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

Passover Haggadah Supplement, 1997

TIKKUN

Editorials:

Putting Down the Prophets
Clinton's Character Miseducation
TIKKUN's Finances

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY MARCH/APRIL 1997 $6.00



Sex & Love

Amitai Etzioni ▫ Peter Gabel
Jane Goldsmith
Susan Mintz

Psychoanalysis & Post-Modernism
Michael Bader

Buddhist Jews?
Nathan Katz

Why Hagar Left
Phyllis Ocean Berman

Promise Keepers
Michael Kimmel

PLUS

MICHELLE EPHRAIM ON JEWISH SENSIBILITIES IN ACADEMIA
STEW ALBERT ON *EVITA*
THAD WILLIAMSON ON ECONOMIC STRATEGIES FOR MEANING
JERRY LEMBKE ON VIETNAM VETS AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY
FICTION BY ROBERT COHEN
POETRY BY MARGE PIERCY AND JOSHUA WEINER

Learning to Read

My mother would not teach me to read.
Experts in newspapers and pop books
said school must receive us virgin
Secrets were locked in those

black scribbles on white, magic
to open the sky and the earth.
In a book I tried to guess from
pictures, a mountain had in its side

a door through which children ran in
after a guy playing a flute
dressed all in green, and I too
wanted to march into a mountain.

When I sat at Grandmother's seder,
the book went around and everybody
read. I did not make a distinction
between languages. Half the words

in English were strange to me.
I knew when I had learned to read
all would be clear, I would know
everything that adults knew, and more.

Every handle would turn for me.
At school I grabbed words like toys
I had been denied. Finally I
could read, me. I read every sign

from the car. On journeys I read
maps. I read every cereal box
and can, spelling out the hard words.
All printing was sacred.

At the seder I sat down at the table,
selfimportant, adult on my cushion.
I was no longer the youngest child
but the smartest. When the hagaddah

was to be passed across me,
I grabbed it, roaring confidence.
But the squiggles, the scratches
were back. Not a letter

waved to me. I was blinded again.
That night I learned about tongues.
Grandma explained she herself spoke
Yiddish, Russian, Polish, Lithuanian

and bad English, little Hebrew.
That's okay. I said. I will
learn all languages. But I was
fifty before I read Hebrew.

I no longer expect to master
every alphabet before death
snatches away everything I know.
But they are always beckoning to me

those languages still squiggles
and noises, like lovers I never
had time to enjoy, places
I have never (yet) arrived.

—Marge Piercy

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY — VOLUME 12 NUMBER 2

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Letters

We welcome letters from readers, but we are able to print only a small fraction of the huge volume we receive. Be prepared to have your letters dramatically shortened, edited, and sometimes changed in order to bring out more fully what you seem to be trying to say (we'd prefer to call you to receive your permission, but at the moment don't have enough staff to do so). On some occasions, readers have approached a member of the staff with their perspective, and we've written the letter for them. On other occasions, we allow the use of pseudonyms for our letter writers. Send letters to: TIKKUN, 26 Fell Street, San Francisco, Ca. 94102.

S.A.T. EXAMS

To the Editor:

Peter Gabel's article "Abolish the S.A.T.'s," (editor's note: now anthologized in the collection "Gabel's Writings on the Politics of Meaning" available from Tikkun—send $10 check), correctly suggests that thinking should involve employing the faculty of human understanding, and the intuitive understanding that gives ethical direction to life itself. He suggests that intuitive moral understanding should anchor and direct the thought process.

I agree with everything he says, but find myself left with some unanswered pieces to the puzzle:

1. Do you suggest eliminating the S.A.T. and the like and having no standardized testing, or replacing the S.A.T.'s with some measurement of intuitive moral understanding?
2. Doesn't life present issues and problems for everyone that do not involve another person, so intuitive moral understanding may not be relevant in all situations? For instance, how do I use my time wisely? How do I set up my household (in which only I live) and my

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personal finances for effectiveness and efficiency? Isn't it important to measure and maximize my reading, writing and thinking skills so I can understand and communicate with Peter Gabel and Michael Lerner?

3. Doesn't reading ability and comprehension, logical problem solving, and arithmetic help us to better get through life? As I read your writings, my reading comprehension enabled me to try to understand your message. A great message is wasted if not understood.
4. Should we retain the S.A.T. measurements and add to it the following parts?
   a. Understanding the world?
   b. Understanding the lives and aspirations of human beings individually and as a group?
   c. Understanding difficulties we face in realizing those aspirations?
   d. Understanding of "intuitive moral understanding?"
5. Can we really be creative and integrate the S.A.T.-type thinking with the human-understanding thinking and create test questions that involve both simultaneously?

Martin Jacobs
Raleigh, North Carolina

Peter Gabel responds:

It is possible to integrate the objectives of reading comprehension and math calculation with empathic human understanding, but not by keeping constant the existing testing structure and adding moral understanding to it. What we need to do is to reconceptualize how to foster and evaluate human development in all its dimensions for all of our citizens—understanding that the means of evaluation affects what it is we are fostering.

The S.A.T. is a "test." It is efficient, but only at the terrible price of dehumanizing the interaction between the older and younger generations (the testers and testees, respectively). The test in its very nature values rapid analytical cleverness and detached manipulation as normative values to which the younger generation should aspire. To abhor this, as I do, does not mean that learning mathematics or reading skills is undesirable.

The challenge is to reimagine the entire world of human development and evaluation from a humanistic,

TIKKUN Savers: Cocktail Party

with Cornel West & Michael Lerner
Sunday, May 18th, in Manhattan 3:00-7:00 p.m.

A TIME FOR SERIOUS SHMOOZING WITH TWO OF AMERICA'S MOST INTRIGUING THINKERS

COST: $250. If you've already donated $250 or more to help save TIKKUN since January 1, 1997, you are invited for free. To ease the pain: Allow us to deduct $25/mo. for a year from your credit card—use the enclosed form between pages 32 and 33, or just send us the credit card info (though a check for the full amount would be even easier for us).

To reserve a place: Write to TIKKUN's Cocktail Party, 951 Cragmont Ave, Berkeley, Ca. 94708.

TIKKUN Summer Camp

AN INTERFAITH GATHERING TO BUILD A SPIRITUAL AND POLITICAL TRANSFOMATION OF AMERICAN SOCIETY

August 19-24

at Elat Chayyim, a Jewish retreat center near Woodstock, New York

with Cherrie Brown, Peter Gabel, and Rabbi Michael Lerner

First of all, it's a nice place to hang out with key members of the TIKKUN community. So if you are someone who wants to be an activist in building the TIKKUN community, or in building the campaign for a politics of meaning, you could have a wonderful time being at TIKKUN Camp this summer.

Bring your children, enjoy delicious vegetarian food, swimming, and a rich spiritual experience.

Cherrie Brown will teach how to address class issues, Peter Gabel will teach about how to embody the politics of meaning in daily life, and Michael Lerner will discuss strategies for the coming years. Other TIKKUN writers will be present.

It's meant to be a place to share ideas, experiences, theory, and practice—and to have a good time. People of all faiths are welcome. Enrollment limited. To apply: write a self-revealing letter about you, your interests, and what you like and/or dislike about about TIKKUN or the politics of meaning, and how specifically you plan to be involved as an activist, writer or intellectual shaper of our community. Send to TIKKUN Camp, 951 Cragmont Ave, Berkeley, Ca. 94708.

Cost: If you bring a tent and camp, or commute it's $300; 4-person occupany room: $350/per; double: $400/per; double with private bath: $430/per; single: $475; weekend only (space permitting): $285.

meaning-centered standpoint, and then within that new frame to think through what role tests should play, if any, and how such tests should be designed and administered.

For example, I feel that community service should be required of all high school students and that one's ability to give of oneself to a local community should be at the core of how well one is thought to be doing and learning in school. If S.A.T.-type skills were clearly subordinated to one's record in serving the local community, I would have much less of a problem with evaluating those skills, although I am confident that the more the development of empathy were valued, the less "tests" like the S.A.T. would be regarded as tolerable ways of relating to and evaluating teenagers.

Jews in the Movies

To the Editor:

Reviewing *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot*, Paul Buhle and Edward Portnoy discover a footnote in which I facetiously wonder whether Leslie Fiedler was the uncredited screenwriter of Martin Ritt's 1961 film *Paris Blues*. Not getting the joke (what kind of a Jew is this Portnoy?), they self-righteously and longwindedly accuse me of taking the credit away from Ritt. Listing Martin Ritt's credentials is no substitute for looking at his film, however; the "evidence" Buhle and Portnoy fail to see is in front of their eyes, in the interracial bond (about which Fiedler was also writing) between the black and white male protagonists not only of that film, but also of two other Jewish popular front movies, *Body and Soul* and *Home of the Brave*.

But then the authors of a forthcoming *Guide to Jewish Films on Video* are as unreliable viewers of movies as they are readers of books. To minimize the power of blackface in *The Jazz Singer*, they wrongly claim that Jakie Rabinowitz/Jack Robin was "already a Broadway star" when he blacks up, and they replace the "Jewish psychological turmoil" that continues to move Jewish views of the first talking picture (like J. Hoberman, who has written the authoritative study of Yiddish film) with the "assimilationist visions of [Jolson/Robin's] bosses." By bosses they seem to mean the gentile producers within the film, not the Hollywood Jewish moguls evacuated from their own vision of Jewish Americanization.

Why has Buhle and Portnoy's "Al Jolson in Black and White" gotten so much so wrong? The Buhle/Portnoy complaint reviews a book that fails to be the one they wish they'd written, a catalogue of Bund and Yiddishkeyt contributions to American popular culture. The book I actually wrote examines a subject Buhle and Portnoy wish would go away, the conjunction between traditional American blackface and immigrant Jewish Hollywood. It focuses on the most popular entertainer, songwriter, and entertainment form of the first half of the twentieth century—Al Jolson, Irving Berlin, and motion pictures. Blackface, I argue, contaminated even the post-World War II Jewish race relations films that tried to leave it behind. Afraid of what they will see, however, Portnoy and Buhle can't get any films right. The black hero of *Home of the Brave* suffers a hysterical paralysis from the death not of a "deeply-racist fellow soldier," but of his best friend. In having that buddy under pressure start to speak a racial slur, the film reaches (even as it also ends up exemplifying and abandoning) an insight about the invasive power of racialization subtler than anything in Portnoy/Buhle's black-and-white. Uncritically to celebrate their idealized object, an undifferentiated Jewish old left, they close their eyes to mammy/minstrel tradition in popular front films—and then red-bait me as a "Communist hardliner" for spoiling their party. Like the Hollywood Jewish radical community that produced it, a film such as *Body and Soul* is strong enough to survive accurate observation; what will kill it is blind sentimentality.

The author of the original *Portnoy's Complaint* also took abuse for his wound to group narcissism. In the tradition of Groucho Marx's vexed relations with an exclusive Los Angeles Jewish country club (Whoopi Goldberg recently revived his line to climax her whiteface scene in *The Associate*), thanks to Portnoy/Buhle for reading me out of a club of which I do not wish to be a member.

Michael Rogin
U.C. Berkeley

Paul Buhle and Edward Portnoy respond:

Keyner zet nit zayn eygenem hoyker (a man never sees his own hump). Michael Rogin's response to our review is all hyperbole and personal venom (we would never ask, "What kind of a Jew is this Rogin?" Leave that to the neo-conservatives, please.) *Blackface* is a grossly inaccurate book because Rogin substituted how-flown theoretical formulations for the historical homework that he evidently skipped in the course of expanding an exceptionally interesting article.

Suffice it to say that Jewish Hollywood moguls most certainly did engage in the worst forms of cinematic racism (and no one should deny it). But they were opposed by an ardent Jewish Left which has been steadily abused, the value of its films denied, and even its right to work within the industry decried by the like of the *Commentary* crowd and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., ever since the onset of the Blacklist fifty years ago. One great strength of this Hollywood Left is that it rooted itself, consciously and unconsciously, in the traditions of secular Yiddishkayt. In the guise of combatting an imagined romanticism about a supposedly "undifferentiated Jewish old left," Rogin returns to the familiar slander, with a few new touches. Now, it turns out, they weren't left-wing enough.

If Rogin (and Tikkun readers) can spare the time to read our forthcoming *Guide to Jewish Films on Video*, he will find ample serious treatment of racism and plenty of differentiation—from *Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein* to *Nazi Agent* and *Sounder*, from *Mister Smith Goes to Washington* to *Broken Arrow*, and from *Spartacus* to *The Front*. Who could ask for anything more?

Sabbath & Time

To the Editor:

I have sat through umpteen years in Hebrew school, have taken a course in Jewish law from a justice of the Israeli Supreme Court, and have spent almost two decades in Israel—but until I read Letty Cottin Pogrebin's article "Time Is All There Is" (May/June, 1996), I never regarded the Sabbath as anything but a colossal pain in the neck.

Thanks to Heschel, Pogrebin writes, she gained the insight that the Sabbath was essentially a gift of time.

In the midst of a late 20th century over-extended life, I have found myself driving my young daughter to a swimming lesson twice a week. The pool is

far from home, isolated, and my child is the only one from our town who attends. Thus I am essentially "stuck" cooling my heels for an hour while she swims innumerable laps of backstroke and crawl.

Friends commiserate at my "sacrifice," but I have grown to view the swimming lesson as my secret reprieve. In that hour I cannot produce any things—no magazine articles, vegetable soup, political petitions. Mine is the luxury of enforced idleness, and I savor each one of the languorous minutes.

Today, during the swimming lesson, I leaned back on a reclining chair on a green lawn in the shade of a palm tree. Then I unwrapped my TIKKUN, and settled down with Pogrebin. The gain was all my own. Time, indeed, is all there is.

Helen Motro
Kfar Shmariahu
Israel

ELECTION '96

To the Editor:

I want to amplify the comments of Election Roundtable (Sept./Oct. 1996) participant Dan Cantor from the New Party on the importance of being patient, building real organizations, and not getting seduced into presidential handicapping.

The American progressive community has both organizational and ideological problems, and we need to work on both. The New Party seems to be making intelligent moves on both fronts, building relationships among diverse groups of people, delivering tangible victories to members and supporters, developing sound policy proposals, and thinking strategically and carefully about upcoming electoral opportunities.

For example, most New Party affiliates are already considering the 1998 and 2000 state legislative "term-limits" elections, when hundreds of incumbent legislators will be forced out of office. Imagine a set of locally-rooted parties backing federal, state and local candidates in those elections on a platform of living wage jobs, "starting gate" equality for children, and radical campaign finance reform. Some of the candidates could run on both the Democratic and New Party lines (aka "fusion") and others as third line candidates alone, if both major parties put up right-wingers. Now that's a meaningful political strategy.

Aaron Back
Montclair, N.J.

Editor Responds:

No, it's not a "meaning-full political strategy." Instead, it assumes that the real problems remain economic. That's the problem with the entire New Party and much of the Green Party alternative. We support the demands Mr. Back suggests, but we believe that to effectively counter the Right you must have something more to offer than a set of economic goodies. Yes, that may produce a short-term election victory, particularly in areas where there is heavy concentration of liberal voters. But it will not speak to the millions of Americans whose primary pain comes from living in a society that systematically frustrates their need for recognition, human connection, love, and a transcendent meaning and purpose for their lives.

To the Editor:

Even though I'm a stalwart Republican, I enjoyed your editorial "Clinton's Victory" (Nov./Dec. 1996). It made me think about a lot of things I normally don't reflect on.

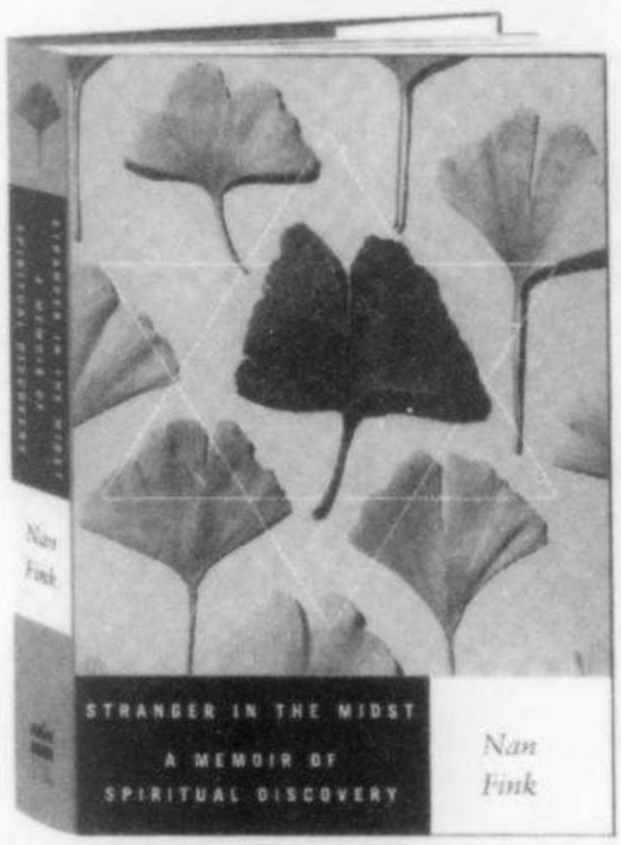
To be honest, even though I supported and voted for Bob Dole, I thought something was missing from his campaign. And it was more than just his less-than-desirable performance; on the hustings, he seemed to jump from issue to issue and topic to topic, with no central theme, nothing voters could grab on to and take to the polls in a positive sense.

I was particularly intrigued by your concept of "meaning," and it made me ponder. I don't intend to criticize your approach by what I'm about to say, but (as the 1996 contest proved) there can be too much meaning—consider the Buchanan candidacy.

Buchanan cynically employed many of the populist concepts offered in your editorial. As a Republican, I kind of cringe when I hear this sort of thing, but I cringe less when I hear it from a more liberal publication such as yours than when I hear it from someone like Buchanan. I really believe Buchanan is using this populist angle to advance the heinous cause of white, male Christian supremacy, much as David Duke did in late 1991 and early 1992 when Duke briefly considered a run for the Presidency.

Daniel K. Weir
Arlington, Virginia

A FASCINATING MEMOIR OF SPIRITUAL EXPLORATION FROM THE CO-FOUNDER OF *TIKKUN*.



Stranger in the Midst, the moving story of one woman's search for spiritual meaning through her conversion to Judaism.

"There is a saying that it's hard to be a Jew. In this deeply moving memoir, Fink shows that it's equally hard to *become* a Jew."
—*Kirkus Reviews*

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To the Editor:

Tom Hayden's memo to President Clinton, and his enclosed letter to us readers (Jan./Feb., 1997) really drove home a point that I had suspected all along: that many liberal Democrats have been so seduced by the allure of "access" to power that they are unable to see what is really happening. I was astounded to see how many people who deeply detested Clinton's dismantling of welfare and his strident assertions that the era of big government was over (except for big military) were nevertheless enthusiastically rallying around him and Hillary.

TIKKUN seemed to be suggesting that this could be accounted for by lesser-evilism. But when Clinton was a solid 10-12 points ahead in the polls there was still no significant defections to protest candidates. Hayden's point is that we liberals have lost our moral compass and have become intoxicated by the access that Clinton gives us. He listens, he shakes his head sympathetically, he gives us the impression that he really wishes he could do things our way if only he had more power to do so. And feeling that we are so important to him, we play along.

You only need to look at the sycophantic tones of some of your "Memos to Clinton" writers in 1997: Jean Houston, publicly humiliated by Hillary Clinton although for months Ms. Houston served as her spiritual advisor; Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi imagining that Clinton is looking for yet more spiritual advice; Marie Wilson begging for some more crumbs for women from the boss' table.

How well I remember the public meeting sponsored by TIKKUN in New York some two years ago, after the 1994 Republican victory, when Gloria Steinem argued that the country didn't need a politics of meaning; all it needed was to get more people registered and more Democrats voting.

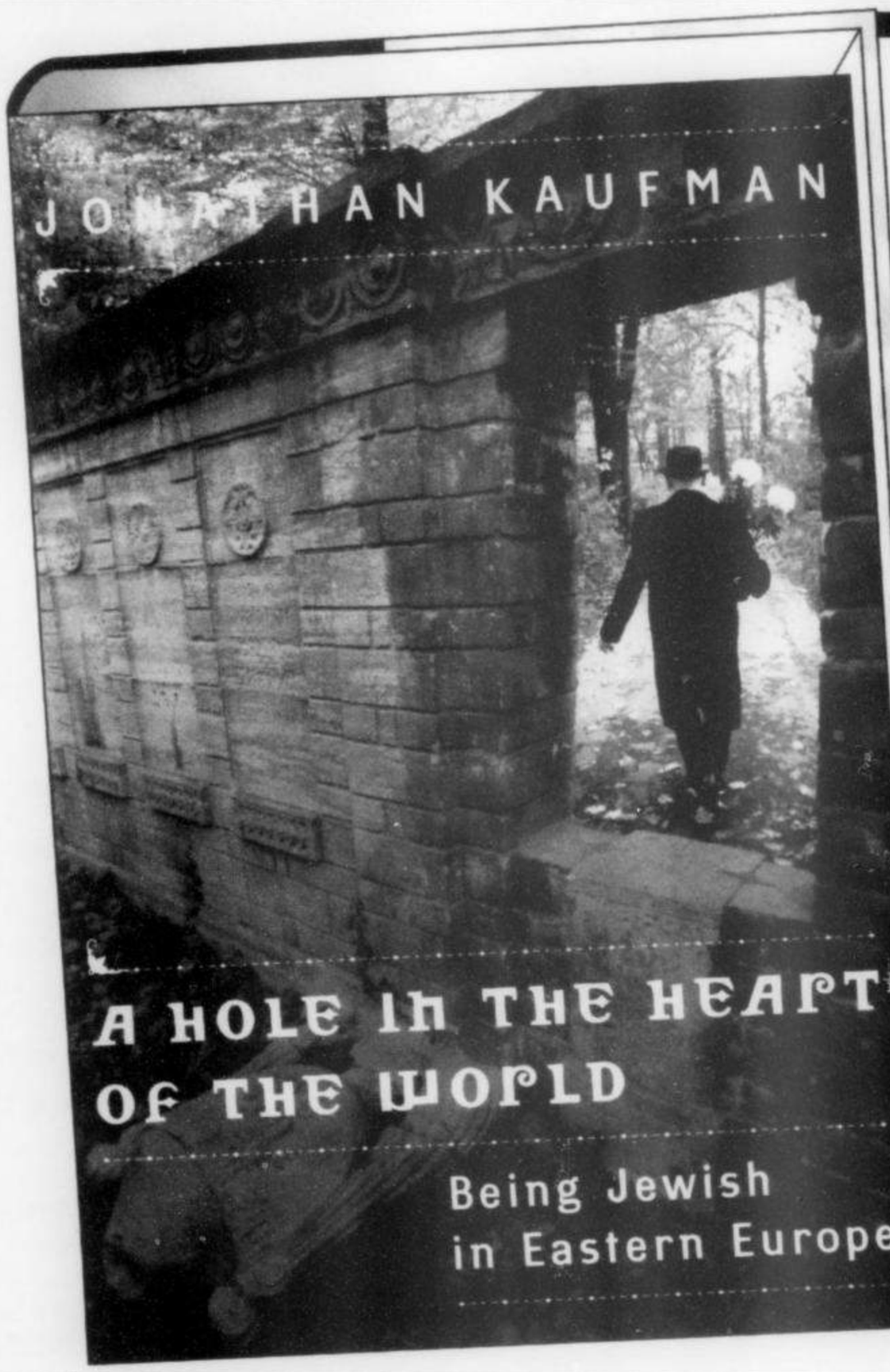
Well, that happened in 1996, and from what I've heard from Clinton since the election, it doesn't seem as though he feels any greater loyalty to his liberal troops now than he did in his first term. I'm ashamed of myself for having fallen into this illusion once again in 1996.

Sarah Bern
New York, N.Y.

To the Editor:

For all the pissing and moaning about Clinton, I'm still glad he is in

(Continued on p. 78)



"An occasion for rejoicing and dismay"*

"I can only marvel at this work of controlled passion that makes one want to weep or celebrate—or both."
Daniel Schorr, National Public Radio*

"In these five mesmerizing family stories, alternatingly sad and uplifting, Jonathan Kaufman has pulled back the curtain on a painful chapter in Jewish life.... [He] has filled a hole in the heart of history."
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Andrei Codrescu, National Public Radio

IN BOOKSTORES NOW FROM VIKING

Editorials

Putting Down the Prophets

In a *New York Times* book review of Philip Berrigan's recent autobiography, J. Anthony Lukas reflects on the Berrigan brothers, famous for thirty years of unrelenting demonstrations against nuclear weapons, and gives us the normal cynical stock-in-trade put-downs of political activists. These activists are "disinclined to step back from the rough edge of dissent and ruminate on their lifetime quarrel with the world." But their quarrel has never been with "the world" but with the injustice and oppression that is not a necessary part of reality.

"Dan's self-righteousness and Phil's intolerance" are referred to as though we, the readers, would immediately understand, and that it would never occur to us to ask whether perhaps the critic who has "stepped back from the rough edge of dissent" might himself have lost the ability to distinguish between self-righteousness and just plain righteousness? Lukas tells us that Dan, now 75, has spent much time emptying bedpans and otherwise attending to AIDS patients––is this part of his self-righteousness? Lukas reminds us of *New York Times* journalist Peter Steinfels' observation that the SALT negotiations did more to reduce the stock of nuclear weapons that all the Berrigan's hammer blows and vials of blood thrown at nuclear weapons. But what Steinfels and Lukas do not mention is the way that the Berrigans, and the political movement they shaped, helped create the political climate within which negotiations and policy alternatives might proceed.

Lukas claims to admire their "dogged persistence and fierce devotion to principle." Yet the put-downish tone of the review, like so much of the media, has a chilling-effect, helping to convince the younger generations that a career in following principles is likely to be met with condescension and dismissal. In such a climate, prophets may feel that they have to take a shrill tone to even begin to be heard.

We in the liberal Jewish world want to send a Mazel Tov to both the Berrigans and to the rest of the progressive wing of the Catholic community. Keep up the passion in serving God's will in the struggle against injustice and militarism!

Clinton's Character Miseducation vs. the Message of Passover

I was not impressed by the way that President Clinton's February "State of the Union Address" had picked up the theme of "character education" (see Thomas Lickona, "The Case for Character Education," January/February, 1997) as part of his plea for a new focus on education. Lickona's TIKKUN article makes a powerful case for the need to make character education a focus in schools, an extension of our call to teach empathy and other values.

Yet, even as he adopted the notion of character education, his State of the Union speech sent a different message. In his speeches through the years, and now once again, Clinton justifies his various policy directions and programs by claiming that they will make us number one in the world, that they will enhance our ability to compete in the world market, so that we will be stronger than others, or that we will be able to make more money. It never occurs to Clinton to think of education as a good for its own sake—it must be valued because it will enhance our national security, and America must never be less than number one on this score.

Clinton's friends defend him by claiming that all this is "merely rhetoric" to position his program in a way that would give it a better chance to win. But that's just the point—everything is geared to win, and winning is the ultimate trump for every argument. That position is what people learn from Clinton.

All the focus on Clinton's possible mistresses or his financial indiscretions really miss the point. The moral bankruptcy of Clinton is not in the areas of his unique personal life mistakes, but in the way that his public life supports the central value in American society: maximizing wealth and power. Yet because that value is so

pervasive, it never even occurs to Clinton to notice that he is advocating the very "bottom line" consciousness that distorts all of moral life in this country.

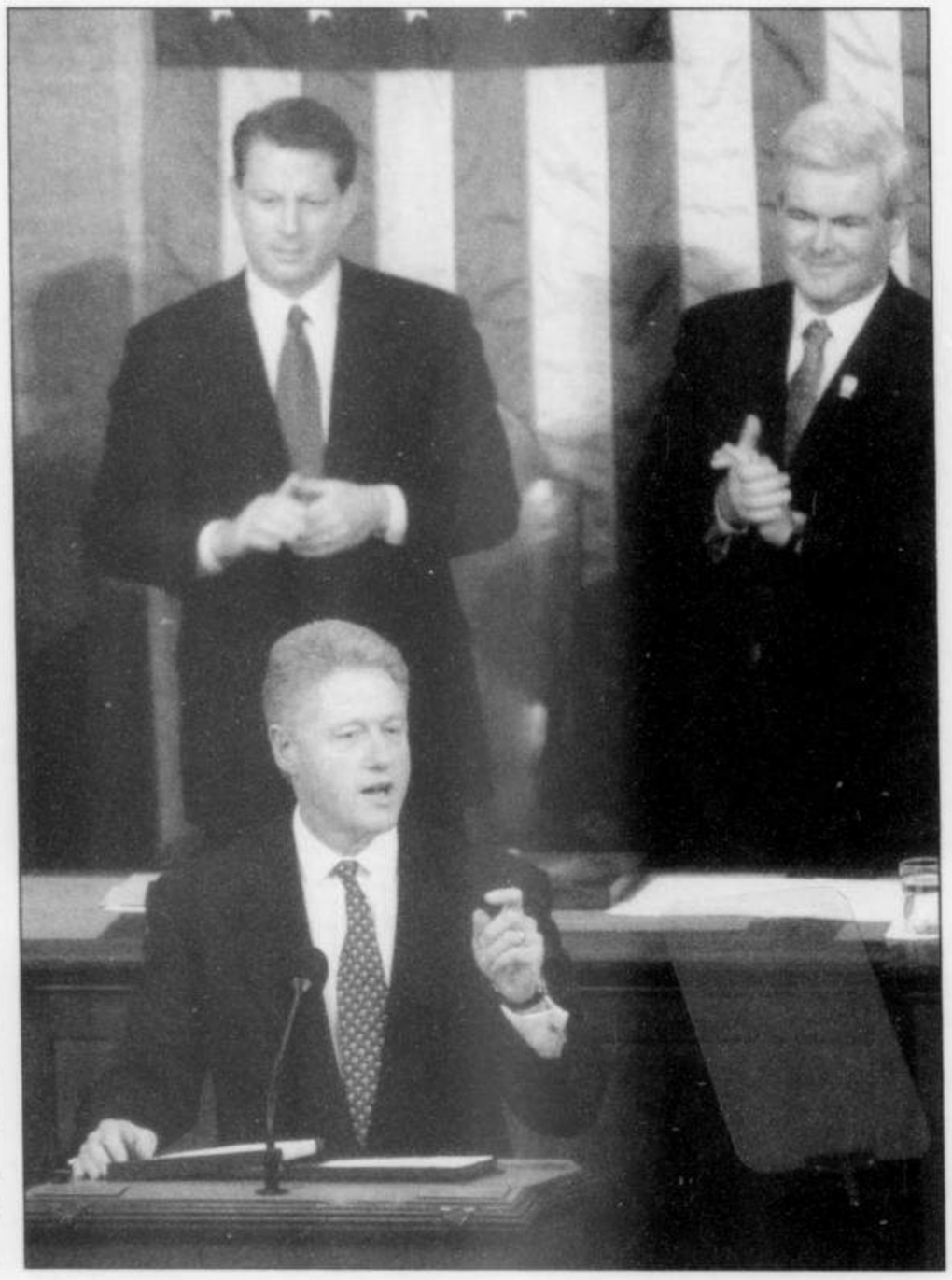
It's a testimony to how far we have drifted from a moral compass that to many Americans the very notion of justifying programs or policies in terms other than the way they will maximize our wealth or our power seems "naive" and "unrealistic."

