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

TIKKUN

Jewish Renewal
High Holiday Supplement

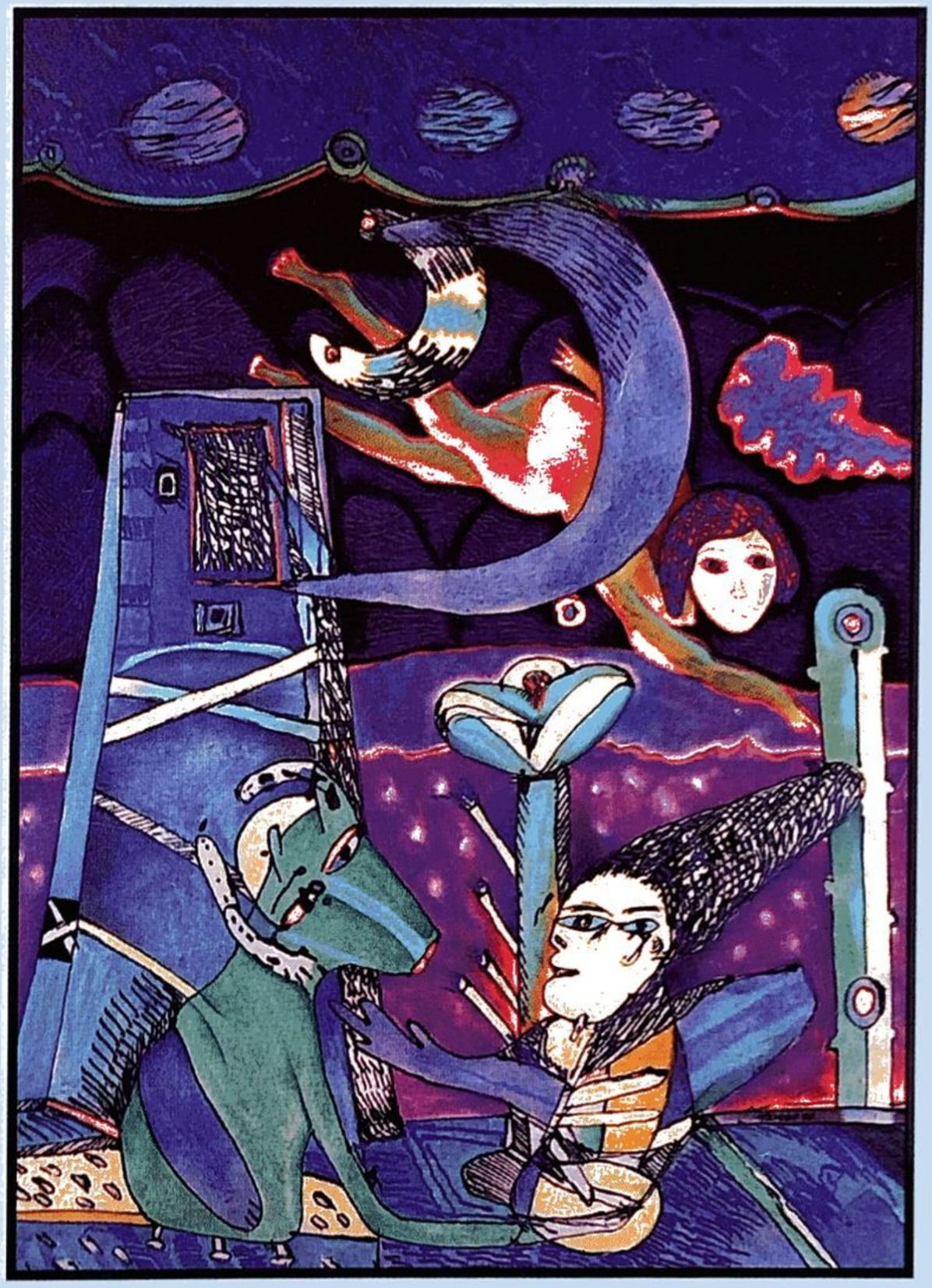
EDITORIALS:
Affirmative Action
Abolish the S.A.T.
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A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1995 $6.00

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Stephen Mo Hanan



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Selfishness in Public Health

Robert S. Levine

Jews Shaping Culture

Paul Buhle

Susan M. Andersen, Jamin B. Raskin, and Mark LeVine on Clinton

Colin Greer on *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories*

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Net

The Wailing Wall now accepts messages by fax.

My grandmother, Rebecca Cohen Levy,
in her red dress, dusty hands;
in her fist a slip of paper drinks
her sweat. Oceans crossed, from Turkey
to Spain to Cuba; then Queens, New York,
now here before the wall—a tourist, finally,
crossing water for the crossing's own sweet sake.
Her dressmaker fingers are thorough, the prayer
folded tight, wedged deep into the wall. Rock,
cloth, skin, she has always loved her hand
upon the pulse of things. I touch it, she said.

A human desire that needs to be catered to
is the desire to know where you are—not to be lost.

Years earlier, she wakes in the night
during the war, her son David out at sea,
and knows before it is known. "Bombed,"
she says to my grandfather, then days, weeks and
no son, just a telegram hammering out
the missing. Seven months, eight, and one day,
bright among the mourners, she begins to cook
his favorite foods, the filo dough more delicate
than skin, and of course (the tale passed down
with rolled eyes. And yet, we say—
my mother, my sister and I—and yet who knows
how the invisible moves through sky and sea),
he appears blinking on the doorstep.

Years later I watch the documentary
with my Uncle David: The S.S. Franklin,
the war footage jerky and gray. On the deck
a Navy boy small as a matchstick, brief
among the flames, then overboard.
My uncle rewinds, stops the boy mid-air
and leans over to touch himself
through the static belly of the screen.

We are learning to maintain
new forms of virtual community.

And now, the bits we have of her—
how, after her funeral, we lined up
her framed needlepoints on the wall
in my uncle's backyard, like a garage sale,
an exhibit, the brightness of them
almost garish: tigers behind leaves,
her dalmatian Reina, an intricate rabbi walking
an intricate path. And from the window,
the sound of a tape played by her son:
My grandmother singing, *Besame Mucho.*

We have to learn the odd skill of speaking
to someone who won't hear us until later.

From here, from here to there
to there, a message to the Wailing Wall,
a moving through the net. Nights
connected to my modem, keyboard, humming screen,
I talk and talk to invisible strangers
across oceans, through plasma blue,
through temporary alphabets. "Such faith
in the unseen she had," I type (and somewhere
in the net, her fingers knotting thread).

We are drinking from a deep sea.

Elizabeth Graver

(italicized passages from "The Telephone Transformed—
Into Almost Everything," by James Gleick,
The *New York Times Magazine*, May 16, 1993)

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY — VOLUME 10 NUMBER 5

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Letters

FAMILY VALUES

To the Editor:

Your response to the Christian Coalition's Contract with the American Family is admirable, but I must take issue with your discussion of abortion. The "legitimate concerns" of the Catholic church that you speak of are based on the Catholic doctrine that life begins at conception. This contrasts with Jewish law in which "a fetus does not have the status of a human being" (Francine Klagsburn in *Voices of Wisdom*). I have no objection to the Catholic Church preaching this doctrine to Catholics, but I do object to imposing it on everyone else as the Catholic Church is trying to do.

Abortion in Jewish law and morality is primarily for the mother's physical and mental welfare, according to David Feldman, an authority on the issue. Again this is in sharp contrast to the Catholic Church and the Right, where the fetus is given priority even when a woman's life is at stake.

Contrary to your assertion that "most women are already deeply conflicted and in much psychic pain when they undergo abortions," research done essentially to prove this showed the opposite. The prevailing feeling is relief.

It is important to make the distinction between abortion and choice in any discussion on abortion. Liberals do not defend abortion as stated in your article. We defend choice. Most Americans oppose abortion, but 73 percent of those who do oppose it favor choice.

If, as you say, "the liberal world should be crusading for voluntary restraints on abortion," it, and the Jewish world, should also crusade for the central role of women in making abortion decisions and the right of women to make those decisions in the context of their own religious beliefs.

Constance Lindemann
Norman, Oklahoma

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To the Editor:

I don't know why it never occurred to me to challenge the Right on its own terrain, but the way you did so in your editorial (July/August 1995) calling for a progressive politics of meaning Contract With American Families was an eye-opener. It also helped me understand a central difference between liberal politics and a politics of meaning. By taking seriously the family crisis, you are able to outsmart the Right because you show that you care about families even more than they do. It's a strategy that I wish the Left would adopt.

Norman Cohen
New York, New York

To the Editor:

As a gay man, I often worried that leftists who were talking about being "pro-family" would end up strengthening the Right, even though that's not what they intended. So it was a relief to read your Contract with American Families and realize that you were not trying to ape the Right but to critique them. If your Contract becomes well known, the Right is going to be in deep trouble. Congratulations!

Harry Tyler
Boston, Massachusetts

MEANING

To the Editor:

In your insert describing the program of the politics of meaning, you talk about valuing people for themselves. But then you add that "Able-bodied persons receiving public support should also be required to work."

First of all, what is work? Do you count parenting as work? What about artists and writers?

If there were an abundance of good jobs with a living wage and good working conditions (and if men, as well as women, took full responsibility for housework and childcare when both parents work full time) then no one who is mentally healthy needs to be "required" to work! To assume that they will have to be coerced would seem to contradict your repudiation of the cynical view that people are only motivated by economic factors (in this case, no work, no money to eat!).

Anne Miles
Gibsons, British Columbia
Canada

TIKKUN and the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning presents a

Summit on Ethics and Meaning

APRIL 14-16, 1996

OMNI SHOREHAM HOTEL, WASHINGTON, D.C.

THIS WILL BE THE MAJOR TIKKUN EVENT OF THE COMING YEAR

Not just for Jews, it will be the most serious and creative conference on American politics and culture you've ever experienced. Just as people still talk about the first TIKKUN conference in New York, they will talk about this one for years. So don't miss it!

You can reserve a place now at a greatly reduced registration fee of $120 (register before Nov. 15, 1995).
We will arrange reduced-rate accommodations at the Omni Shoreham.

Timed to follow the March primaries, this conference will challenge both parties and will present a new vision for politics, based on a politics of meaning.

Panels will feature scholars, activists, and entertainment personalities from around the world.

WE NEED YOU TO BE THERE...
and we need you to spread the word to your friends, colleagues, coworkers, etc. Afterward, they will thank you for letting them know.

A more complete program will be available by December, but don't wait till then to reserve. Call or write for a copy of the tentative agenda and a preliminary list of speakers, and mark the date in your calendar now.

COME MEET THE EDITOR, MICHAEL LERNER

... and if he's not coming to your town, arrange to have him come. To invite Michael Lerner to speak at your university, synagogue, or church, please call Martha at 212-864-4110.

Sept. 16	Michael Lerner will conduct a pre-Rosh HaShanah Repentance and Transformation Workshop, at 9:30 p.m. followed by a creative Selichot service at midnight (half-hour) 251 West 100th, fifth floor, NYC, RSVP: 212-864-8253.
Sept. 17	Potluck vegetarian picnic (bring drinks) and discussion of American politics and the Israeli/Palestinian peace accord. Riverside Park, (look for us in the park, in a grassy area approximately between 93rd and 88th), 1 p.m. Bring your friends and bring musical instruments for singing (kumsitz).
Sept. 19	College of St. Scholastica, 1200 Kenwood Ave, Duluth, MN, 7:30 p.m.
Sept. 20	University of Missouri, Memorial Union Building, Columbia, MO, 7:30 p.m.
Sept. 21	Southwestern College, Winfield, KS, 7:30 p.m.

Book Tour: *Jewish Renewal* (paperback edition)

Oct. 18	New York City*
Oct. 19	Book Stall at Chestnut Court, 811 Elm St., Winnetka, IL, 7:30 p.m.
Oct. 22	Berkeley, CA*
Oct. 23	San Francisco, CA*
Oct. 24	Seattle, WA*
Oct. 25	[with Cornel West] Mt. Holyoke College, Chapin Adtrm, S. Hadley, MA, 7:30 p.m.
Oct. 26	Boston, MA, Book-signing*
Nov. 2	[with Cornel West] Jewish Book Fair, Alper JCC, 11155 SW 112th Avenue, Miami, FL
Nov. 5	Jewish Book Fair opening-night speech, JCC, 802 Highland Ave., Austin, TX, 7:30 p.m.
Nov. 6	Jewish Book Fair, JCC, 103 West Rampart Dr., San Antonio, TX, 7 p.m.
Nov. 9	Iowa State University, Institute on World Affairs, Memorial Union Bldg., Ames, IA, 8 p.m.
Nov. 10-11	JCC Retreat Scholar-in-Residence, Kansas City, KS (913-451-1177)
Nov. 12	Reconstructionist Convention, Hotel Radisson Bajiya Mar, Ft. Lauderdale, FL, 10 a.m.

* Please call Martha Mendelsohn at 212-864-4110 for further information

Israel

To the Editor:

After reading "Lost Opportunities for Peace" (May/June 1995), I would like to suggest that in the future, whenever an anti-Israel article is published, the magazine should demand that the author provide minimal background information, such as:

1. A sketchy outline of a map that compares the size and the border contour of Israel with that of its Arab neighbors.

2. The ratio of Israel's population to that of the Arab countries that Israel had to fight repeatedly and that vowed to push Israel into the sea and out of its very existence.

3. The cruel abandonment of the Palestinian refugees by the rich and territorially sprawling Arab states, converting the "suffering brother" into a political tool. I was surprised that Jerome Slater did not protest in his article the revocation of the 1975 U.N. resolution that "Zionism is racism."

Rivka Black Sandler
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

To the Editor:

Perhaps the hardest part for me of facing the reality of Israel is to acknowledge that Israel's contemporary predicament is at least partly her own making. It was easy for me to think, "Although the Arabs created this mess, now that Israel is in it the best way out is a two-state solution and a peace treaty with Israel's neighbors." I felt morally superior, because I imagined that Israel would, in accepting such a solution, once again be taking the moral high ground and proving that Jews were so much better than everyone else. But what Jerome Slater's article in your May/June issue proved to me was that Israel has to take at least part of the responsibility for creating the current mess. And that, I find, brings up for me a great deal of internal resistance. I started to read Bennie Morris's article in the *Tikkun Anthology* [Editor's note: available through Tikkun office for $25] and discovered that Israel really played a morally compromised role in creating the Palestinian refugee problem in the first place. Slater's article only makes things worse. I am sick about this—I wish I could go back to my happier picture of the world in which Israel was always the good-guy compromiser and the Arabs were always the intransigent and stupid opponents.

Harriet Brooks
Los Angeles, California

Panther

To the Editor:

After reading your interview with Mario Van Peebles, I truly despaired that I had missed the film ("Panther," July/August 1995). Although I agreed with Tikkun's seeming skepticism about the notion that the CIA and FBI consciously flooded the ghetto with drugs to destroy the potentially emerging radicalism, I did get convinced that the police played a major role in destroying the Panthers. I never once thought about how Blacks could reasonably conclude from the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr. that nonviolence was no more effective than violence. I think if I were Black, I might have joined the Panthers. So it's all the more shame that there exists no similar organization today to speak for the outrage Blacks must feel at the current assault upon them, and that David Horowitz and his conservative culture-shapers were successful in keeping the movie from reaching its potential audience.

Jeff Green
Chicago, Illinois

Mothering and Ethics

To the Editor:

My husband and I read Laurie Zoloth-Dorfman's article on mothering and the ethics of the ordinary world ("Traveling with Children," July/August 1995) and it had a profound impact on our relationship. For years I've tried to explain to him the importance of mothering, but I've always felt as though I was making a merely personal appeal to give me more respect. When he read Zoloth-Dorfman, his eyes were opened. I know of no other article that has ever captured the moral significance of mothering. And nothing in Tikkun has made clearer to me the importance of a politics of meaning, and how really radical you are when you at Tikkun insist that the starting place for thought is not the individual and his or her rights, but rather people in relationship to each other, most important the relationship of mother to child. There have been moments when I thought the politics of meaning was a clever way to undermine feminism because it seemed to question women's absolute right to choice. Now, I see that it's really a more profound form of feminism, one that puts the mother at the center of moral reasoning, and that takes the little actions of daily life as having great moral consequence. I once heard Michael Lerner say that the politics of meaning is a way of translating Jewish ethics into a secular vocabulary. Laurie Zoloth-Dorfman puts flesh on those bones by showing how it can be done. Thank you for publishing this wonderful article.

Ruth Klein
Houston, Texas

Jerusalem

To the Editor:

It was great to see an American Jewish magazine publishing something about the way that the government here is grabbing Arab lands in order to extend the borders of Jerusalem ("The Battle for Jerusalem," July/August 1995). Americans get dewy-eyed the moment the word Jerusalem appears in a conversation, and they suddenly lose all perspective and become like our worst hawks. Partly, this is a product of the powerful public relations machine built by former Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kollek that transformed him into a modern-day saint at precisely the moment he was screwing the Palestinian population of East Jerusalem. But partly it's a product of an unchallenged Jewish chauvinism that lies deep in the hearts of many Jewish liberals and does not allow them to use the same moral standards for assessing Jewish actions that they use when thinking about every other place in the world.

Meanwhile, I hope American Jews will read this article and not get hoodwinked by the huge propaganda campaign being waged in association with the "Jerusalem 3000" events scheduled from September 1995 to September 1996. The whole point of the campaign is to solidify an intransigent negotiating position for Israel so that Jerusalem never becomes a capital for a Palestinian state. I hope American Jews coming here will question this position and let their Israeli hosts know that one can love Jerusalem, and still share it with others! Otherwise, they will be unknowing accomplices to the plans by the right-wing mayor of Jerusalem, Ehud Olmert, to build 38,500 housing

units for Jews on land expropriated in East (Arab) Jerusalem, while not building a single housing unit for Palestinians. I think many American Jews don't understand that this kind of housing is effectively segregated housing—and it is built with the monies and the blessing of the American Jewish community.

Aharon Hertzog
Tel Aviv, Israel

Angels in America

To the Editor:

In response both to Jyl Lynn Felman's article ("Lost Jewish Male Souls," May/June 1995) and to Bruce Dahlberg's letter regarding the rabbi's statement that "the Holy Scriptures have nothing to say" about a person such as Louis Ironson, who abandons someone he loves at a time of great need, I think what is meant here is that to a person who commits such cowardly and heartless actions, actions at such variance with the teachings of Judaism, nothing can be said, because Louis is, for all purposes, deaf, dumb, and blind.

Torah, however, is far from silent. It is a commandment to visit and to care for the sick. As Jews we may not "stand by idly while our neighbor bleeds," even if it is inconvenient, unpleasant, or expensive. All the more so for people we love.

One need only look to the number of hospitals endowed by individual Jews and by organizations such as Hadassah, to look at the hundreds of millions of dollars of private funds given to rescue Jews in Ethiopia and in the former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union, to know of the millions of dollars given by the Jewish Board in New York City for housing for needy people with AIDS, and in the hundreds of acts of loving-kindness done every day in every Jewish community to see Torah in action.

In his abandonment both of his grandmother and of his love in their times of need, Louis Ironson violates basic tenets of Judaism, as well as basic human dignity.

Ron Friedman
Richmond, Virginia

Atomic Bomb

To the Editor:

Gar Alperovitz ("Hiroshima at Fifty," July/August 1995) assumes the persona of armchair general and Monday morning quarterback in critiquing the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

For the thousands of young Americans and Allied troops who were waiting in staging areas for the final assault on the mainland of Japan, that bomb was a heaven-sent reprieve from a bloodbath on the beaches, a reprieve for Allied and Japanese soldiers alike. Millions of innocents, barely out of childhood, would have lost life and limb in the slaughter.

Alperovitz fails to understand the Kamikaze mind-set of the Japanese, who would have fought to the death to protect their Emperor, their honor, and their homeland in roughly that order. He forgets that Japanese generals took the ceremonial knife when the war was lost. The whole Japanese military would have been prepared to take that knife on the field of battle.

I am tired of hearing from the "bleeding hearts" who were never faced with the prospect of bleeding battle wounds. It is kill or be killed in battle. War makes no claim to civility. Perhaps Alperovitz has forgotten the slaughter at Pearl Harbor.

The critics of the Hiroshima bombing might do better if they promoted peace and condemned war, rather than the non-productive acts of pointing fingers and assessing blame for horrors perpetrated by both sides a half century ago. Hiroshima is history. Let it rest in peace.

Alvin M. Laster
Southbury, Connecticut

Father's Day

To the Editor:

Felicia Ackerman's letter to the editor in response to my essay ("Father's Day," May/June 1995) critiques my insensitivity and lack of morality for publicly revealing the physical deterioration, loss of function, and increasing mindlessness of my father. Ackerman's morality, it seems, pivots on silence, or some elaborate intellectual rationalization for avoidance. But when confronting the bewildering dilemmas of our aging parents, we ought not be evasive in the name of a principle of abstract prudence or supposedly dignified denial.

It is estimated that over one million five hundred thousand Americans now reside in nursing homes. Many are disabled, immobilized, demented, and suffering from mild to extreme forms of depression. Incontinence is a highly pervasive condition for the elderly, including those not under institutionalized care. It is neither a violation of privacy nor an attempt to humiliate the elderly sick to confront these problems honestly. My essay was designed to give candid emotional expression to the profound sadness, grief, and helplessness that my father's condition called up in my family and me, while maintaining an enlightened and humane concern for those who, like my father, suffer, and ultimately die. Age and disability and confinement unleash so many ambivalences on the part of the children, despite the understanding and gratitude one feels for our loved ones. Only when the real situation of the elderly and our genuine reactions to their condition are confronted can authentic dialogue begin.

David James Fisher
UCLA School of Medicine
Los Angeles, California

Help Singles Meet Their *Bashert* (Appropriate Partner)

TIKKUN wants to counter the individualist ethos that creates a marketplace in relationships, with each person fending for herself or himself. Throughout most of history, communities took responsibility for bringing single people together. While we do not want to return to arranged marriages, we don't want to abandon each other to the chance encounters of daily life.

•**TIKKUN Singles Retreat**: December 22-25th in NYC. Cost $250/person ($230 for TIKKUN subscribers) including 3 meals on Shabbat, but not including lodging or other meals. Note: people must enroll with a friend of the opposite sex (not a partner, just a friend) to ensure equal number of men and women at this event.
More info: TIKKUN, 251 West 100th St. NY, NY 10025.

•**A TIKKUN National Jewish Singles Listing**: Send a photo and self-description, including interests. We will share this info only with others who've enrolled. Write to: Singles Listings, TIKKUN, 251 W. 100th, NY, NY 10025.

EDITORIALS

"Politics is Broken"



RICK REINHARD/IMPACT VISUALS

With those powerful words announcing his decision not to seek re-election, U.S. Senator Bill Bradley raised hopes that he might entertain an independent presidential campaign. Bradley has articulated a politics-of-meaning critique of American politics, correctly observing that many of his fellow liberal Democrats have abandoned any coherent moral vision and seem totally identified with a mechanistic and bureaucratic status quo. Many of the meaning-oriented phrases that Bill Clinton adopted during the 1992 presidential election campaign and then subsequently abandoned have been central to Bradley's vision all along.

A Bradley campaign could force the discussion of serious ideas, something that both Democrats and Republicans usually ignore, with the help of media that redefine every issue in terms of who is likely to win "the horse race" and gain power, and what power-oriented motivations lead people to say what they say (rather than telling us what it is that people are actually saying). Bradley has already broken political norms by calling for Americans to join with their neighbors to discuss politics—an idea not far from the consciousness-raising politics of meaning groups that TIKKUN has been advocating. If those groups could encourage ordinary citizens to begin to envision a society based on an ethical and spiritual foundation, they could become a transformative social force. Because Bradley's presence in national politics could generate this kind of activity, people should be writing letters to Bradley's Senate office and to their local newspapers urging an independent Bradley candidacy. If you act now, you might have some real options.

Some skeptics remind us that despite Bradley's powerful articulation of politics-of-meaning themes, he has been reluctant to extend ethical or communitarian concerns to the economic sphere and to confront American corporations. It was this same failure that made inevitable Clinton's ultimate collapse before the forces of the status quo. The difference, some say, is only that a President Bradley might be willing to stick to his ideological guns, in contrast to a Clinton who so quickly abandoned them. Yet from our perspective, that in itself is very important.

Of course, TIKKUN never endorses candidates, but we do endorse political discourse and can say unequivocally that if Bradley were to create a third-party candidacy, he would not only guarantee that the 1996 elections would be on a far higher level of intellectual sophistication than seemed likely up till now, but that he would offer a powerful answer to those who have argued that any criticism of Clinton only plays into the hands of the Right.

With a Bradley candidacy as likely to draw votes from Republicans as from Democrats, it becomes possible to imagine that Clinton's inconsistency and abandonment of moral vision could become fair game. For those of us who have been sickened by the way that Clinton and his party have failed to provide a coherent alternative to the Right's offensive against the poor and the powerless and failed to recognize the deep spiritual and ethical crisis facing middle-income Americans, an independent party in 1996 would almost certainly make American politics smarter and might provide a progressive version of the politics of meaning that would contrast with conservative meaning-oriented ideas that the Right will almost certainly use once again to build electoral support.

My Son the Israeli Paratrooper vs. Israeli Settlers:

The Personal Meaning of the Latest Israeli-Palestinian Accord

This past year I faced the most excruciatingly difficult decision I've ever had to face. And ever since I've been living in fear.

The decision was to allow my son, Akiba, to enter the Israeli paratroopers. Having graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, Phi Beta Kappa in history, my son decided that he wanted to serve the Jewish people in appreciation for all that he has gotten from his Jewish heritage. I rejoiced in having the kind of son who would place his sense of obligation to the community above his career and make the decision to gave a

portion of his life to a higher cause. Though I believe there are other equally important ways to serve our people, I was proud that he had chosen the Israeli army.

But a combat unit was another story. To voluntarily put oneself in the position of enforcing the occupation of the West Bank seemed morally problematic to me. But, to be honest, I was far more concerned about my son's physical safety. Because he is my only child, the Israeli army required that I give written permission for him to be in the paratroopers—one of the most hazardous of the elite units of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). I thought I could support his decision, but when I first went to the Israeli consulate to sign the documents, I had an emotional breakdown, cried without restraint, and couldn't do it. Akiba has been the most important person in my life for the past twenty-three years, and the thought that I was putting my signature on a paper that would allow him to risk his life was too overwhelming.

Nor was I convinced by the arguments of my friends that a twenty-three-year-old young man has the right to make such decisions for himself. This "rights" argument could perhaps be convincing to many liberals or progressives, but from TIKKUN's inception, I've contended that human beings are not self-made, that from birth they exist first and foremost *in relationship*, and that the obligation to loving relationships may sometimes have to be given equal weight with individual rights.

As opposed to the "it's my life and I can do whatever I want with it" argument, we at TIKKUN have tried to show that our own bodies and souls have been nurtured by many others, who have transmitted to us the physical, spiritual, and cultural wealth of the human race. In turn, those who have given us this legacy have every right to make demands on us, and we do not have the right to behave as if we didn't matter to others, or as though others have no significant claim on us.

Dangerous as this reasoning has sometimes become when put in the hands of authoritarian communities or patriarchal families, it nevertheless has some continuing legitimacy. To me, who as a single parent raised my son largely by myself, the claim to have my concerns weigh in his decisions goes beyond the formality of the IDF permission procedures and includes my legitimate desire to ensure my son's safety, even if in some instances taking my concerns into account might limit his autonomy.

My son responded to this line of reasoning by saying that he was *not* arguing for individual rights, but rather was also accepting a politics of meaning perspective, choosing to serve in order to give to the larger community that had nurtured him. It was I, he contended, who was being individualistic, by allowing my own desires for his safety to outweigh his recognition that to protect the interest of the Jewish people we may need to be prepared to risk our lives, and this historical moment was one such time in his life.

In the end, what changed my mind was not any particular argument, but the feeling I had from Akiba that refusing to allow him to go would endanger our relationship too much. Because I am the kind of father who has trusted many of my son's decisions, giving him a good deal of emotional space to pursue his own thinking and decisions, our loving has always been built on my respect for him and for the particular way he has received God's spirit within him and the way he manifested it within his own life. To change that dynamic now would have been to make myself into a different person, one who saw his son less clearly, and one whom he could trust less and hence love less. If this was his vision of what best nourished his soul, it would seem to be denying his reality in ways that could not help but undermine our loving connection for me to insist on his acceptance of my vision. It was the desire to respect the love between us, not his individual rights, that led me to let Akiba do it his way.

But every moment since he entered the paratroopers, I've been terrified for his safety. Whether through intention or accident, my son could be hurt. He has served six months and I still remain on edge.

Since we don't have family in Israel, Akiba hasn't had much support when he goes on leave every other weekend for Shabbat. I've thus decided to spend a lot of my time in Israel, so that I could be here for him. So here I am in Jerusalem, suddenly forced to confront a shocker that had never fully occurred to me: My son may be in as much danger from right-wing settlers who are trying to block the peace accords as from Palestinian terrorists.

Terror's Lessons, Right and Wrong

As the August 21 Hamas terror attack on a Jerusalem bus made clear, it's not only the settlers who wish to undermine the peace process. By halting negotiations, and shutting borders whenever these disgusting acts take place, Rabin actually rewards Hamas and gives them an incentive for further violence. The only disincentive: Greet each act of violence with an acceleration of the peace process, transferring power in the West Bank to Hamas's greatest enemy, the PLO. Rabin should help Israelis see how Hamas and the settlers are in an unholy alliance to destroy the peace process, as Mubarak Awad and Edy Kaufman discuss in greater detail on p. 63.



AP WIDE WORLD PHOTO/NATI HARNIK

Rabbi Riskin and the Settlers vs. Peace

In August, Akiba's paratrooper unit was put on alert and told to prepare for possible duty in Efrat, the West Bank settlement where settlers had grabbed a nearby hill (owned by Palestinians in a neighboring village). Many of the residents are Orthodox Jews who had emigrated from the United States, and they were led by the community's rabbi, Shlomo Riskin, who had been the rabbi at Lincoln Square Synagogue in New York, the flagship community of modern Orthodoxy in the United States.

Although Riskin has insisted that he is a "moderate," he has in fact moved dramatically to the right since he arrived in Israel, and not just on issues concerning Palestinians. In a recent talk at Yeidiyah, a Jerusalem synagogue, Riskin revealed that while as a New York rabbi he had become famous for allowing women to have a separate minyan in which they could conduct Torah reading in the same way as men, he no longer allowed women to make the blessings over Torah even when they were not in the presence of men.

Riskin and his followers do little to hide their interest in preventing the implementation of "Oslo II," the disengagement agreements that give Palestinians autonomy to run their domestic affairs in several large West Bank cities. Citing polls that indicate that a majority of Israelis have deep doubts about the agreement, Riskin insists that when he and the settlers grab Palestinian property and use traditional nonviolent resistance techniques against the police or the Israeli army, they are merely following the path of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. Riskin, who claims to have been a participant in the American civil-rights movement of the 1960s, says he's now applying its insights to the situation in Israel where a new minority—the settlers—are being persecuted by an insensitive government.

Riskin's claims to moderation seem less plausible in light of a recent article by Israeli journalist Tzvi Zinger, in the newspaper *Yediot Achranot*, that states that the Efrat rabbi was urging settlers to occupy any sites abandoned by the Israeli army—a clear violation of the Israeli/Palestinian accords, and one that would require the Israeli army to return to these sites and remove the armed settlers, with obvious possibilities for violence.

Indeed, the influence of the settlers has been growing precisely because of the explicit threat of some that they would trigger civil war rather than abandon even a small section of "Greater Israel." Further egged on by a halakhic ruling issued by more than two hundred Orthodox rabbis who ordered religious soldiers to disobey any order that would implement the dismantling of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, the settlers seem ready to take on the whole society if necessary. To show their determination, thousands of settlers blocked the main highways of Israel in August, reminding this tiny country how great a danger armed zealots could be. Several Israelis expressed their fear to me that the settler demonstrations are a prelude to a civil war that would ensue if the Oslo II disengagement were implemented.

Riskin, fellow settlers, and their supporters in the Likud Party and other factions of the Israeli Right have called for a referendum on the agreement.

Sounds perfectly reasonable and democratic, doesn't it? But it is not. And here we get to the fallacy in Riskin's analogy between the settler agenda and the civil-rights movement or other democratic struggles.

Referenda are democratic because they allow people who are affected by a given decision to shape the outcome. But the referendum proposed by the Israeli Right leaves out one principal group: the Palestinians. The million people living under Israeli occupation are absent from the consciousness of Riskin or his fellow champions of Israeli democracy. Yet ignoring the Palestinians' humanity and aspirations is neither good Torah ("Thou shalt love the stranger" seems to be one Torah command that these settlers never heard!) nor is it reflective of the American civil-rights struggle of the '60s.

Is Oslo II a Road to Peace?

The irony in this whole picture, say some elements of the Israeli peace movement, is that if the settlers were to pay more careful attention they would see that Rabin himself has been taking actions that seem aimed at preventing the emergence of a Palestinian state. The Israeli government is spending hundreds of millions of dollars to build modern highways from Israel to the West Bank

settlements. Palestinians point out that this is not the action of a government that imagines that in a few years, during the "final status" negotiations called for in the Oslo accords and in Camp David accords, it will withdraw from the territories and urge its settlers to live in peace as a minority within a Palestinian state or to return to the pre-1967 borders of Israel.

The Israeli peace movement is split between those who believe that Oslo II is a ticking time bomb, and those who think it is a brilliant strategy by which Rabin is going to manipulate the public toward peace and ultimately a Palestinian state. Those who accept the time-bomb theory say that Oslo II is bound to fail because it gives no clear picture of what a final settlement could look like, and in the interim it's so provocative that it can only self-destruct. While the agreement sets up a limited number of autonomous Palestinian cities, the surrounding Palestinian villages remain under the control of the Israeli army and will face increased repression as the number of roadblocks and humiliating searches grow. Thus the Palestinians, who had been fighting for a state, get instead a set of isolated cantons, and the feeling that perhaps this is all they will ever get as the Israeli government strengthens the military position of the settlers.



AP WIDE WORLD PHOTO/EYAL WARSHAVSKY

This same uncertainty intensifies the radicalization of the settlers. While there may a core of twenty thousand who are ready to pick up arms against the State of Israel, a much larger group is now being spurred to activism because Oslo II seems to tell them that they might lose everything, yet the government tells them only that they will remain protected citizens. But if there are going to be final status negotiations, will their homes be negotiated away?

Rabin would have been far wiser to tell Israelis the truth as he sees it. If he really believes that the process is leading to a Palestinian state, he ought to outline the possible borders of such a state, which settlements will be incorporated into the State of Israel, and which ones will eventually have to move. He has a year to sell that plan to the Israeli public before the elections.

Instead, Rabin has chosen to avoid any such statement, hoping that everyone will buy Oslo II, reassuring everyone that it really isn't giving away very much (which, of course, is precisely what the Palestinians also believe), and thus setting the stage for a re-election strategy based on dissembling with the people.

The peace optimists believe that once Rabin has won re-election, he will push for a demilitarized Palestinian state. The pessimists, however, warn that if Labor wins re-election this way, it will not have an honest mandate for peace, and when it faces armed resistance by the settlers it would not have the backing of the nation, since Israelis will have felt manipulated.

Worse still, even if Rabin doesn't intend a Palestinian state (and he says he doesn't), he gives the settlers every incentive to act provocatively now. The fears of civil war may be less realistic than the fears that settlers will escalate their provocations, grabbing more land (as Riskin encourages), building houses on the next hills, and terrorizing the Palestinian population as the Israeli army looks the other way. These provocations, it is reasonable to expect, will eventually lead some Palestinians to "crack" under the strain, resulting in more acts of terror against the Israeli population. The most militant settlers count on this negative cycle to lead the Israeli population to feel "betrayed," because, from the standpoint of the discourse being fostered by the settlers and increasingly popular among large sectors of the population, "we gave those Palestinians so much in Oslo II and still they act this way" (i.e., with future acts of terror) "so they obviously can't be trusted and the peace process must be stopped." The eventual outcome: a Likud victory in the 1996 elections.

The pessimists seem to have a strong argument, because Oslo II leaves 120,000 increasingly resentful settlers perched in the middle of the Palestinians, and makes each side feel that it is never going to get the security that it wants. The likelihood of extremist acts on both sides is great, and that may whittle away Israeli confidence, produce a Likud victory, and end the process. Yet the optimists say that Rabin has pulled off a brilliant move, advanced the process toward peace, and that he deserves to be congratulated.

This much seems certain: Those Israelis and Palestinians who are taking Oslo II in good faith, who really do see it as a further step toward peace, do deserve to be congratulated. Leaving aside the wisdom of the particulars, the underlying good will needs to be acknowledged and applauded. For that, we can be proud of the majority of Israelis.

Yet the danger posed by the settlers should not be underestimated—and not just to the peace process. Settler Judaism, fundamentally counterposed to the Jewish

renewal we have been building in the TIKKUN community, sees the world from a paranoid perspective and views the "other" as fundamentally alien and threatening, not an embodiment of the image of God to be respected and loved. The settlers have done more damage to Jewish continuity than all the forces of assimilation combined. By identifying Judaism with a chauvinistic nationalism, they have poisoned the pure living water of our tradition.

No wonder so many Israelis feel militantly secularist. In the past weeks, many Israelis have been saying openly that they wish that these right-wing Jews would stay in New York, and that more of those involved in Jewish renewal would come. If Riskin and the thousands of right-wing American Jews who have come to settle in the territories went back to America, my son, the paratrooper, would be far safer, and Judaism would not be in such deep trouble. □

Changing the Criteria of Merit: Clinton and Affirmative Action

In July, President Clinton endorsed many of the existing affirmative action policies. Though some observers have noted that taking a principled stand on this issue may have been necessary to weaken the appeal of a Jesse Jackson insurgency in the presidential primaries in 1996, we want to congratulate Clinton on the language he used in defending his position. Many people felt encouraged by Clinton's words for the first time in his presidency, because they seemed to harken back to a more visionary moment when affirmative action was not primarily about individual entitlement to rectify past discrimination, but rather evoked the principle of Americans sharing a common fate, and because he committed the nation to developing an ethos of caring for all people.

We never expected miracles from Clinton. There's

Abolish the S.A.T.s

Why isn't there more public challenge to the legitimacy of standardized tests, whether it's the S.A.T., the comparable tests for professional schools, the Civil Service exams with their incredibly important social and economic consequences, or I.Q. tests themselves which continue to be given to children as a legitimate measure of their "intelligence"? As far as I can tell, the answer is that the vast majority of people actually believe that these tests are measures of intelligence, ability, aptitude, and merit, while being secretly humiliated by their own test scores. We have created a society where we are addicted to feeling dumb, inadequate, and like failures, no matter how inaccurate and even childish the "measures" which create and reinforce this impression.

The S.A.T. does not measure how smart you are or your aptitude or your merit. It measures your capacity to think like a machine—by which I mean to think without employing the faculty of human understanding (or more accurately, while suppressing the faculty of human understanding)—under highly abusive competitive and authoritarian social conditions.

The abusive conditions consist of herding together in one room young people who since early childhood have been conditioned like rats to believe that love and approval depend on the quick and correct public answering of magical questions, and then subjecting them under extreme time pressure to what they are told is the one Big Test that will determine the degree of cultural validation they will get for the rest of their lives.

The machine-like thinking demanded by the test is more difficult to see because we have spent centuries developing this capacity and mythologizing it as "natural," as simply "what thinking is" with those who are skilled at it being thought of as the best thinkers, the most intelligent, the most able to discover truth and advance the human race. In fact, the dominance of this way of thinking has increased our alienation from ourselves, from one another, and from the natural world. That this is not obvious to us in the face of the crazy state of present-day human relations and our continuing, possibly fatal destruction of the environment is a measure of how much repression and forgetting the valorization of this way of thinking has entailed.

The key to the machine-like thinking tested by the S.A.T. is the detachment of the thought process from the intuitive understanding that gives ethical direction to life itself. An infant "understands" that he needs his mother's recognition and sensual nuturance or else he could not seek it. This understanding is a kind of knowledge that emerges from his embodied existential engagement with his life-world; his desire for mother teaches him intuitively that love is good and impels him in this good direction and away from the badness and pain of love's absence. As he learns to think, initially through internalizing meaningful sense-images of mother and connecting them to current perceptions of his mother's presence as a way of "finding" her, his motivation for doing so is guided entirely by the goal that he already intuitively understands. His thought-process is anchored in and directed by an intuitive moral understanding, call it love-knowledge, that is prior to it. Or to put this

only one thing over which the President has absolute control—namely, what he says. If Clinton had helped people understand the forces arrayed against him, had talked honestly about the power of America's elites of wealth and power and their hold on the media, he would have been far more popular. Had he taken the further step of joining our campaign against the ethos of materialism and selfishness, and done so in a way that made clear he was not critiquing the American public, but rather the economic institutions that reward selfishness on every level, he could have helped people understand the deep connections between seemingly disparate elements in the American scene (e.g., the flight of capital to improve corporate profit margins without regard to the destructive consequences for the American communities that are being abandoned, the decline of family life as a market consciousness permeates human relationships, etc.).

Instead, the President has consistently allowed himself to appear to be without unifying principles or vision. This has lowered his popularity and undermined his ability to influence the national debate.

The fundamental fact about American politics is *not* that people are essentially conservative. Rather, it is that there is an ongoing battle going on inside most of us between our impulses to live in a more caring, just and spiritually and ethically attuned world, and the part of us that thinks that this is impossible and utopian fantasy, and that we would only be hurting ourselves if we were to act by some principle other than narrow self-interest.

Clinton promised to strengthen the side of us that would stand up for our highest values. He promised a repudiation of the principle of selfishness that governed the Reagan/Bush years; but instead, he backed away from many of his promises to his supporters, and did so in the name of protecting his popularity in the polls. In short, the man who was to lead the crusade against narrow self-interest told us that he couldn't stand up for

slightly differently, thought and understanding are linked by a relation of meaning.

The S.A.T. is structured to test meaningless thought. Students are not expected to understand anything about the world, about their own lives or the lives of their parents, or about the aspirations of human beings as a whole and the difficulties we face in realizing those aspirations. On the contrary, the multiple-choice format of the test requires that the student disconnect him- or herself from any such understanding and adopt a hypothetical rather than an engaged relationship to reality. Meaningful thought requires that there be a relationship between thinking (representing or imagining the world) and a heartfelt end that motivates the activity of thinking itself. The S.A.T. requires that the student detach him- or herself from any compelling engagement with the world whatsoever and manipulate the conventions of "language games" from the position of a "linguistic calculator" who cares nothing about the questions or the answers. The only "intelligence" or "scholastic aptitude" measured by the random collection of analogies, so-called reading comprehension passages, and aphorisms that make up these tests is the ability to very rapidly recognize abstract formal properties of a language that one already speaks under circumstances in which the language is treated as an object served from its meaningful origins (thus it can only be "right" to conclude that cold is to hot as life is to death as Nazis are to Jews if one relates to temperature, existence, and genocide as if they were interchangable). This type of recognition of formal and interchangable properties is exactly what computers do in relation to their own language when they perform "grammar checks" or, to take one of their newer talents, when they tell you that "you are writing on a tenth-grade level."

Those who do well on such tests will for the most part be members of the dominant culture because they have both the greatest pre-existing immersion in the language of the culture and the greatest capacity to accommodate themselves to the alienated consciousness that the testmakers require. Our culture calls upon us to separate mind from body, thought from feeling, and analysis from the intuitive empathic understanding of human longing that is indispensible for comprehending the ethical call of being. These separations are embedded in and reinforced not only by the tests but by the very same detachment from meaning that characterizes much of journalism, legal reasoning, scientific research, corporate decision-making and many other aspects of our culture. As a kind of trial by fire that we all must go through in late adolescence, the S.A.T. plays an important part in cementing this pervasive cultural distortion. Not only is it inherently culturally biased in the ways that I have shown—it is also brutalizing to the soul of everyone who is subjected to it because it requires that we alienate ourselves from everything that matters to us in order to be recognized by the prevailing criteria of merit as deserving, worthy, intelligent members of our community.

—Peter Gabel

principles because that violated his self-interest.

No wonder, then, that the population divided between a majority that grew even more cynical about politics and didn't bother to vote in 1994, and a minority that voted, but was in turn divided between an electoral majority who became convinced that self-interest was the only option and so wanted to reduce their tax burden and limit government, and an electoral minority who unenthusiastically voted for liberal Democrats committed to a visionless continuation of the governmental status quo.

Now, finally, Bill Clinton decides to take a principled stand on affirmative action. Unfortunately, Clinton is going to have to go much further and challenge the fundamental notion of merit, or his support of affirmative action will backfire politically, because it doesn't address the legitimate concerns some people have about affirmative action.

We support affirmative action and oppose current efforts to dismantle it. The cynical use of this issue by California Governor Pete Wilson and other politicians of both parties—the sly appeal to racism by many politicians who have done nothing to eliminate the lingering effects of 400 years of oppression of African Americans—is sickening. It is just another part of the overall economic, political, and ideological assault on African Americans that is the inevitable concomitant of the decision by America's ruling elites that they can no longer afford to provide minimal supports for those most harmed by the workings of the international free market.

If the effects of American economic decline were spread evenly throughout the society, we might soon see a much more significant opposition to America's elites. But concentrating the negative impact of capital flight on American minorities effectively shields the elites, who can then appeal to racist explanations for minorities' economic plight, arguing that they are too lazy and expect government handouts in place of hard work.

Affirmative action complicated this picture for American elites. On the one hand, it helped buy off some of the most energetic elements in the minority community, promising them that they would be able to make it out of the ghetto. On the other hand, it created a fertile ground for right-wing extremists to appeal to the resentment of white men who felt that they were getting screwed in the process.

Liberal supporters of affirmative action have assumed that most of the "white rage" now being articulated through "hate radio" is merely a surfacing of the hidden racism that permeates American society. After all, the liberals seem to be saying, you white men had your opportunity to make it, and if you didn't you have nobody to blame but yourself. Meanwhile, we liberals are here to champion African Americans and women, because they never did have such an opportunity since the system was rigged against them.

It is this assessment of the situation that leads liberals into a political dead-end from which they cannot escape. It forces them to see the overwhelming majority of the population as irrational at best, racist and sexist at worst.

The problem from the standpoint of those of us who adhere to a politics of meaning perspective is that liberals are unaware of the rational basis of white rage. For many white men, the reality of their lives is that they have never been given adequate recognition for who they are. Born into a society that systematically denies recognition of our personhood, instead providing pseudo-recognition linked to our performance according to the external requirements imposed upon us, many white men feel deeply underappreciated and often disrespected.

What these men hear from liberals is a dismissive message: "You've already made it, you are the beneficiaries of your white skin privilege, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself for not recognizing that you have what you need and should be sharing it with those who don't."

But most people—male and female, of all races—don't feel that they've "made it." Their lives are often filled with deep self-doubt, shame about not being more successful, and fear that the ethos of selfishness may soon undermine their families and friendships. They don't recognize themselves in the liberals' descriptions of their situation. Something is deeply wrong in their lives, and they feel in pain. Often they blame themselves and feel terrible about the mess they've made.

Enter hate radio with its very appealing message: "You are in pain, but it's not your own fault. The caring and recognition that you have been denied is being taken away from you and given to someone else by the liberals who control big government; they are giving the very recognition and caring that you need to African Americans, feminists, homosexuals, Jews, and/or immigrants. No wonder your life doesn't feel good—because these liberals have taken away what you need."

The first fundamental point to recognize if we are ever to counter this story is that the pain is real and that the hate radio is right to be suggesting that people are being denied something they very much need—the recognition and caring that should have been there. The Right's analysis of why that happened and who took it is wrong, but they are correct in suggesting that something real is missing and that people have a right to be angry about that.

From a politics of meaning standpoint, the task is to help people understand that in a society governed by the ethos of selfishness and materialism, their own worth is always going to be judged by their usefulness to the

powerful. Our fundamental worth as human beings—our sanctity as beings who embody the image of the divine and who can be God's partners in healing the world—is systematically denied in this society. People are *right* to be resentful of the perpetual demand to prove our worth by passing the tests of the powerful.

But liberals obscure the legitimacy of this anger at being judged inadequate, because they unqualifiedly accept the notion that we live in a meritocratic society that rewards merit. The implied consequence of the meritocratic fantasy: Wherever you end up in the economic sphere, and whatever personal life you have, is a direct reflection of how smart, competent, energetic and/or "together" you are as a human being. The relative degree of success and fulfillment you've achieved is totally your own doing. On this account, you've got nobody to blame but yourself if life doesn't feel good.

