a transparent society in which there would be no sources of friction or misunderstanding between people, where there would be no conflict of interests between people. But this leaves no role for language, argument, political discourse, disagreement, confusion, or human difference, and this is not a human community or a vision worth aspiring to.

Gintis: Communities are something people need. If we don't have them, people don't do well. Communities are disciplining devices as much as they are rewarding experiences. We are forced to enter them in order to meet our daily needs. I choose some communities where I invest a tremendous amount of my personal feeling, but as Nietzsche once said, the call that we should all love one another means that nobody loves anybody very much. We don't have enough love to go around. We have to invest our resources wisely and carefully, knowing that we can be abused in doing so. We are not obliged to love everyone at work, nor should we demand that the workplace be governed by mutual bonds of respect as opposed to rules and regulation. Gabel's is a romantic conception of community that comes from a preindustrial era. Most people think of politics as instrumental to achieving their ends, not as something into which they wish to invest their lives. It's a mistake to think of communities as formed by bonds of love rather than by structures that discipline and reward them for proper behavior.

Sandel: A politics of community should not be a politics of love and intimacy. I don't believe that politics should be restricted to purely instrumental concerns—it should have an expressive dimension, but the form of expression should not be love or intimacy. Politics requires a certain degree of alienation or self-distance so that people can deliberate about ends they may not share. Politics should be about recognition, not just about interests, but it shouldn't try to collapse the distance between people. Hannah Arendt was right about this when she said that what makes mass society so difficult to bear is not the number of people involved but the

fact that the common world between them has lost the ability to separate and relate them. To separate and relate—this is the space of politics. Both are needed.

Tikkun: Perhaps a politics of meaning is a way to correct for the imbalance in liberal politics today in which large-scale bureaucracies do much to separate and little to relate people.

Elshtain: Democratic politics is fractious is about disagreements. The more I know about some people, the less I want to know them, but I still might find ways to work together with them for some particular end or purpose where it is not required that we be of one mind on many issues that we care most about in order to work together on this particular concern. Otherwise we get this radical mitosis that is happening today, in which we divide ourselves more and more into small support groups so that we can just be with people who are exactly like ourselves. That's not a model for politics.

Gabel: Comrades... [laughter among the others] let me respectfully disagree with all of you. First, many of you mischaracterize my position. I am not calling for some absurd notion of community in which people don't disagree with each other.

Let's understand our situation in regard to the rejection of liberal politics by a large number of Americans. When we ask, how do we repair that, the focus has got to be on offering people a vision of something very different from what liberals have offered them in the past as embodied in the liberal welfare state. To understand what needs to be different, we need to focus on lived experience and not on structures, institutions, conceptual frameworks that externalize the distancing and paranoia that is the main characteristic of contemporary social existence. The terror of the other, the frustration of our hopes for connection, the pain that results—these are the phenomena that cause people to become attracted to media images of objectified sexuality on the one hand and violence, aggression, and rage on the other. It is this region of life—the experience of social connection—that is what has to be built up within the realm of everyday life. The ways of thinking that we've inherited have made it difficult for us to attend to this arena when we think about politics. We have trouble evocatively naming this arena—I'm not saying conceptually naming it—but expressing it through language. If you've participated in the experience of being part of a social movement, it is that experience to which I'm appealing—the experience of an upsurge, of a coming into contact that overcomes some of the roles that separate us, the sense of fullness or presence that enables us to resist the tendency to feel underneath a gigantic culture of denial, to feel that sudden lift, and attending to these experiences and the resulting experiences of connectedness as the foundation of community. Our task is to pay attention to these kinds of experiences and then bring community into being, so that we are no longer only theoreticians talking about community that we never actually live, but rather so that we can help people by example, not by telling them what to do or giving them a new structure.

Sandel: Could you give us a few examples?

Gabel: If you lived through the civil rights movement or the antiwar movement or the women's movement, you probably had a dramatic experience of the kind I'm talking about. I'm in favor of provisionally attempting to build institutions as long as they are attentive to the dynamics of the intersubjective life world that will either give people a lift and hope, or will simply create an externalized representation of community that doesn't connect to people's actual experience of alienation within these institutions.

Sandel: The civil rights movement and women's movement—do you, Peter, take these to be examples of unalienated communities? Weren't these movements richly political precisely because they were filled with disagreements, competing conceptions...?

Waskow: There was, however, a sense of fraternity and sorority within them that is absolutely different from what you'd find now in the ordinary Democratic Party. There was excited disagreement, but it was based on a shared passion for working together.

Gintis: I was part of those movements. Yes, there were incredible highs that linked people together. But I also experienced an awful lot of bad stuff—people's marriages breaking up, of predatory sexual relations, of careerism, of using politics for personal ends. I don't think that that was an ideal community, better than communities of which I am a part today.

Waskow: The question is how to move our politics in a particular direction. To attend to issues of alienation doesn't require us to believe that we would totally get rid of jealousies, self-interested deals, etc. Yet there was in my experience a great deal of difference between what went on in parts of the civil rights movement or the women's movement or the antiwar movement and what was going on in normal American politics.

But I don't want a politics of meaning and culture and community to underplay the importance of the grand economic structure that either affirms and supports community or shatters it. The unions fought for the forty-hour week at a time when people felt themselves facing speed-ups and loss of control of their time.

Gabel: But this kind of struggle may no longer be possible if unions aren't finding ways to bring people together to create themselves as centers of cultural connectedness. They will no longer be able to lead a struggle against speed-ups. It is the challenge to alienation that gives people the power to oppose economic domination.

Edsall: But we have to face up to the problems when people put their own self-fulfilling life course at the center of their life project, they sometimes end up betraying others and being betrayed in turn. And that experience of betrayal

becomes a motif through the society, this makes people wary of communities and of making deeply felt emotional investments.

Elshtain: When you talk of community, Peter, there is not enough recognition that community requires things of us, sometimes requires subordination of what feels best to us at the moment—we are bound in particular ways. You look to social movements as an ideal of community, but I don't think they are. There is an ideal there of an élan moment, a losing of oneself, a transparency that Michael Sandel talked about—those kinds of moments are bound to be ephemeral. They leave traces, and we yearn for those kinds of moments again. Many of those movements come and then go—they can't sustain themselves. The civil rights movement couldn't have sustained itself without an institutional network of Southern Black churches and the discipline that was necessary to carry them on.

The women's movement was at times divided and fractious and altogether unpleasant, based on deep disagreements. The sad thing was that there were moments in the women's movement where disagreements were felt to be disruptive to the movement and were seen as a form of treason. We faced what Jo Freeman called "The Tyranny of Structurelessnes." We didn't have political forms through which we could air our disagreements, so it quickly became a "you're either with us or against us."

Edsall: And when we start to think about political community in terms of unalienated relationships, we ourselves start to exit from community. Impatient with imperfection, people on the Left start to talk about divorcing the Democratic Party, and we become perpetrators of the crime we deplore—that is, rupturing community.

Tikkun: You don't seem to be giving adequate credence to the fact that most other people who were part of that community have *already* jumped ship because of the faults in the way that community organized its politics. If we notice that the ship is sinking, that does not mean that we are creating the leak.

Gabel: I was elected to the central committee of the Democratic Party in San Francisco, and I spent two years and could not generate one serious political conversation among these party leaders. Instead, they fell back on techniques like assuming we all agreed, calling for votes rather than discussing issues, refusing to engage in any activity that might affirm shared larger goals, etc.

Edsall: But here we come back to my theme of why it is so hard for us to stay in community. You talk about spending "two whole years" and you don't achieve what you want to, you are ready to quit. What if you were a parent and gave up after two years? The trouble is that you'd rather bowl alone. You can't keep abandoning existing commitments and creating new ones.

Sandel: Progressives should not abandon the Democratic Party. It is the only instrument of progressive politics at the level of national politics. But we should also explore what it is about the Democratic Party as it now exists that is inadequate to answer to the aspirations and the frustrations that are abroad in the land. The inadequacy of the Democratic Party's public philosophy is that it speaks almost entirely about the national community. There are certain ways in which we share a common life as Americans, and that common life should be the basis of common rights as citizens, and certain responsibilities we have to our fellow citizens. But that is not sufficient for two reasons. Most of the time, we live our lives by smaller solidarities. We don't identify morally or politically solely with the nation. We need a politics that can nourish forms of political identity intermediate between the individual and the nation. Liberals have not been able to articulate that need very well. They have a suspicion of smaller forms of political community that derives from the experience of the civil rights movement when local governments were the refuge of racism and intolerance, and so Democrats looked to the national government. There's a second reason. The nation is no longer a political community that controls its own destiny in the ways that we thought it did in the decades after World War II. There is more and more of a gap between the scale of global economic activity and the terms of political identity. For a time in the twentieth century, the nation offered to fill that gap, hence the emphasis on the national community. But now the economy has outrun national borders. So if there is some fit between the scale of the economy and the terms in which people conceive of their identity it is going to have to be filled by a range of institutions and political associations that run from families and neighborhoods and churches and synagogues on the one hand to much more expansive forms of community more expansive than the nation itself.

Gabel: You have a model in your head of a good society. But even what you want can only happen from the opposite direction, from the generation of experiences that make it possible for people to feel that they actually would want the good ideas that you have.

Sandel: Politics is purposive activity. The civil rights movement had clear political purposes. Yes, it inspired feelings of solidarity and community, as well as contentiousness, but the movement had clear purposes that brought people together. Or, consider the activities of the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation. These are groups of activists and community organizers drawn from congregations, and unions and neighborhood organizations who organize for education, job training, toxic clean-ups. Doubtless in the course of those activities people generate a sense of fraternity and solidarity.

Waskow: "Doubtless?" No, it only happens if there is a conscious intention to create that. People can get together to fight for common purpose in a totally uncommunal, unsharing way, or you can get together in a way that seeks to create

a community of struggle.

Elshtain: I'm on the board of the Industrial Areas Foundation. Their politics are built around concrete sets of issues that bring people together interracially. One of the things they emphasize to empower people to build a lasting community committed to changing society is the importance of rectitude and an appropriate public/private distinction, they emphasize that politics is not primarily about therapy, their organizers have their lives together so that they won't use political activity to fulfill needs that are properly fulfilled in personal life. Politics is not primarily a therapeutic enterprise, it is a civic enterprise.

Gintis: People enter communities to solve concrete problems. The Democratic Party is bankrupt because people in it have no idea about how to give the money back to communities in ways which allow those communities to solve those problems while empowering people in those communities. I have argued that one way to do this empowering would be for the government not to redistribute money to communities. Instead, people should be permitted to take deductions on private contributions to groups in the community that are providing necessary services.

Sandel: Peter and I agree in rejecting interest group politics that is purely instrumental. We disagree about what the formative or transformative aspect of politics should be. In my view, democratic politics should attend to the moral character of citizens; it should be a formative activity. Our aim should be to inject into our political discourse an attention to the formative aspect of democratic politics. We should ask what institutions cultivate civic virtue. But civic virtue is not a matter of intimacy or therapy, it has more to do with austerity, restraint, responsibility, and concern for the common good.

Tikkun: Where does the women's movement consciousness—raising small groups fit into your scheme?

Sandel: Consciousness—raising groups are at the margin of politics to the extent that they are concerned with raising or transforming consciousness without exercising power or pursuing political purposes. People engaged in social movements would ideally find, and have in fact found, that their characters are reshaped in the process. But a wholly psychological description doesn't capture the formative process of democratic activity.

Waskow: The churches in the South had a purpose and they came together because they shared a spiritual life. They didn't see those as in contradiction. The women's consciousness—raising groups came together so that women could talk about making some of the changes in their lives they wished to make, and to share some of their ideas about how to do so and what experiences they were having as they did so.

Sandel: The civic virtues I was talking about were being cultivated within the churches—the virtues of discipline, restraint, commitment to the common good, austerity, and

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not self-indulgence, *not* intimacy, not therapy.

Gabel: The problem with the Democratic Party is that it does not speak to this fundamental dimension of our project which is to create an experience of human relationship and connectedness that was always captured in ideal form by the idea of socialism. I am not calling for us to divorce ourselves from the Democratic Party. What I am saying is that to the extent that we participate in any form of politics, whether that be the Democratic Party or any other party or social movement or political organizing, it must have this evocative resonance and meaning-directed force or it will co-opt the basis for our very participation.

Waskow: Let's address these issues around the economy. People who come home after working ten hours a day and two hours of commute are almost certain not to be able to have a loving relationship with family or the neighborhood. So they turn on the television and become a passive consumer of images from the television. We need a demand for time.

Gabel: But the demand for that time has to be generated by some kind of movement that people feel attached to—the economic demand has to emerge from a coming-into-solidarity that leads people to say, "To hell with this ten—hour day, two—hour commute—my life is rotten and I can't stand the system."

Gintis: Community is essential to an alternative vision of America, but I disagree with this politics of meaning approach. You can't unify your politics around symbolism. You have to have an institutional side that deals with real social problems.

Waskow: The Christian Right has shown that you can care about spiritual issues and also about the schools that your kids go to, and that your views about what should happen in schools can flow from your spiritual vision and not be detached from that meaning orientation.

Elshtain: They've been willing to put an enormous amount of energy into civic associations, running for school boards, even forming alternative schools.

Gabel: But what holds their campaigns together is *not* the campaign and the concrete experiences that build it, but a meaning-oriented worldview, their faith.

Edsall: They are fighting for the right of cultural reproduction. It would be important for us to validate that right that would cut across the political spectrum.

Waskow: But do we want to fight for cultural restoration or cultural renewal? I'm not so interested in reproducing the culture I grew up in—I want to renew it by bringing in some new stuff, including the equality of women.

Edsall: So you are choosing that particular way to reproduce, and you should be able to do so.

Gintis: Groups want to have control over their own culture and how it develops.

Tikkun: When the Christian Right organizes, its specific struggles flow from a substantive vision of "the Good" for which liberal forces do not have an analog. The liberal forces do not have a framework of meaning and purpose, a vision of the Good, that can function in an equivalent way. Because they don't, their politics end up feeling, even to the people who are involved in them, as though they are technocratic rather than visionary, and self-interested rather than deriving from a commitment to some higher purpose (be that service of God or service of the common good).

Poor people and working-class people voted for right-wing candidates who favored programs that were *not* in the economic interests of those who supported them. They were attracted to right-wing communities of meaning even when the economic programs of those communities actually served the interests of economic elites more than it served their own interests. The Right was able to articulate a vision of politics that engaged the spiritual and ethical needs of people and the caring dimensions of human reality—and that made it possible for them to win politically.

If the Democratic Party is unable to speak to these kinds of meaning needs, then it frequently becomes largely irrelevant to most people what that party stands for on economic terms, because most people don't care to listen to it, they don't feel connected to it.

Gintis: Most people didn't care about these meaning issues. The Right cares about what's taught in the schools, about how to fight crime, about how to build families.

Elshtain: It's important to consider here as background the ascendancy of the Right the withering of various institutions, for example the withering of the labor unions...

Tikkun: Those institutions that did not wither were the ones that did not lose their expressive, caring, and visionary elements. The white ethnics who populated those unions today come home from work exhausted go to church, but will not go to a union meeting, even though the church has nothing to do with their immediate concrete economic demands, because the church speaks to their meaning needs.

Gintis: Labor unions all over Europe have declined and its not because they lost their orientation towards meaning, but because of a structural change in the nature of advanced industrial economies.

Tikkun: As you know, the politics of meaning emerged from the work we did at the Institute for Labor and Mental Health, the parent body of TIKKUN magazine. For ten years we worked in the labor movement and what we found was that people had declining interest in the labor movement not because of the inability of the labor movement to deliver material goodies, but because workers felt that these unions didn't really care about the lives and problems that their members were facing. In the early past of the 20th century unions functioned as benevolent societies, showing a real level of care about the lives, families and work situations facing most their members. But as business unionism triumphed over a more radical vision of the labor movement,

labor leaders narrowed their focus to wages, benefits, and pensions. Most union members are grateful that they have these benefits and wages, are happy that they have someone to fight out specific grievances as defined by the contract, but at the same time, they feel that the unions don't really care about the alienation and sense of meaninglessness that they face in their work everyday, the feelings of shame and emptiness and anger that they carry home from work, and the resulting dysfunction that these cause in their personal lives. Many working people feel terrible about their lives, that they have wasted their day everyday *not* because of speed-ups but because they don't believe that their work contributes to the common good or serves any higher purpose, and because they believe that this waste of their lives is a reflection of their own failures as individuals who, had they been smarter or more together in some way, would have ended up with a better position in the society. What the upper-middle-class groups who control the Democratic Party find difficult to understand is that most working people share with them a desire to have their lives make sense and be part of some higher purpose than just making money. Liberals, progressives and leftists are unable to understand this need for meaning and purpose because they hold a narrow view of human nature that assumes that people are only motivated by narrowly defined economic or material needs and the need for individual freedom. When working people have tried to raise these issues in the context of the labor movement, they've been ruled out of order by a business union elite which felt threatened by these kinds of concerns and essentially responded with the message that these kinds of meaning concerns should be dealt with in therapy or in church, but had nothing to do with what the unions could deliver, which was solely wages, benefits, pensions, and enforcement of the contract. When people we worked with at the Institute explicitly tried to raise these issues in union meetings, they were told, "We can deliver wages and benefits; we are not interested in the subjective experience of what work feels like to you." The same kind of dismissive talk about "the therapeutic" that some people have expressed at this roundtable was what these workers face in their unions—because labor union officials wouldn't dream of talking to people about their experience of meaninglessness and alienation at the workplace.

Edsall: There isn't enough economic sophistication on the Left to be persuasive to swing voters—who are working people.

Gabel: It's not a matter of economic sophistication. Every week we at New College joined the picket line at the Mark Hopkins Hotel in San Francisco supporting the restaurant workers, and those workers are not any different from us. They have the same human needs as college professors. To think that *they* have a different set of problems having to do with economic issues whereas *we* are the kinds of people who worry about meaning is a delusion. College professors are disconnected people. We stand in front of classes and give speeches about community while these working people do the actual work of building communities, like cleaning the bathrooms that we all need, not to demean the college professors, but don't demean the lives of everyone else.

Elshtain: But the meaning issues are played out through the economic and structural issues facing their lives in ways that are not precisely the same as they get played out through the lives of people whose work is not being economically marginalized by the global economy.

Gabel: Certainly those fears about employment are of concern to many. But when we look at the passage of Proposition 187 in California which attempts to punish illegal immigrants, I don't think that most people who supported it feared losing their jobs to these illegals. It had much more to do with the rage and pain that people feel because they don't get validated and recognized in their lives, and then they see the state providing services and seeming to care for and recognize someone else.

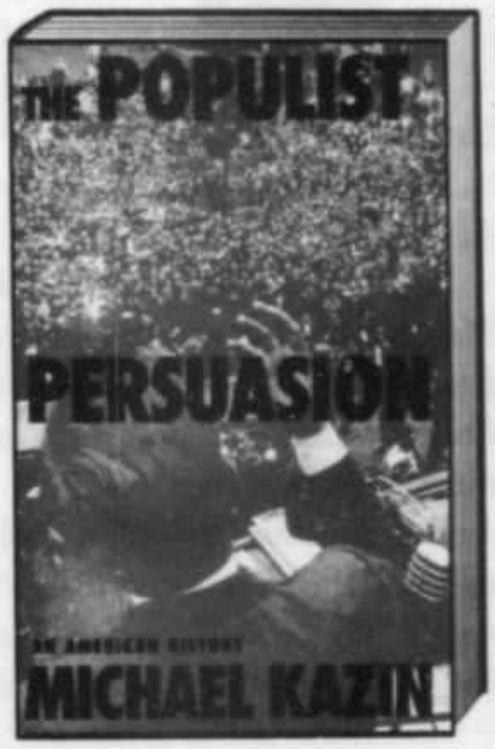
A politics of meaning framework does not ignore people's economic situation—we certainly want to fight for amend to unemployment, for improvement in neighborhood schools, for a reduction for crime. But liberals have been addressing these issues in ways that seemed narrowly technocratic and devoid of larger vision or understanding of human needs. So, a meaning-oriented approach has to address these issues in a

(Continued on p. 92)

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ACTS OF GOD

Bargain Hunting

Lawrence Kushner

Sixteen, seventeen years ago, as was our custom back in the days when the children were young, we would all go out for dinner at Burger King. (We sat at separate tables.) On the way home, if we had a little time and a little money, we might stop at Marshall's, a discount clothing store. The kids made up hide-and-seek games among the racks of clothing, and Karen and I would browse for a bargain.

It was on such an evening that I caught a glimpse of her out of the corner of my eye. A frail, intense, attractive woman who seemed even at first glance to be distraught. Pretending not to notice her as she moved into the aisle, I saw that she was very pregnant and that she was accompanied by a man. They were discreetly moving toward me. She was trying to catch my eye to see if I would recognize her. But even if I did, I would have feigned ignorance. Yes, I know, I'm a rabbi, a public person, but, gimme a break, this public person happens to be shopping for clothes.

It does not work. She is closing in—probably attended a wedding or bar mitzvah I did years ago—moving through the bright fluorescent lights and Muzak like a guided missile.

"Aren't you Rabbi Kushner?" (I could lie.)

"Yes, I am. Have we met?"

"Not exactly, we attended a service you did. My husband and I thought you were very nice."

But before I can even acknowledge her compliment, she moves in for the kill.

"Oh, Rabbi, we were at the doctor's this afternoon. The third opinion. He says I have an inoperable tumor; I'm going to die. He says that the baby will be fine (holding her belly) but I've only got six months at the most."

Her husband is trying to look strong, but his eyes seem abnormally red.

"Oh my God, I'm sorry. Is there anything I can do?" (Stupid question. "Sure, a miracle maybe—right here between sweaters and men's slacks. Nothing big, mind you, just let her live to see her kid grow up—something like that.)

"Hey Dad, could I buy this T-shirt with a picture of Superman on it?"

"Not now, son. Go find Mom, I have to talk to these people, it's important."

They introduce themselves, give me the details. They've been thinking of joining my congregation. Their world has collapsed. Why has this happened? Would I do the funeral?

They joined. She bore a son. She died. I did the funeral.

A few weeks ago, my fellow teachers and I are sitting over the remains of the Monday night high school pizza supper. The other members of the faculty and I are surveying the students. Even after a long day of school, their energy astonishes us. My glance settles on a tall, gawky, brown-haired boy of seventeen, a few pounds overweight, fighting a losing battle with acne. I pretend I am not looking; I do not mean to intrude on their fun. He has just finished telling a joke, or playing some kind of prank; his face has a grin as irrepressible as the sunrise. Everyone laughs with him. He is popular. The group erupts with joy. A few minutes later he comes over to our table and asks me if I would read over a creative worship service he has been writing for an upcoming youth conclave.

"Why not, I need a good laugh," I say with a wink. I love that boy. I am honored he looks up to me. That boy's father never did remarry.

"Last week," I lean over and whisper to another teacher, "his dad told me that his son was thinking of becoming a rabbi."

Look, I don't think God made a tumor grow in the boy's mother's brain, or that God has anything to do with the choice of careers, or where I used to shop for bargain basement clothes, but I can't get it out of my head that somehow God is mixed up in the whole horrible, holy, and joyous goddamn thing. □

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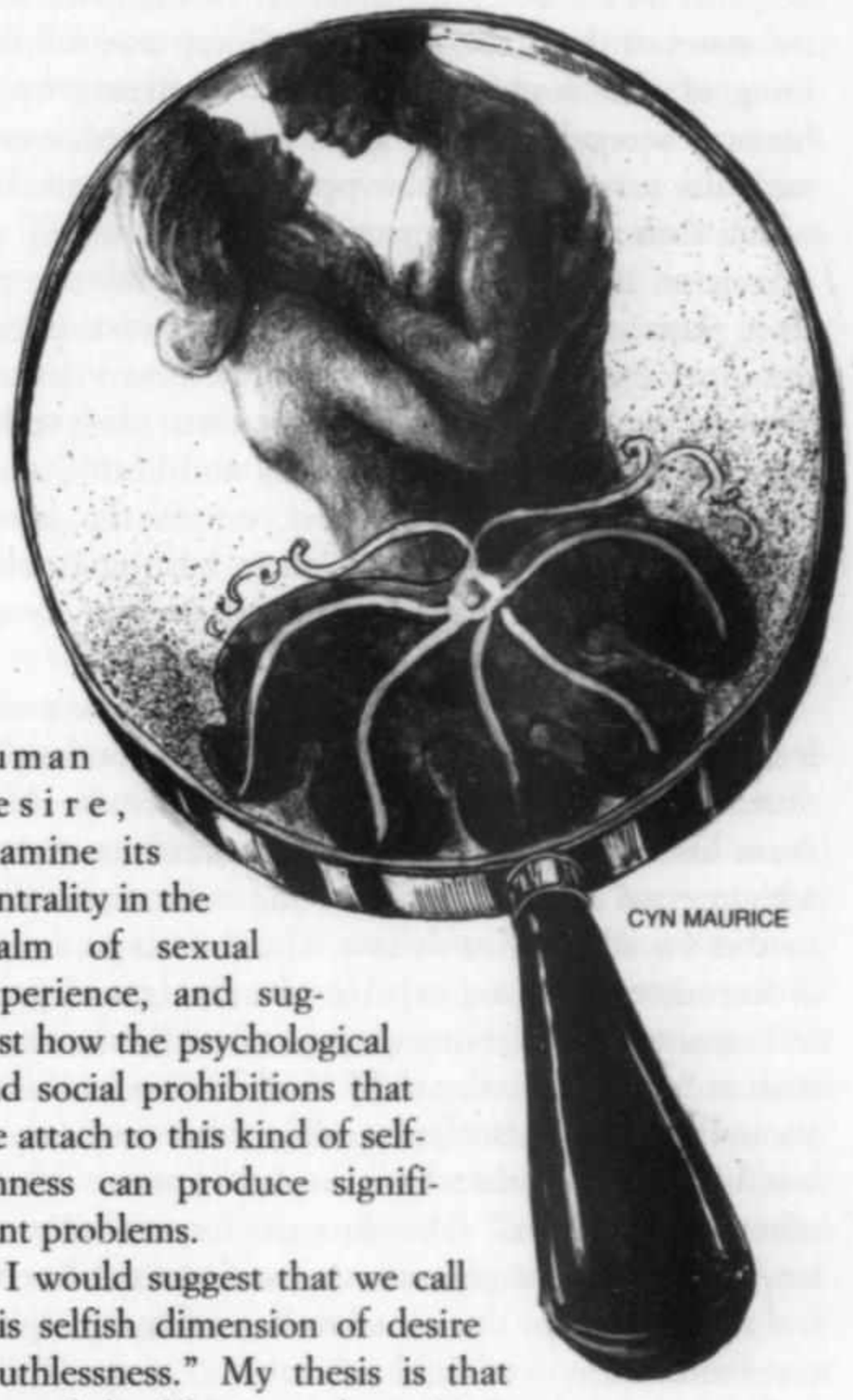
Can We Still Be Selfish After the Revolution?

Michael J. Bader

Because our culture idealizes the pursuit of self-interest, critics of radical conceptions of human nature that valorize altruism and empathy fault these philosophies for being naive and for denying the inevitability and importance of selfishness in human experience. Those of us who espouse these alternative ontologies often play into the hands of the cynics, however, by whitewashing the central role of passionate egoistic desires in our psyches, or by implying that all aggressively self-centered impulses are the product of a sexist or capitalist society.

This tendency to look at all expressions of forceful self-centeredness as symptoms of a sick and politically incorrect environment is particularly ingrained when it comes to discussions about sex. The fact that sex is so intertwined with power and violence in our culture can inadvertently lead liberals and progressives to promote and normalize an image of sexual desire driven only by empathy and caring. Faced with such idealized standards, people can easily feel guilty and misunderstood about the ways that their own private sexual fantasies and preferences seem insufficiently "sensitive," or too selfish, aggressive, or "dirty."

In order to lend legitimacy to our claim that we can create a society which fosters relationships of caring and not domination, we have to understand the healthy aspects of private and egoistic desires. In other words, it's time to give selfishness its due. After the politics of meaning and feminism have finally triumphed, and we have a society based on compassion, community, and connection, we'll still have intensely "selfish" experiences. The selfishness I have in mind isn't captured by concepts like privacy, autonomy, or subjectivity. I mean those moments when we want to "let go" with the full force of our selfish desire without any regard whatsoever for the needs or internal states of the Other. I mean those moments when the drive for personal pleasure takes precedence over our sense of responsibility. My aim is to explore one meaning of this dimension of human desire, examine its centrality in the realm of sexual experience, and suggest how the psychological and social prohibitions that we attach to this kind of selfishness can produce significant problems.



CYN MAURICE

I would suggest that we call this selfish dimension of desire "ruthlessness." My thesis is that normal healthy sexual excitement requires an element of ruthlessness to be successful. The British psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott argued that ruthlessness is an inevitable and healthy aspect of the mental life of the developing child. By ruthless, he didn't mean cruel or cutthroat. He was trying to describe the kind of unselfconscious way that a child *uses* people, without guilt, or even without a realistic picture of the needs and feelings of those people. Ruthlessness characterizes object relations *prior* to the child's discovery that the mother exists outside the child's omnipotent sphere of influence, prior to the development of a capacity for concern and empathy for the internal life

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and well-being of that mother.

Ruthlessness does not disappear with development. This dimension of experience continues to operate in mental life and forms part of the bedrock of many of our most important adult experiences, particularly in the sexual sphere. The normative "ruthlessness" of childhood becomes a building block in the adult's capacity for sexual ecstasy.

In my view, maximum sexual pleasure is not compatible with worry about one's partner. Too much empathy for the other, too much sensitivity to the internal states of the other, and the build-up and full flowering of sexual pleasure is inhibited. Sensitivity can become second-guessing, guilt, and a preoccupation with the sensations of the person on the "outside," which then prevents a surrender to the mounting sensations on the "inside." Too much empathy can produce just enough self-consciousness, just enough estrangement from the fullness of one's own desire to dampen the experience. Therapists often observe how our patients' conflicts over normal and healthy childhood selfishness, aggressiveness, narcissistic entitlement—over, in other words, their healthy ruthlessness—result in their subsequent over-sensitivity and guilt-based worry toward their sexual partners.

In a related vein, Winnicott described how a child learns to "be alone in the presence of the mother." In order to acquire this capacity, the child has to be able to "turn his or her back" on the mother and get in touch with internal desires without having to be aware of the mother's availability or welfare. The child experiences a differentiated mother, capable of coming and going, feeling good or bad, but has internalized this mother to such an extent that the child does not have to worry about her. This particular capacity is also necessary for healthy sex as an adult. One needs to assume that the other can and will take enough responsibility for her/his own sexual pleasure that one doesn't have to feel responsible for the sexual welfare of *two* people at every moment.

On the other hand, too *little* empathy leads either to a kind of mechanical and narcissistic use of the other for purposes of control and relief, or an aggression-based fetishism in which the other is objectified and intimacy is warded off. This is, of course, the conventional picture of heterosexual male sexuality in contemporary culture: The man's experience is dominated by too much selfishness, not its inhibition. Yet clinicians repeatedly see that not only is the pleasure of the woman thwarted by male narcissistic insensitivity, but the man's pleasure is suppressed by his inability to surrender to the pleasure and desire of his partner. Full sexual intimacy, then, also requires a deep sensitivity to the needs and rhythms of the other and a basic empathy with the well-being of that other.

In order to fully understand the dynamics of sexual excitement, one has to posit a dialectic between egoism and empathy, between ruthlessness and concern, between turning one's back on the other and gazing into the other's eyes. If either pole sustaining this tension breaks down, psychopathology results. On a broad social level, it looks like men tend to fall short on the empathy end and women on the ruthlessness end of this continuum. The predominance of fetishism among men and masochism among women tends to support these social generalizations. Feminist psychoanalysts and social theorists have repeatedly documented men's fear of intimacy and defensive flight from empathy and women's relational dependence and hypertrophied empathy.

In my clinical experience, however, I have repeatedly found that these neat distinctions often don't hold, or else are belied by contradictions. For instance, ruthlessness is often quite *inhibited* in heterosexual men. These particular men struggle internally not with a maternal imago threatening to engulf them, but with an inner representation of women as helpless, damaged, and weak. In these cases, the man feels guilty about his own phallic pleasure, overidentifies with the woman, unconsciously worries about and micromanages her emotional state, and cannot "let go" with the full force of his desire and excitement. Often, the male fear of intimacy with a woman is not about *his* being hurt but about hurting *her*. He unconsciously associates "turning his back" on the woman and freely expressing his sexual energy as potentially harming and neglecting her. The resulting guilt leads him to shut down and inhibit his desire.

Maximum sexual pleasure is not compatible with worry about one's partner. But too little empathy leads either to narcissistic use of the other or to aggression-based fetishism.

Similarly, heterosexual women also often feel terribly guilty about their sexual power and worry about making their male partner lose control, feel sexually inadequate, or otherwise emasculate him if they "let go" and ruthlessly "use" him for their own selfish satisfaction. The result of this exaggerated (but socially reinforced) worry is a diminution in the woman's excitement and a hypersensitivity and surrender to the sexual needs of her partner. She puts her own sexual power in a straitjacket in order to protect the man's fragile narcissism.

For instance, a patient of mine felt that she couldn't get sexually excited by a "nice" man with whom she otherwise felt nurtured. She felt that his somewhat anxious concern to please her reflected weakness and burdened her with a sense of responsibility for him—she had to worry about taking care of *his* need to please her! She couldn't "let go" aggressively with him and give in to her own sexual power for fear of hurting him. She and I analyzed the childhood roots of these conflicts and, as she began to work through these dynamics, an interesting thing occurred. Her boyfriend and she began to playfully enact a rape scenario in which he was quite forceful during sex. They enacted scenes in which he "took" what he wanted and acted completely indifferent to what she wanted. The patient found these new enactments extremely exciting and felt that it brought a new vitality into their relationship, as well as bringing them closer together in general. Her self-esteem improved and she felt a greater sense of freedom and abandon during their lovemaking. She felt a more powerful sense of sexual agency, despite the theatrical submission during sex.

We came to understand this in the following way: The man's excitement in dominating her reassured this woman that the man was strong and wouldn't be hurt by her ruthless sexual desire. In other words, she felt that his increased comfort in "taking charge" enabled her to stop worrying about him and to surrender to her own internal excitement. Her apparent surrender was not a real surrender in that—in her mind—the woman felt an increased sense of power and a freedom to "let it all hang out" with a partner that she now felt could withstand and match her. On the other hand, the man was not actually indifferent to her but quite tuned-in. His assumption of an attitude of indifference reassured her that he could take care of himself and his own needs and that, therefore, she could take care of her own needs without guilt or a burdensome responsibility.

Just as the balance between ruthlessness and empathy can break down, there are many ways in which people attempt to restore and maintain it. As a psychoanalyst, I have been impressed with how strivings toward health can underlie even the most apparently pathological behavior. As in the case I just described, for some people certain sado-masochistic rituals, posturing, and games—including *simulations* of the use of force, and theatrical and playful displays of submission and dominance—can function to reassure both parties that the other is robust and intact enough to risk a "letting go" and ruthless mutual "use." For some women in these circumstances, even if the enactments are along conventional sex-role lines, the man's excitement at acting powerful reassures her that he is strong and intact, able to withstand and appreciate her if she unleashes her sexual power and energy. For the man, the woman's excitement in *apparently* being dominated communicates strength and resilience and a willingness to accept and enjoy the fullest expression of his power and energy. This is because he unconsciously realizes that a woman who is truly weak or fragile couldn't enjoy playfully enacting the role of such a woman because of the danger of being actually traumatized.

My point isn't to glorify or even normalize sado-masochism but to describe one way—albeit a controversial one—that even conventional social roles, however limiting, can be creatively used by both men and women to deal with a common problem—namely, the ways that worry about the object can inhibit the ruthlessness necessary to maximize sexual pleasure.

Intimacy and familiarity can deepen love—and vice-versa—but, in some people, it also acts to inhibit ruthlessness. Sometimes, the ennui or diminution of sexual desire experienced by couples who have been together for a long time can be traced to just such inhibitions. Concern and empathy for the one we love can unconsciously heighten our worry and make it harder to "let it all hang out." The more we understand (or imagine we do) the interior of the other, including his or her vulnerabilities and weaknesses, the more the sexual object can turn into a "worry object." Excitement is warded off and the resulting boredom ensures that no harm—real or imaginary—is done.

Ultimately, our aim shouldn't be to use each other as an end in itself but to love each other empathically with the full ruthless force of our desire. An appreciation of the essential role of ruthlessness in sexual desire has to inform and temper our critique of the power imbalances in sexual relationships.

A politics of meaning that seeks to transform relationships based on selfishness to ones based on caring has to appreciate the role of personal ambition, self-assertion, ruthlessness, and aggressive desire in our psyches. Our challenge to the ways that these aims have dominated our culture need not carry the moralistic claim that there is *no* place for their expression. □

THE POLITICAL PSYCHE

Political Energy

Andrew Samuels

Political energy is not the same as political power. Political energy means bringing imaginative creativity to bear on seemingly intractable problems, trying to solve them in ways that reflect concern for social justice. Imagine a computer graphic designed to show the location and quality of political energy in a country like the United States. The screen glows red in those places where political energy is to be found and pulsates in step with its intensity.

Where would we find bright, flashing red lights? In Washington, in the Congress, in the bureaucracy, in state capitals, in the military, in banks and factories? I doubt it. True, all of these are the traditional repositories of political power and, true, they still control the economic and other resources—such as information—that make a complex modern society tick. But political energy has left these places and gone elsewhere. Given the way it has become a dirty word in American public life, it is not surprising that "politics" has left home and gone out into the world to redefine itself and find other and new places to settle.

I am not *advocating* removing political energy from its moribund institutions. It is happening anyway. All one can do is to chronicle and struggle to comprehend what might be the most significant sociocultural shift to take place since the end of World War II. A striking feature of the past twenty years in modern societies like the United States, Britain, and Germany has been the spontaneous growth of new social and cultural networks. More and more people are now involved in such networks—increasingly aware that what they are doing may be regarded as political. The elasticity in our changing image of politics is not something done to politics by intellectuals, but rather something the very idea of politics seems actively to embrace.

These new social movements operate in isolation from each other, seeming to have quite different agendas and programs. Because they form no alliance or coalition, they can only show up on our computer graphic as little dots, scattered across the country. Yet their collective illumination, if we could garner it, measure it—and do it without damaging what might be going on—may be just what Western societies, starved of creativity and imagination in their politics, crave and need as we stumble toward the end of the century.

Furthermore, these disparate social movements have something psychological in common. They share in an emotional rejection of big politics, its pomposity and self-interest, its mendacity and complacency. They share a philosophy or set of values based on ideas of living an intelligible and purposeful life in spite of the massive social forces that mitigate against intelligibility and purpose. They share a commitment to a transformation of politics, something I call the "resacralization" of politics. "Sacral" means holy, and the idea is to pick up on the attempt to get a sense of purpose, decency, and aspiration back into political culture. I believe this is what Michael Lerner has in mind with his "politics of meaning." Even if such a state of affairs never really existed, we behave and think as though it did—hence resacralization. Political reformers and resacralizers share a disgust with present politics and politicians—sometimes it is literal disgust, the gagging reflex, an ancient part of the nervous system, absolutely necessary for survival in a world full of toxins.

But such people have not abandoned politics altogether. They have joined movements that include environmentalism, demands for the rights of ethnic and sexual minorities, animal liberation, complementary medicine including therapy and counseling, spiritual and religious groups including paganism and neopaganism, rock and other kinds of music and art, finding God in the new physics, sports, organic farming, and the pursuit of alternative lifestyles generally. The membership of these movements runs into the millions, far more than are actively involved with the great political parties. In Britain there are more people in the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds than in all the parties

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Andrew Samuels is a Jungian training analyst in clinical practice in London. He works as a consultant for several mainstream and alternative political groupings. A frequent visitor to the United States, he has written numerous books. His latest, The Political Psyche, *was reviewed in* TIKKUN *(November/December 1994).*

put together. Every now and then a political party (the Democrats in the United States, the Liberals in Britain) will try to harness the rainbow energy in these resacralizing movements and turn it into votes. But when formal political parties try to assimilate the resacralizers, incompatibilities of style and goals usually lead to acrimony and disillusionment. In recent years, I have often wondered what would happen if the resacralizers started conversations among themselves leading at least to the formation of a coalition and maybe later to a party of their own.

Let me be the first to say that this is not going to happen in a simple and speedy way. To begin with, many would dispute that the cumulative public significance of these developments is positive. Critics argue that the proliferation of new networks and cultural practices is merely a symptom of social malaise—a selfish retreat into personal, individual preoccupations, reflecting an abandonment of the aspiration to truly political values. Moreover—and it is a good argument—reactionary fundamentalist religious movements can also be seen as resacralizing. But the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism also highlights the vastness of the potential energy pool for urgently needed political reforms.

ANDREW RODMAN



The new political movements share an emotional rejection of big politics and a commitment to living an intelligible and purposeful life.

It often seems amazing to me how little progressives in the United States have managed to learn from those on the Religious Right. I am not saying it would be desirable to share their moralistic and simplistic approaches. But it would be worthwhile trying to figure out what it is that such politicians have heard in the yearning of so many Americans. It would be tragic if the most psychologically minded politicians were to turn out to be the leaders of the Religious Right.

Words like "spirituality" are politically neutral. The harnessing of spiritual passion and energy for politics is not in itself bound to lead to conservative outcomes. In fact, history tells us how radical religions have been over time, whether in promoting the rise of capitalism and the bourgeoisie, or as a source for socialist ideas, or of important principles such as passive resistance and nonviolence.

I believe we should read resacralization positively—as a healthy complement to the rapid decline of public identification with orthodox political institutions. In fact, if there is a future for formal politics, it may be dependent on what happens to today's attempts at political resacralization and transformation. These resacralizing movements carry the seeds of new forms of politics that jibe with modern, culturally diverse societies, forms which would indeed imply a transformation of politics or at least of what constitutes political activity.

It is more important than ever to renegotiate what can be meant by politics so we can engage with issues of empowerment and disempowerment in a more psychological way. In the late modern or postmodern Western world, politics and questions of psychological identity are linked as never before. This is because of myriad other interminglings: ethnic, socioeconomic, national. The whole picture is made more dense by the exciting and rapid course of events in the realms of gender and sexuality.

Feminism introduced us to this new kind of poli-

tics—a feeling-level, subjective politics that encompasses a crucial interplay between the public and the private dimensions of power. For political power is also manifested in family organization, gender and race relations, in connections between wealth and health, in control of processes of information and representation, and in religious and artistic assumptions.

There is a role for psychology and the psychotherapies in a transformed politics based on a search for intelligibility and purpose in social life, a search that is implicitly and sometimes explicitly spiritual and transpersonal in tone.

People of diverse political persuasions have to face the possibility that the citizenry might lose their grasp on the political altogether if they do not themselves reclaim it from the media and the pundits. It is not that the media and their star columnists or presenters ignore psychology altogether. They certainly use a form of psychology. My concern is that a false dialogue has been started between psychology and politics in which we all join in a wild analysis of our politicians in a desperate search for the one with personal stability and integrity. It is a search that usually ends up with the provision of a single-strand nostrum for political ills. Recently, Americans have seen "virtue" or "virtues" advanced as the certain cures for complex and multifaceted problems. Having visited the United States many times, I have formed the impression that many Americans do not actually believe in the simplistic certitudes they find in the books they buy. But very little else is offered. There is a profound hunger for complexity in America these days, clamoring to be fed.