A young woman at Beyt Tikkun (the San Francisco synagogue, started by TIKKUN readers, where I now serve as rabbi) recently told me that despite the fact that she has a job that pays her an adequate living, her friends and family are very critical that she spends so much of her evening and weekend time engaged in social action when she could be using the time to join organizations (like the local fundraising committee for the opera or the arts museum) that will get her better "connections" who might help her advance her career. Everybody in her life has been trying to convince her to be "more realistic" and to go along with the existing system of wealth and power, find her own place in it, and pay more attention to becoming "more successful."

What it came down to for her was simply this question: "Is it unrealistic to try to change things?" If it's unrealistic, then perhaps the others were right.

As we studied the Torah portions together, it became increasingly clear to her that Judaism had a very strong position on this question.

In the ancient world, and continuing through to the modern world, one of the central ways that ruling elites try to convince people that nothing much can be different in the distribution of wealth and power is to put forward the notion that the world is fixed and set. True, there are changes, but the changes are best thought of as analogous to the regular rotations of the heavenly bodies or the regular cycles of nature. So, if you are born into a world in which there is inequality, the best thing to do is learn to flow with that, since inequality in power and wealth is built into the structure of necessity.



The Jews emerge in history with a revolutionary challenge to that skepticism about the possibility of change. The central message of Torah, repeated over and over again, is this: there is a Power in the universe (subsequently it got called "God") that makes for the possibility of transformation from that which is to that which could and should be. Far from being fixed, the world can be transformed. And we know this because we ourselves were slaves, and then we became free—so our history teaches that there is no need to accommodate to "reality." Get this, and you've gotten what Passover is all about.

There have been many subsequent voices in our history that ran away from the revolutionary message. As a result, when we survey Jewish discourse over the past few thousand years we find a tradition which is far more ambiguous. By the time the Torah had been edited, certainly by the time the Mishnah was being codified, the revolutionary tradition was reduced to being only one theme, and there were distinct counterthemes and many despairing voices. Precisely because our tradition was shaped by revolutionaries, the issue of how much to hold on to the initial insights versus how much to accommodate to the "reality" of Persian, then later, Greek, then still later, Roman, then still later, Christian domination was always present, and there were always conflicting voices that made their way into our holy texts. Yet the unmistakable voice of those committed to the healing and transforming (*tikkun*) tradition is also alive in those texts, and it is restated clearly in the Passover celebration. That voice has one unambiguous message: do *not* accommodate to an unjust reality, but struggle against it and you will find the divine energy of the universe assisting you. What part of reality needs to be struggled

against most today? Some will claim that it is homelessness or hunger or poverty. Others will argue that it is racism or sexism or homophobia. Still others will point to the needless slaughter of innocents and the repression of human rights. All these have something in common: the inability to see other human beings as created in the image of God and hence as inherently deserving of love, caring and respect. It is *that* value which needs most to be taught—and it is that perspective that becomes the foundation for character education.

Seeing all human beings as created in the image of God is one important step in the larger spiritual task of the contemporary period: to help people come to understand the fundamental unity of all being, and the inherent mutual dependency of all of creation. It is our inability to see the world from this perspective that leads to the hubris of ripping off the world's resources and somehow imagining that we can get away with it without consequences.

Standing against all this is the religion of "being realistic" (what Jews call idolatry—worshipping of that *which is* rather than the transformative and healing Power in the universe that we call God). To be realistic is to accommodate yourself to a world in which the bottom line is wealth and power. And in that context, as a purveyor of the dominant idolatry, it makes sense to justify whatever changes one seeks in terms of the values and goals of the existing order.

But don't expect to create meaningful character education in this climate. We may well be able to produce more computer literate children, or children with a higher reading capacity. But the discourse and strategy proposed by the President will never lead to a world in which people treat each other with kindness and compassion.

The message our children learn from our liberal centrist leader in the waning years of the 20th century is that what "really counts" is the ability to advance oneself. Don't expect that people who have been learning that lesson all day—and who become preoccupied with how to advance their own interests, the "realism" of today's market-centered society—are suddenly going to be good prospects for loving relationships or friendships, or are even going to know how to be respectful or principled in their dealings. The Clinton education agenda, like the agenda currently in place in our school system, is actually character miseducation. And if educators tell you that it is unrealistic to try to change this "bottom line" in America, and that they are merely being realistic by doing their best within that context, remind them of the Passover story and its message that accommodation is not the only way and that a new reality can be created.

Saving TIKKUN*: A Letter to Our Readers*

This is a somewhat updated and amended text of a letter recently sent to our subscribers, and reprinted here for those who buy or read the magazine on the newsstand.

Dear TIKKUN Reader:

I'm deeply sorry to tell you that TIKKUN is in grave financial danger and must find a way to raise $250,000 if we are to continue publishing. The initial grant that we had to cover the deficit has now run out, and even though we are reducing our costs, we still have a large annual deficit. With your help, we can turn this crisis into an opportunity to transition TIKKUN to a more secure future. But without your help, there may be no more TIKKUN—so please, please read this letter carefully.

The irony is that this comes at a time when the magazine is doing better than ever on many fronts. We have a larger readership now than ever before—but because more people are buying it on the newsstands (we only get 40% of the take) our revenues are down. I've just returned from several college campuses—and at each one I met dozens of students whose identity and consciousness is shaped by TIKKUN, who love the magazine and talk about it regularly. Most of them read it at the newsstand or in the library or borrow it from friends—they don't subscribe, yet they love it. We get no money for this, yet our impact on their lives is enormous.

And our impact grows. In the past few years, TIKKUN has been increasingly quoted in the national media, its articles reprinted for college courses, and its ideas debated in the pulpits of churches and synagogues. We remain the only major Jewish publication that unequivocally supports the Israeli peace movement—and that voice is going to be needed more and more in the Netanyahu years ahead. For many thousands of people each year,reading TIKKUN has been a first step back into their connection to the Jewish world. For thousands more, TIKKUN is the most visible sign that Judaism doesn't have to be tied to conservative politics in the U.S. or to reactionary religious visions in Israel.

Although most American Jews lean toward liberal and progressive politics, few have been willing to actually put their money where their mouth is. As a result, few liberal Jewish institutions remain. TIKKUN is the one institution that combines progressive politics on

Israel with a commitment to maintaining and building ties with the African American community, fighting for social justice, defending civil liberties and human rights, protecting the environment against corporate greed, supporting feminism, challenging homophobia, and simultaneously promoting Judaism and Jewish renewal.

Many, many people tell me that TIKKUN is their one source of hope and resistance against the dominant cynicism that gets thrown at them by the media. TIKKUN's collapse will strengthen the most cynical and defeatist part of everyone—making it all the harder to convince anyone that it's possible to change anything.

We have a survival plan that includes changing the magazine's format (by the May or July issue) to make it more reader-friendly. We will have bigger size print, more graphics, easier access to the articles. We will continue to have intellectually serious and deep discussions of the ethical and spiritual crisis of the contemporary world, as well as first-rate analyses of contemporary culture, social theory, politics and the latest developments in Israel and the Jewish world. But we will mix them with some shorter articles for people whose busy lives makes it hard to get into longer articles.

We've moved the magazine to S.F. to get free rent donated to us by a very generous anonymous donor. We had reduced the already tiny staff from 6 to 4, and now, because of the financial crisis, I've had to lay off the executive editor and will do that job myself. I'm doing everything possible to reduce expenses.

And there is some very good news. Starting in May we will have a new publisher, Danny Goldberg (CEO of Mercury Records), who will coordinate our fundraising and improve our business office. Danny will be bringing some new writers and voices to TIKKUN, without displacing many of the wonderful writers we have already been able to attract.

What we need to realize, however, is that no matter how we change the magazine, intellectually oriented media do not make it on ads and subscriptions alone. Those that have survived have had some very wealthy people or a major institution backing them—or, like *Sojourners* or National Public Radio, they have gotten their readers to actually pay the full cost of keeping the venture alive. People don't just pay for services, they *join*. Even when they don't have much chance to listen to NPR, they support it because they want the institution to be there. Well, we'd like to go that route as well—to ask our readers to join TIKKUN, the community of those committed to healing, repairing and transforming the world. You don't have to be Jewish...to be part of this community and to help TIKKUN to survive.

So far, we are getting good response, both from our readers and from prominent figures in American cultural and intellectual life. Elie Wiesel, Cornel West and Jonathan Kozol have agreed to join our fundraising effort. Kozol is writing a fundraising appeal letter, Wiesel will be at a fundraising party we are giving this Fall.

Cornel West will be at a N.Y. cocktail party, Sunday May 18th (you are invited if you give $250 sometime between now and then). We are also setting up a "Council of 100"—for the (hopefully) 100 donors of $1,000 or more. If you join that Council, you will be invited to an annual weekend retreat with TIKKUN editors and writers to brainstorm article ideas for future issues.

We are also encouraging our readers to write us into their will as a bequest. Similarly, some readers have already begun the practice of donating money to TIKKUN in memory of a friend, colleague or family member (we will send out a card to the family of the deceased if you specify the address). Other readers are giving donations in honor of a birthday, graduation, promotion, publication of a book or article, or even for Mother's or Father's Day.

If you are someone who can afford $1,000 a year, we'd love you to become one of the 100. But if you can't, we certainly would appreciate whatever you *can* afford. Perhaps you'd consider giving $250 a year to keep TIKKUN going? If giving a lump sum is hard, how about letting us deduct $50 a month from your credit card? or $25/mo.?

Please understand that *whatever you give will be very much appreciated*. We really need your help. If you are a student, ask yourself whether it might be worth the price of one movie a month to keep TIKKUN going. If you have more money than that, please donate as much as you can afford, and perhaps even stretch a little beyond what feels comfortable to give.

Send your credit card info or check to TIKKUN, and mail it to me at 26 Fell Street, San Francisco, Ca. 94708.

Warm regards from a very worried editor,

Michael Lerner

P.S. If somebody tells you that they've heard TIKKUN *is going to collapse, tell them it's not true. It is not true because you won't let it be true—because you are joining the community and you are going to help keep it alive. And others are already giving!*

P.P.S. A very generous donor has offered to match *every dollar we receive in the months of March and April—so for each dollar you give, this donor will match it, making your contribution twice as impactful!*

Myth, Spit, and Vietnam Vets:
More on the Politics of Memory

Jerry Lee Lembke

Elizabeth Loftus's story about false memories (From "Incest to Ivan the Terrible," September, 1996) caught my attention because it parallels something I have found in my research into the myth of the spat-upon Vietnam veteran. My initial interest in this subject was piqued during the Persian Gulf War when the Bush Administration invoked the image of abused Vietnam veterans to discourage opposition to war against Iraq. I had been active as an anti-war Vietnam veteran in the early 1970s so I knew the idea of anti-war activists spitting on Vietnam veterans was false. My research interest was in finding out why so many people believed this false image to be true.

What I have found is that the stories of abused veterans provide an alibi for the country, a way for America to explain why it lost the war. The larger narrative woven by these stories is that America lost, not because it was beaten by an underdeveloped nation of Asians, but because our mission was sold-out on the home front. We were defeated by the enemy within, not the enemy abroad. We were stabbed in the back.

On the level of the individual soldier, the stories function to rehabilitate the warrior identity of the Vietnam generation of American males: were it not for the soft, female side of American culture (manifested in the women's movement, long-haired males, the gay-rights movement, etc.) we would have won.

The problem with the alibi is that it is inconsistent with the historical record. The truth is that G.I.s and veterans were an integral part of the anti-war movement. Indeed, by the end of the war, veterans played a leading and militant role in the opposition to the war. In order for the alibi to take root in the culture, the truth had to go. The image of the militant anti-war veterans, empowered by their war-time experiences, had to be displaced by the image of the besieged and bedraggled victim-veteran.

The construction of the veteran-as-victim image was complex, with propaganda from the Nixon Administration and Hollywood playing roles. One ingredient essential to that image, however, was the construction of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a psychiatric diagnostic category. It is in the construction of PTSD that the parallel with Elizabeth Loftus's story is most interesting.

Like the scholars and activists who labored righteously to insure that we remember the millions of Jews victimized in the Holocaust, many well-meaning psychiatrists and social workers worked tirelessly to establish the legitimacy of PTSD during the 1970s. Thanks to them, resources became available to help scores of veterans whose lives were shattered by the war and whose families were ill-equipped to cope with the resulting problems.

The down side of the PTSD story, though, was that as the war itself receded in memory, the coming-home experiences of veterans took center stage in the accounts of what had happened to "our boys" that was so traumatic. As the narrative of what happened took shape over the years, the rejection and hostility that veterans felt from their anti-war peers assumed larger proportions.

Today, one can walk into, say, a college classroom and within minutes generate an animated conversation with twenty year-olds about PTSD and Vietnam veterans. The students have sufficient images of troubled, homeless, violent, and strung-out vets to sustain the conversation. They also "know" about protesters calling veterans "baby killers" and spitting on them. But try to talk to them about Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW), anti-war G.I. coffee houses, or fragging and you will draw blank stares. The real history of G.I. and veteran resistance to the war has been lost, the image of a generation of young men empowered by their war-time experiences displaced by images of them as victims.

As in the story of Elizabeth Loftus, guilt played a special role in the psychologizing of the Vietnam veteran experience. Robert J. Lifton's book *Home From the War* was a keystone in that process. Lifton was a psychiatrist who extrapolated findings from his study of survivor

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guilt among Hiroshima victims and applied them to Vietnam veterans. Veterans, he said, were burdened by guilt because they had survived while others had died. The alleged accusations from the anti-war movement that they were baby killers supposedly added to the trauma of their guilt. But when Paul Starr, who would later win acclaim for his book on the social history of American medicine, reviewed Lifton's book, he said that Lifton and other psychiatrists had used their techniques to evoke the expressions of guilt from the veterans. Guilt was not a common emotion among Vietnam veterans, said Starr, but it was a very prevalent emotion among those who write about veterans. And that, he said, "leads to no end of confusion."

The myth of the spat-upon Vietnam veteran is, finally, not without its anti-Semitic subtext. The story of betrayal which it tells resonates with proto-Nazi propaganda in the years following Germany's defeat in World War I. In the mythology of the German Right, it was women, homosexuals and Jews who had stabbed the military in the back. Stories of spat-upon German veterans were common in the literature of the para-military Freikorps. In France, too, the country's 1954 loss in Indochina was blamed on the disloyalty of the homefront and Jews were alleged to have played a role in that betrayal. During the American war in Vietnam, the ultra-Rightist John Birch Society interjected its conspiratorial analysis of the French war into American political discourse. Nixon translated that analysis into a search for left-wing fifth columnists who were demoralizing G.I.s and giving aid and comfort to Hanoi by opposing the war. His search led him to the so-called Eastern intellectual establishment which he held responsible for the anti-war movement and Jews, as Tom Wells reminds us in his history of the movement, were major players in Nixon's fantasy.

Like the displacement of memories about the rebellion at Treblinka, the displacement of memories of G.I. and veteran resistance to the war in Vietnam occurred in social and political contexts that we can identify and understand. While it is not true that veterans were spat upon literally, it is true that they were not the most welcomed war veterans in history. The standard tour of duty in Vietnam was twelve months, which meant that most of the 3,000,000 troops who served there came home before the war was over. Soldiers arrived home throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s while, simultaneously, thousands of other G.I.s were boarding planes bound for Vietnam. Sometime during 1969, the net flow of troops home began to outweigh the number of replacements going but, throughout the war period, the emotions of the country remained divided between the sadness and anxiety surrounding departures and the pride and elation that accompanied safe homecomings. In short, the vast majority of Vietnam-era veterans reentered a society with divided attention and fractured emotions, a society insufficiently prepared to give veterans their due.

Soldiers returning from Vietnam also returned to a country that was seriously divided by the politics of the war. The late 1960s and early 1970s were rife with marches, rallies, demonstrations, street politics, inflammatory rhetoric, and violent behavior by both pro- and anti-war forces. Rocks were thrown, windows smashed, cars overturned, offices occupied, heads cracked, buildings bombed, people arrested, campuses occupied, and students shot and killed by National Guardsmen. These were days of rage. Twenty years later, people understandably remembered division and anger as the climate that greeted Vietnam veterans when they returned. The memory is accurate. But the details of who was doing what to whom, how and why, fade with time. Depending on who is remembering and with what desired level of precision, the accuracy of detail might be less important than the overall portrayal of the hostility of the times; who was spitting on whom might be less important than the fact that someone was spitting on someone.

During the 1970s and 1980s the displacement of G.I. and veteran resistance to the war by the image of the victim-veteran dovetailed with other developments. The U.S. defeat in Southeast Asia and the OPEC oil embargo of the early 1970s signaled that U.S. expansion abroad was not unlimited. U.S. corporations responded to these new global realities by increasing the pressure at home for lower wages, lower taxes, and lower regulations on production. The strategy to "bring the third world home" resulted in a wave of plant closings during the late 1970s and early 1980s that destroyed employment opportunities and diminished living standards for millions. Steel and automobile manufacturing were particularly hard hit as millions of unionized workers with middle-income earning power lost their jobs and the quality of life in the Great Lakes and Northeast regions was destroyed. The vast majority of the workers laid off were men. Many were Vietnam veterans.

While academic articles connecting unemployment with suicide, alcoholism, and divorce proliferated, the worker-victim never achieved the same cultural resonance as the veteran-victim. Perhaps it was because worker-victims were real and therefore not so easily mused with. It is more likely, though, that as unions declined and the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s splintered into the identity politics of race and gender, the discourse of class itself was displaced. If blue collar workers were victims, the villains were the same

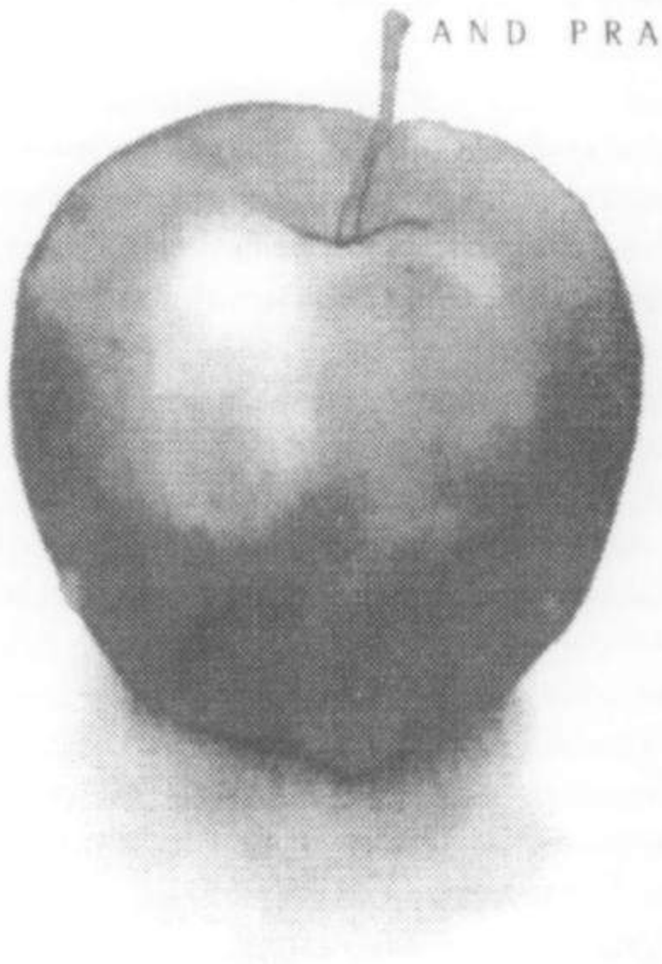
corporate entities that paid the bills and determined the job opportunities of the journalists, film makers, and cultural workers who tell the story; the spin doctors—upwardly mobile careerists with their own class anxieties—caught their cues.

The cultural trends of the 1970s and 1980s erased class vocabularies and left a generation of men grasping for the means to express its pain. The myth of the spat-upon Vietnam veteran and the larger narrative of betrayal that it helped to construct provided a convenient surrogate. If the country couldn't respond to the pain of homelessness and drug addiction caused by corporate layoffs, perhaps it could do better if the cause was said to be the war and its lingering effects. In the absence of a class-conscious social movement to articulate and direct their anger, thousands of Vietnam veterans truly victimized by the class war waged on American workers during the 1970s and 1980s, found it easier to attribute their behavioral disorders and vagrancy to "the war" than to economic displacement. The designated homeless shelters were for veterans, after all, not for the unemployed of U.S. Steel. False memories are perhaps no more common for Vietnam war veterans than for any other segment of the population but neither, it appears, are they any less common. Occasionally we get dramatic reminders of this, such as the suicide of Adm. Jeremy Boorda, the Navy's top commander on May 16, 1996. Boorda was being investigated for wearing ribbons with the V-device, indicating he had seen combat in Vietnam when, in fact, he had not. In another case, it was revealed that Mark Furman, the Los Angeles police officer accused of manipulating evidence in the O.J. Simpson case, had falsely claimed a record of combat service. *New York Times* reporter Fox Butterfield investigated and found that, "[Furman] boasted of violent exploits as a marine in Vietnam, yet the closest he got to the ground war there was aboard a ship in the South China Sea."

Boorda and Furman are not the only men of their generation walking around with fanciful warrior identities. Paul Solotaroff (1995, p. 57), writing in his book *The House of Purple Hearts* about homeless Vietnam veterans says, "Check the discharge papers on all those guys telling war stories and you'll find that a third of them never got within twenty klicks of a firefight and another third did their entire tour in Dusseldorf or Fort Dix." B.G. "Jug" Burkett, a Dallas businessman and Vietnam veteran has followed up on some 1,700 news stories about "troubled" Vietnam veterans. Using the Freedom of Information Act to glean information about their backgrounds, he has been able to expose about 75% of the stories as partial or total frauds. Sometimes the person is a Vietnam veteran who falsely claims to have seen combat; other times the person came no-

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where near Vietnam. Often times the stories package together exaggerated combat biographies with accounts of mistreatment upon return home.

The fictive nature of Vietnam-war homecoming iconography tends to confirm that the United States has never come to grips with the war itself. Rather than dealing with the war that really was and the actually-existing generation of veterans who had opposed the war, the country escaped into its own collective imagination. Today, opponents of the war in Vietnam are remembered as a marginal, pathetic, and ineffective rabble who resorted to extreme measures in order to overcome their isolation. That memory, false though it may be, has the effect of discrediting social activism in the present. In the mid-1990s college aged students report feeling *weird* about political involvements. Activism, many say, is too much like the 1960s and they don't want the stigma that is attached to it.

America's pro-military right wing, meanwhile, feeds on those same historical misrepresentations. As late as 1996, elements central to the myth of the spat-upon Vietnam veteran, such as the betrayal of the public good by big government, the corruption of Washington insiders, cultural decadence dating from the `60s, and the softness of the baby-boomer generation said to be running the country, coursed through the campaign rhetoric of right-wing Republican Party candidates. One could hear the election rhetoric of the mid-1990s and easily mistake it for the rantings of Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew against the anti-war movement thirty years earlier. If we were all hard-edged warriors of World War II vintage like Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole, whatever was wrong with the country would be righted.

The electoral rhetoric was only the tip of the iceberg, however. Beneath it, and spreading out across the nation's heartland, was a large number of Americans feeling the hurt of thirty years of political and economic disruption. The lost war, the oil crisis and inflation of the 1970s, factory shutdowns, the influx of immigrants, and the farm crisis of the early 1980s left many people searching for answers to their problems and a new sense of who they were. Separated from the union cultures they were once a part of and sometimes separated from family and community by their search for work, Americans made vulnerable by despair and social isolation were lured to the easy solutions posed by the ultra-right. In the 1980s traditional right wing groups like the Ku Klux Klan experienced renewal while in the 1990s a new generation of neo-Nazi groups sprung up. In rural areas, armed militias spouting anti-government rhetoric and sporting high-tech weaponry symbolized, for many, the return of something lost in Vietnam.

The rise of the paramilitary Right can only be understood in relation to the Vietnam war. The Right's "New War," as James William Gibson calls it, is largely an imaginary war, fought against the forces held responsible for the loss of the last war. Those forces, pictured for the public by the propaganda of the Right and the vehicles of popular culture, like film, are largely internal to America. They are the enemy within—within America as immigrant groups, the feminist movement, homosexuals, and communists as well as the soft, effeminate, and treasonous side of the culture.

The image of warriors betrayed and then forgotten has been the center piece of paramilitary culture throughout the twentieth century. Just as the proto-fascist Freikorps movement of inter-war Germany stoked the engine of Nazism with visions of warriors stabbed in the back on the homefront, so does America's paramilitary movement of the 1990s propagate the myth of the spat-upon Vietnam veteran. The wrong done the men we abandoned, whether as P.O.W.s, soldiers still in the field or veterans who returned home without parades, must be avenged.

It is the imaginary nature of the Right's war that makes it dangerous. The wrongs it seeks to avenge are haunts, figments of fear and loathing generated in the minds and culture of the paramilitary movement. In the absence of any material manifestation that Vietnam veterans were spat-upon, the anger and resentments generated by the stories that they were, gets transferred onto surrogate targets. Individuals and groups alleged to have something in common with activists who supposedly abused veterans become the objects of scorn and violence.

The myth of the spat-upon Vietnam veteran obscures the reality that thousands of Vietnam veterans joined in solidarity with other activists to help end the war in Vietnam. For many veterans it was their finest hour and the tragedy of the myth is that it strips these gallant fighters against the war of their true place in history. It also denies an alternative generational identity to thousands more who were denied the military victory of their youth. Were we a nation that valued peace-making more than war-making, the post-war identity crisis that has plagued many veterans may have been averted.

The tragedy that the myth holds for America's future is that, unchallenged, it will continue to cloud our political discourse. Manipulated as it was to lead the country into support for the Gulf war, the myth has enormous power to sow confusion and stir political passions. The power of the political Right to exploit those passions should not be underestimated. If it is not laid to rest, this myth will continue to feed the politics of division and violence. ❑

Post-modernism and Psycholanalysis: Fiddling While Rome Burns

Michael J. Bader

Our culture has increasingly given up on the possibility of alleviating human suffering. When Bill Clinton vowed to "end welfare as we know it"—and then did—he was expressing the tip of an iceberg of cynicism about the value and moral imperative of helping the poor, the needy, and the sick. Whatever sense of community and collective responsibility we had during the New Deal or the Civil Rights movement that made helping others seem virtuous and achievable—that we're in this mess together and together we could fix it—has yielded to a collective pessimism and cynicism about fundamentally changing anything.

The collapse of liberal ideals and moral responsibility in the political realm has also been reflected in the academic realm. As writers like Russell Jacoby, Christopher Lasch, Todd Gitlin, and David Lehman have argued, the enervation of the Left, the collapse of progressive movements in the late 70s and 80s, and the increasing conservatism in politics, the media, and academia contributed to a heightened interest in post-modern philosophy. This philosophy, often taken up by former radicals and trumpeted as a sensibility critical of the established order, rejected claims that there were universal truths, an essential canon to be taught, an objective standard of morality and ethics that should prevail, or universal longings and needs that animated human beings regardless of culture, class, gender, or race. The post-modernist was, instead, interested in the particular social context of an idea, the particular cultural point of view of the speaker, and/or the particular and biased interests lying behind so-called "objective" facts. For the post-modernist, universal claims always masked particular interests.

This critique tended to expand to make all idealistic and moral claims untenable and intellectually embarrassing to embrace. In this sense, post-modern theory has contributed to the broader embarrassment in our culture concerning making passionate arguments about Right or Wrong on behalf of progressive causes. It's one thing to argue that right-wing ideology about the universality of Evil, individual responsibility and meritocracy, and the inevitability of class conflict should be deconstructed and made to reveal the hidden hierarchies and elites that really benefit from these values. It's another thing to embrace a philosophy that calls all objective ethics into question, critiques all truth-claims as mere matters of perspective, and makes human suffering anything less than an absolute Evil that we should feel collectively responsible for eradicating. An ethos that emphasizes perspective, context, interpretation, and cultural relativity and particularity can ultimately sanction a retreat from idealism, from a belief in something transcendent and transformative in the social world. It can be used to undermine our right to say "this social condition is objectively wrong and should be fixed," or "this condition violates fundamental human aspirations for connection and mutual recognition," or "it is a moral necessity that the world be changed so that people are treated as ends and not means." By relativizing truth and morality, post-modernism tends to undermine our confidence in the possibility of transformation.

Since the post-modern sensibility can provide a justification for our resignation about practically changing both the world and our own natures, it's not surprising that this sensibility has begun to appear in the ideologies of those professions whose mission is explicitly to help heal human suffering. Psychoanalysis is one such profession. The problem has been transposed from the classroom to the consulting room. Post-modernism has begun to influence psychoanalytic theory in ways that, at first, appear liberating, but eventually tend to sanction a retreat from its mission of practical healing and cure.

In order to understand the receptivity of the psychoanalytic community to the post-modern message, one has to appreciate the predicament in which analysts—and other therapists committed to long-term, depth psychotherapy—find themselves today.

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Psychoanalysis is on the run. The current move toward managed care and biological explanations and treatments of mental illness has posed the following challenge to psychoanalysts (myself among them): Why should anyone see you when your approach takes too long, is too expensive, and has never demonstrated its efficacy? With psychoanalysis no longer enjoying the cachet it once had among mental health providers, increasingly ridiculed as self-indulgent navel-gazing, and deemed irrelevant by the media in the face of the almost daily "discoveries" of behavioral geneticists and psychopharmacologists, psychoanalysts have found their



practices dwindling, their training institutes unable to attract students, and their social standing among mental health care providers increasingly precarious. Old lines of defense sound hollow. Responses such as "You can't study the unconscious empirically," or "You have to be in analysis to really understand analysis," or "You can't take what a patient says about the process at face value because of unconscious resistances," or "The point of analysis isn't to make someone happy but more self-aware," sound increasingly like the rationalizations of a theory and practice that is being marginalized by a society preoccupied with results and efficiency.

Some psychoanalysts have responded to this crisis by attempting to study and systematize what they do. Others have simply put their heads in the sand, dismissing their critics as tragically uninformed or, better, as resistant, and going about their business as usual, pining away for the "good old days." Post-modern theory has begun to offer, unwittingly at times, a third kind of response wherein the issue of therapeutic outcome is indirectly avoided in the interest of engaging the philosophical dilemma of what constitutes psychoanalytic truth and knowledge. In other words, the post-modernists are fiddling about the impossibility of making claims to objective truth in a clinical situation while Rome burns, i.e., while the widespread social cynicism and pessimism about psychotherapy really curing anyone goes unchecked. It is important to understand this contradiction as an instance of a broader intellectual tendency in contemporary culture.