A central reality that we uncovered in our work at the Institute for Labor and Mental Health is that this belief in merit underlies the destructive impact of stress at work. People understand that the stress is in the job, but they blame themselves for having that kind of job in the first place, see themselves as failures because they were unable to secure more fulfilling work, and return home filled with rage at themselves. The Right plays a remarkable role by helping people to reduce the self-blaming, while the liberals seem to intensify it.

The affirmative action defense put forward by Clinton and other liberals never challenges the criteria of objective merit. What is assumed is that the normal operations of the system are fair and reasonable and based on objective standards that make a great deal of sense. However, given the history of previous exclusion, we now need to make an exception for African Americans or for women. In the process, we may unfairly disadvantage white men or others, but they can afford to temporarily suffer the consequences of rectifying historical injustices from which they have up till now benefitted.

No wonder, then, that white men get angry. They've spent much of their lives jumping through hoops, often unsuccessfully, in order to try to show that they could perform according to the criteria that were required in order for them to get the distorted forms of recognition that are available to them. Now they are being told that the liberals, who never seemed to care about them, really care about others, and for these others the hoops are to be dismantled.

The fundamental lie in the whole picture is that rewards are allocated according to merit. Anyone who has been in the workplace knows that there is little correlation between who is a supervisor, boss or owner and who has superior intelligence, creativity, or sense of higher ethical and spiritual purpose. The merit that gets rewarded at work may have more to do with knowing how to manipulate others than any other particular quality.

Perhaps in response to this intuitive sense that most Americans have that our economic elites did not get there by merit, our society has attempted to create "objective tests" that are supposed to measure merit. But what kind of merit?

Take the S.A.T., or Scholastic Assessment Test. It may measure one's ability to manipulate certain math problems or language skills. But why is *that* the merit we want to measure? Might we not be equally interested, for example, in an individual's capacity to cooperate with others, to be responsive to others' pain, or to respond empathically? Might we not be interested in an individual's capacity to attend to the ethical dimensions of a problem, to see through obfuscation, to constructively question authority, or to respond with aesthetic or spiritual sensitivity to the

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world around them? Might we not be interested in an individual's ability to elicit confidence or trust, to motivate others, or to overcome obstacles? Might we not want to assume that merit has something to do with character, honesty, stability, or sensitivity?

Well, you might argue, these are all fine characteristics, but they won't predict whether a person does well or not in college or professional schools. To the extent that that is true, the problem may be with the whole conception of education. Our colleges and universities produce a tremendous amount of anti-intellectualism, precisely because they neglect the ethical, spiritual, and psychological issues facing our society. People come to believe that intellectual life has nothing to do with addressing the fundamental issues facing us, so they lose interest in the life of the mind. And this is a tragedy for our society and culture.

Peter Gabel has suggested that we might take a first step by abolishing the S.A.T.s as the criterion for college admissions. (See "Abolish the S.A.T.," by Peter Gabel, p.10) Then we could give up the fantasy that we have objective tests measuring merit.

If President Clinton and the liberal defenders of affirmative action were to make a full-scale assault on the notion of merit, they would be far more likely to build support for their case.

But as long as the affirmative action proponents assume the objectivity of tests measuring merit, they find themselves in an indefensible position. With merit assumed, the affirmative action people have to be heard as saying to the American majority that their pain is illegitimate, while the pain of these others is legitimate and deserves to be given special consideration, even at your expense. And this position feels all the more outrageous to people who have been twisting themselves around all their lives, denying their own innermost needs, in order to fit into the categories and lifestyles defined by those who create the objective testing hoops through which everyone has been required to jump. For people who have spent their lives feeling bad because they hadn't done a better job of jumping through those hoops, it's an outrage to be told now that someone else is going to get advantages *without* having to jump through hoops. Because the liberals believe that the hoops are fair, it's particularly maddening that they wish to give a sector of their constituency a free ride.

If, on the other hand, we adopted politics of meaning criteria of merit—assessing people's capacity to be empathic, cooperative, aesthetically and spiritually sensitive, to motivate others, to see through media manipulation, to mobilize themselves against overwhelming odds, to see the morally relevant aspects of a situation, plus their character, stability, honesty, and sensitivity—we might get very different results. On these criteria, as opposed to those currently being measured by objective testing, African Americans and other minorities would likely score just as well as other sectors of the population. The result would be a dramatic gain in the numbers of African Americans who were being judged as having merit. And we would be avoiding the apparent unfairness of the way we structure affirmative action today. Race-blind results of this sort would likely yield race-equality, and hence do away with the need for affirmative action. Yet it would do so in a way that whites could accept, because it would be based on criteria of merit that make intuitive sense and which are universal.

So President Clinton has embraced liberalism at its weakest point—where its commitment to the existing economic system is so deep that it embraces the notion that we live in a meritocracy. Unable to imagine that our economy routinely rewards people by a distorted conception of merit and makes most people feel that they are inadequate in some important respects, liberals are baffled by the unhappiness that leads Americans to the Right. Because the Right speaks to the unhappiness and subsumes it within a reactionary ideology, liberals assume that Americans who respond to the Right's appeal are fundamentally racist, sexist, or stupid. And *that* is a message that most Americans hear, reconfirming their feeling that liberals and Democrats don't care much about them or their lives.

The growing antagonism toward affirmative action would be greatly allayed if the criteria were changed in ways that made moral sense, that spoke to people's deepest moral vision of the world—even though these new criteria would yield results that gave Blacks more opportunities.

So, a politics of meaning approach to affirmative action would support the position of African Americans, yet do so in a way less likely to produce the backlash that the liberal approach provoked.

Embracing affirmative action in a way that reaffirms the underlying assumptions about merit can only further weaken the liberal forces. Thus, it's hard to get too enthusiastic about Clinton's new-found principles when the first one he is willing to try in the public domain is so very problematic in its current formulations.

Until the need for affirmative action is obviated by the adoption of the kind of politics of meaning criteria of merit advocated above, we have every intention of standing strong with those who support affirmative action in its current form. But we believe that the preconditions for that position to prevail are, first, to understand the underlying sources of people's anger, and next to address what is legitimate in that anger. Short of that strategy, the liberal and progressive forces will be in deep trouble in 1996.

(Continued on p. 96)

Out of the Psychedelic Closet

Stephen Mo Hanan

In the spring of this year I celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of an experience that presented itself from the outset as the greatest turning point of my life. On the day that followed the initial observance of Earth Day in April 1970, I found myself at the age of twenty-three climbing the western slope of the Mount of Olives, facing Jerusalem and the Dome of the Rock. By mid-afternoon I had returned to the foot of the mountain and entered the Garden of Gethsemane, a lush patch of green adjoining a Russian Orthodox church and filled with roses and olive trees. The ancient trees induced within me a deep sense of awe surpassing any I'd ever felt, though comparable to my childhood response to the blowing of the Shofar that, each year, signaled the close of Yom Kippur.


MAC MCGILL

As I walked through the garden, the certainty that God was about to speak to me increased to the point where I was no longer capable of standing. I paused in front of an opulently flowering rose bush, then dropped to my knees. Next I lost consciousness (though the expression seems inaccurate) and inwardly perceived a vast multitude of fiery Hebrew letters streaming toward "me" from every corner and direction of infinite space. The letters were *quf*, *dalet*, *shin*, spelling out *qodesh*, the Hebrew for "holiness" or "the sacred." Simultaneous with this light show dawned a feeling of prodigious joy, and a realization that the entire manifest cosmos springs from a single, non-physical Source with twin attributes that are nonetheless one: Love and Intelligence.

Much could be said of how this realization shattered my prior conceptual framework and shaped my subsequent conduct, but first I feel obliged to admit what many of my contemporaries, at least, may be surmising: The trigger for this beatific vision was a standard dose of mescaline.

Of all the crimes that have been laid at the door of the late Cultural Revolution (conveniently called "The Sixties") by the unrelenting forces of repression and reaction (conveniently called the Right), few have been so effectively stigmatizing as the use of consciousness-altering substances (conveniently called Drugs). Ever since Ronald Reagan was compelled to withdraw the nomination of Douglas Ginsburg to the Supreme Court after the nominee was discovered to have smoked some pot (despite public indifference to the charge), Baby Boomers have been confined to an official posture of Not Inhaling if they wish to be accorded any legitimacy in public discourse, and not only among office-seekers.

Career oblivion threatens the unsealed lips of any of the numerous popular entertainers to whose free-wheeling mental audacity an unmistakable whiff of contraband adheres. Not even in the electronic Babel of confessional talk-shows, havens for the proudly aberrant, can a word be said in celebration of getting high. Attaching disgrace to drug use is the hidden keystone of the campaign to smear the entire range of liberatory idealism which a quarter-century ago gave hope, heart, and character to a generation.

Lest I be accused of the same oversimplification which mars so much of the so-called debate on drugs, let me clarify a couple of initial points. First, when I use the term "drugs" here, I will be referring exclusively to those which were the common currency of the counterculture, drugs perceived as having a liberatory, mind-expanding,

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even sacramental (some would say subversive) character: marijuana (or hashish) and the psychedelics (LSD, psilocybin, mescaline, and peyote being foremost). Crack, heroin, amphetamines, barbiturates, and even cocaine played insignificant roles in the drug culture as I knew it, a culture in which "drugs" were merely stepping stones, albeit mighty ones, to a radically altered view of human potential and the meaning of life. To anyone who protests that this is merely a dodge to exempt from censure those drugs I personally approve of, I submit the widespread cultural acceptance—despite their documented hazards—of alcohol and tobacco, before the pot calls too much attention to the color of the kettle. Equating hash brownies with crack is as pointless as classing Jane Austen with Jackie Collins.

Second, I am not so naive as to suppose that an honest public discussion of the pros as well as cons of various drugs could have no impact on drug policy, but it is not drug policy per se that I wish to address, but rather, drug-discussion policy. The current public taboo on any evaluation of drug-use experience that fails to be shame-faced and remorse-laden has political and social repercussions far beyond the question of legalization. It is a taboo that, individually and generationally, reinforces hypocrisy, denial, guilt, inhibition, and repression. Like any ban on the utterance of truth, it warps public morality and cripples the soul.

When I returned to "normal" awareness that day in Jerusalem, the first thought I had was that an experience of such magnitude could hardly have come from inside a small pink pill. Like Jacob waking from his dream of the angels, I said, "Truly the Lord was in this place, and I knew it not." What I (and possibly Jacob) meant by "this place" was not just the miraculous site, but my body/mind itself, and, indeed, that extension of my body/mind (as I now perceived it) which stretched out as the panorama before me, united and sanctified beyond imagining by the in-dwelling Presence of Love. The song of birds, the sky and sunlight, the monks and tour buses, the schoolchildren at play, the Hasidic father chastising his small son, the very stones and hills of Jerusalem, seemed joined to me with bonds of holy sympathy. Grievances and anxieties I had carried for a lifetime became inconsequential when viewed beside the splendor of life, and my inherent place in its unfolding. For days after the mescaline wore off, the concept of the Other ceased to beguile me. I knew that my task from here on out was to keep it that way.

This awakening strikes me as anything but unique. Within a month, and back in America (having decided that the building of the New Jerusalem was a metaphor not dependent on literal locale), I encountered two phenomena that identified my generation for me: the release of the film documentary *Woodstock*, and the publication in The *New Yorker* of *The Greening of America*. Eros and Logos shook hands; Dionysus and Apollo were getting stoned together, while the clueless Nixon White House served up Cambodia and Kent State. Something unforeseen was coming to birth: It was an infusion of spiritual values into political discourse, and to some of our fellow Americans, it seemed a very vexing arrival indeed.

For one thing, it raised the question of whether God wants us to be happy, or just well-behaved. Good behavior offends no one, but happiness can repel as well as attract. Good behavior can be taught; happiness must be discovered. The issue may seem abstract, but look where the answers ultimately lead: to patriarchal conformity and social control on the one hand, to Paul Goodmanesque utopian anarchy on the other; to William Bennett, or Woodstock. Shall our children pray to an authoritarian Sky Daddy who will keep them in line, or to an inner source of Wisdom who will help their souls to flower? Shall we view life as a ledger divided between rewards and punishments, credits and debits, or as a gift that flows out of a Mystery? Or perhaps both? America's root paradox—of being founded by a swarm of puritan control freaks in the name of religious freedom—burst wide open to the sweet scent of reefer and the jingle of temple bells.

One of the anonymous hippies speaking on camera in *Woodstock* put the issue with pungent clarity: "What's so great about taking all the earth's resources and turning them into dollar bills?" The idea that human ingenuity could be harnessed to a goal higher than an infinitely expanding GNP has rarely been stated better. The Vietnam War may have convinced those who opposed it of the immorality of corporate American imperialism, but it was the emerging drug culture that helped frame an alternative to the system.

Charles Reich's *The Greening of America* was in its time the clearest exposition of that alternative (possibly excepting *The Whole Earth Catalogs*). After its initial *New Yorker* debut, the book went on to spend much of 1970 and '71 on the best-seller lists, despite fulminations in both the liberal and conservative media ("A Bowl of Scary Mush" was the headline of one *Newsweek* column). Reich analyzed American culture from a perspective with roots in the thought of psychologist/social critic Herbert Marcuse, himself a hero of Sixties radicals. Both men saw in capitalist consumerism a jittery wilderness of commercially generated false needs reinforcing (and in turn reinforced by) a false consciousness, despoiling the environment in return for more stress than happiness.

Reich assigned to pot and acid the function that their enthusiasts had already discovered, that of exposing the hollowness of the consumerist game. From this perspec-

tive, stoned thinking acts like the little boy noticing that the Emperor's new clothes are merely a birthday suit. It is not insignificant that from coast to coast, head shops of the period offered reproductions of the now-classic print of an alchemist breaking through the confines of his worldview and throwing back his arms in wonder at the sight of a new, unimagined sphere beyond.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this breakthrough in consciousness was that it could be shared. Upon returning from Jerusalem, I found a new culture forming, composed of countless young men and women who'd had similar experiences, or wanted to. They may not have all read Marcuse, or Alan Watts, or William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* (at that point, neither had I), but they knew instinctively that distinguishing True from Bogus at the cosmic level involved a more meaningful exercise of personal responsibility than the blind acceptance of the Puritan paradigms of Right and Wrong that tumbled America into the Vietnam War. At the same time, truth-questing could not be purely solitary; it demanded a degree of reality-checking unattainable without the engagement of one's most reliable peers. "I get high with a little help from my friends" says it best.

From the moment marijuana and psychedelics entered the bodies and minds of the Baby Boom generation, no one who resisted the experience had a decent word to say about it. Such grudging legitimacy as was eventually bestowed on nineteenth-century New England Transcendentalism's absorption of Buddhist and Hindu thought has never been accorded to the same set of insights derived in the twentieth century from chemical stimuli. Yet the generation whom drugs inspired launched a shared vision no less compelling than Emerson's circle found in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and of considerably wider scope.

Underground papers, alternative bookstores, and radical spirituality spread from coast to coast, and beyond. Despite unwavering governmental, societal, and parental disapproval, the consciousness scouts of the Sixties found and supported each other, confirmed one another's resolve, and laid the foundations of a transformed global culture. The movement may have ebbed under the onslaught of cooptation, hostile conservatism, and entropy, but its offshoots, under the rubric of "New Age," continue to prosper, arouse controversy, and provoke the derision of puritan and cynic alike.

Of course, unlike Transcendentalism, transformational drug mysticism wasn't primarily an intellectual movement, and in this lay both its power and its weakness. The subtlety and fluidity of the drug experience, along with its unpredictability, opened the minds of initiates to a flowing, intuitive level of awareness not dependent on conventional education, and thus broadly

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universal, but hard to communicate in words, thus highly vulnerable to verbal attack. Control freaks of the Left as well as the Right dismissed as incoherent what was merely inarticulate.

The redemptive capacity of drugs well used was nearly impossible to explain to someone who hadn't personally experienced it. You had to be there. Who can forget the moment as the lights dimmed, prior to a screening of *2001*, when the front two rows of the audience would begin to chant, "Have a good trip, Have a good trip"? What was being invoked wasn't merely the Cinerama light-show finale, but the metaphor of the Star Child itself, a wiser, more humane species evolving from the womb of mechanistic, reductive techno-science. The highest visionaries of our race, starting at least with William Blake and on through the Romantic Movement, have seen the need for just such an evolution since the dawn of the Industrial Era. Sixties drug culture translated their vision into the commonplaces of rock music and poster art, and the reductionists responded by making "messianic" a putdown.

Would the Psalmist who saw
"the mountains skip like rams,
the hills like young lambs"
be kicked out of the canon
if he turned out
to have been tripping?

The steady refusal of government and media to heed the urgent message of drugs drove them increasingly underground and eventually corrupted the drug culture, as well. Not only did a rapacious black market drive the nickel bag off the streets and replace it with crack, but the entire context of drug use shifted from good vibes, exploration, and social engagement in the Sixties to violence, crime, and anomie in the Nineties.

To some extent, this shift reflects the limitations of drugs themselves. As Alan Watts put it, "When you get the message, you can hang up the phone." Wall Street brokers and lawyers who fail to challenge the destructive practices of their work environment except by lighting up a joint when they leave it are clutching a phone with no one at the other end. Parents who dare not tell their children that there is a right time when drugs can be useful may be forced to share the painful consequences of kids using them at the wrong time. Drugs are the dreams of a materialist culture and, as any therapist will agree, dreams whose message is repeatedly disregarded can become insistent nightmares.

No self-fulfilling prophecy is more nightmarish than that of the Partnership for a Drug-free America. If it were social decay that its faceless corporate leadership wished to eradicate, there were a hundred better ways to spend their money. How many after-school programs for latchkey kids could be funded, how many teachers and counselors salaried, how many entry-level computers purchased, for the price of one "This Is Your Brain on Drugs" commercial? Do drugs really do as much harm as the soul-killing social milieu from which they offer temporary, if illusory, escape? Perhaps the real target of the Partnership is an unconscious one: expanded awareness, and the subversive questioning of the status quo that drugs tacitly symbolize for all who lived through the divisive upheavals and ecstatic revelations of that radical age gone by.

Vaclav Havel, speaking in his 1995 commencement address at Harvard about the hazards of techno-global civilization, observed that "In our era, it would seem that one part of the human brain, the rational part which has made all these morally neutral discoveries, has undergone exceptional development, while the other part, which should be alert to ensure that these discoveries really serve humanity and will not destroy it, has lagged behind catastrophically. . . "

What is this other part? How does it ascertain whether humanity is really being served, and why has it lagged behind?

Another look at my Mount of Olives experience may point to some answers. The perception that there is no Other, that humanity, like the God of Judaism, is One, obviously comes from a part of the mind different from that which negotiates contracts and calculates budgets. Contracts and budgets may be morally neutral discoveries in themselves, but when they assume hegemony over every aspect of human endeavor, something vital gets lost. The woman who sits in her booth selling subway tokens ceases to be seen, or to see herself, as an individual soul made in God's image, worthy of greeting (let alone love), and becomes instead an economic unit. So, for that matter, does the executive who earns millions for purveying a soft drink devoid of nutrients.

The rational mind sees no problem here, as it saw no problem with destroying Indo-Chinese villages in order to save them. If, as Marx said, logic is the money of the mind, then you can use it to buy anything. People reduced to economic units are more susceptible to efficient management, at least in the abstract, which is the rational mind's favorite realm. The fact that such an arrangement tends to produce, in Marcuse's phrase, a one-dimensional man, is of little consequence to the rationalist. Late industrial consumerism can churn out plenty of goodies (including a banal psychiatric industry) to distract one-dimensionals from the still, small voice that suggests there may be something wrong.

What is wrong is the failure of communality, which allows the soft-drink CEO his immoderate profits on irresponsible behavior, while begrudging even a dollop of civility to the subway worker. More than at any time since Lincoln, we live in a house divided, and the division extends into so many facets of culture that reduction of these complexities to the political bromides of Right and Left only obscures the problem. An economy that divides people into producers who want to sell high and consumers who want to buy low may have been effective a century ago when the line between consumer regions and producer regions (or nations) was comparatively clear. In today's global economy, the distinction has lost its meaning. Does the laid-off Alabama textile worker rejoice because the slave wage paid to her Korean rival lowers the price of jeans? Not when her unemployment benefits run out. What ultimate fate awaits the investors in companies whose low Pacific-Rim overheads spell rising profits on the one hand, and falling wages on the other? Surely an economy that pays its workers peanuts is oiling its own gears with peanut butter.

But this is not primarily an economic issue. Although a pension fund economy that makes workers stockholders in the very companies that are depriving them of work may imply schizophrenia beyond even Kafka's dreams, it is in fact the schizophrenia that shapes the economy, not vice versa. We must therefore seek our solution not in economic theory but in new modes of awareness, shared redefinings of the human enterprise that embrace and include rather than polarize and contend. It may be that the global crisis of our time will transform the schism between Right and Left into a complementarity analogous to the bicameral human brain, reducing the urge to dominate and reconciling the now-competing values of mechanists and mystics, a possibility for which both Einstein and Buckminster Fuller offer precedent.

The intelligence that draws distinctions has, as Havel points out, created technological marvels and social ills without number. But what of associative intelligence, which William James calls the source of all genius, what of the intelligence that sees connections, the intelligence of love?

The drug culture awakened this connective consciousness in any number of ways, of which the rock festival, happening, and spontaneous eruption of community known as Woodstock became the immediate symbol. The failure of Woodstock '94, its mercantile offspring, to achieve anything comparable as a cultural icon only demonstrates that it was not just the effects of music and drugs that mattered, but the context in which they were encountered. A circle of friends, or strangers, passing a joint around got high on more than the smoke; there was ritual involved in the shared defiance of law and convention; trust and solidarity in affirming the value of a forbidden alteration of consciousness; welcome into an officially despised class of mainstream pariah for whom inhibition could magically dissolve into hilarity; above all, there was the act of sharing, giving away the illicit substance itself in rogue communion.

When the cartoonist Gilbert Shelton had one of his Furry Freak Brothers declare that "Dope [would] get you through times without money better than money [would] get you through times without dope," he was stating a principle that went to the very heart of the assault on materialism that drugs, in their highest application, stood for. "Dope" in this sense represents free-circulating, spontaneous Dionysian energy, just as "money" represents the reverse: hoarding, quantifying, hierarchical disconnection. In times without money there is always community to fall back on, as "poor" cultures repeatedly demonstrate; in times without community the comforts of property are few and cold, as "rich" cultures have shown with equal regularity.

Had it not fostered an awakening of community, the drug culture would have been no more than the exercise in hedonism its detractors have always branded it. They failed to see its wider implications, or else have felt actively threatened by them. The subsequent burgeoning of environmental reverence, of non-sectarian and body-affirming spirituality, of holistic therapies and egalitarian liberationist politics might plausibly have occurred because millions of people suddenly grokked Walt Whitman, but instead we have the psychedelic movement to thank, or to blame, depending on how we view its consequences.

If drugs had led their partisans into the arms of fundamentalist religion and reactionary politics (as in scattered instances they did), chances are the outcry against them would be considerably muted. But in the main their effect was the opposite, fostering reappraisal and radicalism by uncorking regions of the mind long suppressed by the dominant culture of materialism. When the establishment of a professorship in economics was first proposed at Oxford after the Napoleonic Wars, the revered provost of Oriel College, Edward Copleston, expressed grave doubts about admitting into the curriculum a study "so prone to usurp the rest." A century and a half later, the usurpation had prevailed so thoroughly in the industrialized world that it might have continued unnoticed but for a social revolution fueled on the one hand by revulsion toward an unjust war, and on the other by drugs. *The Doors of Perception*, as Aldous Huxley titled the book recounting his mescaline experiences, were flung open, and life in the West has never been the same.

Of course, there are regressive forces in our society who would like nothing better than to shut those doors and pretend they never opened, and they have succeeded to the degree that they completely set the terms of debate about drugs. Even though use of marijuana and LSD is again on the rise, who is asking so simple and preliminary a question as, if drugs are so awful, why are they popular? There are no ad campaigns in their behalf comparable to those promoting alcohol and tobacco. On the contrary, they are fervently damned from every electronic pulpit, though their opponents dare not call them subversive outright, for fear of being asked what is it they subvert.

But what is it? What are young people looking for when they get stoned? What is anyone? Must not our culture, sooner or later, make a place for the alchemist, at least as metaphor? These questions have got to be faced honestly, because our present drug policy, if thoughtless repression can be called a policy, is clearly not working. If we pretend that drugs are irredeemably evil, our children will know we are lying. Or, if successfully brainwashed, they will resent the drug-flecked past of their lawless parents, or force the parents to conceal it.

None of these scenarios can be viewed as beneficial from a family-values perspective. (Telling the truth might do less harm, but what happens when family truth contradicts cultural decrees?)

Certainly drugs have a potential for danger, and can be misused. The same can be said of automobiles, television, and voyages of discovery. Drugs can provoke addictive tendencies. So, too, can the values and methods of the marketplace. Who would dispute that the number one out-of-control abused substance in America today is money?

I freely confess that, although I started smoking pot at twenty, I cannot imagine how I'd have made it through high school under its influence; as soon expect a preadolescent to understand Jung, or Yeats. To everything there is a season, including innocence and initiation. Seeing drug consumption as a stage of adult education from which, like college, one graduates and moves on seems to me a useful model, but it implies there is something to be learned from drugs, and who will admit that in Ralph Reed's '90s? What is it about drugs that, like sex, so fiercely vexes the puritan mind? Why is it a given in our culture that religious ecstasies, creative visions, or just simple elation, are more discredited if drug-induced than if laid to the influence of music, poetry, nature, a page of Scripture, or a pretty face?

Would the Psalmist who saw "the mountains skip like rams, the hills like young lambs" be kicked out of the canon if he turned out to have been tripping? Would the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel, images of singing trees and clouds filled with cherubim, lose their validity if sacred mushrooms had brought them on? Or would they retain their power as symbols of the ravishingly beautiful spiritual energy latent within physical form, beckoning timelessly to the captive human mind, teasing it out of the solemn prisons of fear and calculation, tickling it with enchantment and mirth, and guiding it into a new sphere, no longer unimagined, of harmony, community, and love? □

R.I.P. Jerry Garcia

Reach out your hand if your cup be empty
If your cup be full may it be again
Let it be known there is a fountain
That was not made by the hands of men.
—Jerry Garcia, "Ripple"

On the occasion of Jerry Garcia's death, the spirit of joyful community that he and the Grateful Dead symbolized for his own generation and untold thousands of young people born long after the Sixties was portrayed by the mainstream media as a quaint anomaly of far less consequence than the scandal of Jerry's drug habits.

The outpouring of sadness, shock, and reverence that clogged the Internet that night included no judgment of "Captain Trips" from the fans whose consciousness he helped to stretch. The media told a different story. "Drug Overdose Eyed in Garcia Death" leered Rupert Murdoch's New York tabloid. On the "Nightline" obituary, Ted Koppel asked the venerable rocker David Crosby for a comment. Crosby, an ex-druggie, failed to suggest that mind expansion may have inspired the Dead's music and their message, merely expressing contrition for the excesses of the Sixties with, "I think we'd have done better without the drugs."

No one ever saw a headline reading "Booze Eyed in Joe McCarthy Death," or "Tobacco Fells Leonard Bernstein." But Jerry Garcia's status as a countercultural icon has given Sixties bashers another chance to cluck at the demon of drugs. Whatever role his varied addictions (food as well as heroin) played in the tragedy of his death, and however we may mourn his loss, it would be even more tragic if the light he kindled were trashed because there were some chemicals in the flame.

—S.M.H.

Dust to Dust

Transforming the American Cemetery

Hali Weiss

About a century ago, communal responsibility for the rituals surrounding death began to atrophy in America. The appeal of the "expert" that had spread through so much of American society led mourners to death-care professionals to prepare corpses and manage their final disposal. What resulted was a commercialized "American" way of death, and social critics have long been aware of its slick and manipulated character. But the business interests of the death-care industry have brought more than smooth commercialism to the rituals of death and burial. Mourners have become passive consumers. They buy a package of "appropriate" customs rather than using introspection and ritual to help them negotiate the pain and mystery of loss. Separated from the fullness of death by a cadre of professionals, our culture has sustained severe spiritual damage by industrializing a process that ought to belong to mourners.

During my three-year effort to create a new kind of monument company, called Living Monuments, I have attended a variety of trade conventions and met with people throughout the death-care industry. Repeatedly, I have encountered a staggering lack of imagination and a blunt insensitivity to the demands of the human spirit.

Two of the major national monument companies have not introduced a new product in twenty years, although cultural sensibilities have changed dramatically in that period. Since death produces customers with an immediate need for funerary products and services (and little time to reflect on their use), whatever is manufactured winds up being sold. These companies have no financial incentive to innovate. And the industry has never, on its own, articulated a mission that would lead it to address the dearth of meaning in death care.

As a result, American cemeteries present a bleak scene. They are little more than vast outdoor warehouses, with thousands of nearly identical markers positioned on an unchanging grid. Cemeteries strictly regulate the size, shape, and material of monuments to ensure uniformity—their stated goal. Standardized monuments convey bare facts on shiny slabs of stone, which state the name and lifespan of the deceased buried below, but do not describe that person's life, or engage passers-by. Instead of provoking thought, or summoning any depth of feeling, the cold face of a typical monument actually fortifies the barriers that keep death from gaining any meaningful relationship to life.

But the death-care industry is bound for a transformation. Seventy-seven million Americans, the baby boomers, will turn fifty years old between 1996 and 2015. Just as they took control of the childbirth experience in the 1970s, so will they demand more meaningful deaths and burials in the 2000s. The long march through the institutions which lay ahead at the close of the 1960s is approaching its grand finale in the death-care industry. In recent years, the cremation rate has risen 1 to 2 percent a year and now averages over 23 percent nationally. This trend signals a gradual rejection of traditional burial practices. Seventy percent of Americans cremated in 1993 removed themselves from the institution entirely by having the cremated remains placed outside of the cemetery in a variety of settings that held meaning for them.

Now is the time to probe our fears of aging and death and to formulate our ideas if we want to have a hand in shaping the newly emerging character of our culture of death. In my view, institutions such as the funeral home and cemetery should become sources of genuine meaning and comfort; monuments should resonate with our values and experience. But what sort of monument might result if we began to use spiritual values to redefine the purpose and nature of monuments? And how can we develop a culture in which mourning and memorializing themselves become acts of *tikkun*?

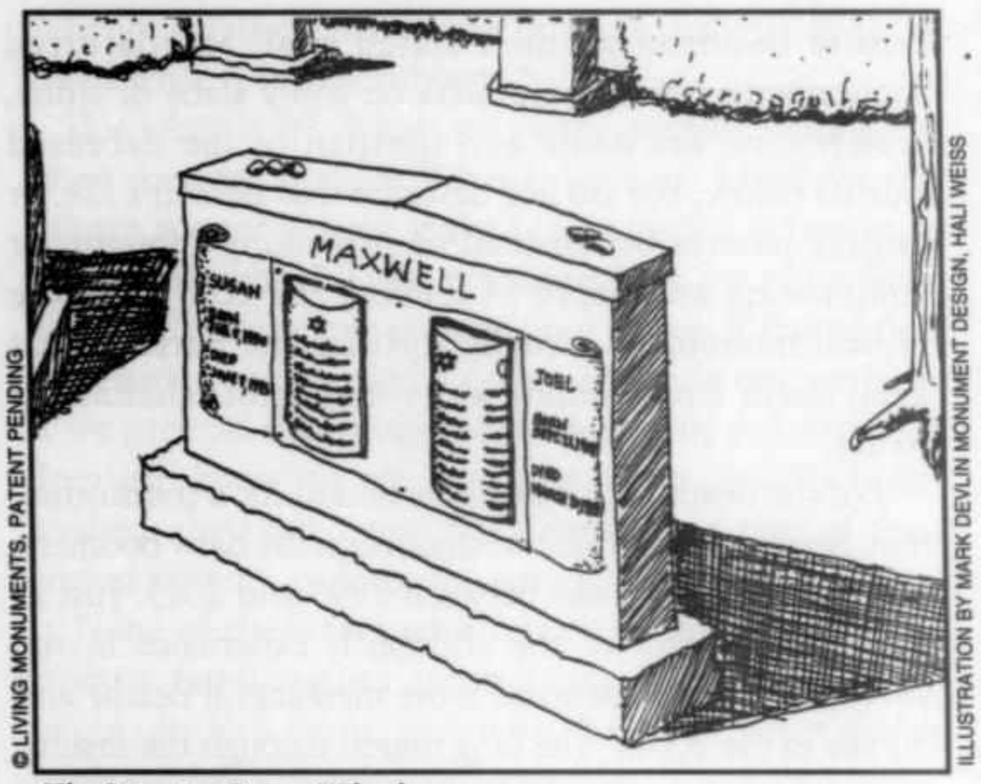
> *The only real hope of people today is probably a renewal of our certainty that we are rooted in the earth and at the same time the cosmos. This awareness endows us with the capacity for self-transcendence.*
>
> —Vaclav Havel, *The New Measure of Man*

Hali Weiss is a licensed architect and the founder of Living Monuments, Inc., a New York City-based national monument company.

The process of rectification (tikkun) is the returning of mankind and all of physical nature to unity with God.

Allen Afterman, *Kabbalah and Consciousness*

If monuments were intended to model Havel's notion of self-transcendence, or engage Afterman's process of rectification, they would have to reflect a radically different approach to design. First, consider the nature



The Spinning Prayer Wheel

of stone, the most common monument material. Sediment slowly becomes stone deep within the earth, over hundreds of thousands of years. Quarried out of the earth itself, stone is actually the oldest material we use to make things. It is natural, heavy, and hard—a part of the earth that seems permanent.

Various cultures throughout history have used stone to mark burials, to establish the burial ground as a sacred place, or to extend the imprint of memory through the ages. Unfortunately, the precision of our modern manufacturing techniques obscure stone's primeval, timeless qualities. In the brief interval that the stone is neither part of the earth's topography nor fixed in the cemetery on top of the earth's surface "forever," it is quarried, cut by lasers on perfectly calibrated machines, squared, rid of any incidental markings, and polished to an artificial gleam. Monuments for sale look fresh and modern; they destroy the sense of the stone's age and thereby cut its natural link to the earth's millions of births and deaths.

By communicating in world time rather than earth time, by trying to look new, contemporary monuments trap us within a temporal frame where the human life span is the only available measure. But earth time—the time it takes the elements to wear down a mountain, or a disintegrated human body itself to become stone—could easily be infused with world time in a more expansive design program. Death is, after all, a transformation from world to earth time: "ashes to ashes, dust to dust."

Earthbound stone monuments, inscribed with names and dates, attest to the temporal nature of our lives, but the agelessness of the stone as material evokes the vast forces of time, nature, and the cosmos. We are rooted, as Havel has said, "in the earth and at the same time the cosmos," and stone monuments could model the relationship between these realms. As such, they could be designed to embody Havel's notion of self-transcendence. They could show us how simultaneously to engage the known and the unknown, finite and infinite, earth and cosmos, life and death. Experiencing this kind of self-transcendence is precisely the purpose of mourning when it is engaged in as an act of *tikkun*.

According to Hasidic tradition, every object has encased within it a spark of divinity. Our task is to "see" this spark within each object, or to "see through" the familiar image an object presents in order to glimpse the presence of God underneath. This kind of "seeing" is believed to be an act of *tikkun*, of repairing the world through recognizing God's ubiquitous but hidden presence. Repairing in this sense means recognizing the divine within all things—made as well as found. Our modern world is clogged with objects that do not engage our senses or intelligence. Designers who wish to repair the world instead of further cluttering it, would, according to this Hasidic view, design objects or places that exude self-awareness and hint at the divine spark within them.

For example, one might begin by allowing each material's integrity and essential nature to shine through. The stoneness of stone, that is, the sense of its oldness, hardness, roughness, and variegations would be important to retain according to this approach. A designer working in this fashion would join together the hands of nature, technology, proportion, and function. Imagine, then, a monument that is actually irregular—a partially tailored small boulder, carved to create some rectilinearity and a few horizontal polished ledges for the display of text. Selecting a "boulder" that feels like it represents the character of the deceased and determining where to locate the ledges and carvings on that boulder would then become a meaningful act. Subtle differences in the boulder's shape, color, texture, and origin might come alive as "sparks" that reflect something of the person who died. Working with stone and respecting its stoneness connects the life being memorialized in world time to the vastness of deep earth time. Who hasn't felt the peculiar power of a natural stone

formation, the way it captures and reflects light, and the mysterious power of its origins? These are precisely the qualities that are stripped from stone in the manufacture of monuments, just as life is stripped away from death by the warehouse-like feeling of most cemeteries.

The profound questions that arise out of grieving can lead one into the midst of a compelling spiritual experience, one that has within it the seeds of Havel's notion of self-transcendence and Afterman's formulation of *tikkun*. When people die, they disappear, and we who remain alive peer into the unknown to try to "see" where that "life" has gone. We strain at this threshold of life to death, trying to look upward, inside of, and beyond life. Standing on earth, questions carry our imaginations outward to the cosmos and inward to search for a source of life beyond the material, which is where the divine spark resides. This process requires a careful, delicate balance which does not disproportionately inflate the role of either earth or cosmos.

Fear of death, or the inability to negotiate between absence and presence, underlies both the repression and magnification of death. Staging funerals with little sentiment or joining cults of the dead (which focus on the dead more than on the living), are different ways of allowing fear to distort the tender relationship between life and death. In contrast to the death-oriented religion of ancient Egypt and the Christian emphasis on an afterlife, Judaism regards life as here, on earth, intermingled with death. The purpose of a new kind of monument would be to map our exploration of this relationship.

The disorienting effect we all experience when someone integral to our life dies renders the future inconceivable and links the past primarily to the pain of loss. Both looking backward to memories or forward to the future is too painful. With neither the past nor the future accessible, living comes to a standstill. Mourners wade through frozen time, inconsolable. The long-term process of mourning and healing eventually dissolves these protective separations between past, present, and future such that we are again able to exist in a fluid present. Time "heals," as we frequently say.

According to kabbalistic thought, embedded in every ending are the seeds of a new beginning. The experience of a loss contains one of these embedded, transitional moments. Loss brings mourners to the sad end of one configuration of their world and immediately to the frightening experience of the birth of a reformulated one, within which lies the potential for a new kind of living. One analogy would be the experience of arriving at a Japanese rock garden where one has meditated for years to find that the rocks been rearranged. Meditation might continue there, but it would be a new kind of meditation with new materials.

How can monuments help people at this moment, suspended between ending and beginning? How can monuments reach people in the limbo between the past and the future?

When someone dies, the center falls out of a world. Instead of being connected by a vibrant presence, we who remain alive are suddenly related by a central absence—which is in itself one model of the relationship between us and God. Those assembled at a memorial service see each other across a void: "Samuel isn't here" is the nature of that void. A monument is eventually erected to mark the location of what the death-care industry terms the "remains." But what actually remains is the character of the deceased, which will live for as long as people continue to review, remember, and re-experience who "Samuel" was and what "Samuel" believed in. The long-standing Jewish tradition of parents composing an ethical will to pass on spiritual values to their children insures the longevity of individual character even after death. We've all witnessed some sort of life after death, as when we discover in parents now gone a secret harmony with our own lives, hear their voices giving wise counsel, or learn a surprising fact that changes our view of them. But these discoveries and recoveries are often disconnected from the grave site itself, where the monument has no power to inspire the renewal or activation of memory.

Ethical wills, or oft-told narratives which illustrate character could be written on a gravestone to amplify the transmission of values held dear. Imagine discovering the following text on a monument. It is excerpted (and slightly edited) from a death notice published in the February 20, 1994 *New York Times*:

> BEER-Anne Berney Heineman, 98. Born Mainz, Germany; untraditional working woman; librarian, teacher of Montessori teachers. In 1920, married to and worked beside department store owner Richard Heineman. Diminutive but always courageous, she took his World War I medal to the Gestapo, Nov. 1938 and gained his release from Buchenwald, where he was taken after Kristallnacht. Sent daughters to England, unsure family could re-unite. She and Richard joined them in September, 1939, though most of their families were lost. Settled Charleston, South Carolina, where she did alterations. Richard (Brotherhood President, Temple Beth Elohim) died 1947.
>
> She moved to Philadelphia, worked as sorority house mother, became a Quaker. In 1959, married Otto Beer. She was insatiably curious about people,

places, nature, travel, music, literature. Passionate advocate of peace. Beloved "Mutti" of children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and other family members. A pragmatic realist, a clear-eyed observer of human nature. An inspiration and blessing, her benign presence continues to guide and surround with love those who cherish her memory.

If this obituary were engraved on her monument, and visitors read it and learned something which they applied to their own lives, the monument would magnify the reproductive power of Anne Berney Heineman Beer's life long after her death. Afterman writes that "True action is clear not only in intention but also in form .... The potency of an act refers to its power to reproduce itself through the generations and thus to perpetuate its purpose. This is the spiritual analogue to the perpetuation of gene characteristics." Monuments that communicate an individual's unique vitality would boost the reproductive power of what Afterman calls "true" action. An epitaph that conveys just one important truth about a life enables that truth to live in future lives, and it is this sort of spiritual potency that our present memorials lack. The traditional monument inscription—BEER, ANNE BERNEY HEINEMAN, 1986-1994—communicates nothing that could have a second, third, or fourth life.

The challenge in designing a monument is to represent something that is actually absent and invisible—the life of the deceased. Modern design has stood on architect Mies Van der Rohe's familiar dictum, "form follows function." Monuments, to be meaningful, must be invigorated by a power greater than function, that is, the dialectic between appearance and disappearance. Form must follow the flow of the mind and heart as they strain upon this threshold.

Contemporary monuments reinforce the notion of a life as a totally separate, localized entity which began in one time and place and ended in another. By simply stating facts on uniform, rectangular pieces of stone, standard monuments reflect a particular view of reality which says that the burial plot is "the" place where a complete life was deposited. But instead of merely conveying "Here lies Samuel Miller ..." monuments could be designed to investigate the edges of what we know about birth, death, and disappearance. Only by exploring the realm between absence and presence can we hone the purpose of our lives as Jews in relation to our absent, single God.

If monuments were thought of as the record of an inquiry instead of a standardized product, they might prompt musings on appearance and disappearance, on the mysteries beyond known life. This new kind of minimal monument would establish its presence "here," where the spirit of the life unfolded, and point to "there," a beyond which we will never know but should not be afraid of.

To create these kinds of monuments, designers would guide family and friends through a personal process, which involves reaching beyond fear and into the absence to capture the ineffable essence of the person who died in words, drawings, shapes, or memorabilia. Family and friends would also be encouraged to discover symbols that describe their own sources of inner strength.

The monument designer's job is to combine these elements—the symbols, drawings, words, and memorabilia—creatively, tastefully, and proportionally, in stone. The resulting monument should appear to come from far away, from the innermost territory of the mourners' experience, much like a new Torah scroll, crafted and scribed in the present, arrives from a sacred past and points toward an infinite life of possibility in the future. By appealing to human imagination, the monument will point people forward to experience a profound world—that described by Havel as "self-transcendence."

In this context, consider The Spinning Prayer Wheel, an interactive monument design which gives visitors something to do when visiting the cemetery and can guide them to profound recollection. The Spinning Prayer Wheel consists of a manually rotatable stone cylinder which has been placed within an immobile stone frame. Engraved on the cylinder is the name, life span, and an extensive epitaph, written by family and friends, about the life or lives for which it was built. The rotating cylinder can be hollow so that visitors can slip handwritten notes of remembrance into it. These notes then become part of the memory process which turns as the cylinder does. A visitor stands at the monument and slowly turns the prayer wheel, reading the stories, or perhaps simply sensing old handwritten notes and past times swirl by as the cylinder turns. The words, the juxtapositions of words, familiar names, and dates, and the very act of turning the prayer wheel, connects the visitor, through this action, to more memories, and to the ceaseless turning of the world.

After the Federal Building in Oklahoma City exploded, the *Daily Oklahoman* published traditional obituaries. But the newspaper also assigned reporters to interview people who knew the victims in order to compose a different kind of obituary, one that provided a brief glimpse, through narrative, into the victims' lives.

This kind of life story, rarely told in a public forum, could be engraved on a turning cylinder or on the face of any monument, perhaps along with personal messages from different family members and friends. Following are three of the brief life profiles that appeared in the newspaper.

Pamela Cleveland Argo

Pamela Cleveland Argo, thirty-six, of Oklahoma City, loved life. Argo, a data-entry specialist at Presbyterian Hospital, was the second person positively identified as a fatality in the April 19 explosion. Friends say Argo began her day like she did most days—"full of life" and with everything planned. She had a 9 a.m. appointment at the Social Security Administration in the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. She loved black clothes and bright red lipstick, stylish hats and big jewelry. She also delivered meals to the homebound and assisted AIDS foundations and Feed the Children. She and her sister, Christi Young, had just planted seventy-five gladiola bulbs in her yard.

Olen Bloomer

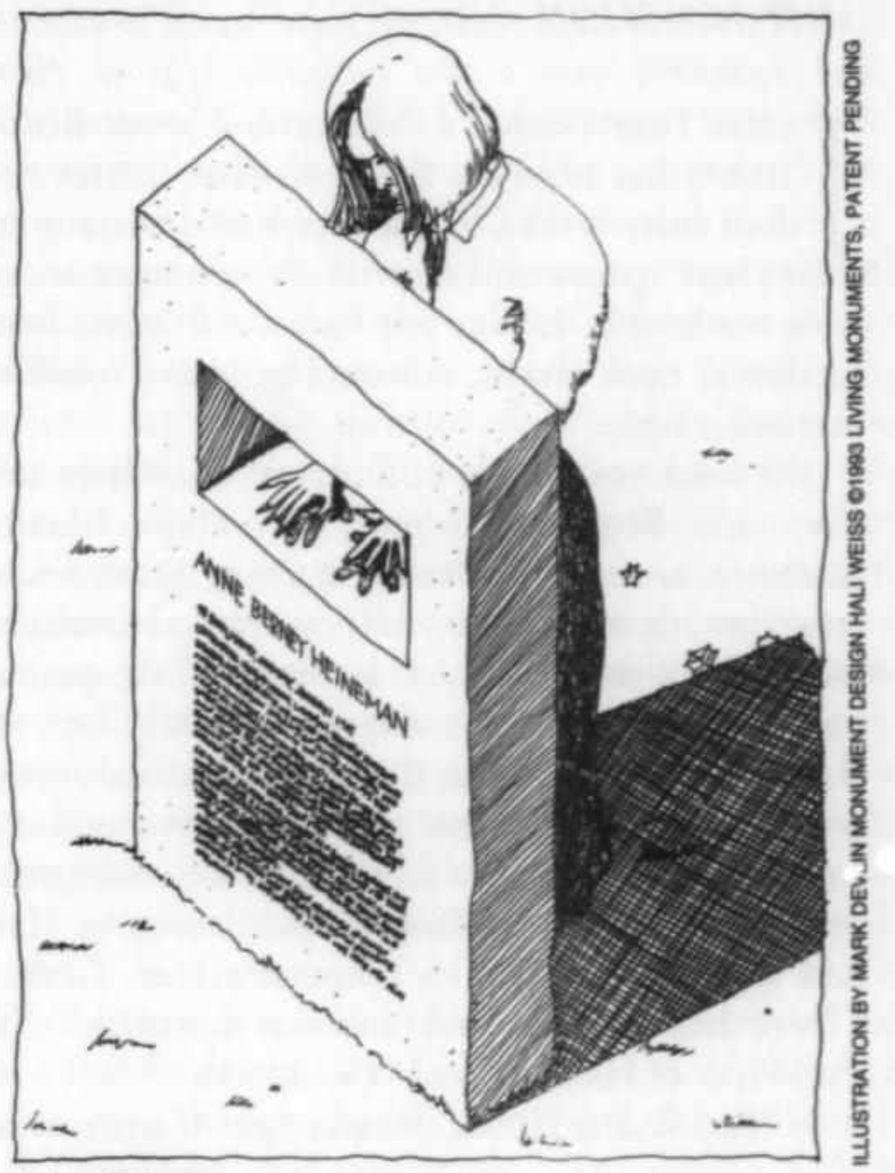
Moore resident Olen Bloomer enjoyed fishing and just watching the birds on his small plot of land at Lake Eufaula. He also loved to play with his grandchildren. Bloomer, sixty-one, was a budget assistant for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He was admired by his staff for his ability to stay cool under pressure and cut through bureaucratic red tape when emergencies arose. He was an "average man" who enjoyed telling jokes and laughing, said daughter Maureen Bloomer. "He was the ideal of what everyone wants in a dad." His wife, Norma Jean Bloomer, died in 1990. His grandchildren called him "Big Dad."