I am not completely uninterested in the relatively simple psychological motivations of politicians. But I am very interested in the much more complicated topic of what would happen to the political system were *citizens* to work on what I call their "political self-awareness." The starting point for an engagement of psychology with politics would be an exploration of the political experiences of citizens themselves. This could contribute to re-energizing the idea of citizenship.

The point on which I will conclude concerns what kind of politically self-aware citizen needs to emerge to make the vision of a transformation of politics into something more tangible. In a fragmenting society, rather than search desperately for a unifying myth, let's go with the idea of a fragmented citizen. This citizen has what we can call "political subpersonalities," including a whole area of feeling and behavior that I call "the politician within." In this area, the border between private and public is usefully blurred. □

Dean of Rockefeller Memorial Chapel

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

The University of Chicago invites applications and nominations for the position of Dean of Rockefeller Memorial Chapel, to start on July 1, 1995. The Dean, reporting to the Provost, is expected to provide intellectual, spiritual, and community service leadership in meeting the needs of an interdenominational community with diverse religious interests and Campus Ministries; to preside over University services and other official functions; to serve as a pastor for students and faculty; to supervise the use of the Chapel for musical programs and public lectures; and to teach in the University. The Dean may be a member of any faith community.

Rockefeller Memorial Chapel, as a part of The University of Chicago, provides a place where faculty and students throughout the year can express their need for ritual and community, reflection and renewal, whether through prayer, meditation, or musical performance, without the constraints of a particular belief. It coordinates the many independent Campus Ministries that are affiliated with the University and that serve the needs of students who wish to be part of a particular faith community.

Applicants should send a curriculum vitae and list of suggested referees. Selection of candidates will commence on February 15 and continue until the position is filled. The University of Chicago is committed to equal employment opportunity and affirmative action.

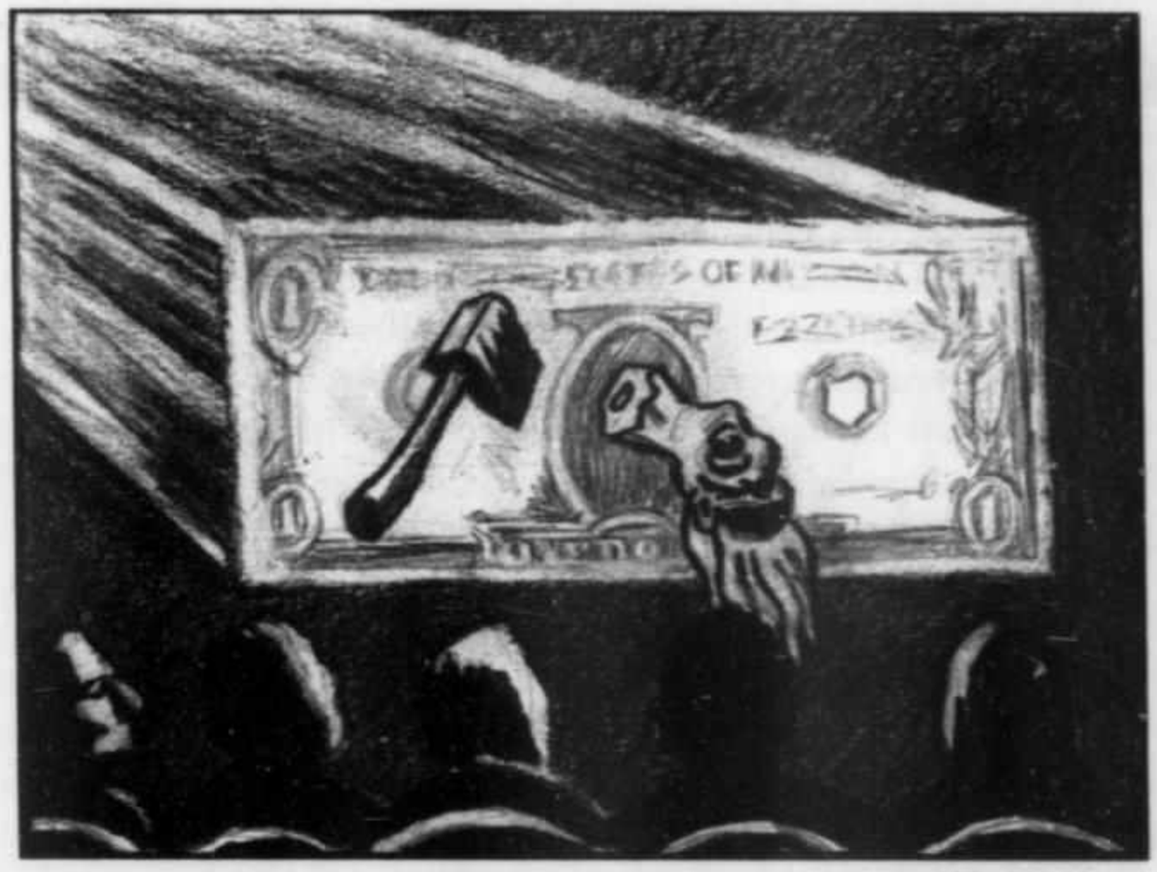
Address applications and nominations to:

Wendy Doniger, Chair
Rockefeller Chapel Search Committee
The University of Chicago, Swift Hall
1025 East 58th Street
Chicago, IL 60637

Pulp Fiction as Degenerate Modernism

Donald Lazere

Am I the only leftist to be distressed over the near unanimous adulation of Quentin Tarantino's film, *Pulp Fiction,* by reviewers in journals from The *Nation* to The *American Spectator*? Seeing the movie in Berkeley, I almost walked out at several points—the gangland murders, the dope-pusher in-talk, the hypodermic in the heart, the brains splattered in the car and on clothes, the forced sodomy—not only because of what was occurring on the screen but because of the Beavis and Butthead like exclamations of "cool!" by young audience members.



SETH TOBOCMAN

Pulp Fiction presents yet another step in the normalization of criminality, hard drugs, bloodshed, and nonstop obscenity as facts of contemporary life, not to be opposed but to be aestheticized and validated as sources of humor in their banality—without even the pretext of satirical, surrealistic hyperbole that raised Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers* a notch above pure sensationalism. The film's admittedly artful dialogue, direction, and acting make it all the more objectionable that such artistry should be lavished on these scummy characters and events. The popularity of *Pulp Fiction* and Tarantino's other films with both a mass audience and serious critics signifies a stage of postmodernism as a degenerate form of modernism.

In the late Fifties and Sixties, many in the New Left embraced sexual liberation, drugs, obscenity, and some forms of violence as modes of political or cultural revolt—epitomized by Norman Mailer's celebrations of psychopathy in "The White Negro" (1957) and of drugs and obscenity in his speech during the 1967 anti-Vietnam War march on the Pentagon, recounted in *The Armies of The Night* and reprinted in the most popular college literature anthologies. The counterculture in turn was the last of a century-and-a-half of adversarial cultural movements from European romanticism and American transcendentalism to French symbolism and decadence, to dada, surrealism, existentialism, and other varieties of modernism or avant-gardism—all of which glorified individual defiance of bourgeois norms. Contemporary neoconservatives and communitarians have both been harsh on the counterproductive effects of the modernist tradition, but these effects have yet to be squarely faced by the cultural Left.

Donald Lazere is editor of American Media and Mass Culture: Left Perspectives *(University of California Press).*

For all of the neoconservatives' hypocritical cant about Judeo-Christian morality and family values, they have raised legitimate doubts about the whole tradition of romantic revolt. These days when I teach college literature courses on the American transcendentalists or French existentialists, my students and I alike are bothered by the near-total absence in these authors' worldview of sympathy with marriage and raising children, or with the exigencies of routine social life faced by the large majority of humanity in industrial democracies.

To be sure, all the romantic and modernist movements have made a necessary statement against the repressive elements of bourgeois society—alienated labor, massified standardization and conformity, philistinism, sexual puritanism, intolerance of minority groups and lifestyles, etc. And they have made positive

alliances with the causes of socialism, civil rights, women's, colonial, and gay liberation (although avant-garde leaders have frequently oscillated between championing populist democracy and turning, in disillusionment with the recalcitrant masses, toward either dandyish aloofness or fascistic hero worship). Still, the most salient outcome of these movements by the end of the twentieth century has been guaranteed alienation from the mainstream of society, which has been ceded to the political Right. Out of reflex opposition to any position embraced by the Right, leftists continue to defend—either on aesthetic, free speech, or quasi-political grounds—anything that scandalizes the bourgeois, including the artwork of Robert Mapplethorpe, Andres Serrano's "Piss Christ," punk style, gangster rap, Madonna's sexual exhibitionism, and the most outlandish expressions of the "queer nation." To make things worse, Left knee-jerk defenses of adversary culture often ignore the inexorable process by which modern capitalism has absorbed virtually all oppositional movements, one by one, into consumer commodities and has turned *le poète maudit* into the celebrity of the month. Baudelaire's *Flowers of Evil* was banned in 1857, and the poet put on trial for obscenity; today Baudelaire would be ... well, Quentin Tarantino.

When today's teenagers exclaim, "Gross me out!" it is more an expression of desire than dismay, and the media are happy to comply with ever more disgusting doses of splatter films, foul-mouthed comedians, and misogynistic rap lyrics.

Mass culture has not just stripped protest movements of any adversarial identity, but enabled them to be taken up by conservative youths as mere fashion statements or hedonistic recreation. Long hair, punk style, obscenity, sex-drugs-and-rock-and-roll, Malcolm X caps (worn backwards), and Black trash talk have become commonplace, from fraternity and sorority houses to bowling alleys. Neoconservatives' charge that the Sixties counterculture has corrupted middle-and working-class youth is partially true, but both the neocons and the Left academics who babble about the revolutionary potential of "transgressive" or "counterhegemonial" cultural practices delude themselves into believing that this degenerate modernism represents any significant challenge to the system of commodity capitalism and a pacified citizenry.

Conservatives denounce the liberal media elite and their degenerate productions, while suppressing the fact that these media are owned by Fortune 500 corporations, financed by advertising from the same corporations, and making profits in the grand old American manner of pandering to the lowest common denominator of taste. So why has the Left allowed Dan Quayle, William J. Bennett, and Michael Medved (author of *Hollywood vs. America*) to dominate the incipient debate about values in the media? To be sure, when President Clinton called, in his 1995 State of the Union address, for Hollywood to become more responsible, conservatives undoubtedly decoded this message as a rallying cry for their campaign to eradicate liberal influence altogether from the media, arts and humanities. But shouldn't the Left pick up the challenge for a frontal attack—purely in the realm of criticism, not of censorship—on the debasement of mass taste by corporations like Miramax, which produced *Pulp Fiction*? It is not enough merely to oppose censorship or to advocate a return to the Hayes Code, nor to argue that the Right has made the media scapegoats for the antisocial consequences of economic and social inequities generated by contemporary capitalism. Even if we lack conclusive causal evidence that violence or drug use in media incite real life imitations, that should not exempt films such as *Pulp Fiction* from criticism for their deadening effect on taste, sensibility, and the capacity for moral judgment.

Conservative groups should not necessarily be derided for organizing legal protests and boycotts against corporations producing or sponsoring offensive materials. Perhaps leftists should even join selectively in such protests, working with the conservative groups while attempting to persuade them to distinguish between pure trash and works with redeeming artistic purpose. In the case of *Pulp Fiction*, the criticism should focus on the waste of artistic talent on uncritical celebration of repulsive subject matter. Our larger goal should be to pressure sincere conservatives into facing up to their inconsistency in condemning immorality in media while extolling the system of production for profit that panders to immorality in all of American social and political life.

Whatever the complexities are of sorting out artistic merit from commercial schlock, I am not convinced that defending multinational media corporations profiting from the debasement of public taste should be part of any leftist agenda. I feel queasy whenever I hear philistine media executives who suddenly become impassioned about defenders of artistic freedom as soon as the morality of their profit imperatives is questioned. If leftists can organize protests against racism and sexism in media, we should at least be opening a discussion about what direction a Left counterpart to the conservative critique of moral values in media should take. □

(Please make copies of this and circulate to your friends, colleagues, co-workers and neighbors—this is something concrete that you can do in response to the rise of the Right)

FINALLY... A PROGRESSIVE ALTERNATIVE TO THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION AND THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT.

Join the

FOUNDATION FOR ETHICS & MEANING

This is my chosen fast: to loosen all the bonds that bind people unfairly, to end oppression, to break every yoke. Share your bread with the hungry, take the homeless into your home. Clothe the naked when you see him, do not turn away from people in need. Then cleansing light shall break forth like the dawn and your wounds shall soon be healed...If you remove from your midst the yoke of oppression, the finger of scorn and the tongue of malice, if you put yourself out for the hungry and relieve the wretched, then shall your light shine in the darkness, and your gloom shall be as noonday.

—Isaiah

THE FOUNDATION FOR ETHICS AND MEANING WILL BE AN EDUCATIONAL, ACTIVIST, AND RESEARCH INSTITUTION THAT SEEKS TO:

Counter the growing social, economic, and political power of conservative thought in both major parties, and counter the impact of the Christian Right and others who seek to impose a patriarchal family, a narrow form of patriotism, homophobia, a 1950s lifestyle or a distorted notion of biblical and spiritual values.

Educate the public about the deprivation of meaning in daily life and how our hunger for meaning is used and manipulated by racist, xenophobic nationalist, fascist, and fundamentalist religious groups in ways that set people against each other.

Promote a new understanding of American society, politics, and intellectual life that is sensitive to the ethical, spiritual, and psychological dimensions of human reality that are all too frequently ignored by liberal and progressive politics—and to foster support for what Michael Lerner calls "the politics of meaning."

Analyze current legislation, governmental policies, economic institutions, social practices, and the media from the standpoint of their psychological, ethical, ecological and spiritual impact.

Projects of the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning

An Alternative to the Christian Right:
The Right addresses legitimate needs of the American public for meaning and purpose—but does so in ways that are punitive towards the poor and those with different lifestyles. We agree with those on the Right who oppose selfishness and narcissism in private life. We agree with those on the Right who reject the cult of individualism and the way people use each other and fail to take responsibility and are unwilling to sustain longterm commitments (often justifying this manipulative behavior in the name of individual freedom). But Rightists typically fail to address the public selfishness fostered by the competitive marketplace—and its central materialist orientation. Too often they distort biblical values in ways that make us forget the Bible's commitment to love, justice and care for the poor and the oppressed.

Some liberals believe that spiritual values have no place in the public arena. We disagree. Our critique of the Right is not that they derive their politics from a religious or spiritual base, but rather that the content of the Right's politics is distorted, has nothing to do with ethical or spiritual sensitivity, and shows no awareness of the notion that every human being is created in the image of God and is infinitely precious to the Creator.

The Policy Institute
The Foundation for Ethics and Meaning will be the progressive alternative to the Heritage Foundation which for several decades helped develop the intellectual foundation for right-wing politics. The Policy Institute will develop policy papers and do campaigns of public eduation. We will do Ethical and Spiritual Impact reports on current legislation, governmental policies, and economic, social and cultural developments in American society.

Ethics Summit
We will create an annual Summit on Ethics and Meaning in Washington, D.C., and a series of regional ethics summits, aimed at bringing people together to discuss their vision of the common good, the deprivation of meaning in American society, the crisis in relationships, the decline of ethical values in the corporate, governmental, social, personal and media arenas.

There are millions of people who *already* share a desire for a society based on caring and idealism. Unfortunately, most of them believe that they are alone and that in "the real world" these ideals must be relegated to the side and that politics must be based on endless compromise with the ethos of selfishness and materialism that dominates in *both* major political parties.

One major goal of the Summits on Ethics and and Meaning is to bring these people together so that they can see that they are not alone and begin to forge an effective social movement. The summits will begin a national dialogue on a new way to think about politics—one that is ethically and spiritually sensitive and that challenges the ethos of selfishness in the economic sphere while challenging the self-indulgence and unwillingness to make sacrifices for the sake of long-term commitments that sometimes characterizes an overly permissive liberal culture. We will also challenge the moral relativism that has mistakenly been thought to be the requisite of a tolerant attitude toward others.

Full Employment and Fulfilling Work
We will foster a campaign for full employment and meaningful work. Too many Americans are caught in a trap between unemployment and overwork. They are expected to exhaust themselves in the world of work and find themselves with little energy to build families, friendships, and communities in the little time outside of work. Yet many feel that their work does not contribute to the common good or to any higher ethical or spiritual purpose. We shall struggle for changes in economic life that ensure full employment and work that is humanly fulfilling and that recognizes the centrality of rest and adequate time to build loving relationships, strong families, and lasting friendships.

Progressive Pro-Families Movement
We will foster the development of a pro-families movement that supports people to build long-term loving and committed relationships. Recognizing the diversity in family forms, we will support all kinds of families and not

MORE ON BACK

CONTINUED:
attempt to impose a particular lifestyle or cultural form. But we will challenge the ethos of selfishness that undermines loving commitments, and the market values that encourages people to use and then discard other human beings as we use and discard products consumed in the market. We will help build family-support networks, encourage family education and parenting skills, and organize national and regional "Family Day" at which people can explore the problems we all face in family life, acknowledge the strengths of our families, and develop progressive agendas to build community institutions that support love and caring.

Education

While we oppose the introduction of prayers in the school, we will support programs to teach ethical sensitivity and values. In particular, we shall encourage schools to develop a curriculum that teaches empathy and gives that equal importance to the teaching of other skills.

Public Intellectuals

We will foster a campaign to encourage intellectuals to use their talents to address the needs of the communities within which they reside, and to address the central intellectual issues facing our society. In part this will require them to leave the narrow academic language whose use has been rewarded and engage in public discourse that is accessible to the ordinary intelligent human being. In part this will mean demanding that universities begin to award tenure and promotion on the basis of the degree to which scholars are involved in developing and fostering a public intellectual life outside academic circles. Intellectuals can thus model an ethos of service, caring, and social responsibility that is needed throughout the society.

Reenvisioning Professional Life and the World of Work

We will bring professionals and people in workplaces together to reconceptualize their own areas of work to imagine what it would be like if the bottom line were no longer profit and power, but promoting ethically, spiritual, and ecologically alive and sensitive human beings.

Cynicism and Selfishness in the Media Project

Our goal is to help people become aware of the degree to which we all absorb messages about the inevitability of selfishness and cynicism from the media—and to encourage the media to voluntarily allow people to *also* see reflected in the media the more idealistic, caring and spiritually sensitive parts of our being. At the same time we will fight against attempts by the Right to impose a single "correct line" on the media or to involve themselves in the kind of self-censorship that produces a media devoid of complexity, erotic energy or rebelliousness.

Black–Jewish Reconciliation

Jews and Blacks form the backbone of the progressive social change movements, yet in the past decades they have often been engaged in struggle with each other. Our goal is to educate against anti-Semitism in the African-American community and against racism in the Jewish community, and to bring both communities together to play a leadership role in a national Campaign for a Politics of Meaning.

Religious Renewal

We believe that true ethical and spiritual sensitivity requires a fundamental challenge to the selfishness and individualism of our economic and political institutions, and to the patriarchy and chauvinism and racism that flourish in some religious circles. But we also challenge the failure of liberals to understand the ethical and spiritual dimensions of human needs.

The Foundation aims to be the expression of progressives in all the religious traditions, progressives from various spiritual disciplines, as well as those who feel more comfortable describing themselves as agnostics or humanists.

We oppose reactionaries who use religious language to serve the goals of cruelty and the perpetuation of needless suffering, and then have the audacity to call that the service of God!

We will use radio talk shows and television, public religious celebrations and rituals to expose and combat the distortions of the religious tradition by those who wish to equate it with their own insensitivity, hatred, punitive attitudes, and demeaning of others.

There are renewal forces in every religious tradition—committed to rejecting the misuse of spiritual ideals that have been appropriated to justify oppression and cruelty. We will support these renewal forces and become a center in which they can dialogue with each other.

FOR COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS, PLEASE FILL OUT THE FORM BELOW

A PROGRESSIVE ALTERNATIVE TO THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION & THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT

The Right spent years building the intellectual foundation for its current victories--and educating people to its way of thinking. The Heritage Foundation, the Moral Majority, and the Christian Right helped coordinate local organizing, media campaigns, and education for local activists. The Foundation for Ethics and Meaning will not just be institution for policy wonks–it will coordinate a national response both to the ascendency of the Right and the conceptual and strategic muddle of the liberal and progressive social change movements.

MEMBERSHIP

The Foundation for Ethics and Meaning will be the education and research arm of TIKKUN'S parent body, the Institute for Labor and Mental Health. The work of the Foundation will become the basis for some of the articles in TIKKUN. Help us create this Foundation. Make checks to TIKKUN (or send us your credit card info) and specify on the bottom of the check that this is for the Foundation. Like TIKKUN, the Foundation will not endorse candidates for office or support specific pieces of legislation.

❑ I want to become a Charter Member of the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning, and help create an institution that will implement the education campaign for the politics of meaning.

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Activism Options:

I've joined the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning. But I want to do more than support you, I want to become active. **I'd like to be involved in the following:**

[ ] Challenging the Cynicism in the Media Project
[ ] Organizing a local chapter of the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning
[ ] Joining a fundraising campaign
[ ] Developing analytic papers critiquing legislation or current social policies
[ ] Organizing the Ethics Summit
____ in Washington, D.C.
____ in my own region (tell us where:_____)
[ ] Working in my own profession (which is:_____)
[ ] Helping create a network of public professionals
[ ] Working in my religious community (which is:_____)

Other ideas:

_____

_____

_____

In Bed with Rush Limbaugh

Sherri Paris

I sat in the living room by myself and stared at the television. A gelatinous fat man, with the toothy smile of a chipmunk, was denigrating liberals and making fun of feminists and the homeless. His round face was bright with an electric jeer when he broached the subject of environmentalists and animal rights activists. His audience squealed with delight. Eighteen million people listened to him daily.

I turned off the set and went into the kitchen.

—James Lee Burke in *Dixie City Jam*

The Rush Limbaugh phenomenon continues to grow. While some of us tune out in disgust, more of our neighbors are tuning in. Limbaugh's radio show now runs on 648 stations, and an estimated 20,000,000 people listen to Rush at least once weekly. His late night television ratings place him neck-in-neck with Letterman and Leno. But Rush Limbaugh is more than an entertainer. He's an industry, dedicated to promoting and marketing himself. His two books, *The Way Things Ought to Be* and *I Told You So*, each sold more than two million copies, and, in audiocassette version, they are currently breaking sales records. A monthly "Limbaugh Letter" goes out to 400,000 subscribers, complete with order forms for "Rush is Right" bumper stickers, souvenir mugs, posters, and T-shirts. Rumor has it that a cartoon series, a newspaper column, and a stuffed animal called the "Rush Limbear" are in the works. As *U.S. News and World Report* aptly put it, Limbaugh is the one-man media theme park of the 1990s.

But if Limbaugh has become an icon, his name is also now synonymous with talk that is racist, sexist, homophobic, and divisive. "What separates Limbaugh from others who also understand what's wrong with liberalism," concludes The *Washington Monthly*, "is that he refuses to acknowledge that polarized debate isn't very useful for the country." Anna Quindlen of The *New York Times* quipped that Limbaugh's followers would have trashed the Emancipation Proclamation if it were put to an oral vote. The charge was seconded by William Raspberry of The *Washington Post*, and others. *Newsweek*, in its cover story on talk radio, dismissed Limbaugh's show as "group therapy for mostly white males who feel politically challenged."

According to Rush, this is all just a misunderstanding. One of Limbaugh's incessant complaints is that the intellectuals who revile him in print don't really listen to his show; or, at least, they don't listen long enough to put what he says "in context." To do so, Limbaugh insists, one needs a steady diet of his ongoing commentary, three hours daily on the radio and a half hour on T.V., for at least six weeks. I know this because I've tuned into Rush almost daily since last June. Over that time, I have learned a lot about why people listen to Rush Limbaugh.

I could pretend I listened to Rush for just that purpose, in the spirit of analysis. But in truth, I listened with no real purpose at all. It was summer. My lifelong soulmate had just dumped me, and my ex-husband was dying, day by day, of AIDS. Being a teacher, I don't leave home to work during the summer months. I could lie there and listen to Rush instead.

You may wonder why I chose listening to Rush, rather than a less aggravating, more socially acceptable way of dealing with deep despair—like Prozac or heavy drinking. I wondered about that myself. While I was wondering, things got worse. By August, my heart was no less broken, my ex-husband was dead, and I was not only listening to Rush on the radio, I was videotaping his T.V. show. One day when it all ended at noon, I contemplated hooking up my CB radio so I could tune in to the Rush replay on a remote station from midnight to three A.M. I knew then that I was in trouble. I sought help.

The therapist I saw confirmed my suspicion that, for one of the world's last living socialists, listening to Limbaugh might not be the ideal way to cope with despair. Since I showed no inclination to get out of bed, or to cease drowning all thoughts of my own with louder voices, she suggested a modest change. I could switch

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from Limbaugh to a little daytime T.V., a diet of mindless pap being obviously more soothing to the soul than a diet of reactionary vitriol.

I hated the idea, but I did try it. The next morning, when my thoughts began to drive me crazy, instead of tuning into Rush, I tried to share Maury Povich's concern with the media's fixation on O.J. Simpson, or Donahue's shock that teenagers are having sex. It didn't work. I envied the teenagers. I found myself doubting Maury's sincerity. The pert, chipper voices of their guests got on my nerves. I was agitated. I felt unappreciated. I was angry at my ex-soulmate and at everyone who had ever left me, especially to die. I was angry at AIDS, the medical establishment, and my helplessness in the face of things I cannot control or accept. I felt that it was a cold, cold world. Although a non-violent type, I wished there was someone I could punch out. In short, I shared the mood of most of Rush Limbaugh's callers.

Rush himself is in a better mood. In fact, Rush often gloats that he's "having more fun than a human being should be allowed to have." He plays the patient, fair-minded father who listens while callers vent their rage and feelings of superiority over "others" of various stripes. Most of the venom on Limbaugh's show is spewed at "whiners," those sniveling ingrates who deny the supremacy of the American Way of Life. Most days, about 80 percent of the calls Limbaugh receives are angry, often very angry, characterized by strident tones and name-calling. Among the callers not motivated by rage, many come on the air to make fevered proclamations of some sort: pride in being an American; loyalty to Rush; support of our boys in uniform, whatever they're doing; or maudlin affirmations of hard work and clean living.

In short, though Rush is fond of words like "objectivity" and "reasonable," the "Rush Limbaugh Show" is a very emotional three hours. Rush's callers and viewers talk about politics as though it were a soap opera packed with villains and heroes whose virtues or lack of character define the shape of the world. The things that they say about Hillary Rodham Clinton are just as impassioned, as close to the bone, as my own solitary rants about my ex-soulmate. (I often wonder what the men who call to rail about Hillary are going through with the women in their lives.)

Rush's task with each caller is to wade through the venom and suds to extract a grain of rational truth consistent with his ideology. He validates the feeling by placing his viewer in alignment with some larger ideological truth, thereby pretending the calls are not about feelings but about ideas. The following call from Shannon of Norfolk, Virginia, is typical. Shannon called Rush on the day I sat down to write this article, the day after President Clinton's televised plug for an invasion of Haiti.

Shannon: "Rush, I'm so angry right now I can hardly stand it."

Rush: (innocently) "Why?"

Shannon: "President Clinton. Our wonderful President Clinton. He is the most doginous (sic) person I've ever seen in my life."

Rush: "Let me ask you a question. If Presidents Bush or Ronald Reagan were ordering this, would you be mad?"

Everyone who calls Rush has a grievance, and there's no shortage of aggrieved people waiting to grind their axes on the air.

Shannon: "Oh yeah."

Rush: "You would?"

Shannon: "Yes. I would be mad. My husband is in the military, and right now he is in Haiti. The reason I would be mad is because there is no clear-cut definition of why we should be there... . If we're gonna go out and rescue the whole entire world, we're gonna be spread out so thin that who's gonna protect our back yard—you know what I mean?"

Rush: "Un Huh."

Shannon: "Plus y'know another thing that torks me about this is that he is cutting our military and then sending us off to God knows where!"

Rush: "That is a *great point!!!* That is an *absolutely* great point!!! You know what we're doin'? We're cutting back the military and expanding their mission. Is that not the way you'd put it, Shannon?"

Shannon: "That's exactly how I'd put it ... . Clinton is such a joke. He is a joke! Unfortunately, the man has no credibility. Nobody knows when he's lying and when he's telling the truth."

Rush: "See, that's why I asked you first if it were Reagan and Bush would you be mad or would you support the policy."

Shannon: "Yes, I would."

Rush: "Well, maybe..."

Either Shannon is slow, or she's a new listener. Even I know, after just a few months of Limbaugh, that you're never supposed to say that you'd be angry at Ronald Reagan or George Bush. In Rush's eyes, Reagan and Bush are great men. They share his deep moral conviction that rich people should be able to keep every cent that they've accumulated. For Limbaugh, seeking to "redistribute the wealth" (his term) through social programs that aid the poor is the cardinal sin, worse than extramarital fornication or



CYN MAURICE

aborting fetuses. That's why he hates Bill Clinton, who has allied himself with whiners by caving into their sniveling desire for health-care reform. Rush's priorities are demonstrated in the show's new focus, away from social issues like abortion, and onto the more crucial matters of taxing and spending.

Rush went on to explain to Shannon that she might still feel the same way about invading Haiti if Bush were in charge, but he doubted it. "I think there's a lot of people who feel like you do and I think a lot of it is based on the fact that they don't know they can believe him [Clinton]," Rush explained. By the time he's done, Rush has concluded that the real problem is Bill Clinton's "character." It's not that sensible people would normally question the wisdom of U.S. military adventures. It's just that Shannon, like lots of others, probably feels she cannot trust this President. Explaining all of this to Shannon and the listeners is what Rush calls "clarifying our thoughts in a daily, relentless pursuit of The Truth."

As a veteran Limbaugh listener, I can also put Shannon's call in what Rush would refer to as "context." Otherwise, I might have mistaken her for a whiner, one of those people Rush teaches us to hate, because Shannon complains rather incessantly, an activity I used to call whining. Now that I've been listening to Rush, however, I've come to understand that people who complain about Bill Clinton, Hillary, feminists, taxes, minorities taking their jobs, or environmental wackos are not whining. Whiners are those who complain about conservatives. The frequency or length of the complaining has nothing to do with it. The worst whiners are those homeless people who silently rebuke conservatives with their misery on the street.

In contrast to the whiners, Limbaugh's listeners have legitimate complaints. Many of their complaints, like Shannon's, are directed at others viewed as less deserving but absurdly fortunate: Bill Clinton, promoters of the gay agenda, college professors, the liberal media, and the "NOW gang" who, according to Limbaugh, drive around in Mercedes-Benzes. But in Limbaugh's universe, although fortune can be undeserved, misfortune, at least in America, isn't. Rage is therefore legitimately directed at those who suffer most: African Americans to the left of Clarence Thomas, illegal immigrants, prisoners, Third-World nations, the unemployed, children in need of vaccines, anyone who bears his or her soul to Oprah, and those among the homeless who will not discreetly hide.

Everyone who calls Rush has a grievance, and there is no shortage of aggrieved people waiting to grind their axes on the air. Limbaugh's callers are carefully screened. As Rush puts it, the calls are selected for those "who will make me look good." After all, he points out, the callers are a small minority: "I don't design the show for them," says Rush. "I design it for the listening audience. And that audience tunes in for *me*." This logic, if you call it logic, effectively narrows the discussion and limits dissent to the edges. Some disagreement is tolerated from people like Shannon who love Rush and agree with him on the basics. But not much disagreement. And it isn't tolerated well.

Understanding the screening process is another way to put Limbaugh's shows "in context." If the calls

Limbaugh gets sound a bit rabid, this reflects something of the focus and tenacity required to get a phone call in to Rush. Because Limbaugh has millions of admirers, the lines for his show are usually busy. Callers who get on frequently remark that they "can't believe" they "got through." Some babble on that they've spent months, even up to two or three years, dialing non-stop for three hours daily, trying to talk to Rush.

Even getting through to Limbaugh's line does not guarantee an actual connection to Limbaugh. First, one is screened by the staff to make sure that most of those with points to pick with Rush have picky points indeed. After the screening process, those lucky callers who were selected get to hang on the phone for minutes or hours, waiting to speak to Rush.

Each phone call Limbaugh takes reflects a difficult and isolated process best reserved for those with nothing else to do. Those with the tenacity to keep calling obviously feel an overwhelming need to connect and identify with Rush, with the famous people Rush chats intimately about, and the others who listen to him. This sense of connection is what "dittos" are all about.

Limbaugh's listeners, who refer to themselves as "dittoheads," almost always greet him with "dittos" or "megadittos" from their city or town. Rush periodically explains that "ditto" does not mean that you agree with all his opinions; dittos are a way of echoing the praise of Rush expressed by previous callers, so that everybody won't have to fawn on Limbaugh at as great a length.

Dittos are a critical part of the ritual bonding of Limbaugh fans to Rush and to each other: Dittoheads converge in Rush rooms, drive miles to gather at enormous bake sales, and recognize each other by their buttons or bumper stickers. They are never alone like I am. Their problems are never personal—they are always caused by other people, and where there are others, there is an "us." Resentment as a driving force binds the dittoheads into a electronic community that occasionally crosses over into the real world.

What Rush does on his shows is take frustration and rage and rearticulate and confirm them as ideology. Limbaugh's skill lies in weaving political alienation and anger into the illusion of common political ground. In Rush's world, dittoheads share a self-interest that is seamless and synonymous with his own. But Limbaugh, in fact, preaches a small-government message to an audience largely dependent on Social Security, Medicare, home-mortgage interest deductions, unemployment insurance, veterans benefits, civil service pensions, and the like—programs that add up to big government. As The *Washington Monthly* put it, "Limbaugh raves about government without really acknowledging that the people he's talking *to* are the people he's talking *about*."

That this glaring inconsistency is overlooked by Limbaugh and his listeners is particularly galling to those with a progressive-liberal outlook that regards politics as a system based on conflicting and competing economic interests and political constituencies. Progressives have failed to grasp that what Limbaugh offers under the guise of analysis is actually more like civil religion—politics as morality play, Good versus Evil. Like Ronald Reagan, who, according to Limbaugh, "taught America to ride tall in the saddle again," Rush reasserts a mythical America, sullied and battered by the social movements of the Sixties, but now resurgent. In Limbaugh's America, military service is unambiguously honorable, wealth connotes virtue, and playing by the rules produces happy families and stable communities. If there is a troubling distance between this mythic reality and the world in which dittoheads must actually live, Rush provides them with an ample supply of people who are to blame—from Joycelyn Elders and Hillary Rodham Clinton to the Friends of the Spotted Owl.

Many in the mainstream press have predicted that the ascendancy of the Republicans in Congress will deprive Limbaugh of the ammunition that has become his cultural capital. According to this line of reasoning, Rush will alienate his followers when he becomes a cheerleader for the new Congress and an apologist for its inevitable failures. But Rush's appeal does not depend upon a Democratic hegemony in the White House or Congress; it stems from the gap between Americans' reality and the American Dream. His continued popularity will hinge on his ability to blame that discontinuity on the Satan in our midst. No matter who is politically ascendant, Rush will find more enemies, not fewer. And as long as millions of people are mired in pain and confusion they need explained or justified, Limbaugh will have a ready-made audience. □

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Out of the Tomb of Abraham

Arthur Waskow

One year after Baruch Goldstein's Purim massacre in the Tomb of Abraham, the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians is in deep trouble, even though the leaders of the Israeli government and the PLO are still negotiating. Goldstein's massacre of Muslims at prayer, carried out in the name of God by a religious Jew, and the corresponding murders of Jews that have been carried out before and since last Purim by Muslims similarly acting in God's name, have come close to accomplishing their common purpose: paralyzing the peace negotiations.

Israeli and Palestinian reactions to the Purim massacre and the analogous murders at Afula, Buenos Aires, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem show that no matter how strong the strategic and political incentives are for governments and the public majorities behind them to make peace, minorities on either side willing to take violent action out of deep religious conviction can shake that commitment to its roots. Religiously motivated violence, and the inability of political leaders to prevent it, is taken as strong evidence that peace on both sides is a fantasy.

Neither those Israeli Jews and other Jews who want peace, nor those Palestinians and other Arabs who want peace have adequately faced the effect of intense religious violence on the broader publics. Their failure to face this phenomenon head-on arises because in both communities, few who are committed to peace either feel or understand the intensity of the deepest and sharpest religious and spiritual forces that bring some Jews and some Muslims to affirm domination, war, and murder.

Indeed, there is a profound asymmetry between those who seek some kind of peaceful and more-or-less equal settlement between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples and those who prefer continued enmity and war. On the one hand, many of the Jews and Muslims who feel compelled to seek mastery over the other people—and will kill to get it—strongly assert both general religious necessity and specific religious requirements for continuing the struggle. On the other hand, many peace activists in both communities assert prudential secular political reasons or at most make vaguely religious claims of the order that Torah or the Koran, YHWH or Allah, desire us to seek peace and eschew murder. They do not act as if religion matters very much.

Yet it seems to me that looking for a moment just at the Jewish side, which I know far better there are two religious and spiritual passions that erupt like undersea volcanoes to make it hard to end the state of bitter war between the peoples, and that keep making a real peace almost impossible to achieve. These spiritual and religious passions are felt not just by a few fanatics but by a very large number of Jews. Most of them feel these passions less intensely than, say, Baruch Goldstein did but the tug of these passions, their undertow, weakens every effort to move in the direction of peace. These two passions emerge from the Jewish psychic and social and political situation of our own day, and find powerful confirmation in two ancient religious formulations:

- "God ("History," "Destiny") promised the Land of Israel to the People of Israel alone."
- "Our enemy is Amalek, who utterly hates and despises us and wills our total destruction."

If the Jewish peace movement wishes to be deeply grounded and ultimately successful, it needs to address these passions, to understand them, and to create an alternative expression for them that both takes them into account and goes beyond them. In short, it has to enter the religious arena in a serious way, in terms of symbols, liturgies, theologies, interpretations of Torah, and daily practice. And the peace movement has to do this not merely as a tactic, but because it comes to understand the deepest religious root of its own work. For "religion" is not merely what can be quoted from Torah, but what moves a people the most deeply. The whole people—including the peace movement itself. The Torah does not make religion; religion makes the

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Torah. Torah is "religion" because Jews encoded into Torah their own efforts to address profound and recurring questions.

If the peace movement recognizes religion in this deeper sense as the root of its own effort, it will begin making Torah anew.

Yet at the same time, the peace movement cannot just ignore Torah as it has been—because it does encode profound and recurring questions, and because the old answers to those questions, with old symbols, liturgies, theologies, and practices, carry much of the Jewish people's own sense of its identity and authenticity. It is necessary neither to restore Torah nor to ignore it, but to renew it.

If the two passionate claims that we have named—the claim to sole ownership of the Land of Israel, and the claim that our enemy is Amalek, utterly hate-filled and destructive—were just Torah texts, without contemporary resonance, they would have no stronger importance than, say, the cultural freight of the tribes of Dan, Issachar, and Naphtali. Or if these passions were contemporary alone, they would not bear the power of Jewish authenticity and ancient echo; they would be far less likely to move a Baruch Goldstein into action. But they are both. And the truth is that these two claims are felt not just by a few hundred Jews who belong to Kach, not just by a few thousand who go on pilgrimage to kiss the grave of Goldstein—but by millions of Jews who would not murder anyone but who feel so deeply committed to these two most powerful religious assertions that they never pause to question or assess them.

These two passions were precisely the passions that inflamed the mind and heart of Baruch Goldstein. They are why he chose the particular time and place to commit mass murder; and the murders encoded both these passions into a single powerful act. And the reason that the massacre pierced the hearts of Jews everywhere is that these two passions concerning the Land of Israel and the fear of Amalek are so powerful for Jews everywhere.

The place that Goldstein chose was the Tomb of Abraham. The time he chose was Purim, the festival of triumph over Haman, who wanted to exterminate the Jews. Let us look at the theologies behind this place and this time.

In the cultural and religious memory of the Jewish people, the very core and beginning of the Jewish ownership of the Land of Israel is at the Tomb of Abraham. According to the Torah, the nomad Abraham bought only one piece of property in the Land: this very place, to bury his wife Sarah. In Jewish thought, this is the first step in carrying out God's promise to Abraham that his descendants will inherit the Land.

Even—or especially—when Jews were distant from the Land, they reminded God of this promise in prayer after prayer. This promise is not only one of the most basic and most passionate beliefs of religious Zionists, but is even the underpinning of secular Zionism.

In the passionate Jewish assertion of a unique inheritance from Abraham, there is a blurring of one aspect of the Torah story: Abraham had other descendants besides Jews. According to the "myths of origin" of both the Jewish and the Arab peoples, the Jews are the descendants of his second son Isaac, who was the child of Abraham and Sarah. The Arabs are also the children of Abraham—but their lineage is through Ishmael, his first-born son, the child of Abraham and Hagar.

According to the Torah story about this troubled family, Sarah first entreated Abraham to marry Hagar so that he could have a child when Sarah seemed to be barren. Then when Hagar became pregnant, Sarah was so distressed and angry that Hagar fled into the wilderness and returned only when God promised to protect her and her son and make of their offspring a great nation.

Then, after Sarah's son, Isaac, was born and began to grow, Sarah insisted that Abraham drive Hagar into the wilderness once and for all. There in the wild, God heard the wailing of Ishmael and Hagar and provided them with a wellspring of life—The Well of the Living One Who Sees Me.

The two half—brothers remained estranged for years, but when Abraham died, they come together to bury him at the tomb in Hebron where Sarah had already been buried. And then Isaac went to live with Hagar and Ishmael at the very well that God had opened up to save their lives.

From that point on, the Torah follows the story of Isaac and his descendants as the Jewish story—the story of gaining and losing and gaining and losing and gaining and losing the Land. The Torah and Jewish tradition never again ask whether Ishmael continues to have any special divinely appointed relationship to the Land of Abraham. From then on, Jewish tradition assumes that the promise of the Land applies only to the Jewish people.

For that reason, most Jewish thought has viewed it as a kind of historical and even existential anomaly that when Jews began to return in large numbers to the Land of Israel and to create their own self-governing society there, they met a Palestinian Arab people living there. A people that claimed a loving relationship with the Land, and that became even more self-assertive in its own identity as the Jewish connection with the Land was strengthened—as if the one claim were somehow ineluctably linked with the other.

But neither people could see this. Each could see the other only as a mocking challenge to itself: You claim to love the Land? How can you?!—for then my claim to the Land would be undercut! You claim to have suffered in exile? How dare you?!—for then my claim of suffering is undermined!

The deepest conflict between the two peoples arose not because they were utterly different from each other, but because in many ways they were alike. For a century, this similarity has been the fuel of rage and hatred. When Jews insisted on settling in Kiryat Arba and even in the midst of Hebron, when they marched brandishing and sometimes firing guns down Hebron's main streets, they did so in order to assert the Jewish "ownership" of the Tomb of Abraham and the other Patriarchs and Matriarchs. When Goldstein attacked the Ibrahim Mosque, he was reasserting Jewish "ownership" of the story and the place.

Especially among Palestinian Muslims and Christians and their secularized nationalist children, the story has a different meaning. In the Koran and later Muslim tradition, Hagar and Ishmael are never humiliated, never cast out. Rather, Abraham travels with them to Mecca, and there prepares—with Ishmael's full and conscious agreement—to offer Ishmael up to God. This willingness to surrender to God's will makes them the first Muslims, and God responds by turning the sacrifice into spiritual triumph, not physical death. They become the transmitters of a sacred tradition that is "Islam," and that flowers with Mohammed. If the Muslim story sounds uncannily familiar, it is because it closely parallels the way classical rabbinic Judaism saw the binding of Isaac as evidence of Abraham's and Isaac's deep faith and readiness to do God's will. Jewish thought, especially in the Middle Ages, saw the binding as a model for Jews in facing their tormentors for the sake of God. Here the two traditions' stories match most closely—except for who becomes the hero.