The post-modern turn in psychoanalysis has involved a special interest in questions of epistemology—what is the nature of the "data" upon which we base our psychoanalytic hypotheses and how does the analyst "know" for sure that these understandings are correct? Just as post-modernists in the academy critiqued the white-male sensibility that assumed the authority to define good and bad literature, so post-modernists in psychoanalysis have challenged the privileged authority of the analyst to divine what the patient "really" feels. The progressive and democratic element of this critique is obvious: The analyst isn't some omniscient scientist sitting "on high," seeing the patient's unconscious mind better than the patient ever could. The analyst is as biased by his or her theory, personality, and social prejudices as is the patient. In fact, the patient might, at times, be able to see the analyst, him- or herself, and what's going on between the pair better than the analyst. Furthermore, whatever the analyst thinks he or she sees as being in the patient might be a contingent response to the analyst. And, finally, the multiple ways that culture informs the analyst's understanding, as well as the patient's symptoms, contribute to the tremendous complexity, ambiguity, and indeterminacy of the analyst's formulations. The post-modernists

argue that analysts should be modest; self-reflectively accept the limits of what they know; and give up any pretense to objectivity, prediction, or other pseudo-scientific myths that have sustained their authority up to now. The post-modernist cherishes surprise, the analyst's ability to tolerate *not* knowing, the constructed nature of knowledge, and the uncertainties and indeterminacy inherent in language and other forms of communication.

This is the new *zeitgeist* that is emerging in psychoanalysis. Students flock to the conferences and read books that feature theories with labels like *social constructivism*, *hermeneutics*, and *intersubjectivity theory*. Irwin Hoffman, Steven Mitchell, Charles Spezzano, Robert Stolorow, and Donnell Stern are just a few of the new breed of analysts whose writings contain elements of this post-modern interest in epistemology. Unfortunately, the potentially progressive message of this new sensibility (and many of these analysts are personally progressive, their writings often deeply human and clinically sensitive)—that reality is socially constructed and that one class of people, analysts, don't have a privileged access to rationality—is often lost in the translation. First of all, post-modern theorizing is highly abstract and philosophical. Therapists looking for clinical guidance often have to wade through a dense philosophical discourse. When the clinical situation is described using this discourse, the clinician quickly comes to feel as if his or her work is almost infinitely complex. And if you're looking for guidance in how to more effectively help patients get better (which most of us are), the technical consequences of the post-modern position can be rather vague, if not daunting. After all, whenever you think that you know something, you don't. Whenever you have a hunch, question it. Whenever you want to tell the patient what's wrong, you have to do so modestly, understanding always that what you're saying is partial, contingent, limited, biased, and probably saying as much about you as about the patient. In critiquing of the "analyst-knows-best" arrogance of traditional analysis, the post-modernist tends to idealize uncertainty. We used to fool ourselves into thinking that our analytic neutrality and training gave us a clear lens through which to view the patient's psychology; now we're being forced to face the epistemological fact that our lens is distorted by our psyches and our theories.

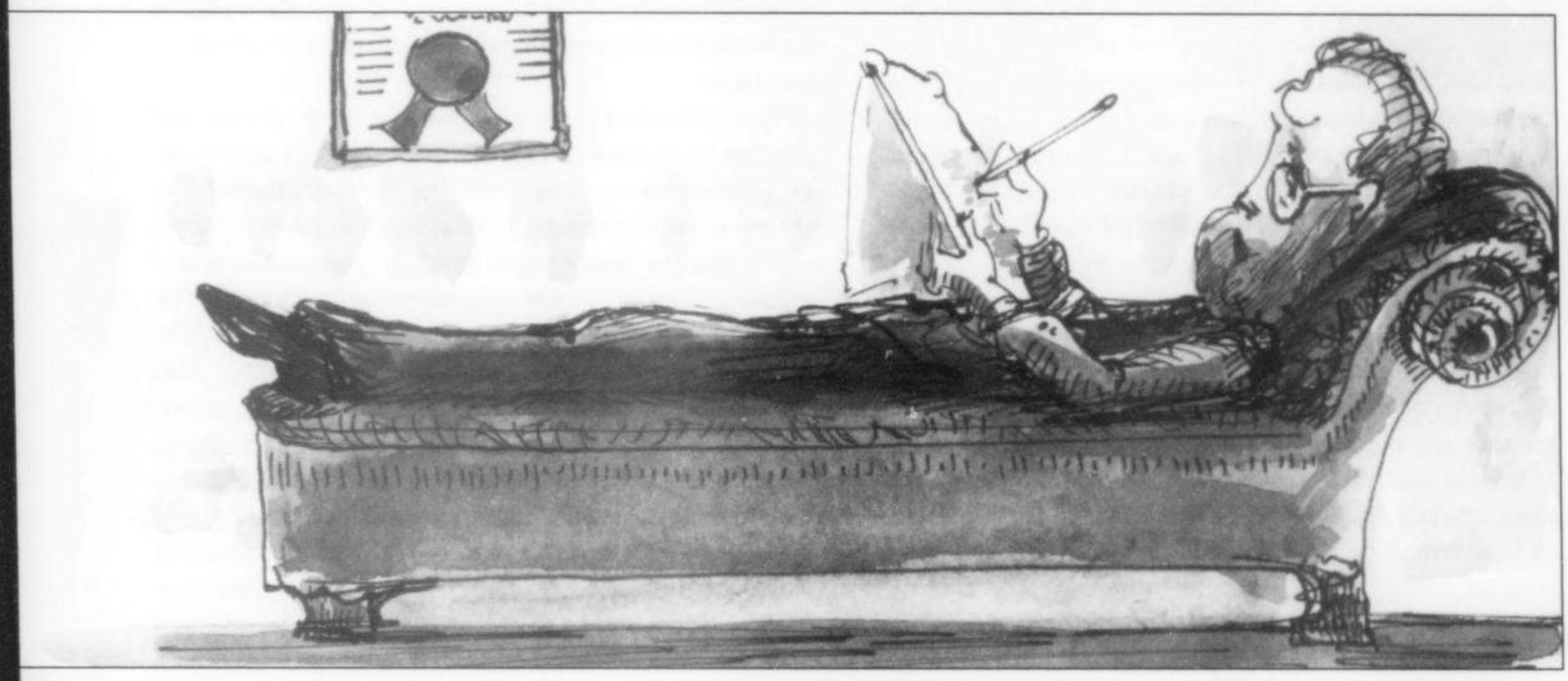


Illustration by Cyn Maruice

Analysis is more like a hall of mirrors than a microscope; misunderstanding is the theoretical norm. We construct new "stories" with our patient rather than discover the truth. We can't use the patient's responses as the primary arbiter of whether we're "getting it" because, first, there is no "it" to get, and, second, there is too much room for misunderstanding, resistance, compliance, and distortion. The only mind we can really come close to "knowing" is our own, and that, only imperfectly. Therapists come to feel almost foolish for presuming to understand the patient's "real" feelings and for wanting to develop a more rigorous or even scientific methodology for confirming that they've done so.

I'm all for modesty, and heaven knows psychoanalysts could use a lot more of it! But as an analyst I also want my hypotheses (modestly given) to be right. By "right," I mean something quite commonsensical: I want my interventions to conform to the subjective experience, conscious and unconscious, of the patient. The patient, after all, wants to be understood "correctly," and when

something that I say falls into that category, there are ways to know this. I don't believe it's self-deceiving to develop a systematic way to judge whether or not I *am* correct. Therapists do this all the time. In my view, it's not infinitely complex. For instance, when I say something that empathically and helpfully articulates an experience with which a patient is struggling, the patient will signal me somehow. Sometimes the signal is simply a believable expression of agreement. Sometimes it's the sudden emergence of a feeling that the patient has been working to ward off. Sometimes the patient has an extremely strong memory of something that bears directly and obviously on what I said. Sometimes a symptom gets better, or the patient is able to move forward developmentally. It is possible to systematize these responses so that the analyst can use them as validation measures, as observable guideposts that he or she is on the right track. There's no danger to thinking you're "right," as long as you're open to changing your hypothesis in response to new data. The value of developing such validation systems should be obvious: It helps us put our patients' progress, their therapeutic outcome, in the forefront of our thinking at all times. It helps us ground our technique in something other than simply our own psychologies or philosophical theories. It grounds our theories in results.

We do this constantly in everyday life. We intuitively sense what the other person is feeling, asking, or needing, and we respond. We note the response, and alter our behavior accordingly. In fact, we intuitively use a kind of low-level experimental method of hypothesis-testing to judge reality. That is, we form hypotheses about other people and we test them. We make predictions based on these hypotheses and change them if the predictions fail. Consider, for instance, how parents figure out what their children are feeling or needing. The baby cries. Is she or he wet or hungry? The parent changes the baby's diaper. The baby continues to cry. The parent feeds the baby. The baby stops crying. The parent has tested an hypothesis and used behavioral criteria to decide that the hypothesis was correct. Based on repeated occurrences of this "experiment in nature," the parent learns to differentiate the "I'm wet" cry from the "I'm hungry" cry. The next time the baby is hungry, the parent will be more likely to provide a correct response immediately.

That's what we do, at our best, as therapists. We form hypotheses, make predictions, test them out with what we say, note our patient's responses as confirmatory or not, change our hypotheses if indicated. We ought to acknowledge this, and use this kind of model to make increasingly better hypotheses. In our wish not to be arrogant, we shouldn't mistake open-mindedness with not being able to know another's mind. This process of knowing can get stuck, go awry, or become distorted by everything from our own hang-ups or overly rigid theories to our cultural blindspots. But this isn't to say that accurate understanding and prediction isn't possible; it's more or less possible, the goal being *more*. In fact, the post-modernists have to agree with me, more or less, in the privacy of their day-to-day clinical work, i.e., they must have all sorts of standards by which they judge the moment-to-moment "correctness" of what they say and do. Unfortunately, the epistemological emphasis in their theory doesn't help them do it. Their theory tends to remain abstract and philosophical and not clearly helpful in the day-to-day challenge of figuring out where the patient wants and needs to go, and how to help him or her get there.

The disjuncture between post-modern theory and practice is important. It accounts for the fact that in reading this literature, one gets the feeling that what is being argued is simultaneously obvious and obtuse; obvious if all it's saying is that we can never be completely sure of anything, but obtuse when it attempts to work out how a therapist can somehow ground his or her clinical *work* in this epistemological truism. If a theory doesn't help improve our practice, what can we say about it? It seems to me that this problem of demonstrating important practical clinical consequences of post-modern theory flows from one of the underlying needs behind the post-modern tilt in psychoanalysis: to rationalize our therapeutic pessimism as psychoanalysts and comfort ourselves with an idealized vision of how complicated and difficult our jobs are.

In response to a social world that is increasingly cynical and pessimistic about the possibility of alleviating human suffering in general, a post-modern epistemology that reminds us of the impossibility of discovering "essences" is a comfort. In response to our frustration at poor therapeutic results, an attitude that underlines complexity and uncertainty is a tonic. In response to our declining status among mental health providers who promise a cheaper, more efficient, and thorough product, the complicated and abstruse flavor of post-modern language and writing is personally and professionally restorative. Yet, in this way, we as analysts accommodate to the prevailing ethos that is objectively undermining our position while reinstating ourselves as worthy in our own imaginations. By this I mean that the post-modern analyst doesn't *directly* take on the challenge to talk about cure, prove that it's possible, dissect exactly how to do it, or feel challenged to do it better. Instead, post-modernism risks encouraging a new kind of navel-gazing in which the navel isn't one's deepest unconscious mind but the idle preoccupations of philosophy about the nature of reality.

The post-modern emphasis on complexity, ambiguity, and misunderstanding subtly helps us justify our confusion about how exactly we help people, and our pessimism about whether we can help them more.

And help them we must. Too often, psychoanalyses go on forever without substantially ridding people of their symptoms, changing their lives, or making them happier. Analysts have always been embarrassed about their therapeutic ambitions, acting as if their goal was only "understanding" and not "change." In this way they differentiated their professional turf from that of other helping professionals, but also allowed psychoanalysis to be caricatured as an endless process of self-exploration for its own sake. While the new theorists have done a lot of good in psychoanalysis by making the process less authoritarian, they have unwittingly also contributed to this anti-therapeutic bias by undermining the urgent project of developing a more rigorous system by which we use feedback from the patient to sharpen our efforts to help. Instead, there is a tendency to fetishize uncertainty, idealize ambiguity, and admire complexity. In this kind of atmosphere, we are told that we have to be particularly cautious of using the patient's therapeutic progress or failure as reliable guideposts for our technique. In fact, the idea of using objective markers at all as a check and balance is viewed with epistemological skepticism. Therapeutic progress, in other words, remains as theoretically secondary or incidental as it always has in classical psychoanalysis; it's just that now we have a more philosophically elegant rationale for it. However, in an era in which psychoanalysis is starting to look like the woolly mammoth, this kind of rationale for our confusion is a bit like passengers on the Titanic being told not to worry about that iceberg because they're on the most beautiful ship of its class. One gets the feeling that the turn to epistemology, the current emphasis in psychoanalysis on the critique of scientific rationality, and the repeated emphasis on what the analyst does not know, have all arisen in response to the declining status of psychoanalysis and the historical confusion in our field about our ability and moral obligation to "really cure" people.

Psychoanalytic theory has a claim on our attention as therapists for only one reason—to increase our understanding of psychological suffering in order to improve our therapeutic attempts to cure it. As an analyst, I use theory to understand what ails my patient. All analysts, naturally, would say the same thing. But I also think that I can use theory to develop validation measures to tell me if I'm on the right track. One of the main measures of this, by the way, is whether patients are doing better in their real lives in response to our work together.

–HISTORY–FAMILY–
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I can help "cure" you better if I *am* on the right track and your improvement is one marker that my track is an accurate one. Again, this sounds like a truism, but while analysts may think this way in their day-to-day clinical work, their theory tends to obfuscate it. In my view, only a theory that explicitly serves my therapeutic aim and my sense of moral responsibility is of interest. A theory that does not help me do so might be aesthetically pleasing but can't possibly be clinically compelling.

The problem is that psychoanalytic post-modernists have gone down the same road as their academic counterparts. Born of a progressive critique of the hierarchies of power lying behind the traditional values and canons of academic subjects ranging from English literature to history to architecture, post-modern scholarship drew its power, its passion, and its appeal from the social change movements of the 1960s and 1970s that were challenging various structures of power and privilege in the public arena. With the decline of the New Left, and increasingly unhinged from the real progressive activity that had given these academic critiques a sense of broader meaning, post-modernists in the academy turned their energies toward more conventional uses—publishing, getting tenure, professional status, and so forth. Its critical edge blunted, post-modern discourse became increasingly abstract, rarified, specialized, and politically irrelevant. In the context of an enervated and dissipated Left, politically apathetic and economically worried student bodies, and a prevailing conservative cynicism about the ideals of the past, former radicals—now academics—took to developing theory for its own sake and not for the sake of inspiring real social change. As Todd Gitlin put it in his book *The Twilight of Common Dreams*: "While the Right was occupying the heights of the political system, the assemblage of groups identified with the Left were marching on the English department."

The post-modern emphasis in psychoanalysis on epistemology, initially offering a useful corrective to a rigid authoritarianism in classical technique, now risks going in the same direction because the emphasis on epistemological uncertainty is never translated into concrete clinical principles of technique. Instead, this emphasis becomes an ethos, a sensibility that reflects and encourages a retreat from the concrete task of helping people change, of getting better results. Like its cousin in the university, post-modernism in analysis unwittingly rationalizes a retreat from the clinical trenches into a relatively academic discourse with questionable applicability.

I believe a better response is for psychoanalysts to make the goal of therapeutic change—of helping patients make concrete changes in their lives in the service of greater happiness—-a more explicit, avowed, publicly stated aspect of their identities, their theory, and their technique. Our energies ought to be put into developing principles of technique that help people get better.

This sounds obvious, a rather prosaic call to arms, but it's not. You see, all psychoanalysts want their patients to get better and all think that their theories will facilitate that eventuality. These are people of good will who care about cure. Unfortunately their theories often discourage them from making this explicit, and from single-mindedly attempting to operationalize it. Because of their theory, their history, and their need to differentiate themselves from other practitioners, psychoanalysts are often ambivalent about representing themselves, first and foremost, as psychological healers. This needs to change. Psychoanalysts have to get rid of their aversion to research, and study what in their technique is helpful to patients and what isn't, what works and what doesn't. They need to study the efficacy of these techniques, and when it is good, proclaim it from the mountaintop and when it is bad, take this as their main theoretical challenge to study and improve. The idea that there is great value to understanding without change is not only ridiculous and morally indefensible for a helping professional to hold, but, worse, it is professional suicide. We can't go the way of the post-modern academic and lose ourselves in elegant but potentially solipsistic theory that can't be translated into improvements in our therapeutic outcomes. Above all, we can't leave ourselves open to the charge that we're more interested in what we *can't* know in our attempts to be helpful than in what we *can* know.

In the last analysis, however, psychoanalysts can't solve this problem within the confines of their theory. The drift away from a therapeutic sensibility to a philosophical one requires a long-term solution that isn't to be found in better philosophy but in changing the general atmosphere that is causing this drift in the culture as a whole. Yet just as analysts (even post-modern ones) don't like to view their intimate clinical work as influenced by social processes, so too are we resistant to looking for social solutions to the problems facing psychoanalysis. Ultimately, however, our attempts to re-commit ourselves to the business of practical cure will be nourished only if they occur in the context of a society in which the ethic of helping is cherished, transformation considered inevitable, and confident idealism about our ability to make it happen a fundamental article of faith. Psychoanalysis would be well served if analysts not only renewed their commitment to clinical cures but brought this same commitment to curing the public cynicism that has made this commitment seem so hopeless. ❑

Why Hagar Left

Phyllis Ocean Berman

Long ago and far away is where most stories start; but this one begins in my own life. One day when I was 16, I came home from school very upset. My mother asked me what was wrong. I told her that Danny, the-love-of-my-life, was spending a lot of time with my second-best-friend Tamar. And I was frightened. I could only see Danny on weekends because he went to a different high school; but Tamar got to see him all the time—at school and at their synagogue's youth group. At the moment they were only friends, but I knew that Tamar really liked Danny, and I knew that he was also interested in her.

"So you're jealous of her?" said my mother.

"Well, of course," I said. "What else can I feel? I'm worried I'll lose him; in fact, I'll lose them both."

"Where did you get the idea that two women have to compete over a man?" my mother asked with a sparkle in her eyes.

Incredulously, I blurted out, "Come on! From the time I was an infant, I've gone to shul; from the time I started Hebrew school, I've read the Chumash. We hear the story of the competition between Sarah and Hagar not just once but twice a year in the Torah reading cycle. It's all about jealousy over Abraham's affection! How can you ask me that question so innocently? I've been taught jealousy and competition from my birth."

"And from your birth, I've been waiting to have this conversation with you," my mother said, patting the chair beside her to invite me to sit down. "But I had to wait till you were ready—more than ready. So at last it's time; at last it's clear you need to hear what I'm about to say.

"What you've been learning—it's not the whole story. How do I know? My mother told me when I was about your age; she had heard it from her mother, who had heard it from her mother, all the way back through all the generations. What she told me is the real story of Sarah and Hagar ..."

Sarai and her boyfriend Avram—those were their names until late in their life—grew up in the same little town. Not only were they cousins, they were friends from childhood. So it was no surprise to anyone when their friendship turned to love.

Most of the young folks they knew stayed close to home, even when the time had come to marry. But Avram and Sarai were different. Sarai heard the words over and over, as if in a dream: "L'chi lach" —"Leave where you are, to learn who you are."

So she and Avram left their families and their hometown and all that was familiar to them, to make their new life together.

As they journeyed, they came to a town where a powerful Pharaoh was in charge. At first it seemed a good place to live, because land was plentiful for grazing cattle and growing crops. But Sarai and Avram quickly noticed that, while there were some men in the area, there were no other women to be seen.

Avram made some discreet inquiries and learned that all of the town's women were living under the Pharaoh's "protection" in his palace. Even worse—in the past, some men had protested when the Pharaoh's officers had come to take the women to the palace. Those men had simply disappeared. The whisper was they were most likely dead.

"We should never have left home!" Avram thought. Night after night, he woke up trembling: Pharaoh might kill him too, in order to add Sarai to his conquests.

So one morning Avram said to Sarai, "If Pharaoh asks us, we'll tell him you're my sister."

"I suppose it's almost true," said Sarai. "You are my cousin. And I love that song you used to sing to me—"How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride!" She looked into his frightened face. "All right; I'm willing."

Sure enough, not long after that the Pharaoh asked about them. Learning they were siblings, he ordered Sarai into his harem. As you can imagine, Sarai was terrified: she was separated from her beloved Avram and

From the book Tales of Tikkun: New Jewish Stories to Heal the Wounded World *(Jason Aronson Publishers) by Phyllis Ocean Berman and Arthur Ocean Waskow. Copyright © 1996 by the authors.*

didn't know what was going to happen to her. So she looked around for a friend, and quickly found another young woman, who only weeks before had herself been added to the collection of Pharaoh's women. And she was a foreigner too, from a distant city—so far away that the other women called her "Hagar" (The Stranger).

So Sarai and Hagar, both far from home, uncertain when they'd be released or what would happen until then, both new to the palace culture, became immediate and intimate friends.

Now when the Pharaoh had first approached Avram and Sarai, he had promised that she'd be free of her palace duties and able to return to Avram's home after a year. And so he said to all the women before they entered his palace. But when Sarai and Hagar looked around, they could see women of all ages. It looked to them as though women were remaining in the harem far more than the single year they had expected.

When they asked the other women how long they had lived in the palace, they heard the same story over and over again. Yes, the Pharaoh had said they might leave after a year, but, by that time, each of them had borne a child. The Pharaoh told them they could leave if they wanted to; but the child, his child, must remain in the palace. What woman, each one said in her own way, could walk away from a child still nursing at the breast? So the single year of servitude turned into many years, the child into children, and after awhile they could no longer extricate themselves from the Pharaoh's home.

The key to freedom, Sarai and Hagar said to each other, is not to become pregnant during this year. But how could they avoid it when none of the other women had been able to? They thought and thought, they talked and talked. And finally they remembered that, in their own home towns, there had been a special feast at the sighting of the new moon each month. In the women's community where Sarai came from, it was called "Rosh Chodesh." The two women talked through the night, one idea melting into another until they had the perfect plan.

The next day the two women gained audience with Pharaoh, who was delighted to receive the newest additions to his harem. They told him how it was the custom in their traditions to celebrate the new moon: he should invite all the men in his retinue to a monthly feast which would be prepared, not by the royal cooks and bakers, but by all the women themselves. The Pharaoh so much liked the idea of a monthly gathering of men to eat and drink that he hardly thought twice when the women mentioned that, once the food and wine were prepared, the women would go off into the woods by themselves for a night or two, to celebrate the moon's fecundity.

"Ah, but that night or two was crucial!" my mother said. "When you live with other women in a college dormitory, you'll see. For when many women live together, they often begin to menstruate on the same cycle. And in those days when there were no electric lights, women's cycles, like the tides, mirrored the rhythms of the moon as it waxed and waned each month. Those days of the New Moon—that was when the women were most fertile!"

Sarai and Hagar knew that, if the women were out of the palace and away from Pharaoh during the most fertile point of their month, they would probably not get pregnant. And for some months, the plan worked very well indeed. None of the women got pregnant—and Pharaoh didn't even notice. That was because there were still women who had already become pregnant before the New Moon celebrations started. They kept having babies. Pharaoh and his men reveled in the feasts, eating and drinking the finest specialties of the women's dishes.

For Sarai and Hagar, the months passed joyfully, each new moon another step toward their day of freedom. Each month, they felt safer from a lifetime sentence.

Four months, five months, six months—and Pharaoh realized something strange was happening. No morning sickness, no bellies swelling. What had happened to halt all fertility?

And then one afternoon, when Avram made his weekly visit into the ruler's gardens where he could talk and walk with his "sister" Sarai, the Pharaoh just happened to be standing on his balcony.

Sarai and Avram were deep in conversation. Now you know how it is, when two people love each other—how they look at one another, how they touch. Even from the distance of his balcony, the Pharaoh could see in the energy field of their loving glance, that this was not the look that one would expect between a brother and a sister. He began to think about life in his palace in the recent months, and suddenly all the different pieces of information fell into place. He ordered Avram and Sarai to his presence immediately.

"You lied to me," the Pharaoh roared. "Anyone can see you are husband and wife, not brother and sister."

"In our tradition," Avram said, "it is common to refer to our brides as our sisters. This is merely a misunderstanding," he assured the Pharaoh. "Even our poetry ..."

"Poetry, shmoetry! You have bewitched my

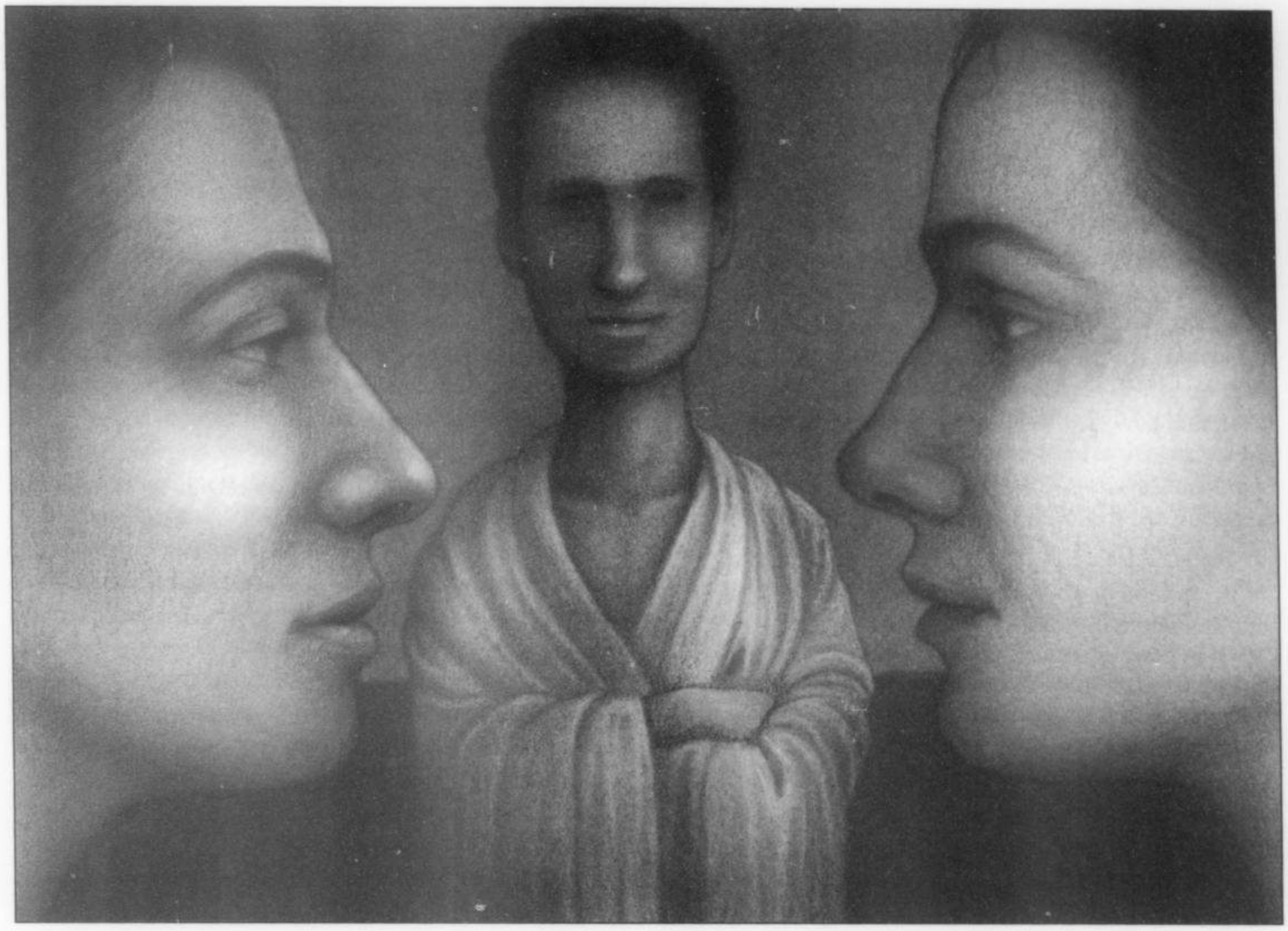


Illustration by Russ Ando

Kingdom with your trickery" said Pharaoh. "I have been cursed with infertility since you have come here. Get out of my palace and away from my lands this instant, and let us return to our blessed state of birthing many babies."

Avram was ready to leave immediately, but Sarai balked. "I'm not leaving here without my dear friend Hagar," she said determinedly, looking the Pharaoh in the eye.

"You are lucky to get out of here with your lives," Pharaoh fumed. "Take Hagar," he said. "Just get yourselves out of here and leave us in peace."

And that is how it happened that the companions Sarai and Hagar, and the couple Sarai and Avram became a family of three. It was no surprise that just as Sarai loved both Avram and Hagar, so it was that Avram and Hagar came to love one another as well. The three settled in Hebron and peacefully went on with their lives.

Well— mostly peacefully, because for several years neither Sarai nor Hagar became pregnant. "Maybe our trick has brought a curse on both of us?" they worried. They prayed together: "You Who are the Source of All Life and all Liberty, You Who heard our prayers for freedom from the Pharaoh's palace, hear our prayers for new life now."

So it was an enormous relief when Hagar's belly did begin to swell. When the son of Hagar and Avram was born, the three called his name "Yishmael—God hears," for God had listened to their prayers. If you've seen how dear friends or close family members delight in the birth of one another's children, so it was with Sarai, who adored Yishmael as fully as Hagar and Avram did. There's more than enough work for two mothers when a newborn comes into a family, and Sarai was involved with Yishmael's parenting in every way but one.

The one thing that Sarai could not do was to nurse the baby, and, according to my mother, when Sarai watched Hagar soothe and satisfy the baby at her breast, it caused her some grief. She yearned for a baby born from her own body, but in all other ways she loved Yishmael as her own.

The household flourished: living together was easy, and the years passed. Sarai had almost made her peace with the fact that her body would bear no children when their household was visited by three strange-seeming guests. First the three suggested that both

Sarai and Avram slow down and breathe more. They even urged them both to add a breathing sound to their names as a reminder: "Sarahhh and Avrahham." And if they were to do that, the visitors predicted, within the year Sarai herself would give birth to a son.

Sarai laughed to hear such news. "After all these years?" she said—in a mixture of joy and disbelief. Yet, filled with hope, she and Avram agreed to rename themselves as the visitors had suggested: Sarah and Avraham.