Ted Allen

As father of six children ranging in age from four to twenty-two, Ted Allen spent many hours coaching youngsters in basketball and soccer. An avid gardener, he took great pride in his lawn care and vegetable crops at his Norman home. Allen, forty-eight, was an urban planner for the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Agency. When he died April 19, Allen was writing state-by-state regulations for homeless housing programs. A graduate of East Tennessee State University, Allen attended graduate school at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. He served as a planner for local governments in Alabama and North Carolina before joining HUD in Dallas. Transferred to Oklahoma City in 1980, Allen left HUD in 1982. He spent eight years as a city planner in Moore before rejoining HUD four years ago.

Automatically, when someone dies, our minds begin to review what we know of the deceased and the quality of shared moments. Over time, the disparate elements of a life, the personality traits and distinct events, coalesce into a unified spirit that may have been difficult to see before. Loss creates the opportunity to perceive the life of the deceased as a whole—and life as whole—to contemplate its unique spirit and purpose in the contexts of world time and earth time. Monuments could express this wholeness and uniqueness in shapes, words, and symbols.

Monuments should be in conversation—with each other and with visitors. If they chronicled our contemplations on disappearance and death, on living through loss,



Joined Hands

and on repairing the world in the ways we live our lives, the cemetery could become vital, relevant, even profound. The cemetery, functioning as a library of lives, could show us, in Havel's words, "what to do with ourselves, where to turn." It would become a library of lives.

I once saw a Mister Softee ice cream truck driving slowly through a silent suburban cemetery. The truck, painted bright blue and white, and decorated with illustrations of ice cream cones, sundaes, and milk shakes, meandered slowly among the headstones and then disappeared from view. This incongruous image amidst somber rows of dark, upright monuments suggested a vision for a new kind of cemetery. It would be vital and sacred, integrate the spirit of life with the mystery of death, and reflect back to us both the temporal and eternal character of our own lives and culture. It would fully encompass the human tale as it travels from "dust to dust." □

Goldilocks

Colin Greer

Introduction

James Finn Garner's *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories* has been on the best-seller list for more than forty weeks. It's a slim book, seventy-nine quite short pages, and surprisingly, it's commanded a wide readership. In fact you find it not in the humor section at book stores, but on The *New York Times* best-seller table.

The book is a parody of a parody. Its stories, taken from the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen, are used to poke fun at a progressive position on sexism, racism, concern for poverty, and revulsion at the greed of the privileged, as though these positions were shallow and entirely rhetorical. Garner lampoons these values as if to tell us that when ideas are unpopular they can quickly seem counterintuitive and so be equated with idiocy. This seems to be the undergirding presumption in his retelling of such stories as "Little Red Riding Hood," "The Emperor's New Clothes," "Three Little Pigs," "Jack and the Beanstalk," "The Pied Piper of Hamlin," and "Goldilocks."

In "Red Riding Hood," for example, Garner writes:

> One day, her mother asked her to take a basket of fresh fruit and mineral water to her grandmother's house—not because this was womyn's work, mind you, but because the deed was generous and helped engender a feeling of community.

Or later in the story,

> The wolf said, "you know, my dear, it isn't safe for a little girl to walk through these woods alone." Red Riding Hood said, "I find your sexist remark offensive in the extreme, but I will ignore it because of your traditional status as an outcast from society, the stress of which has caused you to develop your own, entirely valid, world view."

Depicting the woodchopper as a clumsy "would-be male hero," Garner writes:

> Grandma jumped out of the wolf's mouth, seized the woodchopper-person's ax, and cut his head off. After this ordeal, Red Riding Hood, Grandma, and the Wolf felt a certain commonality of purpose. They decided to set up an alternative household based on mutual respect and cooperation, and they lived together in the woods happily ever after.

As I read these stories, I was reminded of what Republican Congressman Gerald Solomon of New York said recently: "I'm tired of all that compassion rhetoric..." The conservative passion in America has overtaken the national analytic capacity and talent for empathy. William Bennett teaches that values are fixed and finite; Rush Limbaugh kneads the Big Lie like playdough. Likewise, humor is now dominated by their conventions—with P.J. O'Rourke and Jackie Mason helping to send up good intentions and compassion as childish and petulant. The narrative of our history and culture is dominated increasingly by their distortion of the past and their ability to trivialize oppositional views. The historian Todd Gitlin, writing on political correctness, has pointed out that the attack on so-called political correctness is the "surface of a deeper fault line, a trauma in American cultural identity, the fault line of race and gender." Whatever James Garner's intention, his book plumbs precisely that fault line.

My first reaction to Garner's book was to begin to write a competing book attempting to satirize right-wing positions. After all, wasn't it progressives who initiated the attack on big government, the need for social responsibility, and the democratization of public life? How did we end up being laughed at from the high ground of those very positions? I began with Red Riding Hood. Here are some excerpts.

Colin Greer is president of The New World Foundation. His book (with Herb Kohl), A Call to Character, *a progressive alternative to Bennett's* Book of Virtues, *will be published by HarperCollins in the fall.*

A long time ago, there was a tailor, his wife, and his daughter, Red Riding Hood. Red Riding Hood is an unusual name for a little girl. She got her name when she was about four. That is when the cold winters set in. About the same time that her dad lost his work, he made her a coat out of the red velvet curtains that hung in their living room. Her father called her Red Riding Hood as a joke. He said the coat was how they managed to get by, not like those lefties who he used to call "reds" when he was a boy, who behaved like "hoods," feathering their own nests, corrupting decent people.

Or again:

Well, one day, when Red Riding Hood was walking through the woods with a basket full of food and picking flowers for her grandmother along the way, she ran into a stranger who looked like a wolf. He took an apple from her basket. "That's my price for the flowers, they are my flowers, this is my land." He went on to demand more apples and even some of the cookies her mother had baked, to pay for every flower she picked. "Heavens," she cried, "I must get my daddy." She ran home, tripping over her stool as she came into the house. "What is wrong," her father cried, as he helped her up, "What is wrong?" Red Riding Hood explained, but to her surprise her father was not angry. "You have to listen to reason, little one. He only took what was his due, no more no less. It's our job to take care of Grandma, not his—she's our family.

But as I wrote more, I began to realize that I could expect very few readers. No best-seller list for this approach. The fact is, as I was told by several friendly readers, a book of stories like this would probably be hard to sell because there is no acknowledged parody of the Right at this time to parody. Instead, their scapegoating ideas seem sadly intuitive by now. Bob Herbert put it well in The *Times*: "The United States is going through a period in which the politics of meanness is in the ascent. In many circles, it is unfashionable to be compassionate. Putting down others is the dominant mode of political expression, preferably with a vicious remark accompanied by cruel laughter." The emergence of this phenomenon is what the satirist and songwriter Tom Lehrer must have had in mind when he gave up sarcasm, claiming, "There is no more room for sarcasm when Henry Kissinger gets the Nobel Peace Prize." While progressive thinking has been successfully turned into a laughing stock and so can be incorporated in these tales by James Garner, the right-wing conservatism of our time is by no means a parody, but rather stands as wisdom and an accurate reflection of reality.

So I gave up on a competing book. Yet it continued to seem to me that it would be a mistake to give up on the idea of lampooning the Right right back. At least to begin in that direction was a very necessary task. Furthermore, Garner's book defies review in the ordinary sense, but it shouldn't simply be ignored or treated as a good-natured romp. What's missing in the stories is as important as what's there: the true political correctness of our era—the political correctness of reasonable racism, gregarious greed, and willful militarism—are barely mentioned. There is one time Garner does approach the heart of the matter: the children whom the Pied Piper lures away with him call to each other in opposition to their parents' anti-materialist political economy, "Free markets are the only way to give people the personal incentive to build a better society," and "We must respect the rights of citizens to preserve the ethnic purity of their neighborhoods." But quickly we see any decent persons' critique of the Right is presented as a parody of Left thinking, not to jibe at right-wing malevolence and conventionalized hatred. Indeed, in "Jack and the Beanstalk," the Giant is depicted as a courageous native, willfully destroying the tree that feeds him, and Jack is posed as "a complete sizest, who thought that all giants were clumsy, knowledge-impaired, and exploitable." The contest here is between native ignorance and entrepreneurial greed.

So, while I gave up on a book of these stories, I still want to help advance the process of cutting these genial giants of the spin down to size—even if it's only among ourselves at this point. In taking a small step toward appropriating parody status for the Right, I turned to Goldilocks, who in Garner's story is eaten by the bears after trying to use them for experimental purposes and who is depicted as a "maverick biologist" who is sadly a melanin-impoverished wommon . . ."

Goldilocks

There was once a little girl called Goldilocks. She was a delicate-looking child, but at twelve years old she was already very pretty and womanly—and with a proud and spirited nature. She usually walked

barefoot in summer because her family was very poor, and the ground was warm. In the bitter cold and wet of winter, she wore a pair of leaky shoes, and her toes were always terribly cold.

Goldilocks lived with her mother in a rickety old house on the edge of a meadow. Her mother worked for the rich Bear family, who lived at the top of the big hill that jumped out of the meadow into the sky. The Bears' house was grand and very roomy. There were three Bears—Mother Bear, Father Bear, and their nine-year-old son, Little Bear. They had their own rooms. They ate together in a fine dining room, and Little Bear had closets full of toys to play with.

Goldilocks visited her mother at the Bear house almost every day after school. It was her mother's job to keep the big house clean and to cook for the Bears. Her mother arrived early in the morning and left quite late at night. She once asked Mrs. Bear for a raise after she had worked for the family for many years, but Mrs. Bear insisted that she was paid adequately for her labors.



A.J. GARCES

Mrs. Bear told Mr. Bear quite often, "She's asked for more money again. I tell her there is more work she can do around the house and the grounds. There is plenty to do. If she wants to earn more, she can do more."

"That's right," Mr. Bear would reply.

One day, Mrs. Bear told Mr. Bear, "Goldilocks's mother complained again that she couldn't spend enough time with her daughter because she had to jump at every job I offer in order to earn enough money."

Mr. Bear said, "I hope you told her how lucky she was to have work and a house to live in. If only her husband were not off in the village; he doesn't help in looking after Goldilocks. These people are like that. That's how things go in their world."

On school holidays, Goldilocks would visit her father, who lived in town all week. He drove people to work and to the train station early in the mornings and stayed in town to be at work on time each day. He was fierce in his love for Goldilocks and made it clear to all the young boys in town that if they bothered his daughter they would have him to deal with. He had tried to find other work, but was not able to. He came home on weekends, but he worked on Saturday and Sunday too, so he usually arrived after Goldilocks had gone to bed.

Mr. Bear often took an evening walk at about this time, and when he returned home he would report to Mrs. Bear, "I saw him visiting again this evening. He must come home to the mother when he doesn't have a girlfriend in town, I expect."

"How do you know?" Mrs. Bear would ask.

"He comes so late," Mr. Bear said, "Goldilocks is fast asleep by the time he arrives. He's gone by early morning, I hear the dogs notice him going—their barking wakes me. The fact is, like it or not, Mrs. Bear, he is not a bit interested in his daughter." What Mr. Bear didn't know, how could he—he never asked—was that Goldilocks's father worked as hard as her mother.

Early as it was when her father left in the morning, Goldilocks was up soon after. She got up early in the morning to clean, and she cooked when she came home. She left food for her mother to eat when she came home from work. The cottage was such a miserable place for Goldilocks that she would be in bed before her mother got home at night, in search of happier dreams.

I dare say that's how everybody thought things were going. Only it wasn't quite true. Certainly Goldilocks cleaned her house, her mother and father worked very very hard, and of course the Bear family was very rich and very important. But on most days, since she turned eleven, Goldilocks had not been going to school. Her teachers always seemed tired, and they were not interesting, leaving Goldilocks bored. Mr. Bear noticed her wandering in the meadow quite often, and he would tell his wife how surprised he was. "She

doesn't want to learn. She tramples on her chances. I fear when she grows up she will trample on us."

Most people thought Goldilocks was pretty, and many said so: "That is a handsome child you have," people would tell her mother. And that, no doubt, was her misfortune. Goldilocks was ashamed of her clothes and how she looked. Her heart felt heavy; she didn't feel pretty. She tried hard to do all the chores at home, to be as much help to her mother as she could. She loved her mother and worried about her. "She works too hard, much too hard," Goldilocks would tell her gray cat, Goose, her very best friend in all the world. Goldilocks was very sad when she had to give Goose's kittens away to the Bears and their friends, because she and her mother just couldn't afford to feed them.

Since her father was away working, Goldilocks missed him very much. She longed for her life to be less hard. This feeling got worse as she grew older. Soon she began to find her schoolwork too much for her, and it wasn't long before she stopped going to school and began playing with the children in the village who stayed home all day too.

There was a boy Goldilocks liked to play with a lot. He would tell her how lovely she was. When she played with him, Goldilocks forgot about her family, she forgot about the Bears, and she felt like the most important person in the world. "Let us romp in the woods," he would say, offering his hand. She in turn would take his hand, and say, smiling, "That will be a fine amusement," as they ran off together.

One evening, when the sun was setting in summer splendor, the boy knelt by Goldilocks's side and put her bare feet in his lap, saying, "See what beautiful feet you have. I think I would like to kiss them." "Oh," she gasped, "Oh yes, do so by all means," she responded. She liked that a lot. So much, that some nights thereafter she did not go home until much later than usual. Sometimes he would go home with her and stay until just before her mother returned.

This lasted for a few weeks; then the boy disappeared. People said he was no good, that he was a stranger and couldn't be trusted. The boy was a visitor to the town; if he had not been he would have been fearful of Goldilocks's father's threat. No, he was the son of a family who owned an estate as big as the Bears' on the other side of town. He disliked school and enjoyed consorting with the poor kids in town. Goldilocks was alone again. It was soon after this that Goldilocks's mother grew sick and was too tired to work. Early one morning she woke Goldilocks, "Go to the Bears' house for me today," she told Goldilocks. Goldilocks dressed herself at once and went to work at the Bears' house as her mother had asked her.

She got to the Bears' house just a little later than her mother usually arrived. Very quickly she cooked up porridge for their breakfast. But because it was late the Bears came to breakfast before the porridge cooled. Father Bear was not happy. Mother Bear was not happy. Little Bear was not at all happy. The porridge was much too hot to eat. But the Bears were understanding too. "We'll go for a walk in the woods while the porridge cools," Father Bear said to Goldilocks, "You get on with the housework, we need everything finished on time today. Do it just the way your mother does it."

When the Bears left, Goldilocks sat down on Father's chair to rest awhile. She was tired, she didn't know why, and she was frightened. Her fear made her lazy. She didn't want to work. The chair was not at all comfortable, and she was exceedingly hungry. So she took a spoonful of Father Bear's porridge. But it was so hot she couldn't eat it. She moved to Mother Bear's chair. Still she was not comfortable. She tried the porridge she had set for Mother Bear, and she liked it very much. But she was still quite hungry. She had never been so hungry. Next she sat in Little Bear's chair. She ate up all his porridge. As she sat back she fell right through the little chair she was sitting on, breaking it into many pieces, "Oh dear, I'm so tired, I must lie down."

Goldilocks looked out of the window to check if the Bears were still far away from the house. Then she walked upstairs to their bedrooms, "What beautiful rooms, what beautiful colors," she cried, as she fell backwards on the biggest bed, getting ready to enjoy its size and softness. But it wasn't soft at all. Father Bear's bed was hard, the way he liked it. Goldilocks didn't like it. So she went to try Mother Bear's bed. She flopped face down on this one expecting it to soften her fall. But she was disappointed. "This bed is much too hard," she complained. By now she had entirely forgotten that she was not in her own house. She sat on Little Bear's bed and smiled at the pleasant feel of the mattress and the silk quilt cover. "I will sit on it a little longer," she said to herself as she lay back thinking, "Why am I so very tired?" Very soon she fell asleep.

Meanwhile, it was a beautiful sunny day while she slept. The Bears enjoyed walking in the sun so much that they stayed out most of the morning, walking and feasting on berries and nuts in the woods. By late morning the Bears came home, "Cold porridge will make a wonderful snack before lunch," Mother Bear laughed. "We'll have Goldilocks work on lunch while we finish our breakfast."

I expect you have heard, dear Reader, what happens next. The Bears find their porridge has been eaten, they find Little Bear's chair broken, and they find

Goldilocks's mess in their bedrooms. "What on earth is all this mess?" growled Mr. Bear, looking around. Then Little Bear finds Goldilocks asleep in his bed, "Look Daddy, here she is, she's eaten our porridge, she's broken my chair, and here she is asleep in my bed," he cried.

"Mercy," yelled Goldilocks as she awoke, "I'm so sorry, I was so tired." "Cheep! Cheep! Don't you know who you are!" Little Bear screeched until his mother scolded him: "Have the goodness to hold your tongue young man." Mr. and Mrs. Bear looked at each other, quite concerned about what was going on. They sent Little Bear out to play with his dog, "Don't be so angry," they told him, "Goldilocks needs to rest."

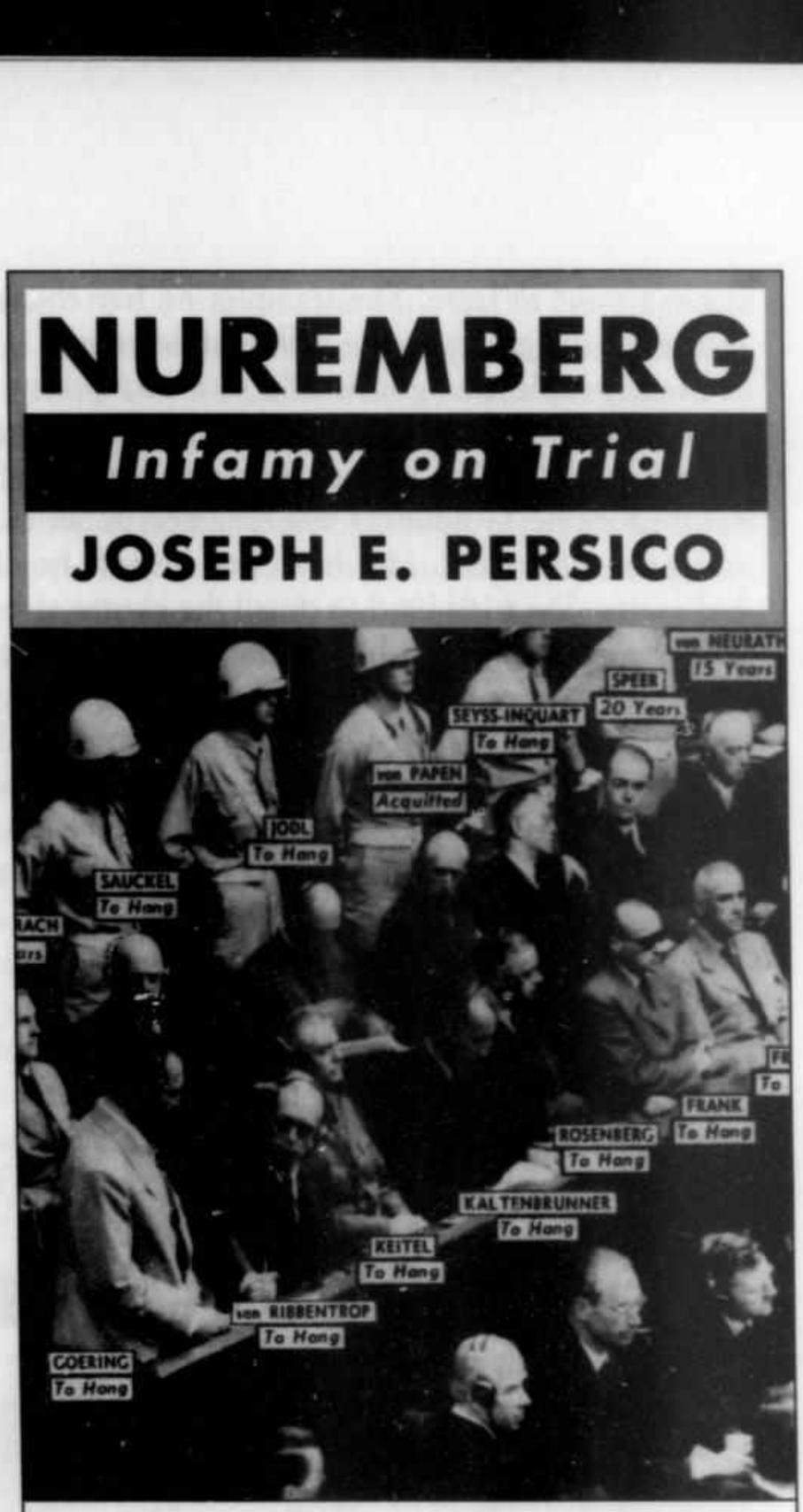
Mrs. Bear sat by Goldilocks and said, "It was God's mercy that you've fallen asleep here today." Mr. Bear said, "If only you'd gone to school each day, this wouldn't have happened." Goldilocks didn't understand, "Why do you look at me like that? I'm sorry. I know I shouldn't have done this." And then she cried and cried, "I'm so hungry and so tired." Mr. Bear and Mrs. Bear took Goldilocks down to her mother's house. They told Goldilocks' mother that her daughter would have to go away. There was no choice. Who would look after the baby? The family barely had enough for themselves now. How would they deal with a new mouth to feed? "And it would not be good for us either," Mr. Bear said, "It's not the right image at all." If Goldilocks stayed, he said, then the family would be asked to leave the estate. He knew a place where she could live for a few years, a home for children difficult like herself, getting into trouble as Goldilocks did. "Her baby will be cared for too," he said, "Mrs. Bear will look into that. She knows how to go about these things."

"But I have no money," Goldilocks's mother cried, "I have none." Mr. Bear put an arm on her shoulder reassuringly. "You may be sure," he said, "I will gladly pay as long as you agree to pay me back. I have been cheated before and had no end of trouble because of it. So I will keep half of what you earn each week to save for what is needed. Do you understand me, ma'am?" Mrs. Bear looked at her husband with great pride. She admired him so much; when it was necessary for a man to take charge, she could count on him. He knew what to do. He knew what was best for people: "That is a wonderfully fine thing you are doing, dear husband." Goldilocks's mother looked sadly at her daughter. Then she looked up meekly at Mr. Bear, "Oh thank heaven," she sighed, "and thank you sir for your kindness toward us." □

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Torat Hesed

Reading Torah to Hear God's Voice

Bradley Shavit Artson

In the famous description of the woman of valor, the Book of Proverbs lauds her because "she opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is *Torat hesed*, a Torah of love." High praise indeed, but it also poses a curious dilemma: doesn't the existence of a Torah of *hesed*, of steadfast love or loving-kindness, imply that there is a Torah that is *not* a Torah of love? Can there be a Torah of hate?

There are compelling reasons to discriminate among passages of Torah, separating the voice of God (a Torah of love) from the voice of pain (a Torah of hate). In his book, *Jewish Renewal*, Michael Lerner courageously and openly advocates categorizing sections of Torah in order to maintain loyalty to God as the force that makes transformation and transcendence possible, as well as loyalty to a Jewish ethic of justice and compassion. Passages in the Torah which seem cruel, sexist, or oppressive, Lerner argues, reflect the inherited pain and alienation imposed on its human recipients/authors, which they perceived as God's will, written into the very structure of the world. In the service of hope and justice, Lerner refuses to grant those passages status as God's word.

Separating out good from bad biblical passages requires great integrity and ethical rigor.

If we understand God's revelation of Torah as a book, a finite text given on a specific day, then it is hard to avoid the conclusion that there are parts of it that cause serious religious/ethical problems for a sensitive and enlightened reader. But that approach raises two serious problems. First, identifying a passage as the voice of pain precludes deriving anything of spiritual or ethical value from that passage. The only reasonable progressive response is to condemn and then ignore that verse, so it is lost as source of Torah, of wisdom and renewal. Second, identifying a specific passage with a particular voice blurs the distinction between Torah the *p'shat* (contextual meaning) with Torah the *drash* (the interpretive meaning). While the Book is, indeed, the vehicle for God's voice, that voice is located in *how* we read the entire Torah, not in the content of particular passages. Identifying God's voice with specific verses assumes a single, intrinsic meaning inherent in the text. Both rabbinic and postmodernist readings assume that Torah is what emerges from the interaction between reader, written word, and interpretive community: "When two people meet and exchange words of Torah, the *Shekhinah* hovers over them." (*Avot* 3:3).

It is not the passage, but how we read it that creates a Torah of love. Rather than saying, for example, that biblical verses condemning to death a *ben sorer u-moreh*, a stubborn and rebellious son, reflect only the voice of pain, the rabbis of the Talmud went out of their way to assert the value of continuing to study those passages even as they rendered them legally unenforceable. Why? Because that law is a poignant reminder of the value of honoring parents, a worthy lesson indeed. To simply dispose of *ben sorer u-moreh* as the voice of pain would preclude our learning that sacred lesson. The voice of God can emerge from every passage of the Torah, provided we read in such a way as to make that voice audible. Such reading takes honesty, effort, and ingenuity, which is precisely what God would have us bring to an encounter with Torah. As the *Turei Zahav* notes, "One is perpetually commanded to derive new teachings from the Torah ... for it is incumbent every moment to labor in the study of Torah and to innovate to the full extent of one's abilities."

Reading the Torah to hear God's voice through its words, as with any strategy of reading, begins with certain assumptions. The first premise is that God is loving, wise, just, and compassionate. The second assumption is that the Torah, when read piously, will reflect those divine values. Hence, when we read Torah and it appears to be hateful, unjust, or callous then we must read it differently. Even when the *p'shat* supports a harsh explication, our religious premise precludes identifying that *p'shat* with the voice of God. And it is God's voice of love, not the *p'shat*, that is commanding.

In *Parashat BeHar*, for instance, we read of the laws of slavery, both for an *eved ivri* (a Hebrew slave) and an

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eved k'nani (a Canaanite slave). The Hebrew slave is an indentured servant—limited in the duress he must endure, and limited also to a finite term of service. But the *eved k'nani* enjoys none of those prerogatives. The Torah allows the master to impose onerous burdens on his slave, and prohibits the master from ever liberating the slave or the slave's children.

If God's revelation is the *p'shat*, then this part of the book forces us to ask: What kind of a God would allow slavery as part of an eternal revelation? What kind of a God would mandate the ownership, and would permit the degradation, of another human being?

There are many Jews who understand the notion of *Torah min ha-Shamayim* (Torah from the Heavens) literally, and they do see God as having dropped down a particular book, the Torah. Thus, they grapple with such difficult texts and try to interpret them in as humane a way as possible (often by confusing what the Torah has to say about the *eved ivri* with what it says about the *eved k'nani* and insisting that the biblical laws governing slavery weren't as harsh as those of other cultures).

For many Jews, however, such an apologetic reading seems forced and untenable. It still puts God in the obscene position of mandating slavery and of permitting the ownership of another human being. Are we forced simply to concede that this passage is a Torah of hate? Is the most that we can do to condemn it and try to ignore it? What, then, of Torah and its holiness? What, then, of God and our Covenant? Identifying this voice as hateful Torah renders the entire Torah suspect and encourages simply bypassing it when seeking spiritual or moral growth.

I would propose that we find our solution in another traditional understanding of the idea of *Torah min ha-Shamayim*. This understanding is less literal, and requires a more dynamic, interactive way of reading the Torah. One can understand Torah not just as a particular book, but as a *process* of God interacting with the Jewish people and all humankind. That midrashic process starts at Sinai, resulting in the Torah, but it continues with full force in the interpretations of the Prophets, the rabbis, medieval, and even contemporary sages. God's voice cannot be contained between the covers of any book (or set of books); it is the interaction between book, reading community, and inherited tradition that is electric. It is in that dynamic that a Torah of love emerges. Just as each wave on the shore leaves a new mark in the sand, each new interpretation marks another refraction of God's Torah, so that *Torah min ha-Shamayim* describes a process that is very much alive.

How, with such an approach, would we hear a loving and just God amidst the painful presence of slavery in the Torah?

Seen as process, the issue would be not what was in Leviticus, but how Jewish tradition insists on hearing God's voice in that presence. How does the process of Torah deal with the existence of slavery in the Book of Leviticus? For it is the process (the *drash*), not the book (the *p'shat*), that is authoritative. It is in the *drash*, the mode of reading, in which God's voice is to be found. As the Zohar recognizes: "Just as wine must be in a jar to keep, so the Torah must be contained in an outer garment. The garment is made up of the tales and stories, but we, we are bound to penetrate beyond."

Let us penetrate beyond the outer garment, the Book of Leviticus, to uncover the process of Torah within. Let us look at one such authoritative *drash*, that of the great medieval rabbi, Moses ben Maimon:

> It is permitted to work an *eved k'nani* with rigor. Though such is the law, it is the quality of piety and the way of wisdom that a man be merciful and pursue justice and not make his yoke heavy upon his slave or distress him, but give him to eat and to drink of all foods and drinks. The sages of old let the slave eat of every dish that they themselves ate and they fed ... the slaves before they themselves sat down to eat ... Thus also the master should not disgrace them by hand or by word, because Scripture has delivered them only to slavery and not to disgrace. Nor should he heap upon the slave oral abuse and anger, but should rather speak to him softly and listen to his claims.

The Rambam accepts the fact of the *p'shat*—slavery was technically permissible and one could ruthlessly oppress one's slave. Yet he also understands the values of Torah moving us beyond the *p'shat*, creating a religious obligation to be merciful and just toward slaves. In fact, he insists that one ought to share the same foods and allow the slaves to eat first as a demonstration of compassion. A good master is one who speaks softly and listens to what the slave has to say. In short, a Jewish master is one who affirms that the slave, too, is made in God's image. Ultimately, our understanding that all people are made in God's image precludes the very possibility of slavery at all.

Verses in the Torah that are morally problematic call upon us to have the religious courage to read against the grain, so that we can hear God's voice in the process of reading. "Those who constantly create new interpretations of Torah are harvesting her." (*Or ha-Hammah* on *Zohar* 3:106a.) In that process, we make God's gift of Torah our own and affirm our status as *b'nei rahamim*, the merciful children of a merciful God. □

A Personal Appeal to Readers and Friends of TIKKUN from Michael Lerner

As we enter our tenth year of publication, TIKKUN needs your financial support. In the past year, America's political right wing has emerged from the shadows and taken control of the Congress. Liberals and progressives have had little to say about how to respond. They are largely in intellectual disarray. We at TIKKUN have been one of the very few places you could turn to hear serious discussion of strategy.

We've kept alive a sense of possibility at a moment when much of the rest of the public discourse was moving to the Right, and when liberals elsewhere were often in disarray, despair, or simply losing hope and withdrawing attention from efforts to change or heal the world.



In the Jewish world, we've been the one voice consistently and unequivocally supporting the peace process in Israel. And we've been the largest public expression of the Jewish renewal energies that are bringing spiritual reality to life in the Jewish community. Our Jewish Renewal conference brought together more than a thousand Jews to chart this path, and in communities around the country people have been reading my book, *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation* and my dialogue with Cornel West, *Jews and Blacks: Let the Healing Begin.*

I personally have been deeply moved by the feedback from these books, and by the thousands of people who have come to hear us during our book tours and public dialogues. Literally hundreds of people have told me that reading *Jewish Renewal* changed their lives profoundly, helped them find a coherent approach to Judaism that allowed them to integrate their intellectual, spiritual, ethical, and psychological sides without any loss of integrity or compromise for the sake of being part of something. Over and over again people have said that the book presented them, for the first time in their lives, with a conception of God that made sense and in whom they could believe. All my life I've hoped for a moment when I could serve God without being too distorted by my own personal needs or ego—and this year, through the *Jewish Renewal* book, the work with Cornel West, the creation of the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning to promote the politics of meaning, and the writings in TIKKUN, I've finally felt that I had reached that point in my life. It felt like an incredible gift. Even if I fall back onto a lower level in the coming years, I'm grateful to God for giving me the opportunity to serve during this past year.

TIKKUN has kept hope alive—and that's no small thing in the Age of Gingrich. Our impact has radiated far beyond the magazine itself. We are constantly being quoted in the mainstream media and our ideas continue to influence public debate. We took a full-page ad in The *New York Times* saying, "No, Mr. Gingrich ... You Do Not Have a Mandate to Dismantle Social Justice in the U.S." and we organized a teach-in in New York a few weeks after the new Congress began, to allow people from different perspectives to share their thinking.

There are no major intellectual magazines that survive on the basis of their own revenues. Each has either a wealthy owner or organizational funding. We have neither—and believe me, we've knocked on many doors.

We have no one to turn to but our readers. Every year, we've been able to continue publication because thousands of our readers push themselves beyond what they would normally give to a non-profit and donate $150 or more to keep us afloat.

Each year I've written a personal letter to our sub-

scribers with an update about the inside workings and perspective of the magazine, plus the latest news in my life, and if you are a subscriber, you should be getting such a letter soon.

But there are tens of thousands of people who read TIKKUN who do not subscribe. And subscribers who do not donate. I can only hope that you will take responsibility in helping TIKKUN. If not you, who?

One of the pathologies of the liberal and progressive world is that many people have a very passive attitude toward their own institutions. They are experts at defining what they disagree with, so they can always find something that's wrong with every liberal or progressive institution, and this gets them off the hook of having to help out.

I'm sure you can find things you disagree with in TIKKUN. Perhaps you think we are giving too much attention to the politics of meaning. Perhaps you think we are too involved with Jewish renewal. Sometimes my editorials are too long-winded. I've made mistakes, and I'll probably make some of them again.

But you must admit that many of our articles are original, thoughtful, provocative, and/or engaging. In every issue there are at least two or three articles that are gems you'd never be able to find elsewhere.

American politics, the Jewish world, American culture—they are all better off because TIKKUN exists.

And so are you.

So help us out. Don't wait for some later moment. Please take out your checkbook, or send us your credit-card number and expiration date, and donate $500, $250, or at least $150. Stretch beyond what you can afford. (Of course, if you really can't do it, absolutely no way, then send us less, but please send us something.)

The Right is powerful because right-wingers are willing to back their ideas with money. Isn't it time that you did the same thing—by donating to TIKKUN? Donations are tax-deductible. And if you are not a subscriber, you might also consider subscribing now—we'll have your name and address so that we can contact you when we are holding a TIKKUN event in your area, plus you pay less and we get more money than if you buy it at the newsstand.

Please send contributions to TIKKUN, 251 West 100th Street, NY, NY 10025.

Meanwhile, accept my blessing to you that you be inscribed for a healthy, happy, spiritually deep, fulfilling, and joyous New Year 5756.

Peace, joy, and fulfillment for all of us
Michael Lerner

P.S. This is going to be a decisive year, both for the Jewish people and for American politics. I hope you'll join us as we launch a national Campaign for a Politics of Meaning at what promises to be an extraordinary event—the Summit on Ethics and Meaning that we will be holding at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C., April 13-15, 1996. Don't miss it. We hope to contribute to the resuscitation of liberal and progressive forces in the U.S. this year.

We will be playing an important role in supporting the Israeli peace movement at a time when too many American Jews have aligned themselves with West Bank settlers determined to undermine the peace process. However flawed the peace process is, it remains the best hope. We congratulate the Rabin government for moving in implementing the peace agreement, even though we will press it to be more decisive and to be more unequivocal in demanding that the settlers live in peace with their Palestinian neighbors. We will continue to be *your public voice* to offer support for escalating the process of reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. Israelis continue to tell me how important it is to them to have TIKKUN'S voice as a counter to the loud voices of American Jews who oppose the peace process. TIKKUN can play that role because of your support.

Shana Tova. Let us all have a wonderful year. □

Don't Feel Guilty...
If you don't read everything in TIKKUN...

You probably lead a very busy life—most of our readers do. So, it's fine if you only find time to read a few pieces in each issue. In TIKKUN you'll find cutting-edge developments in politics, culture, philosophy, and in Jewish renewal. So if you read just one or two of our provocative articles or editorials, you are getting more reading pleasure than if you read dozens of shorter articles in most other magazines.

But, Do Feel Guilty...
If you don't donate to support TIKKUN.
We need your help.

Your tax-deductible contributions make it possible for us to continue TIKKUN's projects—helping to foster Jewish renewal (in the Jewish world) and the politics of meaning (for non-Jews and Jews alike).

You know that there's always something exciting and unpredictable in TIKKUN. In this issue consider the article on psychedelic drugs, or the editorials reframing affirmative action and urging the abolition of the SAT exams.

We can't keep these projects alive unless you decide to become an annual contributor to TIKKUN. We ask that you make a substantial contribution–something that's a stretch. Say, $1,000 a year. OK—how about $500? $250? You get the point—now, before putting this down, please write us a check or send your credit card info and how much you wish to donate to TIKKUN, 251 West 100th St., NY, NY 10025.

The Hollywood Blacklist and the Jew

An Exploration of Popular Culture

Paul Buhle

When Senator Larry Pressler of South Dakota demanded in February that National Public Radio turn over the personnel files on all its employees to the Senate subcommittee on communications he chairs, a small stir passed through the ranks of civil libertarians, all the way up to The *New York Times*. Withdrawn quietly after objections, Pressler's move was perhaps only a trial balloon in a larger war over the use of tax monies for agencies dubbed "liberal" (however contradictory the real evidence) by the new Republican Congress. But what sequence of events might have been set in motion if NPR had actually turned over those dossiers?

Jewish old-timers—who remember better than anyone the McCarthy era's blacklist that played a central role in the film industry and television for several decades—heard ominously familiar signals in the Gingrichites' rhetoric. Pressler's offensive, together with the recent speech by Barbra Streisand at Harvard University defending liberalism and asserting the right of Hollywood celebs to speak out on political questions, evoked some vivid memories of 1947: Katharine Hepburn decrying the emerging militarization of the country and the planet, Dixiecrat J. Parnell Thomas chairing the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities, and the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals pronouncing a universal ban on any writer, actor, director, producer, or technician unwilling to sign a loyalty oath.

One subtext of McCarthyism, nominally the pursuit of "communist subversion," was simply to stay in line or else. An ordinary person resisting the demands of the era could kiss a career, and in many cases a secure identity in mainstream American life, goodbye. Not very surprisingly, at least a hundred homosexuals were fired for every political "subversive" discovered in civil service. A second subtext, barely disguised, was anti-Semitism. The message—from rural Southern barber shops to Senate chambers—that "Jews control Hollywood" and that Jews were poisoning America had a special meaning to those faced with "investigation."

To clear oneself, to resume something like a normal life, it was never enough to declare personal departure from the Left (most intellectuals had already quit or were on their way out of the Communist Party, disillusioned by Stalin's tyranny and Russian anti-Semitism). One had to name names, most especially those of intimate associates who had shared decades of participation in social movements. A blacklistee recently reminded me of the race memories stirred by the red-hunting committees. In earlier days the czar, caliph, or general had demanded something strikingly similar: We let you live, Jew, if you inform on your friends. Otherwise...

It is an apt moment, then, to go back to the scene of the crime (or supposed crime, for conservative think-tankers and Christian Coalitionists still consider McCarthyism a healthy purge of poisonous symptoms). Ours would hardly be the first such trip. Since the days of *The Front*—written, directed, and acted by former blacklistees, with the notable addition of Woody Allen—and Barbra Streisand's more popular *The Way We Were*, fictional renditions of that era have proliferated in theater, television, and film. The American Movie Channel and BBC are each preparing treatments of the Hollywood Red Scare. NPR has planned for 1996 a drama series written by Tony Kahn, son of Gordon Kahn (sometime scriptwriter for Roy Rogers films and author of *Hollywood on Trial*), about the blacklist's withering day-to-day effect upon a Jewish family. Meanwhile, a small production company is completing a documentary of Hollywood's Great Survivor, Abraham Polonsky, writer for that famous Jewish radio show, *The Goldbergs*, master of the 1940s *film noir*, secret scripter for television's *You Are There*, and most recently film-maker of themes both racial (*Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here*) and Old World Yiddish cultural (*Romance of a Horse Thief*).

This is where I come in. An odd gentile with a taste for Jewish culture and a dedication to oral history field work, I've spent years interviewing aged union activists and Yiddish newspaper editors, as well

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as Jewish poets of various generations, summer camp employees, and theatrical types of every left-of-center political description. The passage of time has lately taken me beyond the immigrant generations to a fascinating slice of the next one threatened with oblivion, the Jewish creators of 1930s-'50s popular culture. In some ways, I've realized an old fantasy of meeting my childhood heroes—people like Harvey Kurtzman, the late editor of *Mad Comics*—and married it to the grown-up intellectual pursuit of popular culture's deeper meanings.

Why Jews? And why so many of them leftish Jews, the very people who injected into nearly anonymous popular-culture objects of my generation's youngest years the otherwise scarce values of egalitarianism and social justice? Perhaps, as the politics and economics of the mainstream seem further and further from possible redemption, I'm only one more intellectual turning in the direction of culture. But here, nevertheless, I find my ideal: the old Jewish radical, full of spunk and insight.

I was listening to Abe Polonsky, spry at eighty-two and loaded with bons mots, in the lunchroom of Neiman-Marcus, not far from his apartment in West Los Angeles. While models in fabulously priced designer suits struck poses, Abe reminded me of an American ghetto past. Three-quarters of a century ago, in New York, his grandmother introduced him to the narrative: Night after night, she read the boy what he wryly calls "Huckleberry Finn on the Volga," American fiction remixed, reinterpreted, and rendered into Yiddish language and *Yiddishkeit*, the diaspora sensibility. From this origin, Polonsky developed the intellectual reflexivity to move from one cell of American popular culture to another, era after era, withstanding persecutions and transcending changes of political or commercial fashion.

Polonsky's recollections had special and welcome resonance for me. I had absorbed worlds of connections between Jewishness and popular culture, and between Yiddish and Jewishness, almost twenty years ago as I ambled along the boardwalk of Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, with Maurice Kish, an elderly painter/poet (also chairman of the Yiddish *Kultur Farband*'s more-or-less defunct Art Section), asking him questions about his days as a Catskills dance instructor, amateur boxer, and portraiturist of vanished Coney Island settings like the spectacularly weird Luna Park. Like his contemporaries, Kish did not so much intellectualize about the Yiddish/vernacular connection as live it. But he managed to get the message across to me shortly before Alzheimer's eviscerated his memories—maybe because he knew that I was the only one listening.

Yiddish was, of course, the vernacular language of European Jewry for more than five hundred years, and the language within which Jewish socialism and modern Jewish literature took root simultaneously. I call it, with some irony, the lingua franca of popular culture, and I believe that its very adaptability from linguistic climate to linguistic climate conditioned the native Yiddish speakers to "translate" their culture into new forms, according to the possibilities at hand.

An endless number of show business anecdotes testify equally to the odd and adaptive *Yiddishkeit* of the generations that loved the Yiddish stage but also shimmied in jazz parlors, watched Charlie Chaplin, went to Hollywood, and created some of the strangest and most interesting popular art objects of the twentieth century. But before we get to Hollywood, we need to go backward a bit, scooping up some history along the way.

As far back as the Christian Middle Ages, the historians tell us, bits and pieces of folk culture and humor from the surrounding cultures were absorbed into *Yiddishkeit*, notwithstanding the efforts of religious authorities to keep out gentile contaminants. With the passage of time, the Yiddish language itself continuously grew and contracted, absorbing and casting off different elements as its speakers traveled, adapted, and readapted

to the problems and possibilities around them.

This experience left a curious legacy for the modern period, when industrialization, urbanization, and the possibility of out-migration suddenly swept across the seemingly timeless Jewish world. If cultured German Jews declared Yiddish a mongrel tongue unfit for proper expression, Jewish writers like Mendel Mokher Sforim and Sholem Aleichem used the satire and wry humor native to its inherent ironies to make larger moral points. The Yiddishist is always plugged into the vernacular—and a little bit outside.

Any close reader of Sholem Aleichem will find in the credulousness of his Jewish masses, the rebellion of youth, and the philistinism of the wealthy classes several basic plot lines of the Jewish-American novel, film, and television drama, from *The Rise of David Levinsky* to "Molly Goldberg" to *Goodbye, Columbus* and beyond. For instance: Jewish immigrant (or descendent) grows rich in America, but realizes that he has lost his soul in the process. Or: Sons and daughters seek to escape vapid materialism, and in the process rediscover some Jewish essence. Or again: Jewish lower-class family gets nowhere in the material world, but sees itself through the comic eyes of tolerance and survival. In the very last scene of *Molly*, a film made about radio and television's Goldbergs, actress Gertrude Berg is in bed with Philip Loeb, who had played her husband for decades on the radio (and would commit suicide shortly after the TV series left the air; Berg bravely refused to fire him for his past left-wing connections). A small and mostly unsuccessful garment manufacturer, Jake complains that they will never conquer the world. No matter, Molly answers: "We only want to live in it." A Jewish, Yiddish thought if ever one was uttered.

The plots get worked and reworked over generations and from Manhattan to Los Angeles, as immigrant themes increasingly give way to those of psychological alienation and gender conflict. But the essence remains in many ways unchanged.

By the time the future Hollywood writers of the 1930s and '40s were born, between around 1905 and 1920, a last major Yiddish literary wave (called *di Yunge*, the young ones) had taken its stand on the value of the language and on the historic, but also malleable, culture that language expressed. Short-story writers and playwrights like Leon Kobrin ("the Jewish Zola") wrote about the pathos of slum life, with poverty, sickness, family and sexual longing, upward mobility, and disappointment as features of the American bargain. Sholem Aleichem, who actually died in the Bronx (cared for by a young woman, whom I interviewed in her ninety-second year, still in the Bronx), confirmed the *Weltschmerz* of the Jewish intellectual. He described himself as Pagliacci, amusing the masses while crying on the inside. The melancholiac *Yunge* Moshe Nadir described going to movies and watching newsreels of mass murder in war, wondering how Jewishness would survive both the horrors of the war-torn Old World and the soul-killing, seductive attractions of America. It's still a relevant question.

In just this atmosphere of mixed fascination and revulsion, movies became an extraordinarily significant factor in the ways that Jews would affect modern culture at large. Jews also rewrote, popularized, and to some degree transformed jazz, the basic American music rooted in African-American culture. They became a business force and creative talent behind comic books a generation or so later. And they penned best-seller after best-seller, psychologized and tantalized readers with dozens or hundreds of Dr. Ruths and Jonathan Kellermans. They did marvelous things on Broadway. But it was film where they could be moguls and writers, scenarists and even stars for the masses—under gentile names, at least for the first several generations.

Most of those who got to Hollywood in the 1930s found disappointment waiting. The studio system was more than a little like a plantation. Entrepreneurs and executives raked in enormous profits, paid most of the help very badly, and made it clear that "Jewish" issues were not going to surface in films made for the *goyishe* mass audience. They were also bitterly anti-union, although they tolerated the craft (or graft) stagehands' organization that shared their contempt for the contemporary industrial union movement.

Anti-fascism and the drive for unions created a bloc of Hollywood progressives (mostly, but by no means entirely, aligned with the small group of communists, nearly all of them Jewish). It was a West Coast commonplace to say that social movements had real life in them, while movies were only a way of making a living. Yet to take only a single, contrary case in point: Easily one of the oddest and most remarkable of all low-budget production Hollywood directors, Edgar Ulmer—the real Ed Wood if Ed Wood had been an artist—had fled from Vienna to Hollywood and turned out one of the outstanding horror classics of the screen, *The Black Cat* (he claimed it was an allegory about capitalism) in 1935. Sickened by the studio system, he embarked on a series of independent projects, some involving the very cream of the Yiddish stage. Raising money from the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and other sources, he filmed *Gruene Felder* (Green Fields) in 1937, often considered the most artistic Yiddish-language film and certainly the most commercially successful ever made. (Shot in rural New Jersey, it never-

theless won an Academy Award for the best foreign film of the year.)

There was another sense in which Hollywood progressives didn't give themselves enough credit. The idea or ideal of the public intellectual, not a handful of noted idealists but of a mass of artistic-intellectual toilers in the field of popular documentation and presentation, emerged during the later 1930s at the leftish fringes of the New Deal. Government agencies such as the Works Progress Administration helped make this possible. But the driving concept, of a radically democratic pluralism, had important origins in the networks of the heavily politicized Yiddish stage, and the Yiddish backgrounds of Left cultural figures, including painters and writers as well as movie people. More than anyone else, these people had the need to envision a multicultural, multiracial America in order to imagine a worthy place for themselves in it.