So for Muslims, the Jewish variant seems especially galling in that the story itself—not just its content, but even more deeply the telling of the Torah's "false" version—humiliates and dismisses Hagar and Ishmael, and therefore the Arab peoples, and Islam. To Palestinian Muslims in our own day, it is as if the Jews had turned the "false" ancient story of the humiliating expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael into a true, eerily similar modern event through what they feel was their expulsion from their own homes by the creation and expansion of the State of Israel. In religious as well as historical terms, that humiliation burns to be undone. And the lingering sense of humiliation may intensify the belief of some Muslims that once Islam has triumphed anywhere, but especially in the sacred regions of Abraham and Ishmael, it would be a sin to relinquish control of those places to anyone else, including Jews. In such religious views and their secularized offshoots, granting space to Israel is forbidden.

Classical Christianity, which accepted the Torah's version of the Hagar-Sarah story, nevertheless read it very differently. For Paul, the advent of Christ turned the Jews symbolically into Hagar, the slave woman, because the Jews remained "enslaved" to the letter of the Law. And so the Church became the true Sarah, the true Isaac. For some Christians, this Christian "supersession" of the Jews became a warrant for denial that Jews have any ongoing connection with or covenanted right to the Land. Though most Western Christian churches have laid this view aside, some Palestinian Christians have not.

If all three religions and both peoples continue to tell these traditional versions of the story, it will be all but impossible to win a resolution of the conflict between them. Every political settlement will remain fragile, subject to a burst of religious fervor, such as murders by Hamas or acts of violence by Israeli settlers. Even the decent rabbis, priests, imams, and ministers who condemn acts of terrorism by all parties will feel themselves hobbled by their own theologies.

In our generation, it is possible to imagine an alternative way of seeing the story—one that all the parties can affirm as true religion because it accords with their deepest contemporary needs, as well as with their ancient stories and symbols. Not so easy, of course, to convince whole peoples and faith-communities that an alternative vision, an alternative reading of the story, might fulfill even more of their yearnings than the older versions.

Yet a newly reread passionate vision that is rooted in the ancient stories has a far greater likelihood of changing the world than a cautious, crippled effort to make compromises from a place in which most people are either in truth still passionately committed to the old story, or have wearily shrugged off the ancient encoding of our various communities' efforts toward the expression of our deepest passions. In either case, each community will be in a losing interior war against its own sense of its own authenticity.

The new twist on the story is simple and radical. It is to see that God—or Truth, or Inevitability, or History, or the Dialectic, or any deep force you want to name by any name—promised the Land to both sets of Abraham's descendants.

Irony? Yes. God's jokes act themselves out in history, not in words alone. From this joke you could die laughing—and many people have. Perhaps the joke goes all

the way back to Isaac/*Yitzchak*, whose name means "the one who laughs," and to Ishmael, who is described as *mitzachek*—laughing-with-a-twist. Perhaps they got the joke—which is why they were able to be reconciled.

From the standpoint of the jealous and possessive traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, why on Earth (or why in Heaven) might God have been so perverse and ironic as to promise the Land twice over, to two different peoples? Perhaps because the land that is called the Land of Israel, or the Holy Land, or the Land of Abraham, or Palestine, is intended to be a microcosm of the Earth, and Abraham's descendants are intended to be models for the human race.

And since the great round Earth has no boundaries chiseled on it, since the many peoples of the human race must learn in their very distinctiveness to share it nevertheless, or wreck it, here we are: In macrocosm, one Earth, many peoples; in microcosm, one land, two peoples. Two cousin peoples that must learn to share one land, one water table, one envelope of air, and yet be distinct and separate from each other.

So far, we have explored the passions of place—the Land, the Tomb of Abraham. What about the passions of time? Why did the mass murders happen on the festival of Purim?

The story of Purim tugs in two directions. One is the tug of nightmare, the other of carnival. Most scholars and most celebrants take Purim as a day of hilarity and joking, in which the seemingly nightmarish story of the Scroll of Esther is a fantasy, itself a joke.

But the nightmare that lives on the surface of the story is what Goldstein was responding to: the nightmare of the danger of Holocaust. Haman, prime minister of Persia, persuades his king to have the Jews wiped out. Queen Esther, a secret Jew, saves them. The Jews fight back on the day appointed for their destruction; they win, and one line of the Scroll of Esther triumphantly says they killed 75,000 of their enemies. Hardly anyone outside of Orthodox Jewry believes this ever happened; almost everyone thinks this tale, as well as the whole story, is a fantasy. The dream of the powerless that once, just once, they could fight back and destroy everyone who ever sneered at them.

The story has deep reverberations in Jewish memory and fear. Jewish tradition connects it with a story from the Exodus and wilderness: that a nation named Amalek attacked the Jews from the rear, killing the women and children who had been placed there for safety. The Torah teaches that forever, Jews must remember to blot out the memory of Amalek. Haman. Torquemada. Hitler. They are all Amalek.

Of course, in the generation after the Nazi Holocaust the Holocaust that actually did happen, the one from which no Esther saved the Jews—this archetypal myth of disaster bites home with intense cruelty and fear. Suddenly, Jews for whom the Amalek mythos had become somewhat quiescent, become attuned to it.

So then, in our generation, for some Jews the Palestinians become Amalek. Some Palestinians are terrorists? Some Palestinians call publicly for the State of Israel to be shattered? The archetypes of fear slide into place: all Palestinians are Amalek.

What does it mean to blot out their memory? To Goldstein, it meant murder. In some new and deeper understanding of Torah, it must mean something else. Here too, religious beliefs must be transformed (but not abandoned) if peace is to become real.

What could be a new understanding of Amalek? There are several approaches, all keyed to seeing the danger that a spark of Amalek may arise not only in outsiders and enemies but in our own selves.

How interpret the key command? It has two parts: First, "Remember what Amalek did to you." Then, "When your God brings you safely into the land, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek."

Barbara Breitman, drawing on her experience as a psychotherapist, teaches that this means: First, the victim must clearly and fully recover the memories of victimization and abuse. But then, when we are no longer weak and powerless, when we are "safe in a good land," we must no longer be obsessed with Amalek; for it is exactly an unrealistic and obsessive fear that will drive us to desperate acts—indeed, into acting like Amalek.

Rabbi Tirzah Firestone points out that Amalek was a descendant of Esau-that grandson of Abraham who was cheated from the birthright and the blessing that might have let him follow in Abraham's footsteps. Amalek, she suggests, is part of our own family—the residue of rage that sprang from the grief and anger Esau felt. Amalek is always a possibility within us, as well as in others. The Torah is teaching that we must blot out the urge to Amalek within ourselves, by turning that urge toward compassion.

On Purim morning in the Tomb of Abraham, Goldstein himself became Amalek, attacking from the rear those who had made themselves vulnerable in order to pray. He showed us that "Amalek" is a way of living, not a specific ethnic community. Germans, Arabs, and Jews can choose to behave like Amalek or like Queen Esther—who challenged a king to do justice, at the risk of her life.

We see that the old ways of interpreting Torah can fuse with contemporary passions to explode into murder. What must we do?

The Jewish people now finds itself—irony of

(Continued on p. 89)

Crossing the Ethnic Divide
A Meditation on Anti-Semitism

Nan Fink

A few weeks after converting to Judaism, I stopped by my neighborhood fish market. I told the man behind the counter that I needed supplies to make gefilte fish for Passover.

"You?" he asked. "You're Jewish?"

"Yes, of course," I answered, sounding more sure of myself than I felt.

"That can't be," he laughed. "You don't have the right kind of nose." With a flourish, he cupped his hand over his nose to make it larger.

By this time I was used to Jews questioning whether I was Jewish, but no non-Jew had done it before. And this comment about noses? I was horrified.



MAIRAV SALOMON

"You can't identify Jews that way," I said coldly. "That's an anti-Semitic stereotype."

"Don't be offended," he replied, piling fish on the scale. His tone did not sound at all remorseful.

"Lots of us have noses that are small," I continued. When he didn't answer, I let the subject drop.

As I left the store, the man waved to me. Clearly he was not bothered by our interchange, but I was shaken. This was my first direct brush with anti-Semitism as a Jew, and it brought to the surface my feeling of insecurity in this new identity.

Afterward, I began to question myself. Why hadn't I stormed out of the store? I could have made more of a scene, but I was bound by long-standing, internalized rules of politeness. What did this say about my Jewish commitment?

More confusing, this man easily could have been my cousin. He had the solid Protestant look of many members of my family. He must have assumed that I came from his side of the ethnic line, and thus he took the liberty of making the comment about noses—one Christian talking to another, an insider's joke. Had I transmitted uncertainty about my Jewish identity, thereby giving him permission?

I was outraged, but it was easier to criticize myself for catalyzing this man's comments than to stay with my feeling of anger. In those early days after my conversion, I did not want to think about anti-Semitism. My overriding concern was finding acceptance within the Jewish community, not monitoring the actions of the people I had left behind.

As I submerged myself in my new Jewish life, I hardly remembered the man in the fish store. When I did, I explained his behavior away as an isolated example of anti-Semitism. The guy was a jerk, period. One incident didn't mean that anti-Semitism was a major problem. After all, this was the United States, a good place for Jews.

But my initial interpretation of this incident stemmed from denial, not lack of knowledge. I knew a great deal about the subject of anti-Semitism, yet it was too much for me to grasp that I, a converted Jew, was now its potential target. My WASP privilege would no longer count. Instead of realizing how vulnerable this made me

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feel, and how ashamed I was of this reaction, I tried to convince myself that anti-Semitism was not a serious matter.

While still in a state of denial, I had a terrifying experience of anti-Semitism. In the summer of 1987, TIKKUN magazine organized a demonstration against Pope John Paul II during his visit to the United States. As TIKKUN's publisher, I was involved in this much-publicized protest. During this time, when we arrived at the TIKKUN office in the morning, we'd listen to a spate of poisonous curses and death threats left on the answering machine. "You dirty kikes," an anonymous caller (always male, in my memory) would say in a cold voice, "You're going to die." The threats were horrifying, but what could we do? We notified the police, we were watchful, and our work continued. Finally, the callers stopped harassing us.

My original family is part of the web of discrimination, and as their child, I have a different life experience from other Jews. Yet now that I am a Jew, I am also the object of anti-Semitism.

We had been the victims of anti-Semitism, but it was hard for me to absorb this fact. As time went by, the experience seemed increasingly unreal. When people voiced their concern about anti-Semitism, I'd want to reassure them that there was little to worry about. It was obvious that the callers at the time of the demonstration had been just a bunch of right-wing crazies.

Up to this point I had been able to minimize the existence of anti-Semitism, but I soon confronted it in a way that forced me to see how deeply embedded it is in our culture. One afternoon, when I was taping the oral history of my favorite aunt, she unexpectedly stopped the interview. "Why did you become a Jew?" she asked, her voice sharp. I answered her, but she hardly listened. Describing the "money-grubbing," "unsavory," and "clannish" Jews she had met in her lifetime, she mouthed one stereotype after another.

Anti-Semitism in my family? This was hard to take. I had heard a lot of racist talk as I grew up, but no one had spoken poorly about Jews. Somehow I had not recognized my family's anti-Semitism. But there it was, brought to the surface by my conversion. I couldn't pass it off as the irrational behavior of a group of crazy people.

I began to see the prejudice in my mother. She could hardly bear that I had converted, and she freely expressed her negative opinion of Jews. Once I allowed myself to see her anti-Semitism, I began to recognize that it can exist even in the hearts of fundamentally well-intentioned people.

My mother's attitude toward Jews has hardly changed over the last decade, despite my efforts to educate her about Judaism and share my experience with her. The anger I have about this, and her anger toward me for becoming a Jew, have created a measure of distance between us. Yet she is now in her last years, and it pains me that a breach like this exists.

Through this experience, and others, I've come to acknowledge anti-Semitism more fully. When I first converted, I wasn't sure who "we" and "they" were, regarding the question of anti-Semitism. As the offspring of a non-Jewish family, I continued to carry a feeling of responsibility. Now, however, I am firmly rooted in a Jewish "we," so that "they" are non-Jews, even if "they" are my family. As the recipient of anti-Semitism, I no longer feel responsible for it.

The issue of anti-Semitism points out my weakest link to Judaism. Through the generations, no one in my family was hurt, or killed, or discriminated against because of anti-Semitism. Quite the opposite, my original family exists on the other side. They are part of the system, part of the web of discrimination, and as their child, I have had a different life experience from other Jews. It is this that separates me, even more than blood.

Yet now that I am a Jew, I am also the object of anti-Semitism. The fact that I'm a convert doesn't matter. I've passed over the ethnic divide in the eyes of non-Jews. Some, like the man in the fish store, might momentarily assume that I am a Christian, but as soon as they know I am Jewish, I do not get special treatment.

The only people who question my Jewishness are those Jews who have difficulty accepting that I am "really" Jewish. They fear that I cut it both ways, taking the best from Judaism and enjoying the privilege of the Gentile world at the same time. But such a thing is

impossible. Even if non-Jews continue to see me as one of them, dwelling in both worlds would make me schizophrenic.

Ten years after conversion, I sometimes find myself looking at all non-Jews with suspicion, searching their faces and analyzing their words for hidden meaning. I experience the cynicism and disregard for "the goyim" that many other Jews carry. Yet this is tempered by my desire to remain open. After all, not everyone in my non-Jewish family is anti-Semitic; I think especially of my children, who are very supportive of my becoming Jewish.

I remind myself that if I take every glance, every remark of uneasiness by non-Jews and label it as anti-Semitic, I am slipping into paranoia. Rather than naming trouble, I am searching for it. By doing this, I ignore the possibility that I might be wrong in my perception, and I close the door to deeper understanding.

As I look back across the ethnic divide, I recount the geography of the non-Jewish world. From my experience, I know that many non-Jews in America are ignorant about Judaism. They assume that it is just another American religious denomination, not quite Christian, but one that is along the same continuum.

These are the people who wonder why Jews don't feel comfortable in their churches, or why Jews like to associate with each other, or why Jews don't want to celebrate Christmas. They think of Jews as being pretty much like themselves, and are surprised when we are different. Because of their lack of familiarity with Jewish culture and history, they often feel rejected when we don't respond to them in the way they expect.

Comments from these people might be antagonistic, but they are often based in misunderstanding or hurt feelings, rather than maliciousness. But other non-Jews, who are more hostile, agree with the ugly stereotypes of Jews that exist in the larger culture. They are the ones who, like my aunt, make assumptions about our motives and think of us as inferior. At the far edge of this group are those who threaten and physically abuse us, the ones who write on buildings and destroy graves.

Finally, there are the non-Jews who are sister-fellow travelers. I used to be one of them: people who are attracted to and make an effort to understand Jewish culture. Fueled by a love and respect for the Jewish people, they are our allies and defenders, and a bridge to the non-Jewish world.

I do not intend here to make an exhaustive survey of non-Jews' attitudes toward Jews. Rather, I want to make the point that non-Jews differ from each other, as do Jews. An anti-Semitic-sounding remark coming from one person might be the result of ignorance, while the same remark from another might mean danger. The question, of course, is how to tell them apart. The only way I know is to see what happens when these remarks are confronted. The anti-Semitic man in the fish store, with his jeering attitude, did not seem to learn anything, or even care, when I disputed him, but another non-Jew might well apologize.

In a better world, non-Jews would take it upon themselves to eradicate anti-Semitism. Putting pressure on each other to change, they would lead the way to a shift in anti-Semitic attitudes and behavior. But we recognize that this is not happening, or at least it is happening in too small a measure to make a difference. Anti-Semitic incidences have increased worldwide, and in this country the far Right—often though not exclusively the source of anti-Semitic words and acts—has become more powerful. It is up to us as Jews to be vigilant about anti-Semitism.

In the end, like every other Jew, I am faced with a destructive, frightening force that seems to go away at times, only to resurface in other shapes, other permutations. It strikes at unlikely moments, and happens so fast that it leaves me dislocated, intimidated, and horrified. Afterward the anger remains, but also an overwhelming feeling of impotence and the desire to draw in for protection.

Like others, I try to balance this with my desire to be receptive to non-Jews. I find myself walking the fine line of relating to them, and loving some of them, but fighting anti-Semitism at the same time. This is not easy, especially for me as a convert: The conflict in loyalties never subsides. Yet what is the choice? Rather than denying anti-Semitism, or finding it everywhere, I choose this more complicated course. □



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Beyond Internalized Anti-Semitism
Healing the Collective Scars of the Past

Cherie Brown

Fifty years have passed since the end of the Holocaust. But the scars live on in the daily personal lives of the Jewish people in ways more pervasive and complex than many of us have understood. Among the Jewish people are those of the generation who witnessed—and in some cases were victims of—the Nazi Final Solution. The internalized terror of the Holocaust generation has been passed on to a new generation shaping their personal lives, their politics, and most important, their ability as Jews to see the present as a fresh, new moment filled with possibility. Yet the Holocaust is but the extreme of two millennia of Jewish persecution, a pattern of suffering so enmeshed with our sense of peoplehood that it is incorporated into our religious ritual, the history we teach to our children, and our sense of our relationship to the non-Jewish world. We proclaim, "Never Again," but our worldview, so entwined with the past, ensures that we will never forget. And in never forgetting, we often fail to maintain an objective picture of the present—separate from the traumas of the past.

As a young girl, I sat in synagogue between my parents every Yom Kippur afternoon, glued to my seat as I listened to the readings from the Martyrology service, the recitation of the pious and the saintly Jews who died at the hands of their persecutors. With every graphic reading reminding the congregants of all the suffering that had been inflicted upon Jews, including young children, throughout history, I became increasingly convinced that, as a Jewish child, I was not safe, indeed would never be safe. I choreographed dances to *The Diary of Anne Frank*, I read and reread *The Autobiography of Hannah Senesh*, and silently agonized about whether or not I would have had the courage to parachute into Austria, risking my life to save Jews.

Cherie Brown is founder and executive director of the National Coalition Building Institute, a leadership-training organization with chapters in forty-three cities in North America and Europe. She trains people to lead programs on prejudice reduction, intergroup conflict resolution, and coalition building.



ANDREW RODMAN

Only in later years did I come to understand the extent to which my secret fears were shared by so many other Jews. In the past twenty years, I have counseled thousands of Jews from around the world on a wide range of issues related to Jewish identity. I found that many of them had trouble sleeping. Others struggled with breathing—sometimes in the form of asthma. Many felt an underlying feeling of panic and insecurity in their daily lives, often without knowing why. Still others had difficulty making life decisions. What has struck me most is that these clients, most of whom were born after 1945, saw their difficulties as their personal problems. Rarely did they associate their individual fears with being Jewish or with the Holocaust. The need for Jews to heal these internalized recordings of terror so that they will not pass them on to the next generation should be a central priority of any movement toward Jewish renewal.

One way that Jews traditionally have dealt with the pain of traumatic historical events is to remember and commemorate them in religious and communal services. The tears shed at the Martyrology on Yom Kippur, the sadness felt at Tisha B'Av, even the upset

we feel about being threatened with extermination by Haman are all incorporated into our community experience in doses that aim to make them manageable, particularly when associated with rituals that reaffirm our fundamental belief in the goodness and ultimate power of a benign Being.

But when the pain of near-extermination is still so fresh in the hearts and minds of so many Jews, these kinds of rituals need to be supplemented with more directed counseling or support groups. In these sessions, Jews would be helped to feel safe enough to grieve openly and face the terror from the Holocaust that has led so many Jews to see themselves still in 1995 as an endangered people, or to experience their everyday world colored by panic, worry, or fear.

To give an example from one counseling session, a Jewish woman was deciding whether or not to have a child. She had agonized for months about the decision. Friends and family offered opinions, but she was unable to decide what to do. In the counseling session, I asked her to give me her very first uncensored thought in response to the question, where are you stuck back in your past? She shocked herself with her response: the Holocaust. Out came a secretly held conviction that although she had, in fact, been born in 1949, she believed that she had been alive during the Holocaust and had been forcibly separated from her parents. While she knew that the fantasy didn't make any logical sense, somewhere deep inside, she was still that small Jewish girl who had listened to stories about the Holocaust (often told by well-meaning adults who themselves were still terrified and had not been given a chance to heal their own grief about what had so recently been done to the Jews).

Young children who hear tragic stories, particularly when the victims of the tragedy are children, do not always make a distinction between what has happened to others and what has happened to them. They quickly believe that they are personally involved in the events—that they were there. And they often feel personally responsible for not being able to prevent the tragedy. Many Jewish children have thus internalized the unhealed terror in the voices and the actions of the adults around them. Even children who were never given specific information about the Holocaust or even about being Jewish, had nevertheless unintentionally had that terror passed on to them, in the generalized message that the world is a dangerous place.

It is not that young children should not be given accurate information about Jewish history, including the Holocaust. But when Jewish history is told in voices filled with terror and panic, it can sound to a child as if the same degree of danger for Jews that existed during the Holocaust still persists in the present. And this is simply not true. Compared to many periods in Jewish history, and particularly when compared with the near-extermination of Jews during the Holocaust, Jews are now living in security. And when we speak to one another as if the world of 1995 is just about as dangerous for Jews as the world of 1933, we are setting up a dynamic that can have extremely negative consequences for our lives, the lives of our children, and for all of our political decisions.

In numerous counseling sessions with Jews I have found that the passing down of this terror from one generation to the next has led to myriad other destructive reactions. There is a growing body of literature documenting that people who are abused are the very ones who then turn around and abuse others. The all-too-common cry that can be heard from some Jews—how can we, who have been so mistreated turn around and mistreat others—is a misunderstanding of the whole mechanism of abuse. Those who have been oppressed often internalize the behaviors of the oppressor and act them out unintentionally against their own people. Thus, the hostility and brutality leveled at Jews, when left unhealed, can be internalized and then Jews may become hostile, hypercritical, or even brutal to one another. This cycle of repeating the initial mistreatment is one of the most insidious results of oppression. The vicious trashing of Jewish leaders by some Jews, when they perceive their leaders to be adopting policies that, in their minds, might possibly threaten Jewish survival, and the high degree of criticism and mistrust between Jews are manifestations of this dynamic.

To give an example of how this dynamic can operate in someone's personal life, I recently counseled a young woman who passionately wanted to set up support groups to train other young Jews in leadership skills for work in the mainstream Jewish community. She had already established one support group, but she was having difficulty convening the meetings because she kept getting paralyzed by her anticipated fears of being overwhelmed by criticism from the group's members. When I asked her when in her past she had been surrounded by critical Jews, she sobbed as she recalled memories of her parents screaming at each other with terror in their voices; as a young child, she had been powerless to intervene. Neither parent at the time acknowledged to her—nor did they probably understand themselves—how likely it was that their angry fights were dramatizations of their feelings of terror and helplessness.

The need to separate the past from the present is certainly a central theme in most counseling literature. But what has not been dealt with fully in

the literature are the unique dynamics of the Jewish experience. How do we determine which patterns of behavior are in fact rooted in Jewish internalized oppression and the collective traumas of Jewish history and which behaviors are simply individual life problems for those individual Jews? When I began to lead workshops for Jews dealing with issues of internalized oppression, almost every participant initially was convinced that his or her family struggles were unique psychological problems. Through years of leading workshops and listening to thousands of Jews I have come to identify a common set of behaviors—panic, worry, urgency, hypercriticalness, etc—that emerge in so many family stories.

Obviously, everyone has at times been frightened or worried. In fact, at least half of the workshops that I have led have included joint sessions for Jews and non-Jews who wanted to work on being better allies. In contrasting the family stories of the non-Jewish participants with those of the Jews, however, I found a convincing pattern of behaviors and struggles among the Jews.

As important as it is to identify this common set of Jewish struggles, it is by no means appropriate to assume that all Jews have had the same experience. For example, in my workshops I've had Jews whose parents were anything but overprotective, anxious, or overbearing. Every Jewish person is a unique individual with a complex set of life circumstances. And no one set of descriptive patterns of behavior is accurate for all Jews. Yet the preponderance of so much anxiety, worry, terror, and hypercriticalness in so many Jews cannot be dismissed as the individual problems of a few.

And nowhere is the need to heal the terror more apparent than in Jewish communal political decisions. Why did it require a letter from Yitzhak Rabin to every rabbi in North America last Rosh Hashanah to shake them out of their silence and fears about the peace process? Why did Rabin have to take this extraordinary step and make a personal appeal, asking rabbis to back Israel's struggling peace efforts by giving a High Holiday sermon supporting the accords?

If Jewish leaders living far away from Israel weren't able to step outside of their own internalized fears sufficiently to back a major breakthrough in the Arab-Israeli conflict at a time of heightened hope and new possibility, how much more understandable it becomes that Israelis today, in the face of new acts of terrorism, throw up their hands and want to back away from the peace process. Yet the current situation in Israel calls for a courageous response and a firm commitment to stick with the peace process. It is still the only workable solution, no matter how discouraged people feel.

The present experience of betrayal is nothing like the betrayal of Jews that took place in the Holocaust, even when it feels similar. Israel is not in the same vulnerable position in which Jews once found themselves. The strong feelings of betrayal among Israelis, no matter how understandable in the wake of the recent terrorist attacks, cannot be used as the basis for present political decisions. Terrorism is such a successful strategy for our enemies because it so quickly throws us back into seeing the present as an exact repetition of the traumas and memories of the past, even when the present actually differs significantly from the past. The pull for Jews to see the present political situation through a prism distorted by the unhealed fears of the past can lock Jews into rigid responses that miss the fresh political opportunities and needs of the present.

But it is not an easy decision to live fully in the present. It requires the courage to go back and release all the internalized grief and terror connected with being Jewish. It is time that we convene ongoing support groups for Jews in which they can acknowledge openly to one another the fear and pain from the past. Participants would be helped to release the grief from the stories about the Holocaust they'd listened to (or witnessed directly) growing up; they would be helped to see the connections between the struggles in their current life and the past experiences of Jews. A major contribution of the Jewish renewal movement could be to play a pivotal role in initiating these Jewish support groups in communities everywhere.

Even Jews who never heard stories about the Holocaust would still be an important part of a support group. By listening to the life stories of all of the participants, each person could begin to make sense of his or her own experiences in light of what had happened to other Jews. In the same way that women who participated in consciousness-raising groups in the early years of the women's movement listened to each other's stories and came to understand that what at first appeared to be an individual struggle was in fact a political issue connected to a history of sexism and internalized sexism, so too can Jews, through telling their life stories to one another and releasing the grief and terror from those stories, come to understand that our difficulties are not our isolated problems but also are a result of a history of anti-Semitism and internalized oppression.

We can no longer afford to ignore, personally or collectively, how much, as a people, we are still traumatized by the past. Religious rituals will always be powerful tools to inspire us and link us to our ancient past. But ritual alone cannot heal all the internalized terror. It is time that we admit that our entire people is still in mourning and take the time to heal the collective wounds of the past. □

Taking the Cure

Vanessa L. Ochs

"When I was a student at the New York Psychoanalytic Institute, there was an unspoken gentlemen's agreement that in psychoanalysis one does not discuss Jewishness, except to demonstrate to an occasional religious patient that his piety is a sign of neurosis."

—*Mortimer Ostow,* Judaism and Psychoanalysis



MAIRAV SALOMON

In the spring of 1966, my oldest cousin was, according to some relatives, having a nervous breakdown and was, according to others, in a deep depression. My cousin was going to a psychiatrist, but what did anyone in the family know from mental illness? I was thirteen at the time, newly ensconced with my family in an enormous house in Hewlett Harbor, Long Island, and I felt sorry for my cousin.

She lived in a cramped apartment a few towns away with a husband who cracked his knuckles and two daughters who whined and fought. She was the cousin who was allergic to everything, the cousin who studied the fashion "do's" and "don't's" in *Vogue* and *Glamour* to no avail, and now her situation seemed worse.

I stayed away from their apartment. There was the lingering smell of diapers from the baby days, and the noise was too much for me: my cousin and her husband yelling at each other, the shrill girls, the rush of Long Island Railroad trains, and the constant screech of jets in and out of JFK. In such a situation, even a normal person, we all said, could go nuts.

I should mention that my cousin's husband was more religiously observant that she was—hard for me to imagine, considering that she practiced the Orthodox Judaism of our grandparents. Until this man joined our family, I had never heard of more stringent standards. But her husband indeed outdid the Orthodoxy we knew. Ultra-ultra, we called him, meaning that it was too much, a good thing that had gotten carried away into absurdity. Under her husband's religious regime, my cousin would no longer eat anything in a restaurant, even a tuna sandwich or a scoop of cottage cheese, unless the restaurant was under the strictest rabbinic supervision. We stopped recalling the times she would jokingly hang a kneesock over our grandparent's fireplace on Christmas eve and cup her ear, listening for reindeer. With everything else that was too much for my cousin, our family believed that it was adhering to her husband's extreme level of religious observance, however willingly she did it, that had pushed her over the edge.

My cousin's psychiatrist had also concluded that extreme religious observance was part of her problem, the main part. In a nutshell, this was the plan the psychiatrist devised: On Saturday afternoon, my cousin was supposed to get into her car, and, in violation of the Sabbath, drive to our house, fifteen minutes away. There, she was to visit with us, have a cup of tea which I would prepare for her on the stove—again, in violation of the Sabbath—and then she would drive home.

My cousin had never in her whole life driven in a car on the Sabbath. Even though my own family drove to synagogue on the Sabbath and sometimes, it's true, drove

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afterward to W.J. Sloane's furniture outlet for a good sale, the very thought of my cousin violating the Sabbath made me nauseated and jittery. For us, violations were just hypocrisy and laziness. For my cousin, it meant going against what she had believed in her entire life.

My mother said we would go along with the treatment the doctor devised, in case it might help, because for your own flesh and blood, what wouldn't you do? Still, she thought the treatment was violent, cruel, a bit of anti-Semitism only a self-hating Jewish psychiatrist could dream up. What did the psychiatrist think? That if my cousin violated the Sabbath and saw that lightning didn't strike her down, she would decide, "Well, now I see there's no rational reason to observe all this stuff, so I might as well chuck it all and become a happier person?"

Still, my mother did say that the psychiatrist was a "big man" and perhaps knew what he was doing. Maybe my cousin did think lightning would strike her. Since she would never, never stop observing—that my mother knew—it might not hurt for my cousin to see observance with her eyes open. My job, my mother reminded me, was to fix the tea, cut the marble cake, and make conversation with my cousin without mentioning the fact that she had driven to our house, or anything that might call attention to the fact that we all knew she had lost her marbles.

I was anxious before my cousin came, but excited, too. Having never seen a nervous breakdown, I was curious to see what one looked like. But even more, I wanted to see if the cure would take effect instantly, or if it was like antibiotics, which sometimes took a while. We sat on our patio and spoke with exaggerated interest and politeness about the lovely breeze off the harbor. When we finished our tea, my cousin, who had been limp and wet-washraggy, fished for her keys in her pocketbook. Oh! She had carried a pocketbook on the Sabbath! She saw me looking at her hand make contact with her keys—car keys!–and I quickly averted my eyes toward her feet, complimenting her Papagallo shoes.

The cure did not take effect immediately or even in the short run, as I recall, but thirty years have gone by, and it seems as if she's O.K. now. She, her husband, the daughters… it took time, but they all mellowed out. My cousin became even more observant than her husband and spends a lot of time in Boro Park. In her wig and long denim skirt and sneakers, she makes her husband's "ultra-ultra" look like chopped liver.

Apparently, the same psychiatrist who had treated my cousin eventually treated my mother, her siblings, and several cousins. It was cheaper for everyone to see the same psychiatrist, my mother, the lover of sales, said. It knocked off the first few sessions. My grandmother, who met the psychiatrist at a family affair, said she couldn't get over how he knew so much about her, even though they had just met. He said that he felt as if he knew her too.

When I was twenty-six years old, thirteen years after the Sabbath-violation cure was administered, I was living in upstate New York with my husband and baby daughter. My husband brought home one of his college students, thinking I would find it neat to meet a princess from a Middle Eastern country (but nobody was supposed to know she was a princess). She must have been twenty-two and wanted badly, as I did, to become a writer. We looked at each other's writing. I liked her a lot, and probably had more in common with her than with most of my colleagues. Aside from our mutual interest in writing, she was closer to me in age than any colleague at the college, and how much different was a Jewish-American Princess from any other kind? We both detested the materialism of our parents and sort of counted on it. There was not much we had to explain to each other.

Then, in the second year of our friendship, the princess became suicidal. Just like that. She called me and said she was suicidal, and since she had little feel for humor or exaggeration, I knew this could only be the real thing. I was a little fascinated to be this close to suicide, but terribly sad too, and sometimes, I wanted just to faint, be revived, and find the princess as she'd been before.

As a faculty member and her friend, it fell upon me—or that's how it felt—to coordinate the efforts of deans, counselors, and chaplains to keep her alive and get her back to normal. This terrified me, although I admit, I rather enjoyed the constant rush of adrenaline— I felt like a fire chief on call whenever the phone rang.

Aside from the friendship I offered, I was probably not much help: as much as we talked, as much as the princess's psychiatrist, who saw her daily, briefed me in our frequent phone conversations, I couldn't really intuit what was happening to the princess. Whereas I had once kind of understood my cousin's turning morose, I didn't understand how the princess had moved from the run-of-the-mill unhappiness we both often felt to being unable to sustain the will to live.

She talked, I listened, I observed, and I had this thought: What the princess had could be contagious, and if anyone caught it, it would be me. It was January, I think, with short, cold, sunless days. The princess's psychiatrist wanted to wait and see if institutionalization would be necessary, or if daily out-patient care and medication would work.

It was my seventh year of being a wife, my first year of being a mother, one of many difficult years of becom-

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ing a writer. And I was trying to hold it all together with a teaching schedule that had me scrambling here and there. Then the princess became suicidal. It was just one thing too much, much more than I could handle.

One evening, as I had done every Monday night since the fall, I was driving to the Center for Humanistic Studies at Syracuse University to teach an adult writing class. On this particular night, I lost cohesiveness. My freshmen were reading Joan Didion's *Slouching Toward Bethlehem* that year, so the phrase, "I lost my center," came to mind. I couldn't keep the car in a lane. I considered driving into a tree, off the side of the road: Why? Why not? Dissociation? I didn't know, and still don't have any precise term to describe what was happening. There was, as I said, all my own pressure, and I had been hearing and sustaining all of the princess's misery.

Out of breath and crying, I pulled over to the side of the road next to a phone booth on Genesee Street. I didn't know what to do. I sensed that if I could only get to my writing students, a few miles away, they might ground me in my role as teacher, pull me back in. But a few miles was too far away. I couldn't call home: My husband would only worry, and I wouldn't be able to explain what the matter was, or even suggest what he could do.

Of course, I could call the princess's psychiatrist. She might know what to do. I would begin with our usual update on the princess, and then, as an aside, mention, "Oh, by the way, I'm having a little trouble here myself." God, this was desperate, I thought; it had come to this. Is this how my cousin felt, so desperate she thought telling her story to a stranger would make a difference?

I called. The psychiatrist wasn't in, and I got her service. What was I going to say? I'm standing at a phone booth in Syracuse, I'll wait here till you come rescue me? I didn't really think one person could rescue another, no matter how kind the intentions. In the end, you rescued yourself; that was the whole point, my credo at the time, and perhaps still.

I hung up, leaning against the phone booth. It was getting darker, colder. It would be ingenuous of me to suggest that I knew then that I was being consumed by too many demanding social constraints and needed to engage in some ceremony which would allow me to flout constraint—any constraint—and feel empowered once again. At the time, however, I knew only this: I was in need of an emergency cure. I had heard of shock therapy, but my cousin's Sabbath-violation remedy (however dubious it seemed) was the only psychiatric treatment that I had observed first-hand.

Since it was a Monday, farther from the Sabbath than I was from the university, I ended up having to modify the one cure at my disposal. Very slowly, concentrating hard, I drove the few blocks to King David's Middle Eastern Restaurant, where I usually went before class for a falafel or a hummus platter. I stood at the counter and placed my order. "Kibbeh," I said in a little voice, in case anyone I knew was there. I had always thought that if only I ate non-kosher food, I would like King David's kibbeh enormously. It appeared to be made of bulgur wheat on the outside, minced lamb or beef on the inside, rolled into an ovoid shape, and deep fried. Each week, out of the corner of my eye, I had watched people eat kibbeh, and they seemed very happy.

I took my kibbeh to a little table. I stared at it. This would have to work. *Pikuach nefesh*—it was a matter of life or death, or that's how it felt. I took a few bites. It was not at all like I had imagined. Was it the taste, was it the disgust of non-kosherness? Still, I forced myself to eat as much as I could, and washed it down with Turkish coffee. I had eaten *traife*. I had violated the inviolable and nothing had happened. Good.

Well look, I knew nothing would happen. Yet what else was there to do but push against this artificial boundary and come out the other side and say, "So?" A good mother, a bad mother, a good wife, a bad wife, published, unpublished? What did it matter? What really had value, not just what people valued because it was conventional? The terms of happiness were an invention, a construct, what other people made up. To make it day to day, you had to call your own shots, invent and reinvent the terms of your own happiness.

That was that. I bussed my tray. I taught a good class, drove home that night, continued to see the princess through to her recovery. I kept expecting her father to call one day and ask about his daughter, but that never happened. Her mother did call to apologize for the bother. When the princess went home for the summer, she found that her brother had burned her books, blaming her breakdown on Western influences. But she survived and started raising horses.

My baby got older. I published my first story, then my first essay, and felt less wounded by anonymity, the sense that I had promise that might never be achieved. Mostly, I was buoyed by the security of knowing that I now had two cures in my armamentarium—one for the Sabbath, and one for weekdays—and I could whip either out if I ever lost my center again, if I were constrained beyond my capacity, if all hopefulness and perspective ever leaked away. But it would have to be a real emergency before I'd ever again resort to such a drastic measure. □

My Best Friend

Mark Rudman

This criminal is dangerous
The criminal under my own hat

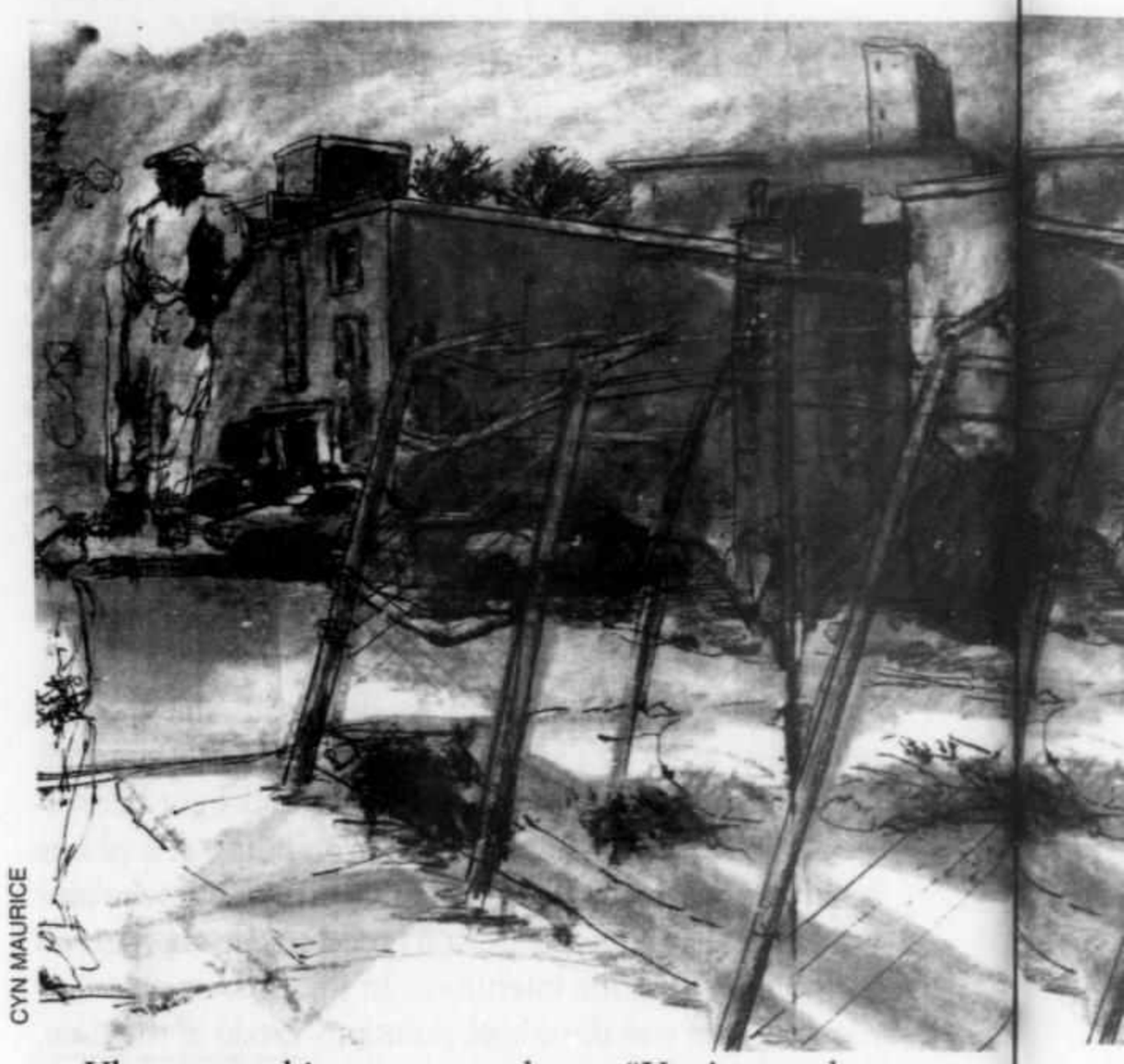
—T Bone Burnett

It had to be on one of those auspicious days, days when you wished for some clouds, that the sun showed up in all its regalia, bouncing off every passing van or chrome hubcap, so that the rusty, pallid, chain-link fence blazed, igniting the gravel. It had to be amidst these cruel refracting reflections that Sidney made his way from the entrance at the chain-link fence toward the steps leading into the school itself, so that every kid in school could watch and see that he was connected to me. I, who had nowhere to hide, even as I tried to disappear, nowhere to hide from Ulysses, who didn't need a diagram to figure out that Sidney had come to talk to the principal on my behalf. I felt misunderstood: *I wasn't a snitch,* but I was desperate—and outnumbered. Ulysses couldn't keep himself from attacking me; he loved to fight just as I hated to, and he was older, faster, stronger than me. And so I felt driven to ask Sidney *to do something.* But not this. Not come to school as school was starting so that I could get into deeper shit by becoming known as a snitch.

At the moment Sidney, my stepfather, put his foot on the steps of Kenwood Elementary, Ulysses flashed a radiant smile at me, and I smiled back. His teeth gleamed. He approached me in such a friendly manner that my heart melted. And no threats. "That your Dad?" he asked, knowing it was, as if excited to see him. "Yeah." "He's got a cool hat. Where'd he get that hat?"

"I dunno." It was his way of saying he knew I had to do it, and he knew that it would not change our relationship in any essential way. How can I describe it? Because we were *friends.*

"You know what? I like you. You and me can work things out."



CYN MAURICE

Ulysses put his arm around me. "You're my best friend."

I tried to explain. *It's not really you he's come to complain about; just certain things you do that are not really you. Why do you do them?*

"Excuse me."