Now you may think that everything was finally perfect, but I'm sorry to say that a strange shadow fell upon the family right before the birth of Sarah's baby. Avraham awoke one morning full of dreams about a commanding transcendent lordly God. In his dreams he had heard this God demand the circumcision of all the males in the family—the adolescent Yishmael, the aging Avraham, and all future newborn boys—to hallow the male genitals to create life for ongoing generations.

Avraham told these words to Sarah and Hagar, and the women were outraged. "You mean to say that you'd take our Yishmael—a thirteen-year old just coming to terms with his body's change from boyhood to manhood—and you want to cut off the skin at the tip of his penis?" Hagar said incredulously.

"Yes," Avraham answered. "I, and all the men of our clan and our village, and all the boy children, including our Yishmael, must be circumcised.

"For God insists that on the eighth day of life we will circumcise newborns, but now we must consecrate men and boys of all ages so that our people will be as numerous as grains of sand on the seashore or stars in the sky."

The women looked at each other in disbelief. They could barely tolerate the thought of maiming their male child, let alone the men in the community. It made no sense, they thought; and yet, Avraham was so certain that it was what God wanted. Finally and reluctantly, they agreed, and the circumcisions were done.

But from that moment on, a gulf fell open between the two women and Avraham. If he could dream such weird dreams, such dangerous and outrageous dreams, who knew what might be next?

And yet all this was put aside when Sarah delivered a healthy baby boy. To this son, the three of them gave the name "Yitzhak—Laughing One," because the news of his coming had caused all of them to laugh with delight. The family of five continued to grow in love and prosperity, until one morning Sarah awoke from a terrible night's dream. She was so distressed that she told it to Hagar: In her nightmare, Avraham had had another dream. This time God had told him to take his first-born son to a nearby mountain, and, like so many of their neighbors who believed that sacrificing living beings insured continued fertility, sacrifice him. As Sarah told the dream, she began to cry. Her body shook and her voice broke.

Hagar put her arms around Sarah. "Beloved Sarah, it is just a dream," said Hagar.

"Beloved Hagar, it is just a dream," said Sarah.

"It is just a dream of a dream," said each woman to the other.

But the dream came to Sarah once again, and yet once more. "Three times!" she said to Hagar. "It will no longer leave me in the morning. Remember when Avraham dreamed that God wanted our oldest son circumcised? Is it so impossible that he might dream that God wants him to sacrifice our oldest son?"

Sarah and Hagar didn't know what to think; but, since the circumcision, they were not so confident about Avraham and the voices he chose to listen to. "What can we do if Avraham decides to take our Yishmael to sacrifice him?" they cried. And so they sat and talked and planned and plotted through the day and into the night, just as they had done so many years before, in the Pharaoh's palace.

And once again, they agreed on an idea, this time to protect Yishmael from Avraham's potential dream. The plan, my mother said, is one we know well; it's the one we read about in the Torah. If Sarah were to tell Avraham this preposterous story about Yishmael teasing Yitzhak and demand that Avraham send Yishmael and Hagar away from the household, he would have to believe her, because he knew without a doubt how bound together the women and the boys had been. So he would send Hagar and Yishmael away.

It was a terrible plan, a heartbreaking one, but one that would keep Yishmael alive and out of Avraham's reach.

We all know what happened: Sarah did tell Avraham that she and Yitzhak could no longer stand to live with Hagar and Yishmael. Avraham couldn't understand it, but Sarah was so insistent that Avraham agreed, with a heavy heart, to send them away.

The night before Hagar and Yishmael were to go, the two women sat up, alternately weeping and reminiscing, and, each in her own hand, they wrote two scrolls. In each was the real story of their love and friendship through all the years they had lived together. Hagar placed her scroll in Sarah's hands, to give to a daughter-in-law or other female relative. Sarah put her parchment in Hagar's hands for the same purpose.

So it was that Hagar and Yishmael left the household and went out into the desert. How they survived

there and made a life for themselves is a story for another day. It's enough to say that they lived a good and long life. Yishmael had many children and won a great deal of respect among those with whom he settled.

Sarah was never the same after Hagar and Yishmael went their own way. She became withdrawn and lonely, barely consoling herself with mothering the growing Yitzhak. Although she believed that her deception had saved Yishmael's life, it had taken from her most of her own life energy.

You can imagine, then, how shocked, how outraged she was, many years later when Avraham, indeed, did have the dream she had seen in her own vision. For in his dream, Avraham did hear God commanding him to take his son, his only son, his beloved son Yitzhak up to Mount Moriah and to sacrifice him there. Avraham did take Yitzhak, and was ready to sacrifice him on that day. But at the last moment, God sent a ram to take Yitzhak's place on the altar.

When Avraham and Yitzhak returned home after this terrifying journey, Sarah was on her deathbed, grief-stricken once more and half-crazed that everyone she had ever loved would be lost to her. When she saw that Yitzhak had returned, miraculously alive, she blessed him and gave him the parchment that had been written by Hagar.

"This scroll," Sarah said, "is my gift to your wife if you should marry. I don't expect to live long enough to give it to her myself, but there is a story she and her offspring must know."

So it was, my mother told me, that Yitzhak presented Rivkah with this mysterious gift from his mother Sarah; Rivkah eventually gave it to her daughter-in-law Leah, who gave it to her daughter Dina, and so it passed from generation to generation through the ages. When the actual scrolls disappeared, women just told the story to their daughters and granddaughters, to their nieces and their cousins.

Through this whole story, my mother and I had been sitting side by side. Her eyes were turned more inward, toward the past, than facing me. But now she took my arm and turned the two of us to face each other. And then she said, "At last this story I've so longed to tell you—at last I can put this story in your hands. Now it is your responsibility to pass on to the next generation, so people will know the truth about Sarah and Hagar.

"And more!"—she said. "Now you too can look beyond the world of jealousy and competition. You can ask yourself whether we must forever live according to the tale you learned in school—or has the time begun to come when women can shape the world together, as Hagar and Sarah tried to do." ❑

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Strategies for Meaning in the Economy

Thad Williamson

Is it possible to imagine changes in our economic life so that our work could support rather than undermine meaning and human relationships in everyday life? Today that goal of the Politics of Meaning seems far-fetched. The reality of the meaningless work, unethical and even criminal business practices, cutthroat office environments, and disconnected consumerism so emblematic of the American economy represents a fundamental—and daunting—challenge to efforts to develop a politics-of-meaning-centered political movement and program.

Indeed, conventional analysis all but takes it for granted that the practices of capitalist institutions will accentuate stresses on the social fabric of meaning and caring. Hence, the calls for families (on the right), the state (on the left), or civil society (left, center, and right) to pick up the pieces. The politics of meaning idea that our basic institutional practices in economic life ought to reflect ethical criteria and a sensitivity to human well-being is not yet in the mainstream of public discussion—but it should be a central goal of the politics of meaning movement to place it there.

To speak of applying ethical norms to economic life necessarily requires an attention to practical policy options for altering the practices of our economic institutions. In fact, a growing number of policy suggestions which might be fruitfully considered by the PoM movement have been developed by a range of activists and thinkers. The following memorandum summarizes and critiques existing proposals for pushing forward into economic life with a meaning-centered agenda in a very practical way. These strategies involve both specific policy changes and larger-scale campaigns around, for instance, state-level voter initiatives and referenda. The goal of such approaches should be both to dramatize by example the possibility of an alternative way of "doing economics" and to raise public awareness about the strong linkages between the nature of economic life under contemporary capitalism and the fundamental crisis of human meaning which the PoM seeks to address.

The strategies noted below fall into three broad categories:

- Efforts to change corporate behavior inasmuch as it affects the public at large, by focusing attention on businesses' employment policies, pollution output, treatment of consumers, and so forth. The thrust of such proposals is to change the tangible outcomes on behalf of the public interest, not altering the substance of day-to-day relations between persons within firms.
- Efforts to change corporate culture internally, such that persons are treated with respect, each job is designed so as to be "meaningful," and a value system other than competitive climbing through the hierarchy begins to characterize everyday life at work.
- Efforts to nurture alternative forms of economic organization to the corporation which, theoretically at least, would be more consistent with a cooperative approach and bringing ethical values into economic life.

The strategies summarized below are itemized, in no particular order.

1. Publicize relevant information about corporations.

Who are the owners of a given corporation? What is its track record in dealing with workers and the public; in providing job security; in producing safe products? Shouldn't the public know? The fullest statement of this idea comes from Ralph Estes in his recent book, *Tyranny of the Bottom Line*.

Estes proposes to create "a new scorecard" for corporate governance by requiring corporations to disclose a wide range of information of relevance to consumers, workers, communities, and society at large. Estes, a certified accountant who estimates the total costs to society of corporate behavior at some $2.6 trillion (1991

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dollars), would alter the Securities and Exchange Commission and rename it the "Corporate Accountability Commission". Each corporation would then file an annual report including such information as the safety record of its products, records of litigation involving the corporation, long-term data on corporate employment policies, data on occupational health, ownership of the corporation, environmental impacts (including both materials used and waste/pollution produced), and core financial data (already legally required).

The idea is that this information would give "stakeholders" (employees, consumers, shareholders, local communities) the leverage to affect corporate management policies. "Change the performance evaluation system and you change behavior," Estes writes. He cites the success of the acts establishing the current Securities and Exchange Commission in 1933 and 1934 as an example of how the requirement of public disclosure of financial data effectively reduced much financial chicanery on Wall Street and throughout corporate America. Publicizing the facts about corporate impact on a wide range of stakeholders might have a similar salutary effect, according to Estes, who contrasts this approach to strategies of increased regulation which he views as inordinately costly, and apt to apply "a bureaucratic overlay to all business decisions."

Pro: Estes' idea is easily translatable into state-level action. Politics of Meaning groups and related organizations could conceivably sponsor an initiative to establish "Corporate Accountability Commissions" in each state. Such initiatives also would put on the table the central contention that corporate decision making—that is, economic decision making—is the public's business.

Con: It may be politically unattractive to appear to be advocating the creation of a new bureaucracy (the Corporate Accountability Commission). Nor is Estes entirely convincing in arguing that publicizing information about corporations would really lead to a substantive behavior change.

2. Use government spending policies to target good companies for preferences in obtaining government contracts.

"Good companies" might include those with good job stability policies, a participatory ethos, environmentally sound practices. For instance, a state might say it will give preferences of 10% on contract bids to companies which have no-layoff policies and are committed to employee participation. There is precedent for this kind of preference in regard to helping minority and women-owned businesses (and in some cases, local companies in general) obtain government contracts.

The other major creative use of government spending has been to create new markets for socially beneficial products, most typically environmental technology, but also advances like the air bag, whose adoption was assisted by their placement in several thousand federal government cars well before the general airbag requirement went into effect. A more mundane example is a federal executive order mandating that a set percentage of the government's paper purchases must be recycled paper. A voter initiative might identify four or five areas where socially desirable products need to be developed and call for government commitments to use its own spending to build up those markets.

Pro: Attention to public purchasing policies can lead to quick, tangible benefits.

Con: Criteria with some credibility need to be developed to measure what makes a positive firm, a positive work experience—for instance, is "participation" to be measured by some objective standard, by employee surveys, by anecdotes, by government inspection, or what? Otherwise it will be difficult to make the public purchasing approach more than just a narrow, technocratic strategy. My judgement is that PoM should be supportive of this kind of effort, but not necessarily lead with it.

3. Encourage community recognition of "good citizen" businesses.

I'm thinking of the retailer in my own neighborhood who gives great help to homeless people in the area, contributes time to community organizations, is friendly to everyone, and is getting killed by a Rite Aid franchise next door. "Community recognition" of some kind may help keep such an entrepreneur afloat—and confer some social approval upon this kind of person.

Pro: Bringing positive examples to public attention is always useful for its own sake.

Con: It is not obvious that one can legislate appropriate civic recognition for "good citizen" businesses—it seems more likely this would happen as a natural outgrowth of a strong civic culture. Also, there is the danger that "community recognition" could be used more to legitimate current praxis—"see, it's not all that bad"—than to challenge it. On the other hand, there is value in getting people to take interest in the behavior of the local businesses in their area, to apply some basic ethical standards to purchasing behavior.

4. Recharter corporations, federally (as long advocated by Ralph Nader), or at the state level.

The idea of state rechartering of corporations has been advocated most recently by Frank Adams and Richard Grossman, authors of *Taking Care of Business*.

The basic idea is to challenge the legal doctrine of the corporation as a "person" by directly changing the laws governing corporations: their charters. Charters for corporation should limit sharply their legal powers and lay out basic standards of social responsibility, as well as include provisions for dissolving corporations in the case of violation of the charter. Usefully, redefining the corporation would allow for explicit limitations on the right to "free speech"—i.e. massive advertising and political contributions—now afforded corporations as a "person." Other ideas include mandating salary caps or executive-worker salary ratios, banning corporations from involvement in public schools, banning hire of replacement labor for strikers, and so forth.

Pros: The rechartering concept challenges the very existence of current corporations, and reasserts the right of the public to have a say in their operation. There is a clear opportunity to bring ethical and meaning criteria to the fore in developing revised charters.

Cons: It may prove very difficult to push for corporate rechartering on a state-by-state basis since most corporations will just pick the most corporate-friendly state to register in, regardless of where their actual production takes place. That is why so many corporations are now chartered in Delaware.

5. PLACE CONDITIONS ON SUBSIDIES GIVEN BY LOCALITIES AND STATES TO BUSINESSES.

Businesses must meet certain employment goals, pollution levels, etc.—or else repay their subsidy to the state. Example: If Tennessee gives Saturn $100 million in tax breaks over 10 years as an incentive to build a new auto plant, and agrees to build 5 new roads leading up to the plant, Saturn must sign a written agreement guaranteeing certain employment levels, emissions levels, and perhaps other criteria over the course of that 10 years. Otherwise the subsidy either must be repaid in full with interest or the state gets a share of the plant.

PRO: This strategy is a way to take the fact of widespread subsidies of corporations by localities desperate for jobs, and use it to give leverage to the states over corporate policymaking and behavior. It would also assure a practical return to the public of money spent on tax breaks.

CON: It is not at all clear that one or even a handful of states could do this on their own. This strategy seems to require concerted action, or else capital will simply avoid relocating to the states that place conditions on subsidies. It is also not clear that this approach would really place the ethical/meaning questions on the table—this idea might be used to promote standard growth and development policies rather than a different bottom line. On the other hand, raising the issue does help highlight the fact that the state and the economy are deeply intertwined and again helps promote the idea that economic decision-making is the public's business. Placing conditions on subsidies to business is a step towards economic planning in the public interest. Again, I think PoM should strongly support efforts to place conditions on business subsidies at the state and local levels without necessarily initiating them.

6. USE STATE PENSION FUNDS TO INVEST IN GOOD COMPANIES—OR AT LEAST NOT IN BAD PRACTICES.

Pension funds also might be used to promote local economic development. Example: California's state employee pension fund might decide to establish clear ethical criteria to guide its investments: It will only invest in companies with strong track records on employment, employee involvement, and that have no criminal records, etc. The policy might be strengthened by stipulating that the fund will only invest in industries located in California or that employ California workers—that is, the fund might be made a tool for state-level economic planning. This latter approach has been attempted with some success in a number of states, including in the "conservative" South: Retirement Systems of Alabama has aggressively invested in a range of local industries from aerospace to tourism.

PRO: This strategy has the advantage of directly challenging the "bottom line" criteria by which decisions regarding these funds are made. Presently, the primary if not sole criteria guiding most of these funds is the maximization of profit. An alternative approach could have real impact in affecting the character of local economic development. These funds are one of the few sources of capital available to the public and it is reasonable that the public demand some involvement in how that capital is managed, and that values favoring the public good, not market values, should be guiding those decisions.

CON: Again, this approach will not be credible without first developing a clear view of what the ethical criteria guiding pension investments should be. This strategy will surely meet political opposition, even among traditional liberal constituencies, who will say it risks public money. Nonetheless, there is reason to believe that a thorough rethinking of how public pension funds are managed could overlap well with a PoM agenda.

7. PROVIDE MORE STATE ASSISTANCE TO COMMUNITY ENTERPRISES.

These would include worker-owned firms, businesses owned by community development corporations, cooperatives, community supported agriculture, municipally-owned enterprises, and other structural alternatives to the modern corporation. State assistance could take a wide range of forms, such as providing start-up loans;

giving preferences on government contracts to collectively owned enterprises; technical assistance; establishing a credit vehicle for such institutions; and giving such enterprises priority in buying assets obtained by the state (as in the S&L crisis, as well as routine foreclosures).
Pro: This strategy sends a clear message that enterprises which are non-hierarchical, more participatory, and share profits are to be preferred. It would also help in the long term process of nurturing long-run alternatives to the corporate model, by helping to generate success stories of alternatives that work.
Con: This would have to be done in such a way as to highlight the ethical issues involved. Such a strategy would be very difficult politically to implement in initiative form. Initially, this approach may also seem a little obscure to some people—it doesn't hit on a hot issue but a long term one. Still, however else the PoM movement attempts to connect meaning concerns and economic life, it ought to be interested in developing long-run alternatives to the corporate model, although it may make sense to lead with some shorter-term strategies first.

8. Ban public assistance or contracts to companies that have broken the law.
This strategy echoes the "divestment" movement of the 1980s when hundreds of municipalities and other institutions withdrew investments from companies doing business in South Africa; more recently, Chapel Hill, North Carolina and a number of other towns have banned awarding contracts to companies (such as Pepsi) with investments in human rights-plagued Burma. The notion here, however, is to go beyond the "divestment" concept and challenge much more fundamentally the widespread criminal behavior of corporations themselves.
Pro: This approach sets a very clear standard for minimal ethical behavior by business enterprises, and also helps to highlight for the public the full extent of corporate lawbreaking. It also has the advantage of being easy to translate into the form of a voter initiative.
Con: Focusing on criminal companies doesn't establish a positive set of ethical criteria, and may not work to fundamentally alter the public debate.

9. Ban advertising on the airwaves to companies convicted of felonies and implement more restrictive policies on advertisements that promote certain negative values (i.e. the exploitation of women).
Also in this vein, there is a strong argument for attempting to reduce the influence of commercial advertising in general on the grounds that its promotion of acquisitiveness as a central human activity has deeply penetrated and negatively impacted our collective mindset. Ending advertising-related tax writeoffs and imposing prohibitive taxes on large-scale advertising budgets could be an effective means of countering the culture of the 30-second commercial—while also dampening the large advantage mass advertising gives large corporations over smaller enterprises.
Pro: A ban on advertising by criminal corporations again would help highlight the extent of corporate criminal activity. Such an initiative would also challenge the view of the corporation as a person with the same First Amendment rights as citizens, and thus might fit in well with a state charter initiative.
Con: Any attempt to make inroads into advertising practices is likely to raise lots of opposition from an ACLU/free speech point of view (as well as, naturally, corporate America), and might impel unsavory alliances with pro-censorship forces.

10. Facilitate public education campaigns to promote good companies that treat workers and communities well.
This is like the "community recognition" category noted above, except that it would be supported by the state more directly by airing television and radio commercials promoting certain kinds of business behavior, on the model of previous public service announcements (i.e. "Don't Smoke" or "Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires"). Former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich hinted at this approach with his practice of holding press conferences to honor companies with innovative management-labor relations. This approach would have much the same pros and cons as "community recognition" (#4).

11. Support "buy local" campaigns, or, alternatively "buy good" campaigns.
These would be consumer campaigns aimed at helping businesses that keep money in the local economy and/or firms that meet basic ethical criteria. This goes on to some degree already in the alternative press; the idea would be to expand it to make people more critical consumers.
Pro: Again, such campaigns might help in raising consciousness a bit and possibly influence the behavior of some firms.
Con: This is an appealing but nonetheless quite weak strategy; it is probably best taken up by civic organizations rather than made the focus of a political campaign.

12. Develop a progressive product labeling system.
This would entail labeling products with information

that tells where the materials came from and how well the company is paying the workers, describes the ecological impacts involved, and any other relevant information. This could be either mandatory (every product must be labeled, by state law, as with food nutrition information now) or voluntary (an organization sets up labels of approval and companies have to submit information to earn the seal of approval.) One organization which is attempting to develop such a system for use in the Pacific Northwest is Consumers for a Sustainable Cascadia, based in Seattle.

Pro: This approach coheres with the "buy good" strategy noted above, and also complements Ralph Estes' emphasis on publicizing information about corporations.

Con: Again, the labeling approach seems fairly limited and weak as a strategy. It probably would be hard to generate political momentum for a voter initiative to institute such a system, although efforts by civic organizations to develop such labels are worthy of support.

13. Place greater public demand on public agencies to take the lead in the ethical treatment of people.

What's going on at the Post Office that makes it such an obviously alienating place to work? Shouldn't the government conduct itself by a bottom line different than that of corporate market values, beyond just providing generous benefits and leave?

Pro: It is probably easier, near term, to get changes made in public jobs than in the private sector; and there is a good chance of generating a pretty high public profile by talking about making government jobs more meaningful and fulfilling.

Con: Such change is more likely to come via executive action or union agitation rather than via legislative initiatives, as most voters are unlikely to express great sympathy for the plight of the government worker. This is probably not an area PoM can take the lead on, but one it should be interested in.

14. Develop formal workplace committees to participate in oversight of certain company affairs.

For instance, a workplace committee might take responsibility for ensuring that high levels of workplace safety are maintained on an ongoing basis, as an alternative to the largely ineffective current system which depends on infrequent visits by overburdened government inspectors. Effective use of such committees would require developing a legal structure within labor law to ensure that the new committees are not used to undercut unions, etc. Political theorists Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers have proposed such workplace structures as part of their emphasis on non-governmental "associations" as a locus of decision-making in a revitalized democracy. (See their new book, *Associations and Democracy*). Cohen and Rogers believe that as part of a broader labor law reform, the state should pass specific laws to help set up and legitimate workplace "associations," with the goal of strengthening genuine worker participation on the job. Such associations, including unions, might also take over the management of functions traditionally provided by the state, such as job training, and receive public funding to do so.

Pro: This approach does begin to address the internal structure of working life within the firm.

Con: The strategy, however, does not necessarily bring the broader ethical issues at stake to the fore, particularly if it is framed as a mechanism for strengthening worker power while at the same time keeping businesses "competitive." Also, altering labor law in a more progressive direction at either the federal or state level has proven to be an exceptionally difficult political project over the past 20 years.

15. Redefine the notion of wage labor.

This is obviously a more radical step than even rechartering corporations; ideas in this direction include making everyone a salaried worker; putting tight restrictions on the use of temporary work; making all workers "partners" within firms, with a role in shaping their own job descriptions such that each job is intrinsically meaningful; and making profit-sharing mandatory. An important related idea is the notion of a "social" income supplement to be provided unconditionally to all adult citizens out of public funds (either taxes, or conceivably, out of profits and royalties from government-owned businesses and resources).

Pro: These ideas directly challenge the use of human beings as mere factors of production (cogs in the wheel, means to an end), and hint at an insistence that everyone has a right to find fulfillment in their work, however humble.

Con: Translating any of these ideas into legislation or a voter initiative means coming up with a very radical document! However, as noted below, the apparent political impossibility of confronting the nature of wage employment in the American economy should not necessarily deter the PoM movement from pressing in this direction.

16. Create new indicators of progress.

The notion here is to discard the old Gross Domestic Product as a measure of economic health, and instead use indicators that take account of the holistic effects of economic life, including waste, pollution, inequality, the

human impact of economic growth and change, and so forth. A large number of activists, including Hazel Henderson, the California-based organization Redefining Progress, Walter Corson of George Washington University, and respected ecological economist Herman Daly have strongly advocated this approach and helped develop a number of alternative indicators aimed at providing a more realistic—and revealing— measure of societal well-being.

Pro: Again, to implement a new set of indicators would directly challenge "the bottom line" and shift it in a more humane direction. This idea is also very translatable into voter initiative, which might urge, for instance, that "From now on the State of California will no longer publish figures on the size of the economy, but figures on the holistic health of the economy." As noted, considerable energy behind this idea already has been expended, and there is a chance for PoM to join forces with a fairly wide swath of progressive activists.

Con: Changing the indicators in public discourse, even if it were to be implemented, might not translate into real institutional and policy change as automatically as its most fervent supporters sometimes suggest.

17. Strengthen whistleblower legislation.

Long a policy staple of public interest advocates, whistleblower legislation provides protections to employees who come forward with information about wrongful actions taken by their companies. Such legislation might be strengthened to improve enforcement of existing laws and more punitive penalties for companies which harass whistleblowers or are found to have committed crimes. A related approach to corporate misdeeds is exemplified by the recent slew of state lawsuits against the tobacco industry, seeking damages on health care costs to the public caused by cigarettes. While the tobacco case is an unusual circumstance, the use of lawsuits as an instrument for countering flagrant corporate violations of the public good might have broader applicability.

Pro: Whistleblower legislation can have a very tangible effect on uncovering and stopping corporate crime; nothing scares a corporation like a lawsuit backed by the resources of the state.

Con: Whistleblower protection and state lawsuits do not challenge, but in fact reinforce, the assumption that companies inevitably will perform unethical acts and that it is the role of the government to step in and help clean up. Rather than seek to change the overall bottom line, these measures are simply means of limiting the damages of the flawed bottom line our economy presently pursues.

18. Shorten the work week.

The present norm of a 40-hour work week (if not more), when combined with time spent on transportation and running household errands, demonstrably leads to severe stress on the lives of many workers, particularly working mothers with children. The "time squeeze" means there is less time and energy to participate in community-wide activities (such as politics), and that many people come home each day tired and grouchy. It also increases the resentment many workers feel towards their jobs. Moving to a shorter work week would directly reduce the dominion of "the economy" over the rest of life and conceivably lead to improvements in workers' psychological health, family life, and community participation. It is also likely to produce the added benefit of increasing total employment as some businesses hire more workers to pick up the slack.

Pro: This idea is easily translatable into a voter initiative or legislation: The legislation would simply state that, after a transition period, the standard work week is to be reduced to, for instance, 35 hours. Government workers will now work 35 hours a week, and private sector employees working more than 35 hours will be entitled to overtime. This idea has a chance to strike a deep chord with the American public and might win broad popular backing in the foreseeable future.

Con: Shortening the work week would also draw the strongest possible opposition from the business community and most establishment economists, in all likelihood. An important counter to this objection would be to point out, as both the experience of the Kellogg Company in the 1930s and 40s with shorter hours and common sense suggest, that better rested, less frazzled workers are likely to be more productive—even if they are working 5 fewer hours a week. However, the reduction of work strategy will meet with skepticism from workers unless careful measures are taken to avoid or minimize reductions in worker paychecks during the transition to a shorter work week.

As can be seen, none of these ideas for practically applying ethical norms to the economy are perfect. Many of the ideas just noted are fairly modest in impact, and almost all are politically very difficult.

However, I would like to suggest four further thoughts which may be possible avenues of action for a PoM approach to economic life.

First, it is of the utmost importance that PoM begin to develop a practical vision of what "ethical," meaningful economic life looks like, both in the interaction between producers and the larger community (the

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Remembering Jackie Robinson

Peter Dreier

Nineteen ninety-seven marks the 50th anniversary of Jackie Robinson's courageous triumph over baseball's apartheid system. When Robinson took the field for the Brooklyn Dodgers on April 15, 1947, he was the first black player in modern baseball.

To commemorate this milestone, Major League Baseball will honor Robinson by sewing patches on all players' uniforms. This year will see a proliferation of books, TV movies, and conferences about Robinson, who has not received the respect he deserves. Today, many Americans under 30, including some African American superstars, can't even identify Robinson, much less appreciate his accomplishment.

Many consider Robinson (1919-1972) America's greatest all-around athlete. The grandson of a slave and son of a sharecropper, he was a four-sport athlete at UCLA, played professional football and then briefly in baseball's Negro Leagues. He spent his major league career (1947 to 1956) with the Brooklyn Dodgers, was chosen Rookie of the Year in 1947 and Most Valuable Player in 1949. An outstanding baserunner with a .311 lifetime batting average, he led the Dodgers to six pennants and was elected to the Hall of Fame.

Like baseball, America is more racially integrated than it was in Robinson's day. We've seen the dismantling of legal segregation, growth of the black middle class, and a virtual end to the overt daily terror imposed on blacks. Without discounting the persistence of segregated neighborhoods, black poverty, and racial bigotry, the progress is undeniable.

Even so, American race relations seems to have reached an ideological impasse. The dominant race relations metaphors of Robinson's era—integration, the melting pot, and assimilation—were unambiguous. Progressives believed in a color-blind society. It was easy to answer, which side are you on? Today's disputes over multiculturalism, affirmative action, racial preferences, and even (in the views of some black educators and playwright August Wilson) self-segregation make the political landscape more confusing.

Robinson's legacy is caught in contemporary culture wars. He was often criticized by 1960s black nationalists for being an Uncle Tom or a symbolic token. Some of their heirs now view baseball's integration with ambivalence for its role in destroying the Negro Leagues. And a writer in the conservative *National Review* last year used Robinson's success to argue against government policies like affirmative action, claiming it was a "triumph of the competitive market" and that "[b]aseball owners finally realized that the more they cared about the color of people's money, the less they could afford to care about the color of their skin."

In reality, black Americans welcomed baseball's integration as much as they welcomed the end of separate drinking fountains. The demise of the Negro Leagues was a small price to pay to defeat Jim Crow. And contrary to the conservative view, the dismantling of baseball's color line was a triumph of social protest in the pre-King era, not of enlightened capitalists. As historian Jules Tygiel explains in *Baseball's Great Experiment*, the Negro press, civil rights groups, and progressive whites waged a sustained campaign to integrate baseball that involved demonstrations, boycotts, political maneuvering, and other forms of pressure that would gain greater currency the following decade. Martin Luther King once told Dodgers pitcher Don Newcombe, "You'll never know what you and Jackie and Roy [Campanella] did to make it possible to do my job."

Dodger general manager Branch Rickey selected Robinson to break the sport's color barrier as much for his personal characteristics as for his baseball skill. He could have chosen other Negro League players with greater talent or name recognition, but he wanted someone who today we call a "role model." He knew that if the "experiment" failed, the cause of baseball integration would be set back for many years. Robinson was well-educated and articulate, born in the segregated deep South, but raised among whites in Southern California.

Rickey knew that Robinson had a hot temper and

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Peter Dreier is professor of politics and director of the Public Policy Program at Occidental College in Los Angeles.

A Letter to TIKKUN Readers from Cornel West

Dear TIKKUN Reader or Browser:

TIKKUN magazine is about to cease publication unless it can get some significant financial support. I'm writing to ask if you would donate to the magazine to help keep it going.