The war suddenly made the public intellectual, even the Jewish left-wing intellectual, a precious resource. As the Red Army held Hitler's legions at bay and powerful liberals urged an anti-fascist propaganda campaign, Left film writers collaborated in a string of remarkable (and sometimes hit) features. Films such as *Action in the North Atlantic*, *Hitler's Children*, *Edge of Darkness*, *Tender Comrade*, *Pride of the Marines*, and, yes, *Casablanca* reflected an unprecedented articulation of democratic but also cryptically Jewish social values. Especially in those starring John Garfield, the Everyman struggles in an alien world for love and community. Bogey's Rick was a Spanish Civil War vet and a goy with a Jewish heart, his *Café Americain* a little piece of America where the melting pot still contains the elements of hope in a dark world. As the postmodernists might put it: skepticism, but within that, also hope.

The Jews who wrote and in some cases directed these films were making a career for themselves in a commercial medium, make no mistake about it. That was (and is) the way Hollywood works.

But consciously or unconsciously, they were reweaving the fabric of the past, their own past, into the present. Yiddish language virtually never appeared in the Hollywood film, but *Yiddishkeit* was not absent.

Left-wing Hollywood came out of the war, as many Americans did, with remarkably naive optimism about the future. And why not? Their films were boffo at the box office. Director Edward Dmytryk's *Murder, My Sweet*, with Dick Powell as the beleaguered private eye, was a magnum success that proved the commercial possibilities of *film noir* with its vivid night scenes, paranoid loners, and cynical desperados. Dmytryck's *Crossfire*, a brilliant frontal attack on anti-Semitism (and one of the favorite targets of congressional investigators seeking Hollywood "subversion"), introduced Robert Ryan as the perfect, twisted face of hate. *Till the End of Time* and *The House I Live In* (an award-winning short feature, starring Frank Sinatra singing an ode to anti-anti-Semitism) verified the hopeful themes of postwar promise.

But the further America (and the world) got from the optimistic, antifascist unity days, the more *noir* things looked in real life. In a brief moment of relative artistic freedom for anti-capitalist messages, Jewish left-wingers made their aesthetic statement and took their political stand. Abraham Polonsky's *Force of Evil*, called by Andrew Sarris "one of the great films of the modern American cinema" and re-released this March in the "Martin Scorsese Presents" video package, shows corruption at the very heart of the system. His John Garfield, emblematic as always ("Call me Julie," as the Jewish actor began private conversations, shedding his gentile mask), is the perfected man on the make plagued with inner doubts precisely because something inside him knows better.

A variety of other remarkable experiments, such as the heavily-gendered features *I Can Get It for You Wholesale* (written by Polonsky) and *The Strange Loves of Martha Ivers* (written by his sometime collaborator Robert Rossen), reflected women's challenges to men's world, or took up the social themes of postwar Jewish working-class life in transition. Jewish left-wingers like Carl Foreman also pressed, without much immediate luck but great confidence of long-run success, for serious cinematic treatment of race relations in America.

All this bold experimentation ended with the blacklist. A host of writers, directors, and technicians, overwhelmingly Jewish, faced ruin. Most never got work in films again. But to look only at the short-run consequences in Hollywood films would be to miss the larger significance of the blacklistees and the meaning of what I call their *Yiddishkeit*. Left to their own devices, and with the breakup of the big studios, they probably would have invented the American art film on something like the Italian neorealist model—but a lot more Jewish. Returning instead to disguise, they and a younger cohort of Jewish progressives who eluded the blacklist continued to experiment with various popular culture mediums, especially television. There they reoriented their Left/New Dealish sensibility to the changing scene. The problem of community in a world of cultural transitions and alienated teenagers, of determined women, troubled races, and continuing injustices found its answer in an ethos of tolerance, real justice, and an openness to learn from new and unfamiliar cultures.

Polonsky himself "greylisted" (wrote under pseudo-

nyms) for "You Are There," television's earliest self-proclaimed "quality" show, directed by a former Group Theater child actor, Sidney Lumet. He and his collaborators, Walter Bernstein and Arnold Manoff (whose wife, Lee Grant, was blacklisted for refusing to testify against him), wrote most of the episodes, projecting faux "newscast" episode-dramas—"a day like all days...only *you are there*"—with heavy emphasis on the historic struggle for free speech and assorted civil liberties.

Fellow blacklistee Paul Jarrico, best remembered as producer of the classic film, *Salt of the Earth*, wrote for what historians consider television's finest early sitcom, "The Phil Silvers Show" (or "You'll Never Get Rich"), depicting a racially integrated troop of soldiers led by the sentimental (and for anyone but the culturally hard of hearing, the emblematically Jewish) schemer Sergeant Bilko. If a political message would be hard to demonstrate here, in the midst of McCarthyism, an anti-political message might do. The bureaucracy and stupidity and sheer superfluousness of military life (at the height of the Cold War) could perhaps be read as a subscript that those militant anti-fascists, the Marx Brothers, would have easily understood. The sympathetic portrayals of the ordinary soldiers, and the ludicrousness of visiting martinets, punctuated this hilarious lampoon of a peacetime army devoted to meaningless pursuits.

For a teen growing up in the 1950s, television played the role that movies had ten or fifteen years earlier. A viewership of "Adventures of Robin Hood" (1956-58), with its episodes written largely by blacklistees and produced by Hannah Weinstein, lead publicist of Henry Wallace's 1948 presidential publicity campaign (and matriarch of Hollywood's current Jewish feminist dynasty), was far more likely than any film of the day to drive home the message of the system's corrupt character and the rebel's fun-loving adventure. For a younger child, "Lassie" might possibly provide a maudlin version of an idealist and animal-lovers' message, with malefactors determined to dynamite a lake or otherwise victimize the innocent; a few years later, "Flipper" would go ecological-minded writers one better, supplying an animal protagonist literally depending upon the survival of an endangered environment. Both were written, in many episodes, by Hollywood blacklistee (and former Abbott and Costello comedy writer) Bobby Lees in his secret return from the blacklist. Were these animals Jewish? Well, they had heart.

The opening of "adult" television to socially critical content began in the 1960s with the trickle of such weekly social dramas as "East Side/West Side" (1962-63) and "NYPD" (1968-70), both produced by David Suskind and scripted in part by Writers' Guild activist Eddie Adler, or "The Defenders" (1961-63) written in part by Robin Hood veteran (and later sometime "Kojak" scripter) Albert Ruben. Adopting what neoliberals would later mean-spiritedly call "victimology," these shows dealt sympathetically with the poor and their heroic defenders. The Vietnam War and the appearance of grown-up but still youthful consumers ready to purchase durables and offended by redneck politics prompted a new wave of "social comedies" such as "All In the Family" and "M*A*S*H."

Norman Lear, a former radio writer from the small milieu of almost exclusively Jewish, progressive professionals, had actually been an officer in the short-lived Television Writers of America, a union destroyed for refusing to accept the blacklist. Lear's auteurship began with "All in the Family," an adaptation of the English sitcom "Steptoe and Son," with some of the look and feel of ersatz Clifford Odets: a New York extended family with large doses of yelling. Stripped of most of the useful or sympathetic ethnicity, family members strive to accommodate (or to resist) the racial and other social changes around them. Spinoffs such as "The Jeffersons" and "Maude" carried the momentum forward. They had the built-in limitations of the "problem" format (one problem per show, from abortion to interracial sex) which seemed to trivialize the real issues, and a need to reconcile conflicting characters sentimentally. Still, Lear had opened things up.

"M*A*S*H" offered better opportunities for hard politics and a limited but real artistic experimentation. Based upon blacklistee Ring Lardner, Jr.'s co-authored Oscar-winning script for the Robert Altman film, the television version drove home dissenting, humanist themes, striving to find genuine incidents in the lives of U.S. Army medics in Korea and to portray them accurately. Auteur Larry Gelbart, another seasoned writer from the Cold War days, was best known for his playscript of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, which (until *The Front*) was arguably the biggest showcase of Jewish blacklistees. Once the half-Jewish Alan Alda had become America's wholesomely anti-war sweetheart, the cooperative writing and even directing of episodes was unprecedented in U.S. television. All told, "M*A*S*H" offered another side of the legacy of Abe Polonsky's Hollywood generation: truths through entertainment that documented the horrors of the modern world. Indeed, the television-writing process would never be quite so flexible again.

In the very odd way that classic *film noir* mixes disillusionment with social breakdown and exaltation of the loner, even "The Rockford Files"—the leading detective show in reruns by a long shot—is part of the Jewish

blacklist diaspora. Its co-producer, Roy Huggins, and its lead writer, Meta Rosenberg, were among Hollywood's friendly witnesses who decided to make peace with the witch-hunters in order to keep working. The utterly charming James Garner, Noah Beery, and the rest of the cast (especially Stuart Margolin, who played the small-time grifter Angel Martin) face a world of incompetent cops, neurotic mobsters, conspiratorial CIA agents, and cruel fate with all the effort they can manage to create their own community of sorts. In "Rockford"'s better moments, we see shadows of shadows: the *noir* detective of the 1940s, continuously beaten, anti-heroic in his unwillingness to glamorize himself and his profession, lost but never truly forlorn in the dark world of modern reality.

The blacklistees had less effect upon the later world of films, because the field was quickly crowded with social-minded competitors better tuned into the generational pop scene. But they still had something important to say. Take the oeuvre of Martin Ritt, blacklisted as an actor and not as a director. From *No Down Payment*, a 1957 assault on middle-class apathy, dysfunctionalism, racism, and plain greed in the 'burbs," he moved on to *The Front*, *Sounder*, *The Molly Maguires*, and *Norma Rae* among others, all of them examples in one way or another of what the classic cinematic Jewish Old Left had in mind. Walter Bernstein, who collaborated on several of these, wrote the anti-nuke drama *Fail Safe* and a neglected anti-fascist classic of the late 1980s, *The House on Carroll Street*, frankly admits that they are not punkish, cartoonish, or outside reality like, for instance, *Natural Born Killers* or *Pulp Fiction*. Unfashionable, perhaps, they possess a comforting solidity: They tell the story.

There's more to the legacy, by a long shot. Next time you wade through hours of *Malcolm X*, hang on for the credits: Arnold Perl, ten years dead and a blacklistee to boot, is there as co-author with Spike Lee. Who else but a Jewish ex-red from a Yiddish background? If you've answered that one, then try another: What do we miss now that they're almost gone? Perhaps Adam Gopnik, in a *New Yorker* profile of Woody Allen a couple years ago, put it right on this score: Without the aging, Yiddish-accented scoffers who made fun of the contrast between popular life and artistic pretension, a fundamental reference point of Jewish comedy has disappeared. And without the eschatological vision of a cooperative society in the future, so perhaps has the uniquely Jewish dramatic tension.

But in our media-sogged world that has become a vast cross-referenced library, some crucial legacy of those traditions is not really lost at all. Check out a classic sci-fi flick like *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, and ruminate on the Freudian-ecological message that the Jewish producer, a close associate of Orson Welles in earlier years and scriptwriter for a kids' psychology radio show of the late '40s, claims he intended. On another dull night, look at "Hogan's Heroes," tinged with anti-fascist themes scripted by the former president of the Television Writers' Union, and featuring a long list of Jewish crypto-progressives. And get yourself ready for the canon of Jewish Left 1940s movies likely to be unleashed on the video market soon.

As an oral historian, I bitterly regret missing conversations with John Garfield or Moe Howard, the cerebral member of the Three Stooges (two of them Jewish) who in one of his last interviews cursed Nixon and the Vietnam War. Or even Groucho, in his day quite a unionist and a secretive but substantial financial contributor to the cause of the blacklistees. About a week after he died, I saw Groucho clearly in a dream and pressed him about his old left-wing connections. He replied: I can't answer now, I'm much too busy.

This last one is not much of a story, but goes to the heart of my personal pursuit. It is not really political in the way the Old Left would consider the term, but neither can it entirely escape the old controversies that raged through the Jewish community with special passion. Murray Kempton, decades after he savaged the blacklistees, changed his mind about them. Dead wrong in their views of Russia, they had nevertheless been braver in their convictions and their deeds, and suffered considerably more, than those who condemned them so easily at the time. No doubt Vietnam, and also the passage of time, had a lot to do with Kempton's shifting judgment. But I think he was ready to reclaim these American Jews, with all their failings, for his own. Gentile Yiddishist, television watcher, movie lover, I can't help wanting to do the same. □

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FICTION

May Dance

Rebecca Goldstein

There are people who don't have a good word to say for the late Sixties. They look back on the excesses of those times as on a sickness in the soul, like maybe a hernia, some kind of rupture. Not Sasha, though. There had been something in the largeness of those times that had healed her, closed up the wound that had bled years. The curtain was going up on some new sets that looked like they might have been drawn up by the town lunatic when the moon was full. And the players, too, were all raving in fine form, putting poetry in their lunacy, like Ophelia, such a show!

The students had closed Columbia University down. Sasha, dressed in blue jeans, sandals, and a flowing purple Indian shirt, had been standing in her kitchen, washing some fresh strawberries for Phoebe's lunch, when she had heard the news of the Columbia University uprising on the all-news radio station, the one that always promises, "More of these and other stories, after this," and then either forgets or never really meant it.

"*Right on*!" Sasha had said to little Phoebe, whom she was babysitting.

"Go on," Sasha had coaxed the little girl, who was sitting at the kitchen table blowing her soap bubbles. She was the easiest child in all the world to take care of, as sagacious as a little Aristotle. You almost *wanted* to hear her, just once, throw a temper tantrum, or at least whine a little.

"Go on, darling, you say it, too, just like Grandma. *Right on.*"

"Right on," Phoebe had repeated dutifully, with little of her grandmother's heart, and then had turned back to contemplating the shimmering, shifting forms she was holding at the end of her bubble wand. This was the one distinctly childish activity that could absorb her for hours.

Sasha babysat Phoebe during the day, while Chloe was up at Columbia, teaching her classes and doing her research. But today Chloe had arrived home early, her classes canceled, by reason of the Revolution.

Sasha had by now gotten used to being baffled by her daughter, who would rather sit out any event, *even a revolution*, reading those plays that were written in yet another dead language, and engaging her brainy little daughter in brainy games. Chloe seemed to be entirely unswept up by the spirit of the topsy-turvy times, even though it was *her* generation that was leading the psychedelic May dance. Chloe alone kept her head entirely on her shoulders, untempted by any form of unreason, refusing to be anything less than objective, sensible, and fair. Her mother couldn't have felt more sorry for her.

Chloe had even gone about getting pregnant as if it were a research project.

"Celibacy isn't an alternative life-style!" Sasha had tried to tell her, before she finally gave up trying to talk any sense or nonsense into her.

"Why not?"

"Because *it's not a life*!"

Chloe had grinned, but—this was one of her most maddening ploys—had said nothing.

So it hadn't exactly surprised Sasha that Chloe had decided to skip the drama unfolding up on Morningside Heights and instead had taken advantage of the Revolution to pick Phoebe up early from Sasha's.

"What's it like?" Sasha now asked her.

"Chaos," Chloe answered.

"I'm on my way!"

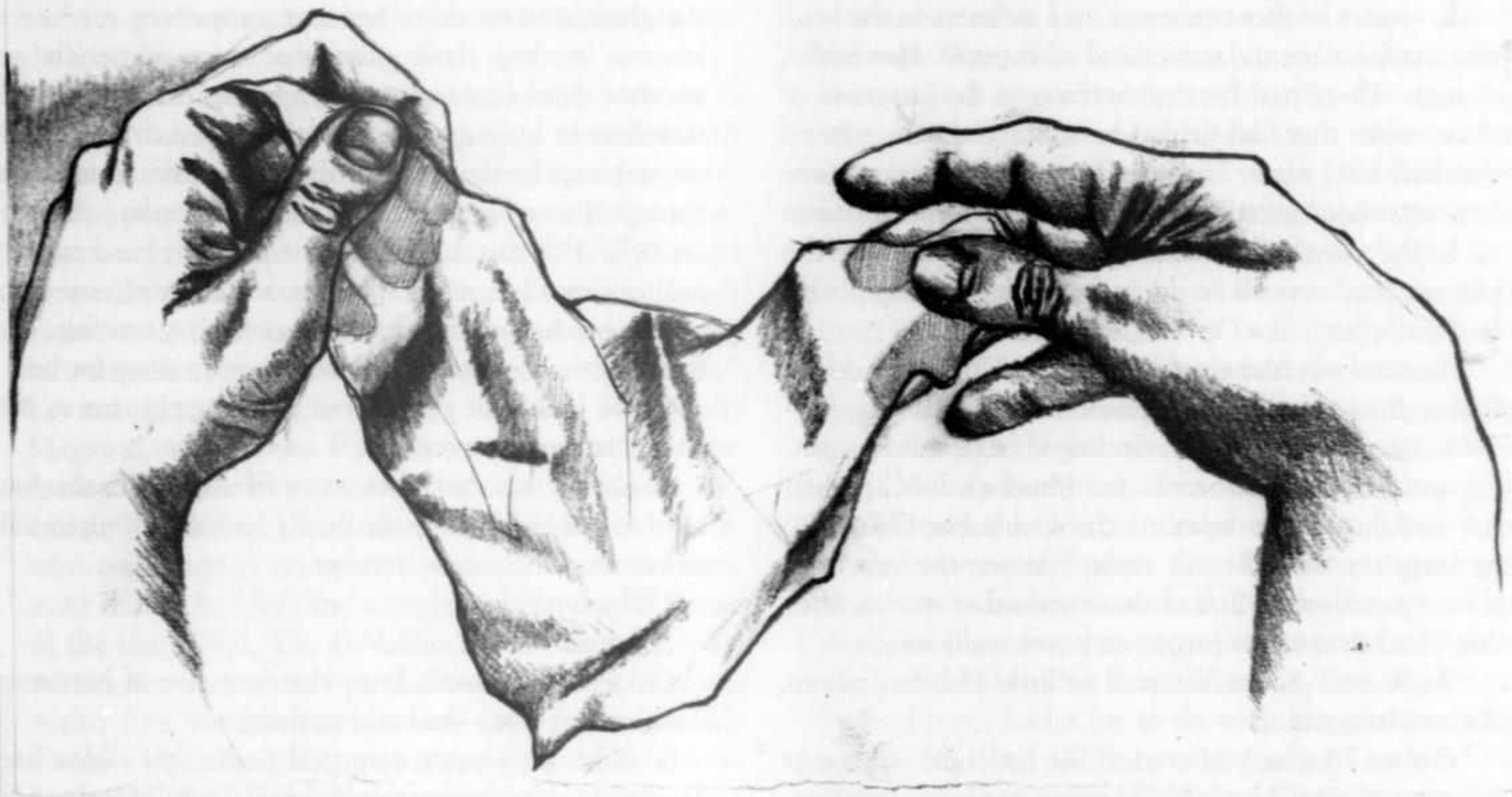
The Powers That Be (though who knew for how long?) had sealed off the campus, trying to keep out the notorious Outside Agitators. (Like *me*, Sasha thought.) The only gate that was still semi-open—but controlled by guards—was the one at 116th Street and Broadway. Sasha emerged from the subway to find a fairly sizable throng milling around this gate, some just trying to get a look at the action inside and others disgruntling in one way or another. There was a little half-hearted attempt at chanting and a few homemade placards:

COLUMBIA IS RACIST AND ELITIST!
COLUMBIA OUT OF HARLEM!
That sort of thing.

Rebecca Goldstein is the author of The Mind-Body Problem, The Late Summer Passion of a Woman of Mind, The Dark Sister, Strange Attractors, *and, forthcoming,* Mazel, *from which this is excerpted. She teaches writing at Columbia University.*

Sasha had had the foresight to borrow Chloe's faculty I.D. card, which she flashed to the guard at the gate; he respectfully waved her in. Inside the gates, it looked less like the ten days that shook the world, and more like Purim. So much color, and motion, and noise. Sasha felt the old rush of excitement rising up through the long stem of her body. It had been a while.

There were groups of hyper students everywhere, and everyone seemed to be wearing a different-colored armband. You needed a color code to know which side was which. The statue of The Thinker that sat in front of Philosophy Hall was wearing at least five different-



KAREN KULLER

colored armbands. Sasha wanted to get a look at the leading man of this production, the charismatic Mark Rudd, leader of the S.D.S., but nobody seemed to have any idea where he might be.

The other stars of the takeovers, the Leibela Trotskys from Columbia College, the Emma Goldmans from Barnard, were sitting up on the ledges of the liberated buildings, soaking in the bright springtime sun, and engaging in revolutionary dialogue with those who stood on the ground below, both supporters and hecklers. The hecklers (almost all of whom were reputed to come from the School of Engineering) were the only ones who looked genuinely pained by the whole situation.

Sasha didn't for a moment doubt the sincerity of the students happily sprawled up there on the ledges. She knew that the anger and grief they felt over the war and racism was as authentic as her own. Still, you couldn't help seeing that, there at center stage, backdropped by their belligerent banners, they were also, at least for the moment, having an awfully good time.

And *why not*, Sasha would have liked to know. She was constantly having this argument. So many of the old lefties that she knew were more purple than red these days, going apoplectic at the high-spirited politics in the street. Sour grapes, was Sasha's opinion, which she of course didn't hesitate to share with the over-forty fogies who just couldn't stand it that anyone should be having so much *fun* with their Revolution.

Sasha always, always sided with the young. Even if the times themselves weren't so hot, this was their time to live it up, and it did Sasha's heart good to see that they were. At the sundial, there was more ardent dialogue going on. It reminded Sasha, just a little, of the Café Pripetshok, where the ideas used to be so thick in the air that you could get an education just by inhaling.

"We don't have to clarify our demands!" a pixie girl with hair almost to her knees was arguing with a beautiful passion from up on the sundial. "Being specific is a liberal cop-out!"

"Bullshit!" yelled a young man whose veins seemed about to explode. His short hair and good physique proclaimed him a jock. "You assholes live in a dream world!"

Sasha had been on the verge of saying something on the side of dream worlds, but then she heard music drifting up from the great lawn below, which was bordered by red and yellow tulips and crowded with the radiant young in their jeans and Gypsy costumes. The music sounded vaguely familiar to Sasha, distinctly European. Someone had brought a record player outdoors, and it was blaring a medley of mandolins—a folk

song from the Balkans, of all things!

Sasha looked down at the lawn to see that the children were forming themselves into a long line of dancers, slowly snaking their way beneath the windows of Furnald Hall. Sasha hurried down to the lawn and placed her hand on the shoulder of a long-haired boy in front of her. It was an easy, repetitive dance, everyone caught on quickly, and the snake grew in length and grace so that it was undulating all across the wide expanse of the South Lawn.

"Oh," the boy in front of her suddenly turned around and said. "You've changed."

"Yes," Sasha answered him, "I suppose I have. We all have."

"You're so beautiful," he said, when he turned back again after a while.

He was a slight boy, with very narrow waist and shoulders, although he may still have been growing. Yes, he was probably still growing. His delicate, fine-featured face was framed by his shoulder-length silky blond hair, and his very blue eyes were just the slightest bit unfocused.

"Thank you," Sasha said, laughing, "and you're so stoned."

"Well, we're both right. I'm Owen MacArthur III," he suddenly introduced himself, too somberly to be kidding. Sasha had to repress the urge to gather him up into her arms, to stroke the silken locks and reassure him that it would all be okay someday, that these things truly do have a way of working themselves out.

"I'm Sasha," is what she said.

"Sasha," he repeated. "It's perfect."

"That's always been my opinion."

They danced some more in the snaking line. It was Marty Koenig who had brought out the record player and taught the dance, thinking to calm everybody down just a little. For years and years, after the Revolution had come and gone, a subculture of Balkan dancers would persist up on Morningside Heights.

Owen suddenly turned back again to Sasha, having grown disaffected with the dance.

"This is beginning to feel like some sort of form of fascism," he complained to Sasha. "Everybody falling into step. Come on, let's you and I do our own thing."

He broke off from the line, bringing Sasha unreluctantly with him. Owen must have endured, sometime in his not-too-distant childhood, a very complete set of parentally imposed dance lessons. He knew them all, all the square, middle-aged, country-club sorts of steps, the fox trots and the waltzes. He and Sasha tried them all out, trying to make them fit to the Balkan melodies, a thankless task.

Then Sasha, inspired, whipped off the tie-dyed bandanna she was wearing on her head, and she held it up between herself and Owen, who was such a natural, so lithe and brilliant on his feet, that he caught on immediately. You would have thought that Owen MacArthur III had grown up seeing brides and bridegrooms dancing the handkerchief dance at Jewish weddings all of his life.

He held a corner and she held a corner and they twirled and circled, while many on the lawn gathered round to watch. It didn't take them very long to catch on, and soon Marty's snake was embroidered with many more handkerchief dancers, holding corners of scarves, of streamers, of revolutionary armbands.

Several days later, there came the shock of the police arriving at 4:00 a.m., swinging their clubs with a vengeance. They weren't pretending in the *least*, and this came as the profoundest shock of all. For many, the sweetest moment of the ephemeral Revolution had been that dance on the South Lawn with Sasha, the beautiful older woman with the amazing voice and the presence that had made them, the eighteen- and nineteen- and twenty-year-olds, wonder who she was and how one might possibly get to be like that.

It had been a good moment for Sasha, too, and she always kept a soft spot in her heart for that season of sweet chutzpa. For a brief time, she had really believed that the kids were going to do it, to make everything over again in a way that had felt for all the world like Purim. □

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MAIRAV SALOMON

If Noah had been able to pray before the flood-rains fell, the world might not have been destroyed. The Zohar implies this when it portrays Noah emerging from the ark, breaking into tears at the sight of the drowned, decimated landscape, and at last crying out piteously to the heavens—at which point God responds:

> Foolish shepherd ...
> I lingered with you and spoke to you at length so that you would ask for mercy for the world!
> But as soon as you heard that you would be safe in the ark,
> the evil of the world did not touch your heart.
> You built the ark and saved yourself.
> Now that the world has been destroyed
> you open your mouth ...?" (Translation by Daniel Matt.)

In the Torah itself, however, this mute survivor speaks not a word throughout his lengthy appearance (Genesis 6:8-9:29) until, waking up from a drunken stupor (9:25), he curses his son Ham, who "saw his father's nakedness." There is not an utterance, a direct quotation from Noah, throughout the entire biblical cycle of warning, preparation, and mass destruction. We see him as silently obedient, as drunk, as naked, and as cursing—and then the text makes short shrift of him with two brief lines of obituary. Yet Noah, says the Torah, was "a righteous man ... blameless in his age ...." Could it be his "blamelessness" was simply a function of a kind of spiritual autism that isolated him from others of his "wicked generation"—and from God, his family, even himself? The Noah of the Torah seems a man without community and without prayer—a man, like me, with the heart of an atheist.

Why do I recoil from prayer? I love to study Jewish texts and discuss the merits of Jewish thought and spirituality. I devour books on Jewish history and politics. I have overcome in myself the ambivalences, common among my breed of Jewish "red diaper babies," about Jewish identity, peoplehood, Zionism, etc. Moreover, I generally like to sing, to light candles, to offer toasts, to celebrate. But when it comes time to enter into a circle of people to pray, I freeze up. My critical, analytic mind comes to the fore. I stand apart, aloof, and with a sneering heart.

At the root of this prayer block, I have come to recognize, is a complex egotism. On its most superficial level operates the common reluctance to confess to ignorance—to abandon my status as a knowledgeable Jewish writer and editor, a minor "someone" among Jews, by displaying my liturgical ignorance in public. That I am, indeed, ignorant of the liturgy is the unfortunate outcome of my secular Jewish education: The left-wing *folkshule* I attended transmitted Jewish history, *Yiddishkeit*, and the insurgent elements of Jewish folk culture, but deliberately ignored all elements of Jewish civilization that smacked of religion. We did not

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Lawrence Bush edits Reconstructionism Today *and is the co-author of* Jews, Money and Social Responsibility *(1993, The Shefa Fund) and author of* Emma Ansky-Levine and Her Mitzvah Machine *(1991, UAHC Press), among other books. This essay is from a work-in-progress titled,* Waiting for God: A Jewish Heart, a Skeptic's Mind.

learn even the history and order of Jewish prayer services, let alone how we might participate in them; instead, stories by Sholem Aleichem and I.L. Peretz were offered up as our spiritual texts. Hebrew, the language of prayer, was personified as a kind of conservative bourgeois with Zionist pretensions, putting on airs as he walked through the Yiddish-speaking shtetl—and meanwhile overseeing the suppression of Yiddish in the nascent Jewish state. (I have been vaguely biased against the sound of liturgical Hebrew ever since my *shule* days. The language and melodies always seem too clean-limbed, noble, and sexless for my taste.)

Such ignorance-with-attitude does not readily lead to synagogue membership and spiritual exaltation. Still, I have in this life taught myself how to use a computer, despite being a bit of a technophobe; how to design a magazine, despite always believing that I "can't draw"; how to be a patient father, despite my ample reservoir of anger. Certainly I could learn how to pray, in order to participate in this central activity of Jewish life.

Each time I am so resolved, however, I bump into a deeper level of egotism. Very simply, I was raised in an atheist tradition that portrayed religion as "the opiate of the people," a crutch for the weak, a false comfort, an illusion. We, the atheist minority, were the strong, the wise, the realistic, the objective. Our truth was the whole truth (or, at least, we were not blinded by religious illusion); religious faith we saw as the outcome of ignorance, psychologically flawed perception, or conscious wickedness.

This undying sense of superiority was reinforced by those of my friends in the late 1950s and early '60s who did go to synagogue-based Hebrew schools and prayer services and invariably complained of their experiences as a tedious, obligatory bother. Being overtly religious was extremely uncool among us; the "yarmulke-bops," as we called Orthodox boys who wore *kippot* in public, seemed invariably to be klutzes, nerds, dissociated from their bodies, even homely. They were "sheep-to-slaughter" types, unmanly boys whose appearance bespoke a link between being religious and being a victim. These were ones whom I pictured lining up in front of death pits and being gunned down while they recited the *Sh'ma*. By contrast, I had been taught about the link between left-wing Jewish politics and armed resistance to Nazism. It was only secular Jewish communities, for example, that during my boyhood were observing April 19 as a day of commemoration of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the most illustrious revolt among several that were led by Jewish socialist-Zionists, Bundists, and Communists.

My claim to this heritage of resistance heightened my disdain for religious Jews. I should add in my own defense, however, that I was an empathic kid and not at all quick to tease or dominate those who were vulnerable in the neighborhood pecking order. I remember, for example, watching my older brother and a crony encircling a patsy friend of theirs who had the misfortune to be seen on the street while wearing a *kippah*. It was Yom Kippur, he explained (pronouncing the holiday's name hebraically, as "Yom Kee-poor," instead of in our Yiddish-American style, as "Yom Kipper"), whereupon they began skipping in a circle around him—Jews, all three of them, in a nearly all-Jewish neighborhood—flipping their hands to connote "sissy" and chanting, "Yom Kee-poor, Yom Kee-poor..." And while I stood at the curb like a good German, the boy in the *kippah* dissolved into tears.

I doubt whether as an adult he would be so vulnerable to ridicule about his Judaism. In the America of the 1990s, Jewish observance has become downright hip (while Marxism, long a partner to bohemian hipness, seems headed into a profound exile). Like other oppressed minorities of the '50s and '60s, Jews have transformed their shame into an in-your-face pride.

Even the realm of social action that was so valued by my family has, for the past two decades, been fruitfully cultivated by religiously based activists, who seem to have the vocabulary, discipline, and moral foundation to address most creatively the issues of our day. With an evolutionary, rather than revolutionary, perspective on social change predominant among activists ("heal" rather than "smash," "shift the paradigm" rather than "overthrow the system"), even prayer, which I once viewed as purely an escape from political action, can now be embraced as a consciousness-raising, community-building, transformative tool. In short, my inherited disdain for the religious life no longer receives reinforcement from the general culture, not even from the progressive elite subset of that culture with which I most strongly identify.

Still, I do not, cannot, pray.

And what am I missing, in my silence? "Brethren, give me a God, for I am full of prayer!" wrote the Polish Hebrew writer, David Frishman (1865-1922). I suppose that I, too, am full of prayer: of the need to focus and discipline my mind, to get in touch with my heart, to declare aloud certain aspired-to feelings of humility, awe, and devotion, and to gain that feeling of exaltation and purposefulness that such declarations can evoke. And my brethren have given me a God to whom I could address myself in prayer without repressing all rationality, for certainly the naturalistic Reconstructionist "God idea"—God as the "Power that makes for salvation," manifesting in our feelings of unity and in our

yearning for redemption—is as close to a humanistic affirmation as I'm going to get from any theology. Such a God, writes Arthur Green, the former president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, "demands no 'leap of faith' as does the miracle-working deity of conventional Western theism" but requires, rather, "a 'leap of consciousness,' an openness to considering that the universe could be more whole, more beautiful ...."

Adding an attractively resolute, liberatory element to this modern concept of God is Michael Lerner's book, *Jewish Renewal*, which heralds a God who "has made it so that transcendence and transformation of the world are both possible and necessary," obliging "those who are spiritually alive ... not to pursue their own paths, but to become involved in the struggle."

If truth be told,
I have prayed in Jewish fashion
more than once,
to bring a sense of well-being
to my table and
calm my children.

Lerner's theology sends shivers up my spine—my body's way of warning that there's a Truth lurking near, to be embraced at risk, perhaps, to my ego, but to be ignored at risk to my soul. He even anticipates my atheistic resistance and spine-stiffening: The suggestion, Lerner compassionately writes, "that the physical world is infused with transformative possibilities and operates according to spiritual and not just material concerns" undermines "our security from seeing the world as predictable and potentially under our control." The resultant fear, set off when "(t)he false solidity we had constructed as part of our strategy for dealing with alienated reality suddenly is in danger of melting beneath our feet," is the very essence, he observes, of *yir'at hashem*, the fear of God.

Well, perhaps so: Perhaps the God-reality is there, and my prayer block amounts to a fear of surrender, an unwillingness to say, "yes" to a Truth that, if embraced, would make enormous, life-changing demands upon me. Like Noah, I can merely "walk with" God (Noah, the Midrash taught, was spiritually feeble, and therefore had to walk with God, rather than, like Abraham, walking before God and declaring God's reality). Like Noah, I can hear God, and can even obey what I hear, but I cannot muster a reply. Or, to stand another biblical conceit on its head, I can live with God, but I won't marry Her, or tell Her I love Her.

The rationalist in me nevertheless seeks to render my noncommitment into a credo—or, at least, into a set of pointed, atheistic questions. Why, indeed, he asks, should I consider Michael Lerner's notion of a God-Who-Makes-Transformation-Possible-and-Necessary any less of a personal projection, a personal claim to exceptionalism, than the atheism of my youth? The power of his liberation theology to set the butterflies in my stomach to flapping does not earn it the rank of revelation; the same fearful perception that there is more to reality than the cozy little consciousness to which I customarily cling has been stoked in my life by various and sometimes contradictory reality principles such as dialectical materialism, feminism, Freudian theories of the mind, Buddhist ideas of illusion and transcendence, and drug-induced intimations of ecstasy. Of course, my rationalist continues, human transformation is possible—that's been amply attested to within my lifetime by the civil-rights movement, the South Africa liberation struggle, the deposing of Ferdinand Marcos, etc.

That such transformation is imperative to our survival has also been made amply clear by the environmental and anti-nuclear movements. That this possibility and imperative is writ larger than in our genes and our culture, however, that it is part of a covenantal bond with the universe itself—that's a leap of faith no less broad, and no less absurdly anthropocentric, than those demanded by fundamentalist Judaism, Christianity, or even astrology, for God's sake!

Why, then, should I affirm even a humanistic theology as real, when its metaphors are likely to be hijacked by authoritarians seeking divine sanction for their repressive activities? Why legalize the "opiate of the people" to satisfy their meaning-needs? Is the foundational Jewish principle of *tselem Elohim*, that human beings are created in God's image, truly more compelling and politically effective than Marx's atheistic notion of "species-being"? Does the rock-bottom liberal faith in human goodness need to be exalted into a religious sensibility to be sustained? Has activist-atheism truly been rendered irrelevant by the reinvention of God as a naturalistic, humanistic force?

My rationalist doth protest too much, for, if truth be told, I have prayed in Jewish fashion more than once. I often say a *bracha* before meals—though not without embarrassment—to bring a sense of well-being to my table and calm to my children. Likewise does my family light *shabbos* candles and crown our home-grown ceremony (dedicating each light and recalling meaningful moments from our week) by reciting

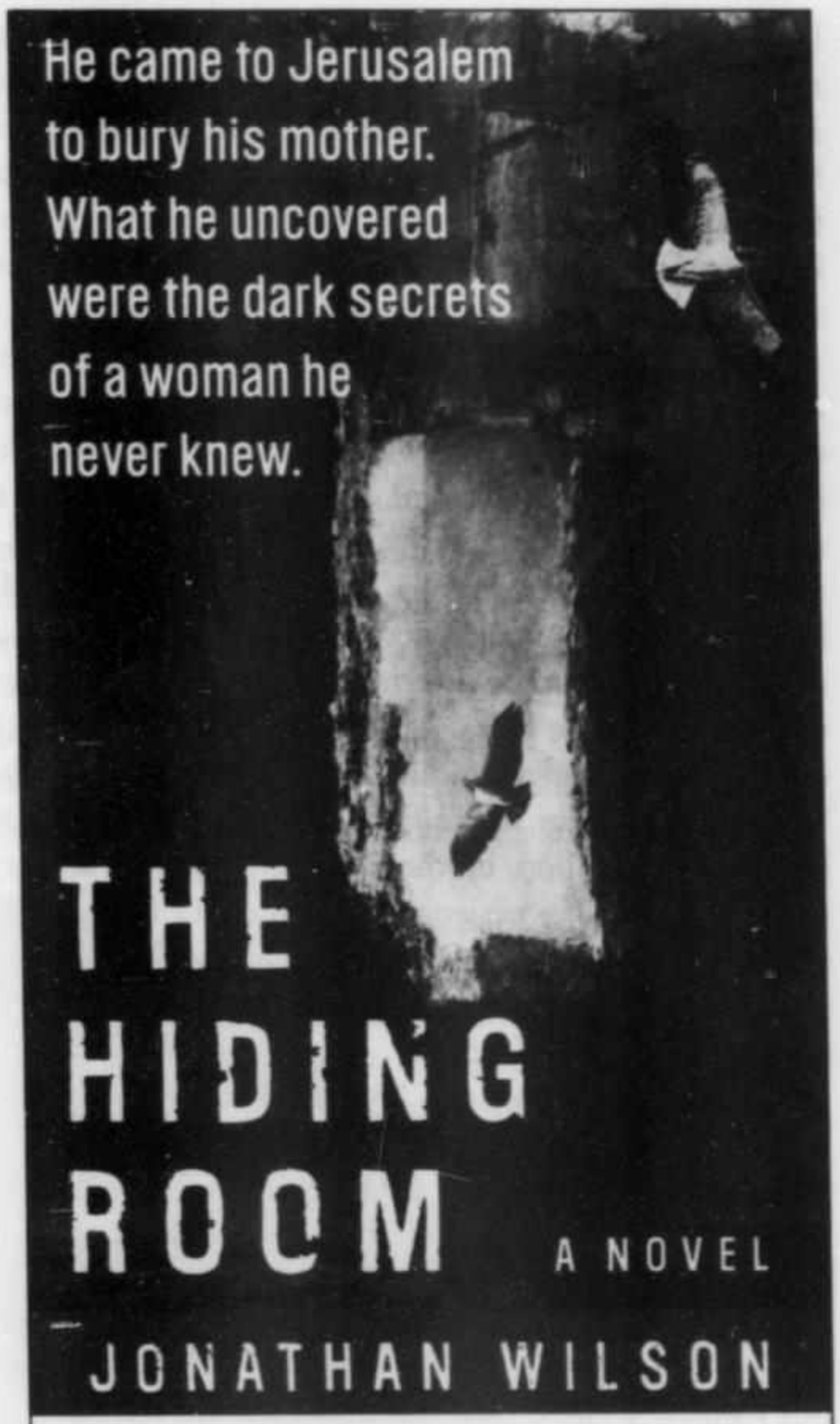
a version of the traditional blessings over candles, wine, and bread. To the extent that such ceremonies have become incorporated into the comfort zones of my life, the atheist in me abides them. They are therapeutic rituals; they link me and my children to a rich sense of being Jewish; they massage and relax our family dynamics.

They also reveal a powerful little secret about Jewish prayer: that there are really no theological prerequisites for its contents to fulfill its classic purposes, which are tidily defined by Michael Lerner as "articulat(ing) joy, thanksgiving, radical amazement, and a recommitment to healing and repairing the world." Fortunately for someone as prayer-blocked as I, there are other means of reaching these goals. I can perceive that the universe is radically amazing simply by opening my eyes ("Good Lord!" is my usual exclamation as I step onto my front lawn), while the small shifts in consciousness that I rely upon for breaking up emotional logjams and getting joyful feelings to flow can be obtained with a nice glass of wine, a reflective conversation, a good piece of jazz. Thankfulness I can express directly to my wife, my children, my relatives and close friends, and to my earth, through words and eye contact and deeds—from which my commitment to healing and repairing flows and is sustained.

Nevertheless, I have learned to respect, even if I cannot easily access, the power of prayer for cultivating a sense of the "Thou" —the recognition of each human being's full humanity and of the constant offer of "dialogue" that living brings. With that in mind, I can sometimes even address myself to the God-Who-Is-a-Metaphor-for-Our-Deepest-Humanistic-Yearnings, the God-Through-Whom-We-Reach-Out-To-One-Another-By-Reaching-Up. Theology be damned, I then say; what counts in this enterprise is not determining the source of my redemptive consciousness, what counts is cultivating its power, through *mitzvot*, study, affirmation and, yes, prayer, to make for goodness in this world.

Another path to prayer-comfort for atheists has been paved by Rabbi Ira Eisenstein, the founder of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, in a recent, brief article in the magazine I edit, *Reconstructionism Today*. Eisenstein distinguishes between *davvening* and prayer, the former being the recitation of the Jewish prayers of yesteryear, "with the clear purpose of establishing our links with the past." Rewriting the traditional Jewish prayers to reflect modern values is rendered unnecessary and irrelevant by this definition; *davvening*, as Eisenstein practices it, is an exercise in historical preservation, not an effort to express contemporary values or aspirations.

Praying, by contrast, is for Eisenstein an activity of "passionate reflection" that consciously avoids "dia-



Jonathan Wilson's debut novel is a brilliant exploration of history, war, and the search for identity. In 1941, in Cairo, a young Jewish refugee meets a British intelligence officer. Their affair is full of heartbreak, ending in a tragic betrayal. Half a century later a man travels to his mother's native country to answer questions about his own past. The story that links these characters is part political thriller, part poignant love story—and a totally absorbing drama.

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logue with some Other." Through such "passionate reflection" (the phrase is Walter Kaufman's), Eisenstein aims to "revive one's resolution to strive for ethical heights, to resist evil, to engender love and respect for fellow persons—and, finally, to rekindle love of and loyalty to the Jewish people, to Torah in its broadest and deepest sense."

Eisenstein does not make clear in his article, however, whether his "passionate reflection" is simply a form of inner meditation on Jewish themes, or whether he indulges in praying out loud. For me, the distinction is crucial, for I have learned that I have a very primitive response to spoken prayer: its utterance immediately kicks me into a sense of address to a Being, a Presence to which I yearn to be attached, but in whose separate reality beyond the Self I cannot believe. The sophisticated modern understanding of God as a verb, as the Whole Shebang, or as the Force of Meaning and Unity and Transformation in the natural universe, is very exalting when I experience it on the printed page—study being my main Jewish spiritual activity—but as soon as I give voice to prayer, it is the ancient Daddy God who replies, "Yes?"

To which I can only say, "Never mind."

Ultimately, therefore, I fear that I will need more than psychological safety and a humanistic theology to overcome my prayer block and all its inertial force: I will need a crisis (God forbid!), an assault on my reality that effectively ends my illusion of autonomy and control. I fancy that it is the Voice of Punishment that spoke to the spiritually feeble Noah, rather than the Voice of Blessing that spoke to the spiritually ripe Abraham, that has the best chance of being heard by me: I will need a beating over the head (*vay iz meer*!) that makes me fear the consequences of not embracing God's reality more than I fear the consequences of embracing it.

"Now, if you obey the Lord your God, to observe faithfully all His commandments which I enjoin upon you this day ... All these blessings shall come upon you and take effect," declares Deuteronomy 28. "... But if you do not obey the Lord your God to observe faithfully all His commandments and laws ... all these curses shall come upon you and take effect ...." One might argue that the growing worldwide environmental crisis should be "proof" enough. Certainly, environmental consciousness has provoked in me a new tolerance for the prescriptive voice of the Torah and a new willingness to listen to it interpretively. Environmental imperatives do, after all, have a "do-this-or-else" urgency to them, while the recognition of deep ecological interdependence carries implications of "covenant" that often seem as binding as any divine commandments.

Worldwide interdependence and the threat of worldwide calamity, however, are very new concepts for the human race—concepts that we keep at bay for fear of confronting them and for fear of appearing grandiose. For most of us, the dawning of God-awareness is more bound up with psychic ecology, the inner landscape. An experience of "synchronicity," of mysteriously meaningful coincidence, will make us wonder about the connections between our psyches and external reality; a bout of disease will spark a painful process of self-evaluation and search for wholeness; a temptation will awaken our sense of desire and, simultaneously, our fear of consequence; a mystical intimation, somehow infantile yet somehow beyond the beyond, will open our hearts to possibility. Late at night, lying in our prayerless repose, we begin to wonder:

Did Dad grow his own fatal cancer by hunkering down in his anger (and his atheism) rather than ventilating his soul through some version of *teshuvah*?

Did I cause my own infertility by desiring women outside my marriage, or by otherwise failing to fully "encounter" my wife?

If I keep the extra twenty bucks the bank mistakenly assigned my account, will its loss be felt somewhere in the fabric of creation?

How come all those corrupt power-brokers and soul-snatchers in Washington, in Hollywood, in New York, seem to be having such a good time—or, at least, seem to have a lot more material abundance than I?

Perhaps these were the kinds of questions that Noah asked himself as he watched the "corrupt" and "lawless" humans of his day. The Midrash speculates that their chief sin was "wantonness," bred of the extraordinary prosperity that resulted from the ideal conditions of antediluvian life: the single plantings of crops that would yield food for forty years, the children who were born after a few days' pregnancy and could walk and talk immediately after birth. In such a vibrant, productive world, Noah must have wondered: What are the consequences of sin? Is there a divine reality principle impinging upon human behavior—or might I just as well join in the fun?

Which was harder for him to resist: the wild, anarchic, individualistic living that was going on all around him, or those intuitions, vague yet at times irresistible, that God does exist, that there are consequences, blessings and curses, wrought by our behavior?