"Sure Mark, what's the matter?"

Mark!

"I forgot to tell my Dad something."

And then I ran. Caught up with him just in time. "Look, I've been thinking. I don't think Ulysses's going to do it again. In fact, he's my best friend."

"No. I came here because you asked me, and I'm going to talk to the principal."

Mark Rudman's recent books include The Nowhere Steps *(Sheep Meadow Press);* Diverse Voices: Essays on Poets and Poetry *(Story Line Press);* Rider *(Wesleyan University Press), nominated for the 1994 National Book Critics Circle Award; and* Realm of Unknowing, *from which this memoir is excerpted, forthcoming this spring from Wesleyan.*

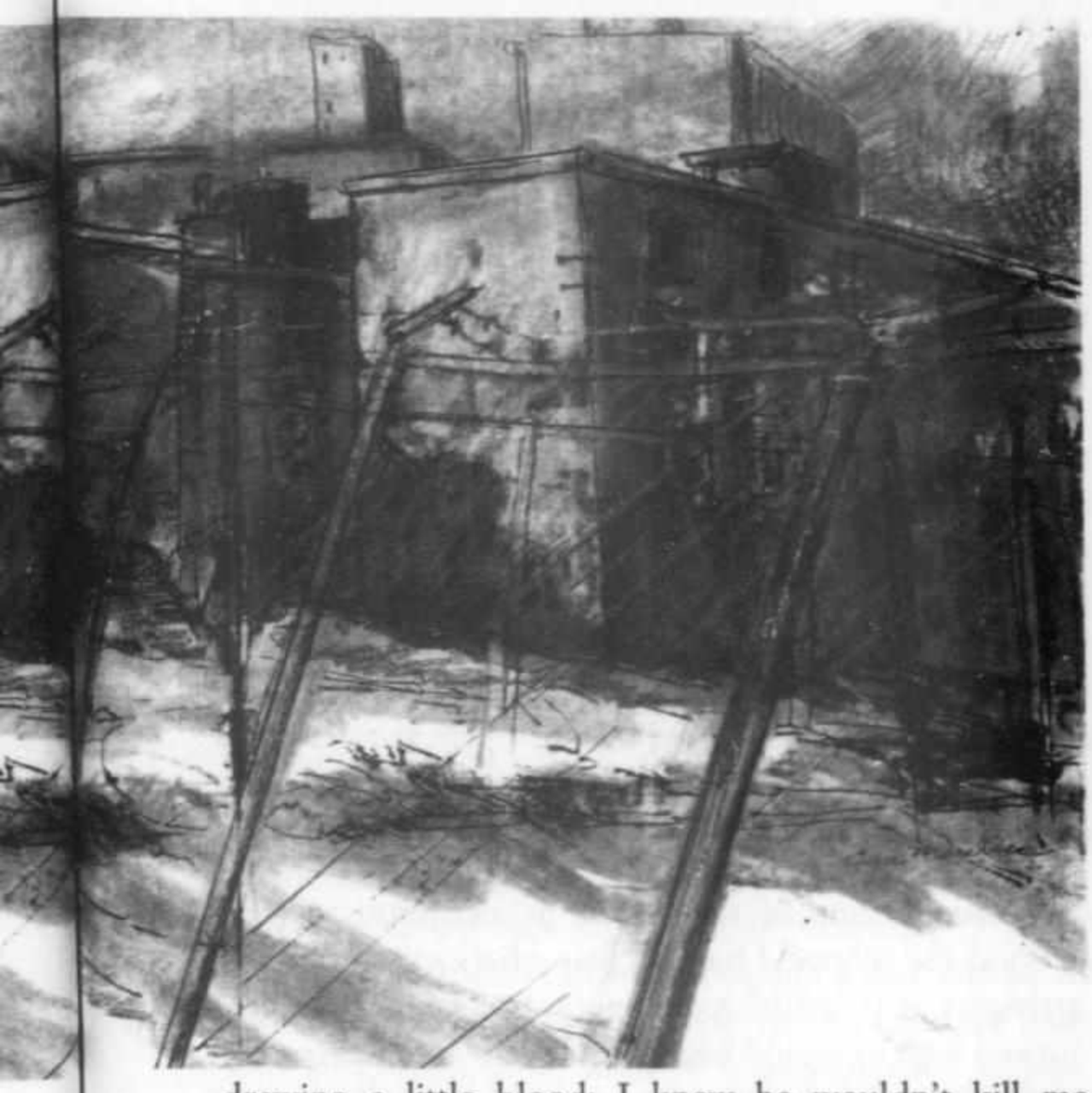
I stood in front of the opaque corrugated glass.

"They'll call me snitch. It'll make things worse."

"All right, but from now on you're on your own. Any more problems between you and Ulysses you'll have to work them out between yourselves."

That wasn't what I wanted to hear, but I wagered that if I came home really bruised and bloody that he'd forget this ultimatum.

I was at a slight disadvantage physically. Ulysses was the toughest and most streetwise kid in our class. It's true that Ulysses would often pick a fight with me; it's also true that sometimes he'd prick me with a switchblade; but I knew that Ulysses would go no further than



drawing a little blood; I knew he wouldn't kill me (though in addition to the pain I didn't like it when he got that far-off look on his face and he seemed to forget whose head he was knocking against the pavement). So I was angry when my parents outlawed him from our house and he had to climb up the fire escape and come in the back window in order to play.

And Ulysses was never cruel while in our house. This was the heart of our relationship: It was a conspiracy. But in public Ulysses wanted the other kids to think this was not so, and so would turn on his heels and start pummelling me at recess, before or after school, and after Ulysses, James would have a turn; James who crooned in his Sam Cooke voice as he punched, James who though smoother on the outside didn't have a secret warm spot in his heart like Ulysses.

Me and Ulysses were pals. Not best friends exactly, but close to it. I had no idea at the time, when we both attended Kenwood Elementary School on the South Side of Chicago, that he was eleven and I was only eight—I guess we were children, though it didn't feel like it then. And I doubt Ulysses knew then the profound effect he had on me.

Ulysses was an orphan. He lived with his grandmother, who cleaned apartments, when she could get the work. Ulysses had sauce, personality. He led—seemingly without effort. Of course this could have been due to his age. Fourth grade was to become Ulysses's impasse: He couldn't get over that wall, and it was time to knock it down.

I remember the expression on Mrs. Klein's face when I entered her classroom: delight, relief. At last—another refugee from the middle classes. If there were any other white boys in our class, I don't remember them. But there were, by some peculiar sleight of demographics, several girls: Karen, Karen, Karen, and Louisa.

There were a few quiet, unassuming kids in the class who never got into a fight. They didn't scramble for the ball at recess; they ate lunch quietly in a corner of the cafeteria. Though shy to the point of mortification, I forced myself to put up a good front and not reveal my vulnerability. But there was a wildness, a wilderness in me that drew me to Ulysses. I had to know Ulysses's world.

Mrs. Klein would often throw me a wide, inviting smile when I came back from recess and I, smarting from my wounds, would smile back. It was amazing how little blood there was to show for the amount of pain endured. And there was never any question of my informing.

I was a boy. But I hated fighting, and contact sports. I wanted to protect my head. I adopted a warrior's pose, a camouflage of white T-shirts with the sleeves rolled up and blue jeans and motorcycle boots. I smoked cigarettes that were a cinch to pilfer, along with small change

(a windfall fortune) from my mother's purse.

If it hadn't been for Ulysses, I might not have adopted my camouflage. If I hadn't met Ulysses, I might not have thought to move on from robbing pennies from the nun's poor box, while she looked on with compassion for my weakness, to my mother's bulging change purse, waiting there in her open handbag, nor learned how to quadruple my ten-cent allowance with very little effort or risk of being caught.

One day Ulysses knocked at the window on the fire escape, and all I could see was his body against the sky, not where his feet were planted. I opened the window and he hopped in. We were both gleeful at his daring. The nerve! The resources! The simple, elegant solution to his banishment!

Ulysses seemed utterly at home in my room with my toys.

Electric trains would have made too much noise to play with so we lined up toy soldiers, blew them away, and brought them back. Ulysses put a couple of howitzer bearers in a drawer and said, "You can't get those."

I raided the icebox and fruit bowl. Ulysses stuffed his pockets with apples and bananas and cookies. I could see he liked me better than he ever had and that this visit would alter our relationship forever.

"Wasn't that...Eugenies..." my mother observed as he disappeared down the fire escape. "I mean isn't that the boy who's giving you such a hard time?"

"Yeah. But we're friends again now."

"Oh. That's good. I mean, I guess that's good."

I am not exaggerating Ulysses's toughness. But he was a sprite, a Jiminy Cricket compared to the high school kids who waited for the grade-schoolers at the soda fountain after school. These were kids whose eyes couldn't focus anymore, who barely moved their lips when they uttered their threats and tapped the side pockets of their army fatigues to let you hear the sound of metal clanking. They bored themselves with their own demands. "Gimme your money kid and you can go."

I was angry and afraid, but what really threw me was the terror in the eyes of the guy who owned the candy store. He watched, from behind the counter, in his white smock, and I could hear him swallowing, gulping, dry-mouthed with fear. He was afraid to call the police for fear of further repercussions. This was real life and *there was no one to help*. But I was damned if I wanted to hand over my meager allowance on a Monday afternoon before I'd had even a Coke or an egg cream. Ulysses was walking by. He came to the grimy window and rapped on the glass and waved. "Mark!" Whenever he used my first name I knew he was well disposed toward me. "Gotta go," I said, breaking free from the circle of negative magnetic energy the teenagers had installed around me. Ulysses broke the spell of fear, and as we broke into a run, I asked him if he knew what was happening in the store. "No, man, I saw you and I knocked on the window." Simple questions, simple answers.

Ulysses was so fearless he hadn't even noticed!

"Ulysses," I said. "I want us to be friends forever."

"You got it man, you got it."

Ulysses knocks on my window from the fire escape.

"Come out, man."

"But it's late, dark."

"That's all right, come on."

So Ulysses and I prowl the avenues and side streets and vacant lots. In the neighborhoods where we walk there is hardly another body on the street. There is nothing to be afraid of, really, in the late 1950s in Chicago; what I feel is a sense of awe at the vast windy spaces, the way the prairie keeps breaking through the vacant lots. This is a wilderness upon which concrete has been imposed.

I didn't think of the streets as dangerous, except around the school. I had no fear whatsoever of adults, strangers as potential kidnappers, I mean, anyone who fucked with us would have been crazy—we were armed and dangerous, though I had sworn to myself never to use more in self-defense than a roll of pennies clutched in my fist: I was afraid of repercussions.

Of course I knew that I was white and middle-class and that Ulysses was Black and poor. But Ulysses seemed to know infinitely more of life than anyone else remotely my age. What I didn't know was how desperately Ulysses didn't want to go home.

I had two other Black friends, Paul and Rex. Paul was my real best friend, but since our relationship was satisfying, and without crucifying tensions, I have less to say

about him than Ulysses. Paul was a sweet boy who managed to stay out of harm's way. Some of my happiest afternoons were spent with him trading comic books. We both came out winners.

But going over to his house was a real shock. Because it was dark. Darker than it was outside in the autumnal haze amid the repartee of reflections. We sat poring over comic books in the fading light that barely entered the opaque window of his dreary, gray, airless living room, a stage set with the scantiest of props. The floor was bare, the furniture droopy. I perched lightly on a jut of the collapsed yellowed sofa. His mother, a sourpuss with a broom, tensed her face when she looked at us playing while she busied herself. The absence of light in Paul's house weighed heavily on me.

This was why Paul was so rarely allowed to play after school: He had to do his homework by daylight. This saddened me; I thought *light* was a common property, I couldn't imagine being so poor as to not afford a light bulb.

I returned home with a mission. My mother's cupboard bulged with light bulbs, and I knew she wouldn't miss the half-dozen I extracted on Paul's behalf. The bare living room wouldn't be exactly cheerful, but at least he would be able to read.

I wrote my father in New York to tell him about how much I was enjoying my new life in Chicago and to ask for money to buy light bulbs for Paul. I tore open his letter in the brisk November air, under the awning of our apartment house, and lit upon the phrase, "I'm happy to hear you have some Negro friends." His reply crushed and angered me. Negro? How could he call my friends *Negroes?* I felt demeaned by the word, having confused, or rather conflated it with "nigger." I sensed a certain condescension in his tone: It set up an invisible (invincible?) barrier between myself and my friends.

Yet nothing in the letter said anything bad, and for all I know I overreacted and misread (in this case) the tone, and I must, in some form of communication to him, phone call or letter, have referred to Ulysses and Paul and Rex as something other than "white male caucasian."

If they're *Negroes,* I wondered, what am I?

The next time I went over to Paul's house, the situation had not improved. I was stumped by this conundrum. They hadn't even put the bulbs in the sockets. More than a decade passed before I realized (because I had often meditated on this event) that the problem lay not in their lack of bulbs but in their inability to pay the electric bill.

It bothered me that Paul did not complain, that he did not see it as his right to complain. (But how to separate that from the natural sweetness of his temperament?)

Being an only child, my friends became my family. I loved my friends, and I lived out of the house as much as was possible. I longed to be part of a community, and I didn't see any problem in creating one.

Black kids had another fashion in which I found a certain novelty. Many came to class with stockings on their heads. Everyone acted as if this was perfectly natural. I asked Sidney about this phenomenon. "They have ringworm," he said, "and it's very contagious. It comes from living in squalid, dirty places..." And once more the association of dark skin, bad light, and squalor began to combine in my imagination and saddened me.

I began to feel at home in the homelessness of sadness, at one with dispossession.

Asthma gave palpable suffering to my privileged life (light bulbs, record players, balanced meals, blankets without holes, shoes with arch supports, electric trains, psychiatrists...).

Why shouldn't Ivan Karamazov's absurd declaration that *there is no God because children suffer without reason* be applied to races, peoples, wandering tribes...? I say absurd because even if there is a God I am certain he has nothing to do with suffering on this particular (earthly) level.

I thought the mastery of long division was the key to the mystery. The recognition of infinity. There is no limit to what can be divided. We go on, being divided.

Even at the tender ageless age of nine, while I counted the time until *Love Me Tender* would appear in stellar black and white, I was painfully aware of how middle-class white people felt that white was right. I recognized, despite the pleasure I took from favoritism, the undisguised look of pleasure in the eyes of teachers like Mrs. Klein and (later) Miss Shapiro, because I was one of them, because in addition to whatever individual characteristics might have attracted them to me, they were profoundly relieved to be teaching a (sort of) clean-cut kid who (more or less) shared certain values, certain assumptions, who would not stand up on the chair when they left the room, unzip his fly, and treat the class to some butt-wiggle and hand-action with his penis; that I did not, even as I donned the camouflage of a tough kid, carry a switchblade or a roll of nickels to add punch to my punch...

Love Me Tender was about to open, and we surreptitiously circulated articles with stills. The girls mooned. James crooned. Karen L. lulled me with "Tammy." Paul was noncommittal. Rex was beyond childish things.

Walking home, Ulysses and I recited the ditty that ran through the student body.

Sap sucker
Mother fucker
Ass hole
Blue balled bitch

I never tired of these lines, and continued to repeat them silently when I was alone. It is not, I think, because of the crude rhyme or copious alliteration, but because the last two lines disturb, distress, expectation. A word that was always run together, "asshole," is changed, estranged from itself, its familiar use, when it becomes two words, each of which demands, in this new context, equal emphasis, equal stress. And "blue balled bitch" was both shocking and confusing: I didn't know what "blue balls" were but I knew that females didn't have balls—so what was the point? I was intoxicated by the senseless sound, the ambiguity of the transsexual image. Did this abrupt, broken lyric inherited from who knows where purposefully transpose blue balls onto the bitch because she was a tease? Was she a bitch because she let the male motherfuckers go away with blue balls?

The Ulysses who came to my birthday party was not Ulysses of the playground. This was a shy, charming boy, who would never think of upsetting the lovely girls seated cross-legged in a circle in the living room. He seemed pleased that we were still best friends in spite of all that had happened between us. "This is cool, man," Ulysses confided to me in the kitchen. "Those girls, and all this food. Your mom's a good cook, man." This was heartbreaking. Ulysses sat outside the circle.

I don't remember ever going through a stage beyond the age of seven when, like most of the boys I see around me now, I didn't want to play with girls. I'm not sure why I never scorned the company of women, with whom I felt at ease even in the act of desiring them.

It was mutual: I was and was not a boy's boy.

Tall, graceful, willowy, a strawberry blond and a Jew, Karen L. moved with an elegance and an assurance that was the opposite of my own frenzied awkwardness. I feared I would disappoint her, that I could never be smart or good enough for her, that she made a mistake in liking me, in not seeing me as worthless, subhuman, an insect. The fact that she was happy in my presence made me want to turn around when she was looking at me to see who she was looking at, who was at my back.

I preferred to pursue Louisa, the one girl who remained oblivious to Ulysses's secret charms—and mine; the one girl who scorned me actively; the only one who looked remotely like my mother. Dark hair, brown eyes, olive skin. She often wore fluffy white turtleneck sweaters, which heightened the beautiful severity and austerity of her features and her black hair. She was defined where the rest of us were undefined. She had made an effort to harden her sensual mouth. But nothing about Louisa was overdone. She was hard-edged, fierce, intense, and focused. I admired her quick absorption of matters which I could barely summon the will to attempt at all.

Louisa sat in the seat behind me in Mrs. Sheehey's class. Several times an hour I turned around to look at her, to engage her attention, mainly with pestiferous requests to borrow her eraser, but these efforts were usually met by a barely concealed sigh-groan and a scowl. Her resistance fueled, inflamed my daydreams. I thought it took courage for her to be as severe as she was. I respected her judgment: She saw through me, to *me*, to who I really was. She identified a menace.

My ruse for asking her questions during tests always failed. When I asked to borrow her eraser she handed it over while keeping her head down, continuing to write with her free hand. I loved to watch her doing in-class assignments. I thrilled to the rigor of her logic; her clarity, both physical and spiritual. When I saw myself through her eyes I was filled with self-loathing; I longed to throw myself at her feet and pour my heart out with declarations of love and declamations about the "real" me which would emerge if she returned my gaze; I longed to show her that I was at heart a deeply serious person somehow at odds with my situation.

Did she know I was an only child, that I needed attention so desperately because I was so lonely, lonelier than I would ever admit, that in spite of my sturdy appearance I was so depleted by asthma attacks at night that I arrived at school drained, a shell of myself, yet determined not to let on and give the teacher an excuse to keep me in at recess when dead leaves littered the ground, or the air was too raw for my lungs, or thick with pollen?

Couldn't she see I bothered her and played the buffoon only to get her attention? As all starved, diseased souls know, any attention is better than none, than being ignored, rendered nonexistent. I usually got the atten-

tion I sought, especially from girls and adults—though the very promiscuity of this charm propelled me later toward solitude.

I wanted to tell her that I read books, even if they weren't the ones we were assigned in school. She would love the ingenious Zane Grey in which a sheriff, who can't let on that he's been temporarily blinded, insists on meeting a gunfighter in the street at noon, when the sun is high, so he can catch its reflection in a hand mirror and blind him long enough to shoot at the dusty shuffling of his boots, the clink of his spurs. *If she came home with me sometime after school I would show her.* I fantasized her watching me hit clutch doubles, driving in three runs with the bases loaded for our class's nonexistent team to emerge victorious at recess; pass for touchdowns and make key interceptions, and, of course, being nursed back to health by her after being injured by all these heroics. This was surely wishful thinking even if I had been a better than middling athlete, because Louisa was utterly indifferent to such classic male behavior. Not that I could say what it was she wanted. Other than to be left alone by the likes of me.

Karen G. sat in front of me, and she was always happy to be pestered. When I gently tugged her braid like a bell pull, she screwed up her face in mock annoyance and handed me the compass, eraser, or "questions to be answered" I had not heard. She wore light cotton, light-colored dresses, crawling with small flowers, with a cast of round ivory buttons up the front. I wanted her to be my sister because then we could play together all the time; I loved the careless, absentminded way she'd curl up, cross-legged, on my bed and do her homework; I was touched that she could lose herself in my presence. She must have known I could see the white cotton flag of her panties in the splayed position she adopted, but made no fetish of modesty. I didn't need to stare because all was offered—we were too intimate to "play doctor." I was in awe of her prairie beauty. But her after-school visits had a dark side, afflicted with a gnawing anxiety, that *she would leave,* get up and go as the clock neared five in the afternoon, stealing the brief serenity which suffused the room. I would no longer feel calm and whole, complete.

In the madness of my magical thinking that pouring out my heart to my mother would somehow enhance, make more real, the intimacy I shared with Karen, I had not armored myself in defense of her answer. My mother was happier at this time than she would ever be again: her relationship with her boss, Dell Girlie, contributed a lot to her high spirits. Sometimes my mother was my best friend. One afternoon when I had no one to play with and longed to try out my spanking new baseball uniform, I asked her if she would come out to the windy vacant lot across the street from civilization and pitch to me. She wore a loose cotton shift and a light wool gray cardigan, which she loosely draped over her shoulders. It wasn't just that her slow, underhand pitches were good, but that I was inspired to play better when she was looking at me, that she was forced to spend most of the hour hunting the prairie for the lost ball. And since we played together and sang songs like Jimmie Rodgers's "Honeycomb" and "Kisses Sweeter Than Wine" in the free-floating hours before dinner—choreographed so that she made the final preparations while I set the table—it felt right to tell her how swell I thought Karen was. Here memory stops short of event and invention, but I might have broached the subject of our future plans, as if by commiserating with the person dearest to me in all the world I could enhance, make more real, the intimacy I shared with Karen, and at the very least insure further play dates in the future.

My usually playful, warm, empathetic mother vexed me here with her dour, half-hearted response to the wild, beautiful creature I had just escorted home. No, *she* wouldn't "call her beautiful; Eva Marie Saint (whom Karen resembled) was beautiful. But then that little shift she had on wasn't very complimentary."

"You're beautiful too mom," I chimed in.

"A lot of people think so. When I walked down the aisle on my father's arm at a premiere everyone thought I was Hedy Lamarr."

"You're prettier than that." I had never seen a picture of Hedy Lamarr but her name implied a monolithic look, a unidimensional shell: black mane, white skin.

"Oh, I don't think so. Hedy Lamarr is gorgeous. But she's no actress, and that's why you don't see her in movies anymore, she can't act."

"I can."

"No you can't."

"I can. I made up a puppet-show to put on tonight."

"You were so cute when you were little. Your hair was white. A director had his eye on you once when we were staying with Pop in a house he'd rented on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. He asked me if you could take direction. 'Absolutely not,' I said."

There could be no more beautiful street in the world than Rodeo Drive, even though everything I knew about it I owed to snapshots.

"And?"

"That was the end of it."

"Maybe I could have taken direction from him. I could have tried."

I was beginning to have that hollow, nobody's-home feeling.

"No. You couldn't have. And I wasn't about to humiliate..."

There's a phrase about gambling that Sidney liked to use: throwing good money after bad. The same holds true for our emotions. Some of us feel compelled, when things are going much worse than we expected, to continue hunting for the response we are after. Life is cruel and tricky here. As certain interactions approach disaster, catastrophe, or at least a collision that will definitely injure both parties (even if only one feels mistreated at the time) our fear is not, as is commonly thought, of losing the other's love. If someone manages in this way to infuse us with a negative feeling about ourselves, magnifying the feelings of emptiness and worthlessness we are struggling to relieve, grow through, and overcome, we fear that we won't be able to love them as wholeheartedly as we had before. Something is irrevocably changed: It is not that we will be *denied* love, but that we will be unable to love as we had wished, when it is precisely this ardency, this passion, this rage to love, that keeps us whole and hopeful. We are embarrassed by the people who hurt us so unnecessarily, who must assert their superiority at all times at all costs, out of their own bone-deep jealousies they would rather die of than redress. And who among us has not caused pain to others in this way? Who is not, at times, sickened by the juggernaut of our own steamrolling cruelty?

My body registered my mother's put-down of Karen, and then of me. Was it that I could not resist seeing how far she would go, that I allowed myself one more chance, double or nothing, for her to respond in the way I wanted her to, and say that she thought Karen was as lovely as I knew her to be?

"But Mom,"—would she hear the strain and anger in my voice and behind my question, she who, as I saw it, held the key to release me from this wave of unease—"don't you think Karen has beautiful hair?"

I reached out to catch the spike of contempt.

"Oh well," she paused and sighed, thoughtful yet casual: clearly this (leading!) question merited a considered answer. "I thought it was kind of mousy looking, somewhere between, I'd guess you'd say, brown and blond, don't you think?...more like what you'd call...a dishwater blond."

Now that her criticism was no longer directed at me, my stuttering paralysis transformed itself into an empowering anger. "No Mom, she's beautiful, you just don't like her because she isn't fancy."

"That's not true. I didn't say I didn't like the girl. I thought she was very nice, very well behaved, unlike some of the children you bring in here like that...Eugenies.... What does her father do?"

I stormed to my room and bolted the door with desks, chairs, books, pillows, soldiers, and wept, and let it be known I would not come out for dinner. And when Sidney came home and the threats began of what would happen if I didn't open the door, I opened the window instead, clambered down the fire escape, and ran. I ran as fast as I could for as long as I could. People were still coming home from work, bent low against the wind, their free hands occupied in keeping their hats on their heads. There were microphones attached to the dead leaves as they scraped the ground. The harsh November weather and the sinister leer of the streets where wild prairie and blunt high rise took turns announcing their presence were nothing compared to the imaginary fears that racked my waking and sleeping hours when my body was still.

I was inflamed, on fire, on a tear, and with that much adrenalin pumping any muggers, kidnappers, or child molesters would be wise to be afraid of me. High bales of wire under the floodlights against the fence offered another kind of shelter. And when I entered the gates of a military installation and conned the kind M.P. into letting me warm up in his booth for as long as I liked, I knew I had won, and that Sidney would have to search for a long time before he discovered that his charge was not only not lost, but well-employed, helping this lonely soldier check out the credentials of the entering cars. I was right, and when he stopped to see if the M.P. had seen "a little boy," I stood behind the soldier and said, "I'll only come out if you promise not to hit me, now or later." Strange how easy it was to get adults over a barrel if you were rough enough with them and held your ground.

Ulysses' life was unmoored. I envied him his freedom.

If he could be *out at any hour of the day or night so could I.*

His life was without constraints—without bourgeois bullshit, like the "family" being together at mealtime. Not that I had anything against the family, but that sometimes I might have wanted to be doing something else when they were sitting down to a civilized dinner with candles. And the requisite regurgitation of the day's events.

One late afternoon Ulysses and I stopped at a coffee shop. "I'm thirsty," I said. "C'mon, man, I ain't got no

(Continued on p. 90)



Idollatry

Kathy Chamberlain

With a lengthy advertising campaign lauding their lucrative Dorian Gray, the Mattel Corporation recently celebrated the thirty-fifth birthday of Barbie doll. Over the years, despite the successes of the women's movement, Barbie has proliferated wildly, making only cosmetic accommodations to feminist sensibilities. A shocking-pink publicity folder, issued as part of Mattel's birthday blitz, documents the scope of the phenomenon with a "Barbie Fun Facts" sheet: In 1993 the Barbie franchise exceeded $1 billion in worldwide sales; the typical American girl owns an average of eight Barbie dolls; the doll is sold in more than 140 countries around the world; Barbie—leaving Imelda Marcos in the dust—has "more than a billion pair of shoes." The eeriest "Fun Fact" claims that if placed head-to-toe, the dolls would circle the Earth more than six times.



Barbie's longevity and ubiquity have caused many of her feminist critics to reluctantly accept that she's here to stay; Anna Quindlen theorized in a recent *New York Times* column that to get rid of her "you'd have to drive a stake through her silver lamé heart." But I think it's important to take Barbie on once again, so emblematic is she of the nexus of American women's feelings about and preoccupation with body image.

Appearing as Barbie first did, so very white and blond in her zebra-striped bathing suit, the doll was a quintessentially Fifties conception. A recent *faux pas*—the tape-recorded voice of a "Teen-Talk Barbie" lamenting that "Math class is tough" (a line of dolls Mattel has now discontinued)—came right from Barbie's Fifties heart, a part of her that "updating" can't fundamentally change. Barbie resurrects in our midst the retro atmosphere of dim-witted pompom girls, cheerleaders, and beauty queens.

Coming of age in the 1950s with the twin stigmas of acne and glasses, I was not a contender for those roles; nevertheless, the intense pressure I felt to conform to the impossible added greatly to normal adolescent glooms. One fall, my father got a T.V. set so that he could watch the Miss America contest. Since my sisters and I wanted him to like us and he rarely talked, making us unsure what he thought, we sat in a row on the couch and carefully scrutinized the show to see what it was that enchanted him. Were we or weren't we pretty like the young women on the screen? Two of us thought not and suffered accordingly. My other sister felt that turning herself into a bathing beauty was her only chance for attention; it was years before she truly believed she was a person of substance. That we survived at all, we attribute to the women's movement.

Barbie doll came on the scene just about the time my college girlfriends and I were passing around paperback copies of Simone de Beauvoir's feminist classic, *The Second Sex*. What relief we felt, in our rudimentary, inchoate way, that a twentieth-century conversation about who we really were as women had finally begun. Enlightened by de Beauvoir and a little later by Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, as well as by reflections on our experiences growing up in the Fifties, we said "yuk" to Barbie when she first appeared and swore our daughters would never get their hands on one (not yet understanding that what is forbidden can become all the more enticing). When Marge Piercy's vivid poem, "Barbie Doll," appeared in 1969, coinciding with the first women's consciousness-raising groups, we agreed with

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Piercy that the doll played into the belittling and objectifying, the deathly thingifying of women.

But while many Second-Wave feminists have regarded Barbie as the personification of impossible demands a male-dominated society places upon women, Mattel has continued to churn out new Barbie incarnations for which people apparently have an insatiable appetite. Some say that little girls' love affair with Barbie does no harm, that the doll has kept up with society's expanded understanding of who women are. But Doctor Barbies and multicultural Barbies and Air Force Thunderbird Squadron Leader Barbies, while noteworthy departures from earlier stereotypes, don't dispel the distortions that Barbie fosters. (An entertaining new book on the doll, *Forever Barbie*, by M.G. Lord, while full of lore and analysis, is not, in my opinion, sufficiently critical of the toy as a purveyor of negative concepts of women.)

Barbie's basic problem—her bland homogeneity of feature and anatomy—reinforces the American epidemic of unnecessary face lifts, tummy tucks, breast reduction surgery, breast augmentation surgery, as well as anorexia, bulimia, and diet fanaticism. Distilling within her molded form so much else that's at work in society, the doll becomes a symbol of the unattainable body; and we know a symbol (in answer to those who ask why all this fuss about a doll) is far more potent than "just a toy."



Being plastic, incidentally, does not exempt you from plastic surgery. Mattel's publicity kit reveals that Barbie has undergone "face sculpting" a number of times; for instance, "by the end of the 1970s Barbie doll's face was again resculpted to a wide smile."

Given our society's continuing preoccupation with physical perfection, it is not surprising that girls' attitudes toward their bodies seem even worse today than they were in the Fifties. In her *New York Times* column about Barbie's birthday, Anna Quindlen called attention to how widespread the problem is, citing a University of Arizona study which found that "90 percent" of the white girls questioned "expressed dissatisfaction with their own bodies."

Helen Coster, the 1994 valedictorian of Mattituck High School, asked by her local Long Island paper, the *Suffolk Times,* what she saw as the greatest problem facing young women today, replied: "80 percent of the girls I know have . . . experienced an eating disorder. The message society gives adolescent girls is that women should be docile and women should have a perfect body, which is ridiculous. That affects girls' self-esteem so much. Their goals are changed from academic success to physical appearance. I would classify it as an epidemic in Mattituck, either anorexia or bulimia. I've had three of my best friends hospitalized."

When Coster was asked why she escaped an obsession with appearance, she told the reporter that she was seen as "well rounded" (an interesting word in this context), having participated in sports, theater, and volunteer work; her many and varied interests and accomplishments seemed to shore her up within and also in the eyes of others.

Each year, at the Borough of Manhattan Community College, where I teach, a committee of faculty and staff prepare a poster in celebration of Women's History Month. Last March, the committee chose as its theme "Women in Action." When the poster appeared, close to the top in large letters was the following: "Barbie: At 35, Toys Come and Go, but Mattel's Barbie Seems Immune to the Ravages of Time."

The day I walked into school and saw Barbie's name on our women's poster, I was overcome by a surge of horror, hurt, and fear. I must have unconsciously slammed down anger because in no time my psychosomatic illness flared up, and I had to spend the next day at home in bed. I felt like a victim. The poster seemed an utter betrayal of what we had fought for in the past.

My age and stage of life made me feel especially vulnerable: I was going through menopause. Physiological changes were taking place more rapidly: hot flashes, graying hair, pinker skin. I had seen magazine after magazine raising the question of plastic surgery for older women, some of whom were quoted as saying, defensively, that they felt they had to carve up their faces and dye their hair "to remain players" in this society; they yearned to continue working and feared that without making these changes, they wouldn't be allowed to participate. I would look in the mirror and pull back the skin at the sides of my face to see what I looked like "younger," then I would feel disgusted, because I believe in aging naturally.

I wish I could have reacted to the poster like the strong, already empowered and privileged woman I am free to be, according to third-wave feminists. But in the real world, it is far from that easy. Furthermore, as a colleague, Nan Bauer Maglin (co-editor of a forthcoming book on women and power in the 1990s), reminded me,

we can learn a great deal from admitting, defining, and organizing against our victimization.

Fortunately for me, when I revived, I found that members of the college's Audre Lorde Womyn's Collective, a student group, were ready to do just that. They, too, felt hurt, angry, and dissed by the poster, not only because of Barbie's inclusion, but because the poster-women included Christie Brinkley, Cindy Crawford, Kathy Lee Gifford, Ivana Trump, and Kate Moss—all "supermodels" or human Barbies.

With the inclusion of Barbies and women such as Carol Moseley-Braun and Angela Davis, the poster reflected the "anything goes" ethos of third-wave feminists popularized in the writings of Katie Roiphe, Christina Sommers, and Naomi Wolf (in her book *Fire With Fire*, Sommers, in *Who Stole Feminism?*, scoffs at the idea of "a tenacious internalized power" operating adversely in women; she asserts that we're already "free creatures." Roiphe thinks we should just get with it, already. Naomi Wolf advocates "power feminism" to replace "victim feminism.") While it's important to reexamine the assumptions of early feminism in the light of social change, it seems to me that with the exception of a few women who are unusually privileged economically and psychologically (perhaps having had feminist mothers), we are far from free. And since women still have serious problems with self-esteem and body image, we should not hold up an emaciated young woman like Kate Moss as a role model.

It may seem inclusive and a liberatory rejection of annoying p.c. standards to point to the story of Ivana Trump, as Naomi Wolf does, as a drama that reinterprets "the Horatio Alger self-creation tale for women" (arguing that if you can't beat capitalism, join it)—or to put Ivana Trump on a poster saluting women in action. But, as a feminist credo, "anything goes" winds up being a cop-out. In these desperate economic times, when people feel the need to be as versatile as possible, it may seem like a senseless luxury to take positions that could limit options. But issues like women's sense of worth and self-image are too important to ignore; we are only too aware of the extent of the damage. "Anything goes," in offering no values, provides no guidance and solves no problems.

The Women's History Month poster became the center of a stormy controversy. In the midst of the protests, the poster disappeared. Standing by their poster as an example of pluralism and diversity, the Women's History Month Committee demanded its return. For its part, the dean's office issued a denial that it had done the confiscating. In due course, however, the poster reappeared.

Finally, Glenda Francis, a young woman originally from St. Croix and a former president of the Student Government Association, proposed a "cleansing ceremony" to take the feelings of those of us who had been hurt and angered and turn them into collective empowerment.



At the ceremony, Glenda read from an open letter the collective had written to the Women's History Month Committee:

> Not only was Barbie constructed upon racist and sexist assumptions about beauty, but she is also a sexually objectified being whose 35 years of existence have brought immense profits for Mattel at the expense of young girls (white and non-white) who dreamed of wanting to be like and look like Barbie. Additionally, we contend that Barbie is the modern man-made mother of anorexic and bulimic females, young and old, who die and/or risk death so that they too can be just like Barbie.... How is it possible that Barbie, a racist and sexist construction and a non-living being finds a home on "our" Women's History Month poster?

Students and faculty members attending the ceremony were invited to cross out a name on the original poster and substitute the name of a woman they admired. The first to go was Ivana Trump. To cheering and clapping, she was replaced by Rosa Parks. This collective response, by women of diverse classes and racial backgrounds, helped us all to put Barbie in her place.

Some months after the furor at the college had died down, I had coffee with the poster's designer, Mona Rankin, and we talked about the incident. As usual, things were not precisely what you might imagine. Why had Barbie gotten top billing? Mona, an African-American woman who grew up in a northern Chicago suburb, attended New Trier High School, and inhabited an interracial world, had had a memorable

childhood Barbie experience.

One day when Mona was very young, a white playmate destroyed her Barbie doll—tore her to pieces. Mona had loved her Barbie and wanted her back—which may well have been at the back of her mind when she designed the poster.

Did she ever experience Barbie as a constricting image? No, she said, although she understands why others do. Had I ever seen *Jet* centerfolds, she wondered, which, while objectifying women, display a more full-figured image of female beauty? Mona—who is letting her hair silver naturally and won't diet except for health reasons—said she feels relatively secure emotionally and socially, and isn't that what protects women from feeling oppressed by society's ideals of attractiveness? We also discussed recent studies that found Black women have fewer problems with dieting and anorexia. Mona's first response was, "I can't help it if white women can't cope!" But then she began to wonder if Black women would manifest more of these pathologies as they gain greater access to the dominant culture—would they then feel the same pressures to conform?

Around the time of the college's Barbie doll debate, a colleague told me her daughter's fifth-grade class at St. Ann's School in Brooklyn was also discussing the toy—another reaction to the Mattel advertising campaign. I called her daughter, Zarina Feinman, to learn what ten-year-olds were saying about Barbie. Zarina indicated that she saw Barbie in a new light after the class discussion—as she put it, she had never heard "Barbie is sexist" on the street.

Zarina has ten Barbies. For a while they were *the* thing to give at Park Slope birthday parties. "How did you feel about Barbie back then?" I asked.

"I loved her," Zarina said; "I was in love with her. I was an only child, and it was a person."

And now? "Now I think she's disgusting, because she has an impossible structure. She causes people to want to have breast surgery, things like that. Kids play with Barbie. They love her. Part of that love is the way she looks. Then that look turns out to require surgery."

Love does have something to do with it, I think, or why get so exercised about a doll, even a doll that's a symbol? I loved dolls when I was a girl; all that intense, involved play—they were part of me. If, to the kids who play with them, dolls are an extension of self and a means to learn to care for others, they should not be caricatures that constrict and restrict and homogenize.

Barbie brings with her a dazzling, sophisticated world, a world of specificity so enticing—with those unending wardrobes and miniature accessories—that you may be reminded of the Brontës' Gondal and Angria. But for today's children, someone other than themselves is drawing the pictures and writing the words.

Barbie looks as though she might be real and accessible, as opposed to outright fantasy creations such as pony dolls, but the bland-faced, impossibly skinny creature with the big bosom, absurdly long legs, and feet curved to fit forever and only in high heels is a saboteur. She holds the illusory promise of inclusion—you love her, identify with her, want to be like her, and you can't. It's a betrayal from the very heart of things.

By now, after thirty-five years, Barbie has become woven into the consciousness of many adults. In one way or another, she is part of women's identity. Martha T. McCluskey put it well (in the March/April 1994 issue of TIKKUN) when she wrote, "We each share a complicated and contextual mixture of identity of privilege and oppression."

Women's identity, the terms of our participation in society, and the scope and meaning of feminism are still hotly contested questions. If feminists—and who else will lead us out of these mazes?—uphold Barbie, it only further confuses the issues. We are living at a time when the media ever more brilliantly portray visual images that exclude most women. The media promote conformity to their version of the female body, and we too often remain entranced by the very images that enslave us. This is in truth a kind of idolatry, a worship of artificial gods. As long as this continues, we will be distracted from discovering and treasuring our specialness, our uniqueness, out of which we give our gifts to the world. □

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FICTION

The Painter

David Yair Rosenstock

"Never lie to your dog," Timothy said to Avram the painter, "never tell him a black cat crossed your path if it had even one tiny white spot on its nose."

"Never in my life have I lied to a dog," Avram said, removing his protective eyeglasses to get a better look at the young man he had just hired. "First, I could see no good reason to, and second, I have never owned a dog."

"But you are Jewish, aren't you?" Timothy said as if continuing a conversation they'd started earlier.

Avram adjusted the skullcap on his head. "Every day," he said, "but I'm not superstitious."

"I'm not really superstitious either," Timothy said, "but sometimes when my Mom sends me to the butcher's and I'm standing there in the sawdust, I look through the curved glass window of the refrigerator and I recognize certain parts of the animals, you know, like the tongue, or liver, or the head of a pig or a chicken, and I warn everyone on line not to eat them because if they do, they're gonna feel what it's like to have that part of their own body eaten. I'm not grossing you out, am I?"

Timothy had started his paid apprenticeship with Avram the painter one very early winter morning during the seventeenth year of his life. Avram supplied the paint, brushes, rollers, scrapers, plaster, drop cloths, caps, coveralls, ladders, and protective glasses. Timothy brought his own sneakers and a commitment to work and learn on the job for at least one week.

Timothy broke the silence by laughing. It was not a vicious laugh, but rather one that seemed to acknowledge Avram's power to ignore him when necessary. "It's too bad you never had a dog," he said. "They're great listeners and they never lie to you. When I was in the fifth grade I told my dog I was leaving home to marry a ballerina I'd seen on a school trip to the ballet. He told me I was too young to get married, but if I did, I'd have to take him with me. He said a promise is a promise."

Avram's hair was on its way from gray to white, yet his face, and especially his eyes, retained the features of an inquisitive boy. Throughout his life he, as well as his father, had attracted strangers whose most urgent need seemed to be to have someone to listen to their often nonsensical, effortless flow of words. That Timothy was the only one to respond to the three-by-five index card he'd posted on the supermarket's bulletin board was no surprise to Avram. He didn't know if he was the magnet pulling in the Timothys of the world, or if the Timothys were the magnets pulling him into their orbits.

"Do you know why I took this job?" Timothy asked Avram as they both scraped peeling paint and plaster from the walls of a stranger's living room.

"To warn me about the dangers of eating certain animal parts, and to convince me to go out and find a dog, a Jewish dog, to keep me company in my old age. That is the reason you decided to be a painter."

"No," Timothy said,



JULIE DELTON

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"that's not why, but there's this lady who lives across the street from me who takes in stray dogs and then tries to find them homes. Right now she has about twelve of them in her house. We could stop there this evening and have a look if you want. She doesn't charge anything and they all have their shots and tags and she'll even give you a free leash and a bag of food to get you started. She's a little strange but she's doing something important. That's where I got mine from."

"I do not mind if we talk," Avram said, "but work comes first and if you want to finish telling me why you took this job, you must keep scraping or we'll never finish on time."

"Okay, okay. Don't get mad at me."

"I'm not mad at you," Avram said.

For several minutes Timothy and Avram focused on their work. Avram scraped slowly, methodically, as if playing an instrument, while Timothy worked in sudden bursts, almost vengefully.

"Avram?" Timothy said, breaking the silence, "what would you do if you suddenly found a lot of money?"