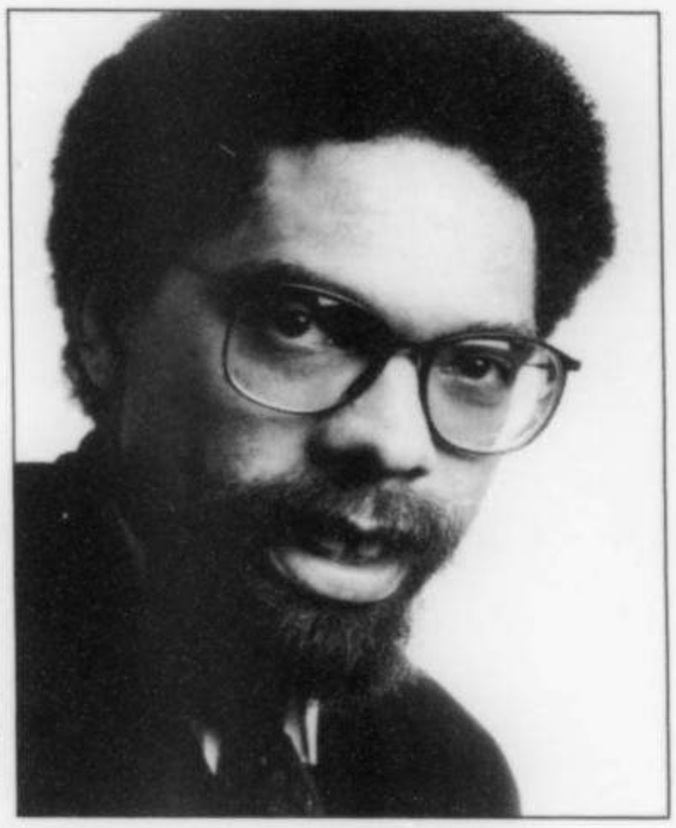
You may know me as a professor at Harvard (I divide my time between the Harvard divinity school and the Du Bois Center for African American Studies), and as the author of *Race Matters*. I've also been a contributor to TIKKUN, co-author with Michael Lerner of a recent book called *Jews and Blacks: A Dialogue on Race, Religion and Culture in America* (Penguin Books, 1996), and a participant with Michael Lerner in an ongoing series of public dialogues which we've held in major cities across America on America's political and spiritual crisis.

What I've come to understand is the powerful impact of TIKKUN magazine on American culture. I'm continually amazed at how many people who don't buy the magazine nevertheless read it, think about it, and are influenced by it.

TIKKUN makes a major contribution in many worlds in which I function. To the African American community, TIKKUN is the major and most powerful voice of Jews who care about our situation--and hence a powerful antidote to those in the African American world who claim that Jews have become selfish and only care about their own community. To many of my Jewish friends who have been alienated from some aspects of the organized Jewish community, TIKKUN has been a vehicle for reexamining their Jewishness—and many have become reinvolved in the Jewish world because they got excited by the kind of openness and intellectual and spiritual sophistication they encountered in the pages of TIKKUN, and because of TIKKUN's courageous willingness to champion the rights of Palestinians even as it vigorously insists on Israeli security needs.

TIKKUN was one of the major voices supporting human rights in South Africa, in Central America, and against totalitarianism in Eastern Europe, and continues to be on the forefront of battles for expanding America's circle of caring to include the fate of the homeless and poor in America, and the fate of those suffering oppression in Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America.

TIKKUN's major impact is on the larger American society. TIKKUN has offered a new way of thinking about American culture and politics that is as much a critique of some of the standard liberal and progressive ideas as it is of the American Right. I don't always agree with everything in TIKKUN, but I've found myself influenced by TIKKUN's insistence that we broaden our conception of human needs, and that we think more deeply about the psychological and ethical crisis in American society and how the "meaning needs" have been co-opted by the Right and ignored by liberals and progressives.



If TIKKUN fails, it will be a serious setback for progressive forces--not only for Jews and African Americans (though certainly for us), but for everyone. Please don't let that happen. TIKKUN needs to raise $200,000 if it is to continue to publish. What it really needs is a $5 million endowment, but for the moment it is sufficient if we just keep it alive. Most major intellectual publications in America are sustained by some rich person or institution that is backing it. TIKKUN doesn't have that—so it can only survive now with your help.

I believe that you could make a substantial contribution to this effort if you decided it was important to do so. TIKKUN is seeking to find 100 people who would donate $1,000 each for the next five years to keep the magazine alive. Would you be one of those? If not, could you donate $500 or $250 or $25 a month deducted from your credit card? I know that whatever you can afford would be greatly appreciated.

I don't usually ask people for money, and I can't say I feel comfortable doing this, but I really believe in TIKKUN and in Lerner, really believe its going to be a huge loss for all of us if it is allowed to collapse, and so am willing to reach out to you in this way.

I'm looking forward to meeting some of you at the fundraising party TIKKUN has set up for donors of $250 or more on May 18 in New York City.

Please make your tax-deductible contribution checks (or send credit-card info) to TIKKUN, 26 Fell Street, San Francisco, CA 94102.

Sincerely yours,
Cornel West

Special Focus: Sex And Love

Michael Lerner

Many people still believe that to be hip or progressive is to reject all constraints on sexual behavior. While we at TIKKUN reject any attempt to use state power to enforce sexual morality, we also reject the attitude that "anything goes as long as we have two consenting adults." From our inception, TIKKUN has argued that there is an objective moral obligation to treat other human beings as created in the image of God, and this must be translated into sexual behavior as well. Our community's task is to find ways to do that which do not stifle erotic playfulness or create the communitarian coercion that represses the life spirit within each of us. In the articles below, some of our writers show how they have been grappling with these issues in their own lives. ❑

Reunion

By Susanna Mintz

What spectacular irony! Here is Philip Kenyon, calling after twenty-five years to tell me that his marriage has ended, that his wife has left. The fact of his calling is not ironic. On the contrary, I spent years having delicious fantasies about just such a call. Over time, Phillip became "the one who got away."

It started when I received his wedding invitation and intensified a few years later when I stumbled upon an essay written by his wife, Zoe, describing their success in balancing their careers and babies. In great detail, Zoe described a carefully worked out partnership of equally shared housekeeping, cooking, and childcare, and equitably apportioned time for each one's professional and creative pursuits. I was consumed with envy and regret. At the time, I was struggling without much success to achieve an egalitarian balance in my own marriage. What is ironic is Phil's answer to my question about why Zoe left. He thinks their marriage ended because Zoe was so disappointed and frustrated with his lack of professional and financial success.

One of the most painful areas in my life with my husband, David, relates to his limited involvement at home and with our children. We have ended up with what Pepper Schwartz calls a "near peer" marriage. Both of us believe in the idea of equality, of equal influence and power, and yet David's engrossment in his career seems to eclipse everything else. He works six days a week, routinely logging twelve hour days, attending numerous professional meetings after work, and using what's left of the evening to return phone calls and prepare for the next day. In whatever time remains, he is happy to be available and help in any way that is needed. He is always available in an emergency, especially an emotional emergency.

While I have made my peace with this lifestyle in recent years, it was almost unbearably difficult when our children were babies and very young. My unhappiness about this arrangement was clear, my complaints frequent. Throughout the years that David trained for and pursued his very successful career, I felt certain that perfect happiness would be a household with a husband and father like Philip, enthusiastically involved at home and engaged with his children. It took me years to understand that the core inequity in our marriage was not about what each partner was doing, but about the unfairness of the decision-making process. David had carved out a life for himself, centered very much around career achievement, and I was free to move around it in any way I wished. I was free to work full time or part time or not at all. But we weren't jointly negotiating a lifestyle.

Then two years ago, Phil's call comes out of the blue. I shiver with excitement as Phillip actually speaks the words, that his wife has decided to leave the marriage. We speak again the next day, both thoroughly enlivened by the interaction the day before. I confide that this is a dream come true; during rocky times in my own marriage, I've longed for this phone call from Phil. Despite the persistent fantasy, I tell Phil that once again his timing is lousy. He is reentering my life when I am not available for a romantic relationship. Nonetheless, I love talking with him by phone, love listening to his resonant voice and warm, ready laugh. We speak often over the next few months. It feels wonderful to finally be able to give something back. When Phil was in love with me in college, I

Susanna Mintz is a pseudonym.

simply was not ready for a serious relationship. Phil waited patiently for several years before committing himself to someone else. I listen with interest and compassion to his pain about his failed marriage, convey my delight at being in contact again, and let Phil know that when I finally matured, I recognized what a remarkable person he was.

I tell David about my renewed contact with Phil. While hiking with David one weekend, I broach the subject of going to visit Phil who lives on the other side of the country. David's reaction is immediate and ferocious: "Oh, so you want an open marriage? Do you want a divorce?" Both of us get defensive. We finish our hike in silence, and I do not pursue further plans to get together with Phil.

But now, several years later, a family trip has brought us to the East Coast during the children's spring break. When I propose staying a few days longer on my own to see Phil, if he is available, David immediately asks, "Will there be any hanky panky?" "No," I quickly reply.

Waiting at the station for the train from Philadelphia, I wonder about Philip Kenyon, whom I have not seen in twenty five years. In ten minutes, he will arrive. Will he look like an old man? Will I recognize him? Will he recognize me? I am 50 years old now. I've dressed carefully for this meeting, in black stirrup pants, boots, and long knit sweater with a deep V neck.

The train pulls in. I wait for the train doors to open and deliver this man who has been a disembodied voice for the past two years, with whom I have had a friendly, forthright and flirtatious relationship. Soon I spot Phil. He is nearly bald and his remaining hair is white. But I recognize his energetic gait, his compact body and his distinctive face. I quietly join in step with him as he approaches and we walk out of the train station. In the car, we look at one another, shake our heads and laugh with awkwardness and delight.

Our plan is to visit museums in Washington D.C. and visit old college friends. At the Smithsonian, we stand close together studying the exhibits. Phil's arm next to mine feels electric. Suddenly, I'm in another world, no, another life. As if I have taken a gigantic leap back over thirty years, once again I am with Phil, but this time I am wide open to him, enjoying him, delighting in his delight, eagerly breathing in his proximity, the texture of his jacket, the scent of his skin, cherishing the shape of his face, the warmth of his smile and his exuberant laugh. At the African Art museum, we laugh appreciatively at the abundance of carvings of figures with erect penises and gaping labia. Our secret impulses are being hurled into our own and each other's eyes.

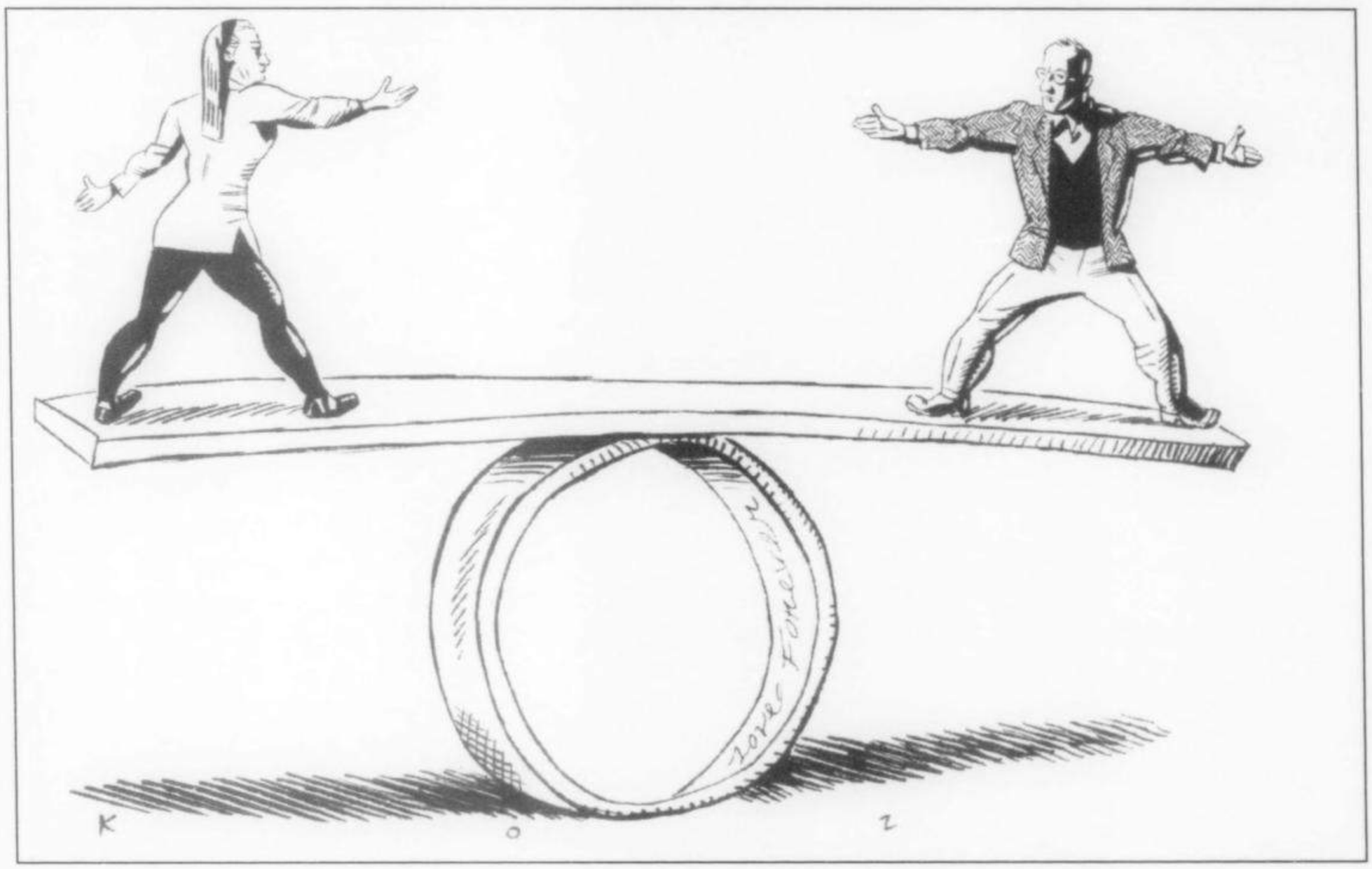


Illustration by Martin Kozlowski

Visiting a modern art exhibit, I am intrigued by a gigantic portrait made completely out of fingerprints. I chuckle at the "canoe" which turns out to be a red cross knife, with giant blades that move up and down. Art is about PLAY! What I am doing with Phil is play, in an

excruciating sort of way. I am playing at what might have been had I dared to open my heart when we both were young and he was in love with me. We are also flirting with what might be if I can bear to walk away from the life I've built.

We cross the mall and have lunch at an outdoor cafe. At a small table facing each other, we talk our hearts out. I want to know what his life has been like in the twenty five years since I last saw him, I want to know about his children, his metal sculpting, his ideas about what made his marriage end. I describe my life, my marriage, what I love about David and what is difficult.

Phil isn't quite sure when or how his marriage got into trouble. The relationship had been sexually satisfying, companionable, rich with friendships, shared interests and active involvement with their three children. He thinks that his characteristically optimistic and positive outlook may have joined forces with some denial, allowing him to ignore or miss troubling signals. He knew Zoe wanted him to contribute more financially; it bothered her that he wasn't more successful. Yet it had been their early decision for him to be actively involved with their children that influenced the trajectory of his career.

We are staying at the home of an old college friend. Each night, in a room next to Phil, I lie awake hour after hour, aching with longing, with excitement which borders on panic, and an intensity of sexual desire that astonishes me. The last night of our visit, Phil knocks lightly on my door and comes in to say goodnight. He sits on the edge of the bed and I curl myself against his body, as I have each night. We talk about our visit and how good and natural it feels to be together. It has been lovely, I tell him, but also incredibly painful. If my circumstances were different, I would want to be his mate and share a life with him. He knows this. He leans down and encircles me with his arms. We start to kiss deeply...we both know that if I am going to throw my resolve to the wind, it is going to happen right now. I don't. In saying goodbye, Phil says, "Tell your husband he is a lucky man."

On the plane back to Seattle and my family I am woozy from lack of sleep and sexual frustration and emotional tension. Silent tears slip down my face. Each time I "get it" that I will have to walk away from this loving man and from this incredible feeling of aliveness, the tears come again.

The plane sets me down in Seattle in the late afternoon, and I am home shortly after the children return from school. At dinner time, David finds me lying on our bed with my arm over my face. David wants to know about the visit with Phil. I begin cautiously, telling him simply that I found Philip to be as wonderful as I remembered him, warm and exuberant. I wait to find out if David really wants to know more, and he makes clear that he does. Eventually, I tell him how aroused I was, how incredibly painful it was to hold back sexually, and how much longing and desire came rushing up for me. David lies on his side, holding me and looking thoughtful. When he speaks it is to offer the observation, in a kind voice, that I have some big grieving ahead of me. If I choose David, I must again grieve the loss of Phil; if I choose Phil, I must grieve the loss of David; and, if I try to hang on to both, he predicts I will end up with nothing.

I have spent twenty-five years believing that if I could only live my life over, I would choose Phil for my mate and marry him and have babies with him. Twenty-five years later, Philip is available again, and once again, I am choosing something else. Was I lying to myself all along? I feel like a coward to walk away from this miraculous second chance, after all those years of regret and wishing. It would be so satisfying to love him with the openness and respect and gratitude I was incapable of before. Yet my love for David is immeasurable. I imagine David and a new wife sitting around the table with our children and I can't bear it.

For weeks, I am engaged in an excruciating struggle. One inner voice tells me this much yearning and passionate desire must be listened to. Another voice says that "yearning" will always be more seductive and exciting than "having." How do I figure this out without jeopardizing more than I intend to? I share my struggle with David, who listens steadfastly and compassionately.

Talking in bed one night, David remarks that he wishes I would pay more attention to him, stay more connected with large and small events in his daily life, and remember to ask about them. Startled, I realize that David is asking me to love him with the focus and fascination and attention I imagine lavishing on Phil. So, why don't I? I am quite certain that the intensity of emotion I crave comes from loving with a fully open mind and body.

It dawns on me. This is about resentment. With Philip, there is no residue of hurt, only the sparkling promise of what might have been. What I bring to bed with David, along with my very real love for him, is resentment—resentment that when our children were young he was chasing after his career and frustrating my needs for his closeness and involvement; resentment that he would not negotiate a lifestyle with me around childraising, and resentment that I was left feeling less valued than his work.

I realize that these resentments have held me back from loving David with all my heart. How can I forgive him for such fundamental deprivations, which were so wounding and so irreparable? Without blame, I try to tell David how hard it is to forgive him for depriving me of what I needed to be a happy person and a serene mother. David offers the observation, "We were stingy with each other, weren't we?" I am touched by his honesty. I practice cherishing David. We grow increasingly close as we

TIKKUN SHOULD NOT STOP PUBLISHING!

Since May of 1986, TIKKUN magazine has been a prophetic voice--challenging the conservatism and conformism and spiritual deadness inside some sectors of the organized Jewish community, and simultaneously challenging the lack of attention to ethical and spiritual concerns in the secular left in the U.S.

TIKKUN itself has sought to model a different kind of intellectual and spiritual life. It has asked the most difficult questions, encouraged debate about the issues that were unpopular.

Rush Limbaugh led the attack on TIKKUN in the U.S. and other conservative columnists regularly ridicule our ideas. It isn't just right-wingers who get upset by us. The high priests of media cynicism at The *New Republic* continually flail at our vision of a "new bottom line"' that reflects ethical and spiritual and ecological sensitivity. The *Nation* assails our interest in psychological and ethical issues. Because we follow no orthodoxies, we make enemies on all sides of the political spectrum.

TIKKUN has been a central way that the Israeli peace movement could get its perspective and messages heard in the U.S. We have opposed religious coercion, supported pluralism and tolerance, and fought for a Jewish renewal that was spiritually alive and intellectually sophisticated.

TIKKUN deserves to continue--but it won't, unless you decide to become a member of this community. Not just by subscribing, but by giving us a donation now. We are $250,000 in debt every year. We can't afford to continue without your help.

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try to bring this unexpected sensual and sexual awakening back into our marriage.

I am left with nagging questions about Phil. I really don't know why Zoe left her marriage. I have only Phil's explanation. Was it really frustration and disappointment with his lack of financial and professional accomplishment, as Phil suggests? That is hard for me to believe. But I couldn't possibly ask Zoe. But I'd really love to. But ... it just isn't done ... but, I wonder if I could?

It takes a while before I summon the chutzpah to phone Zoe. I start the conversation by telling Zoe I am proposing something brazen. I explain that my own marriage has been filled with tensions due to my husband's professional ambitions and my desire for him to be more involved with our family. I am wondering if Zoe's marriage, too, was influenced by conflicts about work and family, and if so, whether she'd be willing to talk about them. I describe my recent visit with Phil and the intense feelings it stirred up about the path not taken.

Zoe is quite willing to talk. She confirms what Phil has suggested, that issues around financial responsibility and employment were the basis of her decision to leave her marriage. "Of course, it's much more complicated than that." I understand, it always is more complicated. But essentially, Zoe did not feel well partnered in providing financially for their family. Phil loved his creative and artistic work and loved his involvement with the children. He was not interested in taking a salaried job which would provide more income but would detract from his other involvements. He seemed unwilling to negotiate. Zoe felt she was doing more than her fair share, giving up more of her creative life to wage earning than she cared to or than Phil was willing to, and she resented it. "Did you try to negotiate a change?" I wondered. "Repeatedly," Zoe assured me.

My God! How complicated life is. Because Phil was so willing to negotiate the things about which I could never get David to budge—sharing the care of children and home—I saw him as someone who would always negotiate, always share, always play fair. And he too, had an arena where he wanted something so much that he looked away and ignored his loved one's pain and anger. I feel dizzy with discovery and the challenge of making sense out of what I am hearing. I can imagine what probably happened with Phil and Zoe. After repeatedly trying and failing to resolve their conflict about generating income, it just hung there, maybe not even discussed very often anymore, except for occasional digs. Would Phil have compromised if he'd known it would cost him his marriage to ignore Zoe's desire? I am sure he would have. But, of course he didn't know. Even Zoe didn't know. "I didn't fully realize how angry I was about it until after I had left."

"How did you try to negotiate?" I ask Zoe in a subsequent phone conversation. "What exactly did you try?" And she confesses that eventually she just complained a lot, because she felt so hopeless about changing this one crucial area of their marriage.

Despite the apparent differences, Zoe and I have much in common. We were both deeply frustrated, although at different times in our lives, by husbands who refused to let decisions regarding their careers be jointly negotiated. By holding their career cards close to their chests, they excluded us from parts of their lives which had a huge impact on our own. Zoe and I have something else in common. As wives, we wanted it all. We each wanted a professionally successful, financially secure husband, a helpmate at home, and an equal sharing partner. As our husbands excluded us from their career decisions, they also excused us from the painful responsibility of facing and making some hard choices about tradeoffs and priorities. I took solace in making endless pot shots at David for his workaholism and his obliviousness at home; Zoe could poke at Phil for his financial shortcomings. It occurs to me that we are not alone. Men and women seeking equal partnership need to wrestle with an important question: To what extent are career decisions the domain of the individuals who are pursuing those careers, and to what extent do career decisions rightfully belong to the couple and to the marriage?

My yearning and indecision begin to subside. I find insight and reassurance in the writing of Jungian analyst Robert A. Johnson: "Probably the main reason we all have so many 'unlived lives' is that there are just not enough years in a human life to experience all the possible personalities, talents, occupations and relationships that are contained potentially within us. Even ten lifetimes would not be enough to marry all the people one has loved...But if we ignore these unlived possibilities, they can go sour. We may sit around feeling nostalgic about 'what might have been'...Whatever that other life is, you can still live it, if you will consent to do so as an inner experience...it is important that you experience it, for all the main energies in your total self need to be lived out in some conscious way."

I still love Phil enthusiastically, but I no longer feel in danger of having made the worst mistake in my life, of being the coward who deserves to lose out, or the fool who woke up too late. As a result of this intense emotional journey, David and I now share a far deeper friendship. I have new respect for his ability to accept and embrace my aliveness and my separateness. We have agreed to bring more "play" into our lives. Is my story finished? Probably not. But it isn't churning anymore. I feel loving toward David *and* Zoe *and* Phil. These are my brothers and sisters—all of us struggling to grow, all of us facing "so soon old, so late wise." ❑

SEX AND LOVE

Education for Intimacy

Amitai Etzioni

Instead of approaching the discussion of sex in public schools as a matter of health and safety bereft of moral content or forbidding discussion of sex out of traditional moral concerns (seeking to rely exclusively on the family and religious institutions for this purpose), schools should develop a program of education that provides children with the facts they need to know, within the context of values that responsible and moral persons seek to affirm and embody in their lives. Sex education should not be taught as a chapter in human hygiene or human biology, akin to dental care or car mechanics. We can find better sources and role models for teaching this subject than what the birds and the bees do. Nor should sex education be treated as if it is, was, or could be, value-free.

Education for interpersonal relations, family life, and intimacy should occur in all public schools, at least in junior high schools (or middle schools) and high schools. The program should include discussion of human nature, an examination of human beings as social creatures who require one another; who find deep satisfaction, longer and healthier lives, when they are part of lasting social relations; and who have transcendental needs for meanings and moral values. The program should explore the responsibilities that we have for one another as members of a community, and ways we can strengthen our relations with one another, as co-workers, neighbors, friends and potential family members. This topic includes teaching ways to work out differences, by techniques such as improved communication skills and conflict resolution. Discussion of family life will explore matters such as the nature of the commitments involved in marriage; sharing decision-making in such matters as relocation and forming and adhering to budget; and the issues raised by intimate relations, ranging from the avoidance of exploitative relations to the use of contraceptives.

Schools now cover a good portion of these topics in a variety of classes such as social studies and home economics, while ignoring other parts. Schools need to combine some of these elements already in place with new ones, to provide a comprehensive and morally sound approach to interpersonal relations and to provide the needed context for teaching sex education.

Specifically, a public school program of sex education should be folded into a much more encompassing treatment of interpersonal relations, family life, and intimacy, to be developed by taking into account the premises and principles here articulated.

Developing a strong character needs to be at the core of all education programs, and particularly of programs dedicated to interpersonal relations, family life, and intimacy. Persons of weak character cannot take responsibility for their actions, abide by values they themselves believe in, be good partners in a relationship, or be upstanding members of a community. Character development is essential both because without it, all other educational efforts will be undermined (as we see in disorderly classrooms), and whatever education is imparted will be woefully lacking.

Two personality capabilities stand out as leading the agenda of character building: First, a person of good character is able to restrain his or her raw impulses by channeling them into socially constructive and morally sound avenues rather than mindlessly yielding to them. Such a person can express affection and commitment in socially and morally appropriate manners. Second, a person of good character can empathize with the other person involved who may have different needs or be in a different stage of sexual and social development.

The underlying orientation of the intimacy program to sex is that sex is inherently neither good nor evil, neither pure nor sinful; the context makes all the difference. Sex is somewhat akin to nuclear energy: properly contained it is a boon to the world; let loose

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it can be a highly destructive force. As Kevin Ryan, professor at the School of Education at Boston University, put it:

"Sex is strong stuff. It is a powerful force in people's lives, and as such, it can be a strong force for individual happiness and family stability. On the other hand, selfish and uncontrolled sex can be a raging cyclone, making havoc of those in its path.

We find throughout history extreme attempts to control sex through barbaric acts such as genital mutilation, stoning of prostitutes and summary executions of adulterous princesses. And we find cultures that seek to "free" sex from its moral and social context, tolerating forcing children to marry old men and accepting child prostitution. The facts that need to be shared with the young generation are, as we learn from both historical and contemporary experiences, that both attempts to repress sex as well as to let it roam freely, cause much human misery.

Sexual exploitation, for example, is far from unknown, even in our society. A high proportion of teen pregnancies are caused by men who are not high school boys, but who are at least five years older than the girls they impregnate. Frequently, these are men who hang around the mothers of the girls involved and sex is non-consensual. Seventy-five percent of teenage pregnancies and youth-affected STDs would still occur if all teenage boys refrained from having sex; fifty-one percent of pregnancies in junior high school would still occur if teenage boys refrained from having sex, according to one study. Incest is also all too common. Strategies for dealing with those who pressure children to have sex should be included in all intimacy programs.

Several studies and surveys of teenage girls have found that, more than information about contraception, STDs, HIV, and pregnancy, what girls seek most is information on how to refuse to engage in sexual acts without hurting someone's feelings. Better communication skills are also necessary for boys, particularly relating to rape and sexual harassment prevention, and how to relate better to fellow human beings. These skills make people into better friends, employees, neighbors, and community members. They are particularly significant in the context of sex education.

Even much less severe expressions of sex are matters of serious concern. Making sexual advances to someone committed to one's friend is a quick way to lose that friendship and to offend one's community. The same holds for continuing to make sexual advances to those who indicate that they do not appreciate being approached.

In contrast, sex properly contextualized is a precondition of our future. Sex can be an appropriate way to cement relations that have properly matured,



Kathy Willens/AP Wide World Photos

and it can be a source of much joy. In short, sex should always be viewed, treated, and taught within the context of values and relations.

Specifically, when the general orientation of the program is brought to bear on sex education, the program should stress that bringing children into the world is a moral act—one that entails a set of personal and social responsibilities. We all need to appreciate that sex is not a merely biological act; sex is much more than "recreational." It is an act that can carry with it serious consequences including loss of life. Responsible persons weigh the moral issues involved; they take into account that yielding to impulse in this area can lead to dire consequences for the child to be born, restrict the life chances of the parents, and corrode the values of the communities in which we are all members.

Education for intimacy seeks to encourage children to refrain from having children. Children born to children often suffer considerably physiologically, psychologically, and otherwise. These babies are more prone to illnesses, anxieties, and other afflictions. They often become public charges in a society that is increasingly disinclined to attend to children properly.

Children who have babies often find their life opportunities seriously constricted. They are much less likely to complete their studies, find work, and otherwise develop their own life, economically, socially and otherwise.

When educational programs favor that young people defer engaging in sex, the question is raised, should sex be deferred until a person is 18? 21? married? The question is often raised by those who argue that sex is only proper within marriage. While much is to be said for deferring sex until two people have made the kind of permanent commitment and mutual responsibility implied by marriage, marriage does not provide the only criterion. We would urge young teens to defer both sex and marriage on the grounds that they are likely not to be ready to make a responsible decision in either department. And we are less troubled by intimate relations between mature adults than between children. Maturity is measured by behavior rather than chronological age, but it is more common among those who are older than those who are younger.

Many discussions of sex education start with the question of which sex education methodology to follow. I deliberately delayed addressing this issue to emphasize that if proper values and interpersonal skill development are included in the intimacy education program, intercourse is no longer the only issue or main focus. At the same time we maintain that programs that deal only with values or relations but exclude specific sex education are insufficient for reasons that will become evident shortly.

The methodology I favor diverges from the notion that sex should be described simply as a natural, healthy act and that children should be taught how to proceed safely, but not be discouraged otherwise. Statements such as "sexuality is a natural and healthy part of living" and "all persons are sexual" may be correct by some standards of psychiatry (which consider all erotic responses sexual) but are open to gross misinterpretation when given to children, especially without the proper normative context. To state that "the primary goal of sexuality education is the promotion of sexual health" is particularly unfortunate in this context. At the same time, approaches which treat sex not tied to procreation as sinful, shameful, or dirty should be avoided. To say, in this context, that "most merciful God, we confess we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves," may speak to some people with religious commitments (but surely offends others); provided as a part of a statement about "human sexuality" it sends a rather different message than the one endorsed here.