Noah couldn't make up his mind. Legend holds that he was up to his knees in water before he at last resolved to enter the ark. How many days more of steady rain, I wonder, before he would open up his lips and cry, "My God!" □

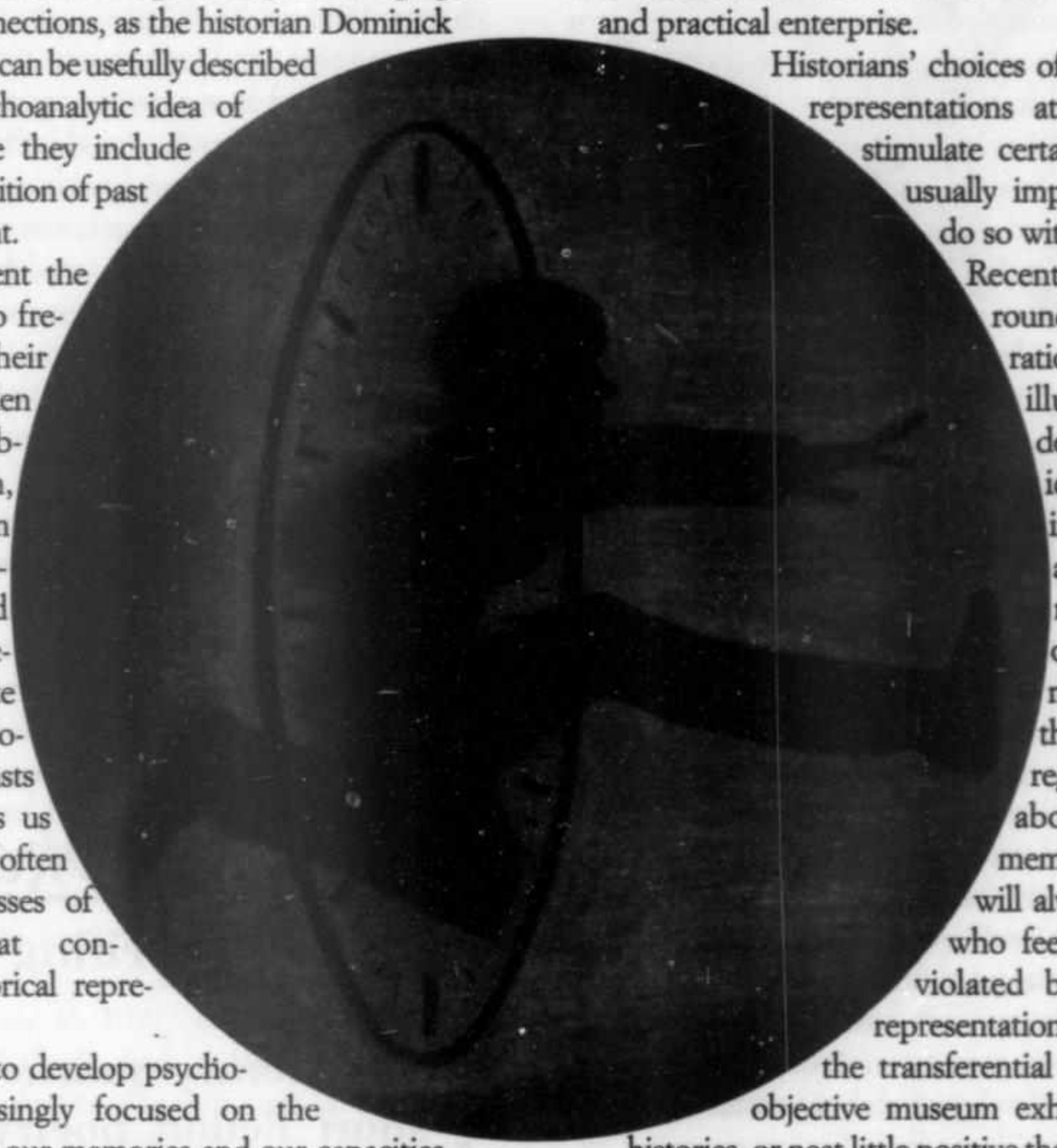
Past Imperfect

Michael S. Roth

Recent theorists of history have called into question the traditional picture of the neutral, objective historian reconstructing past events the way they "happened." The point of this questioning is not that all interpretations of the past are equally valid, but that it is important to interpret the subtle ways historians establish connections between their own present and the pasts they are bringing to it. Some of these connections, as the historian Dominick LaCapra has stressed, can be usefully described in terms of the psychoanalytic idea of transference, because they include the unconscious repetition of past patterns in the present.

Historians represent the past, and in doing so frequently act out their unconscious or hidden investments in the subjects they research, which are often objects of their complex longing and loathing. An awareness of the intricate investments that historians have in the pasts they construct helps us to understand the (often unconscious) processes of transformation that contribute to any historical representation.

As Freud began to develop psychoanalysis, he increasingly focused on the desires that affected our memories and our capacities to connect our present with our past. How do the connections we construct to a remembered past, or to a past which we imagine is inaccessible to us, serve particular desires in the present? And how does serving those desires make it impossible for us to pursue other desires we may have? These questions have remained crucial for psychoanalysis as a theoretical and clinical enterprise. They are also central to the construction of history as a theoretical and practical enterprise.



ART BY RENÉ CARSON

Historians' choices of particular historical representations attempt to satisfy or stimulate certain desires, and it is usually impossible for them to do so without denying others. Recent controversies surrounding the commemorations of World War II illustrate clearly the degree to which specific representations are in conflict with one another. Whether in regard to the problem of how to make a museum context for the Enola Gay, or in regard to the debates about a Holocaust memorial in Berlin, there will always be some people who feel their past is being violated by its contemporary representation. But the retreat from the transferential through attempts at objective museum exhibits, cool, detached histories, or neat little positive therapeutic experiences, are merely denials of, not solutions to, the problem of how the present necessarily reshapes the past. One can hope to make the workings of transference in historical representation more apparent, but one cannot avoid this dynamic through some sufficiently hygienic stance.

Michael S. Roth teaches cultural studies and history at the Claremont Graduate School. His most recent books, Psycho-Analysis as History: Negation and Freedom in Freud *(Cornell University Press, new edition) and* The Ironist's Cage: Memory, Trauma and the Construction of History *(Columbia University Press) are being published this fall.*

How does the remembered or imagined past draw one to it? How does the traumatic past compel our attention, care, or obsession even as it seems to demand acknowledgement that one can never comprehend what happened there? These questions have become major public issues in the last several years, and they are as important for psychoanalysts as they are for historians.

Freud was intensely concerned with the process through which a memory could become a psychological wound. In his early writings, he strove to remove the memory's potency, not through forgetting but through the discharge of energy that resulted from remembering. and describing some painful events in one's life. As he moved away from this "cathartic" approach to memory, Freud came to develop psychoanalysis as a mode of interpretation that would create a past with which one could live—an especially difficult task when dealing with patients whose pasts were punctuated by trauma. This talking cure demanded that one situate oneself (or one's desires) in relation to the past, not that one reconstruct the actual past in the present.

The role of trauma has been of decisive significance in the history of psychoanalysis, and recently has been the subject of much heated debate. Freud created psychoanalysis as a technique for connecting with and representing the past that has important affinities to mourning. He developed a hermeneutics of memory rather than a tool for a pure expression of the past (whatever that might be) which would pretend to get free of it. Thus, Freud developed psychoanalysis as a way of using the past rather than revolting against it.

If trauma, however, is an unassimilated element of the past, how can it be used in creating a history with which one can live? The historical wound of World War I forced Freud to return to the role of psychological trauma in the construction of the past. Shell-shocked soldiers returned to the source of their pain in dreams and fantasies. As Freud noted: "It is as though these patients had not yet finished with the traumatic situation, as though they were still faced by it as an immediate task which has not been dealt with." It is the "unfinished" quality of the relationship to the event that reveals it as traumatic; that is, that reveals the presence of an unhealed wound, a piercing of the psyche. From the late nineteenth century until today, psychiatrists (and historians) have developed techniques for finishing with an event that could not be told; for removing its power in the present. It is necessary to forget, they claimed, or at least to "normalize" the past that continues to wound. Freud, on the other hand, developed psychoanalysis as a form of historical consciousness that focused on the role of desire in relation to the past. How does our inability to "finish" with (or let go of) a past event serve particular desires in the present? What other desires are generated or denied as a result of the return to unfinished business demanded by the unhealed trauma? An identity constructed around pain may bring satisfactions and even status in particular cultural contexts, but it may also make certain kinds of action all but impossible.

Some models of memory and history obscure the issue of one's investment in the past, using strategies for recollection or forgetting without the conceptual space for the desire that one has for the past, a desire that can result in an effort to link present and past in a narrative. Attempts to teach American history without contamination by any political meaning, or crude calls to let go of legacies of pain and oppression in order to "live in the present" ignore the desires that weave us into our histories. These desires form the very tricky terrain of psychoanalysis. They also delimit the space of modern historical consciousness, which understands freedom as the result of acknowledging one's past in a present containing possibilities for meaningful change. Historical reflection—whether for individuals or groups—helps us see our present conflicts in relation both to our pasts and to our desires for transformation.

Trauma challenges this freedom by keeping the past an "unfinished business," an open wound. Psychoanalysis as a form of historical representation can acknowledge this wound without aspiring to a redemptive healing that would leave no scars. In this acknowledgment of the past and the complex patterns of desires that link us to it, psychoanalysis offers the possibility of meaningful change not simply as escape but also as preservation. This dialectical change imagined by psychoanalysis is precisely the possibility of freedom and meaning that modern historical consciousness attempts to construct. If we are to think about progressive political action in relation to our traditions, our families, and our identities over time, as well as the desires for change that emerge from them, this mode of constructing meaning still has much to teach us. □

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The Poetry of Yona Wallach

Linda Zisquit

Introductory Words on Translating Yona Wallach

In 1979, I began translating several of Yona Wallach's early poems in response to the request of a friend editing a special section on Israeli poetry for an American journal. I had reservations: my Hebrew was then in its elementary stage, and Wallach's reputation—as a masterful poet who fragmented the language with demonic power and broke all the laws of male and female conjugation—was intimidating. From the first, I felt myself pulled into a whirlwind.

People would ask, isn't she too difficult? Impossible? All that savaging of Hebrew, that shattering of tradition, that turning upside-down of the world as we are used to knowing it. I had no answer but a drive to go on, clearly challenged by Wallach's brilliance and charged by her contrariness. Something deeply personal drew me into the swirling force of Wallach's work. More than a need to learn the Hebrew inside-out or to enter the sensibility of an important poet, I think it must have been an instinctive pull to that mysterious space—where nothing is absolute and everything is in constant flux, in continual metamorphosis, and in which the self remains unfixed—out of which Wallach speaks. And a desire to ride on the "galloping horse" of Wallach's accelerated consciousness, to use Harold Schimmel's phrase. As though there were no choice, only an organic, imperative relationship requiring my energy to match hers, I have continued the project over these years.

The Selected Poems of Yona Wallach 1963-1985, first published in Hebrew in 1992, is now in its fourth printing. Though Wallach died in 1985 at the age of forty-one, her work continues to influence poets writing in Hebrew.

In many of her sharp-edged lyrics, Wallach speaks through personae—children in the grip of pain or terror, wounded and rejected female souls on the brink of madness. In Arieh Sachs's words, "She was wild .... What is generally accepted as religious, sexual, or national identity concerned her only as material to be turned on its head .... Yona found sanctity in profanity ... she managed to store an incredible energy of opposites that gave her mythical power." Much of her later work—long, androgynous monologues written in the knowledge that she was dying of cancer—express impatience and disdain for the "wrong kind of sex"; yet these poems, charged with heat and warmth, are moved by a courageous and desperate search for love.



JULIE DELTON

I first began to understand Yona Wallach's prophetic voice while considering the biblical Moses' speech problem—his reticence, his sensitivity to the power and risks of using language, his resistance to performing the task of spokesperson for God, and his ultimate acceptance of that role. What meaningful connection can be made between the first leader of the Jewish

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Linda Stern Zisquit is a poet and translator living in Jerusalem. Ritual Bath, *her first collection of poetry, appeared in 1993.* Unopened Letters, *her second collection, and* Selected Poems of Yona Wallach *will be published in 1996 by Sheep Meadow Press.*

nation who balked at having to open his "uncircumcised lips" to a people that refused to listen, and a modern female Hebrew poet whose bold and fluid lines have been described as shocking, blasphemous, sacrilegious, even demonic? What is a prophet? Someone who proclaims and makes clear words of rebuke, to whom secrets of the universe are revealed, whose intense relationship to God means that God reveals extraordinary things to him/her, and who is inspired by wind, or divine spirit, blown into her and from whose mouth air, or miraculous language, is expressed. Not for her the ready-made speech filled with cliché and tired metaphor and idiom, but rather a unique way of speaking so that the physical and spiritual meet.

In Wallach's poetry, God has body, voice, a physical presence she has known intimately, in all the passionate imperfection of human encounter. Thus, the anguish she experiences confronting God's future absence, when "never again will his sweet voice pass under my window." Wallach stands as if one with the radiant angels, and at the same time she is alienated painfully from God, in a state of desire and engaged in a process of constant struggle and choice, metabolizing and making use of this world. Throughout her life, Wallach wrote with unflagging inspiration, heightened consciousness, extraordinary energy. Moving at great speed, incorporating wild rhythms and prophetic pronouncements, her poetry is nevertheless lucid and logical. "I would play with fear/as with a child," she writes in one of her last poems, characteristically combining laughter and anxiety.

As one of the "Tel Aviv Poets" coming to full force in the wake of the Six Day War, Wallach's work—with its black humor, direct confrontation, and emotions veering close to madness—struck a chord in a large segment of the Israeli population. Gabriel Levin notes, "Its cutting edge seemed to speak to a generation of readers who, like Wallach, were born and raised in Israel and who saw in her demonic, half-crazed figures ... a sort of shattered defiance of the self in a country caught in a *cri de conscience* in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War." Wallach's articulation of human vision—always necessarily incomplete, broken, reaching for wholeness—continues to speak to and for a country struggling with vital questions of spiritual connection to a physical land and the place of women's voices within a patriarchal tradition. For her singularity and range as a poet, and the impact of her verse on poets writing in Hebrew since the 1970s, Yona Wallach's work deserves our attention.

Linda Zisquit

When You Come To Sleep With Me Come Like My Father

When you come to sleep with me
come like my father
come in darkness

speak in his voice
so I won't know
I'll crawl on all fours
and I'll speak about what I don't have
and you'll scold me:
"my substance"
separate from me
at the gate
say goodbye
a thousand times
with all the yearnings
there are
until God says:
"enough"
and I'll let go
I won't sleep
not with God
not with my father
I'll want to sleep with you
but you say no
together with my father
suddenly you'll be revealed
as the one in charge of
the restraints
my father will be an angel
officer of hosts
and the two of you will try to make of me
something
I'll feel
like nothing
and I'll do everything
you tell me to do.
On the one hand you'll be God
and I'll wait for afterwards
and you won't be the authority
and I'm just down and out
trying to be polite
I'll divide you in two
and also myself
part soul
part body

you'll appear like two
and I
like two seals
one wounded
dragging a fin

or two women
one always limping
and you one face
and the other hardly seen

Hebrew

English has all the possibilities for gender
every I—in actuality
is every possibility of sex
and every you feminine is you masculine
and every I is sexless
and there's no difference between you feminine and
you masculine
and all things are so—not a man not a woman
you don't have to think before relating to sex
Hebrew is a sex maniac
Hebrew discriminates for bad or good
is generous gives privileges
with an account longer than the Exile
in the plural they have the right of way
with great subtlety and secrecy
in the singular chances are equal
who says all hope is lost
Hebrew is a sex maniac
wants to know who's speaking
almost a vision almost a picture
what's forbidden in the whole Torah
at least to see the sex
Hebrew peeks through the keyhole
like me at your mother and you
when you both were bathing then in the shack
your mother had large buttocks
but I never stopped thinking
the days passed like vanishing ink
you feminine remained a thin and soapy girl
afterwards you both sealed all the holes
sealed all the cracks
Hebrew peeks at you feminine singular from
the keyhole
the language sees you naked
my father didn't permit me to look
he turned his back when he pissed
I never really had a good look at him
he always hid the sex
the way the plural hides a woman
like a crowd is male in conjugations
like *word* is male and female

there's nothing like those sweet things
Hebrew is a woman bathing
Hebrew is a clean Bathsheba
Hebrew is a carving that doesn't cut out
she has small dimples and birthmarks
as she grows up she gets prettier
her judgement is sometimes prehistoric
such a neurosis is for the best
tell me in the masculine tell me in the feminine
every childish I is an unfertilized egg
it's possible to pass over sex
it's possible to give up sex
who will tell the sex of a chick?
the man who nature creates
before he's implanted with his identifying verb.
Memory is masculine
creating sexes
propagation is imperative
since she is life
Hebrew is a sex maniac (feminine)
and whatever shrill feminists complain about
seeking stimulation outside language
with intonation that interprets things
signs only of the masculine and feminine in a sentence
will offer strange sexual relationships
on every female a sign, on every male a different sign
when every verb and conjugation is assigned
what the man does to the woman
what he gets in return
what power she exerts over him
and what sign is given to the object
and to an abstract noun and articles
we'll get a rather natural game
a psychological occurrence like a young forest
a game of the common powers of nature
from which all the details are derived,
common signs for all events
that can possibly happen at one time or another
look what body the language has what dimensions
I will love her now with a free tongue

□

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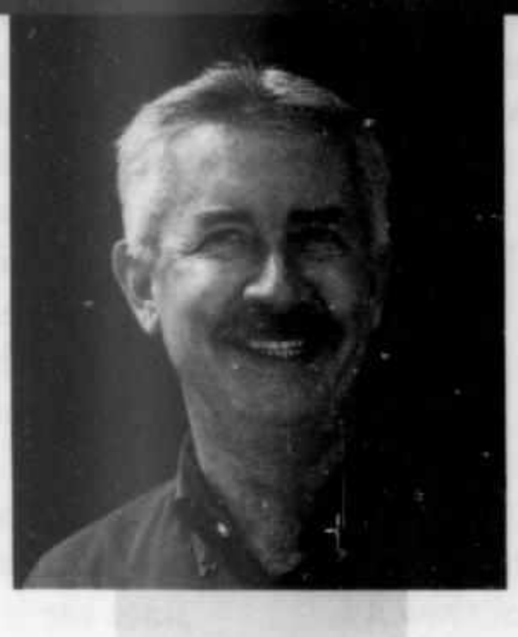
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CURRENT DEBATE

President Clinton and the Politics of Meaning:

Let Healing Begin

Susan M. Andersen

Splintering in progressive politics runs so deeply and pervasively through our society that it leaves ever-smaller interest groups fighting for ever-narrower agendas, nearly blind to the commonweal that binds us. In a prime example, TIKKUN recently proclaimed President Clinton's "betrayal" of the politics of meaning.

In my view, the notion that the President has betrayed the politics of meaning is both unforgiving and inaccurate. Our suffering did not arise with Bill Clinton, and it will not end with him. The struggle against ignorance and apathy is lifelong for each of us, including Bill Clinton, who as President must not only try to make change by building coalitions and negotiating, but also must find a way to stand up to the attack-dog rhetoric in politics and in the media that takes humanity hostage.

In his 1992 presidential campaign, Clinton conveyed a message of healing. He persuasively articulated the need of Americans to become a part of something larger than themselves, to contribute to society, to strive to become better human beings. As reflected in community service, education, and job retraining, his vision seemed to inspire Americans—for a while.

If the Clinton administration has failed to sustain this message, the blame is hardly the President's alone. Our despair is *not* only, or even especially, about political compromises, about failures on specific policies or nominees. It stems instead from the growing sense that societal forces, both from the Right and from the Left, repeatedly silence compassionate voices that might stimulate the healing we need.

Perceiving *betrayal* on the part of the President is part of a larger cycle of hope and despair that increasingly serves as the benchmark of the cynicism of our age: The rapid, inevitable deterioration of all public figures and phenomena, at the center of the ongoing communications-machine cyclone we call our civilization. To attribute weakness to the individual at its center—while ignoring the cyclone itself—is a fundamental miscalculation.

Instead of struggling to see beyond conflict-driven media portrayals to the bigger picture and to our greater common humanity, we seem increasingly to take a perverse pleasure in the downfall of our heroes and call for their heads, perhaps embarrassed by having so childishly been moved or inspired.

Ad hominem remarks reign supreme in politics and the media, defining the present historical context. Only the "pathetic" (to use Gingrich's favorite term) listen to opposing views and struggle to find mutually acceptable, compassionate solutions—as if respectful consideration of diverse perspectives signals weakness, policy negotiation surrender, compassion muddleheadedness.

Against these forces, the Clinton administration must articulate a coherent vision of who we would aspire to be as a people—one in which, as Bobby Kennedy said, after the Greeks, we can "tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world."

Clinton's National Service Program—which the Republican-dominated Congress intends to extinguish—draws young people into community service in exchange for help with college tuition, inspiring them to focus on what they wish to contribute to their community. In a me-first society in which a nearly endless craving for wealth, power, status, and celebrity seems to have taken the place of much that might otherwise constitute "meaning" in life, this program, if allowed to survive, could have profound implications for people's capacity to relate to one another with empathy.

President Clinton has made strides in civil rights for minorities, women, and gays, has fought hard for child immunization, family and medical leave, improvements in education and training, research funding for long-neglected women's health problems and for AIDS, and for the cause of health-care equity. He has promoted civil liberties, and these are stronger now than prior to his presidency, especially on the Supreme Court, where his appointees hold the center from the slippery slide rightward.

Clinton has not succeeded on all fronts. He has stumbled badly on some, and has had to compromise on others. But an imperfect record does not constitute a "betrayal." We are all flawed and often fail to live up to our own standards and aspirations. The imperative for progressives, then, is to unite, striving to accept real, pragmatic compromises that dignify our unruly but aspiring humanity with small progressive gains in legislative or judicial victories.

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When no action is considered grand or principled or thorough enough, no compromise tolerable, fantasies of perfection become all that will suffice, and the despair and apathy experienced when reality fails to measure up proliferate. If the politics of meaning is to help serve as an antidote to the mean-spiritedness now taking root in our culture, we must be determined to enlarge our allegiances with the "not us," to question habitual terms of reference. We must therefore encourage each other to find something to *like* in options that *exist* and in electable political leaders willing to persevere. The shades of gray are where we must live and what we must champion. □

Politics—No Saving Grace

A Reply to Susan Andersen

Jamin B. Raskin

I find something refreshing in both Susan Andersen's spirited defense of President Clinton and in Michael Lerner's sober comment that prompted it ("Clinton's Betrayal," TIKKUN, March/April 1995). Andersen recognizes the primitive forces that are now washing over our political culture, the "mean-spiritedness" and "nearly endless craving for wealth, power, status, and celebrity" that throttle progressive organizing. She captures the essential smallness of Bill Clinton before the reactionary dynamics of our time. If Bill and Hillary Clinton begged TIKKUN'S forgiveness and petitioned to join the magazine's editorial board, it's still hard to see how such a miracle would affect: the fact that a quarter of America's children live in Third-World-style poverty; the fact that a corporate union-busting offensive has so demolished America's labor unions that only 12 percent of the work force is unionized, which is less than half of what it was when the Wagner Act was passed in the 1930s; the fact that more than a million citizens are behind bars, many in unspeakable conditions; or the fact that our distorted campaign-finance regime has accomplished the hostile corporate takeover of both political parties and virtually every committee in the Congress.

On the other hand, Lerner properly refuses to let Clinton off the hook for his collusion with the forces of corporate dominance and his missed opportunities to promote social change. Bill Clinton is not Superman, but he is the President of the United States of America. He has the power to set the public agenda, and yet he has not harnessed that power to a set of broadly understood social purposes that could reverse the ongoing processes of corporate self-aggrandizement and communal disintegration. We have certainly witnessed in Washington the "refusal to articulate and fight for a central principle." Lerner is dead-on about the backbone question.

I suspect, however, that the distance between Lerner and Andersen is not that great—that their differences in tone have more to do with their personal levels of disappointment with how things have unraveled since those heady days when the Clintons took office. Indeed, Lerner's and Andersen's outlooks are so similar that I want to register my objection to an assumption about the nature and purposes of politics that they seem to share.

The continuing use of therapeutic, psychoanalytic, and spiritual terms to describe the progressive political project can only lead to the kind of corrosive cynicism that both writers bemoan. Andersen places "[o]ur suffering" at the center of her political analysis and praises Clinton's original "message of healing." Lerner invokes the "meaning needs" of the people and condemns Clinton's "sin" of evoking "our highest desires and most noble aspirations, and then turning his back on them...."

Forgive me, but if I'm suffering, I'll go to a doctor, and if I need emotional healing, I'll see my wife. America's 240 million citizens don't need the government, or the Clinton family—which apparently has enough of its own healing to do—to minister to their psychic needs. And what could they do for us anyway? Most of us will derive more satisfaction from the existing structures of meaning in our lives—families, workplaces, friends, religion, sports, volunteer activities, the Internet—than we ever will from a federal program, much less a presidential speech.

Of course, many people *are* suffering because they cannot afford needed medical and dental care. But for that problem, we don't need any particular rhetoric from the Clintons, or even a "coherent vision." We need them to fight against insurance companies and the medical-industrial complex for real health-care reform, like the Canadian plan, or the plan that members of Congress enjoy. The conflation of national politics with mass-based group therapy can only lead people to "feel so disillusioned that they will never allow themselves to hope again," as Lerner predicts about the effect of Clinton's "betrayal." The "politics of meaning"—a welcome antidote to the hollow and superficial public talk of our time—should not distract us from the actual *meaning of politics*, which has always been about the struggle between justice and power.

If we stop looking to politics for salvation, we will stop being devastated when politicians turn out not to be saviors. Politicians should be assessed by the social forces they align with and the historical changes they herald. Progressive movements should always stay at arms length from state power. Lerner argues that, in order to understand Clinton, we have to return to the "redemptive

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vision" introduced by "the civil rights movement combined with the inspiring rhetoric of President Kennedy." He is only half-right, since President Kennedy did a whole lot less to uplift civil rights workers in the South than they did to uplift the country. We should spend less time worrying about the "downfall of our heroes" (Andersen) and the rhetoric of the First Couple and more time working out strategies to reclaim wealth and power for ordinary people. Ask not how the government makes you feel; ask how you can change what the government does. □

Our Blueprint for Change

Mark LeVine

There's more to a politics of meaning than either Andersen or Raskin seems to grasp. Raskin's Left response invokes several horrific statistics reflective of the market-dominated society and implores us to spend less time worrying about the President's "rhetoric" and more time trying to "reclaim wealth and power for ordinary people." The question he never addresses is why the majority of "ordinary people" have consistently refused to join the Left's fight on their behalf.

The problem with Raskin's analysis is illustrative of the Left's complete failure to understand that the *meaning of politics* has not only, or even primarily, been about the "struggle between justice and power." Social scientists have understood for decades that to limit our understanding of "power" to its most visible manifestations in politics and the economic system is grossly inadequate. Power must be understood as a process or web of relationships that structures and frames the very conditions of our existence as individuals within the larger society. Seen this way, psychological, emotional, and "meaning" issues are as integral to our understanding of power as its more visible political-economic dynamics.

Consequently, if a society's worldview is dominated by the market, and thus by an ethos of selfishness and materialism, the middle class and most of the poor will be socialized into the very belief system that perpetuates their socio-economic subjugation. Yet many Leftists still don't understand that we need to move beyond economistic analyses and look at the psychodynamic aspects of power if we want to understand why, for example, union members supported Reagan. Until they do, the Left will remain basically irrelevant to the unfolding of American politics.

Perhaps Raskin is happy that way, since he feels we should remain "at arms length from state power." But how do we avoid contact with the "state" (as vast and complex a web of power relations as there has ever been) and still help the poor and working people? What good is a radical politics that only appeals to radicals?

Finally, Raskin's glib remarks about seeing his wife or doctor if he needs healing betray the condescending tone that has made the Left so easy to hate. Why can't the Left understand that people need community, that there's nothing wrong with sharing pain and healing outside of the bedroom or doctor's office. Wouldn't we all be better off—and wouldn't it signify the ultimate victory over the political/economic elite the Left has been fighting against—if the "angry white male" and the poor minority female could understand the common source of their economic *and* emotional pain?

Susan Andersen's belief that Lerner's use of "betrayal" to characterize Clinton's presidency is "unforgiving and inaccurate" would be valid only if Lerner's critique was personal—directed at the President as the main source of the country's problems. In fact, a politics of meaning was not conceived of as a stick to bash Clinton (let's remember, it was the Clintons who embraced a politics of meaning, not the other way around); it is an explanatory framework that attempts to show us that the American people are not fundamentally racist, sexist, or reactionary when they move to the Right. Rather, they are acting rationally within our dominant market ideology and responding to issues that the Left continues to ignore. As such, a politics of meaning helps us see how Clinton's failure to embody his original vision contributed greatly to the oft-remarked increase in cynicism and the concomitant reascendence of the Right.

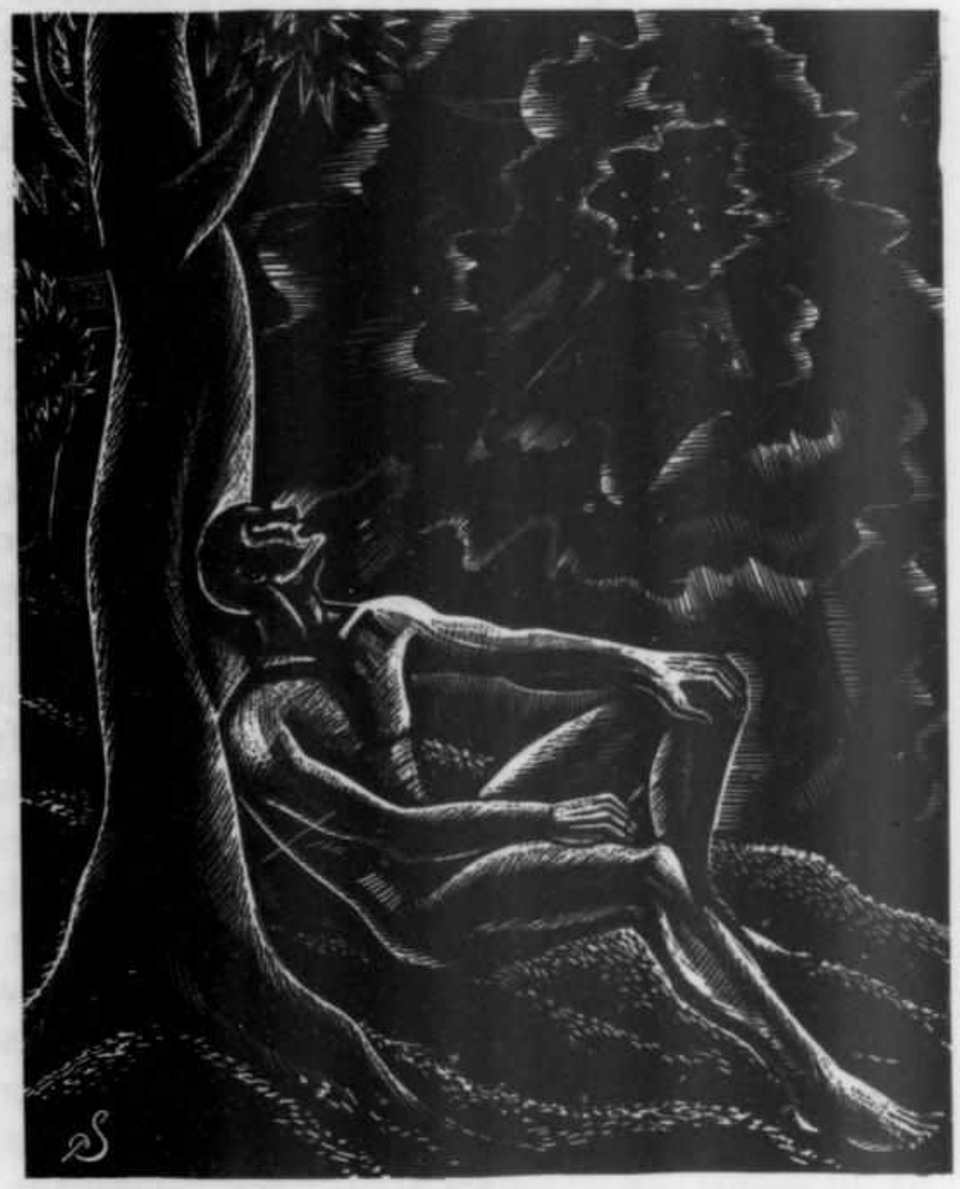
But beyond explaining current political dynamics, a politics of meaning provides a blueprint for change that is as radical as any the Left or Right has offered. It calls for creating a new societal paradigm in which the dominance of the market as the final arbiter of "value" will be overturned and replaced by a more ethically, spiritually, and ecologically sensitive vision. It is precisely through this transformation that the poor and the middle class will begin to understand the common origin of their seemingly competing problems. This is a long-sought-after goal of progressive politics, of whose success the Right is so afraid.

A progressive politics of meaning not only acknowledges the forces the President is up against, it reveals their scope and complexity. We certainly should support Clinton initiatives such as the National Service Program and Family Leave Act, yet these are a pale hallmark of a presidency that started with such promise. Lerner may have erred in describing Clinton's betrayal as "monumental," but if the conservatives succeed, the resulting social, ecological, and economic disaster will certainly be so. Let's hope that Clinton's recent stands on affirmative action, values, and religion signal a renewed sense of purpose. If so, the healing can indeed begin. □

Marc LeVine is the Program Coordinator of the Foundation For Ethics and Meaning.

A Masculine Critique of a Father God

Howard Eilberg-Schwartz



STEPHANIE A. SHIELDHOUSE

Convinced by the argument that within the Jewish tradition, God has not been beyond gender, many men like myself have found the feminist criticism of God language in the classic texts and liturgy compelling. As imagined in our tradition, God is generally a "He" who is described in predominantly male images: King, Father, Husband, Shepherd, and Man of War, to name only a few. We acknowledge, moreover, the social critique implied by this insight.

The masculinity of God both reflects and reinforces male domination in the religious domain if not the social order. As Judith Plaskow put it in *Standing Again at Sinai*, "When God is pictured as male in a community that understands 'man' to have been created in God's image, it only makes sense that maleness functions as the norm of Jewish humanity." Those of us who support this critique also advocate the rewriting of Jewish liturgy and ritual so that it is more reflective of women's experience.

But this kind of male response to feminism is partial and perhaps even patronizing. In many ways, men have remained aloof bystanders to a process that we see as irrelevant to us. We participate in the changes because we want women to feel that their experiences are equally reflected in Jewish tradition. But we fail to extend the feminist critique, to examine the challenge it presents to us *as men*: To what extent do classical Jewish texts and liturgy in fact provide conceptions of masculinity that meet our needs? Do the myths and rituals that feature male characters speak to the kinds of masculinities that now define us? What impact does a masculine image of God have for us?

Men have tended to ignore these questions because, along with women feminists, we have assumed that the answers are self-evident: The tradition must already speak for us as men because it was made *by* men and *for* men. But the fact that it spoke for men of the past does not mean it speaks for men of the present, especially men who have taken the feminist critique seriously. In other words, we must engage the tradition as men, by asking about the ways in which our senses of masculinity find their expression in the tradition. If we evoke present notions of masculinity, then we too may want to revise our understanding of the tradition and seek significant changes in Jewish practice to reflect our experiences.

Over the past few years, I have been indirectly working at this problem, trying to understand how the masculine image of God might have affected men in ancient Judaism. The result, contained in my book, *God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism*, is the argument that a masculine image of God generates dilemmas for men as well as women. This idea will initially seem counterintuitive, since a quarter-century of feminist criticism has been based on the presupposition that a masculine image of God was a manifestation of male domination.

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I agree that a masculine image of God negates female experience, as feminists have taught us. But a masculine image of God also creates tensions for men, especially within the developing monotheism of Israelite religion. If my theory is correct, then there may be some significant consequences for us as men and women working to reformulate the language and practice of contemporary Judaism.

Consider briefly two dilemmas for men that arise in ancient Judaism. The first, stemming from the Torah's portrayal of God as a sexless male deity, is the impossible ideal it presents for masculinity. For, on the one hand, men are expected to procreate and carry on the lineage of their fathers. Failure to do so is a failure of manhood. On the other hand, men are also expected to imagine themselves as made in the image of an asexual masculine creator. So the biblical models of masculinity pull in opposite directions.

The second dilemma involves the problem of homoeroticism, arising because the relationship of God to Israel is frequently imagined as analogous to the relationship between husband and wife. When Israel goes after other gods, "she" is metaphorically whoring. When "she" properly worships God, she is being faithful to her relationship with her Husband. These popular metaphors obviously support the patriarchy; a husband is to his wife as God is to Israel. In both cases, the male is in the dominant position.

But these metaphors also generate tensions for masculinity. Men must also imagine themselves as part of this feminized Israel and hence as God's wives. This presents men with a dilemma. They are expected to embrace what we now call "heterosexuality," to partner themselves to women and procreate. Yet at the same time they must imagine their love for God in ways that are described sensually and erotically.

It is the presence of these dilemmas, I argue, that leads to a prohibition on images of God and to a veiling of God's body in ancient Jewish imagination. It is not, as is commonly assumed, that ancient Judaism imagines God to be incorporeal. This interpretation is a later, Hellenistic accretion onto biblical Judaism. There are many texts in the Bible in which leaders, such as Moses or the prophets, see God. Most of these passages describe God in human—albeit veiled—form. Moses and the elders see only what is under God's feet (Exodus 24). On another occasion, Moses only sees God's back as He strides by (Ex. 33).

Various prophets, such as Isaiah, Micah, and Ezekiel, describe seeing God seated on a throne. But God's body is either not described or hidden. We have no indication that this God who is routinely described in masculine images is actually imagined with a male body. It is as if his maleness *must not* be imagined. This hiding of the divine body is a kind of solution to the homoerotic dilemma that would arise for men in thinking of a sexual father God. Like Noah's sons who do not gaze on their father's nakedness, Israelite men should not look at God's body.

Another solution to these dilemmas involves feminizing Israelite males, thereby both preserving heterosexual imagery and signifying their submission to God. Through the ritual act of wounding we call circumcision, males are symbolically emasculated in order to become "wives" of God. Several biblical stories dealing with male wounding provide structural models for this ritual. In Genesis, for example, Jacob's struggle with the angel results in a wound "in the hollow of his thigh." As some interpreters have noted, this may be a euphemistic way of referring to a genital injury. Jacob receives his injury at the very moment when he is renamed "Israel." Thus, when "Israel" emerges as a collective entity, it occurs through an act of male wounding. Similarly, Moses is almost killed by God on his way back to Egypt from Midian (Ex. 4). Only Zipporah's hasty circumcision of Moses' son causes God to desist from trying to kill Moses. Again, a male genital wounding signifies the sacrifice of manhood to God.

Feminists have tended to offer two solutions to Judaism's predominantly male God language. The first is to introduce women-oriented images of God, such as mother and crone. These female-oriented images balance out the masculine theological language which reflects and reinforces male experience. The second strategy involves seeking images that are beyond gender altogether. This latter approach presupposes that any representation of God that is gender-based is limiting and therefore inappropriately concretizes a God who is beyond gender.

How might men today relate to a masculine father God who has no body and who demands wounding as a sign of covenant? What kinds of images do men need? In offering one possible answer to this question, I also hope to contribute to feminist reflection on the issue of God language. I suggest that men may need male images of God, but not those that are currently dominant in the tradition. Specifically, we may want and need a masculine image of God whose face we can see and whose name we may speak.

As mentioned earlier, most biblical characters are not allowed to see God directly "face to face." Indeed, God tells Moses that anyone who sees the divine face shall die. So God turns his back to Moses, permitting him only to see God striding by. The masculine God imagined in Judaism is a model of masculinity that is all too familiar

and painful to many of us: a father figure whom we can never know. For those men who are struggling to redefine their own masculinity as a result of the feminist critique, it is a different kind of father and different kind of man that we both wish to know and to emulate.

In my view, the image of the masculine God who is rejected in feminist discourse should be rejected by men as well as women. These masculine images by and large neither reflect my experience, nor do they console me. I am not satisfied by an image of a masculine God whom I cannot imagine "face to face." I feel a need for images of a loving father figure, one who will not turn away, but who will embrace me. I need images of caring, loving men who do not wound me.

I have been told by some men who find traditional Jewish liturgy more powerful than I, that they do indeed find they can have intimacy with God as presently imagined in Jewish tradition. They point to the mystics as their predecessors. There has always been the possibility of an "I-Thou" experience with God in Jewish tradition. *Kol Hakavod*. Nevertheless, I simply cannot relate to an image of a Father whose name is unmentionable and into whose face I cannot look.

This desire for loving father images is relevant not only for men who are believers in God. I often hear men and women dismiss the discussion of God language because they don't believe in God. Why argue over how God is imagined if God does not exist? But one need not believe in a traditional notion of God to find such images powerful. Whether God is the name one gives to the processes of the universe, or to the still, small voice one hears when one stills one's mind, it may be useful to imagine that God in the form of a loving father.

Indeed, one symptom of our masculine oppression may be that we have lost any sensitivity to such images. Our atheism about the power of images—our inability to resonate with fatherly images—may be far more damaging and alienating than our atheism about God. Our atheism may be as much a product of our alienation from an abstract, distant father as a disbelief in God per se. Let me be clear. I am not suggesting that if God were imagined as a loving, nurturing father that more men would believe in Him. But more men might find their souls engaged if they had a nurturing, intimate father to whom they could turn.

As men who are seeking a new kind of masculinity, we may want to imagine what our God looks like and to begin using his personal name. We may want to imagine what it would be like to see Him face to face, to feel the warmth of His embrace. We may also want to imagine His face: as an old man with a beard, as a younger man whose face has not yet wrinkled. He may have blue eyes or brown. Let us imagine His tears as He cries over the pain of His children. We may want to imagine Him as tall and muscle-bound. Or perhaps a stooped small old man like Yoda. Let us imagine His gnarled fingers holding a cane. Let us imagine Him as a strong, loving father who can comfort us. Let Him be a wise old man who knows how to endure pain. We cannot rule out any of these images. For different purposes and for different people all of these may be necessary at one time or another.

To some, the imaging of God in this way will smack of idolatry. After all, we have been told repeatedly that Judaism prides itself on not reducing God to images. To have images of God is to restrict God, to reduce what is beyond knowledge to a static form. This is why the prohibition on making material images of God is part of the Ten Commandments.

If idolatry is the cost of imagining God in the form of a man, or of imagining God with a face, then I happily choose idolatry. But in fact such imagining should not be viewed as idolatrous. Feminist criticism has already called that assumption into question, noting that images of God abound throughout the Bible, and that those images are typically masculine: husband, king, father. Thus feminists have rightfully argued that if the masculine images are not idolatrous, then the new feminine ones also cannot be idolatrous.

Only the most abstract philosophical versions of Judaism come close to representing God without images. And even they still refer to God as "He." So if we accept the historical truth that Judaism has always used images to think of God, then we either define most versions of Judaism as idolatrous, or redefine the meaning of idolatry.

A preferable definition of idolatry is the hardening or deadening of images so that they no longer speak for their time. In other words, idolatry is a possibility within any religion. And what may be an appropriate image at time may turn out to be idolatrous at another. I am suggesting that the invisible, unapproachable father God be considered by men as an idolatrous image. For it continues this problematic association of an abstract, unavailable masculinity that has no body. Instead, we need to imagine God in a human form who turns toward us, reaches out fatherly arms to console us, picks us up and cradles us. To evoke such images is to undo the idolatry of creating a disembodied masculinity.

If we carry this approach to idolatry to its logical conclusion, then a new approach to material images of God may also be desirable. Material images of God are regarded as more idolatrous than textual representations. This is why the second of the Ten Commandments prohibits making material images. Unlike textual

images, material depictions have permanence. There is greater fear, perhaps, that they will be mistaken for what God actually is.

But the prohibition against material images contributes to our difficulty imagining what our God looks like. It is one thing to call God father; it is another to see God represented as father. To avoid giving these images materiality is to keep them intangible and inaccessible. Think of the power of imagining Apollo or Jesus in material form. The reduction of God to a material image was idolatrous for the biblical writers. But the opposite may be the case for some of us: It may be that by making such images we overcome a deadened, lifeless image of God.

The suggestion that Jews use material images will seem to remove the boundaries between Judaism and other religions, particularly Christianity. After all, as Jews, we have prided ourselves on our rejection of images. In both the popular and the scholarly imagination, the aniconographic strictures of ancient Israel signal Judaism's superiority over paganism, from which it grew, and over Christianity, which developed subsequently.

In fact, the use of images would not, by itself, collapse Judaism into Christianity or paganism, since many other beliefs and practices distinguish the religions. But more important, this compulsive need to find a criterion of demarcation, to differentiate Judaism from other religions, resembles the male game of one-upsmanship.

Furthermore, the notion of "tradition" as an autonomous and self-sufficient system is suspiciously like the notion of masculinity that we wish to overcome. Intimacy is precisely about the fluidity or softening of boundaries, between me and you, between God and human, between us and them. The need for rigid boundaries around Judaism recapitulates the image of a bounded masculinity. A different kind of masculinity would embrace a more fluid boundary of the tradition itself.

For similar reasons, men may also find that it is time to imagine God with a sexuality. Representing God's sexuality has been a problem, because of Judaism's tendencies toward strict monotheism. Without a divine partner, God cannot be imagined as a sexual being. The absence of divine sexuality, like the rejection of iconographic depictions of divinity, has been one of Judaism's distinctive traits. Only Kabbalah, with its understanding of many dimensions of the "Godhead" has been able to reconcile sexuality with monotheism.

But men also need positive models of sexuality. We want our sexuality to be affirmed in the images that are used to celebrate ourselves as human beings. Nevertheless, we must be particularly careful in reintroducing male sexuality into the divine realm, lest such images reinforce the already problematic ways in which male sexuality is connected with power over and violence toward women.

With whom can the expression of God's sexuality be imagined? The answer will depend on one's own sexuality. Heterosexuals may want to imagine God in love with Wisdom or *Shekinah* or Israel. But to avoid the association of masculinity and power, it is important that sometimes the genders be reversed: God the female making love to a masculine Wisdom, *Shekinah*, or Israel. Alternatively, heterosexual men might imagine loving God in the image of a woman. If the gender of God and Israel is flexible, then gays and lesbians can imagine themselves in love with a God of the same sex.

There will be people who will resist this sexualizing of God. They will argue that it was precisely the desexualizing of Israel's God that differentiated monotheism from paganism. In *God's Phallus*, I tried to show how wrong this contrast really is. The issue of eroticism was central to Israel's relationship with God. But even if this were not so, it again raises the question of whether we must keep our tradition static in order to preserve its uniqueness.

Jewish men may need to rethink circumcision. It is time to begin speaking about the implications of using this kind of wounding as a sign of the covenant.

In addition to rethinking the images of God, Jewish men may need to rethink practices such as circumcision. As I argued in my earlier book, *The Savage in Judaism*, circumcision in ancient Judaism was a symbol of a man's fertility, which was central to God's promise to Abraham. But it is time for men to begin speaking about the implications of using this kind of wounding as a sign of the covenant.

While debates continue about the medical necessity of circumcision, and about the pain the child may or may not experience, they are irrelevant to the specifically Jewish issue of whether a boy's entrance into the community should occur through a symbolic wounding. I believe that practices often carry meanings beyond those that actors intend. Whatever we say that circumcision means, the act of cutting the male foreskin

makes male wounding central to the covenant between God and Israel.

The issue of circumcision, in my view, is whether we want submission and wounding, as a symbolic act, to mark a man's relationship to God and to the community in general. I no longer believe such a wounding is defensible.

There is more emotion about eliminating circumcision than perhaps any other traditional practice. But it is time to find a different symbol of a boy's entrance into the community. Instead of cutting our sons, we might celebrate their masculinity. A more appropriate symbol would be a nurturing act, one that would affirm a boy's relationship to a loving father, both his own and that of his God. We might, for example, feed our sons, since a meal is also a traditional symbol of covenant. Indeed, in one text, Moses and Aaron and the elders go up to the top of the mountain, and when they see God, they eat and drink. Feeding our sons, rather than wounding them, would be a symbol of our nurturing relationship to them.

Such a change, of course, will introduce a significant disruption into the tradition. Some fathers will be circumcised, and their sons will not be. And there will be some Jews who circumcise and some who do not. But why must this be any more problematic than the fact that some family members observe the Sabbath and others don't? Some parents say that they circumcise their sons so that they will look like the father. But parents can use the difference as a point of departure to explain how religious symbols develop. What if a Jewish boy wants to be circumcised later in life because he affirms the traditional practice? Haven't his parents foisted a difficult and painful alternative upon him? But this argument is spurious. Any decision eliminates a choice. The decision to circumcise also eliminates a choice to be uncircumcised.

For good reasons, women may initially feel uneasy with a male critique of Judaism. The desire to celebrate the masculinity of God may sound like an attempt to revive the patriarchal tendencies of Judaism. Indeed, we have seen in the contemporary men's movement certain insensitivities to women's concerns and even new misogynist tendencies. But this need not be the case. Men might turn to masculine images of God out of their own feminist convictions.

For us to take the feminist critique seriously is to find ways of bringing new forms of masculinity into Jewish tradition. These are the kinds of masculinities that women have been asking for and that we as men have been seeking. What may begin as a need of men may resonate as well with some women. Just as men continue to be enriched by feminine images of God, so may women find resonance with a loving, nurturing father. □

Sadder than Abraham

Sadder than Abraham
with his spattered frock.
Sadder than Isaac,
skidding alone down the other
side of the mountain,
looking at the trees
as if for the first time.
Sadder than the ram,
its head a few feet from its body.
Sadder than this famous troupe is the thicket.
The thicket which guarded
the ram like a loyal henchman.
Even with its scroll of crime it weeps.
It remembers the slick horns in its brambles.
The blood it drew.
The thicket who listened quietly
to the yelp and silence,
yelp and silence,
like a door to a noisy room
opening and closing.

Peter Waldor

Back from South Africa

Lessons for the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process

Mubarak Awad and Edy Kaufman



AP/ WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

A Palestinian and Israeli visiting South Africa cannot avoid reflecting with a mixture of envy and admiration on the scope of political change in that nation. Although obviously distinct in their particulars, the South African and Israeli-Palestinian cases have many parallels; both stem from protracted, intractable communal conflicts. Both are now in a transition toward reconciliation and peace.