"If," Avram explained, "there is no way of knowing who it belongs to, the Talmud says you can keep it. But, if you found, for example, three coins piled up one on top of another, it would be a *seemahn*, a sign that they were placed there for some reason and, therefore, you cannot take them, even if you have no way of knowing whom they belong to. Do you see what I mean?"

Timothy shrugged his shoulders. "I guess my luck's starting to run out. I used to find money all the time. Just about every day I'd find some."

"And where did you find this money?" Avram asked.

"Mostly in the gutter or under people's porches, or in the sand under the boardwalk. But like I said, my luck's running out and things are getting expensive and I'm not a kid anymore."

"No, you're not a kid anymore," Avram said, motioning to Timothy to start on the ceiling, the area Avram now had the most difficulty with.

Timothy opened the stepladder, positioned it, then climbed up to the rung right below the top. He looked down at Avram and wondered how old he was and why he was still a painter of other people's houses and what it was like to be a Jew.

"Avram," he said, "do you pray every day?"

"Every day," Avram said.

"What do you pray for?"

Avram put down his scraper and examined the wall he was working on. "I pray that when I take a walk in the woods on the Sabbath for peace and tranquility, I do not come across a tree with a rope hanging off a branch. And if I come across such a tree, I pray that there is no noose at the end of the rope. And if there is a noose at the end of the rope, I pray I hear no heavenly voice say, 'Avram, go hang thyself from that evergreen tree.' And if I hear such a voice say such a thing, I pray the rope is weak. And if, as I place the rope around my neck I feel it is strong, I pray that the branch it is hanging from is weak. And if the branch is strong, I pray to God I misled no one in this lifetime."

"Do all Jews pray that way?" Timothy asked.

Avram laughed. "No, Timothy, this is not a Jewish prayer."

Timothy climbed down the ladder and placed his hand on Avram's shoulder in a gesture of comfort. "I sometimes hear voices myself," he said.

The painter and his new apprentice went their separate ways after work, and that night, as the plaster dried and hardened, creating a smooth surface for them to paint on, Timothy slept soundly while Avram awoke several times from white dreams.

At seven-thirty the next morning, as promised, Avram pulled up in front of Timothy's house in his old station wagon. Timothy was standing in the cold morning air watching his breath make streams of vapor. His coat was open and he was wearing the white coveralls and cap Avram had given him the day before.

"Good morning," Avram said as he rolled down the window, "I didn't expect to find you out here waiting for me."

"Where else would I be?" Timothy said as he looked at the mess in the back of the car and guessed it had always been that way, filled with old dropcloths and cans of paint and turpentine. He sat down in the heated car, stuffed his cap in his pocket and rubbed his hands together, not sure what else to say to Avram so early in the morning.

"I feel good about hiring you," Avram said, nodding. "Being on time is a sign of dedication."

Timothy waved goodbye to someone in the window, Avram turned on the radio to a classical music station, and the two of them drove off to work as if they'd been partners for years.

"I'm not sure how dedicated I am," Timothy said, making his voice carry above the music, "but I really appreciate the ride and I'm never late. My Mom says I'll be early to my own funeral. She says I can't help myself."

"Mozart's concerto for flute and orchestra," Avram said turning up the sound, "do you know it?"

Timothy didn't answer. He was too busy watching the way Avram drove—both hands tightly gripping the steering wheel, eyes constantly looking out the rear-view mirror even though there were almost no other cars on the road. He thought about telling Avram about the three-legged dog his neighbor took in yesterday but decided not to.

When they arrived at the house Avram did not ring the doorbell but took a set of keys out of his pocket and unlocked the front door. "They trust you with their keys?" Timothy said.

"What's not to trust?" Avram said. "You trust me, no? And I trust them, and they don't know you, and I am a good judge of character and they trust me, so today we go inside and we paint, okay?"

"Okay," Timothy said, as he followed Avram inside through rooms he'd not seen before, rooms they were not painting.

With a screwdriver he kept in his back pocket, Avram pried open a can of paint and started stirring it slowly in one direction with a wooden stirrer, then slowly in the other, scooping up from the bottom and scraping the sides every few turns. Timothy watched Avram rock back and forth and listened as the painter sang to himself, much like the way his grandmother did when she used to stand by the stove and stir a large pot of soup for what seemed to him like hours. It was important for his grandmother to feed them, he thought. It was important for Avram to feed the walls.

Avram kept stirring without looking up. His voice gradually faded until Timothy could barely hear him.

"Avram?" Timothy whispered, but Avram did not respond. Timothy stepped close enough to see the hairs in Avram's ears and whispered again, "Avram? Avram, do the fumes ever get to you?"

"Fumes?" Avram said looking up at Timothy as if he didn't quite recognize him.

"Yeah, fumes. From the paint. Do they ever make you dizzy or anything?"

"Fumes? Who smells fumes?"

"You mean you can't smell the paint?"

Avram stuck his nose as close as he could to the can of paint without getting it wet and took a deep breath. "Today," he said, standing up to face Timothy, "today I smell nothing. A long time ago I had a good nose, a sensitive nose, a nose like one of your dogs, but one day, a day which I cannot ever forget, I stood up too quickly to smell flowers my wife placed in a vase on our table, and I got a little dizzy. Well it was more than a little dizzy to tell you the truth. She didn't see me fall and when I was once again stable on my feet, I went over to the vase and as hard as I tried, and I put my nose right into them, I could smell nothing. Nothing."

"Were you sick or something?" Timothy asked.

"No. No, I was not sick. My nose was clear. There was no congestion. I remember there were at least a dozen red roses, a few branches of eucalyptus and what you call baby's breath. I was new to this country then, and to this language, but I already knew to identify these flowers by their English name."

Avram paused and handed Timothy the screwdriver, motioning for him to open another can of paint. Timothy pried open the can and took a deep breath. He had never heard of anyone losing their sense of smell before.

"So, what happened?" Timothy said, "you're not gonna just leave me hanging here like this?"

Avram took a long, deep breath through his nose and let it out slowly. "What happened?" he said. "What happened is that night, while I was reading the paper, the *Malach ha'Mavet*, the Angel of Death, snuck up behind me, and as I couldn't see him because he's invisible, and now I couldn't smell him either, he went freely into our bedroom and, without a fight, took from me my wife. And ever since then, and as I said that was many years ago, I have never been bothered by these fumes you smell. I smell no roses, no paint, no turpentine, no Angel of Death. I cannot even remember these things. I'm like an elephant without a trunk, only nobody would shoot me for these, even though these," Avram paused and held his lips apart for Timothy to see his teeth, "these are my originals. But tell me Timothy, because I am old and I forget, how is it to be young?"

"Am I young?"

"Yes, you, you are young."

"I don't know," Timothy said, holding back a grin, "but did you know that one dog year equals seven of ours? So if I was a dog I'd be over a hundred years old and most likely I'd be dead."

"But you're not a dog."

"No, I'm not, but if you ever wanted one I could give you a good recommendation even though you never had one before 'cause I'm a good judge of character too."

Timothy laughed and then Avram laughed, and then they stirred the paint together.

When the paint was ready Avram lifted the wooden stirrer, scraped both sides of it on the rim of the can, then placed it carefully on the lid that was on the floor. Timothy watched him and then did the same with his stirrer, trying to imitate the way Avram moved.

"Before I start painting," Avram said, straightening himself up, "I always say a prayer and have a little drink." He reached into his bag and pulled out a thermos and two paper coffee cups. "We will make a toast," he said as he unscrewed the cover and took a deep breath of the steamy contents. Avram poured hot coffee into the cups and handed one to Timothy. "To the completion of this job," he said.

Timothy took a sip of the coffee. It was strong and black and there was no sugar in it, but he drank it anyway and told Avram that it was good.

"Tell me, Timothy," Avram said as he finished his drink and put his cup back in his bag, "are you married?"

Timothy almost choked on the coffee he was swallow-

ing. "Me? Married? Are you kidding? I'm only seventeen. I still live with my Mom."

"When I was your age my wife was already chosen for me and I for her. We were married before I was eighteen and by the time I was twenty we had grown to love each other."

"Well, that's nice but things are real different now."

"Of this I am quite aware, my young friend."

Timothy finished his coffee and crushed the paper cup into a ball. "Avram," he said, looking for a place to toss it, "Do you have any children?"

Avram picked up a can of paint, bent over and poured a small amount into one of the trays. "Children?" he said, slowly straightening himself up again, "The night I came home and found all the flowers in the house I thought it was strange because the Sabbath was still a few days away, but then I started to think maybe they were a sign that my wife had some good news from the doctor. She told me that when she got on the subway to go home it was completely filled with Orthodox men standing with no shoes on. One of them, a very tall man with long bony fingers, took off his hat and put his yarmulke on her head like this."

Avram took off his plain black skullcap and placed it on Timothy's head to demonstrate, "Just like this," he said, "as if she were a man and not a woman."

Timothy put his hand on his head and felt the small round piece of cloth and pressed it down so it wouldn't fall off.

"And then," Avram said, "this man took out from his bag his *tallis*, his white prayer shawl, recited the blessing, and wrapped it around my wife's shoulders. Now you must understand, Timothy, that in a synagogue the men and women are kept apart, and the women do not wear the prayer shawl. He then asked her if she knew her prayers. Of course my wife knew all her prayers, but she was frightened and started singing a children's song her grandfather had taught her. My wife's voice, unlike my own, was always beautiful. She sang it for them once by herself and then they all joined in and sang it with her. When the doors opened at our station, all the men stopped singing and moved away from her. She got off and walked down the stairs to the avenue and when she saw the flower shop she started crying and bought all the flowers.

"I told her she must have fallen asleep and that it was only a dream. I told her to take some aspirin and went into the other room to get away from her for a while. I sat there by myself and while I read the newspaper, this *Malach*, this Angel of Death, passed over me and did what it does. So the answer to your question is, no, we had no children, we had no time."

Timothy took off the skullcap and put it back on Avram's head. "I'd of believed her," he said.

Avram handed Timothy a roller. "Here, Mr. Believer, now I will show you how to paint the ceiling."

Timothy watched, then picked up a wooden pole and screwed it into the end of his roller. He put on his goggles and rolled the roller in the paint exactly the way Avram did. Without spilling a drop, Timothy raised the pole and started painting.

"Avram," Timothy said, after he'd finished half the ceiling, "I was just thinking. Maybe we could get some Chinese food later and read each other's fortunes."

"Fortunes? Who needs fortunes? At my age one knows already what to expect."

"But it's fun and there's nothing to worry about because bad fortunes aren't good for digestion, and bad digestion's not good for business. You see what I mean?"

Avram looked up at the ceiling and nodded. "I see what you mean," he said, "you want me to tell you what a good job you're doing, then you want me to eat your Chinese food, because my future, which is good for my digestion, is hidden inside a cookie, and then, when I drive you home tonight you want me to stop at your neighbor's house because there's a dog there that's been asking for me by name. And all I want of you, Timothy, who thinks that if I would have believed my wife, the Angel of Death would have gone away

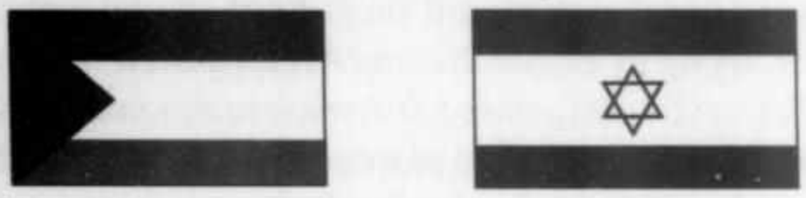
(Continued on p.91)

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בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל

TIKKUN

PASSOVER HAGGADAH SUPPLEMENT 1994

Ever since Rabbi Akiba used the Seder to plan a revolutionary struggle against the Romans, the Jews have used the Seder as a time to grapple with their current reality. They have used the Haggadah not as a sacred text, but as an inspiration to address their own reality and to imagine concretely how to change it. It is in this spirit that we encourage you to make any Seder you attend a lively and spirited occasion by attaching this Haggadah supplement to whatever text is being used. This supplement is intended to add controversy and liveliness to your Seder discussions. Don't read the Haggadah as though it were a prayer book, but as a guide for topical discussions. Discuss the ideas, debate them, and, if necessary, reject them. Engage in your own analysis of how to make Passover's message not just an interesting historical memory but a contemporary commandment to seek liberation in this world. Only thus can we fulfill the Torah's obligation to view ourselves as though we personally had gone out of Egypt.

KIDDUSH

Before the Kiddush (the first blessing over the wine).

We are gathered here tonight to affirm our continuity with the generations of Jews who have kept alive the vision of freedom inherent in the Passover story. We proudly affirm that we are the descendants of slaves—the first group of slaves in recorded history ever to wage a successful rebellion against their slaveholders. Ours was the first historical national liberation struggle, and the prototype of many struggles that other nations would wage against those who oppressed them.

There are others who would have done their best to forget their humble past. There are other peoples that saw themselves as descendants of gods or of superhuman heroes. We are proud that our people has clung to its vision of itself as a slave people and has insisted on telling its story of liberation as the central founding event around which its culture was built.

Ruling classes have traditionally tried to convince their subjects that domination is inevitable and is built into the very structure of the universe. The Jewish people's Torah, telling the story of our liberation struggle, has been a perpetual thorn in the side of these ruling classes. Not only was our very existence a proof that the world could be changed, but every Passover, and every Sabbath, we insisted on recounting the story and drawing the lesson: The way things are is not the way things have to be; the world can be radically altered. While ruling classes, slave owners, and bosses want no limits on how much they can exploit human labor, the Shabbat institutionalizes the first absolute limit and is the prototypical worker's victory over the power of bosses. For twenty-four hours, the Jewish people declare that they are withdrawing from anything connected with labor—the activity of acting on and changing the material world. Getting and spending, using money, lighting fires, building, harvesting, and writing are forbidden. For twenty-four hours we stop attempting to dominate and control the world, and instead celebrate its grandeur—and celebrate the victory in our struggle for freedom, which allows us to rest and rejoice in this way.

No wonder that the constant recounting of our quest for freedom has predisposed Jews throughout the ages to support the liberation struggles of other oppressed groups. While there have been Jews in every age who thought that they best served the interests of our people by currying favor with the powerful and allying with them, most Jews have rejected this strategy and instead have sought ways to ally themselves with the oppressed.

The tradition is to use the Seder to move from a discussion of the past to a discussion of the present—so that we too can embody the Jewish tradition of healing and repairing the world. Jews in Egypt did not require only an internal spiritual transformation—they also needed to get out of the situation of physical bondage. Judaism has always insisted that spiritual and social transformation go together. *Tikkun,* the healing and repair and transformation that we seek, is not just a matter of politics, but of changing our inner lives, recognizing God in the world around us, in each other, and in ourselves. We need personal time to develop our own inner spiritual lives. But *tikkun* is also about transforming the social world. And the Seder is not primarily a time for personal healing, but for world healing. So, like Jews of yore, we discuss concrete politics with all its complications and potential disagreements—recognizing that as Jews we cannot be satisfied with spiritual liberation that leaves the political and social inequalities of the world in place, the suffering of others unchanged. Far from being overly political, such discussions are the essence of taking Pesach seriously.

This year, many Jews are troubled by the ascent to power of forces connected to the Christian Right and other reactionary forces in the United States. We are well aware that some of the movements whose agendas are now being given national prominence have close associations with anti-Semitic and racist forces in our society. The choice by the new Speaker of the House of a historian for Congress who had denied funding to a project that sought to teach about the Holocaust because that project did not give equal attention to the pro-Nazi position should remind us that, despite the embrace of the Right by some Jews, this new political development could be very dangerous for our people.

But in the short run, it is not the danger to our own people but to those who are most economically and politically powerless that must concern us. The Right articulates a punitive and uncompassionate approach to the needs of the poor, the homeless, the hungry, the unem-

ployed, those without health care, those who need government protections from the selfishness and me-firstism of the competitive marketplace and from the willingness of corporations to exploit their workers and then discard them when they are no longer profitable. Though these right-wingers like to talk about the Bible or spiritual values, they actually distort Biblical values and seem unaware of the Biblical commands to love our neighbors, love the stranger, and actively pursue social justice. We are appalled at the racism, sexism, homophobia and demeaning of others that accompanies some of these right wing movements, and we cannot celebrate our own liberation without recommitting ourselves to the struggle for social justice.

We are aware, however, that one way to help the most oppressed is to try to understand and speak to the concerns of middle-income people who voted with the Right but who are not themselves deeply racist or deep haters. Instead of dismissing these people as reactionary enemies, our task is to understand what draws some of these people to right-wing movements. The ethos of selfishness and materialism, and "bottom line" me-firstism of the competitive market, has had a corrosive effect on this society. As market values permeate our society, every relationship is weakened, because people begin to relate to each other in terms of what they can get from each other. This instrumental attitude undermines our ability to see each other as created in the image of God. The result is a growing loneliness and mutual distrust, even in families and friendships.

The ethos of selfishness permeates every aspect of our society—from the corporations that think it perfectly appropriate to rip off the resources of the planet for private gain to the criminals who would rob or mug us in our streets and neighborhoods.

No wonder, then, that people are deeply upset and willing to respond to those who understand that we are in the midst of an ethical and spiritual crisis in this society. The Right speaks to that crisis by suggesting that its source lies in the selfishness of feminists, gays, African Americans, or immigrants, all of whom are supposedly selfishly pursuing their own needs without regard to the needs of the larger community, and using the liberal commitment to big-government as the way to get special goodies and benefits. We reject this kind of scapegoating of the powerless. But we also sympathize with the plight of middle-income people who are rightfully resentful of the consequences in their own lives of the ethos of selfishness. Though we reject the way that their anger gets misdirected against the poor and against those who have been beneficiaries of government programs aimed at redressing past wrongs, we do acknowledge that their upset cannot be dismissed. Our task is to find ways to deal with their distress, rather than allow right-wingers to misdirect that pain against the powerless. It's not enough for us to ritualistically commit ourselves to caring about the poor—tonight we have to think about concrete strategies that can actually defend the powerless effectively.

We are also troubled tonight by the situation in the Middle East. The recent acts of terror against Israelis deeply sadden us and remind us that there are some elements in the Islamic world who will never accept a Jewish state in the Middle East, no matter how accommodating Israelis become. But we also reject calls to slow the peace process. Such calls give new fuel to the terrorists, whose goal of subverting the peace process will be rewarded if every act of terror is followed by new hesitations.

We will never accept a peaceful settlement that threatens Israeli security. We recognize that Palestinians have the same right to national self-determination as Jews, and so we support the Israeli peace movement's demands on the Rabin government that it speed up the process, create a demilitarized Palestinian state, dismantle those settlements that are not willing to live as minority citizens of the new Palestinian state, and withdraw Israeli troops from the West Bank so that they can instead defend the borders of Israel proper. Unless this move is made quickly and decisively, we fear that continuing acts of terror from Islamic fundamentalists will deepen despair in Israel and lead to an electoral resurgence of the Israeli right—and with it a new determination to persist in an occupation that is morally unjust and politically untenable. So tonight we commit ourselves to supporting the Israeli government as it continues its search for peace. We cannot support any solution to the problem that would endanger the existence of the State of Israel. But neither can we remain silent year after year as the Palestinian people continue to live under conditions of harsh occupation in the West Bank or refugee camps in the Arab world, yearning for a homeland just as we Jews once yearned for our own return to Zion. Their liberation and freedom can and must be achieved without harm to the safety, security, and freedom of the Jewish people—but we cannot close our ears to their cries and their pain.

Nor can we shut our ears to the cries of pain from Bosnia. We Jews have often shouted "Never Again." Although there are relevant differences between the Holocaust and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, the slaughter there is outrageous and a violation of the image of God implanted in each person. We commit ourselves to going beyond ritual condemnations of the slaughter and to involve ourselves in practical political activity aimed at getting our government to immediately and forcefully end the slaughter. This year we commit ourselves to actively and consciously struggling against the alienation, fragmentation, and meaninglessness in American life, and to support a change in American society from an ethos of selfishness and cynicism to an ethos of caring and idealism. We intend to widen the circle of our caring, so that it encompasses the poor and the oppressed, not only in the United States but also in Haiti, Mexico, El Salvador, Eastern Europe, Africa, and wherever else there is human suffering.

Passover, then, is not just a celebration of our own freedom—it is a moment in which we rededicate ourselves to the struggles for peace, justice, equality, and meaningful lives for all peoples.

Bless the Vegetation of the Earth in Times of Ecological Crisis

Add to the section where we dip the parsley or greens of the earth in the salt water and say the blessing "boray pree ha-adamah."

Our holiday of freedom is also a time to rejoice in the bountiful blessings of the Earth. The Earth pours forth its riches, allowing us and God's myriad creatures to flourish and enjoy the splendor of life. Each spring we witness the miracle of renewal as vegetation returns to the planet.

This Pesach we pause to reflect on the ways that we have failed to take adequate care of the Earth. The free market, in a relentless fury to amass profits without regard for ecological consequences, has generated tens of thousands of corporate ventures and products that have combined to do incalculable damage to the life-support systems of the planet. Willing to let corporate concerns for profit count more than the general interest, we have restricted our responses to ecological insensitivity.

Our biblical injunction to work and to exercise stewardship over the Earth has been transformed into a notion that the Earth is simply a resource for exploitation. If we construct a society in which people are encouraged to look out for themselves and advance their own interests without regard for the consequences to others, an ecological crisis becomes almost inevitable.

As Jews, however, we recognize that our own fate is closely connected to the fate of others. The peasant in Brazil who has no other way to make a living but to cut down the rain forest, the Japanese fisherman who has no way to live but to deplete the sea, or the auto manufacturer who uses political clout to block funds for mass transit or for stricter environmental policies—all are acting rationally, given the logic of the competitive marketplace. Nevertheless, their actions have dire consequences for the rest of us. Our task is not to condemn these people, but to construct an economic and social system in which people no longer have to choose between their own best interests and the best interests of the environment. This is not a question solely of learning as individuals to be more ecologically aware—though this is also important—but also of transforming the social system that makes it possible for some people to profit on activities that destroy or endanger our planet Earth.

We approach the Earth not only as our sustainer, vital to our survival, but also as a sacred place, worthy of our respect and awe. The Bible teaches us that the whole Earth is full of God's glory—that every part is alive, holy, and miraculous. Today, as we rededicate ourselves to saving the Earth from the ecological damage that has been done, we also rejoice in the Earth and thank God for its beauty and wonder.

Blessed are you, God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the Earth.

Drops from Our Cup of Joy

Before reciting the Ten Plagues

It is traditional to spill a drop of wine from our cups as we recite each plague. Our cup of rejoicing cannot be full if our enemies are suffering. The Talmud recounts that when the heavenly angels sang songs of praise to God as the Egyptians were drowning in the Sea of Reeds, God reprimanded them for celebrating the suffering of his children the Egyptians.

Our people did not return to its ancient homeland with the intention of displacing or oppressing another people. The historical responsibility for the tragedy is two-sided; when we were refugees fleeing from the oppression of Christian Europe, the Palestinian leadership did all it could to block our return and refused to consider sharing the land. When the UN offered a two-state solution in 1947, Israel accepted and the Palestinians refused. Yet most Palestinians who fled were not involved in these decisions; they were peasant farmers with little knowledge of or involvement in the affairs that would eventually lead to displacement from their homes.

Even though we are hopeful that Israel and the Palestinians will speed the pace of peacemaking and reconciliation, and though we remain proud of the courageous steps Israel has already taken, we nevertheless cannot leave our cup of joy full as long as a million Palestinians live in refugee camps or under Israel military rule. But we also dip drops from our cup in sadness for the many Israelis who have lost their lives to violent attacks by those who wish to undermine the peace accord.

We are particularly saddened by the continued economic oppression and spiritual suffering of African Americans, and by the assault on the poor amongst them by a right-wing Congress. As people and corporations move from our inner cities, leaving them without a tax-base or employment possibilities, as social services deteriorate in the face of a mean-spirited backlash that defunds local and state governments, and as despair and meaninglessness yields drug abuse, alcoholism, and a surge in acts of violence, the conditions of many African Americans deteriorates. Escalating repression while reducing economic resources, the white power structure in Congress acts as a modern-day Pharaoh. Black Muslim demagogues and other rappers of despair and hate manipulate the growing despair of some African Americans in racist, anti-Semitic, and misogynist directions. We are furious at the anti-Semitism—and commit ourselves to fighting it wherever it rears its ugly head. But we also identify with the pain of those who have been subjected to systematic humiliation and discrimination. Remembering how less than a century ago it was Jews who were being blamed for having a culture that produced the sloth and ugliness of Eastern European ghetto life, we reject all attempts to blame the long history of oppression of Blacks on a "culture of poverty." Instead, even as we actively demand that Blacks repudiate and marginalize all anti-Semitic forces within their own communities, we simultaneously affirm our solidarity with them, and spill a drop of wine from our cups for the suffering and continued oppression of African Americans.

In Every Generation

After reading "vihee she'amda" *(that in every generation there have been those who rose up against us, but God ultimately saved us from their hands).*

Why the Jews? Why should we have been the subject of persecution for thousands of years?

Was it perhaps our exclusiveness, our separateness, our insistence on being special—or some other aspect of our internal collective pathology? No!

To counter this, we affirm our Jewishness today. We have not been the cause of our oppression. We have been a very convenient tool for various ruling classes: a separable and recognizable minority that could be used as a scapegoat, a convenient target upon which to vent their hostility.

Jews have not been the only scapegoats to be used in this way. But in Western Europe they were the primary and most consistent scapegoat.

Our target status was largely responsible for our headlong rush into assimilation once that was legally possible. The Judaism that was abandoned, full of tears and suffering, was a Judaism whose sense of joy and inner confidence had been replaced by a narrow defensiveness—itself a response to external oppression. Even Hasidism, born as a protest against the joylessness of a rigidifying Eastern European Judaism, eventually lost much of its spontaneity and its earlier creativity, increasingly reproducing the dogmatic spirit it sought to replace. It is only now, decades after one-third of our people was wiped out, that we can begin to imagine reclaiming the more joyous and life-affirming aspects of our Jewish heritage.

Yet even here we are not free of the dynamics of world oppression. In class societies, virtually everyone is enmeshed in a web of oppression, in some respects by forces outside our control, in some respects by participating and benefiting from the oppression of others. Whether as tax collectors and small tavern owners in Eastern Europe, or as shopkeepers, government bureaucrats, social workers and teachers interacting with people in American ghettos, Jews are sometimes perceived as representatives of the established order in their dealings with other oppressed groups. In the process, and quite unfairly, anti-

Semitism is regenerated. It is understandable why we Jews would become angry at the groups who participate in these dynamics—the peasants in Eastern Europe or some African Americans in the U.S. We wish that they would understand that we too are victims, yet it's understandable why they may see us otherwise.

Similarly, when people point to the relative material prosperity of Jews compared to other ethnic groups in the U.S. and use this as a reason to claim that Jewish oppression is a matter of the past, they fail to understand the history of that oppression. Jews were doing well from a material standpoint in pre-war Germany as well. Anti-Semitism, like sexism, cannot be reduced to an economic category—there are other unique forms of oppression besides material deprivation. Jews who sympathize with the oppression of every other group but who have little understanding or knowledge of the history of their own people may be engaged in a massive denial of reality. This denial is sometimes inspired by internalized anti-Semitism and the resulting need to convince oneself and one's non-Jewish friends that Jewishness "really isn't very important," and that it's "really just an interesting historical relic of the past."

There is no easy way out, no way for one people to make a separate peace with a world of oppressors or assimilate successfully and without moral compromise into that world. Our own liberation and our own mental health require the liberation of all, and the end of all oppression.

Spiritual Reflections

Egypt is mitzrayim, the strait place, the place of constraint and tightness. Tonight we seek to liberate ourselves from the ways that we keep ourselves tied up in psychological, spiritual and intellectual knots, preventing us from being in touch with our own God space within. Each of us is created in the image of that God, and each of us has the task of liberating ourselves from the inner Pharaohs that keep us from being in touch with the God within and the God in each other human being.

But many of us feel uncomfortable with God language, no longer sure we can believe in a God who is represented as a powerful patriarch or some judgmental, angry, or even loving parent sitting above us in Heaven and periodically choosing to interfere in human affairs. Jewish Renewal today involves rejecting concepts of God that make no sense to us in order to give us space to discover the God that can be real to us. We should not make an idol of older conceptions of God, nor should we accept the idea that we are atheists if we cannot accept patriarchal or hierarchical conceptions of divinity. Our task today is to open ourselves to awe, wonder, and radical amazement of the universe, and to the accumulated wisdom that we can discern from studying Jewish texts, and in that process to find our own connection to God. Understanding that all language about God is necessarily misleading, we will reject language that makes little sense to us and find language that comes closer to speaking about our experience. [Pause here and share with each other some of your thinking about God.]

But our task is not to speak of God, but to speak to God. And for that, the ancient words still resonate, and so we sing and say Hallelu-Yah, praise to you, Yah, the breath and spirit of the universe, the force that makes possible the transformation of the world from that which is to that which ought to be, the power that liberated us from Egypt.

Pour Out Thy Wrath

After the meal, before opening the door for Elijah and before saying "Shefokh Chamatkha."

Tonight we remember our six million sisters and brothers who perished at the hands of the Nazis and at the hands of hundreds of thousands of anti-Semites—many of them Germans, Poles, Croatians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Romanians, Hungarians, Austrians—who assisted those Nazis throughout Europe. We remember also the Jewish martyrs throughout the generations—oppressed, beaten, raped, and murdered by European Christians. And we remember tonight with pride the Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto, and the tens of thousands of Jews who resisted, fought back, joined Partisan units, or engaged in acts of armed violence against the oppressors.

It is not fashionable to speak about these atrocities—particularly since some reactionary Jews use these memories to legitimate human rights violations against Palestinians, as though shooting rock-throwing children could somehow compensate for our own failure to have taken up arms soon enough against the Nazi oppressors, or as an excuse to be insensitive to the violence done to others—as though our pain was the only pain. But though the memories of past oppression are sometimes misused to support insensitivity to others, it is still right for us to talk about our pain, what was done to us, how unspeakable, how outrageous. So tonight we recall in pain and in anger what was done to us.

To get beyond the pain, we must first be allowed to express our anger. Tonight it is appropriate to speak about our history. What was done to us was wrong, disgusting, an assault on the sanctity of human life and on God. It is with righteous indignation that Jews have traditionally called out "*Shefokh Chamatkha ha'goyim asher lo yeda'ukha*"—pour out your wrath, God, on those people who have acted toward us in a way that fails to recognize Your holy spirit within us as it is within all human beings. [This might be an appropriate place to pause for discussion.]

Yet, even as we speak our anger, we pause also to thank the peoples of the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union who united fifty years ago to defeat the Nazis. We celebrate their victory and the liberation that they brought to the remnants of our people. Tonight we reaffirm our commitment to the messianic vision of a world of peace and justice, a world in which inequalities have been abolished and our human capacities for love and solidarity and creativity and freedom are allowed to flourish, a world in which all people will recognize and affirm in each other the spirit of God. In that day, living in harmony with nature and with each other, all peoples will participate in acknowledging God's presence on earth. We remain committed to the struggles in our own time that will contribute to making that messianic vision possible someday.

Please copy and circulate this Haggadah supplement. Encourage those who find its perspective engaging to subscribe to Tikkun magazine (in which the issues developed here are explored) and to read Michael Lerner's book, *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation*. For Tikkun subscriptions, send $31 to: Tikkun, P.O. B. 460926, Escondido, CA 92046-9914.

Sex in Israel

David Margolis

The Hope of Two Thousand Years

Uri: The name means light. But another meaning inheres, for in the first syllable of "Uri" blinks the name of the ancient city out of which our forefather Abraham, touched by God, arose to meet his new life. In English, by no coincidence, the word "ur" means something primitive, unpolished—something at its beginnings. As an American friend once said to him, "Uri, you are a rough draft."

Which was not completely fair to Uri, an Israeli man not yet thirty, who possessed that combination of sweetness and brash self-certainty that marks our brothers in the Homeland. Yes, he was unpolished, but which of us is not, after all, an unrevised early version of what—like artists, revising as we go—we know we could become?

Uri had an easy manner. If he was behind you in the supermarket line and you lacked ten shekels for your purchase, without even thinking he would plunk down the coins for you, addressing you with a click of the tongue and an upturned hand to let you know he's half insulted that you even think you need to thank him.

True, his generosity is partly impatience: His hands and feet are already moving behind the obstacle you represent, he wants to get going and you have already taken one hundred seconds of his time while you laboriously explore your pockets and purse and explain your predicament to the checkout girl. He's willing to pay ten shekels just in order to *stop standing on this line.*

Because he is part Moroccan, with that beautiful dark, pouty, ardent, expressive face that can burst—*pitom!*—like sunshine into a big smile, and because he wears tight European-style pants and keeps the top four buttons of his shirt open to display the golden Star of David he wears on his chest, some people mistake him at first for one of the *chakchakim* who may be found in public places in the development towns especially, trying to make the acquaintance of young women. "Hey, sweet, you want to drink a cup of coffee with me?"

But Uri is really nothing like a Moroccan *chakchak* guy. He is tall, for one thing, which is probably because his mother is American, and Americans somehow grow tall. Also, because he is half-American, he thinks differently than most of the guys he went through the army with.

For example, he thinks about God. His mother, who was a Conservative Jew in America, maintained fervently that you didn't have to be Orthodox to be "spiritual." After she made *aliyah* and married Uri's Moroccan father, she insisted, when Uri was growing up, on joining the only Conservative synagogue in BeerSheva.

Uri's father, on the other hand, went to a Moroccan synagogue when he needed to go to synagogue and didn't understand why praying the wrong way and talking in English made things more spiritual. Uri, like his father, doesn't often go to synagogue. But he takes after his mother by sometimes using the word "spiritual," or talking about the meaning that he sees in a Jewish holiday. When he does, his Moroccan buddies wag their heads and say, "Oo-wah, Uri's getting *spiritual.*" Uri retorts, "Hey, it's Torah—it's your heritage," which really makes them whoop, so he gives a grin and shuts up.

After the army, he went to college but didn't like to study. Also he realized a secret that is the same in both Israel and America: Having a college degree doesn't mean you're going to get a job.

So he left after a year. He worked on a kibbutz for a few seasons, then waited on tables in a Tel Aviv dance club, then used his knowledge of English to train as a tour guide. For six months he carted groups of tourists to Masada and the Western Wall. But a person gets impatient from saying the same things over and over again or making up entertaining lies.

Uri didn't know what to try next. In the army, he had been good at fixing and building. Finally, his father's Moroccan cronies in the Jewish Agency landed Uri a job as chief handyman at "Building Our People," an educational program in BeerSheva that brought young American Jews to learn about Israel and Zionism.

Now that Uri has found a niche at the Building Our People program, our romance can begin.

David Margolis is an award-winning journalist and fiction writer currently living in Jerusalem, whose work has appeared in many general and Jewish periodicals. He wrote "Sex in Israel" while a writer-in-residence at the Arad Arts Project.

A Spiritual Encounter

Uri was replacing the broken lock on the door of an apartment that housed two women from New York. In the sort of coincidence that is quite common in life but is nearly always eschewed by fiction as false, both women were named Linda.

The first Linda, who was watching him work, was quiet and slender, with long, dark hair and lustrous black eyes. The other was a tawny blonde with a bubbly theatrical manner. She had gone out to buy chocolate and wasn't home when Uri arrived carrying his tool box.

When Dark-Haired Linda, after trying out her pidgin Hebrew and some sign language, discovered that Uri spoke English, she asked him questions while he worked. When she learned he was Moroccan, she wanted to know if he hung pictures of *tzaddikim* on his wall or liked to visit graves of *tzadikkim*. "Are there any graves of *tzadikkim* in the BeerSheva area?" she inquired.

It was an unusual turn for the conversation to take, Uri thought, yet he felt some chamber within his breast resonate with it. As a matter of fact, he told her, his father had a picture of the Baba Sali, the greatest Moroccan holy man, in a drawer. His family got together for Friday evening dinners, he had relatives who were still strictly religious. But no, he didn't know any *tzaddikim* or graves.

Seated beside a table watching him work, her hands folded in quiet repose on the lap of her ankle-length denim skirt, Linda eyed him speculatively with her dark eyes.

Dark-Haired Linda was a dreamy woman and always had been. She had grown up in an "attached" garden apartment with a yard in back, in Flatbush. Her grandmother, called "Bubbe," lived in the identical apartment on the other side of the walls. Bubbe, short, wide, and wrinkled, was dead now, and all Linda could remember about her was the tremendous love that radiated from her to Linda.

As a child, Linda would come home after school and immediately go next door to visit Bubbe. The old lady would sit beside her on the sofa, take Linda's hand, hold it, and pat it for, it seemed, hours at a time, just pat her hand for hours.

Somewhere in the background of her adult mind, Linda knew her Bubbe must have said things too (asked about school, told stories about the old country, suggested snacks, something—you don't just pat someone's hand for hours, do you?) but Linda could never remember anything but the measured, happy pat-and-pat-and-pat of Bubbe's loving child-sized hand on her own soft little child's hand. When it got cold in BeerSheva and Linda turned on the gas heater in her apartment, it reminded her of her Bubbe, who had burned with a steady orange flame of love for her.

As a child, Linda was known in the family for befriending earthworms stranded on the back patio after a rain, bringing them inside to administer shoebox love. She wrote compositions about the lives of spiders, kept ants and beetles in plastic containers. She saved up her own money to buy two hamsters in a cage and did an elaborate seventh-grade science project about them, keeping records of how changes in light and food affected them.

Dreamy as a child, she grew seamlessly into a dreamy teenager. Sometimes on the subway, she would examine the passengers until she felt sure she loved each one. After high school, she thought she would like to be an artist or a scientist, but her parents helped her make a more practical choice: She majored in biology at Brooklyn College and became a junior-high-school science teacher.

Dark-Haired Linda had seemed well behaved and malleable all this time, but by her senior year the accumulation of the men she brought home—motorcyclists, Buddhist meditators, guys with safety pins in their faces, guys who didn't even speak English—finally forced on her parents the realization that a rootless wildness had bloomed in their daughter. "You should think about settling down," they counseled.

Settle down? She wanted to be wild forever. Biology meant a future of pre-pubescent homo sapiens while growing older with the Board of Education. Settle down? She went a little crazy, got wilder and wilder, scaring even herself.

And then one day she remembered, as if she were opening a gift package from the Old Country, all that love from Bubbe. She would follow that love back to its source. The same week, by coincidence, a teacher friend mentioned an ad in the paper, a Jewish class in Brighton Beach. She went. The rabbi (a Moroccan —yet another coincidence, she thought later, though by then she no longer believed in coincidence) was named Ben-Dor, a mystical little man with a potbelly and a wispy beard who taught small groups for free in his apartment. He called her Leah and introduced her to Torah. After a while, he welcomed her into the warmth of his family on Sabbath and weekdays, told stories of holy men and miracle workers while his wife fed her plates of oily rice with lamb and currants and pastries made of ground nuts. She had not known such a world existed.

How lost she had been! How many tears she shed! One day she confessed to Ben-Dor that she had lately stolen various items from the homes of friends, objects

she did not want or need and which afterward, in horror and self-disgust, she threw away. Yet she could not stop.

That was when, quite out of character, he patted her hand—once, twice, three times he patted, then withdrew his fingers, little and soft as Bubbe's. He told her he understood this pain and directed her to go outdoors each evening at twilight and eat three large dates under the open sky, drink a glass of cool water, and afterward say the blessing *borei nafashot*, "Creator of beings." "God is the life of all the worlds," said Rabbi Ben-Dor. Dark-Haired Linda obeyed, laboring over the Hebrew words. Maybe it was self-hypnosis, but soon the desire to steal left her completely.

About certain sexual activities which the Torah called crimes, she felt little remorse: They seemed mistakes, perhaps, not sins. Nevertheless, each evening under the open sky, she asked to be cleared of mistakes as well as sins. A week later, the Gentile ex-boyfriend who kept bothering her suddenly found another woman and disappeared, leaving her on her own at last. "The Earth is full of need and longing," said Rabbi Ben-Dor with a sigh, "and Heaven is full of healing."

Surrendering, she opened herself to miracles. Imitating the rabbi and some of his students, feeling peaceful and cleansed, she began to keep kosher and observe the Sabbath laws. She went to classes two and three times a week. Deep in her core, she had a passion for being a Jew! When she left for Israel, he blessed her that she should find her intended.

Dark-Haired Linda told all this to Uri over beer at Sosha's, Uri's favorite place in the Old City of BeerSheva. The restaurant was one flight up, a dark room with wooden tables and Arabic music playing low in the background. Beside beer and wine, Sosha served pizza, falafel, and a thick, fried Yemenite substitute for French toast called *malawach*. Linda, who had insisted on a kosher place, was uneasy because Sosha's did not have a *kashrut* certificate.

"Where I got two thousand shekel a month to give the rabbi?" demanded Sosha in response to Linda's question. She was an old Yemenite woman whose gold teeth shone in the dimness. "You eat *malawach*," she informed Linda, setting down their beers and going off to cook it.

Uri said Sosha was known to be strictly religious. *Kashrut* supervision was mostly a racket to make rabbis rich, he told her. Linda sipped her beer without agreeing but, as a gesture of compromise, nibbled on a crust of oily, eggy *malawach* when it came.

"You are believing all this that your rabbi said?" Uri asked politely, watching her eat.

"I believe in miracles," she nodded. "I believe there are holy people with powers greater than mine. I believe the soul flies to another dimension when we die. I believe that God chose the Jewish people and that everything that happens to me is part of a plan that I don't know the details of. I'm a religious woman," she reminded him. "I may teach in a yeshiva some day."

"And you have come to Israel to now get married," he said, summing up.

She tilted her head and gave him her slow sideways grin. Her natural expression was inward and slightly apprehensive. But that lazy grin unwinding on her face made her seem like someone who knew the secret that the world is perfect if you look at it the right way.

"No," she told him, "I came to Israel to be in a spiritual place."

He stared with his dark eyes into her dark eyes for a moment, aware of a new collision with the word *spiritual*, as well as of her slender fingers around the glass of beer.

"And also it's time for me to find my mate," she agreed. "I'm thirty years old, after all."

"My family wants me also to be married," Uri confessed, fingering the Jewish star on the exposed V of his chest. It was an understatement: His father was angry that he was still single. Her dark eyes looked at him seriously a long time, the way they had once stared at riders on the New York City subway. Then she uncoiled that long, affable grin again. "Maybe we should get

A Special Invitation to Jewish Intellectuals and Scholars

As part of the TIKKUN Camp near Woodstock, NY, June 13-18, and then as a separate grouping in Jerusalem, on August 6-10, there will be a special seminar exploring issues of social theory in the morning and new directions in Jewish thought in the afternoon. These sessions are open to a small group of invited scholars , but we will also consider the application of others with advanced degrees in philosophy, literature, sociology, history, psychology, anthropology, cultural studies, or Jewish studies. Cost: for the session at Woodstock: $450, including delicious vegetarian food, lodging, pool, and beautiful country setting, plus access to all the other pleasurable activities of the TIKKUN week at Elat Chayyim. Session in Jerusalem: free, but you provide your own transportation, lodging, and food. If you just want to come to the TIKKUN camp week without participation in this seminar, there is no need to apply (information on page 3). If you wish to apply, write us and tell us about yourself: TIKKUN Camp, 251 W. 100th St., NY, NY 10025.

married," she remarked sweetly.