Sex should be viewed originally as a primordial urge. Like all others, it cannot be ignored and should not be suppressed but its expressions must be subject to self-control. What is needed is (a) that a person will form judgments before he or she acts and (b) that a person will channel expression of this urge into morally and socially proper, responsible channels.

Narrow sex education programs that favor sharing full information about safe sex with young children are problematic. These programs tend to assume that the resulting effects of encouraging sexual activity are minimal. Also troublesome are programs that address contraception in what Jane Mauldon and Kristin Luker say is "...a tone of value neutrality, focusing on clinical information to the exclusion of social, emotional, and moral aspects of sex," as some do.

At the same time I am also concerned about programs that promote abstinence only and do not take sufficiently into account the moral issues that arise by the many (even those in highly religious groups) who do not adhere to the high standards involved, by engaging in sex, and hence risking exposure to AIDS and other STDs, or experience unwanted pregnancies. These effects can be significantly reduced, albeit not eliminated, if students are taught about safer sex.

Educators, parents, community members and policy-makers need to understand that there are ways to strongly urge young people to defer sexual behavior

and still provide information for those who proceed anyhow, without making these two messages cancel each other out or seem contradictory. Schools ought to employ programs that urge children to wait—at least until they are mature enough to deal with the consequences of their sexual acts—but also provide them with information on how to conduct themselves if they do not wait. Responsibility should include the notion of deferring sex and engaging in it in a responsible manner. This position is advocated by Bishop Albert Rouet, the chairman of the French Roman Catholic bishops' social committee, among others.

In dealing with other topics, divorce for instance, religious groups have found ways to extol the importance of preserving marriage, and still counsel those who divorce. The same can be done for sex education. One can strongly advocate abstinence, but also provide youngsters with age-appropriate sex information and ways to proceed responsibly and more safely, lest they rely on misconstrued notions provided by much less wholesome and irresponsible sources. (This approach is sometimes referred to as "abstinence, plus.")

Merely relying on willpower, "just say no," is psychologically naive and unrealistic. Educators should point out that (a) use of drugs and alcohol reduces our self-control; and that (b) other forms of intimacy than intercourse are also best deferred. Our grandparents had a point: Dressing eight-year-old girls with training bras, arranging "socials" with close dancing for nine-year-old children, and other such activities do not always lead to premature sexual experimentation but neither are they without any such effects.

Children need to be taught that the use of alcohol and drugs lowers a person's ability to deal with urges in ways that are socially constructive and morally responsible. They need to learn—and above all experience—the joy of living up to their moral values and social commitment by engaging in acts such as community service, peer mentoring, sports, successful completion of taxing assignments and sharing in the household duties. "Just say no" should be preceded, accompanied and followed by mores one finds reason or value for saying "yes" to. The sociological record shows that those positively engaged, are most able to resist yielding to their raw impulses. There are so many other meaningful and enjoyable activities to cultivate.

The program envisioned should not be limited to lectures and reading material. Role playing, role modeling, peer mentoring, school assemblies, plays, tapes and other educational techniques should be used. Acquiring communication skills allows people to fend off unwanted and premature sexual advances without feeling inadequate, guilty, or isolated. They enable youngsters to handle conflicts that arise when the pace of development of two or more young people varies. Assemblies, peer juries, and other such educational techniques help develop the moral voice of the school community.

Parents should be involved; they have both rights and responsibilities in this area. If parents would initiate, advance, and complete the education of their children in a socially and morally appropriate manner, there would be no need for schools to become involved in this subject. The fact, though, is that all too many parents are either unable or unwilling to dedicate themselves sufficiently to the education of their children. Indeed, throughout modern times, schools have supplemented parental education, and stepped in where parents were not available or their contributions to character education were inadequate. Public education for intimacy is no different.

The fact, however, that some of the responsibility for sex education is delegated to schools, does not mean that parents have lost their right and duty to be involved in decision-making concerning the education to which their children are subjected, especially with highly charged and normatively loaded issues. True, parents are not the only ones who have a say when it comes to education; the state, for instance, mandates both attendance and numerous subjects and other matters of education policy. The parents, though, should not be excluded both as a matter of right and because their involvement can greatly enhance the education provided in school.

Parents have a right to be informed and consulted about all school programs. Schools should actively reach out to the parents and keep them informed about their approach to teaching sex education and what issues they will discuss. The parents' right is accompanied by a responsibility of the parents to inform themselves on the issues at hand before they act to curtail a program or urge the adoption of another or seek to remove their children from a given course.

Parents should have the right—and be afforded the opportunity—to opt children out of classes on intimacy, but not to block the whole program. This opting-out system requires notifying parents ahead of time about the material that is going to be covered in such classes, the methodology to be used, and other relevant matters. Children who are being opted out by their parents should be given some other assignments in the same period.

At the same time, an opt-in system, according to which a child would only be enrolled in a course if his or her parents provided prior written approval, is not called for. Children should not be denied education of any kind just because their parents are not available or are indifferent to the point that they neglect to act. They should be given full opportunity to act on their values, but not to block education by inaction.

There is an exception to the above policy: The community may take the position that withholding certain kinds of information directly endangers lives. Similar to vaccines, the common good may take priority over parental objections under certain limited conditions. If schools have evidence that in their jurisdiction a significant number of children die from AIDS, and they believe that there is no other way to prevent the spread of the disease among their students, they may require "inoculation" of youngsters against such dangers by sharing with them proper information and devices. This should be done only after the community discusses these matters with its elected bodies and following open hearings.

Schools are but one factor in the societal matrix that affects children's attitudes toward sex. The media, families, adult role models, socio-economic forces, and numerous other factors affect young people. Educators should make it clear that they cannot single-handedly deliver all the desired outcomes. Educators need to act as agents who endeavor to activate other social agents, calling on them to discharge their responsibilities in this area, become partners of and with educators. For instance, educators should support efforts to improve the messages to which children are exposed on television. At the same time these "other" forces should not be used as a rationale for families or educators to not do their part. ❑

PETER GABEL RESPONDS TO AMITAI ETZIONI

Try a Little Tenderness

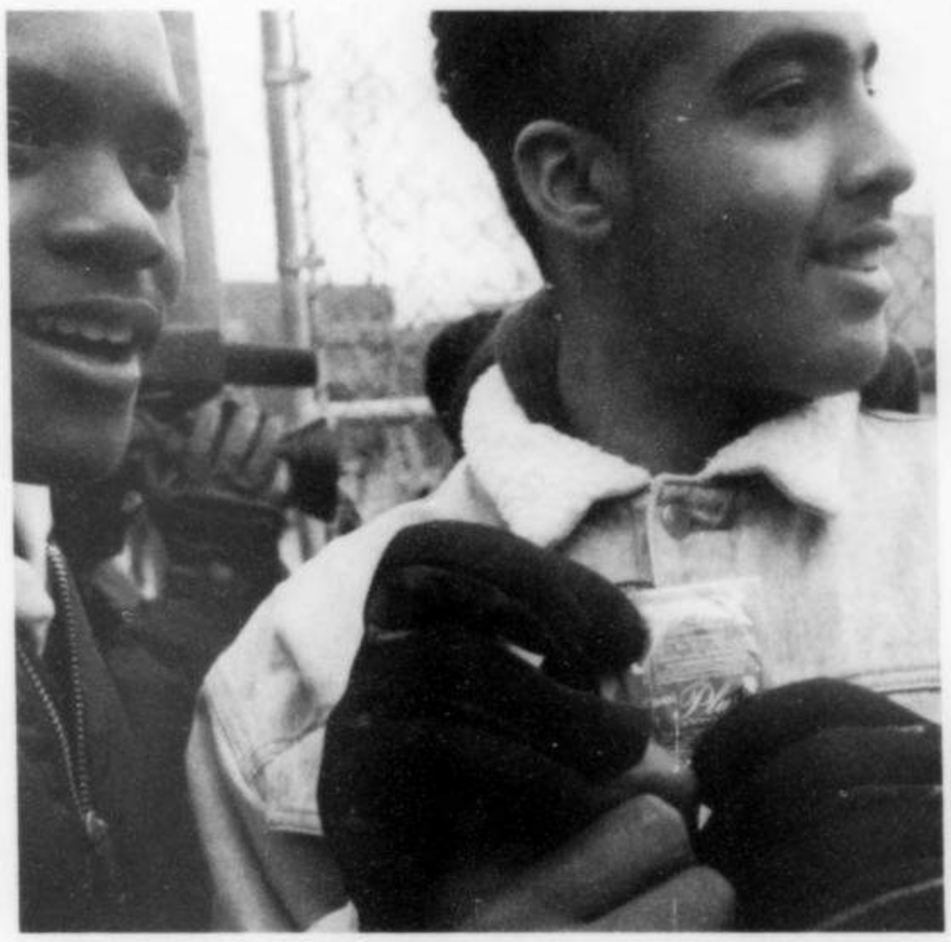
Peter Gabel

Communitarianism and the Politics of Meaning are both open to conservative as well as progessive interpretations, and it is hard to imagine a piece that better reflects the ambiguity than Amitai Etzioni's piece on sex education. On the one hand, I agree with Etzioni's effort to bring a moral perspective to the way young people are taught about sex, to the extent that what he means by this is that our schools should affirm that sexuality is the beautiful embodiment of the longing for human connection and mutual recognition. Understanding sexuality as an erotic energy flow of reciprocity that goes beyond intercourse, that is in some way present in all touching and even in the rhythm of the sound of the spoken word and in the aura of another's presence—this is a far better way to present the moral meaning of sexuality than are the biological metaphors of "healthy human functioning" or mere empirical statements about the facts of reproduction. By presenting the meaning of sexuality in its true interpersonal context, schools would be able to foreground the critiques of exploitation, objectification, and shallow sexual experiences Etzioni speaks to in a way that is not possible when the matter is relegated to a biology or hygiene class.

So far so good. But when Etzioni begins to describe

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sexuality as "raw impulses" to be "channel(ed) into socially constructive and morally sound avenues," or later as a "primordial urge" which must be "subject to self-control," he begins to slide toward repressive descriptions that actually cause the very social distortions in sexual relations that he is rightly concerned about. Sexuality does not begin as a raw urge in need of control—on the contrary, an infant sensually nursing at his/her mother's breast is a beautiful example of exactly the broadened understanding of sexuality that Etzioni is advocating for. It is the social alienation and lack of community that corrodes our entire social dynamic—or to put it in more concrete terms, it is the fact that we have to spend so much of our time relating to each other like numbed-out robots trapped inside our heads and cut off from our sensual in-touchness with one another and with the natural world—that leads sex to become the distorted raw urge that Etzioni is worried about. And it is this legacy of everyday repression that must be gradually and lovingly healed so that one day sexual morality and sexual liberation are not perceived as at odds with each other, but as two ways of describing transcendent and meaning-giving sensual human connection. A moral approach to sex education ought to be aimed at helping the next generation understand and feel the difference between alienated and unalienated sexuality, not at telling them to control their so-called raw impulses until they can be expressed in a socially responsible form.



I'm not necessarily rejecting any of Etzioni's practical points, even the idea of telling kids not to sleep together until they're old enough or encouraging them to go to Shabbat services or the basketball game instead of making out in the park. I too am against the liberal paradigm of do-anything-you-want-as-long-as-you-wear-a-condom. But if we are really going to take responsibility for the moral development of the next generation in the area of sexuality, we have to realize there is a limit to how much we are going to accomplish by telling them good moral precepts or anything else.We have to try to *be* more wholesome sensual beings and create more wholesome sensual environments, including the environment of the school and the classroom, in order to really begin to alleviate the sensual pain that our individualistic, despiritualized society produces. Schools, for example, are often anti-communal, pain-inducing, sensually dead places preoccupied with competitive testing like the SAT's, macho sports, and authoritarian, indifference-fostering routines. "Education for intimacy," in the words of Etzioni's title, can't occur without fostering experiences of intimacy to ground the verbal discussions of it, no matter how true the teacher's words alone may be.

In the context of sex education, this means schools must try to do a very difficult thing—create an environment of tenderness and sensual openness that is not intrusive or offensive to families and that remains appropriate to the classroom. It is this environment that should serve as the experiential background for the kind of moral discussion Etzioni wants to encourage, in order to prevent students from experiencing such discussions as authoritarian and irrelevant to their developing sexual feelings. Among the ideas that occur to me that might help to create this kind of environment are providing students with a) the chance to watch and talk about movies that bring out, in a poignant and non-prurient way, how attraction, sexuality and love emerge in adolescnce (*David and Lisa* is an example from my own teenage years); b) playful participation in forms of dance and movement that allow the expression of sensual affection without it being charged or frightening or potentially explosive; and c) more sensory contact with the natural world, including the world of the birds and the bees that Etzioni is perhaps too dismissive of.

But the best people to help imagine this kind of curriculum are high-school teachers, parents, and students who are dealing with these issues directly and who share TIKKUN's goal of healing the world rather than trying to control what is wrong with it. We encourage TIKKUN readers who do have thoughts on this to write to us and we'll try to publish some of your responses. The point is not to avoid telling students the difference between right and wrong but to reconcile this need with the need to tenderly elicit in them the open-hearted longings of their early erotic experience. ❑

Bebeto Matthews/World Wide Photos

SEX AND LOVE

Dancing in The Eye of the Beholder

Joan Oliver Goldsmith

Beautiful, I learned early in life, is a princess with blond hair streaming down her back who is always the youngest daughter. Beautiful is a Barbie Doll.

Beautiful is a girl who is asked out by a boy who wants to make his friends jealous. A *Playboy* foldout. A trophy wife. But if these lessons are true, why would anyone call me beautiful?



Illustration by Mac McGill

I stood in my singing teacher's living room, in the crook of her baby grand, staring out through the glass patio doors past the bird feeders at the tidy suburban lawn. We were rehearsing Edward Elgar's song cycle *Sea Pictures*. The piano began its long, descending passage and then rocked slowly, gently.

"Sea birds are asleep"—my voice softly emerging, all on one note, until the last syllable, then lifting, not much, just a minor third. Then, even softer, returning to the starting note. "The world forgets to weep"—lifting and reaching this time, just a little, on "weep." Finally, a sweep of melody—"Sea murmurs her soft slumber song." "Slumber," the highest note of the phrase, but also the softest. Difficult because the air must be so precisely measured—too little and the note is flat, too much and it is loud. "On the shadowy sand"—descending to the lowest notes, the darkest waters—"Of this elfin land."

When I finished, my teacher sighed (Oh! to make your voice teacher sigh) and said, "That color, that color that you got into the sound on the first line. If you can sing it that way in performance…it was beautiful."

God, what had I done to make that sound? I couldn't remember doing anything.

I was seeing gulls asleep on the beach. The uncanny shadows made by a full moon. Beaks tucked into wings. The almost stillness covering everything.

The lapping of small waves. My bare feet sinking into day-warmed sand, I simply sang.

I remember sitting in the performance tent after a day of rehearsing for the Aspen Music Festival. The tent was nearly empty, so he was playing for me, that clarinet. The cool darkness of the tent—a refuge from the bright, sharp mountain air. The cool clarinet notes playing Mozart's concerto. I listened to each phrase ebbing and flowing, each note exquisitely placed in the air.

And I felt nothing.

Wondering, I tried to feel the perfection my brain told me was there.

Nothing, not for me. Tired, stuffed full with too much fine music? Or is it possible that the clarinetist was looking in the mirror of his own sound, reflecting back to himself with such pleasure that there was no room in the transaction for anyone else?

Beautiful women have told me, "You can always get a man to kiss you, but whether that man will love you—ah, that is another thing entirely." But

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I am not interested in their pain. I'm not that generous.

I stood alone at the wedding reception of my friend's son, watching. The band played Sinatra, Country Western, the Beatles, lifting the crowd's feet with their upright beat. The groom's parents twirled. The cells of my body pulsed. Those who had brought dancing partners were having a fine time. But the only unattached men were the groom's buddies. Right. I could just see myself walking up to one and saying "You don't know me, and I'm old enough to be your mother, but would you like to dance?"

Thirty years clawed away in a moment, and once again I was a fat glasses girl, standing against the wall of the junior high school gym in a pink party dress; unwanted, unasked except for one fellow with soft, sweaty hands. Such a cliché and such astonishing pain.

Thirty years since I began to work with the dance-class mirror. Teaching it, as I took class after class. At first it would only show me *not*—not a long, lean dancer's body. True, I told it, but look at my graceful wrist. Look at the way the music joins my body and lifts it. Show me that. And eventually it did.

As I grew up, I accepted my designation—not beautiful, not ugly—one of the many reasonably attractive. But a secret knowing glowed in my belly: When I dance, magnificence moves through me.

Fiddle, bass, banjo, caller; swing, sweat, flirt, and bow. Half of us at the square dance had come without partners. No matter. Eyes met, and I was twirling in a new set of arms. He looked at me and grinned. "You haven't been here before. I would have noticed if you had." He was emphatically noticing me now.

I gave a party where we entertained each other, reading and singing. On impulse, I pulled out a short story I had written and abandoned years ago—an older woman, a younger man, music-making, love-making, the beach at night. My naked fantasies shivered in the cool evening air, only partly protected by a cloak of fiction. I reveled in each juicy scene. I was too embarrassed to lift my eyes from the page.

The day after the party, Beth said to me, "You were beautiful. Bob saw it too. You just look beautiful, when you read and when you sing. As if that was what you were meant to do."

When I am so myself that I lose consciousness of myself, it seems to invite others in—to participate in a kind of splendor. So the dancing woman winks at the fat glasses girl: I know what you're beautiful at. Let's do more of that. ❑

Bruno's Night

Up the hill of snoring
The father climbs in dream,
The mother sinks in silence
And the baby sucks its thumb.

But struggling next door
Boy Bruno smells the dawn
While the sick, the sad, the torn,
Apart quiet their song.

Dropped curtains hide the night's
Inspired fantastic pomp
That liquidates with light—
Don't oversleep—wake up!

Run to the grimy window,
Press your nose to the dirt.
Under the dawn: you follow
The mass of gathering earth.

—*Joshua Weiner*

THE RIGHT ADDRESSING MEANING

Promise Keepers:
Patriarchy's Second Coming as Masculine Renewal

Michael S. Kimmel

It was Shea Stadium in late September, after all, so a crowd of 35,000 men chanting, whooping, hollering, and high-fiving each other wasn't all that unusual. But the Mets attract barely half that number late in their woeful season. And there are no women in the stands. That is unusual. And besides, the Mets are on the road.

On this day Shea is the setting for the latest rally by Promise Keepers, a Christian organization that seeks to revitalize men through a mass-based evangelical ministry. The dramatic growth and continuing appeal of Promise Keepers indicate that the movement of masculine fundamentalism has struck a nerve among American men with its messages of personal responsibility and racial reconciliation: Promise Keepers is arguably the largest "men's movement" in the nation. Its calls to men to be more domestically responsible, socially conscious and responsive friends, fathers, and husbands make Promise Keepers seem innocuous at worst, and potentially a force for masculine reform. But its ominous ties with fanatic right-wing organizations and their views on women, homosexuals, and non-Christians, however, suggest that the rest of us had better start paying attention.

Who are Promise Keepers?

Promise Keepers hasn't been around very long to have caused such a monumental stir. The group was founded in 1990 by former University of Colorado football coach Bill McCartney who had brought a national title to his school that year. A devout Catholic, McCartney had become, he admits, a workaholic absentee husband who demanded that family life be subordinated to his professional ambitions. In 1989, his unwed teenage daughter Kristyn had given birth to a child fathered by one of McCartney's players. The following summer, after a religious epiphany, he left the Catholic church for the more evangelical Protestant Vineyard Christian Fellowship and heeded the call to expand his mission from athletes to men in general.

The move wasn't that uncharacteristic. McCartney had always been pulled towards the charismatic and evangelical. While an assistant coach at Michigan in the 1970s, he had become involved with the right-wing Catholic "Word of God" movement, with its emphasis on Biblical literalism. The Vineyard Fellowship's cultish theology uses faith healing, miracles, and other "signs and wonders." With a diagnosis of the nation's moral and spiritual crisis gleaned partly from his family's sexual scandals and partly from the Vineyard Fellowship's ultra-right political agenda, McCartney put out a call to men to come to a rally for masculine Christian renewal. Just over 4000 men turned up in July, 1991, at the Colorado basketball arena.

From that modest beginning, the organization's growth has been almost exponential. Twenty-two thousand men half-filled the Colorado football stadium in 1992, and 50,000 filled it the next year. In 1994, 278,600 men attended several stadium events, 700,000 came in 1995, and an estimated 1.2 million met this year at 22 sites. Now, the organization is promising their own two-million man march in Washington for 1997. (One assumes they'll keep their promise.)

The organizational infrastructure has kept pace, growing from 22 full-time staff with a budget of $4 million in 1993 to more than 400 full-time employees, and a budget of more than $100 million today. They publish a slick magazine, *New Man*, which places devotional stories and prayers alongside political debates on questions like home schooling (they're for it), more practical tips like "how to save bucks on your home mortgage" (standard fare like comparing rates, paying more than the monthly premium, and refinancing the home), and advertisements for various Christian consumables. McCartney himself now works for the organization full-time, having resigned from his more secular coaching duties—followers still call him "coach"—in 1994, after Kristyn had given birth to yet another illegitimate child fathered by another of his players, and his wife had threatened to divorce him if he did not pay more attention to his home life.

Although data on the rank-and-file Promise Keepers is scarce, the National Center for Fathering in Shawnee,

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Kansas found that, as of 1995, 88% of rally attendees were married, 21% had been divorced, and about 20% had parents who were divorced. Median age was 38, and 84% were white. Over one-fourth reported becoming Christian after age 24, and one-third had attended Baptist or Southern Baptist churches. Half reported that their own fathers were absent while they were growing up.

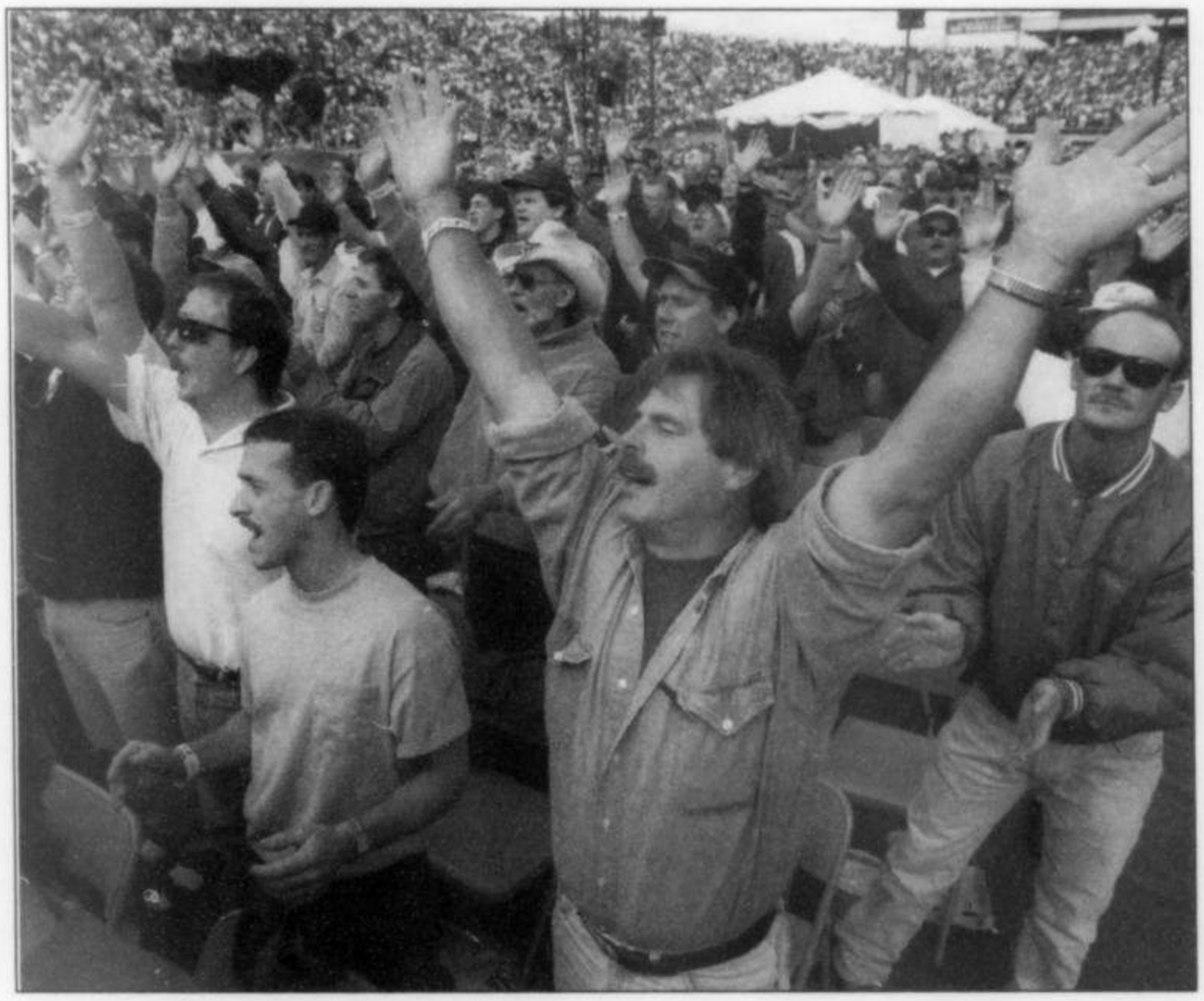
Unlike the Fellowship for Christian Athletes, which organizes prayer meetings among athletes in virtually every sport, including those little devotional moments at midfield for religious gridders from both teams, Promise Keepers wants more than just jocks. They want all men.

Sports seem to be the way they intend to get them, at least metaphorically. At their stadium rallies, the parade of speakers, dressed in vertically striped polo shirts, khakis and sneakers, look more like a lineup of sales clerks at Foot Locker than of evangelical stump preachers. Coach McCartney, and the other speakers—who include Ed Cole, organizer of the Christian Men's Network, who had the guys high-fiving for Jesus, and Charles Colson, convicted Watergate conspirator who found God in prison and now runs the Prison Fellowship Ministries—exhort their "worshipping warriors" with manly homilies like "go the distance," snatched from that masculine weepy, *Field of Dreams*, and "break down the walls," the rally's theme, which sounds like a cross between Home Improvement and a karate exhibition. The massive tent set up in the parking lot is a virtual messianic mini-mall, hawking books, T-shirts, and souvenirs; but the best-selling items by far are the ubiquitous baseball caps.

Non-Muscular Christianity?

Such a move to bring men back into the church by muscling up is not new in American history. And, after all, athletes are used by advertisers to sell everything from shoes to cologne and flashlight batteries, so why not God? At the turn of the century, the fleet-footed former Chicago Cub right fielder Billy Sunday quit professional baseball and remorphed into a Bible-Belt evangelist, preaching "Muscular Christianity" to throngs of men, and bringing, in the words of one journalist, "bleacher-crazed, frenzied aggression to religion." To Sunday, Protestantism had turned Christ into a henpecked wimp, whose angelic countenance smiled down even on his enemies from the national pulpit. Inveighing against this "dainty, sissified, lily-livered piety" to massive men-only crowds in tents throughout the Midwest and the South—the same states where Promise Keepers today find the majority of their audience— Sunday offered his minions a "hard muscled, pick-axed religion, a religion from the gut, tough and resilient." Jesus, himself was no "dough-faced lick-spittle proposition," he roared, but "the greatest scrapper who ever lived." Some Promise Keepers echo Sunday's critique of feminized masculinity. "The demise of our community and culture is the fault of sissified men who have been overly influenced by women," writes Tony Evans, a black Dallas-based evangelist, who is among the Promise Keepers' most popular rally speakers. Men, he admonishes, must "reclaim" their manhood, saying, "I want to be a man again." But in the bright September sun at Shea Stadium one would search in vain for such hypermasculine bravado. Gone also are the virulent misogyny, the homophobia, and the spectre of theocracy that has brought most of the criticism of the organization. Instead, one is struck by the immense sincerity of the guys in attendance, the earnestness of their searching, the heartful expressions of remorse. Were it not for the exclusion of women and the endless, tacky sports stuff, this could have been any Billy Graham Crusade. And were it not for the Christian fundamentalism, this might have been a mythopoetic men's meeting with Robert Bly and Sam Keen.

While Muscular Christians railed against a feminized Christianity grown soft and indolent, drawing on inspir-



Chris Pietsch/AP Photo

ing oratory about religious combat and righteous rage, most Promise Keepers are virtual SNAGs, "sensitive new age guys" celebrating Christian sweetness and kindness. They are less Christian soldiers "marching as to war," and more friends, confidants, therapists and partners, promising to listen carefully to their wives and children, sharing with their friends, healing their wounds and their worlds.

A Kinder, Gentler Patriarchy

The message has certainly resonated for large numbers of American men, who feel their lives are less deeply fulfilling, less meaningful, less animated by higher purpose than the one to which they believed they were entitled. Without community, a sense of purpose and connection, masculinity can feel hollow; we become ectomorphs—hard-shelled workaholics who are afraid there is nothing of any substance inside, and who deny that fear with drugs, alcohol, or strings of meaningless affairs. The marketplace is a perilous place to seek to prove one's manhood, what with plant closings, corporate layoffs, and downward mobility. Better to seek affirmation of manhood someplace safe, like as a father, husband, and an ethical man among men.

Promise Keepers ministers brilliantly to men's anxieties and needs, while promoting that masculine sense of entitlement that we believe is our birthright. The key words in their message are relationships and reconciliation. The organization's founding document proclaims the group's dedication "to uniting men through vital relationships to become godly influences in their world." Men have abdicated responsibility; at home, husbands are "not giving their wives the support they need," and are absent in the lives of their children or their friends. Among the "Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper" (also the title of their chief doctrinal book) are building strong marriages, families, and friendships, and working in the church.

Promise Keepers promotes a kind of soft patriarchy, male domination as obligation, surrender and service — sort of "Every Man's Burden." There's lots of rhetoric about men becoming servants of Christ at home, administering to their families as he did to his church. "A real man is one who accepts responsibilities and doesn't run away from them. He raises his family and takes a leadership role," says one rally-goer. Men are entitled to lead; expected to do it, soberly and responsibly. Masculine malaise, the search for meaning and community, is resolved by the reassertion of a kinder, gentler patriarchal control.