During our recent stay in South Africa, we observed that the country has made decisive progress toward the achievement of the ultimate goal of a multiracial democracy. In contrast, back home, two years after the dramatic signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Accords, we found that the process has slowed down and often seems deadlocked.

The primary threat to the ultimate success of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process comes from the extremist opponents in both camps. This has also been the case with violent and intransigent groups in South Africa, but they have been successfully isolated and controlled. The key to constructive change in ending apartheid has been for the process to be *active rather than reactive*; to adopt a decisive strategy and move forward without being derailed. Hence, the South African elections announced for April 1994 were conducted on schedule despite innumerable difficulties, forcing Afrikaans and Zulu politicians who might otherwise have found openings to undermine the process to jump onto the bandwagon and participate.

In Israel, acts of terrorism targeting Israeli civilians perpetuated by small groups of Islamic fanatics have had a chilling effect on the public's and the government's willingness to move forward with the peace process. Personal and national security have once again taken precedence over a larger vision of the future in the national debate. The government's rationale for delays in the accords' original timetable is that removing troops from the remaining Occupied Territories would leave the Jewish settlements vulnerable to terrorism. Indeed, rather than easing Israeli control of the occupied areas, the Israelis have responded to each terrorist act during the last two years with draconian measures, including waves of arrests and the closure of Gaza and the West Bank, preventing Arab workers from going to their jobs inside Israel. These policies simply increase the frustration and despair of the vast number of Palestinians. Jerusalem is more often than not off-limits to most Muslim and Christian West-Bankers, resulting in daily hardships and denial of access to religious sites.

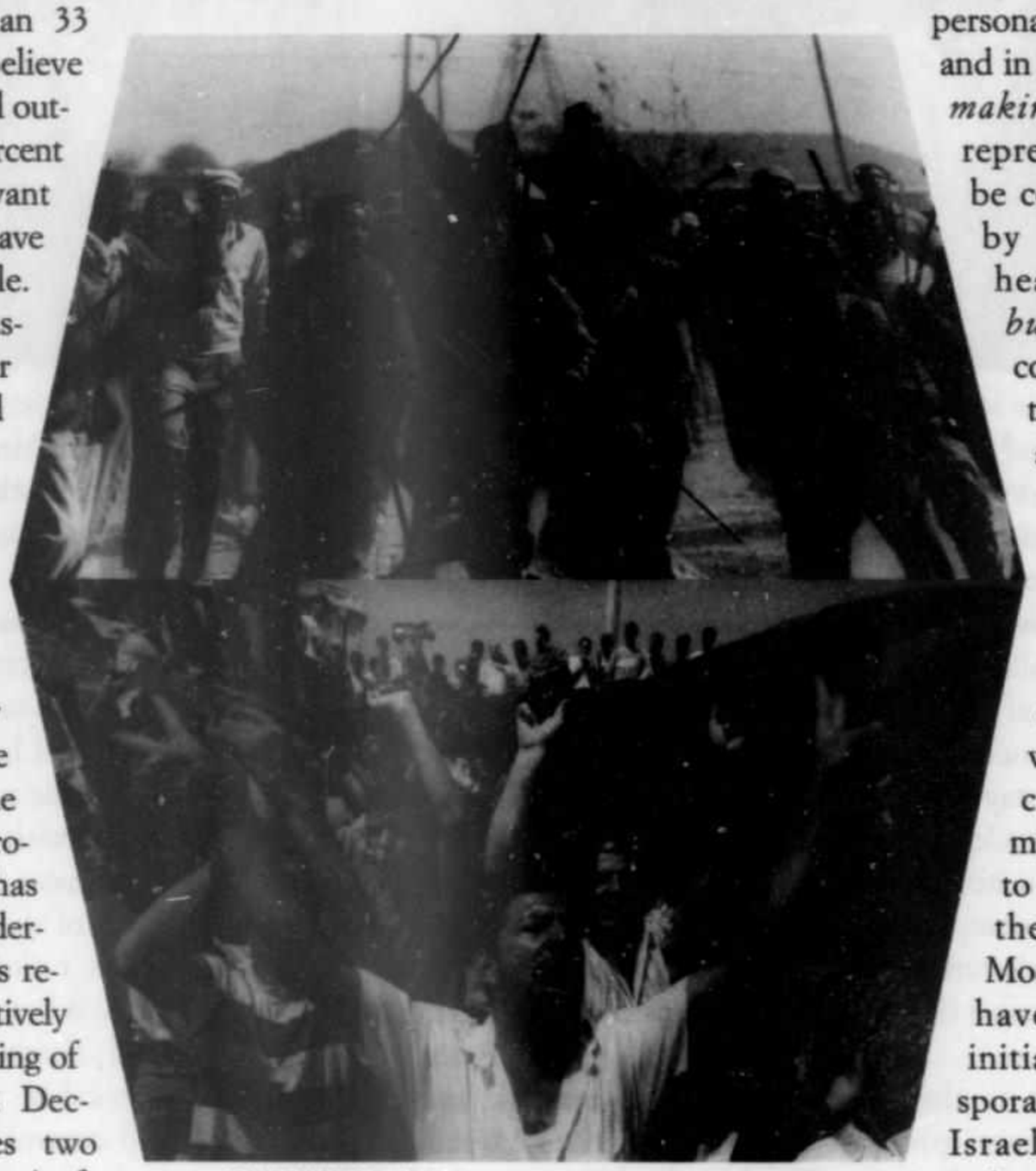
The government's restrictive policies have strengthened support for Islamic organizations such as Hamas. The Israeli public is, in turn, dismayed by the high level

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of popular Palestinian support for the murders and bombings and disappointed with the inability or unwillingness of the Palestinian National Authority to crack down on anti-Israel terrorism. Yet in their zeal to hold onto or annex Palestinian territory, right-wing Jewish settlers have created a security nightmare for the Israeli government. And the government itself sends a decidedly mixed message in its continuing approval of construction sites on Palestinian land around Jerusalem and selectively in existing settlements. Small wonder that there is widening desperation among Palestinians, many of whom call for the immediate cessation of the negotiations.

While support for the peace process among Palestinians and Israelis has at times been greater than 65 percent, lately less than 33 percent of Israelis believe there will be a successful outcome and about 80 percent of Palestinians want Chairman Arafat to leave the negotiating table. According to the Nablus-based Center for Palestine Research and Studies, last July, 81 percent of the Palestinians did not trust the Israeli intentions in regard to the peace process, and needless to say, very few Israelis have confidence in Arafat's designs. The lack of discernible progress toward peace has weakened Rabin's leadership; the chances of his reelection now seem relatively smaller than at the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles two years ago. For his part, Arafat has not been able to expand his base of support even within the ranks of the PLO, his own organization. The fate of each of these leaders is entwined with the other; thus, the political demise of one of the partners may halt the transition to peace for years, opening the grim possibility of another Intifada and a growing toll of new victims. The editors of this journal summed up the bleak situation in the March/April issue: "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."



AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

In hindsight, it is clear that it was a serious tactical error for Israeli and Palestinian peace activists to assume that after the culmination of second-track efforts in the Oslo accord they could relax and let the politicians and diplomats lead their two peoples toward peace. This type of communal conflict is different from the few remaining Cold War struggles, such as North and South Korea, or Cuba and the United States. As with the South African struggle, the Israeli-Palestinian problem involves not only political regimes or ideologies, but is a deeply rooted conflict between peoples. While wise statesmanship was certainly crucial to resolving the strife in South Africa, the future of the new regime cannot be solely dependent on the leaders' personalities. Both in Israel and in South Africa, peace-*making* among official representatives needs to be constantly nourished by reconciliation, healing, and peace-*building* by people committed to working together across ethnic and national lines. In the Israeli-Palestinian context, while people mobilize to build an effective resistance to the extremist tendencies within their own communities, they must also reach beyond to their counterparts in the other community. Moderates of both sides have to regain the initiative. The currently sporadic joint Palestinian-Israeli acts of peaceful resistance to the settlers' expansionist provocations should become routine.

Acknowledging the stamina and perseverance of "worthy opponents" and forgiving past injustices are painful steps, given the current level of animosity and the vast gulf of incomprehension. Yet social space must be made for Palestinians to feel safe to express their sorrow for the violence and loss of human lives, talking to Israelis about the suffering and grief of their families. After years of dehumanization, lukewarm official communiques expressing regret for terroristic acts are not

(Continued on p. 94)

Detach and Save

High Holiday Supplement:
Taking Spiritual Transformation Seriously

The ten days starting with Rosh HaShanah and ending with Yom Kippur can be a powerful experience of change, if you take the opportunity to seriously engage with the theme of repentance, and if you experience this process within a community that takes the whole venture seriously.

We have developed a Spiritual Transformation (*Tshuvah,* or Repentance) Workbook that can provide you with detailed guidance about how to use this period effectively. And it is followed by a penitential prayer that you can use on Yom Kippur to supplement the standard (*Al Cheyt*—For Our Sins) prayer. It can be used most effectively if you read Michael Lerner's book, *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation* (HarperPerennials, 1995), particularly chapters 2 and 15.

In many synagogues, it is difficult to get into a consciousness that is receptive to spiritual transformation. Yet that is what Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur are about. So we recommend that you take time during the afternoons of the holiday to begin to work this through. Then, use the next seven days to go through the entire workbook systematically and bring it with you to review on Yom Kippur.

The whole experience is far more powerful if you get a *Tshuvah* partner—someone who will go through the process with you. We explain in more detail below in the workbook.

Spiritual Transformation: The Tshuvah Process

The following are elaborations on themes developed by Michael Lerner in his book, Jewish Renewal

I. Reviewing the Past Year

Get a calendar or your diary or other records of the past year. Try to recall what you wanted to accomplish last Rosh HaShanah and what part you did accomplish this year. This year, keep a written record of the conclusions you come to at the end of the Tshuvah process, so that you can refer to it next Rosh HaShanah.

Now, go through the year in your mind. Tonight, try to remember the highlights and problems you faced in this past year.

Start with your relationships to your parents, children, spouse, lovers, and friends.

List here the major issues you had with each.

Problem	***What You Contribute To It***
Father	
1.	
2.	
Mother	
1.	
2.	
Spouse, Lover or Potentials	
1.	
2.	
3.	
Friends and Children	
1.	
2.	
3.	

Now, in each case, write down what part of the problem might have been generated by you, and what about the way you are in that relationship might have been a part (not the entirety) of the problem. And what part of that, about how you are, is something you might consider working on in this Tshuvah period?

World of Work

What have been the problems you've faced here? Have you had good elationships with co-workers? Have you felt fulfilled in your work? Have you been involved in collective efforts to change the workplace, or the union, or tried to organize, or have you felt powerless and unable to envision changing anything? If you were in a supervisory position, did you treat your supervisees with the respect that they deserve? If you were unemployed, what efforts did you make to change that, or were you feeling more defeated than necessary? Did you stay in a job or remain unemployed because you felt that you didn't deserve something better, or did you make serious efforts to find more fulfilling work? Or, if you recognized that such work was unavailable, did you join with others to challenge the economic realities that make work unfulfilling, or did that seem too overwhelming? If your work is unfulfilling, did you blame yourself inappropriately, or involve yourself in struggles to change the workplace? Did you discharge anger from work by punishing yourself (e.g., through alcohol or drugs) or by dumping on friends or lovers, or did you express that anger at the appropriate targets, or through collective action? What could have been different?

Problem	What You Contribute To It
1. Relationship to Co-Workers	
2. Relationship to Supervisors or Supervisees	
3. How healthy were your coping mechanisms with stress at work?	
4. Did you inappropriately blame yourself, or dump anger inappropriately on others?	
5. What kind of political action did you take in relationship to work?	

Respect For Your Body

Did you care for your body in a good way this past year? If not, what didn't you do that you should have done?

1. *Eating*
2. *Exercise*
3. *Vacations*
4. *Clothing and Appearance*
5. *Self-Presentation*
6. *Meditation or Quiet Time*

Respect For Your Soul

In what ways did you care for your soul this past year?

In what ways did you neglect your soul?

Did you nourish its hunger for quiet time or meditation?

Did it give you any messages that you ignored? What were they?

Did you take time to read the books that would have expanded your awareness of spiritual life? If not, what do you want to read this next year?

Did you take the time to read other books that would have given you pleasure and joy? If not, what do you want to read this next year?

What courses (evening schools in liberal arts or a new profession, art programs, Hebrew, Jewish studies, studying a new musical instrument, learning a martial art, learning about another culture or philosophical tradition) did you want to take to expand your horizons? What would you like to take this next year?

What pleasures did you give to yourself this year? Which do you want to expand or initiate this next year? Did you allow yourself to go to art exhibits, plays, musical concerts, poetry readings, discussion groups, community political action activities, or other things that would have given you pleasure? What do you want to do in this regard in the next year?

Tikkun Olam: Healing and Repairing the World

In what ways is the political, economic, and social world functioning that are destructive, harmful, or hurtful to people in other countries, to people in the U.S., or to you personally?

Consider, for example, Bosnia, Haiti, China, Rwanda, Israel, Palestine, domestic poverty, homelessness.

What concrete steps have you taken to be involved in or to form some group that would address any of these?

If you haven't been involved, what were the reasons you gave yourself? Which of those reasons presupposed a "surplus powerlessness" (a way in which you were actually assuming yourself less able to initiate things or take leadership than is "objectively" true)?

If you tried to be involved, and had hassles or disappointments with other people in the process, what were those and what part did you have in making or sustaining them? What did you do to confront the problems directly? If you tried to confront the problems and failed, did you give up or did you attempt to form another group addressing the same problems, but this time under your own leadership and direction? If not, what could you have done in this direction?

In what ways did you buy the message that "they will never listen," or "I can never get things to happen," or "I'm not powerful enough to start something so I'll wait for someone else to do it," or "Other people are too untogether or too immoral or too passive, so there's no point in me trying to mobilize them," or other similar messages?

Judaism and the Jewish World

In what ways did you explore your relationship with God this past year, or what ways did you ignore that dimension of life? Did you read any books or attend lectures or courses or dedicate time to exploring the spiritual dimension of your life?

How much did you seek to deepen your knowledge of Judaism, Jewish history, Jewish texts or the culture of the Jewish people or of Israel? What opportunities were there and what were the reasons you gave yourself for why this year wasn't the right time?

Did you allow yourself to take 25 hours out of your busy schedule to observe Shabbat in a traditional way? If not, what part of Shabbat did you observe? How fulfilling or spiritually deep did you allow it to be? If it wasn't, what explanations did you give yourself for why it wasn't working? What would you have wished it to be?

Did you allow others to convince you to separate the religious from the social/political transformative aspects of Judaism? How did that happen in your life?

Did you involve yourself in some communal activity, or in the TIKKUN *community? Did you read* TIKKUN *carefully, did you get others to read it? Did you work on conferences, or other activities for* TIKKUN, *New Israel Fund, Peace Now or some other Jewish group in which you believed? What held you back?*

If what you found existing was spiritually one-dimensional or politically or socially unsatisfying, what actions, if any, did you take to change that?

Did you challenge aspects of the Jewish world that you don't like or that are too conservative, conformist or spiritually dead? Did you give support to those who do challenge?

Personal Traits

Do you find yourself sometimes exhibiting behaviors or traits that you wish were not there?

Check which of these apply to you, and when, during the past year, it played a hurtful role in your life:

1. *Fear that others won't or don't like you*
2. *Self-denigration or lack of self-respect*
3. *Inability to express anger*
4. *Self-punishing or self-blame*
5. *Excessive criticalness toward others*
6. *Rejection of others' caring or love for you*
7. *Coldness or insensitivity to others*
8. *Paranoia*
9. *Depression*
10. *Excessively controlling of others*
11. *Confusion*
12. *Tardiness*
13. *Disorganization*
14. *Excessive focus on details or petty issues*
15. *Lying*
16. *Manipulating others*
17. *Disrespect toward others, subtly or overtly*
18. *Inability to let go*
19. _____
20. _____

Now, go over the lists of issues that have come up for you during this past year, and dedicate one or two days to each area during the coming Tshuvah period. You don't have to wait till Rosh HaShanah to begin—start right after Slichot. Make a copy of this page for each area, so that you can fill in the page differently for each problem issue. Then, do the following:

1. *Imagine if you don't change some important aspect of this area. Now list some of the bad consequences* (ro'a ha'g'zeyra) *that might come to pass in the next few years if things stay the same as they have been.*

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

The tradition says that "tshuvah, tfillah u tzedakah maavirin et ro'a ha'g'zeyra" *(yearning, caring and turning can temper the harshness of the decree). So, compose a prayer asking for God's help in dealing with this issue and what kind of help you want.*

2. *Now, decide which part of this area you can work on in this coming year.*

3. *Who is already doing the good work and is your ally in this matter? Write out the name or names of those currently struggling with this issue. Write out a resolution to help, through donating time or money, to this person's/organization's work, and ways that you will allow yourself to learn from them or participate with them, or get therapy from them, or work with them.*

4. *What specific plan will you follow this next year, and what specific steps will you take to change your behavior? (Use the other side of this page to write a detailed plan.)*

5. *What first steps could you take within the limited ten-day period of tshuvah that address this issue in some real or symbolic way? What specific help do you need to take them?*

Tshuvah "Partner" or Support Group

It's hard enough to be honest with oneself enough to list the issues. But when it comes to figuring out what to do, this is often blocked for many of us. So, we take on a "partner" or a support group that will assist us in thinking about first steps and a plan to change things. This is particularly important in dealing with the issues where you feel most blocked, where you simply can't imagine how to take the first step to change the dynamics of a bad relationship or a troubling internal trait.

The goal of the partner, however, is not to make concrete suggestions. Rather, the partner's goal is to encourage you to verbally explore every possibility, and to ask you if you have explored avenues that may occur to the partner or support-group person that haven't occurred to you. Then, switch, and you play that role for the partner, asking them the relevant questions. There is a thin line here, because sometimes asking about possibilities is really a subtle way of trying to suggest a course of action. Don't do that! You are not a therapist and this is not a therapy group, and you have not been commissioned to solve someone else's problems. So be sure not to convey the sense that you know that a particular road to go is the right one. Instead, keep asking about a wide variety of options, and help the person consider those options through asking, whenever a roadblock appears, whether that person can think of any ways to get around the roadblock. After Yom Kippur, consider checking in with each other once a month this year.

*Partner's name or names of people in the support group:*_____

_____

Home Phone:

_____

Work Phone:

Checking In With Each Other

During the week, arrange to talk to your partner or at least one member of the support group every day (yes, every day). The phone call can be as short as, "Did you get to work on your tshuvah work today? If not, do you want to do it now on the phone? If not now, is there some time later today we can discuss it?" On Shabbat and Yom Tov, arrange for a time to get together (one hour, half of which goes to one person, half to the other, to explore their issues and the steps they are taking).

CONFIDENTIALITY

You keep this. It's your promise from your partner or members of your group that they will keep whatever you discuss totally confidential. So have them sign the pledge.

"I promise to keep any information I learn from ..... (print your name here) totally confidential, to not share it with others in any way, and to not refer to it in any public or private way in future dealings I have with this person or with anyone else, except as explicitly agreed to by the person listed above."

Tshuvah partner or group members sign here:

For Our Sins על חטא

A Supplement to the High Holiday Prayerbook

We invite you to use the following along with the traditional confessional prayer, "Al Cheyt," *recited on Yom Kippur. Members of your community might spend time together before or during the services to discuss this supplement and add to it your own ideas and concerns. The "sins" need not be those of you or your friends. The idea of a collective confessional is that we are inextricably linked and hence must take responsibility for the entire community involved either in discussing this version of the* Al Cheyt, *or writing your own. In this way we hope to assist those who want to ensure that the spiritually powerful experience of the High Holidays does not get lost in a rote recitation of prayers that feel remote, expressing the sensibilities of another time and place.*

FOR OUR SINS

On the Jewish High Holy Days we take collective responsibility for our lives and for the activities of the community of which we are a part.

Although we realize that we did not create the world into which we are born, we nevertheless have responsibility for what it is like as long as we participate in it.

While the struggle to change ourselves and our world may be long and painful, it is our struggle. No one else can do it for us. To the extent that we have failed to do all that we could to make ourselves or our community all that we ought to be, we ask God and each other for forgiveness—and we now commit ourselves to acting differently this coming year.

Ve-al kulam, Eloha selichot, selach lanu, mechal lanu, kaper lanu.

וְעַל כּוּלָּם אֱלוֹהַּ סְלִיחוֹת, סְלַח לָנוּ, מְחַל לָנוּ, כַּפֵּר לָנוּ.

For all our sins, may the force that makes forgiveness possible forgive us, pardon us, and make atonement possible.

For the sins we have committed before you and in our communities by being so preoccupied with ourselves that we ignore the larger problems of the world in which we live;

And for the sins we have committed by being so directed toward outward realities that we have ignored our spiritual development;

For the sins of accepting the current distribution of wealth and power as unchangeable;

And for the sins of giving up on social change and focusing exclusively on personal advancement and success;

For the sins of feeling so powerless when we hear about oppression that we finally close our ears;

And for the sins of dulling our outrage at the continuation of poverty, oppression, and violence in this world, most notably this year in Bosnia, Chechnya, and in our own nation;

For the sins of participating in a racist society and not dedicating more energy to fighting racism;

And for the sins we have committed by allowing our food and our air to be poisoned;

For the sins of not doing enough to save the environment;

And for the sins of not doing enough to challenge sexist institutions and practices;

For the sins of turning our backs on—or participating in—the oppression of gays and lesbians;

And for the sins of passing moral judgments on people infected with HIV;

For the sins of not doing enough to alleviate homelessness, poverty, and world hunger;

For the sins of cynicism and passivity about social change;

And for the sins of expecting that our leaders and activists must be perfect or far more together than the rest of us;

For these sins we ask God and each other to give us the strength to forgive ourselves and each other.

For the sins we have committed by not forgiving our parents for the wrongs they committed when we were children;

And for the sins of having too little compassion or too little respect for our parents or for our children;

For the sins of cooperating with self-destructive behavior in others or in ourselves;

And for the sins of not supporting each other as we attempt to change;

For the sins of not seeing the spark of divinity within each person we encounter or within ourselves;

And for the sins of not learning from and giving adequate respect and care to our elders and to our teachers;

For the sins of being jealous and trying to possess and control those whom we love;

And for the sins of being judgmental of others and ourselves;

For the sins of withholding love and support;

And for the sins of doubting our ability to love and get love from others;

For the sins of insisting that everything we do have a payoff;

For the sins of not recognizing the beauty within ourselves;

And for the sins of not recognizing the beauty that surrounds us;

For the sins of not allowing ourselves to play;

And for the sins of being manipulative or hurting others to protect our own egos;

Ve-al kulam, Eloha וְעַל כּוּלָם אֱלוֹהַּ
selichot, selach lanu, סְלִיחוֹת, סְלַח לָנוּ,
mechal lanu, kaper lanu מְחַל לָנוּ, כַּפֶּר לָנוּ.

For the sins we have committed by not publicly supporting the Jewish people and Israel when they are being treated or criticized unfairly;

And for the sins we have committed by not publicly criticizing Israel or the Jewish people when they are acting in opposition to the highest principles of the Jewish tradition;

For the sins of not recognizing the humanity and suffering of the Palestinian people and the injustice they face living under the unwanted Occupation;

And for the sins of not recognizing the humanity and pain of the Israeli people and the injustice they face living under the unwanted Occupation;

And for the sins of not recognizing the humanity and pain of the Israeli people, or for blaming the conflict with the Palestinian people entirely on the Jewish people or Israelis or Zionism;

For the sins of allowing conservative or insensitive leaders to speak on behalf of all American Jews;

And for the sins of not supporting those institutions and leaders that have attempted to provide an alternative voice;

For the sins of being critical of Jewish life from a distance rather than from a personal involvement or commitment;

And for the sins of not spending more time engaged in learning the Jewish tradition and studying Jewish history, literature, and holy texts;

For the sins of not giving enough time to building the kind of Jewish community we desire instead expecting things to happen without contributing to make things happen;

And for the sins of being insensitive or insulting to non-Jews;

For the sins of not having compassion for one another;

And for not taking care of one another;

For the sins of not sharing responsibility for childbearing;

And for the sins of self-absorption, allowing us to be insulated from the loneliness and need of people around us;

For the sins of focusing only on our sins and not our strengths and beauties;

And for the sins of not adequately rejoicing and celebrating the beauty and grandeur of God's creation.

Ve-al kulam, Eloha וְעַל כּוּלָם אֱלוֹהַּ
selichot, selach lanu, סְלִיחוֹת, סְלַח לָנוּ,
mechal lanu, kaper lanu מְחַל לָנוּ, כַּפֶּר לָנוּ.

For all these, Lord of Forgiveness, forgive us, pardon us, grant us atonement.

In some congregations the service stops after this is read, and people divide into small groups of four to five and discuss what particular aspects of this prayer make most sense to them, what they are going to do differently in the coming year; what support they need from others to help make changes in their lives, and what they are going to do to secure that support.

Composed by Michael Lerner, editor, TIKKUN *magazine, for Yom Kippur, 5756; September 1995.*

Circulate these prayers and workbook. And support us in doing this work by subscribing to TIKKUN *($31 to* TIKKUN*, 251 West 100th St. N.Y. N.Y. 10025).*

Sex and Yom Kippur

Judith Plaskow

For some time now, many non-Orthodox congregations have been changing the Torah reading for the afternoon of Yom Kippur, substituting the ethical precepts of Leviticus 19 for Leviticus 18. While the origin of the traditional reading—a list of prohibited sexual relationships—may be connected to an ancient custom of dancing and courting in the fields on the afternoon of Yom Kippur, in the context of contemporary observance of the Day of Atonement, the recitation of Leviticus 18 seems out of place and even slightly bizarre. I had always supported the substitution of a different reading—until a recent incident made me look again at the function of Leviticus 18 and raise some questions around it.

After a lecture I delivered this year on rethinking Jewish attitudes toward sexuality, a woman approached me in a very distressed state. She told me that she belonged to a Conservative synagogue that had abandoned the practice of reading Leviticus 18 on Yom Kippur. As a victim of childhood sexual abuse by her grandfather, she said, she felt betrayed by that decision, since she wanted to hear her community state publicly the parameters of legitimate sexual relations on a day when large numbers of Jews gather.

I responded to the woman that it was not the purpose of the incest prohibitions of Leviticus 18 to protect the young and vulnerable. Rather, these strictures served to guard the honor of adult males through injunctions not to "uncover the nakedness" of those who belong to them. As part of the Bible's "holiness code," which deals with the laws of purity, Leviticus 18 is far more interested in the purity of genealogical descent, the prevention of improper mixtures, and the preservation of proper class boundaries than it is with "sexual ethics" in the current sense. The text's striking silence on the issue of father/daughter incest—the most common violation—is one indication of the gulf between biblical concerns and contemporary interests and values.

Judith Plaskow is professor of religious studies at Manhattan College, where she teaches a course titled Sexuality and the Sacred.

While I argued with my interlocutor that reverting to Leviticus 18 would not really address her needs, I also was quite aware that I had failed to provide a satisfactory response to her desire to see the themes of self-examination and atonement publicly linked to issues of behavior in intimate relationships. Although this person was not necessarily committed to the understanding of sexual holiness expressed in Leviticus 18, she felt that in quietly changing the Torah reading her community had avoided issues of sexual responsibility altogether.

The criticism points to a broad pattern of communal evasion of issues of sexuality, which affects many people other than survivors of sexual abuse. When one considers the enormous amount of work that many Christian denominations have devoted to issues of sexual ethics over the last twenty years, it is striking how sparse and how recent the Jewish discussion has been. Many sectors of the Jewish community have engaged in debates about homosexuality. But focusing the community's anxiety about sexual norms on a particular minority often has served to deflect attention from broader consideration of changing Jewish sexual behavior and values. It is only just now, for example, several years after the movement's decision to admit gay and lesbian students to Hebrew Union College, that an ad hoc committee of the Reform Central Conference of American Rabbis is working on a report on human sexuality. In the Conservative movement, the 1994 "Jewish Pastoral Letter on Intimate Relations," written by Elliot Dorff for the Rabbinical Assembly partly to contextualize discussion of homosexuality, was drafted with the explicit noncooperation of the Jewish Theological Seminary and United Synagogue.

I think there are a number of reasons for this reluctance to take up sexual issues. First is the difficulty of talking seriously about sexual questions in our society. Saturated as our culture is with sexual images, there is an enormous gap between media fixation on sexuality and pressures toward sexual activity, and the capacity of individuals to speak comfortably about and claim responsibility for their own sexuality. As a teacher, I am continually astonished by the gulf between my students'

behavior—many of them are sexually active—and the embarrassment many of them experience even saying the word "sex."

Another reason for the reticence is the contentiousness of sexual questions. There are many topics pertaining to sexuality on which it is virtually impossible to reach consensus. Add to this the fact that individuals generally have a deep personal stake in defending their own behaviors and perspectives, and it may be tempting to the powers that be to avoid discussion—even if the process of conversation would be much more important than any particular outcome.

Third, I think there is a real fear in some sectors of the Jewish community of confronting the depths of the conflict between traditional sexual values and contemporary behavior, because the conflict raises basic questions about the authority, and even the morality, of tradition. So many Jews are "sexual outlaws" when measured against traditional criteria—that disallow premarital sex, for example—that even acknowledging the realities of people's lives can seem an affront to tradition. In this context, it is easier to ignore the contradictions with which many Jews live than either to criticize and transform traditional values or to have to judge one's friends, one's children, and one's self.



JULIE DELTON

In the aftermath of the conversation with my questioner, however, I had a vision of a different way of proceeding—one that would open up the discussions now beginning within the various denominations. I imagined many small Jewish communities grappling with their sexual values and struggling to create statements of sexual ethics that they would be willing to affirm. Leviticus 18 enjoins Jews to holiness in the arena of sexual behavior, connecting that holiness with the health and survival of the people. If various groups within the Jewish community were to try to create their own Leviticus 18, how would they define holiness now?

Such groups might well begin by wrestling with Leviticus, yet they would undoubtedly find their way to very different questions. In examining the relationship between individual and communal well-being, they would have to address the ways in which many of the assumptions of Leviticus—e.g., that it is the nakedness of the fathers that is most in need of protection, or that menstrual blood is defiling—grow out of and support sexual injustice. They might define defilement as the outcome of abuse of power and the violation of the vulnerable rather than as an almost physical attribute, and one that often protects the privilege of the powerful. At the same time, they would want to attend to the social structures that make for holy relationships. They would also be more person-centered, focusing on the quality of relationships rather than on the worthiness of particular acts. They might be aware of the dangers of equating certain feelings with holiness, yet they would want at least to attend to feelings. Attempting to articulate both basic standards of sexual decency and a vision of possible holiness, they might try to connect sexual values with broader criteria for just relationships. And while, with Leviticus, they might acknowledge the importance of boundaries, they would also want to formulate a positive understanding of sexual delight.

Obviously, the necessity for serious reexamination of Jewish sexual values is not tied to a particular event or season. Yet there may be a certain appropriateness in linking this task to Yom Kippur. In making the connection, we pose as concretely as possible the need for new foundations. We acknowledge the importance of doing *tshuvah* (repentance) in the realm of our most intimate relationships. Our families are the first sphere in which we learn about both love and domination, and they are the most immediate and most frightening context in which we can begin to make change. In speaking of sex on Yom Kippur, we continue to link the concept of holy community to the quest for holiness in personal relations. We also undertake communal *tshuvah* in relation to all those who have been passed over, exploited, or abandoned because it has been easier to play ostrich than to confront the contradictions that are part of the fabric of our lives. □

Dreaming of Tarshish/Living in Nineveh

Two Images of Jonah

Mordechai Beck

Prophecy is bad business. Most biblical prophets suffer the slings and arrows of an outraged public. Neither is their personal life spared. The greatest of all Hebrew prophets, Moses, was constantly attacked by the ungrateful and short-tempered Children of Israel. Even his beloved sister and brother, Miriam and Aaron, told tales against him. Later prophets fared no better. Jeremiah was slung into a pit, Elijah forced into the desert, Elisha taunted by unruly children and called "baldy." The prophet's lot is not a happy one. Only Jonah, the son of Amitai, succeeds fully with his mission, and yet—paradox of paradox!—this very success is treated by the prophet himself as a form of failure.

Jonah comes to us out of a vacuum. At the opening of his saga—among the shortest books of the so-called minor prophets—he is blasted onto center stage without prior warning. We know not from whence he comes, his intellectual background or family pedigree, nor, most intriguing, why he should have been sent to do the Lord's work among the recalcitrant inhabitants of big, bad Nineveh—the apogee of contemporary urban civilization.

Academics and scholars argue over Jonah's status. Was he a real person, or just a metaphor? Maybe he was a combination of both. Some identify him with the gentleman of the same name and profession who appears at the time of the Israel's King Yarovam ben Yoash (Kings 2, 14; 25). But this is an old strategy. Did Solomon really write The Song of Songs or Ecclesiates? Did King David write all the Psalms attributed to him? Then as now, a famous name on the cover works as an approbation. In any case, Jonah's true identity is secondary to his inner life, which contains within it a profound paradigm.

Jonah's paradigm, wrapped up in a fairy tale coating, is considered so crucial that the Rabbis included the chanting of the entire tale in the service of the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur. How is it possible that this fictional narrative should warrant such esteem? And what is the nature of its link with Yom Kippur? The clues to these mysteries demand an open mind and an open heart.

*Writer and printmaker Mordechai Beck has lived in Jerusalem since 1975. An exhibition of "*Maftir Yonah*" was mounted at Yeshiva University in 1993/94.*



MORDECHAI BECK

Figure 1

No sooner does Jonah appear in the biblical narrative than he's off, "fleeing before the Lord." His decision to try to escape the divine imperative is radically different from that of other prophets, such as Moses, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, who merely express their unworthiness in the face of their divine mandates. Jonah seems to be consciously running away not only from God, his people, and the Land of Israel, but also and perhaps essentially from himself.

A rich, possibly well-traveled individual, Jonah heads for Tarshish, a destination that fate prevents him from reaching. If his own identity is shrouded in mystery and anonymity, the same could be said for the location of this equally mysterious city. Scholars and biblical exegeses guess at points as far away as Sidon in Phoenicia to Carthage and Spain. But a fairer assumption is that this, too, is part of the parabolic atmosphere conjured up by the rest of the narrative.

The Bible depicts Tarshish as a place at the end of the rainbow, a paradise-on-earth in which the burden of human responsibility is lightened if not indeed erased. It is like Gauguin's Tahiti, which the painter reached by bursting out of the everyday bonds of bourgeois



Figure 2

respectability and the daily transactions of family, job, and social obligations. Jonah is such a burster of boundaries. In Hebrew, the name TaRSHiSH consists of the three last letters of the alphabet—*shin, resh, tav*—suggesting its extremity. The fourth letter is "*yad*," a cipher for God's name. Even there, at the edge of the canvas, the God of the universe is to be found.

The biblical Jonah—his name means dove—is a bird in flight.

His penchant for flying is delicately balanced against his dependency on the earthier elements for his sustenance. Perhaps he is attracted by the impossibility of his flight precisely because he knows it will fail.

All these considerations faced me when I undertook to illustrate the Book of Jonah for a limited- edition book with my colleague, the calligrapher David Moss. The challenge was how I could translate graphically the essence of this enigmatic story. There were few precedents before the modern era. In the past, few if any of the great masters (Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Blake) had dealt with Jonah, possibly because it was considered too flippant a story. Those artists who did illustrate it did so as folk artists, taking the narrative at face value.

In this century Jonah did a bit better. At least two major Israeli artists—Nahum Guttman and Jacob Steinhardt—did illustrations. Each executed a series of etchings, and though they are beautiful, inventive works, they, too, tend to relate to the surface meaning of the text. Mysteriously, Steinhardt chose to publish not his etchings, which are delightful, but his woodcuts, which make Jonah resemble the far more anguished figure of Job. (The result can be seen in his *Book of Jonah*, published by the Jewish Publication Society in 1953.)

My own attempt at Jonah is pitched at a more psychological dimension. I have tried—also in etching—to present the prophet as a modern everyman (figure 1). He is pitted against the massive forces around him, and within him. I derived my interpretation from the text itself, which emphasizes Jonah's insignificance. This is best exemplified—in a contrary way, which typifies the protagonist's character—by the thirteen-fold repetition of the word 'big,' applied to Nineveh, to the gargantuan fish that swallows Jonah, to the fears of the sailors, and to a moment of Jonah's spontaneous joy.

Ultimately, Jonah flees from himself, from his own talents. But his flight is grounded in a deep psychological truth about the human condition—both physical (limited) and spiritual (limitless). This is what I tried to capture in this opening etching, with its suggestion of dark forces both within and without the prophet's persona.

The last scene of the narrative is also the last I illustrated. In this etching (figure 2), the viewer confronts the city of Nineveh in the way that it confronts the prophet. It is an ironic statement. At the end of his spiritual journey Jonah is forced to come to a reckoning with the place from which he fled at the very beginning of his odyssey. Again the psychological realism takes on an eerily modern edge. To really repent, we have to return to those places in our psyche that most disturb us. In modern psychotherapeutic jargon, this is the only way that we can be reborn.

Apart from its size, Nineveh is characterized by its moral waywardness. Its half-animal, half-human inhabitants are both highly civilized yet simultaneously alienated from their psychic sources. They have, under the influence of Jonah, turned to God. But just as easily they could have turned to a stranger advocating some political ideology. These people lack a basic sense of direction, "knowing neither left from right" which, according to some medieval commentators, puts them into the category of animals, and according to others, of children.

The parallels between the Jonah story and our contemporary dilemmas are so strong that during the three years I worked on this project I came to sense that, to a generation which is searching for both independence and meaning, the Book of Jonah is as relevant as was the Book of Job to the generation that passed, in reality or vicariously, through the traumas of the Holocaust. This is why Jonah does not appear in the final print (the last of six I executed for the book). The point of view is that of the onlooker. In this last etching we, the viewers, have become Jonah. We can flee or we can stay. Emerging from the belly of the fish into the light of day, we are forced to realize that the land of Tarshish is reached—if ever—only through the gates of Nineveh. □

Public Health: Practicing Without a Net

Robert S. Levine

Within the pages of this magazine, its editors and writers have argued that America needs a fundamental transformation from an ethos of selfishness to an ethos of caring. At the outset of my career as a medical doctor, I imagined that my contribution to that transformation could take place within my profession, by living a life of caring and concern built upon the already existing structures of the public health-care system—where monitory motivation related to provider profit would not be central to the operation. But during more than twenty years within the American public health-care system, I have discovered the hard way that the same ethos of selfishness that dominates the private sector prevails in the public sector. And even those who have chosen this path for the most altruistic reasons find themselves working for constituencies of narrow self-interest rather than the common good.

My motives for entering the quality-review field had been to put what I had learned as an academician to practical use. As a result, I took a job as director of quality assurance for a federally funded out-patient review program. Our job was to check medical records to verify that services billed to the government had been delivered and that the services were of good quality. I had not reckoned, however, on the role of outright fraud in the public sector.

One of my sharpest memories concerns quality-of-care review at a particular storefront Medicare clinic. A single business interest owned the clinic and an adjacent pharmacy. A clinic physician had phoned us, disturbed that she had been given an ultimatum: either prescribe unneeded medications, or find work elsewhere. As she spoke, the clinic's scam unfolded. Doctors ordered an armful of medications, most of which were not medically indicated, for each patient. When the patients walked next door to the pharmacy, they received the one or two necessary medications, plus a few toiletries as inducements to play the game of defrauding the government on the cost of the bogus prescriptions. The pharmacy then billed the government's designated insurance company for all eight or ten prescriptions. The business raked in the cash. And because the pharmacy still held the drugs, it could then sell them over the counter at any price the market would stand.

We reported the case to the FBI. Nothing happened on the street. Finally, almost ten years later, I read the following item from the U.S. General Accounting Office:

> Medicaid prescription fraud is widespread in the United States, contributing significantly to the government's $5.5 billion tab for prescription drugs in 1991. For example, some pharmacists routinely pad customer prescriptions, keeping the extra drugs to sell or use themselves. Clinics inappropriately give Medicaid recipients completed prescription forms that are then traded for merchandise from local pharmacies or sold on the street to the highest bidder; some pills costing 50 cents at the pharmacy have been sold for as much as $85 .... [F]ederal leadership and support is needed to ensure [correction] ....

Leadership indeed. Ten years and still no substantial change. And what about our review? Looking back, the fraud was not simply that of the clinic owners. It was also that of a bogus system of public review and ultimately, of my own participation as a reviewer. For this "public" program, the bottom line was profit. If I wanted to advocate for scientifically based quality-of-care review, that was O.K.—just as long as it didn't interfere with the scams, and I never complained outside the system. By my own act of faith in a review program dominated by an ethos of selfishness, I became a useful if unwitting tool for those who designed the frauds.

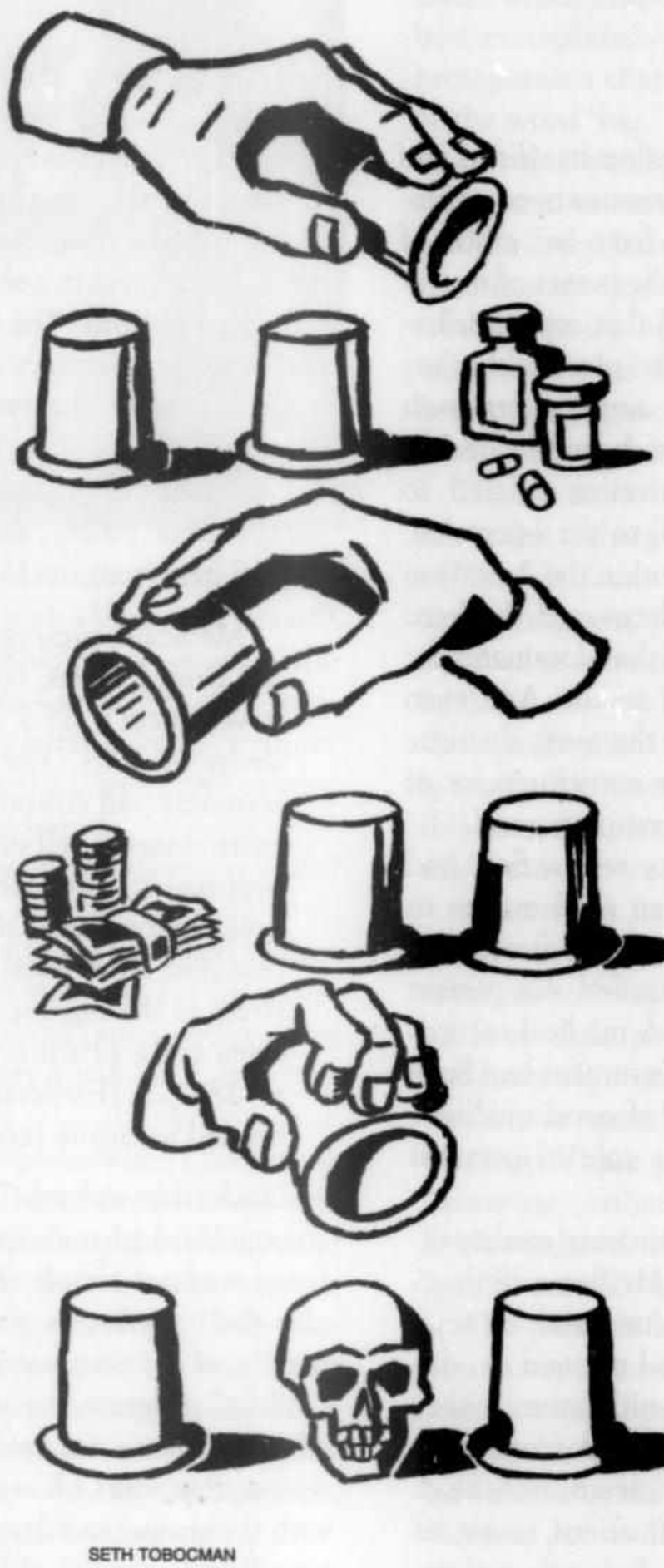
I encountered a similar dynamic in public clinical practice. In one of my first experiences with a county public health department, for example, I worked in a free satellite clinic for medically indigent patients with

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sexually transmitted diseases. In contrast with the department's central clinic, the satellite budget did not provide for either microscopes, or the capacity to do simple screening tests on site; the basic philosophy was to prescribe antibiotics at even a suspicion of infection. Here, the public variant of narrow entrepreneurial self-interest was couched in bureaucratic terms. From the administrator's perspective, dispensing antibiotics outweighed any other consideration. The more "services" rendered (of whatever medical quality), the better the program looked.

Within a few years, my community was one of the first to develop a strain of gonorrhea resistant to the antibiotics we had used so freely. In essence, the clinic's cavalier prescriptions—in part, *my* prescriptions—may have made the community sicker. To my knowledge, the possibility that the health department's narrow interpretation of its mission might have helped cause this tragedy was never investigated.

At another public health department, we received a grant for a project to help minority women and their babies who might be at risk for AIDS. The money came from federal, not local coffers. Yet the county executive, Thomas Gulotta, refused to use the funds to hire new personnel. (It was close to election time, and Gulotta had instituted a hiring freeze that was popular with voters.) Instead, he used the first-year grant money to employ and retrain enthusiastic but essentially unqualified personnel from inside the county.



SETH TOBOCMAN

Meanwhile, because field work for the AIDS program was delayed by the hiring freeze, key county personnel assigned to the grant were left with little to do on the project. Even though they received portions of their salaries for the AIDS work, the funding actually went to other uses. Even when the AIDS program was reactivated, this pattern proved impossible to break. Other members of the Health Department, myself included, maintained a public silence.

Ultimately, more than a year after I left that department, the grant was withdrawn by the funding agency—but about $1 million had already been spent, virtually none of it to help the people for whom it was intended. A few years ago, I saw Thomas Gulotta as he ranted on television about what he termed the "animal" who had gunned down innocent commuters on the Long Island Railroad. I wondered how a man who willingly gambled the lives of innocent women and children for the sake of his own political image could call anyone else an animal.

Some time later, I started work at Kings County Hospital, a large, public facility in Brooklyn, New York. I still believed in the fundamental ability of publicly supported medicine to deliver care to those who needed it most. Although I stayed at Kings County for only six months, it was this experience that finally woke me up.

Most of my assignments at Kings County were aimed at helping the hospital prepare for outside quality-of-care review by the Joint Commission for Accreditation of Health Care Organizations (JCAHO). JCAHO accreditation is the lifeline of most American hospitals, since it certifies to Congress that a hospital meets industry-wide standards of patient care and is thus eligible for reimbursement by Medicare. Accreditation is also required for the establishment of approved residency programs to train graduate physicians; at medical schools, this relatively cheap labor of graduate trainees frees faculty to pursue research grants and other activities which bring both prestige and additional public and private funds to the institution.

At Kings County, the focus was once again on form

over substance. We fought continual battles over methodology. Since the Joint Commission review of the medical staff focused primarily on minutes of quality-assurance meetings and interviews concerning those minutes, our top priority was to get the minutes in shape. In June, a consulting company was brought in to help in this process. The company's analysis and proposal (for $51,480 worth of work) arrived in July. Its conclusion—"The majority of the monitoring Committee and Clinical Services' minutes will not pass the JCAHO survey"—confirmed Kings County administrators' worst fears. But to me, the company's proposed remedy was even worse:

> Department specific indicators which cover the important aspects of care need to be developed and documented .... Once developed the indicators should be documented and formally approved .... Data should be collected retrospectively re these indicators and backed into the appropriate sets of minutes following the findings, conclusions, recommendations, and effectiveness of action format.

In other words, the consultants were proposing that we determine after the fact which indicators would make us look good, and then insert these indicators into the minutes, followed by data showing how well we had met our goals.

When confronted about these methods, the company representative indicated that they were standard practice. At Bellevue Hospital, he said, his company had successfully worked with nine departments, all of which had passed Joint Commission review after being placed on probation the year before. A department chairman at New York University, Bellevue's academic affiliate, confessed to a Kings County physician that the minutes he presented to the Joint Commission reviewer were first handed to him only ten minutes before. Such expeditious falsification was accomplished thanks to round-the-clock word processing. Records reportedly obtained by The *New York Times* revealed payments (via an NYU source) for twenty-four-hour-a-day word processing just before the Joint Commission review. At Harlem Hospital, which is affiliated with Columbia University, the company representative stated that a team was already hard at work preparing for an upcoming review, using the same methods proposed for Kings County.

Kings County offered the consulting company a contract. To their credit, however, hospital officials made it clear that the only revisions they would permit were those that reflected an inaccuracy in the current minutes. The company declined the contract, stating, in part, that it had a reputation to protect.