The Struggle for Pluralism

The other Linda, Tawny-Haired Linda, was the daughter of Holocaust survivors. After the war, her father came to America, married another survivor and made a lot of money in reupholstering. On their one child, the parents bestowed private schools, fine clothes, vacations. But under the surface of this good life, Linda felt a current of things unsaid. Though they had told her about the camps, long tunnels of silence opened in the midst of conversations with the relatives. She noticed odd manipulations where ordinary talking would have sufficed and an absolute refusal to ask anyone in uniform for help. Yes, there were corridors in her family's castle that had to be navigated carefully. Did everyone's mother have an irrational tendency to stock an extra closet with food? Did other children routinely check rooms for possible places to hide? Or wonder if friends would be protectors or betrayers, when the time came? The upholsterer's daughter grew up a complex weave, with a personality that had many textures and flecks of color: She was knowing, needy, bossy, warm, calculating, with a fragile ego and a lot of nerve.

Blonde and *zaftig*, with a talent for meeting people and charming them, she was not a bit Old Worldly: She talked in fast Newyorkese and affected a tousled, upsweep hairdo. Dressed in black leggings and bright silk shirts that flowed and floated in the air around her, she had a theatrical, slightly ditsy look. But her shrewdness and a natural skill with people made her a good interviewer. Fighting for it, she landed a job as a researcher at *People* Magazine.

But no matter how ebullient she acted, she often felt frightened inside and lonely. She could charm women and entice men, but her life felt brittle. "I'm having a crisis," she said to herself. Maybe living in New York is a crisis in itself, she thought. Maybe Israel was a place where a Jew could be renewed. She did a little research, found out about Building Our People, hesitated for months and then signed up. But going to Israel didn't mean she intended to leave anything behind.

"I'm a media freak," she told Dark-Haired Linda on their first day together, as she unpacked the CD player, the radio-tape deck, and the miniature color TV she had brought from home. She listened to everything from the Grateful Dead to Metallica and sang show tunes in a brassy voice. She watched Hebrew talk shows she couldn't understand, Jordanian news, American movies dubbed into Turkish, CNN. A friend at *People* was mailing her issues weekly so she could keep up with celebrity news. She had a subscription to *Time* and had put in a request with her father for money to buy a VCR so she could watch movies in her room. "I like to have the culture around me," she explained. Had Dark-Haired Linda paled slightly?

Charmed at first by Linda's piety, she had agreed to keep their kitchen kosher—imagine, her keeping kosher! But she tired quickly of watching what spoon she put in what pot or watching Linda flip out because she brought in a falafel from the wrong restaurant. Who could remember all these details? Who would want to? Now she panicked every time Dark-Haired Linda came in while she was having an innocent snack, afraid she had cut her turkey sandwich with a milk knife, washed a pot with the wrong scrubber or bought the one damn thing in the supermarket that had a forbidden chemical in it. Keeping kosher was giving her indigestion, she wrote home to America.

And it wasn't just the rules. Dark-Haired Linda might seem meek on the surface, but she was a master of coercion. When Tawny-Haired Linda's mother sent her a Care package with Ritz crackers in it, Dark-Haired Linda insisted she could eat them only in her own bedroom. When she played her radio in the living room on Saturday afternoon, Dark-Haired Linda pleaded for quiet. "Don't you see, how can I have Sabbath rest if you play the radio?"

"How can I have Sabbath rest if I can't do anything but sleep?" she shot back as she took the radio into the bedroom. Dark-Haired Linda said the sound was still too loud for Sabbath peace, though, so she surrendered again and tied herself to earphones. It wasn't like her to give in again and again, but she didn't want to be an anti-Semite. Nonetheless, out of spite, she started eating roast beef and butter sandwiches on paper plates. "I spent summers in New England when I was a kid," she snapped at her roommate's murmurs of distress. "I'm getting in touch with my roots."

A Triangle Is One Half of a Jewish Star

A month after she met him, Dark-Haired Linda summed up her romance with Uri in a single sentence: "He's my *bashert*, my destined one."

His interest in religious observance was growing, she explained to Tawny-Haired Linda. In the proper time they would marry. She would work as a teacher while he learned in yeshiva, then he would work while she bore children for them to raise in Jewish holiness.

"When you think about it," she told Tawny-Haired Linda, "that his father has a picture of the Baba Sali in

a drawer is a perfect metaphor. His father didn't hang it on the wall, but he didn't throw it away, either. That means Uri could have gone in either direction."

Uri pleased her, she said, by talking deeply with her, confiding to her his boyhood longings, his ideas about God and intimate stories about his family. He was glad to spend both Sabbath and weekdays with her, in appropriate activities. He paid attention to her. "I think it's a kind of praying when two people just sit together like friends," she said to Tawny-Haired Linda.

Of course, they had their problems, too. "Where there's love, aren't there always problems?" she asked rhetorically.

The most troubling thing was that he had a tendency to wander away. He would make an appointment with her and not keep it. He would go off for a long weekend without letting her know, and when he showed up again, he didn't understand why she was mad. "I'm here now," he would say, annoyed by her hot tears. He would promise to change his ways, but real apology seemed beyond him—and then he would do it again. "Sometimes I feel like I've got an educational retraining project, not a romance," Dark-Haired Linda mourned to her roommate.

"It sounds like he's a slow learner," agreed Tawny-Haired Linda drily.

Another problem was that Uri had his own circle of friends, Moroccan guys he hung out with on Old City street corners, that he kept separate from her. Usually there were a couple of young women with them, Sephardi girls dressed in ultra-tight jeans and high-heeled sandals, wearing rings and big earrings that glinted as they chattered and laughed. The girls were friends of the guys he was friends with, Uri assured her, but she feared them as icons of his other personality.

Uri introduced her when she ran into them one evening hanging out in front of Sosha's. The girls said "hi," casting bold glances that made her go paranoid, then trilled in Hebrew among themselves. The guys said "hi" and waited to see what would happen. Uri let her leave without ever urging her to stay.

When she complained, Uri acted sincerely baffled and then sincerely irritated. "If you wanted to stay why don't you stay? Why don't you do what you want? What has it to do with me?"

"Of *course* he loves you," Tawny-Haired Linda comforted her in a sisterly way. "That's how Israelis are—they treat everybody the crappy way Americans only treat other family members."

But mentally, Tawny-Haired Linda gave the romance another two weeks at the most, especially because now she knew Uri's side, too. They had talked.

"Shabbat dinner, I like," he said. "Okay, going to synagogue sometimes. But every second she is saying a prayer or rushing to wash her hands or lighting a candle. Isn't it enough sometimes?"

"I think so," Tawny-Haired Linda said primly. Drawing him out, she put some squares of chocolate on a plate in front of him.

With Dark-Haired Linda, he complained, it was always a religious event or time to prepare for one. He felt forced a lot into doing what he didn't want to do, or kept from doing what he wanted. "I feel I am being, what do you call it, nagged." And to tell the truth, he wasn't sure he wanted to study in yeshiva. He hadn't liked any other kind of school, why this one? Anyway, too many rabbis were crooks. Even Baba Baruch, the Baba Sali's son and successor, had been arrested for fraud. "It might all be superstition," he said. "Spiritual is maybe good. But religion it could be something else."

"I know what you mean," Tawny-Haired Linda nodded. Liking him much better now, she urged the last piece of chocolate on him. He wasn't a bad-looking guy, either, and he was *so* Israeli. "In fact, I agree with you," she added in a general way. Without knowing the details yet, she felt a plan developing in her mind.

Did You Ever Have to Make Up Your Mind?

But not only had Dark-Haired Linda and Uri gone on being a couple, to Tawny-Haired Linda's surprise, but now Uri had half moved in, emptying the refrigerator and staying over a few nights each week.

Dark-Haired Linda quickly assured her roommate that she and Uri weren't sleeping together. That is, they slept together but chastely, like brother and sister, almost. Hugs and cuddles only, no sex.

"Why would Uri put up with that?" asked Tawny-Haired Linda.

"Moroccans are still traditional enough to know they have to keep their pants on if a woman is religious," Dark-Haired Linda explained with pride. "He respects me, because I'm a religious woman."

Since God had put them together so she could save Uri for a life of Torah, however, she began to wonder if she was doing the wrong thing by withholding herself. It was true that the Torah prohibited premarital sex, but if she slept with him, that would give their relationship a certain weight and permanence. Uri was pressing her. They were eventually going to get married anyway; this would ensure it. She had the feeling, she confided to Tawny-Haired Linda, that it might be a sacrifice she was being called on to make for the sake of bringing another soul under the wings of the *Shekhinah*.

"You're thinking of making the sacrifice of having

sex with your boyfriend?" Tawny-Haired Linda repeated incredulously.

Her tone was lost on Dark-Haired Linda, who nodded. "It makes me feel a little like Queen Esther," she said dreamily. "Although of course she sacrificed herself to save all the Jews."

Tawny-Haired Linda smiled nicely while she asked herself how, how, *how* she was going to go on living in the same apartment with this no-brained Linda for the rest of the Building Our People program.

Building Our People

For an hour already, loud dance music had been pouring out of the dining hall, site of the Building Our People mid-program "Dance All Night" party. Distant but undimmed, it rose into the apartments, a hollow thrumming of amplified rock 'n' roll. This was no night for studying.

In her room, Tawny-Haired Linda shouldered herself into a translucent red silk blouse and shook out her tawny mane. Through the thin wall, she could hear Dark-Haired Linda and Uri moving around. She pulled on tight black leggings, cursing her thighs for thickness, then brushed out her hair, fingertipped spots of cologne onto her neck and cheeks, and called herself done. Her roommate knocked on her door and peeked in. "Are you ready to go? You look great!"

Dark-Haired Linda was dressed in a long-sleeved cotton blouse and a long plaid skirt. "I'm looking forward to this so much," she said eagerly to her roommate, sending Uri down the stairs ahead of them. Her face was flushed with expectation. She had decided, she confided to Tawny-Haired Linda, to put aside certain considerations about mixed dancing because they seemed incongruous if she was sharing her bed (even if chastely) with a man. Tawny-Haired Linda smiled and nodded.

The music roared around them in the darkened courtyard. The big dining hall was decorated with streamers and colored strobe lights. The volume of the music was off the charts, and the floor was filled, dreamlike, with the undulating bodies of all the Building Our People students.

"I'll get us something to drink," Dark-Haired Linda offered kindly, yelling over the music as they grouped at the edge of the dancers. Along the far wall, drinks and snacks were arranged on tables. "Don't dance till I come back," she shouted at Uri, who was standing right next to her. "*What do you want?*"

Uri called "Beer."

Tawny-Haired Linda mouthed "Diet Coke."

"*I'll get munchies, too*," Dark-Haired Linda shouted, and began to thread her way through the dancers.

Uri, looking restless and impatient, stood at one edge of the crowd. Not a bad-looking guy, Tawny-Haired Linda thought again, a little baby-faced maybe, but solid and possessing an appealing masculine insouciance. Male indifference had attracted her before, not necessarily to her benefit. But he looked particularly graceful tonight as he moved one leg in time to the music and stared into the crowd. Swaying beside him and snapping her fingers, red silk flowing around her, Tawny-Haired Linda allowed the music to enter her.

It was so loud that, standing right at his ear and smiling brightly, she had to yell "Wanna dance?" twice before he heard her, shrugged a yes and led her into a little empty pocket he had apparently spotted on the crowded floor.

That was canny dance sense, she remarked to herself. Yes, and he was a good dancer, too. He moved easily without showing off. He gave her attention as his partner without demanding anything special from her, leaving her free to dance on her own or to bounce off him a little when she wanted a response. He did a brief flashy riff, then cut it short with a self-conscious laugh.

Through the forest of other dancers, she could see Dark-Haired Linda's birdlike form at the refreshment tables. She was bent slightly, balancing plates and cups.

"Hey, you're good," she told Uri appreciatively when the whirlpool of music stopped. Maybe I should be roommates with him, she thought.

"You also. You are good, too," he said back. "I am enjoying to dance with you."

Breathing hard with exertion, Tawny-Haired Linda and Uri stood appreciating each other. She felt they had reached a temporary understanding—they had become partners. Over his shoulder, across the darkened room, she could see Dark-Haired Linda carefully navigating her way back through the crowd with cups and plates.

There was a squawk of feedback from the microphone, then the disk jockey's voice broke in. "We got a slow one coming now," he said. There were cheers from the dancers. "If you know how to do it, you're set. If you don't, get someone to teach you." There was a ripple of laughter.

The Flamingos glided onto the amplifying system, the original 1950s version of "I Only Have Eyes for You." The music was still loud, but its slowness muted it, made it intimate. Couples paired off and started to move with each other. Uri began to slide back and forth, getting ready, and Tawny-Haired Linda swayed beside him in rhythm, then struck a statuary pose before she entered the circle of his arms to dance.

My love must be a kind of blind love,

(Continued on p. 93)

Sikkum

The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism, by Daniel Matt (Harper San Francisco, 1995)

Through Matt's sensitive and original translations, commentaries, and helpful guideposts, the reader gets a deep and brilliant introduction to the Jewish mystical tradition. What's all the fuss about Kabbalah? This gem of a book helps the tradition to speak for itself, and the answers are worthy of deep contemplation.

God, a Biography, by Jack Miles (Knopf, 1995)

A fresh and lively interpretation of the Bible, tracing the development of God from creation through the tumultuous history of the Jewish people and our encounter with the divine. This is a subtle and creative reading—and a first-rate introduction to the way God grows up with the Jewish people in biblical literature.

Reading Ruth: Contemporary Women Reclaim a Sacred Story, ed. by Judith A. Kates and Gail Twersky Reimer, Ballantine Books, 1994.

The contributors to this commentary on the Book of Ruth have a clear purpose: to "enable women to feel nourished by sacred texts" through their engagement with the lives of Ruth and Naomi. Women reading *Reading Ruth* will also be nourished by the warm and witty commentators whose great diversity brings new insight to an old story.

The Book of Ruth is a "short story" about a woman who dedicates herself beyond death to the woman she loves. It is a story about the lovingkindness (*chesed*) central to Jewish morality, central to the very heart of God. In creating a present, vital, and central place for women in the textual study, the writers seek to retain women's interest in maintaining the richness of Jewish religious tradition.

Victoria Erickson

Mornings and Mourning: A Kaddish Journal, by E.M. Broner.

In the observance of the traditional customs of mourning, Judaism gives us a powerful way to heal ourselves. Esther Broner gives us a poignant portrait of difficulties that Jewish women experience when we try to partake of the richness of our tradition. Broner sets out to say *Kaddish* for her father, and finds that barriers of intolerance prevent her from pursuing her healing process. Pushing away the curtain that veils women's full participation in synagogue life allows her to deal with her loss and transform her pain into a constructive endeavor.

Rabbi Lia Bass

Breakfast at the Victory: The Mysticism of Ordinary Experience, by James P. Carse. HarperCollins, New York.

James Carse helps us see a world in which every moment is filled with spiritual possibilities, and there is always a presence to which we can be present. Carse encourages us to see that each of life's dramas, whether public or private, "deserve equal attention." One wonders, however, what happens too the fundamentally Jewish urge to transform the world if we understand each moment as equally significant from a spiritual standpoint. Because even the best of New Age spiritualities are so focused on celebrating the beauty and splendor of that which is, they run the risk of being unable to encourage readers to move beyond appreciating of the world they encounter toward its *tikkun*, healing and repair.

Brad Hirschfeld

Healing of Soul, Healing of Body, ed. by Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub. (Jewish Lights, 1994).

The Jewish Healing Center has assembled a group of ten psalms to provide solace and strength for those facing the inner turmoils that often accompany the process of recovery from physical sickness. The original translations are accompanied by instructive commentary from Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg, Rabbi Amy Eilberg, Rabbi Nancy Flamm, Rabbi Harlan Wechsler, and other Jewish illuminati.□

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Poetry

Treblinka

These peasant women are as yellowed as the hay they harvest
here at Treblinka, where old world sparrows chatter among monuments. Ten thousand stones, more or less, stand for ravaged
towns, each rock for three hundred Polish Jews. The forest the
Nazis planted does not loom: we're in a park.
This space is about symbols; so even Charles says Kaddish for his
family, dead fifty years. He lights a candle the imporverished
women will steal, a small flame for his four-year old brother.
These pines could burn, too, kindled with a little hay.
Chana stands nearby, maybe on her father's dust. The women
speak and she replies: they hear in her speech, what? Warsaw?
Yiddish? the rhythms still alien after a thousand years? One of
the straw-women finds a final thing to say: "We know who you
are. You're one who got away."

Keith W. Schlegel

The Hidden Child

I was good. We were all good
Dutch children—those of us
who survived.

Before the Nazis, *Moeder* brandished
other threats—potatoes that would grow
behind unwashed ears, rats
that might nest in unkempt hair.
Then jackboots on cobblestone began
to punctuate days and nights.
In our attic room, no soccer balls
or bicycles, no tulips; and sometimes
we ate dog meat to survive.

My daughter asks about the taste.
I say I don't remember.
She probes what I mean by good:
How good is good, she wonders,
keen to quantify. Imagining me
studious, parsing out days
for later profit, she cannot fathom
the card games, flatness, waste.
She says I'm hooded, use
time as a weapon. It is. It was…

One time, when meat was scarce,
those who concealed us
rode their bicycles past Sunday soccer
to dig up tulip bulbs.
We roasted them, peeled the brown,
and ate them. As I chewed,
I thought *tulip, tulip* and tried to let
the flower I could not see
bloom inside.

Last year when the hidden ones met,
I did not go. I told my daughter
I was out of time.

Susan Terris

While Now We Are Here

At the cemetery seven of us took hold of his casket.
The chapel official waved off Rabbi Jack.
"Only six carry" he said "You pray,"
But Rabbi Jack shrugged him off, said:
"I promised I'd walk with Robert to the end,"
and my heart ached with gladness for his answer.

With his pocket-sized
prayer book held up he led us,
his other hand firmly
on the casket,
an explorer, first in the prow of his ship,
reaching undiscovered shores.

Up ahead beefy grave diggers with snide
grins straddled the hole.
But the prow of his prayer
cleaved them as froth.
Our solemn assembly filled the place.
From the warm timbre of his voice
arose a *shul* under blustery sky,
where some could weep
and others rise to the meaning of death.

As our shovels tossed dirt,
we made Robert separate from us
so that we could keep him forever.
After Kaddish was read,
we formed two lines
for his widow Sarah to pass through.
With an encircling arm,
Rabbi Jack
ushered her
into grief.

On the way out, we stepped from our cars
to wash our hands.
The world had returned to its ordinariness.
Telling jokes, the barrel-armed gravediggers
resumed what we had started,
filling the hole with dirt.
Death is such a dirty job.
May the clean, invisible spirit
of sanctification
house them too,
and all their loved ones.

As I drove off I wondered:
whom have I hurt? Whom have I bragged to lately?
Who have I offended?
Whose hopes have I crushed?
I must say how wrong I was—must
admit: I am but clay He breathed into.

In the street outside my home,
I held my girlfriend close,
who had come out to meet me
under skies like Goya's Toledo,
and I thought:
I will not see you, dear,
very long here
before this kiss
is torn from our mouths.
Let me hold you,
as though for the last time,
While now we are here.

Alan Kaufman

Poetry

Isaac Babel's 1920 Diary

Introduction

Carol J. Avins

Isaac Babel (1894-1940), one of the greatest Russian writers of this century, gained renown for a relatively small body of work. His range, however, is broad: from the vitality and villainy of Odessa's Jewish underworld to the conflicting passions of the Jewish intellectual, from the rift between revolutionary theory and practice to the grief of unfulfilled desire. His prose, lyrical and compressed, is laced with a kind of irony both subtle and brutal. By the late 1920s, Babel had published his best writing—the story cycles *Red Cavalry* and *Odessa Tales*; the ostensibly autobiographical stories of a painful Jewish boyhood such as "The Awakening"; stories about eroticism, power, and art such as "Guy de Maupassant" and "Di Grasso."

Unable to write in the socialist realist mode mandated under Stalin, he joked at the 1934 Soviet Writers' Congress that he had mastered the genre of silence. But while he published little in the 1930s, he was writing intensively—among other things, a set of stories about forced collectivization.

Babel was arrested in May, 1939 and his manuscripts confiscated; he was shot in prison eight months later. (A pretext for persecution was hardly needed in that dark era when so many were imprisoned, but his link to the wife of secret police chief Yezhov, replaced in late 1938, may have been a factor.)

Not all of Babel's unpublished writing was lost, however—some papers survived, as well as one diary, left long before at the home of a Kiev friend. The plain lined notebook had been filled by Babel two decades earlier, in 1920, and was not intended for an audience. For many years it had none; now, along with much else from government and private archives in the former Soviet Union, it can reach a reader. How it rewards the reader will become clear below.

Babel, working as a journalist, spent the summer of 1920 with a Cossack cavalry division of the Red Army engaged in a now-obscure territorial conflict known as the Polish-Soviet War. (Poland, newly independent after World War I, sought to take advantage of the nascent Soviet state's civil war to recover territory lost to Russia during the tsarist period; the Bolsheviks sought not only to keep these lands but to spread revolution westward into Poland, Germany, and beyond.) If this war (won by Poland) is remembered outside that region today, it is because of the fiction that Babel made out of his experience. His stories began appearing in Soviet journals a few years later; in 1926 thirty-four stories were published together in a book titled *Red Cavalry*.

Red Cavalry gained Babel immediate celebrity (as well as controversy) and lasting international regard as a master of the short story. The source of his masterpiece is the diary he kept as he rode with the Cossacks. For those who know the stories, the diary provides the thrill of seeing behind the scenes and a wealth of insights into Babel's artistry. But it is in the intersecting spheres of personal history, Jewish history, and Russian and Polish history that the diary offers its most remarkable material. Readers unfamiliar with Babel's stories and uninterested in the transformation of notes into art will be caught up in two other dramas. In the foreground: a young man's struggle to define his relation to his Jewish identity, to the Bolshevik cause, and to those with whom he fought for its victory. In the background, but powerfully affecting that primary drama: the struggle of Eastern European Jewry to weather the upheaval of this era of war and revolution.

The Polish-Soviet War took place at an ethnic crossroads, a long-contested area at the border of the former Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires. It was a region in which the large Jewish population had long been persecuted. That persecution was heightened in the conditions of wartime, with the Polish and Red armies in turn using the Jews as an easy target of hostility. Babel continually found himself among the victimized Jewish population. Reading the diary, we are taken into the homes of Hasidic sages, into the kitchens of Jewish women forced to wait on abusive occupying soldiers, into the streets and marketplaces where Jews gathered to discuss their prospects, into the synagogues where they continued to pray.

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On occasion Babel prayed with them—and on occasion he silently witnessed their abuse. The story of his interaction with these Jews—so different, he felt, from the more assimilated Russian Jews of his native Odessa—is a complex one. Its complexity is circumstantial as well as psychological, for during his stint as a war correspondent, Babel, using a pseudonym, was trying to hide the fact that he was a Jew. His notes deal extensively with the practical and emotional consequences of his subterfuge. The tension between his identification with the Jews he encountered and his desire to distance himself from them is one reason why the diary makes absorbing, suspenseful reading.

As the excerpts that follow show, among Jews, Babel concealed his identity selectively. The motivation for dropping his cover appears to have varied at different times—sometimes to gain entrée into a milieu that fascinated him; sometimes to satisfy the questions of Jews who suspected the truth. One poignant instance occurs early on, in the town of Hoszcza, where Babel has chosen to stay with a Jewish family. They pour out to him their story of being looted by the retreating Poles and advancing Russians in turn. A still-trembling little girl, sitting on her father's lap, asks him with a child's directness: "Aren't you a Jew?" He apparently dodges the question and responds instead to one that has not been asked but that hangs in the air: the question of what awaits the Jews under Soviet control. Babel writes of his answer: "I tell them everything will be all right, explain what the revolution means, I talk on and on."

These words summarize not just what Babel said that night but also what he says on many similar occasions, particularly during the first half of the summer. Confronted by the accounts of Jewish civilians, Babel often maintains the fiction of his non-Jewishness and offers further fictions, stories that he privately calls "fairy tales" about the justice and well-being that will follow a Bolshevik victory. It is as though, unwilling to express his kinship with these people and extend the comfort of that kinship, he offers ideological comfort as a substitute.

The entry for July 24 is illustrative. Babel finds himself billeted, along with the volatile Cossack Prishchepa, at the home of a proud and pious Jewish family in the shtetl of Demidovka. It is the Sabbath and the beginning of Tisha b'Av, a day of fasting to commemorate the destruction of the Temple. Prishchepa rages, demanding a meal; "I keep silent," writes Babel later that evening, "because I'm a Russian." Privately appalled, Babel nonetheless eats too, then records in his diary: "We sweat, they keep serving us, all this is terrible, I tell them fairy tales about Bolshevism.... I captivate all these tormented people."

This entry and others show that his professed optimism was accompanied by a growing skepticism, and by increasing discomfort with the ethics of consolation. His skepticism about the Soviet regime's ability to provide quick remedies for society's ills was nothing new: During 1918 he had published in the anti-Bolshevik paper *Novaia zhizn* (*New Life*) a series of exposés documenting the gap between ideals and reality in post-revolutionary Petrograd. In the diary's second entry, he ridicules the true-believer types who form a club for Communist Party members among the press corps, writing: "There's your proletariat: these incredibly feeble Jewish men and women from the underground. Pathetic, fearsome tribe, march on!"

But while Babel separated himself from the dedicated believers, he clearly harbored some hopes that the violent means of revolution and war could bring beneficial ends. Those hopes were severely tested by what he saw riding with the cavalry. "We are the vanguard" he writes on July 21, "but of what? The population await their saviors, the Jews look for liberation—and in ride the Kuban Cossacks."

Some scene-setting: The Poles had taken Kiev in May and at the point when the diary begins were being pushed back westward by the Red Army. Zhitomir, where we enter the scene, had been recaptured by another Red cavalry division nearly a month before Babel's division arrived. Babel, observing signs of the pogrom that had accompanied the battle for the town, would have known that Zhitomir had seen pogroms before—in 1905, and most recently in January and March of 1919. The little Jewish philosopher whom Babel meets in the market was later immortalized in his story "Gedali." He puts in the mouth of his title character a lament that expresses not only Babel's own feelings but those of all the civilians, Jews and non-Jews, whom we see in the pages of this diary: "Woe unto us, where is the joy-giving revolution?"

The diary begins on page 55 of Babel's notebook; the first 54 pages are missing.

Zhitomir, 3 June [July] 1920

Morning in the train, came for tunic and boots. I'm sleeping with Zhukov, Topolnik, it's filthy, morning sun in my eyes, railroad-car filth. Lanky Zhukov, gluttonous Topolnik, the whole editorial team—unbelievably filthy fellows.

Revolting tea in borrowed mess tins. Letters home, packets for Yugrosta, interview with Pollak, operation to get control of Novograd, discipline in the Polish army is getting weaker, Polish White-Guard literature, booklets of cigarette paper, matches, erstwhile

(Ukrainian) Jews, commissars, all of it stupid, malicious, feeble, incompetent, and extraordinarily unconvincing. Mikhailov's extracts from Polish newspapers.

The kitchen on the train, fat soldiers with florid faces, gray souls, suffocating heat in the kitchen, kasha, midday, sweat, thick-legged washerwomen, phlegmatic creatures—lathes—describe the soldiers and the women, fat, overfed, sleepy.

Love in the kitchen.

After dinner to Zhitomir. White town, not sleepy, but battered, hushed. I look for traces of Polish culture. Women well dressed, white stockings. Catholic church.

Bathe near Nuska in the Teterev, nasty little river, old Jewish men at the bathing-place, their long skinny legs covered with gray hairs. Young Jews. Women washing clothes in the Teterev. A family: beautiful wife, husband carrying child.

Market in Zhitomir, old cobbler, blueing, whiting, shoelaces.

Synagogue buildings, ancient architecture, how deeply it all moves me.

Watch crystal 1200 rubles. Market. A little Jew, a philosopher. Unimaginable shop—Dickens, brooms and golden slippers. His philosophy—they all say they're fighting for justice and they all loot. If only some government or other were a kind one. Remarkable words, little beard, we talk, tea and three apple tarts—750 rubles. Interesting old woman, sharp-tempered, shrewd, unhurried. How money-hungry they all are. Describe the market, baskets of cherries, interior of cook-shop. Conversation with a Russian woman who came to borrow a washtub. Sweat, anemic tea, I'm beginning to get my teeth into life, farewell, dead men.

Podolsky, the son-in-law, half-starved intellectual, something about Trade Unions, service with Budyonny. "I'm Russian of course, mother Jewish, why?"

Zhitomir pogrom, organized by the Poles, continued, of course, by the Cossacks.

When our advance troops appeared, the Poles entered town, stayed for three days, there was a pogrom, they cut off beards, that's usual, assembled 45 Jews in the marketplace, led them to the slaughter-yard, tortures, cut out tongues, wails heard all over the square. They set fire to six houses, I went to look at Koniuchowski's house on Cathedral Street, they machine-gunned those who tried to rescue people. The yardman, into whose arms a mother dropped a child from a burning window, was bayoneted, the priest put a ladder up against the back wall, they escaped that way.

Sabbath waning, we go from the father-in-law's to see the *tsaddik*. I didn't get his name. A staggering picture for me, though the signs of dying and complete decadence are plain to see. The *tsaddik* himself—his broad-shouldered, emaciated figure. His son—a noble boy in gaberdine, I could see petty-bourgeois but spacious rooms. All very sedate, wife an ordinary Jewish woman, even a little "moderne."

The faces of the old Jews.

Conversations in the corner about rising prices.

I can't find my place in the prayerbook. Podolsky puts me right.

No candle—a tallow dip instead.

I feel happy, enormous faces, hooked noses, black beards with a sprinkling of gray, I think about many things, good-bye, dead men. The *tsaddik*'s face, his nickel-rimmed pince-nez.

"Where are you from, young man?"

"From Odessa."

"How is life there?"

"People live."

"And here it's a horror."

A short conversation.

I leave feeling shaken.

Podolsky, pale and sad, gives me his address, a marvelous evening. I walk along, thinking about it all, quiet, alien streets. Kondratyev with a dark-haired Jewish woman, the poor commandant in his tall sheepskin hat, he never has any luck.

And then it's night, the train, painted over with communist slogans (contrast with what I saw among the old Jews).

The rattle of typewriters, our own generator, our own newspapers, a film showing, the train a blaze of light, its rumbling, fat-faced soldiers lining up for washerwomen (a two-day wait).

Zhitomir, 5 June [July] 1920

Korets, describe it, Jews outside a big building, yeshiva *bocher* in glasses, what are they talking about, old men with yellow beards, hunched traders, frail, lonely. I want to stay, but the telephonists are winding the cables in. Of course, HQ has moved out. We pick apples and cherries. Move on at furious speed. Then the driver, red sash, eats bread with fingers stained with lubricating oil. Before we've gone six versts the magneto is flooded. Repairs under a scorching sun, sweat, other drivers. I finish the journey on a hay-cart (forgot—Artillery-Inspector Timoshenko(?) inspecting guns at Korets. Our generals). Evening. Night. The park at Hoszeza. Zotov and HQ staff flash by, supply wagon behind them, the staff has left for Rovno, damn it all. Jews, I decide to stay with David Uchenik, the soldiers try to talk me out of it, the Jews press me. I wash up, bliss, many Jews. Uchenik's brothers—twins? The wounded want to meet me. Healthy rogues, flesh

wounds in the leg, walk unaided. Real tea, I have supper. Uchenik's children, a small but wordly-wise girl, with squinty eyes, a trembling girl of six, fat wife with gold teeth. They sit around me, anxiety fills the air. Uchenik tells me—the Poles pillaged, then the others descended, whooping and yelling, carried off everything, all his wife's things.

The little girl: aren't you a Jew? Uchenik sits watching me eat, the little girl on his lap, trembling. "She's frightened—cellars, shooting, then your side." I tell them everything will be all right, explain what the revolution means, I talk on and on. "Things look bad for us, they mean to rob us, don't go to bed."

Night, streetlamp outside the window, a Hebrew grammar, my soul aches, hair freshly washed, fresh sadness. The tea makes me sweat. My support is Tsukerman, with a rifle. Radiotelegraphist. Soldiers outside, chasing people off to bed, sniggering. I eavesdrop: they suspect something, stay where you are, I'll mow you down.

The hunt for the woman prisoner. Stars, night over the town. The tall Cossack with an earring and a white-topped cap. They'd arrested Stasova's madwoman—a mattress, she beckoned to them, come on, I'll give you a bit—"if it had been me she'd have been at work all night, she'd have twisted and bucked all she liked but she wouldn't have run off." The soldiers chase everyone off to bed. They eat their supper—fried eggs, tea, roast meat, unimaginable coarseness, sprawling over the table—come on, woman, dish it up . Uchenik outside his house, they've posted a sentry, a comedy, go to bed, I can guard my own house. A terrible business with the madwoman they arrested. If they find her, they'll kill her.

I can't sleep. I interfered, they said all is lost.

An oppressive night, an idiot with a piglet's body—the radiotelegraphist. Dirty nails and refined manners. Conversation about the Jewish question. Wounded man in a black shirt—wet behind the ears, a boor, the old Jews run about, the women have scattered. Nobody sleeps. Some girls out on the porch, some soldier sleeping on the couch.

Writing my diary. There's a lamp. The window looks out on a park, a wagon train goes by. Nobody is going to bed. A car drives up. Morgan is looking for a priest, I take him to the Jews.

The Horyn. Jewish men and old women on their porches. Hoszcza has been sacked, Hoszcza is cleaned out, Hoszcza is silent. A professional job. Whispering—they lifted everything and shed never a tear, real experts. The Horyn, a network of lakes and tributaries, evening light, the battle for Rovno took place here. Talking to the Jews, I feel kind to them, they think I'm Russian, and my soul is laid bare. We sit on the steep river bank. Peace and soft sighs behind my back. I go off to defend Uchenik. I told them my mother was Jewish, a story, Belaya Tserkov, the rabbi.

Belyov, 11 July 1920

Spent the night with soldiers of HQ squadron, in the hay. Slept badly, thought about the manuscripts. Homesickness, flagging energy, I know I shall overcome it, but when? Think about the Khasts, those nits, I remember everything, their malodorous souls, their sheep eyes, their startlingly high, squeaky voices, the smiling father. Above all—that sin, his irateness, all the secrets, the evil-smelling recollections of past scandals. A tremendous character, the mother, she's malicious, cowardly, gluttonous, revolting, her lingering, expectant gaze. The daughter's revolting, elaborate lies, the son's laughing eyes behind his glasses.

My first requisition—a notebook. The synagogue caretaker Menashe accompanies me. I eat at Mudrik's, same old story, the Jews have been plundered, their bewilderment, they expected the Soviet regime to liberate them, and suddenly there were shrieks, whips cracking, shouts of "dirty Yid." I was besieged by a whole circle of them. I tell them about the note to Wilson, the labor armies, the little Jews listen, knowing and sympathetic smiles, a Jew in white trousers who had come to the pine forest for his health wants to go home. Jews sit on the mounds of hardened earth outside their houses, young girls and old men, it's dead quiet, hot, dusty, a peasant (Parfentii Melnik, the same man who had done his military service in Elizavetpol) complains that his horse is swollen with milk, they separated her from her foal, depressed, the manuscripts, the manuscripts, that's what makes me sick at heart.

21 July 1920. Pelcha-Boratyn

A beautiful day. My interview with Konstantin Karlovich. What sort of person is our Cossack? Many-layered: looting, reckless daring, professionalism, revolutionary spirit, bestial cruelty. We are the vanguard, but of what? The population wait their saviors, the Jews look for liberation—and in ride the Kuban Cossacks.

The Army Commander summons the Divisional Commander to Kozin for consultation. Seven versts away. I go with him. Sands. Every house remains in my heart. Clusters of Jews. Their faces—this is the ghetto, and we are an ancient people, exhausted, but we still have some strength left, a shop, I drink splendid coffee, I pour balm on the soul of the shopkeeper, who is listening to the noise in his shop. Cossacks yelling, swearing, climbing over the shelves, too bad for the shop, sweating, ginger-bearded Jew. I wander around end-

lessly, can't tear myself away, the town was destroyed, is rebuilding, has existed four hundred years, remains of a synagogue, magnificent old temple ruins, what was a Catholic and is now an Orthodox church, enchanting white, with triple door, visible from afar, now Orthodox. An old Jew—I like talking with my own kind—they understand me. Cemetery, Rabbi Azrael's ruined house, three generations, the gravestone under a tree that has grown up over it, those old stones, all the same shape, with the same message, this exhausted Jew who is my guide, a family of stupid-looking, thick-legged Jews living in a wooden shed by the cemetery, graves of three Jewish soldiers, killed in the Russo-German war. The Abramoviches from Odessa, the mother came for the burial, and I can see this Jewish woman, burying a son killed in battle for a cause which to her is revolting, incomprehensible, criminal.

The life of these little towns.
There's no salvation.
Everyone destroys them—the
Poles give them no refuge.

An old and a new cemetery—the town is four hundred years old.

Evening, I walk around the houses, Jewish men and women reading posters and proclamations, "Poland is the running dog of the bourgeoisie" and so on. "Insects can kill" and "do not remove stoves from heated boxcars."

These Jews are like portraits, elongated, silent, long-bearded, not like our type, fat and jovial. Lofty old men, hanging around with nothing to do. Most important—the shop and the cemetery.

Back seven verts to Boratyn, beautiful evening, my heart is full, rich householders, pert girls, fried eggs, fatback, our soldiers catching flies, the Russo-Ukrainian soul. I'm not sure I'm really interested.

24 July 1920

In Demidovka by evening. A Jewish town, I'm on my guard. Jews scattered about on the outskirts, everything has been destroyed. We are in a house with a mob of women. The Liachecki family, the Szwechwels—no, this isn't Odessa. A dentist—Dora Aranovna, reads Artsybashev, with Cossacks on the loose all around. She is haughty, angry, says that the Poles have forfeited their self-respect, despises the communists for their plebeian ways, a horde of daughters in white stockings, pious father and mother. Every daughter a distinct personality—one pathetic, black haired, bandy-legged, another—an opulent beauty, a third—housewifely, and all of them, probably, old maids.

Main cause of discord—today is the Sabbath. Prishchepa tries to make them fry potatoes but tomorrow is a fast day, the 9th of Av, and I keep quiet, because I'm a Russian. The dentist, pale with pride and a sense of her own dignity, declares that no one is going to dig potatoes because it is a holiday.

Prishchepa, restrained by me for quite a while, finally breaks out—f-ing Yids, the whole arsenal of abuse, they all, hating us and me, go and dig potatoes, afraid in someone else's garden, they blame crosses, Prishchepa seethes. How excruciating it all is—Artsybashev, the orphaned schoolgirl from Rovno, Prishchepa in his hood. The mother wrings her hands—a fire lit on the Sabbath, bad language flying around. Budyonny has been here and left. Argument between a Jewish youth and Prishchepa. The youth wears glasses, is dark-haired, nervous, has scarlet inflamed eyelids, speaks Russian incorrectly. He believes in God, says God is an ideal we carry in our souls, every person has in his soul his own God, if you behave badly God grieves—this foolishness is pronounced in an exalted fashion and as if it hurt. Prishchepa is insultingly stupid, he goes on about religion in antiquity, confuses Christianity and paganism, his main point is that in antiquity there were communes, of course, he babbles incoherently, says your education is non-existent, and the Jew has gone through sixth form at the Rovno gymnasium—he parrots Platonov, it's touching and comic—clans, clan elders, Perun, paganism.

We eat like oxen, fried potatoes and five tumblersful of coffee each. We sweat, they keep serving us, all this is terrible, I tell them fairy tales about Bolshevism—the blossoming, the express trains, Moscow's textile mills, universities, free meals, the Revel delegation, to crown it all the story of the Chinese, and I captivate all these tormented people. It's the 9th of Av. The old woman sobs, sitting on the floor, and her son, who worships his mother and says he believes in God just to please her, sings in a pleasant, light tenor, and tells the story of the destruction of the Temple. The terrible words of the prophet—they eat dung, their maidens are ravished, their menfolk killed, Israel subjugated, words of wrath and sorrow. The lamp smokes, the old woman wails, the young man sings melodiously, girls in white stockings, outside—Dmidovka, night, Cossacks, all just as it was when the Temple was destroyed. I go out to sleep in the yard, stinking and damp.

Trouble with Grishchuk—he's in some sort of trance, goes around like a sleepwalker, doesn't feed the horses properly, reports problems too late, panders to the *muzhiks* and their children.

Machine gunners have ridden in from their posts, they stay over in our yard, it's night, they're wearing felt cloaks. Prishchepa is making up to a Jewish woman from Kremenec, good-looking, plump, in a sleek dress. She blushes prettily, her father-in-law, blind in one eye, is sitting close by, she blossoms, Prishchepa is easy to talk to, she blossoms and behaves coquettishly, what can they be talking about, then—he wants to go to bed, to pass the time, she is in agonies, who understands her soul better than I? He says—we'll write to each other, I think with anguish, surely, she's not going to, Prishchepa talks on—she's agreeable (with him they're all agreeable). I remember that he probably has syphilis, it's doubtful whether he was ever fully cured.

The girl later on—I shall scream. Describe their initial delicate conversations, and what are you thinking about—she's a cultured person, has worked in the Revolutionary Committee.

My God, I think, women nowadays hear all that foul language, live like soldiers, what's become of gentler feelings?

In the night storm and rain, we run for the stable, it's dirty, dark, damp, cold, the machine gunners are packed off to their posts at dawn, they assemble in the pouring rain, felt cloaks and freezing rain. Pitiful Demidovka.

8 August 1920. Berestechko

I'm beginning to feel at home in this town. They used to have market fairs here. The peasants sell pears. The money they get paid in has long ceased to be legal tender. The place used to be a hive of activity—the Jews used to export grain to Austria, goods and people were smuggled across the nearby frontier.

Unusual barns, cellars.

I am lodging with the proprietress of an inn, a skinny red-headed old bag. Ilchenko has bought some cucumbers, is reading *Everybody's Magazine* and holding forth on economic policy, says the Jews are to blame for everything, an obtuse Slav creature, stuffed his pockets when Rostov was sacked. Some foster children, mother recently dead. The story of the pharmacist, the Poles stuck pins under his fingernails, insane people.

A hot day, people loitering about coming to life again, they'll start trading soon.

The synagogue, Torah scrolls, built 36 years ago by a craftsman from Kremenets, he was paid 50 rubles a month, golden peacocks, folded hands, ancient Torah scrolls, not one *shammes* shows any enthusiasm, moth-eaten old men, the bridges into Berestechko, how they swayed, the Poles gave the whole place a distinctive character which it has long lost. The little old man with whom Korochaev, the demoted Div. Commander, lodged, with his Jewish henchman. Korochaev used to be Chairman of the Cheka somewhere in Astrakhan, prod him and it all comes pouring out. Making friends with the Jew. We drink tea with the old man. Quiet, good-humored. I roam around the town, life goes on in the Jewish hovels—wretched, powerful, immortal—young women in white stockings, shifts, how few fat people there are here.

We are reconnoitering in the direction of Lvov, Apanasenko writes epistles to the Stavropol Executive Committee, "we shall be cutting off heads in the rear," he's delighted with himself. A battle at Radziechow, Apanasenko acquits himself like a hero—lightening-quick deployment of his troops, very nearly had the 14th Division shot for retreating. We are approaching Radziechow.

28 August 1920. Komarow

At night, a walk around the town.

Moonlight, their life at night, behind closed doors. Wailing beyond those walls. They'll clean it all up. The fear and horror of the inhabitants. The worst of it is—our men nonchalantly walk around looting wherever possible, stripping mangled corpses.

The hatred is the same, the Cossacks just the same, the cruelty the same, it's nonsense to think one army is different from another. The life of these little towns. There's no salvation. Everyone destroys them—the Poles gave them no refuge. The girls and women, all of them, can scarcely walk. In the evening—a talkative Jew with a little beard, used to keep a shop, daughter threw herself out of a second-story window to escape a Cossack, broke her arms, one of many.