At one rally, Bill Bright, head of the Campus Crusade for Christ, opined that while men should respect women, the man "is the head of the household and women are responders." At Shea, Rev. Ed Cole reminded the audience that "God's revelation comes through man," not woman, and so the two genders can never be equal, and self-anointed "Bishop" Wellington Boone noted that "how you handle your wife" would reveal how you "handle the world." Boone relies on Biblical inversion of biology—"woman came from man, not man from woman"—and describes his own conversion from absentee landlord to dutiful dad and husband. It's a form of competition, "spiritual warfare," a test of masculine strength, to do more at home than his wife does. "I'm never gonna let no woman outserve me," he shouts to thunderous applause. In his essay in *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper*, the organization's best-selling text, Tony Brown advises men to "sit down with your wife and say: 'Honey I've made a terrible mistake. I've given you my role. I gave up leading this family, and I forced you to take my place. Now I must reclaim that role. Don't misunderstand what I am saying here. I'm not suggesting that you ask for your role back, I'm urging you to take it back . . . [T]here can be no compromise here. If you're going to lead, you must lead.'" (For their part, women are urged to give it back, "[f]or the sake of your family and the survival of our culture.")

To some women, this traditional patriarchal bargain sounds a whole lot better than the deals they'd already cut. After all, the organization lists among its primary goals, deepening "the commitment of men to respect and honor women." In return for submission, or being "responders," women are promised the respect and honor that went with the traditional patriarchal pedestal—and they get in return husbands and fathers who forswear drinking, drugs, smoking, and gambling, who lovingly support their families by steady work, and who even choose to go shopping with them as a form of Christian service. Not bad, perhaps—even if it does require that women remain absolutely obedient and subordinate to men. It's unclear to me whether having a job or even going to college fits into that picture. Some members want their wives home at all times; others say they still need the money. Perhaps we'll know soon enough: Promise Keepers has announced a women's organization, "Suitable Helpers," sort of its Ladies' Auxiliary, where, according to the Christian Coalition, women can "learn what it means to be a godly support and partner to man." In addition, an organization called Women of Faith is drawing thousands of women to its "Joyful Journey" rallies that will happen in more than one dozen cities this year, using what seems to be a Promise Keeper model.

To some listeners, though, this message sounds like male supremacy with a beatific smile. "Promise Keepers are about the return of patriarchy in its Sunday best: spiffed up, polite, and earnest but always, and ultimately, in charge," noted Unitarian minister Rev. David Blanchard of Syracuse. The resolution of the crisis of masculinity cannot come at the expense of women. Though

the Promise Keepers hear men's anguish, they offer a traditional patriarchal salve on a wound that can only be closed by gender equality.

The Racism of Racial Reconciliation

Promise Keepers message of racial reconciliation is as compelling as it is troubling. On the one hand, reconciliation means that white people must take responsibility for racism and take the initiative in seeking fellowship with men of color. Noting that eleven o'clock on Sunday morning is the most racially divided hour of the week, Promise Keepers seeks to heal racial divisiveness by bringing black and white men together under the canopy of patriarchy. At Shea Stadium, it falls to McCartney—grandfather to two interracial children (both of Kirstyn's lovers were men of color)—to sound the call for racial reconciliation. Racism is a white problem, he argues. A "spirit of white racial superiority" maintains "an insensitivity to the pain of people of color." Like harmony between women and men, which can be won only when men return to the home, racial harmony relies on white people's initiative. It is the privileged who must act.

Racial reconciliation is the organization's boldest move into the political arena, and it makes Promise Keepers one of the few virtually all-white groups in the nation willing to confront white racism. At Shea Stadium, that message energized the mostly white (I estimated about 80%) crowd. Rich, who is 39 and white, is a single parent from New Jersey, who brought his two sons. He feels that the racial component is important. "In Christ we're all the same," he says. Daniel, a white 27 year-old, from a working-class neighborhood in Queens came with another man from his Baptist Church, Joseph, a 35 year-old black man originally from Ghana. "As a white person, you kind of take race for granted, you don't see it," Daniel says. "I' m not the one being hurt, but my people have done some terrible things to blacks. As a white person, it's important to take responsibility."

So, what's wrong with this picture of white people taking responsibility for racism, of men becoming more loving, devoted and caring fathers, friends, and husbands? It's a nagging question that emerges once you begin to examine what lies outside the framing of each carefully orchestrated PK photo-op. For one thing, there's the message of reconciliation itself. Theirs is not a call to support those programs that would uplift the race and set the nation on a course toward racial equality. This is not about anti-discrimination legislation or affirmative action—heck, it's not even about integration. It's about being kinder and more civil. It's about hearing their pain, not supporting its alleviation. It's choosing to be nicer, but not about policies that force us to be fairer. In the PK world view, racial reconciliation is an individual posture, but not a collective struggle. Being less racist in one's personal life may be laudatory, but without a program of institutional remedies, it leaves untouched the chief forces that keep that inequality in place. Which is why it doesn't seem so strange to see who else is eagerly lining up to slap some high-fives on the Promise Keeper rank and file. Although McCartney and the Promise Keepers elite maintain a publicly apolitical position, there are increasingly ominous signs of connections between Promise Keepers and far right religious organizations like Focus on the Family, Christian Coalition and the Campus Crusade for Christ. James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, appears regularly at Promise Keeper functions, as does Bill Bright, whose Campus Crusade lent 85 full-time staffers to the Promise Keeper headquarters, and whose most recent book (sold at all Promise Keepers rallies) raves against the "homosexual explosion," the teaching of evolution, and abortion, as well as the laws against school prayer.

In addition to McCartney's well-publicized right-wing ties, other Promise Keepers maintain a "warm fellowship" with the far right. Mark DeMoss, the organization's national spokesman, worked for Jerry Falwell before serving on the advisory committee for Pat Buchanan's presidential campaign. In a sense DeMoss neatly encapsulates the three successive waves of the religious right in America—from Falwell's Moral Majority to Reed's Christian Coalition, to a sanitized theocracy designed to appeal to Generation X. Promise Keepers is only the most recent example of a well-established and well-financed theocratic movement.

This movement promises that "America will be a Christian nation by the year 2000"—not a cheery prospect for Jews, Moslems, athiests, agnostics, and others. Urging his followers to "take this nation for Jesus," McCartney has made clear the political agenda: What you are about to hear is God's word to the men of this nation. We are going to war as of tonight. We have divine power; that is our weapon. We will not compromise. Wherever truth is at risk, in the schools or legislature, we are going to contend for it. We will win.

So much for the avowed apolitical stance of the organization. Theocracies are not known for their tolerance of difference, and their use of these earnest young minions is reminiscent of some New Left organizations, which were propelled from below by youthful idealism but steered from above by hacks who were not especially taken with the idea of participatory democracy. But the radical religious right is currently jumping on the racial reconciliation bandwagon, in part because it allows them to sound supportive of people of color, without actually having to support any of the political and social policies that would benefit people of color. Even Ralph Reed, Promise Keeper

supporter and head of the Christian Coalition, protested the burning of black churches this past summer, only to be more than a little embarrassed when his organization floated overtly racist mock-election guides to potential voters.

Such racial tokenism extends also to the black clergy who are part of the Promise Keepers team. Wellington Boone and other black speakers like E.V. Hill, from Los Angeles, and Pittsburgh's Joseph Garlington are also on the Steering Committee of the Coalition on Revival (COR) an extreme right-wing religious group that espouses Biblical literalism and promotes "Christian reconstructionism." Boone himself was a consultant to Pat Robertson's presidential bid.

Though the Shea Stadium rally was endorsed by several prominent local black clergy, other prominent religious leaders, like Rev. Calvin Butts of the Abysynnian Baptist Church in Harlem or the ubiquitous Rev. Al Sharpton, were conspicuously absent from the mutual love fest. Nationally, too, some black clergy are skeptical, to say the least. "It doesn't translate into how you bring black and white together," noted the Rev. Christopher Hamlin, pastor of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. "The barriers that are broken down in the stadiums are still there when people come home to their communities. I think most black pastors see it as being rhetoric, which is something most of the black community has heard for a long time."

Eventually, those black pastors who have innocently supported Promise Keepers' masculinist ministry will have to face the seamier political underside of their messages of hope. Though Promise Keepers were among the only white organizations to raise money for burned black churches this past summer (they raised over $1 million), the traditional liberalism of the black religious constituency, which favors welfare, civil rights, and women's right to choose will sit uneasily with a right-wing theocratic evangelism. Though both sides agree that racism is a white problem, about the only policy issue they agree on is home schooling.

What is more, the inclusion of men of color comes at an exorbitant multicultural price—lopping off several bands of the rainbow through continued exclusion. Gays and lesbians, for example, don't even get near the pearly gates. Echoing familiar "love the sinner, hate the sin" rhetoric, McCartney and Dr. Raleigh Washington sidestep the question at the rally's press conference. "It's like lying," says Washington. "God doesn't like lying but he loves liars." Perhaps, but would God support a Constitutional amendment banning marriages between liars? Would God sanction discrimination against confessed liars? Though rallygoers barely heard a word about it, homosexuality is a hot topic among both rank and file, and PK leaders. It's the hottest topic on Promise Keepers' web site. Since the Bible never uses the term, or clearly defines homosexuality, these Biblical literalists are forced to struggle with interpretations. The leaders see no ambiguity nor any need for equivocation. When he pronounced homosexuality "an abomination against Almighty God," McCartney was a board member of Colorado for Family Values, the statewide coalition of right-wing religious groups that sponsored Amendment 2, the unconstitutional Colorado initiative that would have permitted discrimination against gays and lesbians. Later, McCartney called homosexuals "a group of people who don't reproduce yet want to be compared to people who do." (One pities Bob and Elizabeth Dole and the Buchanans, as well as other non-breeders.) He's also addressed Operation Rescue rallies, calling abortion "a second Civil War." Given such obviously political positions, it would appear that Promise Keepers' notion of gender reconciliation is also an individual outpouring of concern, however heartfelt, for individual women, while ignoring collective efforts at building a new society together. Good, kind, decent men (and white people) can indeed develop better, more emotionally resonant and caring relationships with women and people of color, and then support precisely those policies that perpetuate their pain.

Male Supremacy as Racial Healing

Perhaps what we are witnessing in this strange alliance of right-wing evangelists and liberal black clergy is that the reassertion of male supremacy can serve as the foundation for both to sit down at the table of brotherhood. "What happened here is that the boys' club has expanded to include people of color," writes Chip Berlet, who is researching right-wing populism in America. "When push comes to shove, what's more important, race or gender?" Here, then, is a concept that both black and white clergy can unite behind. The resurrection of responsible manhood is really the Second Coming of patriarchy. Gender and racial healing is a more unified masculine entitlement. Such allies could even reach out to Louis Farrakhan, the Black Muslim leader of his Million Men, and invite him to the party, since he also excludes women and gay men and lesbians from the table of humanity.

Of course, like the Million Man March, the earnestness and sincerity of the movement adherents—and a genuine alliance with a wide range of black clergy—might in time outstrip Promise Keepers' right wing political agenda. More likely, and more ominous, however, is the possibility that the repressive and censorious voices of theocratic authoritarianism will continue to whisper in the ears of the movement leaders, long after the shouts of the men themselves have died down. ❑

FICTION

Pinch Hitter

Robert Cohen

It being August, Herb Sigorsky was away on his annual sun'n'shmooze junket to the Holy Land, so when Gene Elman, treasurer of the Men's Club, collapsed from a stroke on the tennis court one Sunday, the chore of visiting the hospital fell to the junior rabbi, Joey Pierce. It was to be Joey's first condolence call. There was a fair chance it would be Joey's *last* condolence call too, given the direction of his mood that summer, which was precipitously down. Something, he felt, was in the process of happening to him, or else failing to happen. Since taking up his new life in New Jersey, his days were suffused with the kind of formless near-panic one surrenders to in dreams: a sense of preparation squandered, of always arriving too late. For example, he was late right now for his visit with Gene Elman. This was due to his having fallen asleep after lunch on the sofa in his office, which was itself due to the horrific insomnia that plagued him night after night in his new, as-yet-unfurnished townhouse apartment. Thus, as he undertook the twenty minute drive to the hospital, he was still a little foggy and morose from his nap, and a little irritable as well. Stalled in traffic, the components of his temper seemed to issue like exhaust from the cars on the road and mass cumbrously inside his lungs. He was having another bad day. To calm himself he began chanting under his breath the latest in a series of bouncy new mantras: *I'm a free man, a free man, a free man...*

But this was not, as it happened, the case. Upon being hired Joey had signed a contract, legal and binding. As a rule Jewish people, especially those who serve as Temple board members, regard contracts as serious matters, not to be trifled with. Wasn't the religion itself founded upon just such a contract? From Abraham to Isaac the pattern was established: the old bound the young to service and made sacrifices of them. That was the way of things. The fact was that unless Joey was prepared to abandon his new career before it even got started, he did have to stay here.

As for his previous mantra, Joey could no longer recall it. His former life, like the valley studded with tract houses and franchises that was receding behind him, had already lost definition in the summer haze.

Only three months ago he was still taking courses at the rabbinical college—where he earned high marks in Talmud and Ethics, where his Biblical Hebrew was considered almost as soaringly poetic as the Bible's own, where his senior thesis on the theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel had placed second for the Faculty Prize, and where, the day of his last exam, the carefully inscribed tablets of his heart and his hopes had been cast down and broken into fragments by a raven-haired cantorial student named Sarah Shanks.

"I'm sorry Jo-Jo," she'd said, drawing the belt on her silk kimono—a present from her previous lover, an art dealer, silver-haired, much-travelled. The kimono itself was a lucent blue, frantic with doves; he watched them jerk and flutter as she evaded his arms, backing away down the narrow hallway that neatly bisected her apartment. "You've got to look at it from my point of view. This is reality-time, careerwise. You know how bad the job market is for cantors. I can't pass this up."

Her practicality on this subject was so winning and unforced that it persuaded Joey, who was by nature something of a dreamer, to become very practical himself. That is, he begged. After all, she had been his first serious love; how many was a man given that he should not hold on with all his might? Yes, he begged. Windmilling his arms as if to propel himself into flight, he pleaded with Sarah to renounce her job and stay, or, if not that, to at least agree to consider herself formally engaged to him, or, if not that either, to at least agree to remain faithful to him, or, if not that either, to at least agree to keep the lines of communication open for the present. But Sarah was agreeable to none of these things. Her parents had met in a deportation camp; her father had died when she was six. What could he tell her about loss? What could he add to the stores of her knowledge when it came to getting on with things?

Now she looked up from her packing with an expression of distant but resolute sadness, as if she were already on the plane headed west, as if even now Time's wheel

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was revolving thousands of feet below her, flattening everything that was present into the past. "Sorry, Jo-Jo," she said again, "but this is how it is."

After which she flew off to Milwaukee, or Cedar Rapids, or Terre Haute, or wherever it was out there in the flat, tuneless heartland that a reform temple had prospered enough to hire her, leaving Joey to fail his exam all by himself. He didn't even try to pass; he merely stared at the blue book, waiting for it to go, or be taken, away. Then he walked home under a throbbing sun that blistered the top of his head where the hair was thinning, trying to collect himself. What was left to collect? All those hours sweating over Rashi and cunnilingus, and what did he have to show for it? No job, no Sarah, savings almost gone, hair almost gone, about to be evicted from his sublet on Waverly Place —this, then, was how it was. Of course under these circumstances he'd taken the first offer that came his way. Temple Beth Shalom in Succasunna, New Jersey, needed a last minute replacement for the junior rabbi, who had abruptly demanded a sabbatical. Joey would have demanded one too, had he been in a position to demand things. In fact he would never have sought out such a job in the first place—assistant in a hick congregation, out in the far suburbs—unless he was incredibly desperate. Which he was.

The contract, however, was for only one year. On the one hand this made the terms rather insulting. But on the other, he reasoned (he hadn't finished in the top rank of his Talmud class for nothing) one year was not so bad. It was a great deal better than no years, for instance, or for that matter ten years. Ten years in Succasunna! Would the bar of his ambitions be fixed so low? No, one year would do just fine.

So he sent in his resume, and then went back to the business of misery and loneliness—sitting up all night in his underwear flipping through the cable channels, watching television shows he'd never heard of, shows that had been popular in the 1960s, which he had missed, as he had, it seemed, so much of what people talked about at parties over the years—and a week later, as part of some obscure process of drainage he felt too porous to stopper, he was hired. In truth it had not been much of an interview. Jack Marks, president of the congregation, had borne down on him from the left, his breath like some industrial solvent; Esther Fine, the officious v.p. in the black Donna Karan jacket, had watched skeptically from his right; and directly facing him with a look of wary approbation, sat the treasurer of the Men's Club, Gene Elman himself, his rayon tennis sweats and plump, reddened face the only evidence of the misfortune that awaited him.

For all their initial severity, however, the committee's questions were vague and easy to field, and if he had been feeling better about himself Joey would have seen at once that they intended to hire him and relaxed, rather than fall into the series of yawns, stammers, equivocations, and, when the subject of his marital status had, as he should have known it would, arisen ("People prefer their rabbis married," cautioned Esther Fine, not unkindly, "it gives them institutional confidence"), the near-total paralysis that afflicted his vocal cords the moment he sat down. None of which got in the way of his being hired, of course. As Herb Siretsky would inform him later, Joey had been the only applicant.

Now he looked up to find the county hospital sprawled before him in its wide, modular, red-brick ungainliness, like some nightmarish Lego construction. Institutional confidence, he thought with a shudder. He was unlikely to find it here.

The parking lot was very crowded. He had to stop, roll down his window, and wait for the machine to dispense a ticket before the iron gate rose before him like a dream. The whole transaction seemed to Joey, as he cruised for a space, to be a clean and efficient one, and it rewarded him with a small rolling wave of renewed purpose. The hospital, after all, was a repository of first principles. People were born here, suffered and died here. Hunting for a space he recalled the words he'd appropriated from Heschel for the epigraph of his thesis: *Every hour is endowed with the power to lend meaning to all other hours.* Joey, who lacked firmness in his make-up, at any rate firmly believed this. He found a narrow space and brought his little car in at an angle to rest.

Gene Elman, not unpredictably for a stroke victim, was in terrible shape. Pale and bloated, arms riddled with tubes, he lay propped by pillows in his fourth floor room, asleep. At least Joey hoped he was asleep. Standing in the doorway, mouth contorted into a hopeful smile, clutching the tulips he'd bought in the gift shop downstairs as he might a man's throat he were trying to choke, he found himself telepathically willing Gene Elman's eyelids, puffy with broken vessels, to remain closed. This, he felt sure, would save everyone involved a lot of embarrassment. For Joey had no idea how to conduct himself on such a visit. What to say? Nice to see you? What did you think of my sermon last week? No, none of the courses at the college had prepared him for this.

On the other hand, if Gene Elman did not wake up, *then* what? How long was he expected to stand here with his five dollar bouquet and his whopping discomfort before he was free to go home? After all, Gene Elman, whom he had come to console, was asleep, if not (the idea crossed his mind quickly, hopefully, shamefully) dead. Nor was there any family present to confer with, unless you counted the two wallet-sized photographs, a boy and

a girl, propped against the telephone on the night stand. Joey came closer to examine them. The girl was about seven, dark and pretty, with a reticent mouth that reminded him of Sarah Shanks.

Sarah! A lock in his chest sprang open, and all the channels of his heart flooded at once.

Now that he had arrived he could see very plainly how unsuited he was for this sort of work. What good were his perfect Hebrew conjugations here? The glare of the sun on the windows, the cough of a pneumatic hammer in the distance, the sickly scent of the flowers in his hand, the level hum of the regulator as it pumped fluids through the poor man on the bed—these were not background distractions, he thought, but the thing itself, the elements of the real world, the one that *mattered*. His life swam in his eyes. He wanted very badly to lie down. Here it was August, and Sarah Shanks and the blue doves on her kimono had flown away in May, and how many full nights of sleep had he managed in the interim? Three or four. He had lost the ability to honor and comfort his own body; he was that estranged from himself. And how estranged was he by this point, he wondered, from *other* people?

Joey let out an involuntary groan.

"Zat you, Junior?"

He turned. Had the voice issued from behind him or across the hall or was its source more general than that?

"Get over here Junior you piece of trash. I got a message for you."

Joey, feeling himself summoned, looked down at the flowers in his hand, and then over towards the prone figure of Gene Elman, who, if he was at all bothered by the tone or volume of the voice, did not show it. Then, moving very quietly, he eased across the hall and poked his head in the room directly opposite.

There he found a man in a bed, glaring at him expectantly. He was very slender and very black, in his mid-forties, with deep eyes set close together and a sparse salt-and-pepper beard, and he was in the last stages of what looked to be a successful game of solitaire. "Who might you be?"

"My name is Pierce," said Joey. "I came to see Mister Elman."

"Who?"

"The man across the hall."

The black man's eyes narrowed suspiciously and his gaze, as if under the spell of some vagrant hallucination, took off in a giddy spiral around the room. "That fat guy, you mean?"

"Pardon?"

"That fat guy. You kin of his? His boy maybe?"

"No."

"Old bear had a stroke, you know."

"I heard."

"He can't talk too good. I hear him over there mumbling to hisself. Can't make out what he's saying. Had an uncle, Rex? Same thing happened to him. They said a body just gets wore out sometimes and shuts down operation for a while. 'Specially when you're fat. Nothing you can do."

Joey nodded uncomfortably and allowed a brief silence.

"And you?" he asked after a while. "Did you have a stroke too?"

"Just here for some tests. Got a burning in my stomach."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"Yeah," the man said. His eyes came to rest upon Joey again. "What you want with that guy, anyway? He owe you money?"

"He doesn't owe me anything," Joey said. And then he went ahead and blurted out his confession. "I'm his rabbi."

The man in the bed let out a hoot.

"Well, it's true," Joey said, not so much defensive on the subject as resigned. How tiring it was, the endless skepticism of the world.

"You don't look like no rabbi. Where's your beard?"

"I shaved it off," Joey admitted. "My girlfriend didn't like it. She said it made me look sinister."

"Oh yeah?" The man yawned, revealing a good deal of impressive dental work. His back teeth were crowned with gold. "Have a seat."

Joey sat—or perched, rather—on the edge of the chair. The plastic cushion crackled beneath him.

"Don't shit me now. You really a rabbi?"

"Yes."

"Say something in Jewish."

Joey mumbled a desultory prayer.

The man in the bed nodded, satisfied. "Not bad. Not bad at all."

"Thank you."

"You kinda young though. What are you, twenty-four?"

"Twenty six," said Joey, who in truth felt much older than his years, most of the time.

"Damn." The man in the bed looked gloomy.

"It's my first job," Joey explained. "I just got out of school last spring."

"Uh huh."

"I work for Rabbi Sigorsky, at Beth Shalom."

"Uh huh." The man nodded placidly, as if he and Sigorsky were in fact old golf buddies.

"Herb's the senior man. He knows Mister Elman very well. They serve on the Board together. But he's in Israel this month, leading a group of congregants. So it's up to

me to fill in for him." Having completed this unnecessarily detailed speech, Joey took a moment to watch it register, or fail to, on the listener's face.

"Sure, I got you. You're like the local Gates Brown."

"Who?"

"Gates Brown. Pinch-hitter? Played for Detroit? Come *on*, you gotta know Gates Brown."

"Well, I'm afraid I don't."

The man in the bed regarded Joey sleepily. "You gotta know Gates Brown," he repeated, slower this time, as if the problem here was simply a technical one, a glitch in transmission that could be corrected with the merest fiddling of the dial. Then he closed his eyes and dozed off.

Joey must have dozed off, too, because when next he moved he startled himself. He blinked, his eyes sandy and raw, his mouth dry. Beneath him the plastic cushion wheezed and crackled. The sun out the window was no longer overhead but at roughly eye level, slowly faltering behind the low mountains to the west. The parking lot had arranged itself differently too. Wide spaces of asphalt now separated the cars, which were bathed in a soft amber light that pooled like honey on the windshields. The rest was in shadow.

Five-thirty. At seven he had to help Judy Jacobs prepare for her bat mitzvah. At eight there was the Hospitality Committee, chaired by the impossible Irving Gelb, famous for the duration and contentiousness of his meetings. Which meant that if Joey was to have time for even a hastily thrown together dinner, he'd better leave now.

He picked up his flowers and semi-tiptoed back across the corridor, lest he wake up poor Gene Elman and be confronted once again with his melancholy duty. An orderly rattling by with a dinner cart ignored him. Good. He was on his way out. He would leave the bouquet—after all, he paid good money for it—and go. He was so intent on being quiet and so much in a hurry that he almost failed to absorb two critical pieces of new information. The first was that Gene Elman's bed was empty. Denuded of its linens and pillows, it sprawled there under the window like the cheap and graceless piece of furniture it was. The second was this: though Gene Elman's bed was empty, the chair beside it was not. A woman sat in it crossways, her bare legs dangling over the side. Her feet were bare, too, the shoes thrown into her briefcase, which lay open beneath her, ready to receive any other articles of clothing she might decide to toss in. If the condition of her briefcase in any way mirrored that of her life (as Joey's, empty at the moment save for an apple, some pens and pencils, and a much-battered volume of Heschel, did), then she was in trouble. The leather was bruised and creased, spotted by obscure liquids. So much for the outside. Inside lay a trash dump of manila folders, cassette tapes, Life-Savers, Tic-Tacs, some balled-up stockings, and a green plastic water pistol which did not look quite leak-proof. Doubtless things were even messier below, where he couldn't see. Not that the owner seemed in any way concerned. On her lap was a yellow legal pad upon which she was writing fiercely, oblivious to her surroundings.

Joey, reluctant to intrude, remained where he was. In certain unsubtle and unsettling ways, his body was registering what his mind could not: that this was one of the rare times he'd actually been alone with a woman in the past three months. Of course she hadn't seen him yet, and they were not, given the wandering presences out in the corridor, technically alone. And the woman's face, though attractive in its way, was not beautiful—her nose was a bit too sharp, her cheeks too gaunt; her black hair, cut very short, wasn't flattering, but it gave off a sweet efficient scent of conditioner that reached him from across the room and infiltrated his breath. Her watch, he saw, was expensive. Her fingers, like her clothes—she wore a trim blue business suit adorned with a single row of pearls, each one of which had turned violet in the dusk—were nicely tended, and seemed generally to belong to a person more accomplished than himself. She looked like an older version of the dark girl in the photograph. Did Gene Elman have such a young wife, such young children? Joey couldn't recall.

He took a step forward. He was just the sort of man, he reflected sourly, who would eventually get mixed up with a widow. And yet surely it was better to be mixed up than to be so alone.

Finally she glanced up and saw him; her mouth performed a sour twist. "You must be the rabbi," she said.

"Yes."

"I'm Barbara. The daughter. They told me you were coming today."

Joey nodded. The rabbi. The daughter. Here was a world of shorthand declarations, of neat, definite articles. And yet peering over her shoulder, he saw that what he had taken for impassioned writing was merely so much doodling: a series of tiny interlocking trapezoids formed an intricate ladder of descent down the margin of the page. The intensity of purpose with which she'd etched them out, the way her narrow shoulders had hunched to the work, reminded Joey of a scholar, of a small child—even, in a way he did not quite understand, of himself. "And where is your father now?" he asked.

The question seemed to take her by surprise. "Upstairs."

"Upstairs?" In his post-nap haze and his general alarm, he wondered whether she meant by the word some sort of euphemism.

"Intensive care," she said.

"Oh."

"They want to monitor him more closely. He's not responding too well to treatment. They say he's not in any real danger at the moment though."

"Well," he said, "that's very good."

"Good?" Her pupils were a pale blue with black flecks; they skated over him lazily, with intermittent interest. Her lipstick, he noticed, was smeared at the corners. Despite her air of languor and repose there was something wild in her face that suggested to Joey the kind of teenager she once had been—a very different kind, he reminded himself, than he had been. "Do you know Dad very well?" she asked.

"I'm afraid we only met a couple of times. He was on my committee."

"Uh huh," she said vaguely.

"I mean," he explained, "the committee that hired me."

"What is it with Jews and committees? Every night there's another meeting. It's not like my father's so observant, either. Once in a while he'll light the candles on a Friday night, that's about it. Meanwhile he's shovelling down the shrimp."

"I see," Joey said.

"Where is she anyway?" Frowning, she checked her watch.

"Who?"

"My mother. How come I'm always the one who has to duck out of the office two hours early? Why can't she get here first, just once?"

"There's probably traffic," Joey offered. "Rush hour—"

"And *him*." She shook her head at the empty pillow beside her, a boulder on the long, winding trail of her preoccupations. "He's a child. He doesn't take care of himself. He never has. Matt saw it right off. He said there'd be problems once Dad hit sixty. Sure enough it's been nothing but trouble."

"I see."

"Why do you keep saying that? What could you possibly see?"

"All I mean is—"

"Look," she interrupted, waving her hand before her face as if clearing the room of smoke, "I'm a little frazzled right now. What is it you want?"

The question struck Joey as at once terribly simple and terribly complex. What was it he wanted? He was very tired and thirsty; his libido, after one brief flicker, had all but blown out. For some reason the only thing that came to mind at the moment was Herb Sigorsky, lounging poolside at the King David, a tall glass of tax-deductible iced coffee in his hand. The perks of the profession, if you stuck it out long enough. Jerusalem in the cool of evening, the breeze bearing its sweet freight of jasmine and almonds, the walls of the Old City lit up like a vision. He spent a moment considering, as he often did, the prospect of an entirely different life.

And Matt—who was this Matt? More shorthand. What he really needed, that is, what he actually *wanted*—

"I mean, this is strictly a formality," she said, "isn't it? You *have* to visit sick people in the hospital. It's part of the job description, right?"

"I suppose you could say that."

"Well consider it done. You paid your little visit, now you can run on back to your little shul. Okay?"

He nodded. She didn't want him here, which was fine. He didn't want him here either. And Gene Elman? Whatever his vote might have been was no longer relevant; he was gone.

Nonetheless, now that he was about to be released Joey was aware of an obscure new reluctance washing in to mingle with, and then erode, his previous reluctance. He had to this point accomplished nothing. And yet it seemed necessary to mark his visit somehow, to have effected something tangible in coming to this place and then going. "If you want to," he said, stopping in the middle of the room, "we could talk. That's what I'm here for."

She smiled. "No offense, Rabbi. But if you were me, would you talk to you?"

"I don't know. It would depend upon the circumstances."

"Circumstances," she repeated.

"Other people can be of service sometimes. Even a stranger. We all suffer from the same wounds."

"We do, huh? Go ahead, Rabbi, tell me about yours."

"All I mean is—"

"Tell me about your *job*, Rabbi. Tell me about *your* two kids you're raising by yourself. Tell me about *your* crazy mother who calls you at work a dozen times a day cause she has nobody to talk to, *your* idiot father who in the middle of his fifth or sixth midlife crisis gets hit by a stroke, and guess who's going to have to take care of him now on top of everything else."

"That must be very—"

"Let's let our hair down, shall we Rabbi? Let's exchange confidences. Let's compare savings accounts. Let's discuss the PTA. Then you can tell me all about *your* child support problems, and how you can't sleep four hours at a time without popping awake, and how *you* hardly ever have sex with anything not manufactured by G.E." She regarded him fiercely. Her face was crowded with blood. "What do you say, Rabbi? All talked out? Or would you still like to have a nice spiritual chat?"

Joey reflected for a moment.

"Insomnia," he said, "is a terrible thing. I suffer from it myself."