If an outside review had compared the original and revised minutes, with their dates of submission and the dates of revision, it could have exposed an important problem at Kings County, namely that internal oversight of the review process was dysfunctional. Minutes were routinely turned in late and were sometimes months in arrears. As such, prompt review of departmental minutes by hospital-wide committees was delayed, as was reporting to the New York City Health and Hospitals Commission—Kings County's parent organization. Decisions on significant problems could be postponed indefinitely, and these delays at lower levels let Health and Hospitals authorities off the hook, since they could simply plead ignorance about the system's shortcomings. Thus, there was little enthusiasm for fixing the broken system.

The hospital proceeded with its own plan to compile revised departmental minutes; at my insistence, the CEO and medical director agreed that the revisions were to be identified as such and handed to the JCAHO reviewer signed and dated by the department chairperson, along with the originals. When the time came for the review, however, almost all of the revisions were presented undated, unsigned, and without the originals.

On the last day of the Joint Commission review at Kings County, I delivered a letter to the JCAHO physician in charge, stating my concerns, and I attached an original set of minutes. The next morning, I was locked out of my office, placed under observation by hospital security, informed by the CEO that he knew what I had done (it really wasn't too hard to figure out), and handed a letter of dismissal. Eventually, the case was reviewed by both the Joint Commission and the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York. The Joint Commission, upon examination of this case and others, issued a warning to all hospitals about the sanctity of minutes. It is probable that little more would have been gained by prosecution.

With the exception of a few people, such as members of the departments of neurosurgery and pathology, almost every physician at Kings County participated in the charade. Demonstrably, the submission of phoney data was not important to most of my colleagues. The question I had to wrestle with was, "Why?"

One reason was the quality of leadership set by then-Mayor David Dinkins. The Dinkins admininstration's response to the murder of Yankel Rosenbaum, which occurred during my brief tenure, provides an illustration. Rosenbaum, an Australian rabbinical student, was on the streets of Brooklyn's Crown Heights soon after a car driven by another Orthodox Jew in the entourage of a Hasidic rabbi accidentally killed an African-American child. Rosenbaum, who had been stabbed in the riot that ensued, was brought to the Kings County emergency room.

At about one a.m., when Rosenbaum appeared to be doing well, Mayor Dinkins barged into the intensive-care area to have a well-publicized conversation with the patient. But nurses stated that prior to the mayor's visit, when radiology technicians had been attempting to get into the emergency room to do their job, they were blocked by the mayor's security team. Kings County surgeons later maintained that these events had little bearing on the outcome (Rosenbaum died later that morning). I am not certain, however, whether the delay in this particular X-ray was directly related to Rosenbaum's death.

Why did the mayor and his minions insist on coming into an emergency-care area in the first place? The safest procedure would have been to wait until the patient had been formally discharged. But Dinkins's message was clear: From his point of view, the bottom line for Kings County Hospital was how it affected his own image. The crucial leadership message was that the respective purpose and constituency of the hospital were not health and the surrounding indigent population of Brooklyn; plenty of the medically indigent were treated for stabbings every night at Kings County without drawing a mayoral visit. Instead, the constituency was whatever small percentage of New York City's entire eligible electorate David Dinkins perceived as necessary to maintain his own power. Moreover, as shown by his security team, Dinkins was prepared to be ruthless in the pursuit of that power.

This kind of leadership message was not lost on the staff. I remember the case of an older woman who was driving her car when she was seized by terrible chest pain. Reportedly, when she arrived at Kings County, the emergency-room physicians ruled out a heart attack. They felt the woman was suffering a dissecting aortic aneurysm—a potentially life-threatening tear in the major blood vessel taking blood from her heart—and they wanted to admit her immediately. But emergency-room physicians at Kings County had no admitting authority, and the inpatient medical staff reportedly declined the admission, perhaps reasoning that the patient had a surgical diagnosis and therefore should be admitted to a surgical ward. So the emergency team ordered confirmatory radiologic studies. They knew the surgeons would not operate without a clear picture of the tear.

By then, it was late in the afternoon, and the staff was approaching a change in shifts. According to reports, the radiology staff passed the job to the night shift. But the night shift argued that if there had been an emergency, the day shift would have done the work. So the patient could wait until morning. She waited. She died. At autopsy, the emergency-room diagnosis was confirmed.

Would the patient have lived if she had been admitted right away? I don't know. That's not the point. The real issue is that questions of emergency-room admitting authority and accountability had been bandied about for months without resolution. It was a tough internal political problem; administratively, it was safer to let things simmer. The dysfunctional review system which I attempted to administer helped to assure that narrow bureaucratic self-interest was served, because it helped to keep difficult questions from reaching those with ultimate responsibility.

Nor was this the only problem. Surgeons lacked 000 silk and other types of needed suture materials. Some surgeons said they knew their patients were being sewn up with inferior materials, but that they did not know what else to do. The only alternative was to leave, and this would not help the shortages either. In the mammography unit, the physician director stayed far into the night to keep massive notification files up to date by hand, living in fear and frustration—fear that human error or just plain fatigue might delay needed therapy, and frustration that the unit couldn't afford a tool as basic as a personal computer to manage filing and notification. In other clinics, medicines were in short supply. On the psychiatric units, personnel responsible for patient safety had been lost to budget cuts, resulting in at least two hospital-related deaths—just part of the cost of doing business.

The list went on and on. The answer to staff requests for programmatic resources was "hard times," and for tough administrative decisions—postponement. And yet, money for the $50,000 contract from the so-called quality-of-care consultants was speedily approved. After the consultants demurred, money was spent nevertheless—to hire teams of temporary typists to revise minutes of meetings which should have been prepared correctly the first time. Money was even available for battalions of contractors to paint the hospital halls, to create a good impression for the JCAHO reviewers.

Where were the voices to say, "Stop"? Where were the voices to say, "We need a personal computer for the mammography unit or more heath-care personnel instead of happy painting contractors, or a decision on the emergency room instead of safe bureaucrats"? Where was the leadership to insist that human lives are more important than narrow self-interest?

But such boldness might have borne a high professional cost for any clinician or hospital administrator who spoke out publicly. As an administrator, I found it far easier to rationalize that what was good for me was also the best the community could hope for, because after all, *my* heart was in the right place, far easier to forget how much the newly painted halls were but a veneer for administrative autocracy, like Mussolini's

trains that ran on time. It was far easier to point fingers at others and to believe my own silence didn't really have an impact.

And then an old woman died, waiting in those freshly painted halls for men and women she had no choice but to trust in her last hours on this earth. Finally, my house of cards collapsed. From a political leader who cared only about how he appeared to the electorate, to the Health and Hospitals Corporation, which was happy to look the other way when work was not being done and decisions not being made, to a hospital CEO and a medical director who cared only that I lie for them, I could draw a straight line to my quiet practice of inferior medicine in the venereal disease clinics, and my dutiful work within a system of medical review, which was nothing but a sham.

I have had to face my complacency and naivete—complacency for not examining my self-righteousness, and naiveté for failing to realize a fundamental fact: My colleagues and I had been bought, and I, for one, hadn't even known it. For all of my professional life I had merely been a cog in well-organized machines that cared not at all if the poor received inferior medical care, so long as that inferior care had no impact on either how government administrators perceived it would affect their careers or politicians perceived it would affect the electorate.

Was I atypical? Maybe, but I don't think I was too different from most of my peers in public medicine. For one thing, I saw essentially the same processes in several different types of public-health settings and in several different geographic areas. While this alone might simply reflect that I was a misfit, national mortality trends also support the notion that public medicine may not work. In the 1980s, for example, the life expectancy of African Americans went down, while that of other Americans went up. This is the first time this has happened since such statistics have been recorded. If medical care influences such statistics and if African-American race is a reasonable surrogate for medical indigence, then there are broad-based reasons to question whether public health is working.

In fact, it is hard to imagine that my generation of public-health professionals will be remembered for good on the basis of its performance to date. Qualities we taught ourselves to admire, such as willingness to accept poor working conditions and meager resources, were simply appeals to our own vanity—used by thieves to plunder those we nominally served.

Finally, while it would be inaccurate to state that government doctors in the United States engage in deliberate efforts to harm populations with little political clout, I have no question about my personal collaboration. The electorate has consistently acted to bring a greater burden of disease and death to bear on the poor. My passive, self-aggrandizing behavior aided the consummation of that electoral will.

Action taken within such a milieu may be gentler in spirit than murder by dictatorial decree, but those rendered powerless by race or social class may wind up just as dead. As noted by Primo Levi, a survivor of Hitler's camps: "In every part of the world, wherever you begin by denying the fundamental liberties of mankind, and equality among people, you move toward the concentration camp system, and it is a road which is difficult to halt." In a public health-care setting, when one is asked to work with substandard materials and equipment, to wink at criminal and quasi-criminal activities, to remain silent because it would be politically injudicious to do otherwise, one is ultimately being asked to experiment on the poor without their knowledge or consent, thereby denying a fundamental liberty of mankind, and equality among people. Government decides what is to be done; health-care workers are expected to follow orders.

If I am correct in estimating that my experiences were not unusual, then the notion that one can live a life of caring and concern by building within existing societal structures must be false. Reform is not sufficient. Instead, we need rebirth without innocence. The new child must remember the brutal realities of its past, when uncounted lives were damaged or lost because public-health workers delegated medical decisions to politicians, bureaucratic administrators, and entrepreneurs.

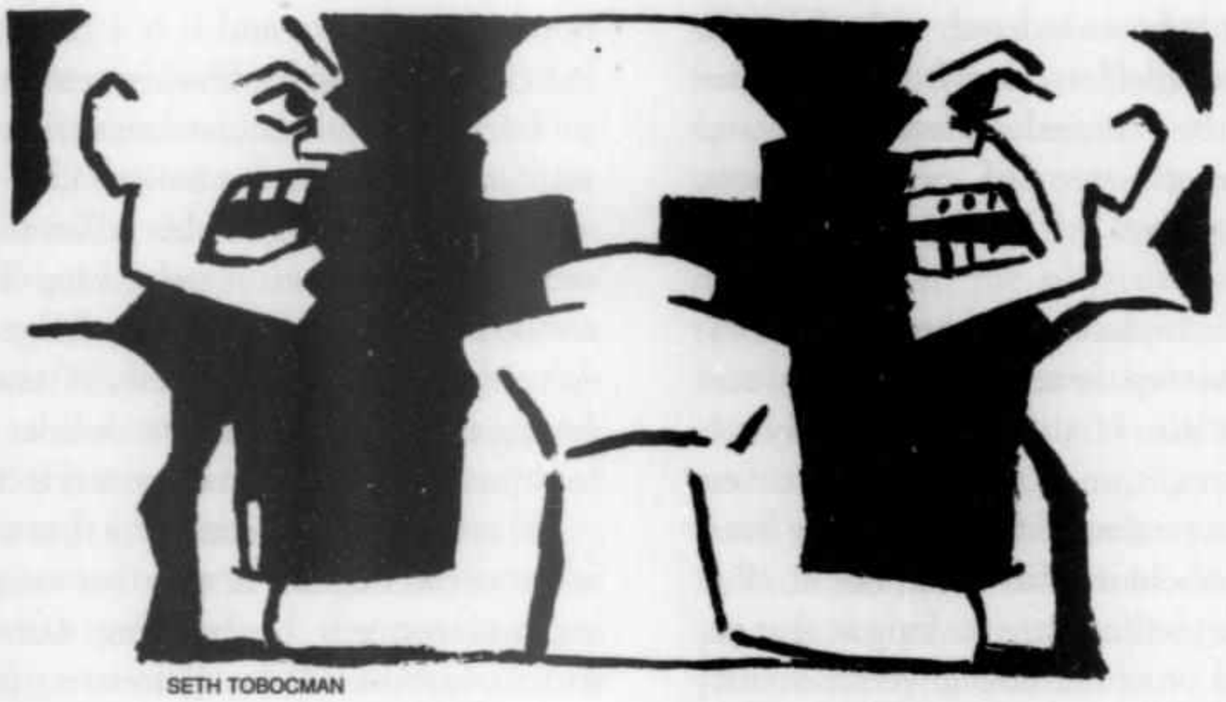
If the best scientific judgment is that a health-care procedure or system is not working, a new structure is needed in our society that will cause what is harmful to cease; a kind of supreme court of health to serve as a safety net for human life. Moreover, such an entity would have to be supported by the resources necessary for high-quality scientific monitoring of the nation's health. If it is born, the new entity would do well to hold as its motto the words attributed to Rabbi Hillel after he was asked to summarize the Torah in one sentence: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man. This is the entire Torah, all of it; the rest is commentary. Go and study." □

May you be inscribed for a year of peace, joy, and fulfillment.

–The TIKKUN Staff

Just Neighbors

David L. Kirp and Elliot Marseille



SETH TOBOCMAN

The setting is pleasant enough, a comfortably scruffy church meeting room in a quiet San Francisco neighborhood, but the tone of the gathering is tense. On one side of the room sits the extended Gonzales family, immigrants from Nicaragua, while across from them sit the Jordans, an African-American family. In between are four neighbors who are acting as mediators, as well as translators for several of the Gonzaleses.

This meeting, taking place under the auspices of an organization called Community Boards, is supposed to settle the quarrels that plague the two-unit building in which these households live. A man's home is his castle, or so the saying goes, but in this instance, the Gonzaleses' six-room castle is situated directly above the Jordans' six-room castle, and this is how the troubles began.

A few months after the Gonzaleses moved into their apartment, the Jordans began to complain about the ceaseless noise from upstairs: children bouncing on trampolines, T.V.'s and stereos blaring, wives and husbands yelling. The Gonzaleses insisted that they couldn't understand what was upsetting the Jordans. "In our culture, we would never bother our neighbors about something like this," says Maria Gonzales, the main spokesperson for her family at this meeting. Out of frustration, the Jordans would bang on the ceiling with a broom handle, which only infuriated the Gonzaleses and prompted them to retaliate.

As these charges are voiced at the meeting, emotions start to escalate. The Jordans insist that the Gonzaleses, who help support themselves by selling odds and ends, confine their possessions to their allotted half of the garage. Maria Gonzales complains that Lamond Kidd, boyfriend of one of the Jordan daughters, called her names and made her afraid to do her laundry in the garage. The Gonzaleses had phoned the police when Hector Gonzales, the grandfather, discovered that his tires had been slashed while his car was parked in front of the house. In turn, the Jordans called the police when Maria Gonzales screamed "nigger" and "bitch" from her front window. Soon enough, the neighbors were regularly calling the police, and rumors were flying that one household, maybe both, had guns.

All this history is overwhelming the peacemakers. Community Boards sets up such sessions with the intention of getting these stories out, then encouraging people to talk honestly to one another, but instead the room feels like a boiler about to explode.

Suddenly, Lamond Kidd stands up. "This is bullshit, man! I knew they would come here and lie and that is just what they're doing .... I work for my money, I pay taxes! Why don't they get a job? .... Why does Isabel gotta speak Spanish? .... I'm sick of their damn lying, so I am outta here!"

The room grows instantly quiet. If Kidd walks out, that will probably mean the end of things, a waste of all the time spent in bringing these families face to face. John Doggett, a soft-spoken Black man in his fifties, one of the mediators, turns to Lamond. "So you feel disre-

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spected when Maria speaks in Spanish?" Kidd nods. "I understand you feel that way," Doggett goes on, "but it is their right to have a translator. The other family members do not speak good English, and Maria didn't want to be concerned about having to translate." Kidd shakes his head once again, almost as if he were listening to an uncle he admires, and then sits back down.

Slowly, guided by panel members' interjections, the Jordans and Gonzaleses begin speaking to one another in a more civil tone. Still, their stories remain as different from one another as the versions of *Rashamon*, with no one making concessions to the truth as the other family sees it. Ninety minutes into the session, the heads of the two households finally speak up. "Let us try to respect one another," says the matriarch of the Jordan family, and this modest and sensible suggestion seems to draw out the chivalrous side of Hector Gonzales. "*Acuerdo*," he says through a translator. "Agreed .... If they respect us, we will respect them. We do not understand each other's language. But let us live in peace and we will leave them in peace."

Nearly two decades ago, San Francisco attorney Ray Shonholtz became disillusioned with the impact of the law on daily life. Even though he was running the Legal Clinic at the University of San Francisco Law School, which provided lawyers for the poor, he felt that more law, with all its awesome formality and impersonalism, solemn strangers deciding the fates of strangers, wasn't needed. Instead, people had to learn how to talk things out, settling quarrels with the help of neighbors trained in mediation. "Community conflict resolution mechanisms," he wrote, "are among the few effective tools for ... the reduction of anger ... between people who know each other."

With $150,000 contributed by local foundations—a budget that has since grown to $750,000 annually—Shonholz started testing out his idea. The heart of the enterprise has always been the volunteers who serve on conciliation panels, recruited from all the different neighborhoods that make up San Francisco. Now Community Boards is one of the city's biggest multiracial community groups and also one of its most popular. At a time when many organizations are hunting for volunteers, 500 people are on the waiting list for the next mediators' training session. The caseload has grown steadily—1,400 people with their problems, 300 full hearings in a single year, more cases than are tried annually before a jury in the city's municipal courts.

Nearly one dispute in five involves adolescents in potentially serious trouble with the law. Last year, for instance, a fourteen-year-old Filipino teenager named Matt Priolo encountered three Anglo boys he believed were giving him "hard looks." He waved a pistol at them to scare them off, and as they gunned their car, Priolo, fearful that they were going to back into him, fired off a round from a .25-caliber automatic pistol, shattering the rear window. "We're gonna kill you," Matt Priolo was told—a real possibility in a city where each year nearly 600 violent crimes are committed by juveniles. His worried family sought the help of Community Boards.

As the mediation session progressed and personal feelings came out, the youths realized that beneath the gang insignias and the message of us-versus-them that the insignias symbolize, there were just teenagers, scarred and scared by the violence on the streets. Matt Priolo promised to pay for the damage he had done to the car, and word went out to leave him alone.

It would be naive to imagine that every conflict can have such a sweet ending, that every dispute can be talked through this peaceably, for only in romance novels and soap operas do things invariably get resolved so tidily. Yet mediation not only resolves disputes, much as a court does; it also offers an element of catharsis, as individuals realize that they are actually being taken seriously.

Neighborhood conciliation combines an inexpensive alternative to going to court with a form of therapy, an approach whose usefulness reaches beyond disagreements among neighbors. Since 1981, the organization has been training "conflict managers" for San Francisco's public schools—nine-year-olds who mediate playground fist fights and help settle whose turn it is to use the computer, and high school students who sit in on matters ranging from "he said, she said" tiffs to racially charged conflicts. In the neighborhoods, volunteers are hearing cases that pit social workers against families with clashing ideas about how to raise children.

When California embarked on a massive "stop smoking" campaign several years ago, it enlisted Community Boards. The organization was unwilling to persuade people to quit smoking, since taking sides is antithetical to its go-between mission, but it did offer a forum where smokers and nonsmokers working in unhappy proximity could talk through their grievances. More recently, the U.S. Department of Justice asked Community Boards to design a process for settling disputes under laws protecting the rights of the disabled. As one might anticipate, the model the organization came up with involves conciliation, with at least one disabled person among the mediators.

The atmosphere in the Gonzales-Jordan hearing improves when the panel members abandon their attempts to sort out the past, and instead ask each family to describe what it wants for the future. "Just two things, keep the noise down and do not damage the

property," says Lamond Kidd, who, since his eruption, has become a voice of reason. "No name calling," Janelle Jordan adds. "The two families can pass each other and not talk," Hector Gonzales replies. From this modest start, other understandings follow. Hector volunteers to clean out the back yard, and Janelle responds: "Our kids will help. We'll all have a barbecue." The families decide who will represent them if a crisis erupts. At five o'clock, nearly four hours after it began, the session ends with an agreement signed by everyone, and the scheduling of a future meeting.

Critics of neighborhood mediation contend that this approach emphasizes amity over vindication, sliding past matters of right and wrong. "The ideology of harmony," writes anthropologist Laura Nader, "the rhetoric of personal therapized harmony which pushes anger and intimacy back into the household have relegated massive outpourings of discontent into buckshot complaints." In fact, a fundamental premise of the Community Boards approach is that conflict is a wound that can be healed by the community, rather than a battle that individual adversaries win or lose, and the sessions are designed to invite the kind of insight associated with therapy.

Peace sometimes comes at the expense of justice, as a therapeutic fog envelops the proceedings. But in more legalistic, justice-driven confrontations between private parties, such as divorce or landlord-tenant cases, the process itself is often punitive. And in most matters brought to Community Boards, the ideology of mediation is exactly right—peace and justice aren't conflicting aspirations, and there is no "right" answer.

The real power in this system doesn't come from law—no court enforces what the disputants decide—but from the moral authority invested by the parties in these proceedings. Not long ago, AIDS Care, a San Francisco nonprofit group whose mission is to connect people with AIDS with a wide array of health and social-service providers, turned to Community Boards to save itself from internal chaos. The conflict revolved around a volunteer named Jesse Nordstrom and the business manager, Carl Jacoby. Nordstrom, who had made the center the focus of his life, believed he knew how things should be run. But when he made suggestions to business manager Carl Jacoby, he got no satisfaction. For his part, the business manager regarded Nordstrom as a busybody.

Nordstrom started voicing dissatisfaction with Jacoby's work, then became so outspoken about what was going wrong that he was said to be telling the press terrible tales of managerial incompetence. At this juncture, Reid Cushing, the center's director, who had tried unsuccessfully to settle the conflict, proposed bringing the matter to Community Boards.

During the mediation session, Cushing sat between Nordstrom and Jacoby, much as a father might sit between two quarreling children. Jacoby was tense, and when he talked, he studiously avoided eye contact with Nordstrom. While he was diplomatic, his dismay at having to sit through another round of accusations was evident. Nordstrom came across as sharp-witted and articulate; it was easy enough to imagine him trying to order others around.

Cushing initially dominated the discussion, thanking Nordstrom for his hard work while defending Jacoby from Nordstrom's accusations. Though this was a nice enough gesture, it did not penetrate to the heart of things. Even when Nordstrom said he never intended to air his grievances in the press, Jacoby, who was unassuaged, made it plain that he didn't trust Nordstrom and complained that he found Nordstrom's constant carping really hurtful.

While wounded feelings are the coin of the realm in San Francisco, Jacoby was a numbers man who rarely talked about such things. Coming from him, this plain statement made Nordstrom stop and reflect, for he had not perceived the impact of his actions in such simple human terms. Yet as the talk continued to cover the same territory, the mediators realized nothing useful would happen unless the terms of the conversation changed. They called a brief time-out.

During the break, the panelists realized that director Reid Cushing, for all his fine intentions, was really getting in the way. The only way out is through, or so Community Boards contends, and Cushing was preventing the disputants from getting through the hard part on their own. Cushing was asked to step back, letting Jacoby and Nordstrom speak directly to one another, and he readily agreed.

Nordstrom had also done some rethinking during the break. When the conciliation resumed, he apologized to Jacoby for the pain he had caused. "I know I can be overly moralistic and controlling. I was talking with my mother about the problems I was having with you guys, and you know what she said? 'There you go again!'" When Jacoby heard that story, more personal and intimate than anything he had known about Nordstrom before, he was able to see Nordstrom not simply as a nuisance and a threat but as a person. He accepted the apology and warmly thanked Nordstrom for all his hard work.

"Those moments are like walking," says panel member Paul Van de Carr, "one leg can move forward only after the other has first taken a step." Soon, the participants had broken into a run, re-learning that they cared more about seeing AIDS Care succeed than about best-

ing one another. An ecstatic Cushing was in tears as he embraced his two colleagues. "In my experience," says panelist Melissa Burke, "people are often talking to one another again at the end of a session, there is friendship and good will. Here there was more—people were displaying the presence of healing, even love."

Whether the issue is as narrowly focused as a spouse's unhappiness about out-of-control drinking, or as broad as the litany of neighborhood teenagers' grievances with the patrolling police, as simple as a barking dog or as complex as restructuring a financial agreement, most people are not accustomed to having a real chance to say their piece or to listen so intently. Instead, their instinct is to turn their apparent antagonist into an enemy, to fight back. Mediation introduces them to a different way.

Many volunteers report that they too have changed. Usually they start out with the hope of helping their neighbors and feeling rejuvenated in the process. Yet the essential skills of democratic citizenship, the talents that Alexis de Tocqueville, in *Democracy in America*, had in mind in his discussion of "self-interest rightly understood"—these also come into play during every mediation. The impact of such psychological and political learning extends leagues beyond any specific dispute.

The story of the Jordans and the Gonzaleses gets another public airing six weeks after the initial session. This time, though, the Gonzaleses are no-shows. Nonetheless, Janelle Jordan acknowledges that relations between the two households have gotten better since the first session. Lamond Kidd, whose temper placed him at the epicenter of the conflicts, has made his peace with the Gonzaleses. For their part, the Gonzaleses have ceased to shout racist insults out the window. The atmosphere of impending violence is much diminished.

Yet headache-inducing noise levels persist. Hector Gonzales sincerely wants to maintain the agreement, Janelle Jordan says, but he cannot control everything that goes on in his own home. Once, when Janelle tried to be her family's ambassador, as the agreement contemplated, the Gonzaleses swore at her and called the police. "The officers told me, 'Don't go up there, whatever Community Boards says. It's dangerous.'"

The Jordans have realized a hard truth: The main source of friction between the two households is not personal, which is why their problems can't be settled by talking things through; it is rooted in the out-of-control lives of the Gonzales household. The mediation itself taught them this lesson: Without those hours of painful public exchanges, says Janelle Jordan, her family would be futilely trying for a peaceable resolution—or, more dangerously, looking to win their feud. Having figured out that the struggle is unwinnable and the price of perpetual fighting too high, they have decided to move.

Several mediators leave the session discouraged. There was too much ingrained racism to sort out, they say, too much outright lying, too much talking at, rather than talking to one another. But in mediation, as in life, there aren't always panaceas.

When Community Boards was launched a generation ago, the idea of finding ways to settle disagreements outside the formal legal system was unfamiliar, the prospects uncertain. Now, such mediation is common in both the public and private sectors. About 200 American cities and towns have set up their own versions of Community Boards. Private firms report a success rate of better than 80 percent, as well as substantial financial savings, when they resolve disputes through mediation instead of going to court.

"Community conflict resolution provides people a unique opportunity to perform civic work, reduce community and individual alienation, and prevent violent and potentially violent situations from escalating," Ray Shonholtz, Community Boards' charismatic and indefatigable founder, points out. "It is this very work that serves to build new alliances and relationships at the community level." Shonholtz has taken this strategy to Eastern Europe and Russia. There, his new organization, Partnerships for Peace, has trained more than 7,000 people to handle conflicts ranging from ethnic clashes to environmental disputes. In Czechoslovakia, these conciliators even played a part in brokering the peaceful divorce of the Slovak and Czech republics.

Closer to home, however, organizations like Community Boards face a new crisis. They have done their work so well that they risk being shunted aside by experts. Mediation is increasingly being sponsored by government, not to give back to people some control over their lives but instead to make dispute resolution more efficient. Several states have passed laws requiring cities and towns to set up mediation centers. These ventures are supposed to be city-wide, not neighborhood-centered; staffed by licensed mediators, not volunteers; and directly linked to the police and the courts, rather than taking advantage of word-of-mouth referrals.

This approach to mediation is all too consistent with a conception of politics that treats ordinary citizens as moral couch potatoes, unable to settle anything of consequence on their own. But volunteer-based organizations like Community Boards instill a sense of real autonomy, authentic personal power, in those who bring their problems to their neighbors. They produce agreements that often work better than imposed settlements. And they

(Continued on p. 95)

BOOK REVIEW

Master of the Bad Name

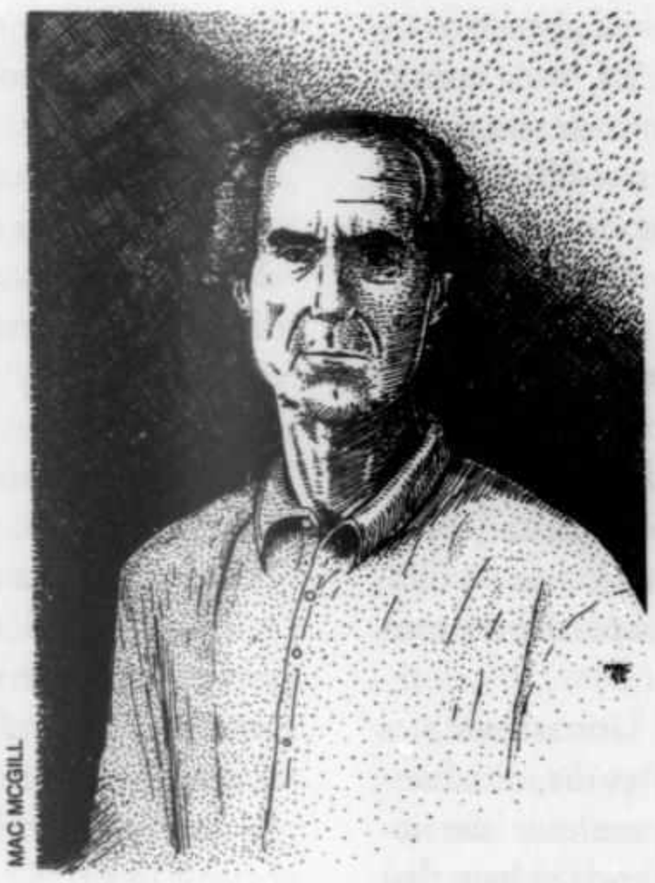
Melvin Jules Bukiet

Sabbath's Theater, by Philip Roth, Houghton Mifflin 1995, 451 pp. $24.95

> Roth: "Read this, Doctor." *(He hands* Sabbath's Theater *across the couch. It's a fat volume with a menstrual red cover.)*
> Spielvogel: (*Six days later, spent, gasping.*) "Oh, my Gott!" (*He rests.*)

The word "fucking" appears in the first sentence of *Sabbath's Theater* and in astonishing proliferation throughout the book, along with innumerable descriptions of no less explicit yet more esoteric varieties of sexual experience. This is not surprising coming from Philip Roth who has, through his decades' worth of alter egos or aliases—among others Neil Klugman, Alexander Portnoy, David Kepesh, Nathan Zuckerman, and Philip Roth—contrived one of the most remarkable series of variations on the theme of selfhood, especially sexual selfhood, of any writer alive. Yet although his new novel's protagonist is most definitely and defiantly male, Roth has transcended the boundaries of his gender. Here, the fingers of the main characters are no longer restrained to manipulating the organ of their creator, no longer traveling merely up and down, but in and out.

Appropriately, Mickey Sabbath is a puppeteer, his self-invented medium the seducing, cannibalizing finger puppet. Mickey loves these puppets, for "[t]here was nothing false or artificial about puppets, nor were they 'metaphors' for human beings. They were what they were." Sabbath works his art on the streets and is duly arrested for obscenity while performing



MAC MCGILL

at the gates of Columbia University, but is rescued by lawyers and patrons of the avant-arts, who subsidize The Indecent Theater of Manhattan. This is the early 1960s, and Mickey is married to Nikki, who abandons him while he's screwing Roseanna, with whom he flees the big city to isolation as assistant professor of puppeteering in some jerkwater college in Madamaska Falls, pop. 1,109, New England, America, where the years roll by. Sabbath's no metaphor for Roth, but his outrage against the public sensibility and his retreat to the bucolic countryside ring of the author as well as the protagonist.

The novel bounces back and forth in time, a Sabbatian odyssey of willful apostasy with each episode linked to a woman. Women, they come—and come—and go. In addition to the lost Nikki, there is Roseanna who also disappears, first into drink and then, worse, sobriety, while Sabbath fools with Kathy Goolsbee, a student whose tape of their dirty talk engenders a P.C. warlock hunt, and the wonderful Croatian hotelier, Drenka Ballich, whose final disappearance is due to cancer. "This shortish woman a little on the plump side, darkly pretty but with an oddly damaged-looking nose, this refugee who knew hardly anything of the world beyond her schoolgirl Split ... seemed to Sabbath a woman of serious importance."

They are all important to Sabbath. Every woman he sees, he sees legs spread, welcoming. And Mickey is catholic; he loves them all, from a Latina maid to a menopausal mom, though there's also plenty of sniffing of adolescent panties. This is not loveless pornography, but passionate engagement with the bodily forms we inhabit and the smells and fluids we emit. Mickey Sabbath more than appreciates women; he adores them. In his own crude fashion, he respects them. Look at his description of a friend's wife, Michelle: "Hot flashes ... Dipped, she is, in the very fire of fleeting time .... Nothing quite touches Sabbath like these aging dishes with their promiscuous pasts and the pretty young daughters. Especially when they've still got it in them to laugh like this one .... It's no fun burning on a pyre at dinner."

There is nearly unbearable pathos in Roth's devotion to threesomes, golden showers, whores and more whores. "Whores. Played a leading role in my life. Always felt at home with whores. Particularly fond of whores. The stew-like stink of those oniony parts. What has ever meant more to me? Real reason for existence then."

"Zo..." says Dr. Spielvogel. "You tell me that you started young vis the sex and the snottiness. At the age of twelve you vere having the fantasies about your cousin, for shame, and at twenty-six, you wrote a book, vhat's wrong vis you? Can't you keep your fingers from the pen or the penis? They're both Jew-

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Melvin Jules Bukiet's most recent book is While the Messiah Tarries. *He is the fiction editor of Tikkun and teaches at Sarah Lawrence College.*

ish appendages, you say, your birthright you claim? They go together like bread and *schmaltz*? *Schmutz* and *schmaltz*, I respond—ach, how unprofessional of me—but please to continue. Pretend that I am not here, and start in the beginning, Mr. Sabbath, I mean Roth, I mean... Vell, let's call the name moot. Let's just say that this is vhat your analysis shall determine."

And what have Roth's other reasons for existence been? To backtrack, a little history: In 1959, his first collection, titled *Goodbye, Columbus* after that *echt* white-bread town (in the mayonnaise state) named for the then-hero, currently imperialist, maybe Jew, won the National Book Award for its stories dealing with the various strains of acculturation among the Jewish bourgeoisie. After that he wrote several other, perhaps lesser, works including an aberrant attempt to portray gentileity, *When She Was Good*, until in the midst of 1960s euphoria he attained international renown by placing his finger on the pulse of the times.

The sixty-two-year-old man on the couch interrupts: "Or in my case, the putz."
"Shah, let the doctor make with the jokes. Outrage, sir, displaying an infantile desire for attention."
Miming suckling, Spielvogel ponders, "Is it the mama's attention?"

The book, *Portnoy's Complaint*, a primer on the myriad forms of masturbation, became a massive bestseller. Coincidentally, it was narrated to the all-but-silent ears of one Dr. O. Spielvogel.

During the early 1970s, amid an efflorescence of radical literary experimentation, Roth dabbled in a stunningly vast range of projects: the mock-Kafkaian fantasy *The Breast*, the mythomaniacal multicultural-before-its-era *The Great American Novel*, the political tract-exposé *Our Gang*.

Then came a transformation. *The Ghost Writer* is a pearl of a volume that incidentally contains the single finest description of the process of writing this reviewer has ever read. Saith Lonoff, elderly mentor of the novice novelist, Nathan Zuckerman:

> I turn sentences around. That's my life. I write a sentence and then I turn it around. Then I look at it and I turn it around again. Then I have lunch. Then I come back in and write another sentence. Then I have tea and turn the new sentence around. Then I read the two sentences over and turn them both around. Then I lie down on my sofa and think. Then I get up and throw them out and start from the beginning. And if I knock off from this routine for as long as a day, I'm frantic with boredom and a sense of waste.

In this slim novel that would spawn a trilogy and epilogue (the latter only available in a volume attached to the collected former, a shabby publishing maneuver aimed to suck those who had already purchased the first three individually into repurchasing them), Roth combined metafictional prose on prose meditations with a portrait of the young artist confronting every Jewish parent's worst fear. But when Nathan meets a girl, he gets to use the ultimate punchline in Diaspora romance. Asked, "Is she Jewish?" he answers something like, "Jewish? She's Anne Frank."

Whether Roth conceived his hero as the subject of a trilogy or not, he couldn't leave Nathan alone at the end of *The Ghost Writer* and brought him back for encores in *Zuckerman Unbound* and *The Anatomy Lesson*, by which time the earnest searching youth had arrived at a state of literary notoriety loosely reminiscent of his creator.

Roth: "Actually, Doctor, he's pretty near identical..."
Spielvogel: "Thank you for sharing."

Insisting that Nathan Zuckerman was not Philip Roth, Roth himself moved into the 1980s, his work growing increasingly complex. He asks fictionally posed ontological questions in *The Counterlife*, wherein a character named Nathan Zuckerman dies in one chapter and returns to life in the next. It's no longer the Nathan Zuckerman of *The Ghost Writer*, however. The new Nathan just happens to bear a familiar name not for lack of imagination, but its opposite, an imagination so fertile that it can bring forth entirely distinct protagonists from a single seed. From there Roth moves to the inner dynamics of *Operation Shylock*, wherein names reflect back and forth again. In this book, Philip Roth the author/character meets a Philip Roth imitator as he sets out single-handedly to save the State of Israel. Is this a man who did nothing for the Jews?

Spielvogel: "The myss of ze prodigal son?"
Roth: "Prodigy son, Doctor."

Roth never does the easy or the expected. During this era, he shifts one step backward to *Deception*, the less said the better of this minimalist exercise in bitter anomie, and two to the side in *Patrimony*, a lusciously sweet memoir of his father, a Newark, New Jersey insurance agent. Roth conquers his father's death by making Herman Roth live forever on the page. *Patrimony* wins the National Book Critics Circle Award, as does *The Counterlife*. Is Roth the only writer to win such honors in both fiction and non-fiction? Perhaps this is appropriate because of the interpenetration of reality and the imagination throughout his works. Perhaps he can't tell the difference. Even *The Facts*, his ostensible autobiography, is framed by an interview with the fictional Nathan Zuckerman.

Yet for all his continually expanding accomplishment, it's not enough for Roth. Now, the man publicly whines that he may have only—only!—50,000 readers who have read half of his books. Talk about perspective. He's written twenty books. Name a fistful of other serious writers who have written ten books that 50,000 people have read. My sense, two pages into *Sabbath's Theater*, was that here he was crazily seeking to recapture the terrain of shock and trespass he once had with Carnovsky, I mean Portnoy. This reader detests psychologizing over what authors mean; he only cares what they do, but the essence of Roth is always, always, to compel one to think precisely as one doesn't wish.

Comfort is not a value; truth is, and the truth of Philip Roth's life has turned as ominous as clouds on the

horizon. Despite the ecstatic vitality of Mickey Sabbath's nature, there is a dark side to his theater that not only plumbs the dank crevices of Eros, but the dark premises of Thanatos. Death is ever-present, from the Shakespearian epigraph, "Every third thought shall be my grave," through mournful recollection of Sabbath's elder brother, Mort, shot down over the Philippines during World War II (like Hesh in *Portnoy*, the cousin who met a similar fate). Draped in the American flag presented to the Sabbath family in lieu of their son, Mickey pursues a manic journey toward self-destruction.

Here lies my one cavil with the book. Roth clearly means us to take Sabbath's suicidal impulses seriously, but the hero's inability to quench the vital drive that keeps him out there, prodding and poking at the bodies and souls of those he encounters, prevents us from taking his torment seriously. Though *Sabbath's Theater* strives for despair, Mickey Sabbath is too rich, warm, hilarious, unrepentant a man to be despairing. There's enormous Lear-like rage at age and mortality, yes, but despair, no.

What else is *Sabbath's Theater* about? Hell, what isn't the book about—love and family, deity and death. If Roth's previous works once seemed brilliant and substantial, *Sabbath's Theater* makes them look like (finger) exercises prior to this quantum leap into the highest realms of art. To the self-obsessed sexuality of *Portnoy*, this novel adds the literary concerns of the Zuckerman trilogy, the dense familial renderings of *Patrimony*, and the inquiry into Jewish identity of *Shylock*.

The sheer power and sweep of *Sabbath's* and Sabbath's dense weave of contrary contemplation and perception is exhausting. What keeps it going is words—endless, logomaniac spurts, spouts, gouts, cataracts of words. Sabbath "felt uncontrollable tenderness for his own shit-filled life. And a laughable hunger for more. More defeat! More disappointment! More deceit! More loneliness! More arthritis! ... God willing, more cunt! More disastrous entanglement in everything. For a pure sense of being tumultuously alive, you can't beat the nasty side of existence. I may not have been a matinee idol, but say what you will about me, it's been a real human life!"

Not only is there so much of this superhuman man with "the body of an old man, the life of an old man, the past of an old man, and the instinctive force of a two year old," but also uncanny mimicry of entire genres of voice: the obituary, the diary, the tape, even a Joycean stream of consciousness on the subway. Roth sustains his eloquence in triumph and tragedy, and has delirious fun in echoing the degraded language of twelve-step programs. This harkens in his disdain of institutions including but hardly limited to marriage, college, and the courts, all viewed through Sabbath's anarchic pride.

Yet Roth is generous to Sabbath's antagonists, like Norman Cowan, so sane, so safe in his large apartment with the view of Central Park. Norman houses and clothes Sabbath and gives him money, while Mickey tries to bed his benefactor's wife and ransacks his daughter's closets for intimate apparel. Discovering Sabbath's vulgar ingratitude, Norman gives as good as he gets. He lambastes "The walking panegyric for obscenity ... the inverted saint whose message is desecration. Isn't it tiresome in 1994, this role of rebel-hero ... What a pathetic, outmoded old crank you are ... the immensity of your isolation is horrifying."

Roth is nowhere near DeSade; he is joyful, akin to Rabelais. He would not be out of place dancing red-faced at a Hasidic wedding—of course, breaking the taboos, dancing with the women.

And what is Sabbath's thought as Norman finally evicts him? "Forgiving, compassionate, determined, indefatigable, almost irrationally humane—every person should have a friend like Norman."

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Spielvogel's journal: Is this a man who wants to have his liver and eat it too?

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Will Roth be castigated, pants yanked down to his knees, spanked again in public for using words that everyone knows and giving voice to scary thoughts that everyone has? For himself, for his characters, for us, Roth bleeds words from his six-pointed crucifix, while trying to figure out what life is and how to live it. He offers the same kind of serious moral instruction that illuminates Tolstoy and the Talmud, rules for living. The first is to cry; the second is to laugh; and always to look, without fear, by way of Everything that's in your head, straight between your legs.

Roth's been a bad boy, from way back early in his career. But look at the trinity of Bellow, Malamud, Roth—the brain, soul and sinew of *Genus Homo Literatus, Species Judaicus*. In the pantheon, there's intellectual Saul, who makes you feel like an idiot if you haven't reread the *Timaeus* lately, and poor dead Bern, who mourned so well, while Philip, jester, kvetcher, is never quite taken with full seriousness because he's such a boorish clown. Yet in his buffoonery there's the genius of blazing argumentation, and as for soul—my Gott!—he beats his breast for four hundred-fifty pages nonstop. Roth is as brainy and soulful as anyone putting ink to paper, but it really is sinew that's at the heart of the Rothian enterprise. It's our parts expanding and contracting that animates this writer of the flesh nonpareil. Roth sings the body erotic.

Roth is nowhere near De Sade, the parallel his publishers' p.r. apparatus invokes. De Sade is a desiccated aristocratic husk, fit only for deconstruction; Roth is more joyful, more linguistically and psychologically akin to Rabelais. And in Jewish terms, if Bellow is the misnagdic Vilna Gaon at home in his study, and Malamud is Nachman of Bratslav with his elusive magic tales, Roth would not be ill-placed dancing red-faced at a Hasidic wedding in Crown Heights. His character is that of the Baal Shem Tov. Or the Baal Shem *Rah*—the Master of the Bad Name. Of course, he would break taboos and dance with the women too. He'd do more than dance with them. He'd fling them to the parquet to partake of the pleasures of the Hasidic flesh while the Rebbe watched, and that would make it all the better. For the voyeur, watching is as good as doing and for the novelistic voyeur of voyeurs, writing about watching is even better. *Sabbath's Theater* is pure imaginative insertion into the very crotch of life.

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Roth: "So, what do you think?"
Spielvogel: "Now vee have truly begun."
Me and Molly Bloom: "Yes!" □

BOOK REVIEW

Poor Vision

Thomas J. Sugrue

The War Against the Poor: The Underclass and Anti-Poverty Policy, by Herbert J. Gans. Basic Books, 1995. 208 pp. $21.

We live in a strange and disturbing political world. A Democratic president proposes an overhaul of the welfare state that Reagan and Bush imagined but could never implement. A right-wing dominated Congress denounces Clinton's sweeping proposal to "end welfare as we know it" as soft-bellied liberalism. The welfare debate has shifted so far to the Right in the last two years that family-values centrist Daniel Patrick Moynihan now guards the liberal flank.

Whether Democratic or Republican, there is a depressing sameness to the analysis of poverty shaping what are probably the most sweeping changes in the welfare state since the New Deal. Liberals and conservatives alike share a new consensus that the most pressing social problem of the 1990s is not poverty but the behavior of poor people. The solution is coercion and punishment.

In the demonology of the New Right, poverty is a symptom of immorality. Like born-again Calvinists, conservatives view poverty as the outward manifestation of inner depravity. The poor, in their view, are lazy, violent, sex-crazed, and addicted to drugs. Bad mothers and absent fathers breed a generation of criminal boys and promiscuous girls. Barely beneath the surface are assumptions about racial inferiority. Although the majority of poor people in the United States are white, the popular image of poverty has a Black face.

The Democratic mainstream has accepted the premises of the right-wing critique of welfare, even as it repudiates Republican mean-spiritedness. In place of shock therapy, Democrats speak of "tough love." Centrist Democrats share the Republican view that the poor are dangerously dependent on government assistance. They concur that poor people should be made to work. They agree that bad parenting causes poverty. They do not dispute the Right's diagnosis of the problem but offer a kinder, gentler prescription for reform: Trim welfare, mandate work, but provide the helping hand of training and education programs. However compassionate he sounds, Clinton's welfare reform proposal shares with Republican ones the belief that behavior modification is the solution to poverty.

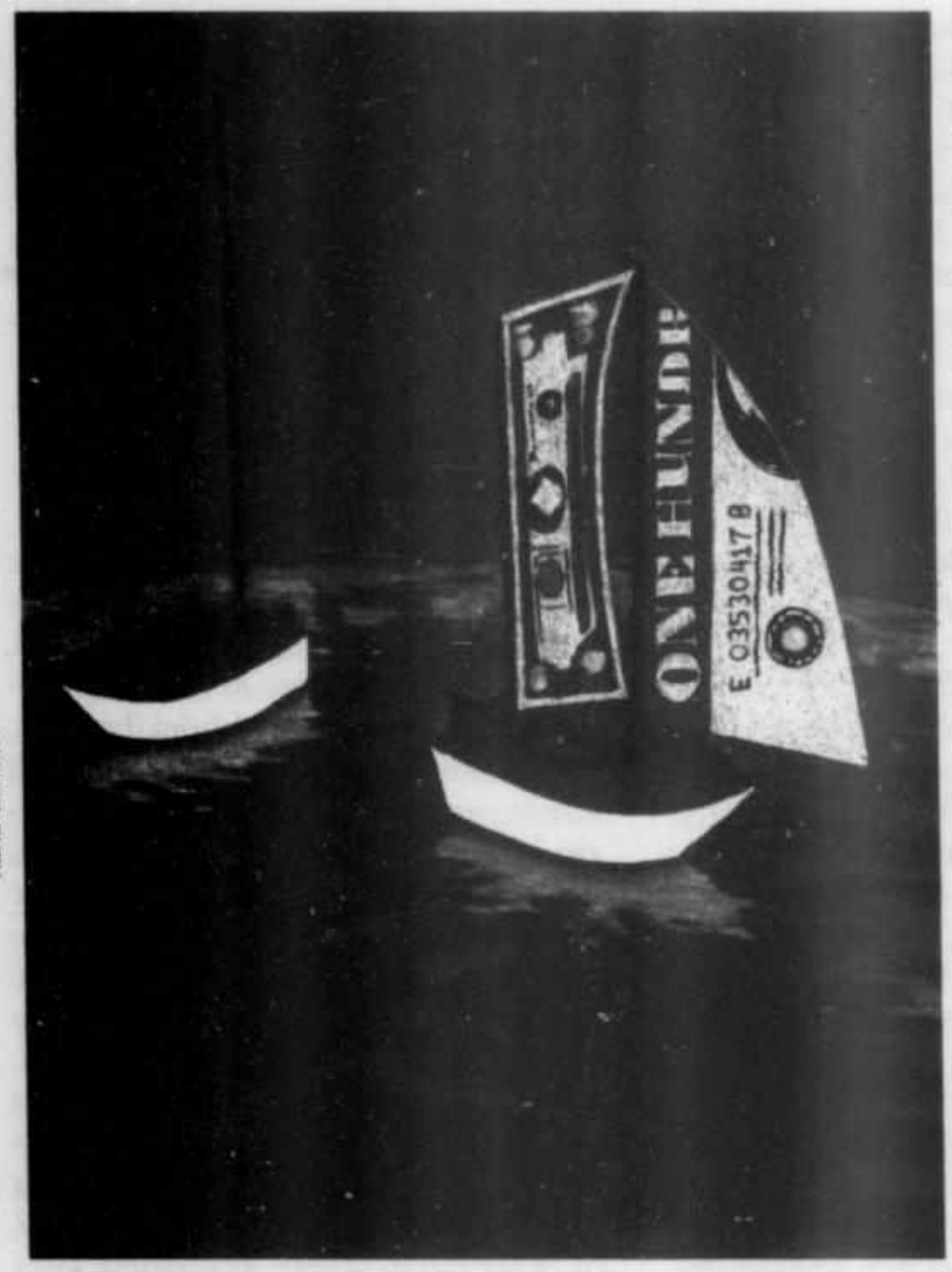
The tragedy of current welfare debates is that they occur in the midst of a swiftly changing economy—but utterly fail to grapple with wrenching structural change. Some conservatives (following Lawrence Mead) believe that jobs are plentiful, but poor people simply refuse to accept them. On the harder Right, others follow Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein in contending that cutting welfare will force poor people of color to accept jobs appropriate to their inferior intelligence. Liberals (following Robert Reich) emphasize the educational mismatch between the poor and the new, high- technology job market. They argue that the solution to inequality is just a matter of educating the poor to become "symbolic analysts," or at least to adapt to the demands of the new computerized workplaces of the future. Put laptops in classrooms, and the children of the inner city will eventually join their better-educated counterparts in the office towers and corporate campuses of the global economy.