What a mighty and marvelous life of a nation existed here. The fate of Jewry. At home in the evening, supper, tea, I sit and drink in the words of the Jews with the little beard, wistfully asking me whether it will be possible to trade.

An oppressive, uneasy night. □

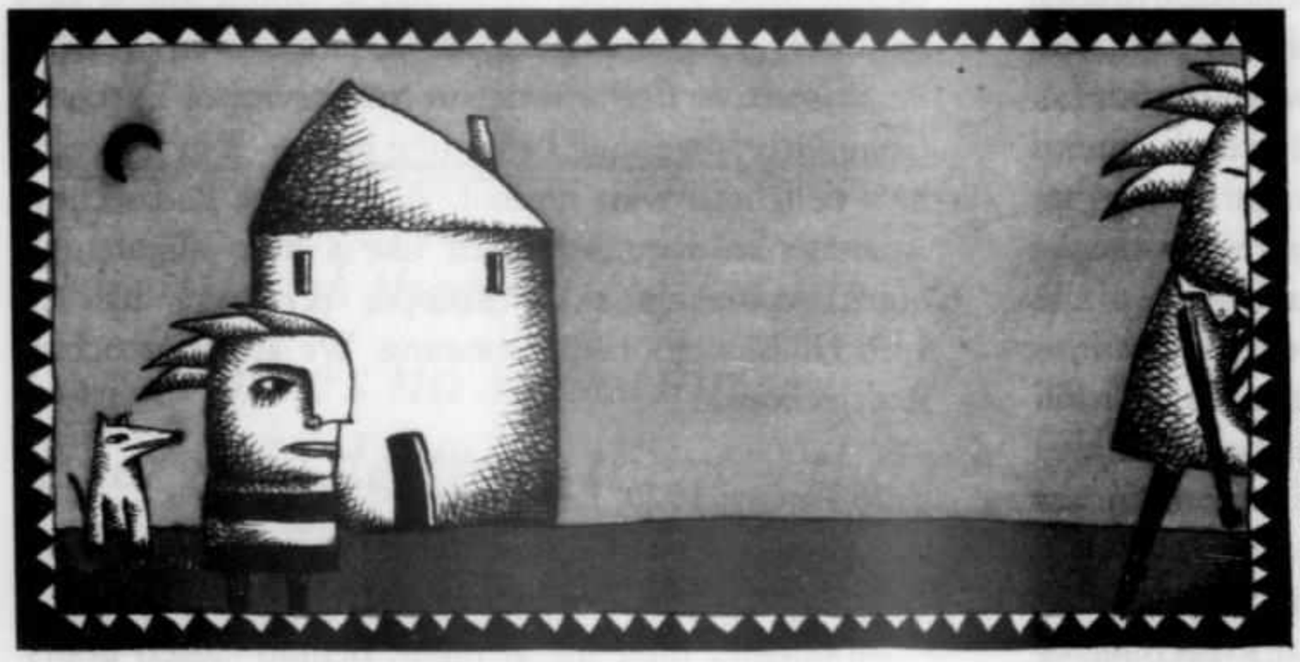
Note on the text: The diary, preserved in the archive of the writer's widow, was published in Moscow in 1990. The selections that follow are excerpted from Isaac Babel, 1920 Diary, *translated by H.T. Willets and edited, introduced, and annotated by Carol J. Avins (Yale University Press).*

Adapted from 1920 Diary, *by Isaac Babel. To be published in April, 1995 by Yale University Press. Russian text copyright ©1990 by Antonia Nikolavena Pirozhkova-Babel. Copyright ©1995 by Yale University. Reproduced by permission.*

BOOK REVIEW

Men Will Be Men

Mark Shechner



MAIRAV SALOMON

Fatheralong: A Meditation on Fathers and Sons, Race and Society. By John Edgar Wideman. New York: Pantheon Books. 1994, 197 pp. $28.95

I recall the lectures well, lectures verging upon scoldings, about how "the family" or rather that peculiar constellation of two parents living in the same household with their children, was a "bourgeois" or "late capitalist" institution that had little to say for itself in a post-bourgeois, postmodern age. The two-parent family could be, and in places had been, superseded by an equivalent, even historically antecedent, constellation the "extended kinship group." It performed all the nurturing and rearing functions of the nuclear family and was, if anything, more functional for some ethnic and/or economic groups. No one who was subjected, perhaps a decade ago, to this doxology will forget the intransigent self-assurance with which it was delivered or the armory of footnotes with which it was fortified.

The usual target of these arguments was the father, whom contemporary social developments, already well advanced in certain sectors of the population, had consigned to the museum of outmoded social forms. Paternity was a legal fiction, like usury or vagrancy, and, like them, a victim of changing social practice. "Who is the father of any son that any son should love him or he any son?" asks the hero of a famous modern novel, as if in anticipation of our own age (Joyce's *Ulysses*, in which that sentence appears, is set in 1904).

Who indeed? Stephen Dedalus's question has exploded into a social emergency of staggering proportions in an age of wholesale divorce, abandonment, death by violence, single motherhood, and teen pregnancy. The very concept of fatherhood has been called into question, not just by feminists avid to cashier the father or by critical theorists, clustered in university English departments, for whom something called "The Patriarchal Order" is an evil on the scale of The Plantation, but by men themselves. The census statistics confirm what we all know: American children are growing up fatherless in unprecedented numbers.

We still hear the sound of one hand clapping for this state of affairs, as we will when any middle class social institution is being dismantled. But now the self-assurance is missing, as postmodern life overflows with nasty consequences and the repercussions of society without fathers are growing more obvious every day. Writers and artists have been taking notice. A few years ago, the poet Robert Bly took a lot of grief for claiming, in his book *Iron John*, that sons need fathers if they are to become men, and other writers—Paul Auster in *The Invention of Solitude* (1982) and Philip Roth in *Patrimony* (1991)–have written movingly of efforts to bond to prickly or remote fathers.

However, it has been in that part of America that has suffered most grievously from the decline of the family, African-American society, that writers and artists have taken up the question most seriously. If they haven't uniformly issued calls for the resurrection of the nuclear family, they have been putting fatherhood under the magnifying glass and reporting back on their findings. Filmmakers, feeling a special burden of responsibility to do the right thing, have been out front in pleading the case for fatherhood, John Singleton's *Boyz 'N the Hood* being the bluntest of their films. More obliquely and self-consciously, Matty Rich's *Straight Out of Brooklyn* suggests that even a wastrel, alcoholic, chess-playing father can have a tonic effect upon a son's moral character.

Writers, working in a more flexible and capacious medium, have made more complex contributions to the image of fathers and sons. Nathan McCall, an ex-convict now a reporter for The *Washington Post*, recalls, in his memoir, *Makes Me Wanna Holler: A Young Black Man in America*, that as a youth he did not view his stepfather, a retired Army officer turned gardener, with admiration. Watching his stepfather at work in affluent white homes in Sterling Point, Virginia, the young Nathan would think he "looked too much like pictures of downtrodden sharecroppers and field slaves." McCall recalls the defining moment when

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he realized, "There were two distinct worlds in America, and a different set of rules for each: the white one was full of the possibilities of life. The dark was just that—dark and limited." It took him a long time to understand his stepfather's quiet tenacity: "I understand now, as an adult, that my old man was more of a man than I ever could be."

Of course, the paternal coin has a flip side, one described by Brent Staples, an editorial writer for The *New York Times*, in his *Parallel Time: Growing Up in Black and White*. Staples, who grew up with a drunk and violent father, once drew a knife and cut his mother. Staples's brother Blake, a drug dealer, would succumb to the chaos in the family and the temptations of the street and be killed by a rival. Unlike film, which trades in flat types, these books do not serve up idealized figures.

The latest contribution to the reevaluation of the father, and the most penetrating, is novelist John Edgar Wideman's *Fatheralong: A Meditation on Fathers and Sons, Race and Society*. Wideman, author of thirteen books of fiction and memoir, is a more practiced social critic and self-observer than first time memoirists McCall and Staples, and his contribution possesses a sensitivity to nuance that comes from Wideman's experiences on the one side and his immersion in literature on the other. *Fatheralong*, a memoir cum diatribe on race, is a reminder of how much Wideman can tell us when he is focused for he is a master digressor and how seriously we need to take him on the subjects he understands best: male bonding, fathers and sons, and what American life does to Black men. Wideman writes with the authority of his own grievous losses, having both a brother and a son in prison on murder convictions. Much of his writing, especially an earlier book about his brother Robbie, *Brothers and Keepers* (1985), has been devoted to understanding how that happened and why.

When Wideman, just entering his fifties, joined his father in 1992 on a trip to the latter's hometown of Promised Land, South Carolina, it was one of the rare occasions that father and son had ever spent time together. Leaving the Charlotte airport, Wideman reflected, "Unless he'd watched me for longer than that when I was a baby, I'd never spent this much time alone with my father, seven hours and counting."

Wideman saw the trip as an occasion to raise baseline questions: about the chill between them, about the father's absences from home, about the remoteness punctuated by flashes of rage, about the street and bar life that the father, Edgar Wideman, preferred to home life, about the musk of masculinity that pervaded a room long after he was out of it.

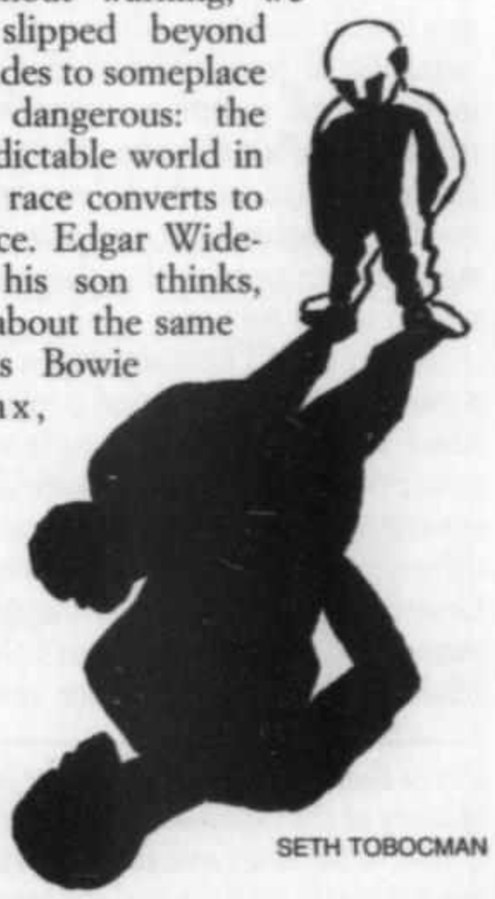
Edgar Wideman's wasn't a simple case of abandonment so much as an emotional withdrawal from the heartbeat of the family, making him all the more remote for being so inscrutably there, present yet apart. The father's mystique was bound up with his manhood. "Perhaps the secret had something to do with my father's smell, seeping off his body while he slept, in his clothes, the sheets and blankets when he wasn't in the room… Not exactly stink but a threat of nastiness in the scent he marked things with. Pungent nastiness I envied and feared…" How different that was from Wideman's mother and her arms "around her children, her grandkids, his sisters and brother, nephews and nieces, and inside that circle of family, smaller circles, two bodies clinging, five or six in a tight huddle, circles concentric, overlapping, intertwined, generations, long gone and yet to be born connected indivisibly."

Buoyed by the feel and smell and taste of the world, even as he fights against riptides of despair and fury within himself, Wideman luxuriates in these sensuous flashbacks. The past, magical and bleak, pumps life into Wideman's prose, fueling its wild fluctuations of voice, now muscular, now languorous, poised between a father who is always "alone, alone, alone" and women in "warm, scented rooms … casual in their bodies." Growing into manhood, Wideman would take neither path. "Neither Father's son nor Mother's son, betraying them both as I became myself. My mother's open arms. My father's arms crossed on his chest."

Arms open and arms closed animate those voices that seem so different from each other. One voice is as forbidding as the photo of Wideman himself on the dust cover, leather-jacketed, scowling, his own arms crossed truculently over his chest. The other voice, rapturous and poetic, can pause tenderly over a son's ecstasy in watching his father shave. The book is a lumpy weave of distinct meditations: on fathers and sons and on race and society, which seem to emerge from disconnected chambers of Wideman's mind: the father-son story being charged with desire, knowledge, and mourning, the race and society story being a sermon on the mount about the "paradigm of race [which] authors one sad story, repeated far too often, that would reduce the complexity of our cultural heritage. Race preempts our right to situate our story where we choose. It casts us as minor characters in somebody else's self-elevating melodrama."

One utters a qualified amen to that sermon: amen for the obvious, bitter wisdom in it, qualified for the exceptions and escape clauses that clamor to be added. *Fatheralong* is laced with such exhortations that fall midway between Jeremiads and bumper stickers and fall short of what Wideman does best: show us the bottom line through human encounters that bypass the commonplace. When a retired history professor guides Wideman through an archive in Abbeville, South Carolina, in search of records concerning Wideman's ancestors, Wideman's gratitude is unexpectedly splashed with rage. "I was grateful, even fond of this elderly man who shared himself, his insights and craft, so unreservedly with a stranger, and that's why I was surprised, shocked even, by the ice cold wave of anger, the fury compressed into one of those if looks could kill looks I found myself flashing down at the back of his thin, freckled bald skull."

Without warning, we have slipped beyond platitudes to someplace more dangerous: the unpredictable world in which race converts to violence. Edgar Wideman, his son thinks, "was about the same age as Bowie Lomax,



SETH TOBOCMAN

as smart, as curious and engaging. Yet, because of his color, my father had been denied the prospects, the possibilities that had enriched the career and life of the white man below me." The paradigm of race veers off at an angle to show us more in this snapshot than we could learn in a week of lectures.

John Edgar Wideman straddles broad social and cultural terrain. A novelist and social critic of impressive powers and a professor at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, he is also intimate with the street and its rhythms and terrors. In some ways he sounds like Philip Roth: knowing, talky, obsessed, his head filled with local and precisely inflected voices. Wideman's writing is sharp, urban, masculine, sexual, and very aggressive. Wideman claims to know violence from within, to identify with it, to claim a piece of it. There are passages in his *Philadelphia Fire* and *Brothers and Keepers*, much as in this book, that are downright menacing, as Wideman intends them to be. But there are open arms for men too, and Wideman writes with vivid force about men and his connections to them. The earlier memoir, *Brothers and Keepers,* is the more potent of the two, for the brother Robbie, who holds center stage in it with his pungent street argot. About the son, Jacob, Wideman has been more diffident, though the coda of *Fatheralong*, an open letter to him, is as heartbreaking a cry of personal grief as you are going to read. A brother lost, a son lost, a father found with Wideman, literature takes root in the hard and rocky soil of family tragedy. □

BOOK REVIEW

The Trivialization of the Jews

David Biale

The Sacred Chain: The History of the Jews, by Norman Cantor. HarperCollins, 1994. 472 pp. $35.00.

Not every Jew is a historian and not every Jew who is a historian is a Jewish historian. But these seemingly uncontestable assertions turn out to have little validity when one picks up a book such as Norman Cantor's *The Sacred Chain*. Here, a respected medieval historian, who is also a Jew, takes on all of Jewish history, with results that cast serious doubt on his competence as a historian, not to mention his competence as a Jewish historian. Moreover, the trivialization of Jewish history that we find in this book points to a much wider, troubling phenomenon in American Jewish culture, in which Jews fail to accord themselves the same intellectual rigor and seriousness that they would invest in other subjects.

Rarely have I encountered a book by a member of the historical profession so filled with opinions and judgments as unsupported as they are weirdly idiosyncratic. About other scholars, Cantor offers the following: He dismisses S.D. Goitein, whose studies of the Mediterranean Jewish communities of the High Middle Ages he admits are classics in twentieth century scholarship, as "verbose, disorganized and self indulgent." He calls Robert Alter's pioneering work applying literary criticism to the Bible "neofundamentalism." And all of Israeli scholarship in Jewish studies is homogenized into one unappetizing ideological screed.

On substantive matters, Cantor is equally perplexing. He claims that archaeology has totally failed to corroborate the Bible, an assertion that shows how disconnected he is from biblical studies. He accepts without a shred of criticism Harold Bloom's whimsical and unprovable suggestion that the author of the J document of the Bible was a woman. Later on, he tells us that the seventeenth- and eighteenth century messianic sects of Sabbatians and Frankists produced "successful progeny" as a result of "extraordinarily careful child care and early childhood education." Since Cantor disdains footnotes, we have no way of knowing where he came up with this last absurdity, but having researched some of these sources myself, I must confess to being utterly mystified.

Cantor asserts that the attraction of nineteenth- and twentieth century Jews to social revolution was a result of unresolved Oedipal conflicts, surely one of the most spectacularly irresponsible appropriations of Freud. With no more proof than he offers for any of his other assertions, he breezily claims that all modern Jewish thinkers, such as Jacques Derrida or Noam Chomsky, are really playing out ideas from the talmudic and kabbalistic traditions in secular forms.

One could go on and on. But the real difficulty with this book lies not so much in its unfounded claims, strange opinions, and factual curiosities, as in its explicit racism. Cantor repeatedly makes statements such as the following: "The Jews are a superior people intellectually and as long as Jewish genes exist, the extraordinary impact Jews have had in twentieth century thought will continue indefinitely." As we have come to expect from him, Cantor offers no proof for this kind of claim, which, to put it mildly, is anything but noncontroversial.

For Cantor, however, the Jews have always been a superior race, which explains why, already in the Bible, they invented a spiritual religion that separated them from "savage societies":

> The Jews of the mid first millennium BC, when the Bible as we have it was written, sensed something special about themselves, something that organically separated the Jews from other peoples. They needed a story of their origins, a narrative myth to account for this specialness, for their moral fiber, their intelligence, their intense communal sensibility, their durability in the face of onslaught and exile.

It would be one thing if Cantor were

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describing what he thinks was the historical self-consciousness of Jews, but he clearly subscribes to his own racial construction of Jewish chosenness. While Cantor's Jews may have been a superior race for thousands of years, he foresees that assimilation, not only in America, but between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East as well, means the end of the race. Here, however, Cantor offers a surprising twist: The Jews, having accomplished their historical mission of creating Western civilization, can now pass their genes into the larger gene pool. Jewish assimilation may therefore improve the genetic stock of the lesser races.

If, however, the Jews still want to survive as a separate group, Cantor offers a few "modest" proposals of what they should do. Let me quote one of them to give a flavor of just how bizarre this book can get:

> Jewish scholars would have to reinterpret Judaism in light of modernist and postmodernist thought. Since almost no rabbi currently has the intellectual and learned capacity to do this, a panel of Jewish professors in the leading universities, the best minds among ethnic Jews, would have to be called upon for this task. They would be given an absolute time limit of three years to produce a new Jewish theology...

I suppose that Cantor himself, as a Jewish professor at a leading university, would be in charge of this heroic effort.

Cantor issues similar peremptory instructions to those he charges with revising synagogue liturgy. The "current boring medieval derived" liturgy has to go and will be replaced by a liturgy written by "Jewish composers, poets, novelists and theater, film and TV people." They would be given "an absolute deadline of two years" and synagogue councils would have to promise in advance to accept whatever these so-called experts came up with. Moreover, Cantor prescribes that no service will be allowed to last more than ninety minutes. Given the involvement of Jewish Hollywood in this task, one wonders if the ninety minutes will include commercials.

As I hope that I have made plain, this book deserves to have no readers. Why, then, waste time on anything so silly? Because it seems to me that Cantor's book is a kind of odd and extreme example of what many American Jews have come to expect in books written about the Jewish experience. Over the last few decades, publishers have evidently decided and presumably the market bears them out that Jews will buy predigested books that serve up Jewish history and thought in simplified, popular packages. Cantor himself denounces this tendency, but it seems to me that his book is part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

Cantor has clearly read (although not so clearly understood) much of the recent work of scholars in Jewish studies. He approves of the way the discipline has grown in sophistication and interests. Yet, his own book reduces the new complexity that scholars have brought to Jewish studies to a kind of mindless chauvinism. He attacks others for a "midrashic" approach to Jewish history and delights in deflating cherished myths with iconoclastic barbs, but his glorification of Jewish "genius" ends up as simplistic and celebratory in its own way. It is as if neither Jewish writers nor readers are prepared to accept a rigorous and unapologetic picture of themselves. When it comes to the Jews, they are ready to throw out the window all of the intellectual criteria that they would apply to any other humanistic or scientific field, searching instead for comfortable clichés or well-worn bromides. As Gershom Scholem put it in an essay fifty years ago about the nineteenth century apologetic view of Judaism: "This terrifying giant, our history is called to task ... and this enormous creature, full of destructive power, made up of vitality, evil and perfection, must contract itself, stunt its growth... . The demonic giant is nothing but a simple fool... ."

Today, as then, the goal of so much of the popular writing about Jews is either to promote pride, or to wallow in a history of victimization; even books that appear to be critical or dissenting, such as Alan Dershowitz's *Chutzpah* or Ruth Wisse's attack on liberal Jews, often subscribe to the same chauvinism and paranoia. Today's scholars of Jewish studies have largely followed Scholem's lead in reconstructing Jewish history in all its vitality and contradictions, yet they have virtually no audience among the general Jewish public.

Can it be that a culture once capable of producing literary masterpieces such as the Bible, or works of the most subtle hermeneutical dialectics such as the Talmud is now reduced to the level of Cantor's book and a host of similar trivializations? If the Jews are really as smart as Cantor thinks they are, then surely they deserve better. □

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BOOK REVIEW

Letting It All Hang Out

James A. Miller

Airing Dirty Laundry, by Ishmael Reed. New York: Addison Wesley Publishing Company. 1993. xix, 284 pp. Cloth, $20.00.

Reflecting Black: African-American Cultural Criticism, by Michael Eric Dyson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1993, 346 pp. Paper, $19.95.

Making Malcolm: The Myth and Meaning of Malcolm X, by Michael Eric Dyson. New York: Oxford University Press. 1994. 215 pp. Cloth, $19.95.

"The profitable literary scam nowadays is to pose as someone who airs unpleasant and frank facts about the black community, only to be condemned by the black community for doing so. This is the sure way to grants, awards, prizes, fellowships, and academic power."

Ishmael Reed
Airing Dirty Laundry

"An oppositional African American cultural criticism is... public and receptive to the best critical insights available from all responsible and reasonable quarters. It does not observe a tedious etiquette of racial manners that maintains that negative, controversial or critical news about black folk must be handled in secrecy away from the omniscient gaze of white society. We may term this protective response to the harmful white surveillance of black culture the 'dirty laundry theory' of racial politics."

Michael Eric Dyson
Reflecting Black:
African American Cultural Criticism

James A. Miller teaches in the American Studies Program at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut.

Who dares, or has the cultural and political authority, to speak about African-American life in the 1990s? Old certainties about race and the Black community are apparently crumbling in the face of sustained assaults upon racial "essentialism" in some academic quarters and, more important, by the sheer demographic facts of the diversity and complexity of contemporary African-American life, particularly in the wake of the successes of the civil rights movement. Paradoxically, at the same time that the Black middle class has grown tremendously since the mid 1960s, the sheer magnitude of the social crisis facing Black communities across the country has also sharply escalated. Drug wars, youth violence, and "Black on Black crime" have now emerged as the leitmotif for contemporary African-American life, the dominant lens through which many white Americans, increasingly separated from Blacks by deeply entrenched patterns of racial segregation and hardening racial divisions, view their Black counterparts.

These shifts in the social structure and outlook in the Black community have been accompanied by the public spectacle of one Black political or public figure after another toppling, or being sent, into disgrace under the unrelenting gaze of the mass media and tabloid journalism. Whether it is the continuing saga of the fall and rise of (re)newly elected mayor of Washington, D.C., Marion Barry; the forced resignation of Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy; the dismissal of NAACP Executive Director Ben Chavis; the Clarence Thomas hearings; the Michael Tyson trial; the recent trial of rap star Tupac Shakur; or our continuing national obsession with O.J. Simpson, the overwhelming impression is one of a community whose political and cultural leadership is floundering and in a state of disarray, a community deeply fissured by these media spectacles along unprecedented fault lines of class and gender. Part of the price of integration, it seems, is a heightened awareness not only that African Americans are nowhere as monolithic as many people imagine them to be, but that Black folks can be as venal, corrupt, or sexist, as any other ordinary Americans.

Still, systems of racial rhetoric (and etiquette) die hard in this country. Under these circumstances, trying to define the contours of contemporary African-American life is tricky business indeed. These conditions, too, raise the ante for informed insights into the current conditions of the Black community, creating new space for articulate Black voices on the Left as well as the Right who can bridge the gap between the world "behind the veil," as W.E.B. DuBois so eloquently phrased it at the turn of the twentieth century, and an increasingly distant white community. These books—one by the wily, irreverent, and iconoclastic veteran of thirty years of the "culture wars," Ishmael Reed; the others by a relative newcomer to public intellectual life (although one not unfamiliar to readers of TIKKUN), Michael Eric Dyson leap into the breech, offering in many ways sharply different interpretations of contemporary African-American life.

Both Reed and Dyson seem to agree, as Dyson points out, that too often Black life is viewed "...through the prisms of racist stereotype or racial essentialism." Both writers invoke their respective working class backgrounds Reed grew up in working class Buffalo, New York, neighborhoods; Dyson was raised in Detroit when both the automobile industry and Motown Records were vital to the economy to buttress their claims to cultural authenticity and authority. Beyond these points of convergence, however, Reed and Dyson explore significantly different

terrain. *Airing Dirty Laundry* is a compilation of occasional essays spanning the period 1978 to 1993, many of which will be familiar to Reed's dedicated readers. Of the previously unpublished essays, "Airing Dirty Laundry," "Is There A Black-Jewish Feud?," and several others provide the connective tissue for the collection. In his preface, Reed briefly traces the conversion in his thinking about social pathology, triggered by his angry reaction to Pete Hammill's 1988 Esquire essay, "Letter to a Black Friend," a scathing critique of the behavior of "the black underclass."

Reed's argument, the one which sets the tone for Airing Dirty Laundry, is that the American media establishment has designated the Black community as the surrogate for the accumulated social pathologies of American life, freely and maliciously airing its dirty laundry at the same time that it indulges and reassures its white constituents by individualizing their problems, or sweeping them into the corner. Reed's solution? Let it all hang out. Hold the social pathologies of every social, racial, and ethnic group suburban whites, Asian Americans, Latinos, Jews, Irish, Italians, etc. up to public view. This full disclosure of the real depths of American social misery, Reed argues, may provide a better basis for a new social consensus in this country.

Along the way, Reed takes well-aimed shots at many of his favorite satiric targets: the corporate media elite, which shapes and largely controls American public opinion; National Public Radio; feminists and liberal feminists (as opposed to "common sense feminists"); and Black and white neoconservatives. At the same time, he castigates Henry Louis Gates, Jr. for his well publicized views on Black anti-Semitism, attacks "white media feminists" for their role in the Clarence Thomas hearings, and portrays Mike Tyson as the latest victim of America's perennial quest for a "great white hope." Not easily pigeonholed, Reed often shoots from the hip, even as he documents his claims with numerous and compelling examples from the national press. But throughout these essays, he needles, jabs, irritates, and provokes—chipping away at the forces which stand in the way of the multicultural America he continues to fiercely advocate.

Michael Eric Dyson's project is more theoretically and politically inflected than Reed's, bearing the distinct imprint of the current move toward "cultural studies" in the American academy as well as Dyson's own carefully crafted stance as an "oppositional African-American cultural critic" thus broadly aligning himself with writers and public intellectuals such as bell hooks and Cornel West, among others, who link the celebration and critique of African-American life with a vision of radical democracy. "An oppositional African-American cultural criticism," he writes in *Reflecting Black*, "is concerned to examine the redemptive and unattractive features of African-American culture....It promotes the preservation of black culture's best features, the amelioration of its weakest parts, and the eradication of its worst traits."

Dyson's is an ambitious project indeed, and one whose fulfillment would presumably have to command the attention and respect of the creators and consumers of the artistic creations and social practices he so skillfully dissects. In the meantime, Dyson ranges freely through a wide swath of contemporary African-American culture: Black popular music, rap, and hip hop culture; Black film; and the plight of contemporary Black males. Preacher that he is, Dyson cannot resist the rhetorical virtuosity of his calling; and his essays are inventive, often freewheeling displays of scholarly erudition and passionate exegesis. Even when his oratorical skills test our faith as in his essay, "Michael Jackson's Postmodern Spirituality," his exuberance and sheer pleasure in the act of analysis itself sustains his momentum.

Dyson's pursuit of a redemptive vision which can undergird contemporary African-American artistic and social practices leads him inevitably to Malcolm X, whose heroic status in Black communities grows larger as the circumstances of his life recede further into the distance. Although the opening chapter of *Making Malcolm* very skillfully traces the various stages of Malcolm X's reincarnation in scholarly and popular life, Dyson is primarily concerned with invoking Malcolm X as a means of exploring his recurrent preoccupations: Black film, hip-hop culture, the plight of poor Black men, and the possibilities of a redemptive and radical vision of American democracy, one which is nurtured by the best values of African-American spiritual, social, and artistic life.

If Reed and Dyson are to be read for more than their entertainment value, however, for more than their reports from the front, so to speak, the value of their works should be assessed in terms of their ability to break through the disenabling and paralyzing rhetoric which too often surrounds contemporary discussions of race, class, and culture in contemporary American life. Both writers, in their own way, seek to break through the rhetoric that has led us to the present racial cul de sac, repudiating the deeply entrenched forces of racial and ethnic chauvinism that continue to shape American life. In this context, it's worth asking where, or whether, these words lead us.

Ishmael Reed's rendition of his efforts at organizing two boycotts of television network news in the early 1990s is a fascinating account of effective action and coalition-building. And his insistence that all people of good will join in the attack on the "...obsolete and unscientific blame the victim explanation of America's racial crisis" takes on a particular urgency in the face of the mean-spirited politics of present day America. Michael Dyson's "oppositional African-American cultural criticism," in contrast, carefully straddles both sides of the racial divide. He assumes a "tough-love" posture toward his African-American readers at the same time that he directs the attention of his white readers to sources of value and insight in arenas of African-American life he assumes they may have overlooked or misunderstood. The success of Dyson's evangelical fervor and redemptive vision ultimately depends upon securing a high degree of consent among a wide range of sectors of the American population —an extremely difficult task in the present climate, although not an impossible one. In either case, airing dirty laundry is certainly a fundamental prerequisite for any vision of a radically transformed America, but it's only a prerequisite. The jury is still out on the next stage. □

BOOK REVIEW

What the World Needs Now

Kai Bird

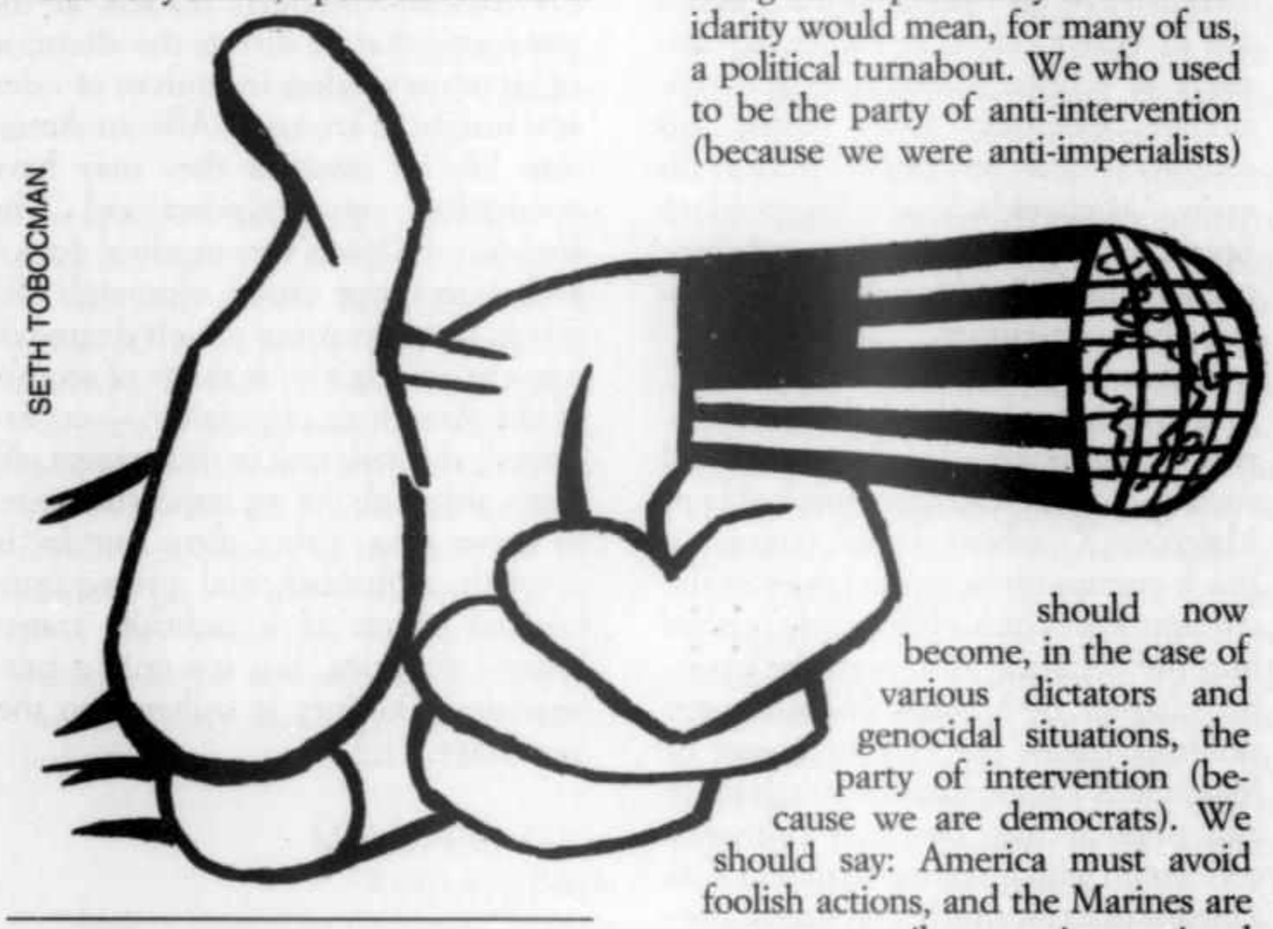
America's Mission: The United States and Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century by Tony Smith, Princeton University Press, 1994, 442 pp.

This is one of those books in which a thoughtful scholar meticulously, and with increasing desperation, attempts to square the circle. That is not to disparage the attempt. Long ago, someone should have examined, in one volume, the proposition that the best way to defend American democracy at home was to export it abroad. Alas, the Wilsonian incarnation of this idea has for so long been the whipping boy of the "realist" school of foreign policy—exemplified by Henry Kissinger—that its adherents have easily been labeled naive and irrelevant. If such a book had been written in the 1950s, it would have been roundly ignored.

But Tony Smith, a political scientist at Tufts University, has written his book after the collapse of the Cold War, and that is sure to make all the difference. It is a new world, and one which might finally be ready for a carefully calibrated application of democratic internationalism.

But what is the nature of this beast? In a recent essay in *Dissent*, Paul Berman quoted Henry Adams ascribing to ordinary Americans of 1800 the revolutionary belief that their country should support "the overthrow of tyranny, aristocracy, hereditary privilege, and priesthood [read "fundamentalism"], wherever they exist." This is indeed a radical notion. With Haiti, Bosnia, Rwanda, and countless other atrocities in mind, Berman goes on to conclude:

> That same revolutionary instinct ought now to become the principle of those who wish to continue viewing foreign policy through a lens of moral considerations. Yes, emphasizing our responsibility to show solidarity would mean, for many of us, a political turnabout. We who used to be the party of anti-intervention (because we were anti-imperialists) should now become, in the case of various dictators and genocidal situations, the party of intervention (because we are democrats). We should say: America must avoid foolish actions, and the Marines are not necessarily our international agency of choice. (We do remember that much from our anti-interventionist days.) But democratic countries should act. Especially rich ones.



SETH TOBOCMAN

Kai Bird, the author of The Chairman: John J. McCloy and the Making of the American Establishment *(Simon & Schuster, 1992), is writing a biography of William and McGeorge Bundy.*

This is an eloquent and yet sufficiently cautionary description of the thinking of those of us who are searching for a workable foreign policy based on human rights. We argued the merits of an intervention in Haiti in order to end the military regime's reign of terror and restore democracy. We condemned Washington's paralysis in the face of clear evidence of genocide in Rwanda. And we have criticized the Clinton Administration's constant temporizing with the Serbian expansionists and their policy of ethnic cleansing. Yes, we have become interventionists, but not, I plead, Wilsonians, or anything as convoluted as "liberal democratic internationalists."

Such people, as Tony Smith quite unintentionally demonstrates, are part of the problem. They are liberals, and as Smith's history of Wilsonianism grudgingly concedes, that means they can be trusted to say one thing and then do another. They are hypocrites, liars and worse, the kind of people who end up believing their own lies. They are Puritans and self-righteous idealists. They invaded Haiti, the Philippines, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua—all in the name of democracy—and then proceeded to hunt down and murder native democrats. They then occupied these nations for as long as possible. Smith's model Wilsonians are Presidents Wilson, Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, and, oddly enough, Reagan, all presidents who—with the exception of Roosevelt—intervened in other nations to support right wing, authoritarian regimes. Even Roosevelt tolerated much thuggery in Latin America and abandoned the Spanish Republicans to Franco's German-supplied fascists. Smith writes honestly about this sordid history; he condemns all the compromises and hypocrisy. But he nevertheless insists that America's mission, particularly in the twentieth century, has been the export of democracy.

This is a strange book, because the

author's historical narrative constantly subverts his Wilsonian prescriptions. The contradictions are both intriguing and frustrating. Take, for example, the postwar imposition of democracy on Japan and Germany. These are Smith's strongest cases for his thesis. But on closer inspection, Smith shows that what happened in those defeated and occupied nations was either the product of indigenous factors or simply peculiar to the Cold War, a "godsend for American purposes, thanks to which conservative forces in both Germany and Japan were ready to make their break with the past and to throw in their lot with the American order."

And when it comes to covert interventions in Iran and Guatemala during the Eisenhower administration, Smith must rewrite history in an attempt to preserve his thesis. To this end, he argues that perhaps Guatemala's deposed President Jacobo Arbenz was indeed a communist and thereby deserved what he got—even though he was elected with 60 percent of the vote. A similar revisionism is used to suggest that it "made sense" for the Americans to take seriously the "communist bid for power" in Mossedegh's Iran. This is nothing but Cold War orthodoxy dressed up as liberal revisionism. Yes, Smith is saying, America intervened in behalf of corrupt, authoritarian regimes, but in the face of the communist threat and absent indigenous democratic forces, it was the right thing to do.

Neo-liberals like Smith believe that, by fine-tuning U.S. foreign policy they can "enlarge democracy." If the Eisenhower-Dulles crowd made the mistake of passing up on opportunities to support indigenous liberals, the Kennedy-Johnson policy wonks made the mistake in South Vietnam of supporting a mandarin Catholic, Ngo Dinh Diem, as the supposed democratic alternative to the communists when the game was already lost. And Jimmy Carter's "naiveté about political realities abroad" led to his policy "failures" in confronting the Iranian and Nicaraguan revolutions of 1979. Smith concludes by calling for a "selective" Wilsonianism that "clearly recognizes the concrete national security interests served by the expansion of democracy abroad while…it has a realistic sense of the limits of American power and the need to work with the world as it is."

Well, excuse me, but I don't like the world as it is, and I don't care very much for "concrete national security interests." If anything, Smith convinces me we'd be better off without a second coming of Woodrow the Good Warrior.

We must indeed begin anew. The world is an increasingly small place, and our problems and those of our neighbors are intersecting at a frightening pace. The threats—from environmental disasters, to ethnic conflict, to the still very real possibility of nuclear terrorism—dwarf any of the capabilities of that Neanderthal creature of the Cold War called the national security state. To think in terms of *national* security is foolishly anachronistic.

Clearly, our problems are global and will require the building of new international institutions and the reformation of such outdated organizations as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. Clearly, we need more internationalist approaches, less protection accorded to the norms of sovereignty, more local democracy, and far greater protections accorded to universal human rights. But how do we get there? How should we think about what Smith calls "America's mission" without getting trapped in his national security state?

Rather than Wilsonianism, with its carefully calibrated compromises, we need to go back to a radical Jeffersonianism which places America's vast resources behind a revolutionary defense of human rights everywhere. Wildly visionary but impractical? Not really.

Broadly speaking, America should use a combination of material incentives and international law to pursue two goals: first, the dramatic demobilization of the world's armies, particularly its nuclear arsenals; and second, the defense of individual human rights through international courts of law.

The goal of demilitarization can be achieved through a wide range of financial incentives and disincentives. Washington could propose that every member of the United Nations pledge to cut its military budget by 5 to 10 percent per year. The World Bank would monitor these defense budgets and withhold loans to those countries that fail to meet the annual targets. The United States, of course, would have to get out of the business of arms exports (we currently sell 73 percent of all arms exports to the developing world). We would also pledge to apply a portion of our defense budget savings—tens of billions of dollars each year—to a world development fund. Countries that move toward eliminating all but normal civilian police forces would be rewarded from this fund with development projects that, over time, could dwarf the Marshall Plan (nuclear countries would be particularly well compensated for eliminating their weapons of mass destruction).

Simultaneously, the United Nations could impose a nominal global tax on all international financial transactions. A tax of 0.05 percent would alone raise tens of billions of dollars, which would then be used to finance a standing United Nations army of 500,000 or more. This expeditionary force would be directed by an expanded security council to intervene in those cases of blatant aggression (Iraq's invasion of Kuwait) or genocide (Rwanda). Obviously, such interventions would occur relatively rarely, and only when a consensus emerged in the international community that force was necessary. From the beginning, genocide would simply not be tolerated. Within fifty years, it is reasonable to assume that such an international force would intervene whenever organized violence occurred.

The second goal—that of a broad defense of universal human rights—is equally within reach, if not by our generation, then by our sons and daughters. The U.N.'s International Law Commission last summer produced a detailed charter for the establishment of an International Criminal Court. As drafted, the charter has the support of many legal scholars and most member countries of the U.N. Predictably, only the United States is now posing objections to specific elements of the charter, in particular the court's jurisdiction over war crimes and drug-related crimes.

But as drafted, such a standing court would have jurisdiction over many of the commonly defined abuses of human rights. Theoretically, presented with evidence of criminal conduct, the court's prosecutors could lodge a case against war criminals, whether they be foot soldiers, war lords, or heads of state. The precedents for such prosecutions have been well-established by the postwar trials of war criminals at Nuremberg. A similar war crimes tribunal has been formed for the former Yugoslavia, but it has accomplished nothing because neither the United States nor the European Community has made it a priority.

Enforcement problems are difficult, but in a world moving toward demilitarization and international law, they need not be insurmountable. The world is be-

coming a small place, and so international indictments can be enforced with a variety of sanctions and perhaps even financial rewards. In the beginning, justice will not always be served. But again, with the passage of time, such a court will win its own credibility.

If I have presented some vision of where, logically, we should be heading, what can be said about the here and now? Two years into the Clinton presidency, this administration's foreign policy is perceived by most voters as incomprehensible. And rightly so, because like George Bush, Clinton and company just haven't bothered with the vision thing. Nevertheless, Clinton pledged during his 1992 campaign to link U.S. foreign policy with principled stands on human rights. But, as Tony Smith shows, Wilsonians are apt to say one thing and do another. Under Clinton's watch, the defense budget has remained sacrosanct, arms sales abroad have ballooned, and ethnic cleansing has been tolerated.