Both liberals and conservatives are blinded by wishful optimism about the ability of the American economy to provide adequate employment. While politicians decide how to reinvigorate a work ethic among the poor, structural changes in the economy are wreaking havoc in poor people's lives. The jobs that provided the bedrock of economic security for masses of Americans forty years ago have largely disappeared. Those that remain are likely to be low-wage, insecure, and without benefits. Since 1980, the most rapid job growth has occurred in the service sector, particularly in part-time or temporary work. The consequences of this economic transformation are rising inequality, increasing poverty, and urban devastation. Over the past twenty-five years, the gap between rich and poor has widened. Wages have stagnated or declined. In 1992, the average income for the poorest fifth of families in the country was a mere $9,708. Hit hardest are residents of inner cities, where joblessness rates often exceed forty percent.

The consequences of America's economic changes are painfully visible on the streets of myriad urban neighborhoods, like Philadelphia's Kensington. Home to Black, white, and Hispanic poor people, Kensington was once the heart of an industrial metropolis. But now, the ghost of a prosperous past hovers over debris-strewn vacant lots and haunts the memories of area residents who remember the days when factory jobs at union wages were abundant. Abandoned houses mar virtually every block, graffiti scars the ubiquitous red-brick building facades, crack vials and hypodermic needles lie strewn on the streets among broken bottles and shattered car glass. Only a few miles away lies Philadelphia's glimmering downtown, its salaried professionals more closely connected to the New York Stock Exchange, to the money markets of London and Tokyo and the big law firms of Chicago and Washington, than to the gritty neighborhoods of their own city.

Welfare is one element in the survival strategies of Kensington's poor. Being poor is hard work, and poor people have to work hard to survive. It is impossible to pay monthly rents, utility bills, and basic food, clothing, and other

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RENÉ CARSON

expenses on a meager welfare check. Even the process of applying for public assistance serves as a deterrent; applicants face long lines, hostile administrators, probing and intimate questions, and arbitrary cut-offs.

Most of the beneficiaries of welfare are mothers with young children, unable to work at full-time paid jobs and take care of their children simultaneously. Some choose welfare over employment so they and their children can receive Medicaid benefits. Very few men receive AFDC, and Pennsylvania, like many other states, has virtually eliminated its General Assistance program, cutting off all childless adults deemed to be "able-bodied."

Many welfare recipients hold part-time jobs surreptitiously, to avoid losing their benefits and falling even further into poverty. Men tinker with broken-down cars on vacant lots, trading parts and labor, to save expenses. Some women operate unlicensed day care centers out of their homes in order to remain with their children and assist family members who cannot afford commercial facilities. Others rely on the unreported income of lovers, sons, and brothers who work in the crack trade, one of the neighborhood's few well-paying "employers."

Those who escape welfare usually get trapped in menial service jobs. They rise early and return late, after cleaning up attorneys' offices, or washing dishes in downtown restaurants. Vulnerable to layoffs and firing, usually without day care or health benefits, Kensington residents rely on unemployment payments, food stamps, and welfare to supplement meager and insecure jobs.

The current debate over welfare flattens the complex lives and strategies of poor people to a few simple buzzwords: dependence, laziness, children having children, crime, drugs. The precarious existence of poor people is forgotten inside the Beltway, in the corridors of state capitols, and on the lawns of suburbia, as policy makers shape programs that are firmly rooted in unreality.

While Congress debates the merits of AFDC cutoffs to teen mothers, the rate of teen motherhood has fallen sharply. While Republicans advocate block grants to states, poor people, already reeling from state and local budget cuts, scrape together a living on shrinking welfare benefits. AFDC benefits for a family of four were lower in constant dollars in 1980 then they were in 1960, before Johnson's Great Society. While Clinton proposes a two-year cut-off for AFDC benefits, poor mothers lose their minimum-wage jobs because they have to spend a day at home with a sick child.

Disputes over welfare thus elide the fundamental questions. Poverty, as Herbert Gans reminds us in his passionate and enlightening book, *The War Against the Poor*, is fundamentally a question of the unequal distribution of power. Those with access to resources and control over political institutions can protect themselves from the vicissitudes of the economy. Residents of suburban communities with well-funded public and private schools (and money for college tuition) guarantee a better future for their children than can parents whose kids are entrapped in underfunded, badly run school districts. Families with access to personal networks, whether in the building trades or in downtown law firms, can place their children in well-paying jobs, while inner-city high school graduates are left with the dregs. All the while, the disadvantaged get branded as frightening, dangerous, and undeserving.

Gans challenges some common assumptions about poverty. The poor, he argues, are not different from the rest of America. For the most part, they share the same aspirations as the middle class, despite the bleak economic reality. And the poor are held to higher standards of behavior than what is tolerated among the better off. "Visibility of behavior, not adherence to values," in Gans's well-crafted phrase, creates the stigma that attaches to the poor. Money buys privacy and insulation from the sharp eyes of social workers, welfare administrators, and the police.

Gans's primary goal in *The War Against the Poor* is to discredit the label "underclass," since he contends that such stereotypical portraits of the immoral poor mask the harsh facts of poverty. Obsessing about a dangerous "underclass," the powerful absolve themselves of any responsibility for social conditions and are able to justify punitive social policies.

"Underclass" is a protean word, widely adopted precisely because it is so vague. It lumps together a bundle of characteristics, denoting values and behaviors that deviate from the mainstream. It has become shorthand to describe groups as diverse as welfare recipients, unmarried mothers, drug dealers, homeless people, high school dropouts, and angry teenagers. Usually, it is an unstated reference to people with dark skin, an erroneous assumption that most poor people are Black and that most Black people are poor. At the University of Pennsylvania, many of my white students use the term as a synonym for "urban Black."

What makes the label "underclass" especially pernicious is that it exaggerates trends that have actually been waning. While pundits worry about an epidemic of teen pregnancies, the rate of births to teen mothers has been falling. While the evening news reports crimes in lurid detail, crime rates have decreased since the late 1970s. As analysts raise fears of an increase in the number of high school dropouts, the high school completion rate for Blacks

recently moved to near parity with that of whites, both over 85 percent. But fears of a dangerous underclass have justified cutbacks in welfare, penalties to mothers who bear children outside of marriage, and an increasingly punitive criminal justice system.

The notion of an undeserving "underclass" also expresses the deepest fears of the non-poor. Sometimes the threat from the poor is quite visceral, as with street crime. But other fears are quite exaggerated—such as the idea that welfare dependency drains hard-earned dollars away from tax-paying workers. Immune to the political outrage of "the angry white male" are defense contractors, savings and loan directors, agribusiness conglomerates, Florida-bound retirees, and housing developers, all of whom benefit from government subsidies that dwarf welfare payments.

In discussing the functions of the "undeserving poor," Gans offers a brilliant archaeology of power. He describes the myriad ways—both conscious and unintentional—that language replicates and reinforces the political and economic status quo. If poor people are responsible for their own fate, then growing income inequality is legitimate. The notion of a class of unworthy poor reinforces everyone else's sense of social distance and moral superiority. And the stigma attached to impoverishment becomes self-fulfilling. Poor people find it difficult to get good jobs because employers believe that they are lazy, violent, and prone to crime. Thus many remain underemployed or jobless, increasingly frustrated at their plight. Writing off poor people as unworthy also allows for the channelling of a limited pool of national resources toward the better-off.

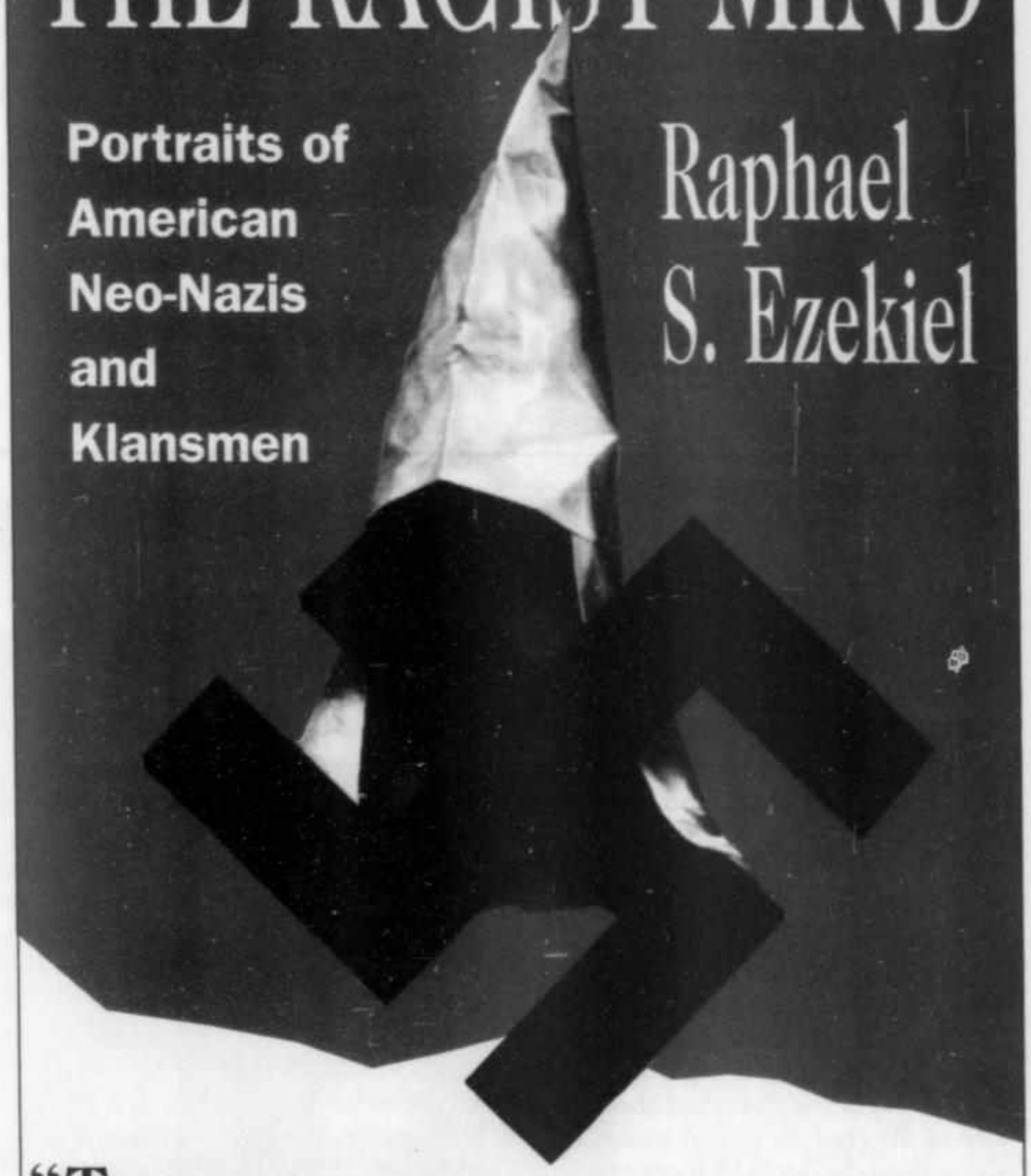
What is the way out? Gans advocates a "job centered anti-poverty policy." Job creation programs, he argues, have the potential to generate political consensus. After all, most poor people want to work. Politicians and policymakers on the Left and the Right concur that gainful employment is a positive good. Working would also eliminate one of the major grounds for the stigmatization of the poor. Because economic insecurity runs deep in late-twentieth-century America, a program guaranteeing stable, secure employment would appeal to a wide segment of the middle and working classes. Gans has little faith in the capacity of the private sector to create new jobs, although he does advocate job sharing and the development of labor-intensive tech-

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE MELTING POT BOILS OVER?

THE RACIST MIND

Portraits of American Neo-Nazis and Klansmen

Raphael S. Ezekiel



"The Radical Right, in its many forms, has again become a significant force in modern America.... Ezekiel's pointed volume...is the best available modern source for grasping the psychological foundations of the movement."

—Thomas F. Pettigrew, University of California, Santa Cruz

"*The Racist Mind*...comes at a time when intolerance of others is a major issue in this country. This important book deserves a wide readership."

—Danny Welch, Director of Klanwatch

IN BOOKSTORES NOW FROM VIKING

Illustration by Tristan Elwell

nologies. Ultimately, he believes the state must intervene and thus joins left-liberal advocates of massive public employment projects, updated versions of the New Deal's WPA and CCC.

But this path is clearly unfashionable. In an era of government retrenchment, it is hard to imagine a Congress that would raise the billions of tax dollars necessary for long-term job creation. Even Republican advocates of "workfare" have largely dropped their call for low-wage, punitive make-work jobs for poor people because they don't want to foot the bill. Absent another Great Depression, it would take a political miracle to convince the public of the necessity of massive public works programs.

Moreover, in an increasingly low-wage, global economy, it is not clear that poverty and economic inequality are problems with domestic solutions. By focusing so much on the war at home, Gans overlooks the real battleground in the war against the poor. The tremendous mobility of international capital has played the greatest role in America's current crisis of poverty. American inner cities are rapidly becoming superfluous in the global economy. Multinationals rely on child labor in Thailand and India, impoverished and politically oppressed workers in China and Malaysia, and displaced agricultural workers crowded into the *maquiladoras* of Mexico and the *favelas* of Brazil. In developing countries, manufacturers can avoid protective labor laws, brutally crush unions, and rapaciously exploit the environment. Poverty and inequality in the United States will continue to grow as long as the global marketplace remains unregulated, and as long as international trade agreements continue to ignore labor rights and environmental devastation.

But other academics should imitate Gans's combination of hard social science and moral exhortation. Against all the odds, he calls for the creation of a humane society that offers genuine opportunities for its most disadvantaged population. Unless the United States moves at least a bit toward Gans and a big step away from Gingrich, we will become a meaner and more divided nation. □

Class-Conscious Patriot

Gary Gerstle

The Next American Nation: The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution, by Michael Lind, The Free Press, 1995. 436 pp. $25.

Michael Lind has produced a remarkable book that offers a sweeping reinterpretation of American history and a bold, imaginative program to revive the promise of American life. This erudite and engrossing work is one that all Americans disturbed about the state of the country should read. Lind makes missteps, some of them serious. But the force of his intelligence and the sincerity of his commitment to a better future for all Americans—especially those disadvantaged by class and race—command our attention.

Lind sees the culture war between the multicultural Left and the conservative Right as a sideshow to the main event of our time—the "revolution of the rich." As poor and middle-class Americans fight each other over affirmative action, political correctness, abortion, and other cultural issues, a wealthy white elite—the "white overclass"—strips them all of wages, union protection, and public services. As a result, America faces the threat of Brazilianization: "the increased withdrawal of the white American overclass into its own barricaded nation-within-a-nation, a world of private neighborhoods, private schools, private police, private health care, and even private roads, walled off from the spreading squalor beyond." Not only does this nightmare vision offend Lind's sense of what's fair, it also represents a tragic turn in the development of that which he holds most dear—the American nation.

Lind believes that virtually all Americans are nationalists, by which he means not flag-wavers or starry-eyed idealists preaching the virtues of 1776 but, more powerfully, loyal members of a broad community distinguished by its language and its folkways: "The patriotism of ordinary Americans is no different in kind from that of Italians or Indians or Russians; it has more to do with family, neighborhood, customs, and historical memories than with constitutions or political philosophies." Lind readily admits that American nationalism has periodically collapsed into a snarling nativism; but he insists that it harbors an alternative, if currently submerged, strain—one that welcomes people of all creeds, colors, and religions who want to be part of the American commonwealth.

It is this liberal nationalism, which he traces from George Washington and Alexander Hamilton through Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, and Theodore Roosevelt to Franklin Roosevelt and Martin Luther King, Jr., that Lind wants to reinvigorate. Not only is it a nationalism that refuses to countenance racial discrimination, affirmative action, or any other distinctions based on race or ethnicity; it is a nationalism that, through the agency of a strong state, seeks to limit the power of the wealthy and create economic opportunity for working- and middle-class Americans. Resurrection of this nationalism requires repudiating both the anti-patriotic, multicultural project of the Left and the anti-government, pro-corporate project of the Right. Once this is accomplished, Lind predicts that Americans will have an opportunity to

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re-establish the vigorously nationalist and social democratic regime that reigned in America during its glory days from the mid-1930s to the mid-1960s.

There is currently a great deal of nostalgia for the New Deal era, a sentiment that will only increase as American liberalism continues its slide into oblivion. But Lind's interest in the New Deal is not sentimental. At thirty-three, he is too young to have had any first-hand experience of the order FDR built and has never been gripped by a blinding liberal faith. (In fact, until recently, he was a conservative *wunderkind*.) His esteem for the liberal heyday is based on a thoughtful and provocative analysis of American history.

For Lind, the New Deal represents the apogee of the "Second Republic," an order that emerged during the Civil War and proceeded to revolutionize the meaning of American national identity. During the era of the "First Republic" (1789-1861), only Protestant Americans of Anglo-Saxon descent could claim a secure place in the American nation. But the nation that took shape in the 1860s, especially in the minds of the numerous Irish and German soldiers who fought for the Union, was open to all European immigrants—even those who would not forsake an allegiance to the Church of Rome, or to the Torah. It took decades for this new definition of nationality to be firmly established. Not until the 1940s, could Irish, Germans, Italians, Jews, Greeks, and Slavs all claim America their true home.

Lind is not oblivious to the discrimination suffered by non-European immigrants and Black people throughout the years of the Second Republic. The Second Republic, like the first, was built on the principle of white supremacy. African- and Asian-Americans were socially and politically marginalized. As a Texan, Lind knows only too well the grim story of turn-of-the-century Black disfranchisement. Even in the North, the Second Republic was sustained by a "grand compromise" between white elites and white workers: the former got social harmony by insuring protection for the latter from the competition of non-white laborers.

But Lind argues that the Second Republic, in its last days, inspired a civil-rights revolution that made possible the creation of a Third, and racially egalitarian, Republic. By the early 1960s, Lind argues, liberal nationalists—Lyndon Johnson, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Bayard Rustin, A. Philip Randolph, among others—were fashioning a republic that brought together the social democracy of the New Deal with the racial egalitarianism of the civil-rights revolution.

Then, their project got hijacked by Black nationalists, Black rioters, and oily conservatives like Richard Nixon, who cynically supported affirmative action as a way to antagonize whites and peel them away from the liberal coalition. A new American nation was born, but it was color-conscious and oligarchic rather than color-blind and social democratic. The affirmative action Left had been seduced by the "plutocratic Right," and the result was the bastard republic—"Multicultural America"—in which we currently live.



STEPHEN SCHILDBACH

This is a bold argument. But it is also a problematic one, for it exaggerates the support that existed in the 1960s both for social democracy and for civil rights. No significant electoral constituency at that time was prepared to confront class differences in America, or to support a greater measure of state control over capitalist investment and labor markets. Lyndon Johnson and Daniel Patrick Moynihan quickly abandoned their tepid gestures toward social democratic reform. Bayard Rustin and A. Philip Randolph were the true architects of a vision linking racial equality with a full-employment, high-wage economy. But they were not the leaders of a vigorous movement. One has to reach back to the 1940s, before the Cold War and a new affluence undermined the Left and tamed the trade unions (developments that Lind ignores) to find a significant airing of class issues in American politics.

Even had a multiracial, social democratic constituency existed in the 1960s, it would not have been influential enough to out-muscle the much greater legions of white working-class voters who were opposed to racial equality. We are only beginning to appreciate the massive resistance among *Northern* whites to the civil-rights revolution. Long before affirmative action became the law of the land, working-class whites in Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, Buffalo, and elsewhere reacted with violent fury to Blacks who dared to move into their neighborhoods, or who ventured to use public parks and swimming pools located in predomi-

nately white areas. In 1964, the race-baiting George Wallace was already a popular figure among white ethnics.

This fact should not surprise Lind, especially given his argument about how much the Second Republic—the New Deal included—depended on the maintenance of white supremacy. From his own perspective, it seems entirely logical that working-class whites would have resisted efforts to strip them of their racial privileges. And it makes perfect sense that civil-rights leaders would have been attracted to government-directed affirmative action. These activists were not duped by a conservative governing elite. Instead, they chose the only policy that might work in a society profoundly hostile to class and racial equality.

Lind's flawed understanding of the origins of affirmative action does not invalidate his arguments about its effects. Affirmative action has indeed accelerated the decline in class politics that began in the 1940s. I see this clearly in my own profession of history, where a preoccupation with race and gender has driven questions of class from the main field of study. That this development occurred in the 1980s, in the midst of an era characterized by a rapidly growing chasm between rich and poor, makes it all the more alarming.

In 1960, the chief executive officers (CEOs) of American corporations earned "only" forty-one times as much as the average factory workers; in 1993, they earned 157 times as much. From 1977 to 1992, the average real wage in America fell by 13 percent, and no respite is in sight. Whatever relief average wage-earners got from federal income-tax cuts in the 1980s has been offset by steep increases in regressive Social Security and state and local taxes; only the very rich have enjoyed a shrinking tax burden. Governments, meanwhile, are too starved for funds to maintain quality public services, and the rich accelerate the public sector's decline by retreating into private schools, private parks, private security forces, and private roads—a realm Lind aptly dubs the "new feudalism."

There is no movement capable of addressing this secession of the rich, no talk-radio host able to rouse the masses and strike fear in the hearts of the ruling elites as Huey Long and John L. Lewis did in the 1930s. In the appeal of Ross Perot in 1992 and then in the opposition to both NAFTA and Clinton's Mexican bailout plan, one can detect populist anger at an economic elite whose commitment to globalism and free trade entails reducing American wages to Third-World levels. But, so far, such protests have been isolated eruptions that have generated neither a movement nor a coherent ideology. Meanwhile many suffering white wage-earners seem to think they will be saved by putting young Blacks in jail, ending welfare as we know it, and eviscerating (or even blowing up) the federal government. There is something desperately wrong with a society incapable of generating opposition to class privilege, and it is Lind's most important contribution to call our attention to this tragic fact.

Lind's discussion of class owes little to Marx or to other socialist thinkers. In this respect, his book is an intellectual landmark, the first serious effort to talk about class in the post-communist world. The typical antagonists of many Marxist accounts—mighty capitalists and heroic workers—are nowhere to be found in Lind's account. His class analysis focuses not on the owners of capital but on its managers—the large class of professionals who run large corporations, banks, and even government agencies that regulate the economy.

He takes a populist's delight in satirizing the lifestyles and pretensions of this elite. He scoffs at their three-parent family ideal—"a husband and wife, each with a lucrative professional job, plus a maid"—and dismisses their obsession with losing weight as nothing more than "fear of lower-middle-class vulgarity, of the animal grossness, the unself-conscious corporeality associated with 'rednecks' and 'hardhats' and 'Bubbas' and 'ethnics' and 'white trash'." More than a few TIKKUN readers may shift uncomfortably in their chairs as they recognize that Lind is talking about them.

The elite status of this white overclass, Lind argues, depends less on their wealth than on their professional credentials, and thus their future depends less on the reproduction of capital than on their ability to get their children into the nation's most prestigious universities. Lind exposes the corrupt "legacy preference" policies that make the children of alumni—even the dumb ones—the most favored applicants at every private, "meritocratic" university. As he correctly points out, legacy preferences tie up many more places in the Ivy League and other top universities than all the other affirmative action set-asides combined. Harvard, to take one example, reserves a full 20 percent of each entering class for legacies; a Harvard alumnus's child has a 40 percent chance of admittance, almost triple the chance of anyone else.

Lind's class analysis, while interesting, is hardly complete. He pays too little attention to the hundreds of non-elite universities that also feed the ranks of the managerial/professional class. And he slights the paths to wealth and power that do not depend on college admission policies or professional credentials. Thus, for example, Lind says barely a word about the Sunbelt entrepreneurs who have used land and mineral speculation, agribusiness, construction, discount retailing, and government servicing to forge themselves into an extraordinarily rich and influential elite. Still, Lind has made great strides in developing an understanding of class in a post-industrial age.

So what is to be done? As befits someone who argues that the old labels of "Left" and "Right" no longer make much sense, Lind offers a blizzard of proposals drawn from all over the political map. His reforms include outlawing paid political advertising, nationalizing the election of senators, imposing a sharp tariff on imported goods manufactured by American corporations in low-wage factories abroad, equalizing the funding of all public schools, democratizing the professions, abolishing legacy preferences, restricting immigration, and reimposing middle-class values on the underclass. Together, these reforms would trigger a fourth American revolution and usher in the next new nation, a color-blind and social-democratic "Trans-America."

This is a wildly utopian vision, especially since Lind offers no portrayal of the social movements that would need to be mobilized, or of the institutions that would have to be established in order for the grand transformation to occur. Perhaps in an attempt to be practical, Lind does argue that his whole program depends on the immediate abolition of affirmative action and the entire system of racial preferences on which it depends. Only such a drastic step, he claims, will enable ordinary Americans from different backgrounds to come together and set the country right.

This extreme position (even Newt Gingrich counsels a gradual approach to doing away with affirmative action) reflects Lind's belief in the power of American nationalism. Once freed from tribal divisions artificially imposed by the plutocratic, multicultural regime, Americans, according to Lind, will be able to express and share the many things they hold in common.

Lind is an unabashed celebrant of the "melting pot," not just as an ideal but as the mechanism that has forged us as a nation. He writes rhapsodically about Anglo-American political ideals, Black music, Tex-Mex cuisine, Anglo-Celtic customs, Dutch folk traditions, evangelical sermons, and bagels as vital ingredients in the making of America. He looks forward to the day when all Americans will be the products of mixed ethnic and racial marriages. His faith in our culture's fundamental egalitarianism—its acceptance of a wide variety of ethnic traditions—drives his belief that a truly democratic republic can be achieved.

But it's a strikingly romantic faith. American traditions are certainly hybrids, but much of the mixing has nurtured neither cultural equality nor political democracy. From nineteenth-century minstrelsy to today's rap music, whites have experienced parts of Black culture and sought to claim them as their own. But precious few have been willing to relinquish the privileges of being white, or even to acknowledge the magnitude of the Black contribution to America. To the contrary, many Euro-Americans have found in Black culture a way of coping with their own morally and sensually constraining—but still superior!—white culture. Thus, mixing across the color line is often a recipe for *maintaining* racial distinctions, not for transcending them.

This counterfeit mixing is keenly resented by minorities themselves, and it helps propel their alienation from the nation and the drive for multiculturalism. Nor is this a uniquely American development. Around the world—from the former Yugoslavia to India to Africa—ethnic, religious, and racial minorities are revolting against national cultures that claim to include them and speak for them but, in reality, hold them down. The crisis in American nationalism is part of this international trend (see "This Land's Not Your Land," TIKKUN, November/December 1994), which suggests that its origins are deeper and more tangled than Lind's analysis allows. The crisis did not begin with the adoption of affirmative action policies in the late 1960s, and it will not end if they are abolished in the late 1990s.

Because Lind does not face up to American nationalism's checkered past, he cannot make a convincing case that this tarnished faith is sufficient to guide us toward his color-blind and economically egalitarian Promised Land. But his book still constitutes an important contribution to contemporary political debate. Lind's bold analysis of class privilege—already the subject of a *Newsweek* cover story—signals the return of class issues to mainstream American politics after a fifty-year absence.

Equally seminal is the argument that informs his calls for a new nationalism: that economically disadvantaged Americans of all races must build a common culture, rooted in American history, if they are to have any chance of halting, or reversing, the revolution of the rich. America's thirty-year preoccupation with cultural divisions has limited the possibilities for a poor people's movement. It is time for working-class Americans to build political and social institutions that will draw them out of their cultural bunkers and into conversations with each other about shared expectations, grievances, and concerns. And it is time for those of us who support this endeavor, but who are skeptical of liberal nationalism's claims, to offer an alternative ideology upon which a vigorous common culture can be based. □

The Book of Ash

Now I am possessed
By a voice that speaks the names
And the histories, binding me
To the dead and inscribing me
In the book and sending me out
Of what I thought was a home,

Restless, each word stinging
As if a glowing coal
Had touched my lips.
I am talking to myself
And am becoming myself,
Sad and angry and free.

I was born with the hand of a corpse
Against my lips and a star
of ash under my tongue,
Flavoring my words
with the hard necessity
of action in this world.

We were not born to live
Like that sparrow in the pine.
Look carefully.
Use the simplest words,
not the magical ones
That will change you, too, to a bird.

We must forget nothing,
Must see the thing as it is—
Musical, perfect, frail—
And keep our human shapes.
And that gaunt pine must not
Have ever been a man.

The mildew's map on the wall
Is unintelligible
And the trout in the cold stream
Refuse to speak. The fox
Sleeps in its dark bed.
The owl stares like a madman.

Give us the words to unsay
The dumb tongue of the fire
And the bitter text of the ash.
Erase the names of the killers
And undo the hour of their birth.
Let them never have been.

Matthew Greenfield

BACK FROM SOUTH AFRICA

(Continued from p. 64)

enough to heal the wounds.

In South Africa, an amnesty for political prisoners and a majority of past human-rights violators while the alleged violations are investigated, along with victims' compensation, have been positive steps toward reconciliation. In the Palestinian-Israeli case, although both sides have agreed that the release of Palestinian political prisoners would be a confidence-building measure in the peace process, the Israelis have been hesitant to proceed with such a release because of continued terrorism. The official explanation for the Israelis' release of a small percentage of Palestinian prisoners is that the others have "blood on their hands." For their part, the Palestinians have demanded the release of all detainees, equating them with prisoners of war in the aftermath of a peace treaty. Perhaps the optimal solution would be the formation of a joint Palestinian-Israeli parole board overseen by an outside observer (such as the International Red Cross). The release of prisoners could be conditional, contingent on their fulfillment of a pledge not to use or advocate violence in the future.

As in South Africa, genuinely democratic elections are an integral part of the Mideast peace process. Mubarak Awad stated the choice clearly in the *Jerusalem Times*: "We have to choose as Palestinians, especially regarding Arafat. Is he to be like Nelson Mandela, or continue being like Fidel Castro, with all of us his army and thinking about revolution?" From a global perspective, Israel will have to cease to monopolize the title of the "only democracy of the Middle East" and genuinely welcome the addition of another democratic entity, while the Palestinians gain international acceptance of their role as a member in the family of free nations. An overwhelming majority of Palestinians understand that with the exercise of voting rights will come their long-sought-after dignity.

The legacy of the Intifada (Palestinian uprising) has been the impetus for Palestinians to become masters of their own fate. Using this model, they should take the initiative, pushing for elections, rather than awaiting Israeli approval. The Palestinians should go ahead and—in a friendly but firm manner—set in motion the process of registration, selection of candidates, preferably through primaries, and elections under international supervision. So far, Israel has agreed to international observation, the participation of all political groups, a partial pullout from additional cities such as Jenin and Tulkerem, a replacement of Israeli soldiers by Palestinian policemen, and their withdrawal from all major urban areas during elections.

One of the remaining obstacles to mideast peace is the "constructive ambiguity" of the functions of the Palestinian Self-Governing Council. Intended by the Israelis to be a small executive council with administrative tasks, the Palestinians interpreted it to be a full-fledged legislative body. Whatever form the council takes, the legitimate expression of popular will through elections could shape its size and function. The nascent State of Israel, it should be remembered, held elections to a body with limited functions that eventually became the full-fledged Knesset.

Even if the Israeli government attempts to limit such a unilateral electoral process, we believe that the entire world and many Israelis would stand by the Palestinians' worthy undertaking. The Palestine Center for Democracy and Elections has been established in Jerusalem by Mubarak Awad to push the process in this direction. As in South Africa, the establishment of an independent electoral committee—perhaps including some foreign experts—and the mobilization of the non-governmental community for voter education are necessary albeit not sufficient conditions for Palestinian empowerment.

For its part, the Israeli peace movement should give priority to convincing fellow citizens that Palestinian democratization is in Israelis' enlightened self-interest, since democracies tend not to fight wars among each other. Facilitating the transition of Israel's neighbors toward democracy thus could lead to greater security. As Isham Sharabi has said: "Only a free democratic Palestinian entity alongside Israel will guarantee a genuine and lasting peace." In the longer term, the consolidation of democracy can allow both countries to play in the "same league" by the same rules of the game. It does not mean that, as competitors, they would never engage in rough play; but being in the same league and accepting the same limits of legitimate action could pave the way for resolution of the more difficult problems that remain to be addressed: borders, refugees, settlements, and the future of Jerusalem. Finally, the Palestinians' embrace of a democratic system may encourage the international community to provide long-promised financial support for economic development.

Even if history has shown that the occupier can often dictate certain conditions over the occupied, wisdom and foresight recommend a lasting peace over an imposed solution of a less permanent nature. Thus, one-sided diktats banning the participation of Hamas in elections could prove counterproductive. The South African experience illustrates the benefit of allowing extremists to compete for ballots; there, the elections revealed the extremist groups' lack of popular support. (See Jacklyn Cock's analysis in "Beyond the Rainbow," TIKKUN, July/August 1994.)

The current leadership's flagging popularity does not necessarily translate into support for the zealots on either side. A significant majority of Israelis supports using force against Jews breaking the law in the territories, blocking roads, or appropriating Arab property. According to the Center for Palestinian Research and Studies, "wide endorsement" among the Palestinians of acts of violence against Jews translates into no more than 19 percent support for Hamas and a negligible amount of support for other Islamic factions.

It remains to be seen if Yasir Arafat, Yitzhak Rabin, and Shimon Peres can truly follow in the footsteps of their Nobel-laureate predecessors Nelson Mandela and P.W. De Klerk. The overall consensus of the citizens of South Africa is that their leaders' commitment to the search for common ground has surpassed their highest expectations. Both South African leaders have exhibited a remarkable humanism. De Klerk elevated himself to the highest standards by publicly expressing sorrow for the wrongs committed by the apartheid policies, acknowledging prejudice and self-interest. And Mandela, after twenty-seven years of unjust suffering, shows no rancor toward his jailers, asking them to join in governing the nation toward a better future.

Fences, mined zones, and electronic detectors along most of the Green Line that separates Israel from the West Bank may temporarily alleviate terrorist infiltration, but such security measures—demanded by some Israelis after each suicide bombing—offer diminishing returns. In contrast, integrating peace with reconciliation as has been done in South Africa is a far more fruitful yet difficult path, one that still has too few adherents among Israelis and Palestinians.

The Palestinian people must not allow the struggle to free themselves from the oppression of foreign occupation to end in accepting a repressive regime of their own. The Israelis must cease to be occupiers; only then will they have an opportunity to become truly involved in the search for the affirmation of their values in the best Jewish and universal traditions. □

JUST NEIGHBORS

(Continued from p. 83)

remind the citizen-mediators that they can contribute tangibly to the welfare of their own neighborhood. Less tangible but just as important, the experience seems to encourage and sustain a deep sense of civic competence. That kind of character-building matters, and not only in a particular neighborhood or community, because it promotes the health of the republic. □

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EDITORIAL

Celebrating Sukkot This Year:

The Jewish Thanksgiving and Reconnection to Nature

(Sunday night, October 9 - October 16, 1995)

One reason Sukkot is absent from the lexicon of most American Jews is that it comes five days after the High Holidays—Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur—and many Jews feel that they've already done their "Jewish thing" for a while. If services already feel boring and removed from their lives, another chance to sit in synagogue certainly doesn't sound really exciting. But if that's your experience with your local synagogue, don't go. You can still do Sukkot as a family observance, even if you skip services.

Sukkot is the Jewish Thanksgiving, a time when people live in flimsy little booths first constructed for life in the desert after the Israelites had left Egypt, then later used in ancient Israel to house Jews when they came to Jerusalem to bring their fall harvest offering to the Temple.

Living in a sukkah for seven days can be an incredibly powerful experience, particularly for contemporary urban and suburban dwellers who rarely have this kind of contact with nature. The temporary walls (often put together by connecting old doors from your garage or cellar), the partial roof made of tree branches or palms and leaves, are meant to allow us to view the stars from within, leaving us vulnerable to the elements.

Why vulnerability? It's a spiritual exercise with political consequences. So much of our pursuit of career and wealth is aimed at protecting us from being dependent or needy. We build elaborate protective structures around us, hoping thereby to gain security. Jewish tradition doesn't put that impulse down, but Sukkot puts it in its place, reminding us that ultimately all the material goods we've assembled around us can't protect us, that we too are also part of the natural order, and that the mystery and grandeur of the universe must necessarily leave our egocentric pretenses in shambles. So, for seven days we live in a hut that we decorate with fruits and vegetables, nothing separating us from the rain or the cold but the branches and palms arranged in such a way that there is enough space between them to see the stars.

We read the Book of Kohelet (Ecclesiastes), which punches holes in our pretenses. "Vanity of vanity," says Kohelet, "all is vanity," and "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted ... a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance ... a time to keep silence and a time to speak ...." Ecclesiastes is not the best philosophy of life, but it is certainly a useful corrective for human arrogance.

Living in a sukkah, we remind ourselves of the dominant historical experience of being Jewish: homelessness. Sukkot is a time to identify with the homeless: the people on the streets of our own cities, the homeless refugees in Bosnia, or those living in Palestinian refugee camps. Jewish renewal communities should make Sukkot an occasion to demand of our legislators that adequate monies be allocated for feeding and housing those in need. And each family could dedicate at least one night of the holiday to working at a homeless shelter.

Sukkot also reminds us of the fragility of the earth itself. We have willfully ignored the signs of global warming (but did you notice the temperature this summer?), and convinced ourselves that the ecological issues have been dealt with just because they were exposed in the media (but meanwhile, the destruction of the environment proceeds unabated and a Republican Congress zealously works to dismantle the ineffectual environmental restraints that Democrats had put on corporate greed). Sukkot is meant to be a time in the Jewish world when we recommit ourselves individually and communally to protecting the earth.

The final element, however, is the joyous celebration and thanksgiving for our own bounty—thus the centrality of daily meals in the sukkah. Invite neighbors and friends every night to a delicious meal (or sumptuous pot-lucks), sing songs of joy and celebration, dance, share stories of struggles from the past, and make plans for transformative struggles in the future. Sleep under the stars and wake at dawn to praise God or to begin your path to create a personal relationship with the Source of all Being. Use Sukkot to re-establish a daily spiritual practice. Sit in your sukkah and meditate or pray according to the Jewish renewal imperative: BE REAL—DON'T SAY PRAYERS YOU DON'T BELIEVE. Most of all, create your own family or individual ways to experience joy and thanksgiving for this moment of life in which each of us gets to experience the incredible wonder of all being, to add our voices momentarily to the choir of all that is, and then, without false attempts to hold on to that which is ephemeral, to recognize that we too will move on. □

What Is the Politics of Meaning?

The politics of meaning is both a new theoretical orientation and a strategy to change American society.

Theoretical Orientation

Liberals and progressives have focused on economic needs and individual rights—and have fought against corporate or governmental forces that deny each. A progressive politics of meaning supports the liberal agenda on these issues (including civil liberties, women's liberation, economic justice, choice, ecological sanity, etc.). Yet liberals have too narrow an understanding of human needs, often seeing us as creatures whose primary interest is in economic survival or individual freedom. But they've been unable to recognize the ethical, spiritual, and psychological needs that are equally central.

We see human beings as fundamentally in relationship to each other and needing each other's recognition and love. The healthy human being is not the one who can stand alone, but the one who can acknowledge his/her need for others and can recognize in every other the sanctity that makes them worthy of respect and caring.

Human beings have a need to transcend the materialism and selfishness and the manipulative consciousness that teaches them to see others primarily in terms of what they can get out of others. Most people have a hunger to move beyond the "looking out for number one" common sense of this society and to see their lives as connected to some higher ethical and spiritual meaning. Yet most people believe that this is unrealistic, that ethical and spiritual life can only be ideals for some future eras, and that in the meantime they must be "realistic" and live according to the dominant ethos of selfishness and cynicism.

But a world based on selfishness and cynicism produces a huge amount of psychic pain. The ethos of selfishness and cynicism plays itself out in a weakening of families, loving relationships, and friendships—because the more people internalize the cynical view that everyone is only out for themselves, the harder it becomes to trust anyone or to believe that they will really be there for you when you most need them, when you don't have so much to give back and can't make the relationship an "equal exchange" (in market terms). Nor can you trust corporations not to pollute the environment or others not to rob you on the streets or at home. As trust dissolves, fear increases.

Because liberals and the Left never really address this crisis of meaning, the Right has been able to position itself as the primary meaning-oriented political force in the society, bemoaning the ethical and spiritual decline and the crisis in families. Yet they are simultaneously the force that champions the very ethos of selfishness and materialism in the world of work, whose consequences lead to all this pain in personal life.

That's why we need a progressive politics of meaning.

Sound-Bite Version

The goal of a politics of meaning is to change the bottom line in American society, so that productivity or efficiency of corporations, legislation, or social practices is no longer measured solely by the degree to which they maximize wealth and power—but rather also by the degree to which they tend to maximize our capacities to sustain loving and caring relationships and to be ethically, spiritually, and ecologically sensitive.

Strategy

Some people think that all of these meaning issues only have an impact on middle-income people, and that liberals and progressives should *first* solve the economic problems of the society and stop the cutbacks of the conservatives. We wish them luck. But we believe that they will be unable to do that until they've addressed the meaning crisis. The alliance needed between poor people and middle-income people can only be built if the pain of middle-income people is given equal attention to the pain faced by poor people. Up till now, the Left has tended to give the message to the American majority that they are being selfish and bad to worry about the collapse of their families, crime, etc., when the poor are suffering so much more. This has not been an effective strategy. We think the best way to serve the interests of the most oppressed is to take seriously the meaning crisis, and build a cross-class alliance on that basis.

Some New Age people talk about meaning issues too—but they tend to focus on changing their own heads. That's an important element—but it is unlikely to work for most people unless we build economic and political institutions that foster caring rather than selfishness and cynicism. In TIKKUN magazine we put forward specific programmatic ideas to show what this might look like concretely.

Ethics Summit

We will convene a national "Summit on Ethics and Meaning" to launch our national campaign for a politics of meaning. The Summit will take place April 14-16, 1996 at the Omni Shoreham in Washington, D.C. Please take time off from work and attend. It could be one of the most important experiences of your life! We've also created the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning, and we are creating mini-summits in cities around the United States. If you want to be involved, come to the conference, join the Foundation, and help us create a movement that addresses the meaning issues. The current strategy debates about how to build the politics of meaning take place inside TIKKUN—so please subscribe. For more information, write: Foundation for Ethics and Meaning, c/o TIKKUN, 251 West 100 Street, New York, NY 10025 (212-864-4110).

Tikkun (tē-kün) ...to heal, repair and transform the world. All the rest is commentary

תיקון

Jewish Renewal

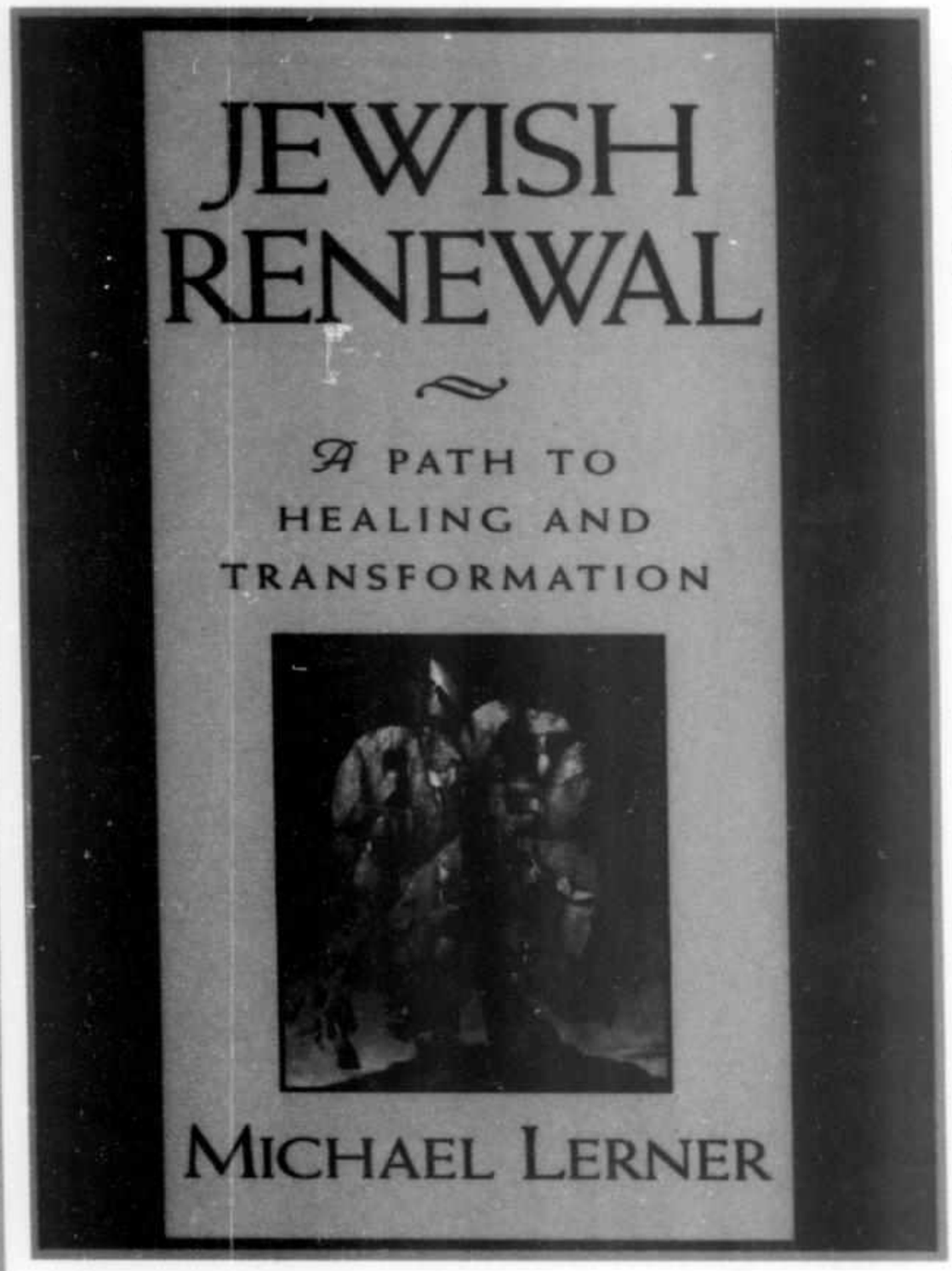
A Path to Healing and Transformation

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Jewish Renewal is a call to God, and hence a paradoxical call to both social commitment and joyousness, to celebration and liberation.

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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.

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