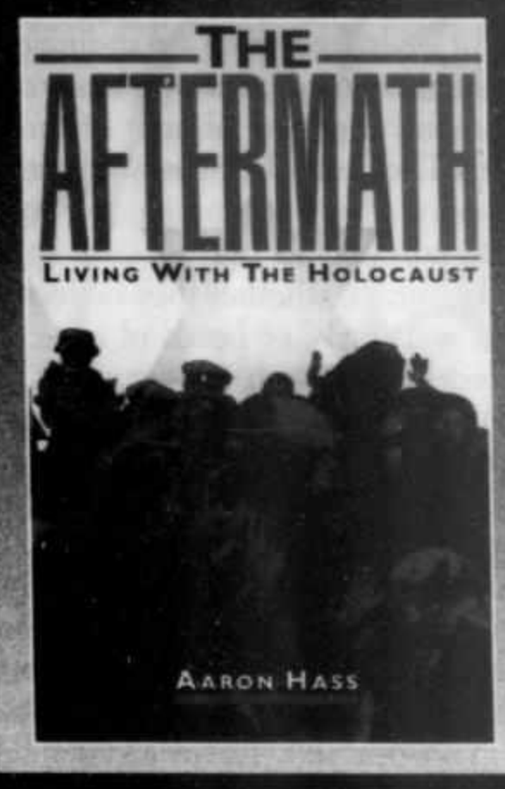
Clinton has acted, finally, only in Haiti. And despite the skepticism of Congress and a largely hostile press, the intervention has so far succeeded beyond anyone's expectations. Not all of the credit for this should be handed to Jimmy Carter; a forced invasion would have been relatively bloodless and ultimately as successful. Intervention was justified in any circumstance and should have happened three years ago. But in his post-presidency, Carter is teaching us that there are indeed many tools and tactics available to those who advocate an unqualified stand for human rights. Teams of international election observers can sometimes alter the political dynamics as much as sending in the Marines. "Truth commissions"–such as the one that investigated human rights abuses in El Salvador–also can make it impossible for tyrants to retain their positions. And finally, we have only begun to explore the merits of various conflict-resolution techniques, including such radical ideas as organized nonviolent invasions whereby large numbers of unarmed peacekeepers occupy a zone of conflict.

Ultimately, Haiti proves what can be done if we intervene on the side of the people instead of on behalf of a few anti-communist thugs. It may be difficult to export democracy (how do you define it?); but it is relatively easy, as Henry Adams put it, to support the "overthrow of tyranny" (we all know who are the tyrants).

But if, in Haiti, Clinton pulled off a classic instance of Wilsonian "selective" intervention, he also immediately began compromising on principles. The men who only a few days before were named as tyrants and thugs were nevertheless allowed to escape justice. (We're even paying them rent on their real estate and have allowed them to retain millions of dollars in ill gotten gains.) Why were these men not held accountable for their actions? Because the attempt might have shed American blood, and politically, that was not deemed an acceptable risk.

Of course, that underscores the weakness of a "selective" and unilateral approach to humanitarian interventions. If American troops essentially go it alone, then the internationalists who command them will always be looking for the perfect intervention, the one or two places where they know a relatively bloodless deal can be cut with the tyrants. "There is a consensus that there should be democracy in Haiti," says Michael Mandelbaum, a scholar close to the Clinton administration. "The problem is there is no consensus for military action. You lack the staying power you have, say, in the [Persian] gulf, which is a place of vital interest. Ultimately, although distant, the gulf looks like self-defense. Haiti does not."

Wilsonians have the advantage of operating in the "real" world, well aware of the limitations of American power. But their vision is ultimately so "realist" that they refuse to build a political constituency for the very internationalist structures—a U.N. army and an international court—that would actually make it possible to "enlarge" democracy. At the end of the twentieth century—a despicably violent era in human history—we are truly in need of something more bracing than liberal internationalism. It might even help to recall the universalistic notions of human rights embraced by our own eighteenth-century revolutionaries. Instead of warmed-over Wilsonianism, we may finally be ready for a new Jeffersonianism. □



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TOMB OF ABRAHAM

(Continued from p. 40)

ironies!–needing to reexamine its own sacred teachings in much the same way Jews have long demanded that Christians reexamine their sacred teachings as they applied to Jews.

It used to be the habit of leading Christian theologians to denounce specific murderous attacks on Jews as aberrations—the result of mistaken deductions from sane Christian theology—even if the pogrom-makers justified themselves on the ground that the Jews had killed Christ. But many Jews thought this cry of "aberration" was an abdication of responsibility and demanded that Christians take serious action not just to deplore such (mis)interpretations of the Christian Scriptures but to make them impossible.

How was this to be done? By consciously and devotedly reeducating the Christian community—and especially by rooting out and reframing formulations that encouraged hatred of the Jews, even if they were rooted in some aspects of the New Testament itself.

Now Jews—as well as Muslims and Christians—must look inward and publicly repudiate the elements of their religious tradition that lead to the dehumanization and murder of Palestinians and Israelis.

After the Hebron murders, many decent Jewish leaders—precisely because of their decency and their love of Torah—tried to dismiss them as an aberration, impermissible in Jewish law and values. They were right in their horror and in their interpretation of Jewish law—but they were not probing deeply enough to understand how even mainstream interpretations of Torah could lead to such a repellent result. And they were not taking action to reeducate the Jewish public, to reinterpret and reframe the elements of Torah that lent themselves to murderous responses.

To create a new religious vision requires the conscious and explicit and focused reinterpretation of old texts, liturgies, and practices. But to come alive, religious renewal means even more than that. It requires addressing the passions that arise from the circumstances of our own day to connect with old understandings—and to give those passions a new direction, a new pattern. They cannot be ignored, only transformed.

For Jews, the new vision must affirm Zionism and transcend it at the same time, by also affirming simultaneously the decent vision of Palestinian nationhood, and what is more-affirming it for Jews' own sake as well as for God's sake—because the divine promise of the land to one set of Abraham's children can only be fulfilled if the promise of the land to the other set is also fulfilled. The two peoples are hooked to each other like Siamese twins. Only if I keep my twin healthy can I be healthy too. So I have a positive need and goal not only to keep myself healthy, but also my twin.

How do we translate such a new vision into public policy? By demanding that each side seek to create the maximum degree of self-government and security for the other side that is consonant with its own basic security, not the minimum it can get away with. If most Jews and most Israelis applied that test, they would probably conclude that many West Bank settlements, especially and most urgently the ones that have been centers of violence against Palestinians, are a *dis*advantage to Israel. If Palestinians were applying that test, it is likely that most of them would conclude that the Arab boycott of Israel has been a *dis*advantage to Palestinians.

For Jews, Muslims, and Christians, these new understandings of their religious traditions must become not only the test of public policy but the fabric of prayers and celebrations, so that they become profoundly part of everyday life and sacred truth.

For example, the traditional Torah readings for Rosh Hashanah encompass the stories of the expulsion of Ishmael and the binding of Isaac for sacrifice. Last Rosh Hashanah, the ALEPH retreat center, Elat Chayyim, invited a respected Muslim scholar to teach the Muslim version of the story as part of the sacred service for the day. For Yom Kippur, Jews might add to the Torah readings the story of Abraham's death and burial, at which Isaac and Ishmael came together in reconciliation. We might ask pairs of congregants to imagine themselves to be Isaac and Ishmael reconnecting for the first time in decades at their father's grave, and to create the conversation between them.

Traditionally, the day before Purim was a Jewish fast day, the Fast of Esther, from dawn to dusk. Few Jews of our generation observe the fast. We could choose to do so again, in token of grief and rededication in memory of all the Arab and Jewish victims of terrorism, with a commitment to make a "Peace of the Children of Abraham." Jews could do this on their own, or could invite local mosques or their imams, Sufi shaikhs, Palestinian Americans who have been involved in dialogue with Jews, and similar people to take part.

Or we could take another tack. We might learn from the traditional practice of the Fast of the Firstborns on the day before Passover—a fast that was traditionally annulled for firstborns who gathered to study Torah together. In the case of the Fast of Esther, we might decide to annul the requirement of a fast for those who do a nonviolent public act of seeking justice, as Esther

did when she broke Persian law to confront the king and prevent genocide. This act could be connected with Jewish-Muslim cooperation, or it could take many other forms—work for the homeless, or for battered women in memory and honor of the battered Queen Vashti of the Esther story.

We might even explore whether it is possible for Jews and Muslims, Palestinians and Israelis, to meet at the Tomb of Abraham in solemn prayer, memorial, and rededication to the unity of God and the pursuit of peace.

Jews could, every Purim from now on, pause in the reading of the Scroll of Esther at the troubling verses that express the fantasies of the powerless for revenge, and when we pause, explain that in sorrow over the deaths on Purim 5754 of our cousins the children of Ishmael in the Tomb of Abraham, we are reciting these verses in an undertone or in the wailing melody of the Book of Lamentations, lest anyone think that these verses are a call to wanton murder. (These possibilities seem to have emerged last year in several different places. I heard them first the day after Purim, in a conversation with David Waskow of Los Angeles. A havurah in Philadelphia, Dorshei Derekh, adopted some of these possibilities in a version proposed by Rivkah Walton.)

Not only on these special occasions, but in regular prayer services, Jews could use music and prayers that affirm their connection to their cousins the offspring of Abraham and Hagar, the children of Ishmael. For example, in the prayer *Oseh shalom*, "You who make peace," the phrase "*v'al kol Yishmael*" might be inserted just after "*v'al kol Yisrael*"–that is, "May You help us make peace for all the children of Ishmael, the Arab peoples, as well as for all the children of Israel."

And not only in prayer but in other aspects of everyday life—for example, in planning for the production and sale of certified kosher and *hallal* food, in political dialogues and economic cooperation—synagogues could redefine contacts and joint work with mosques and with Arab organizations as part of the meaning of Jewish religious life.

The sense that "Amalek" can arise within any of us—as individuals or as cultures and peoples must also be put forward in and by Jewish religious life. We can take Barbara Breitman's insight the way she applied psychotherapeutic knowledge about the rhythm of healing individuals from abuse into the public realm of healing the Jewish people as a culture from the massive abuse of the Holocaust—back into the individual realm as well, by bringing the language of Amalek into a Torah-rooted process for healing wounded Jewish selves.

And meanwhile, it will be important for Muslims and Christians, and secular Palestinians, to undertake a parallel reexamination and reinterpretation of their own traditions concerning the Land of Ibrahim, Hajar, and Ismail. It may be hard for Jews to recommend what precise reinterpretations are possible and necessary, but after the bombings in Afula, Tel Aviv, the World Trade Center, and Buenos Aires, it does not require chutzpah for Jews to insist that some reinterpretations are needed.

If the Jewish and Palestinian peoples, in their religious and national aspects, do renew and transform their traditions, perhaps they can turn the murders at the Tomb of Abraham into a second death of Abraham—the moment at which Ishmael and Isaac can be reconciled.

What is more, if each people can see itself and the other as model peoples for the world, then they do have a chance to accomplish what the Torah prophesies: that Abraham will become a source of blessing to all the peoples of the Earth. □

My Best Friend

(Continued from p. 56)

money but a few pennies." I went up to the counter and told the waitress I had spent my allowance and asked for a glass of water. The waitress delivered it—with ice and a napkin. "Can I have some water, ma'am?" The waitress put a glass of ice water and a napkin in front of Ulysses. He grinned. We sat and chatted, going round and round on the stools, until dark.

"Let's be blood brothers."

Ulysses pulled out his switchblade calmly and, with surgical delicacy, pricked my thumb.

Ulysses had looked happy at my birthday party, yet he knew that middle-class pleasures were not to be his. But this, a free glass of water, was an experience that could be repeated; it could exist outside social Darwinism, and the "dog eat dog" lingo with which my father defined social life along with, paradoxically, an almost mystical belief in Keynesian "laissez-faire" economics. One vicious fact about class structure is that the problem exists in an inverse proportion. The difference between our form of middle-classness and my friend's poverty was somehow an infinitely greater chasm to be crossed than that which lay between ourselves and the rich. The tragedy of economic difference resides in this calculus.

I see her now, the angelic waitress, dyed red hair, pallid green uniform, setting out the two crystal tumblers before us, the transparency of the world. A glass of water: endless. □

The Painter

(Continued from p. 64)

empty-handed, is to help me paint this house."

Timothy waited until the end of the workday, after everything was cleaned up and put away, to ask Avram if he could drive home. He volunteered that while he did not yet have a license, he did have a learner's permit and needed all the practice he could get before he took his road test.

"Because it is already dark out," Avram reasoned aloud, "and because my eyes no longer adjust so well to the headlights of oncoming cars, I will let you drive my car, but first I want to see your papers."

Timothy looked at Avram the way he would sometimes look at himself in the mirror—staring intensely at something that should seem very familiar yet seemed strange and unrecognizable.

"What's the matter?" Avram said, all of a sudden not sure if letting Timothy drive was a good idea.

Timothy let his eyes relax. "The way you said you wanted to see my papers. I thought you said you trusted me, that you were a good judge of character."

"I am a good judge but you are still a boy, or perhaps a young man, and maybe you need glasses to drive and maybe you didn't bring them with you."

"Here," Timothy said, taking the folded permit out of his wallet, "look for yourself, it doesn't say anything about glasses."

Avram took the permit and without reading its small print shook his head and said, "No, it doesn't." He took his car keys out of his pocket and placed them in Timothy's hand.

As soon as Timothy sat down behind the wheel of Avram's car, before he even turned on the ignition, he pushed the seat back to make room for his long legs, adjusted the rear-view mirror, located the headlight switch, and finally tested the horn. Avram sat in silence watching him, reassured of his decision.

Timothy drove well, confidently, not too much to the right or the left for a beginner. Perhaps he checked the traffic behind him a little too often, but this was the sign of a cautious driver and Avram approved. After a minute Timothy let go of the steering wheel with one hand and fumbled for the radio dial. A broadcaster, whose voice was devoid of any emotion, said there were only five days left until Christmas and that tomorrow would be the shortest day of the year. Then he gave a report on depression during the holiday season which both Avram and Timothy listened to but tried to ignore.

"This may sound pretty stupid," Timothy said, as he turned off the radio, "but I think someone's following us."

"Why would anyone want to follow us? You think there is something valuable in this old car?"

"I don't know," Timothy said, "but that car with the broken headlight's been behind me almost since we left the house and my Mom was telling me this story she read in the paper about this guy that was followed..."

"Don't worry," Avram said, cutting Timothy off.

Timothy looked out the rear-view mirror again, but this time he didn't look back at the road soon enough and the car swerved onto the gravel shoulder. Avram put both his hands out and held onto the dashboard, but Timothy managed to regain control of the car and quickly maneuvered it back onto the road. Timothy let out a deep sigh of relief and when there was almost no air left in his lungs an almost inaudible "sorry" slipped out, but he kept his eyes glued to the road and did not look over at Avram.

Avram turned and looked out the back window. "Why don't you pull over and see if he passes us," he said. "If he stops, you must let me talk to him. I will ask him what he wants, in a polite way, so as not to upset him. If nothing is wrong, if perhaps he is only lost, then I will ask him if he'd like to join us for some dinner."

"But what if something is wrong?" Timothy said, as he pulled over onto the left lane's shoulder against his better judgment. He came to a complete stop, but kept the car in drive ready to accelerate at any moment.

"If something's wrong," Avram said, "I will invite him to paint with me tomorrow. I will pick him up and supply him with all the necessary equipment and pay him a living wage."

The car with the broken headlight pulled up along Avram's side of the car and stopped in the middle of the fast lane. Timothy tried to get a look at the driver, but it was dark and Avram was between them and all he could see was the turned figure of a man hunched up, clutching the steering wheel and looking into their car. The driver rolled down his window and with his left hand motioned for Avram to do the same. Avram slowly rolled his window down and the cold night air rushed in. Timothy strained to hear the voice of the driver, but the sounds of their engines drowned him out.

"What's he want?" Timothy said, as he grabbed Avram's shoulder and tried to turn him away from the window, but Avram's body was rigid and would not move, his eyes were closed and his face and fists were clenched tight.

Suddenly, with a voice more forceful and loud than Timothy imagined could come out of Avram's small body, he called out, "Stop following us. You can see I'm not alone. Not now."

Timothy let go of Avram and stared across the divider at the headlights of the cars coming toward them and

then at the darkness that followed. His heart was pounding. He was cold and felt unable to move; his hands seemed frozen to the steering wheel, his foot to the brake. No one spoke, no one moved. Time seemed to stand still and then, from the silence, Timothy heard Avram let out a deep, loud sigh.

Avram opened his eyes and quickly rolled up the window. His face was covered with sweat, his hands were shaking. "Look," he said, catching his breath and pointing at the car as it drove off ahead of them. "On this night he listened to me, to Avram."

Timothy relaxed his grip and held back the tears. He cleared his throat and then slowly, without gunning the engine, pressed his foot down on the gas pedal and resumed driving. All he could think about was getting home, out of the car, and away from Avram and all the fumes.

"I must apologize, I didn't mean all this should scare you," Avram said. "He's just someone, someone who knew my wife a long time ago."

"I wasn't scared," Timothy said, "he probably followed us because he thought he recognized you, and when he saw who you were, he left."

"Yes," Avram said, "that is what he did. He just recognized me and left."

The rest of the ride was made without conversation until Timothy pulled up in front of his house and turned off the engine.

"What about the Chinese food?" Avram asked.

Timothy got out of the car and walked around to the other side. When he opened Avram's door for him, a dog from one of the yards across the street started barking and then others joined in. A cat scurried past him and hid between two garbage pails; its eyes reflected green light, its back hunched up to defend itself. Down the block a young couple were holding hands and walking toward them. They were talking to each other in a language Timothy did not understand.

Avram stood up and listened to the chorus of dogs. "Do you always get such a welcome when you come home?" he asked.

Timothy did not answer him. He just shook his head.

"Tomorrow morning," Avram said, as he tapped Timothy's chest with his finger, "*eem yertseh ha'shem*, I will pick you up the same time as today, okay?"

He closed the door and walked around the back of the car to the driver's side. The headlights were still on and as the young couple crossed in front of the car, for a moment the light seemed to raise them just above the ground, but then they were lowered back into the darkness of the other side.

Timothy turned his back to Avram and started walking up the path toward his house. Someone inside turned on a light. He stopped, turned around, and saw that Avram was still standing by his car looking at the young couple. Timothy raised his right hand to his forehead in a gentle salute. "See you tomorrow," he said, but he wasn't sure Avram heard him.

Avram got into his car and closed the door. "*Eem yertseh ha'shem*," he said to himself as he watched Timothy open the front door to his house and then close it behind him, "if God wills it, tomorrow we will paint again."

Avram turned off the headlights and stared into the darkness. The street was quiet again. The dogs had stopped barking. Perhaps, he thought, they had come to accept his presence. He wanted to ring Timothy's doorbell and ask him what the dogs had said about him. He wanted to follow the young couple and ask them if they had any children at home. He wanted to forget about the pounding in his head. He wanted to lie down. He reached for the handle to adjust his seat. As he pulled it with his left hand he pressed his back into the seat until he was in a reclining position. He closed his eyes for a minute and, to the sounds of a distant siren, slowly drifted into sleep. He didn't feel the cold. He didn't hear the dogs resume their barking, or Timothy banging on his window, or the sound of breaking glass, or the sirens, or Timothy's identification of him as Avram, the painter. □

ROUNDTABLE

(Continued from p. 23)

way that is evocative of the desire for human connection. The absence of sensitivity to that desire, the framing of these issues in technocratic language and purely economic terms, has driven our constituency to seek other frameworks, like those of the Christian Right, that do speak in meaning terms.

I'm not saying we should put up our own Rush Limbaugh or try to compete with the false meaning systems of the Right by offering some equally false New Age alternative. I'm saying we have to create the communal, politics-of-meaning real thing and then blow on it and help it to spread. That feeling of connectedness and being a part of something alive is what leads people to fight for changes in the economy and for social justice and the other things that all of us in this discussion believe in. As my paper suggests, this calls for us to reject the liberal way of using government as an instrument of redistribution, rejecting the separation of government from civil society, and instead creating new ways for us to act together to build meaning-centered caring initiatives that liberal bureaucratic government was unable even to imagine. Newt Gingrich's victory over the last vestiges of the New Deal, gives us an opportunity to do just this, whether we work inside or outside the Democratic Party. □

SEX IN ISRAEL

(Continued from p. 70)

I can't see anyone but you—

Dark-Haired Linda had set three plastic cups and a plate of cookies down on a chair, and found Tawny-Haired Linda and Uri on the dance floor. "I asked you not to dance before I got back," she complained against the music. "I got us some drinks," she added. "I want to dance with Uri now," she said to Tawny-Haired Linda.

Tawny-Haired Linda looked at her roommate and smiled briefly. "*I'm* dancing with him now," she said.

"I want to dance with him," Dark-Haired Linda said again, more shrilly. "*Come on, I've been looking forward to this a long time.*"

Are the stars out tonight?

I don't know if it's cloudy or bright—

It was odd: Uri did not seem to be paying attention to them. Swaying to the music, looking around at the other couples, he was apparently waiting for the two women to work it out for themselves.

You are here and so am I,

Maybe millions of people go by,

But they all disappear from view—

Ignoring her roommate, Tawny-Haired Linda turned back to Uri, who took her loosely into his arms again, as if the matter had now been settled. A smile on her face, Tawny-Haired Linda pulled him to her, and they slow-danced away into the crowd. They moved almost as if they were already lying down beside each other. On the nearby chair, the three cups and the plate of snacks remained untouched.

And I only have eyes—for—you—

The deejay cleverly segued from the end of the cut back to the beginning, raising appreciative moans from the dancers. Dark-Haired Linda came after them once more. "I was looking *forward* to it," she insisted plaintively.

Tawny-Haired Linda, hips moving with the sh'bop-sh'bops, took her head off Uri's shoulder. "*I'm dancing with him*," she hissed so fiercely that Dark-Haired Linda backed away in alarm. Another couple danced in front of her, cutting her off.

After that cut, the deejay changed the pace with a cha-cha, like in the old days, and then he gave them reggae, and after that the long, long cut of "Dance All Night" with its heavy driving beat, so that all the dancers, including Uri and Tawny-Haired Linda, were whooping and shouting as they gyrated. Spinning and whirling in the mad crowd, Uri did not notice when Dark-Haired Linda left the room, and Tawny-Haired Linda did not tell him.

Sex in Israel

Dark-Haired Linda's impulse was to flee—but where to? She had 200 shekels in her drawer. Should she go to the grave of the great *tzaddik* Meir Baal HaNes, master of miracles, on the shores of beautiful Lake Kinneret, as she had often planned? She could sit beside him there, making her pain into the sweetness of prayer, asking him to show her path to her.

But wasn't it a cop-out simply to leave? Wasn't it a betrayal of love to assume that patience and faith would not finally bind Uri to her? This was BeerSheva, the city from which the patriarch Abraham took his only son, whom he loved, to offer him up as a sacrifice at God's command. She could not compete with that, true, but she could still try to fulfill the mission of loving service. Didn't she have an obligation not to surrender Uri to Tawny-Haired Linda and her electronic gadgets and her beef-and-butter sandwiches?

And what if she was wrong? Maybe she wasn't losing Uri at all. Was this any worse than the time he had gone off with his friends to the Dead Sea instead of meeting her for lunch? What if this was just another time when he wouldn't understand what she was crying about? Dancing was just dancing, after all. She still believed in him.

Thinking hard, she walked all the way to the newly renovated but still-shabby city center. Sosha's was already closed, the dark streets were empty. The desert air was fresh and fragrant. She decided finally to leave everything in God's hands; she would wait for a sign.

When she returned to the apartment, Uri and Tawny-Haired Linda were on the couch, sitting close but not touching.

"Come sit down," Tawny-Haired Linda said affably. "Uri and I were just talking. Where did you disappear to?"

"Hi," said Uri, apparently without guilt. "Why did you go out?"

That was when Tawny-Haired Linda said, "Uri, old pal, you are a rough draft," and her laughter made him laugh too, even though he didn't know exactly what she meant.

Dark-Haired Linda did not laugh. What was going on here? She wanted to touch him, as if with her fingers she could mold him into a better shape. Tawny-Haired Linda's smug, bright look made her want to smash her face. How could the two of them possibly go on living in the same apartment? She knew they were going to have a big fight, maybe even a screaming, hair-pulling fight, and then Building Our People would have to separate them. She aimed a hard look at her roommate. Tawny-Haired Linda smiled sweetly back.

All at once, interrupting the tense moment, Uri stood up.

"I am having an idea," he said in a decisive voice.

They swiveled hopefully to him.

"What do you think?: We will all live together. It will be *kef*, yes?—how you say it, fun." He beamed brightly, waiting for assent.

How could he be so dumb? you ask. But don't you see? It was the obvious solution and even, in its way, the right one: to go to synagogue with the one Linda and have sex with the other. Wouldn't—couldn't—they all be happy together then? Didn't our first ancestors too have more than one wife?

Looking around, Uri mistakes for approval the look of absolute awe on Tawny-Haired Linda's face—that he could be so totally clueless. Dark-Haired Linda rushes from the room without a word.

Hurrying, hiding, she finds her 200 shekels and runs out again into the night. Music and festive noise recede behind her as she flees toward the seedy BeerSheva bus station. She will ask the master of miracles for patience and faith, for Uri to be ready for her when she returns.

But as she rides, fear stabs at her. For she suspects that even at this moment, as she speeds through the dark landscape, weeping against the glass, Tawny-Haired Linda is taking Uri into her bed. As the bus spins her into darkness, she trembles to think she has lost him forever.

"I think Linda will be very angry," Uri said as Tawny-Haired Linda unfastened the middle buttons of his shirt.

"She'll forgive you," Tawny-Haired Linda said with flat certainty. How odd it is, she thought, that a man who did whatever he wanted all the time could be so easily led.

She felt a thrill of victory as he reached for her: The balance had shifted. She had Uri and would keep him as long as she wanted. The Building Our People program would have to separate her and Dark-Haired Linda. Why, if she played her cards right, she might even—salvation!—get the whole apartment all for herself at last. □

TIKKUN SINGLES

If you wish to meet people who share a TIKKUN orientation to the world, here are three suggestions:

1. Come to the **TIKKUN Camp**, June 13-18 (see page 3)
2. Volunteer for the **Foundation for Ethics and Meaning**
3. Create a **TIKKUN Salon** in your area–to discuss TIKKUN articles or Michael Lerner's *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation*.

For more information, write
TIKKUN at 251 W. 100, NY, NY 10025

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Organizational and commercial announcements 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.

A Culture in Exile: A 2-day conference on Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetan exile, and the "Jewish connection," will be held at Brandeis Univ., on 3/31 & 4/1, 1995. Call 617-736-2642 for more info.

"Diamonds in the Snow" Award-winning documentary film about children hidden by Christian families during the Holocaust, will be aired on PBS Wednesday, March 22, 10 p.m. (check local listings). With unusual artistry, it illuminates the complexities of "good and bad" in human nature; demonstrates that actions of an individual can and do make a difference.

Author's Query: For an article about The *New York Times* columns, "Hers" and "About Men," Linda R. Hirshman is seeking rejected submissions. Please send them to POB 217, Cave Creek, Arizona, 85331, including the date submitted to The *Times* and the later fate of the work.

Ceremonial Leader (10-15 hrs/wk) Secular Humanist Jewish Sunday School in Philadelphia, PA seeks individual with in-depth knowledge of secular humanist tradition and values to organize and conduct life-cycle and ceremonial events. Send resume to Jewish Children's Folkshul, Box 141, Wyncote, PA 19095.

Social work support group forming in Manhattan. The group will address issues including job–related stress, how to cope with threats of layoffs, and create a supportive network. For further information contact: Michelle Potash, C.S.W. at 914-288-9502

TIKKUN is going on-line with Israel On-line: Israel On-line is a subscriber-oriented computer on-line service for the Jewish and Israeli communities in the U.S. We offer daily updates and discussion forums on current events, culture, religion, and more—in English and in Hebrew. Join us! Organizations and individuals who wish to participate or get a copy of our free software please call us at 212-780-4704.

Victorian homes on a hill above the harbor, $100K & up, in St. George, Staten Island, New York City's newest historic district. Multi-class, multi-ethnic, multi-racial, and multi-lifestyle community with strong neighborhood association. Tree-lined streets, big gardens, quieter, cleaner, safer, no parking restrictions and very low taxes, too. Progressive Reform synagogue, Jewish community center, and 80-acre cultural center nearby; short walk to Manhattan ferry. Community referral service, no fees or commissions, call 718-442-7846.

Career Shift: Corporate lawyer trained at Wharton and NYU, with management experience in business (public & private), non-profits, and social action, seeks to join, form, or lead a "meaning based" business or non-profit committed to transformation, sustainability, and social responsibility. Call Robert Frank at (305)759-6336, or write to: 9330 NE 12th Ave., Miami Shores, FL, 33138.

Salons

Write to Tikkun Salons at the above address to publicize your salon or discussion group.

Tikkun Salon On-Line: subscribe to Tikkun On-Line by sending a mail message to listproc@shamash.nysernet.org and include SUB TIKKUN-ON-LINE <your name>. Contact rand@amanda.dorsai.org with questions.

LETTERS

(Continued from p.5)

never equal the seductive power of Sophia, which is the erotic metaphor for the spirit that inflates and deflates everything in the cosmos.

This erotic dimension of the cosmos seems consistent with the Kabbalistic concept of *Keter*, the unknowable God's infinite potential to create—to enter into some relationship with the universe." *Keter* suggests that God's relationship with us is not only personal but erotic. For *keter* is a kind of erotic gravity (ontological allurement) catalyzing *Hokhmah* ("the bursting through of our universe") and conditioning *binah* ("the female womb in which creation expands to become what it becomes").

Don Nicodemus
San Jose, California

PSYCHOTHERAPY

To the Editor:

Your view (in "Psychotherapy vs. Managed Care," November/December 1994) that the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV, the guidebook to contemporary psychologies, should include "pathologies" as MDS (market-driven selfishness), IENO (Insensitivity to the Economic Needs of Others) and CPSC (Cynicism about the Possibility of Social Change) raises some pressing questions. Why not also include AP (Apoliticality) LI (Liberal Individualism), and SPC (Social and Political Conservatism)?

Do you think it is even possible for any mentally healthy people to consider social and political issues carefully and arrive at views, opposed to your own, or is all dissent from your views a psychiatric symptom? Of course it is true that judgments about mental health and illness cannot be made independently of one's moral views and sometimes one's social and political views as well. But in a pluralistic, democratic society that respects political dissent, this calls for eschewing the language of health and illness as applied to values and conduct and making one's moral and political judgments in openly moral and political terms, rather than treating dissent from one's own political views as a psychological pathology.

Felicia Ackerman
Providence, Rhode Island

Editor responds:

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual is a compilation of the current political, social, philosophical, and cultural prejudices of our period, along with some of its "common sense." It embodies a view of how to cut up the social world and how to define "normality" and "pathology" that is every bit as ideological as Plato's *Republic*, Hume's *Treatise*, Russell's *Principia*, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, Rawl's *Theory of Justice*, or, to use a more banal example, Bennett's *Book of Virtues*. I'm afraid our philosophy professor missed the intended humor in my suggestion that Market-Driven Selfishness, etc. be included in the next edition of DSM. My point was to highlight the already constituted political assumptions of psychological practice, not to insert my own bias in place of those of the medical establishment. On the contrary, I look forward to the day when the psychologically oriented healing professions look at DSMIV the way we today might look at an eighteenth-century book of instructions on how to lock your female child in a chastity belt.

Still, I must demur from the good professor's suggestion that mental health and ethics should be completely separated. Rather than make the argument here, I refer her to the writings of Peter Gabel in this edition of TIKKUN, as well as to the psychoanalytic works of Jessica Benjamin.

To the Editor:

TIKKUN's editorial "Psychotherapy vs. Managed Care" (November/December 1994) correctly notes that managed care is making it virtually impossible for psychotherapy to receive financial reimbursement. However, the editorial then goes on to suggest that to prevail, psychotherapy must be justified, based on the ethical, spiritual and psychological good it offers. That and $6.00 will get you a copy of TIKKUN.

Public and/or health insurance company support for psychotherapy will survive only if it can be justified in economic terms. Psychotherapy does liberate people and enables them to achieve goals on all levels, spiritual, interpersonal, and economic. People do lead more active and productive lives when they are mentally healthier. They work harder and they pay more in taxes.

If we expect employers who contract and pay for health insurance and government agencies that depend on income and social security tax receipts to fund mental health services, we must demonstrate that they will reap some financial benefits. Making these arguments may not feel comfortable, but it's absolutely essential.

Jonathan Kaufman
Berkeley, California

Editor responds:

The Institute for Labor and Mental Health, the parent body of TIKKUN magazine, was set up eighteen years ago to provide education and psychotherapy to working people. In the course of that time, we've found that good psychotherapy can lead to increased productivity defined in economic terms. But we've also found that not infrequently the empowering that psychotherapy brings can lead to working people engaging in workplace struggles to challenge specific abuses, or even, in some cases, to challenge the whole framework of alienated labor and socially meaningless work that does not contribute to the common good. All too often, however, therapists whose financial well-being depends on keeping happy the companies that pay for psychological services find themselves uninterested in learning about those approaches to psychological issues that raise social issues, intuiting that if they themselves understand the social dimension to psychological pain that they will be walking down a path that is going to lead to trouble for themselves and their clients. So these therapists find themselves blissfully unaware of the ways that the social world, including the organization of the world of work, may be a major contributor to sustaining or intensifying psychopathology. I've detailed these issues in my book, *Surplus Powerlessness: The Psychology of Individual and Social Transformation* (Humanities Press, 1991). But the consequence of all this is that most working people intuitively understand that psychotherapists don't really grasp the realities of the world of work, and this makes them far less willing to support any political moves to include psychotherapy in the treatments to be paid for in any plan for national health care, and far less likely to pressure their workers or insurance carriers to cover these services. So even in "bottom-line" capitalist terms, the shaping of psychotherapy to fit the needs of the corporate world may be self-destructive. But it is also a profound disservice to the clients whose health, all too often, can only be achieved by struggling against the current way that their workplaces are organized—a path that "bottom-line" oriented psychotherapists often find impossible to follow.

Health Care

To the Editor:

Barry Schwartz was right on target with his critique of recent failed efforts at health-care reform (November/December, 1994). I am a medical student about to embark on a career in pediatrics, and I can already see that the profession of medicine has been replaced by the business of medicine, more and more of the decisions regarding patient care are being taken out of the hands of those trained to care for patients and being placed in the hands of those with a single rudimentary concern: the bottom line. As the commercial side of medicine wars down its more idealistic side, more and more students entering medicine will do so primarily for its financial rewards.

Gavin Joffe
Worcester, Massachusetts

Resistance to Spirituality

To the Editor

I take issue with Michael Bader's making surrender, idealization of the other, and worship required criteria for spirituality and with his equating secular and intellectual with cynical and nonspiritual (as he does in describing his patient's father in "Shame and the Resistance to Jewish Renewal, November/December 1994). One could be secular, intellectual, and spiritual, and one could be religious, cynical, and nonspiritual. Your client's father was a damaging influence not because he was a secular intellectual, but because he was cynical and anti-social, and selfishly imposed these negative attitudes as well as his opinions about religion on his family.

Raised in a Reform temple, I have been an active member of the Jewish Secular Humanist movement for four and a half years, and I consider myself a spiritual person with faith. A Humanistic Jew is one who identifies with the history, culture, and future of the Jewish people, and believes that the path to truth is an open mind willing to follow the evidence where it may lead. We affirm that people have the power and responsibility to shape their own lives independent of supernatural authority, and we have faith in ourselves and in others. When there is no dichotomy between the content of community ritual and one's own deeply held beliefs, the result is liberating, joyful, and inspiring.

Sandra Miller Citron
Chatham, New Jersey

Memory Politics

To the Editor:

Ruth Wallen's article on "Memory Politics" (November/December 1994) alludes in passing to the "recovered memory" accusations of recent years in which the most brutal crimes and disgusting sexual perversions are said to have occurred. Yet law-enforcement officials have found no evidence for the large-scale existence of satanic cults in America, much less for the very specific instances of murders and child abuse made in some of these "recovered memory" cases. Concern for democracy and simply honesty require serious skepticism about extraordinary claims of nefarious conspiracies supported only with the very tenuous evidence of "recovered memory." To the extent that the "recovered memory" movement has lent unwarranted credibility to fantastic claims of satanic crimes, it has contributed to a sometimes quite literal witch-hunt mentality. The social pressures in a society like ours—such as corporate "downsizing" and "re-engineering," rapid changes in family life, great physical mobility—create a constant temptation for people to look for scapegoats. I'm reminded of the 1992 Pat Robertson letter on the Iowa State Equal Rights Amendment, in which Robertson reportedly portrayed feminists as women who encourage other women to practice witchcraft and kill their children. Robertson's letter made me think that not only a 1950s-style McCarthyist "witch-hunt" in the metaphorical sense would be possible in America today, but that we might actually move to a real witch-hunt in the more literal Salem-style of the 1690s. The "recovered memory" movement might help create the context of this move by giving credibility to the notion that we are surrounded by real Satanic crimes.

Bruce Miller
San Bruno, California

School Choice

To the Editor:

David Kirp's review about education (November/December 1994) is wrong in his assertion that "no pedagogue ever dreamed up school choice; it is a concept that comes straight from the pages of political economy." Since the late 1960s, many progressive public school educators have insisted that families, students, and educators should have options among different kinds of public schools.

Deborah Meier, winner of the MacArthur "genius" grant, wrote several years ago that (public school) choice "is an indispensable part of any agenda for restructuring our education system." That's because choice recognizes that there is no one best kind of school for all youngsters, educators or families, and gives teachers a chance to create the kind of school they think makes most sense—without having everyone agree.

In the early 1970s I helped start and worked for seven years in a K-12, 500-student-public school in St. Paul. Our school, later recognized nationally as "a carefully evaluated, proven innovation worthy of national replication" used the entire continent as a place to learn, had an individual contract between each student, parent and advisor, required youngsters to demonstrate skills before they graduated, and still exists.

Sy Fliegel, one of the architects of the East Harlem small-school teacher-empowerment school-choice program, has done an enormous amount to improve the lives of inner city kids and to encourage educators who care about them. Kirp dismisses Fliegel's book in a sentence as "an inspirational rather than substantive text." Many readers will find it to be both.

Kirp is wrong also when he offers his deeply conservative view that "schools won't basically change things because they can't." True, schools can't change everything, but they can have an enormous impact on the lives and attitudes of young people. Like many other teachers, I've helped youngsters learn they can make a difference in the world. In one of my classes, students took three large polluters to court, and over a three-year period, won. In another class, my students worked on hundreds of consumer problems adults referred to them. The students successfully resolved 80 percent of these cases, learning among other things that persistence and skill sometimes are enough to win.

Progressive politics needs a strong injection of hope, opportunity and inspiration. That's what well-designed school choice plans, and terrific public school teachers provide. Progressives should celebrate school successes and learn from them.

Joe Nathan
St. Paul, Minnesota

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.

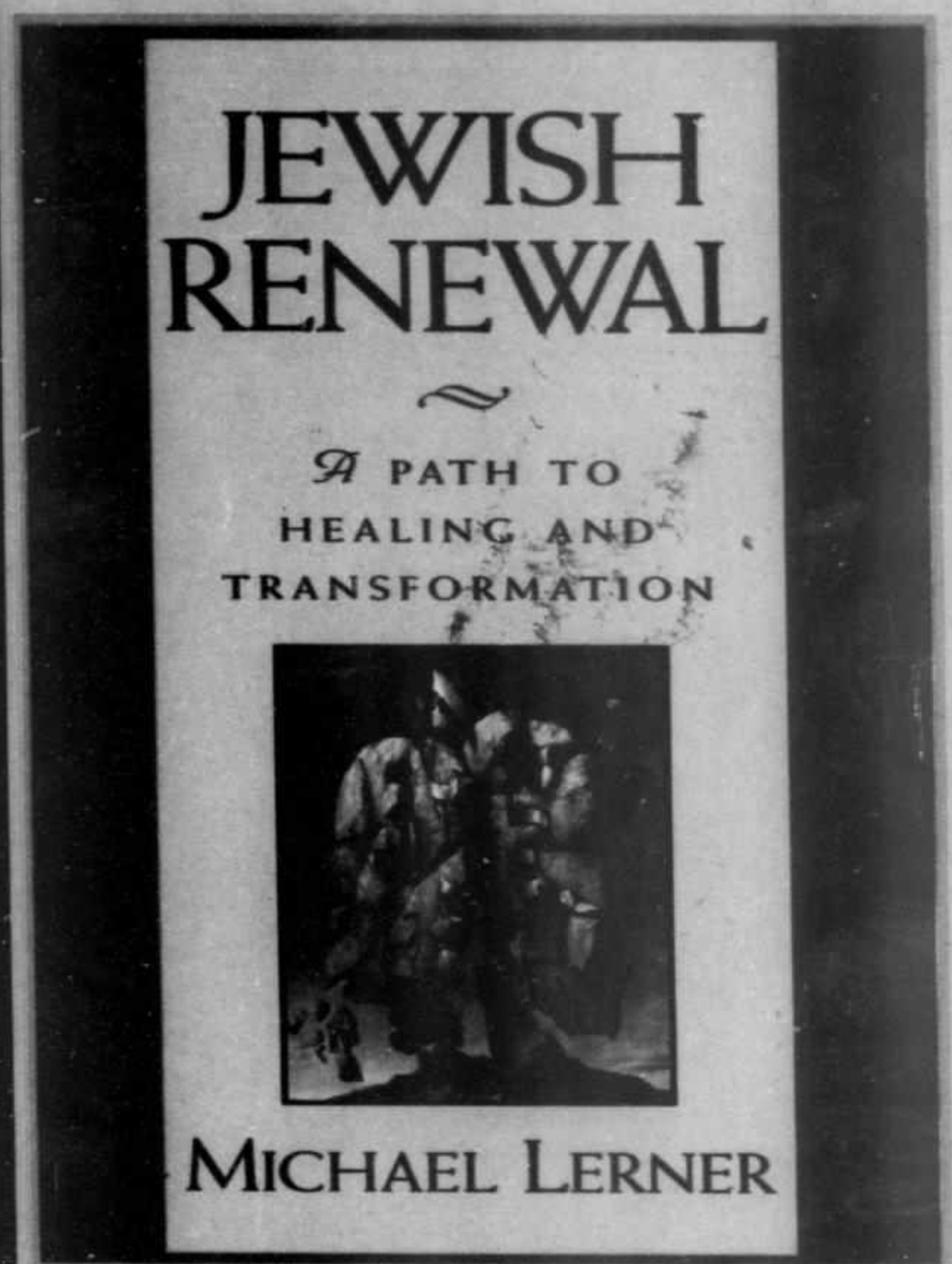
Jewish Renewal

A Path to Healing and Transformation

by Michael Lerner

At last, here is a book on Judaism that places feminist concerns at the center, not the margins, and that shows us the directions Jewish life and thought will take in the twenty-first century.

—Susannah Heschel, associate professor of Jewish Studies, Case Western Reserve University



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.

—Harvey Cox, professor of divinity, Harvard University

A sophisticated and challenging reinterpretation 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

Jewish Renewal is a call to God, and hence a paradoxical call to both social commitment and joyousness, to celebration and liberation.

—M. Scott Peck, M.D.

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