At approximately this point she began to cry. Had he not been looking closely, he might well have missed that too. There were no theatrics involved, no convulsions of the shoulders, no groans of lamentation, merely the tears and their quiet descent down her cheeks.

Joey laid a careful hand upon her shoulder. The whiteness of his wrist against the navy blue of her jacket afforded him a small dissatisfaction; it seemed to reinforce the frailty of the gesture. But she did not shake it off. When she was finished she said something he failed to catch, though it managed because of the effort it cost her to move him obscurely. He thought he could make out one word: "Pain."

This, he understood now, was why he had come. For this moment. This challenge. He wanted to be sure, however, not to say the wrong thing in response, so he asked her to repeat what she had said.

"Tryptophane," she said.

"Pardon?"

"You can get it at the health food store. It's the chemical in warm milk and turkey. They say it works wonders for sleeping problems. Not that it's ever done me any good."

There was a pause. Finally he asked, "How do you spell that?"

She told him. "Better write it down," she said, blowing her nose into a handkerchief.

"I'll remember."

She shrugged. "Whatever you want."

Having settled this point, he could think of nothing else to do. He looked out the window: the elongated shadows, the sun a pale eye, colorless in the distance. "I'll leave you alone now," he said.

She turned her head to see him better. Her lashes were still moist but her gaze was dry. "Tell me something," she said, "first."

"What?"

"I don't care. Whatever you got."

"Well," he said, fidgeting, "there's faith, of course."

She gave a depleted sigh.

"That's really quite a lot," he added. He spoke in a loud voice, because she seemed all of a sudden very far away.

"Look, no offense, but you seem like a bright young guy, a serious person. Do you really believe this stuff? You really think that following the commandments and saying the prayers and whatever else will make the slightest difference in where we all end up?"

"Not where," he said. "Maybe how."

"Please don't give me that confirmation class Kung Fu shit. I swear I'll jump out the window."

"I'm sorry," he said. He was almost as exhausted with her as she seemed to be with him. After all he had his own worries to worry about, his own questions. And she did not want him to stay. She didn't even know him. He began to back towards the door. "I'm sorry," he repeated, one foot in the air, "it's the best I can do."

"Then go. Get the hell out of here."

"You don't understand...I only—"

"Go!" she cried, her voice rising to a shriek. "What's the matter with you? And you wonder why people hate religion? *You*, Rabbi. *You're* why. You're why—"

Her words followed him down the gleaming corridor and out to the elevator, where he pressed the button and waited with a pounding heart. Of course he could have argued with her, he knew that. He could have defended himself. He had not told her, for instance, what he had learned in his studies: that faith does not come into being out of nothing, as an unearned surprise, but over a long life of willingness and commitment, of exposure. That a sense of inadequacy was the essence of being human. The best was latent in the worst, and vice versa; we had only to see it and act upon it. He had not told her these things even though he knew that had he said them the right way, they might have provided consolation of a kind. Why not?

The elevator was very slow. By the time it finally came, a small group had gathered behind him: two residents, a nurse, and an orderly pushing a patient in a wheelchair. Only when they had all crowded into the elevator and were descending towards the lobby did Joey glance down to see who the patient was.

"Hey, Rabbi. Still here? Don't you got nowhere to be?"

Joey stared. Up close the man with the potential ulcer did not look larger, but somehow smaller. His sleep had not done him much good. His eyes were sunken and moist, his arms like slackened ropes. "I'm on my way out," Joey said. "And you, are you being released?"

"Me? Nah. Down to the lab. Got to see a lady 'bout a test."

"Well," Joey said, "good luck."

"No biggie. I had a million. One more won't make much difference." He frowned thoughtfully. "Hey, that Jewish thing you told me before. What was it, like a prayer?"

Before Joey could answer, the elevator stopped, the doors shuddered open, and he had to move out of the way to let everyone out.

For a moment, after they had gone, he kept his hand on the button, holding the car in place. Since leaving school he had been lacking a stance, a position from which to operate. But perhaps, he thought, this business of stepping in, inhabiting another man's space, filling the mold while the pliant material that was himself took

(Continued on p. 75)

Beauty Routines

By Miriam Peskowitz

I have always been attracted by the ideal of everyday study, drawn by the vision of intellectual passions as part of daily life, as ordinary as making sandwiches and washing dishes and drinking coffee in the morning. Lately I've been thinking about what daily study might mean in a feminist context. Amid lots of relative successes, Jewish-American feminism has not yet emerged with notions of everyday study. This is not surprising. Our American society does not emphasize creative intellectual engagement as a necessary part of people's lives. And Jewish traditions have historically linked study with men and with masculinity.

The pervasive image of a learned Jew is a bearded older man wearing a dark suit, black shoes and a hat. Most of us don't wear these clothes. Even so, and if from afar, these images have symbolic power. In the usual picture, the learned Jew studies Talmud or other rabbinic tomes, midrash, perhaps, or mystical texts and legal codes. It is tempting under the name of feminism to demand access, to place women among those who study and read these texts. But aside from their status as sacred, Talmud, Midrash or mystical writings were simply never texts meant to be studied by Jewish women, despite the fact that a few women have studied them. Nor were these texts for most Jewish men. The popular description of Jews as the 'people of the book' transforms the acts of a very small group of men into an impossible generalization of and for all Jews.

In Jewish traditions, study is not gender neutral. The history that links Jewish study, Jewish men, and rabbinic texts stretches eighteen centuries long. Its length has nearly successfully severed any link between women and formal intellectual engagement with Jewish texts. For all the centuries and in all the communities in which study was significant, Jewish women were not participants. This makes study a difficult inheritance for women to claim.

If study is not a gender-neutral term, neither is inheritance. The word *inheritance* is used commonly to describe things that people adopt from the general offerings of their society. But in a narrow sense (from which the more common usage derives), inheritance describes the transmission of property through generations of family. The process that transmits things from one generation of a family to its children has always privileged men. Within Jewish law, the relation of women to inheritance was always tightly controlled by religious codes produced by men and favoring men. Inheritance was a normative expectation for men. If a family amassed material wealth, sons could expect to inherit. Jewish daughters would not expect to inherit in quite the same way as Jewish sons. When women did inherit, they did not automatically or necessarily have the legal right to control their property, or to own any profits made from it. Jewish women have had a different relation to the concept and actuality of inheritance, one that was more tightly controlled and limited than was the case for Jewish men.

Along with study and other things we have wanted to think of as gender neutral and equally available to all, inheritance comes to us enmeshed in systems that have empowered men while bridling women. Thus, for feminists and for women, inheritance is as much a problem as it is a desire. It is easy to be seduced by the legacy of study as a powerful image of Judaism and of what Jews do. It is understandable to want to claim not only the specific inheritance of study, but to insist that, for women, the *idea* of inheritance remains viable.

But in resisting this seduction, other possibilities become imaginable. The historic lack of fit between women and inheritance pushes us to think about alternatives. Taking a more creative and critical stance toward the very *idea* of inheritance, we can question how we use the term 'inheritance' to describe things that we wish to claim as our own. Jewish study has traditionally located male Jews amid a chain of transmis-

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sion that connects them with a legacy of ancient and metaphoric fathers. Along with material goods, study too was part of a religious inheritance. But since inheritance has been so constricted for women, we can resist adopting it as a vision of how women and feminists might engage with everyday study. A feminist vision of study will not limit itself by reaching for the fathers and demanding a place at their table. It will not insist upon reading inherited texts passed on by generations of rabbis and men.

Study can be imagined otherwise. In most places and times, Jewish women knew less about those who came before them than they did of their contemporaries, the women and men around them. Exempted from formal Talmudic study as well as from the liturgical repetition of prayer, women were not constantly reiterating a tradition of transmission. This gives us something to think about.

We can use this difference—*contemporaneity* rather than *inherited transmission*—to imagine new possibilities for ourselves. If the classic texts of Judaism—transmitted and supplemented for centuries—are not the focus of 'study,' what is? Well, in the United States in the late twentieth century, more writing by women and about women is being produced than has been the case at any other place and time. We should take this production seriously. We can enjoy it by foregoing the search for inheritance and instead, engaging our contemporaries: each other.

What I suggest is a routine. Most women and men have, for lack of a better phrase, beauty routines. We have collections of eyeliner and lipstick to apply. We take a shower each day, put on moisturizer before bed, brush teeth and floss twice a day. Maybe we do a facial scrub on Sundays, a mask once in a blue moon, arrange for a hair cut every six weeks, that kind of thing. Some wash in henna, others shave. These are regimens we all know. I propose that we need, similarly, intellectual routines, regimes of reading and thoughtfulness, habits to keep us in practice with creative and sustained thinking.

Daily routines offer a way to become familiar with complicated topics, slowly and over time. Study as a beauty routine proposes that we take time for reading and thinking, for being in ongoing and informed conversations about ideas and possibilities. This routine does not replace participating in book groups, salons, or attending occasional lectures and workshops. It is an addition. An intellectual routine is a personal study regime, a commitment to add study to one's life in an ongoing way, much as some of us do regular physical exercise, or vacuum the carpets that cover our floors.

With busy lives there is the ever present danger of setting goals too high, failing to reach them, and giving up on the whole project. In creating your routine, be realistic in the best sense. Why set yourself an hour's worth of reading when all you really have is ten minutes? Imagine this regime as a yearly cycle. For instance, if you want to learn the creative work of a Jewish feminist poet and thinker, for a year read Irena Klepfisz' poems and prose. Go to a bookstore and purchase *Dreams of an Insomniac: Jewish Feminist Essays, Speeches and Diatribes* and *A Few Words in the Mother Tongue*, both published by Eighth Mountain Press. If you don't find them on the shelves, most bookstores are more than willing to special order books like these. Keep one of her books on your bedside table. Put another in the bag you carry to work or on your errands, and pull it out to read in the interim moments of your day, whenever and wherever they come (waiting on line, eating lunch alone).

As I understand it at this point in my life, study is about living with another thinker and learning to respond to that person. It means immersing oneself amid insights and images and ideas. Read Klepfisz' writing until you have finished, or until the year is out. Read a little each day, even if all you have is a minute or two. Pick a page. Reading is not always about starting with the preface and reading straight on till the author's bio at the end. Read a random paragraph. Read the same paragraph ten times if you need or want to. Let her lines and your responses to them become part of other moments in the day, when the actual book is not in your hands.

The next year, you might continue with the topic of Jewish women and feminism by working your way through the two volumes by Judith Baskin, *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective* and *Women of the Word: Jewish Women and Jewish Writing* (both published by Wayne State University Press). Or you might change your topic, following whatever curiosities seem most compelling at the moment. Whenever you finish, follow up on topics that especially piqued your interest by locating other books or essays from the references and endnotes. Take the next year to read fiction, memoirs or essays. Read books one at a time, or as pairs or trios, letting each play off each other. Or pick a different kind of scholarly book, such as Paula Hyman's recent *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History*, or Riv Ellen Prell's *Fighting to Become Americans: Jewish Women and Men in Conflict in the Twentieth Century* (forthcoming from Beacon Press). Don't be scared. Academic books are often insider books. They are written in the conventions of a profession. They tend to assume lots of information, and can be difficult to follow.

If a book is difficult, slow down and puzzle over the phrases. Read silently or out loud, to hear how words sound and to slow down enough to think. Academic books are meant to be read slowly, to be pondered over and argued with. The reward of reading them is that we get to see the beauty of a carefully crafted argument. We are offered the pleasure of evidence and sources and textures unavailable in more popular writing. If certain paragraphs are hard to figure out, call a friend and work through it together. Read it to her. Ask her for her help and for her insights—sometimes we surprise each other with what we know. Tell your friends what you're reading, until it becomes as easy to chat about your books and study as about other parts of your life.

Take your time. This is not a race, there is no need to move quickly through a long list, and there's no test at the end. See where things lead. One thing that happens in an intellectual routine is that it matters less whether the book is 'good' or not, than whether it sparks something in you. Don't be shy with your books. Talk back to them. Even 'bad' books (whatever these are) can be worth reading because they provide something to interact with. The goal of study is not to master a given set of information, but to be part of a kind of conversation. Imagine the author, if you can. (When I teach I often ask my students to imagine bodies and personalities for the authors they read, and to visualize what clothes they might wear.) Facing a book written by someone else, find room for your thoughts while you read theirs. Write in the margins. Don't be afraid to put the book down once you start to think about other things. If a particular book is too dense, difficult or ultimately, too unpleasurable, put it down. Come back to it if you wish, or not. If books don't work, find something else that does.

Another possibility is to have a study partner—on terms that work for both of you. This might be a commitment between two friends to read the same things and talk about them. Or it can be a parallel reading, where each partner reads different texts and shares them with the other. This kind of study can happen during telephone conversations. It can also take place face-to-face, over a cup of coffee, or a shared dinner or lunch. It can happen in the car, taking a walk, as something new or as a supplement to ongoing acts. It can be as simple as two friends deciding that intellectual talk will be part of their relationship, if this isn't always and already the case. And I think often it isn't. Many of us grow up feeling uncomfortable about intellectual talk—afraid that we aren't smart enough, or don't know enough about a certain topic, and hence should keep quiet. Sometimes the commitment to intellectual engagement and study with a friend can be more frightening than other kinds of intimacy.

As I think about all this, I worry nervously that what I've described is not really Jewish study. That it's too amorphous. Maybe despite myself I am perversely and wistfully bound to the fantasy that 'Jewish' is always clear, that it contains something essential whose presence (or absence) can be recognized. Perhaps I am beholden to a more conservative feminism in which little changes and much looks the same. Possibly I am stymied still by the complication that there is no single answer for Jewish women and feminists. I still feel these tensions (in which most of us are caught). Little of this is easy, after all.

But in the end I'm not concerned. Discussions of Jewish study are most provocative when they refuse easy answers that seem evident. None of these words—Jewish, study, feminist—is a singular thing, and these terms unravel as we think about them. This is especially the case for those of us who do not stake claims to Jewish authority and authenticity. Thinking about study in these ways brings it closer to home. It changes it from an abstraction or an out-of-reach vocation, from a discussion of Jewish feminist studies 'out there' or Jewish Studies 'over at the university,' or Jewish study 'among those religious Jews.' Daily study can come nearer to where and how most of us really live.

In the end, once we become aware of the tensions, desires and impossibilities of inheritance, there is no implicit reason why what I have sketched out is not Jewish study. I mean this. Refusing the nostalgic temptation to believe that there are solid, unfragmented definitions of Jewish or woman or feminist means that we really are open to formulations that don't look like what we imagined 'the old' or 'the authentic' to be.

This vision doesn't offer the clarity of Talmud. It does not proffer the cultural capital of Bible study and Torah. Nor does it promise an ancient and metaphoric family to be part of. Instead, it is built on discomfort. Jewish women do not have a long or easily available history of study and its partnerships. Both women and men lack models for elevating women and books by female authors as textual partners for study. Most of us—women and men alike—are not entirely comfortable with creative female intellectuals (much as we might admire them from afar). We are not used to seeing ourselves and our friends in this way. But by not demanding solid answers, and by not giving in to flawed notions about what is 'really Jewish' or 'authentically feminist' or 'essentially female,' we can free ourselves from the hold of these and other fallacies. These small freedoms may offer some steps toward temporary traditions that do not depend on inheritance. ❑

FICTION

Surprise Exercise

Mordechai Beck

• 1 •

Launching himself down the middle of the bus into the thickening shadows of padded seats and half-settled people, Samuel Brosh, formerly Baumgarten, plonked his night bag on one of two empty spaces towards the back, and squeezed himself into the vacancy next to the window, that was streaked with bird droppings and stickers trumpeting the advantages of traveling with the bus company. He sat, feeling his full weight creasing the leather-bound sprung seat. Moving back and forth in the narrow space, he despaired at ever making himself entirely comfortable.

From his zipper bag he drew out a bunch of grapes, which he had pushed into a plastic wrapper for emergencies. He looked at them for a second, recalling a line he had learnt at school a million years ago, about bursting joy's grape against his palate fine. Who on earth could have written that? Shakespeare, Keats, McNiece? He picked at the grapes, swallowing them one by one. They were late season, Hebron grapes. Before they were squashed in his kit bag, they had been as plump as the Arab woman who had bartered with him at their door.

From where he sat, Sam imagined that he could feel the grip of the driver's fat fingers on the wide steering wheel, as the heavy-set man maneuvered his huge bus out of Jerusalem's Central Station, and onto the slip road heading south. Sam closed his eyes, but he could not find sleep.

In less than an hour they were in the desert. Darkness had fallen. The summer heat blew through the open windows, most of which seemed to be jammed. Sam sat up and took in bags of hot air, drawing to the depths of his lungs the pungent scent of oranges and the sap of the passing pine and eucalyptus trees.

In the middle of nowhere the bus stopped to pick up more passengers. Sam scratched his bare scalp. Where had these wayfarers come from? Were they nomads? Was this odd assortment of men and women also on a surprise exercise; why would someone journey so late if they didn't have to? People were always on the move here, as though the land itself gave them no respite, even after dark.

In the gloom of the bus the new passengers searched for seats. No one sat next to Sam, not the old man with his shopping bags, nor the pretty young soldier with her golden hair bunched above her head like a beehive. He dozed off, one eye half open. When he glanced at his watch again, it made him start. His journey was drawing to an end. That's all he needed, to miss his stop.

He wiped his mouth and belched, covering his mouth as though Margalit was sitting there. How she would have jumped at him for such slovenliness! She'd remind him of his British origins, and how she—an Israeli primitive, as he called her—expected better of him. He should have anticipated her moves, but he didn't. She always had a fresh angle, like one of those oriental despots whose life was dedicated to retaining absolute power.

Their latest fracas, for example, over his plan to leave his office job and work at home, meant that all communications between them had to be relayed by way of their oldest child. Even his sudden call to the army.

"Do you have to go, Abba?" their eldest girl had asked him in her accented voice.

"A surprise exercise," he said, "*targil petah*," as if this would explain his absence from her impending birthday party. His daughter tightened her thin arms around his thickening waist, and he'd responded by stroking her hair and pressing her warm face against his degenerating rib cage. "National duty," he added stoically.

"When will you be back?" asked Margalit from the kitchen, in a tone that revealed no great interest in the answer.

Sam released his daughter and shrugged his shoulders, "Midnight, maybe."

No response.

"Perhaps dawn," he speculated aloud, "like last time."

The bus drew near the army base. His mouth tightened, forming a secretive smile. National duty? In the

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army, too, he felt misused, or worse yet, superfluous.

Shoulder to the window, he tried focusing his attention on his semi-transparent reflection. But all he saw was the darkness inside the outline of his face and shoulders. How he wanted Margalit! Despite their impasse he needed her. He rubbed his palms together. Maybe, if he concentrated hard enough, his feelings would be transferred to her through some higher cosmic force. But these feelings passed.

Margalit's image, so vivid a few seconds ago, evaporated in the dark glass that separated him from the desert night.

• 2 •

The camp was gearing up for the exercise which had been announced without warning. Men and women in dark, olive fatigues crossed the dirt-tracked parade ground between the pre-fabricated huts and the unkempt rockery. Loud curses rent the warm desert air as Sam traversed the ground on his way to the operations room.

A girl-soldier sat behind the desk registering the incoming part-time, citizen-soldiers. Behind her, people were manning telephones, debating, arguing, screaming. On the wide desks lay hundreds of pieces of notepaper, check lists, maps, assignments and computerized bits of information waiting for the exercise to begin. Sam presented his details with the dull obtuseness that passed for communication in the army and then, adjusting his night bag, turned from the desk.

"Brosh?" said the girl unexpectedly.

Sam noticed she was reading his name from a piece of official paper.

"Sam Brosh," she reiterated, "a woman just phoned you."

"Who was it?" he asked.

The soldier rubbed her nose with the back of her hand. Beneath her uniform her firm breasts heaved, as though despairing that the night would never end. "Didn't say," she informed him.

Sam was shouldered aside by other soldier-citizens eager to present their particulars to the girl. He found himself walking through gray, unmarked corridors searching for an unused phone, not knowing, even if he found one, whom he would be calling. He scanned the Hebrew signs on each door, trying to discern the meaning of the army abbreviations, or, failing that, peering inside the rooms to see if he could recognize anyone.

Suddenly a strong voice caught his attention:

"Hey, Sam!"

It was Ohana, his commanding officer, beckoning to him from inside one of the larger rooms. Sam approached, they shook hands, laughed, and Sam, lowering his bag onto the floor, took his place behind one of the desks.

Ohana's rasping voice was now shouting into the black lips of the telephone: "Tell Churchill, if he doesn't come immediately I'll have his balls fried for supper!" Slamming the receiver back on the neck of the phone he cursed in a mixture of Hebrew and Arabic.

The room filled with young uniformed men and women. With them came the smoke of a score of cigarettes, through whose thick mists the members of the regular army personnel doled out thin tomato and cheese sandwiches from a large cardboard box.

Sam picked up a Hebrew newspaper from the table, hoping to find an interesting item or two with which to pass the time. He found himself instead folding the paper and beating the air in front of him in a vain attempt to dispel the noxious odors of the smoke. Someone handed him a sandwich, but when he took his first bite, all he could taste was the acrid air. He pushed the unfinished snack onto the table and, despite the noise, cigarettes, and neon light, curled up in his chair to doze. He dreamed he was a bus driver, a file of angels in army uniforms ascending and descending the steps of his vehicle.

When Sam awoke, Ohana was announcing near his ear that the exercise was nearly over. "Just a few holy trouble-makers left," added Ohana drily.

Sam knew only too well what that meant! They even had a special space on the forms for such absentees: people who had switched addresses without notifying the authorities, students who lived away from home, the 'new pioneers' who had fled abroad seeking respite or fortunes, the sick and the injured, the odd deserter. To track these down one by one — by phone, by messages left with neighbors, by late night visits — could take hours.

He coughed and waved his hand in front of his face, beating a hole through the pall of smoke.

"Had a good rest?" his CO asked him with genuine sympathy in his voice.

"I'm thirsty," said Sam.

"There's hot water next door."

Outside the hut, darkness pressed down on Sam like a weight. Stars poked through the heavens from different time zones, alien universes; a large curved moon lay on its side as though in pain. Sam looked at it for a moment and growled.

A couple of soldiers lolling nearby gave Sam a grave look, as though they could overhear his thoughts.

At the door of the adjacent hut a girl-soldier sat disconsolate, her eyes unfocused. One of the young men now brushed past Sam's ambling figure and leerily

asked the girl what was bugging her.

"I'm famished," she moaned, "Haven't you anything to eat?"

The soldier stood in his tracks and proceeded to fiddle with his fly buttons. "Here's something," he shot back, tugging at his trousers. The girl shied away, her face a mixture of disgust and curiosity. Sam resisted the urge to stare overlong at them, for fear of revealing any special interest.

Facing forward, he pressed on towards his black, sugary drink.

• 3 •

People were screaming and running in all directions. Sam, who had dozed off again, heard bells and saw flashing lights. He was shoved off his wooden chair and directed outside by a female soldier sweating darkly at the armpits. He was not dreaming. Groping blindly he tried to comprehend what was being said, but his brain didn't seem to want to function in Hebrew.

"The yard, soldier! The yard! On the double!"

He reached the door of his hut, and a heavy steel weight was shoved into his arms.

"There's been a crossing," announced one of the full-time soldiers, appearing out of the dark, his bright teeth showing. He too bore a weapon identical to Sam's. "This is for real," he said.

Still only half-conscious, Sam hauled himself into a jeep. Out of the dark a hand pushed a steel helmet towards his stomach. "Put this on," said Ohana's familiar voice, now hardened by a sharp, anxious edge.

The drive to the border road was punctuated by a series of hard bumps. When the order came to file off the vehicles, Sam, now fully awake, followed the line of dark figures, and shuffled impatiently towards the steps leading to the ground.

"Soldier! Move!" came a command. Sam had hardly started forward when a counter order came to drop to the ground. He half-jumped, half-fell on to the sandy bank of the grit path, careful to avoid the brittle thorns of the dry desert bushes. As he touched the ground, a huge florescent light burst tempestuously in the sky, followed by a muted explosion.

"Bastards!" expostulated Ohana in Sam's ear.

"What was that?" asked Sam, tightening his hold on his M-16, as his kids might grip a favorite toy.

"Probably blew themselves up," Ohana shot back disgustedly.

Sam ducked low, as he had been instructed during night range exercises. He heard shooting and cries, but it was impossible to know whose side they belonged to. His nostrils, widely splayed, breathed in dust, sweat, petrol fumes and axle grease.

Suddenly a strong beam, hanging from the lead truck, bisected the surrounding darkness. Ohana punched Sam on the elbow. "They're bringing them in," he barked, lifting himself off the shoulder of the grit path and indicating with his free arm that Sam should follow him.

On the other side of the path an unknown voice ordered Ohana's men to halt. Beneath the uncomfortable weight of his steel helmet Sam peered forward, an acid taste suddenly flooding his stomach. A group of soldiers appeared carrying a stretcher laden with an unmoving object. Sam, thankful for the anonymity offered by his camouflaged helmet, heard the men grunting.

The soldiers reached the spot where Sam stood, and halted. The huge, impassive figure of the camp commander strove forward into the space surrounding the stretcher. In the gap, Sam caught his first glimpse of the body. The light, now swinging above their heads, splashed against the prostrate man's stained shirt and spotted head band. For an instant, Sam tried to believe that the moisture on the head band was only sweat, but the strong light denied the possibility that the prisoner had been out on an innocent jaunt. The injured man's groans came from the same depths in his body as the seeping of his wounds. Sam closed his eyes, but it didn't help. You couldn't avoid what was in front of your face, not at this proximity.

From his first-aid instruction Sam recognized the temporary bandages covering the man's face and abdomen — but the dark red of his guts had managed to bleed its way through the wrapping. Pain mingled with the incomprehension of someone who had sustained an unexpected hurt. It was a young man's face, but the scars had wizened it. What pain! What humiliation! It was a relief when the commander ordered the stretcher aboard the truck, whose engine was already ignited, shaking the vehicle with its own vibrations on the nearby path. The prisoner's entourage brushed past Sam and Ohana, leaving only the smell of sweat and blood lingering in the warm night air.

The first prisoner was being carried aloft on the shoulders of six soldiers when his colleague came into view. Hands tied before him, his face temporarily freed of its outsize bandage (which seemed to Sam to have been designed for a bigger enemy), the man's dark and bitter eyes burned deep holes in his sallow cheeks, like two bullet marks. Sam reckoned him to be about his own age; old for a field soldier, even in the Palestine Underground Army. Perhaps he'd been leading a squad on a night exercise, a surprise one like Sam's.

The commander ordered the second prisoner to stand in front of him. The soldiers obliged, and pushed the tied man forward. Sam, who was no more than a yard or two from him, sensed that the captive was not conscious at all of the movement and fuss around him.

The commander eyed the prisoner at blank range, as though weighing up some basic equation that had brought them together. "Put this man in the box!" he rapped. His voice was absolute, terrifying. "He's needed for interrogation." From deep inside the prisoner's throat a gurgling sound forced itself up and, without a word, the man spat hard into his captor's face.

"Turd!" cried the commander, wiping off the spittle where it was running into his eye.

The prisoner looked prepared to launch another missile from his mouth when the commander lifted his large hand and smashed the tied man across the cheek with a crack that felled him. The soldiers bore down on the prisoner, lifting him up and shaking him from all sides as though to loosen every last drop of saliva in the man's body. As he was being righted, his eyes met Sam's; a fleeting second, but it was enough. Sam recognized something familiar, even frightening, that he—on a far less dramatic scale, of course— encountered every day (from his wife, from his kids, at work, in the army). Poor sod! For that one moment, the prisoner's wild, angry eyes had mirrored his own.

• 4 •

The night was at its darkest. Black, bold clouds mounted each other in the sky as though craving the frenzy of sexual fulfillment. The moon slipped their clutches, filling the heavens with a harsh, chrome light. It was cooler now and a light dew seeped through Sam's summery jacket and cotton trousers. If they'd been talking, he knew that Margalit would have insisted that he wear thicker clothing.

His thoughts drifted between Margalit and the Arab prisoners, phone calls, cups of coffee, and unfinished work. If connections existed they needed more concentrated effort than he could presently muster. Moreover, he was distracted by Ohana's wild driving. On the empty, moonless highway, his commanding officer drove as though to war. The smell of leaves, bushes, fruit trees and harvested fields mingled unpleasantly with the burnt tarmac and petroleum exhaust. The military coffee Sam had hastily downed during the night now swirled threateningly in the nether regions of his unforgiving intestines. Perhaps the first Arab intruder's fate was for the best. Life after all promised you nothing. No doubt the dead boy would be accorded the title of hero by his surviving family and compatriots. In the circumstances, who could ask for more?

At the Jerusalem center of operations, in a school classroom at the back of Beit HaKerem, they handed in their report of the night's doings. The air here, too, was full of smoke and cursing. Inside the cavernous structure everything echoed eerily, hinting to them that their transient presence here was illegal. At any moment, Sam felt that the school bell would bring with it a truck load of police and an irate headmaster. He would have liked that. It would teach these army types a thing or two.

The commanding officer of the center, whom everyone addressed as "Itchy," was in a grumpy, critical mood, as though he, too, had had a fight with his wife. Sam despaired of reaching his bed before late morning.

"Not as good as last time," said the monosyllabic officer running his eye down the column of figures and remarks.

"A surprise exercise," Ohana reminded him. "It's never as successful."

The two sat in a huddle, arguing the merits and defects of the night maneuvers. Ohana expanded on the enemy's aborted raid, but with no particular excitement, as though it were an everyday occurence. After an age, they shook hands and wished each other pleasant dreams. Samuel followed doggedly behind Ohana as the latter filled in a chit for his petrol money, received the necessary coupons, and cracked a joke with the girl soldier in charge of payments.

"Come on, Brosh," he said cheerily. "Unless, that is, you want to stay here with Tsilla."

Sam glanced at the girl who half-smiled and half-snarled at him. Was it a come on? In front of her tired, liquid eyes Sam felt uncomfortable, even a bit terrified. Opening lines, rejoinders, spontaneous responses—these were not his strong suit. He managed his own version of Lieutenant Tsilla's grimace and moved politely on.

While driving Sam home, Ohana said out loud—Sam knew that he could speak no other way—"These bastards are never satisfied. One day they'll call an exercise and no one will come.

He stopped the car outside Sam's house, allowing his passenger to get out. "See you next time around," the commanding officer shouted over the roar of his own engine.

Sam waved at the dark interior of the car as Ohana drove down the street and into the dark.

Standing on the pavement Sam shivered, as though some force had a hold of him and refused to let him go. Lifting his night bag, he entered his building and climbed the stairs. His limbs ached where he had

(Continued on p. 77)

Greenblatt and the Jews

Michelle Ephraim

In the last year, English departments have become the site of heated debates over James Shapiro's *Shakespeare and the Jews* (1996), a study that works from the premise that the significance of Jews in early modern England has yet to be fully acknowledged. While critical responses to Shapiro's study have focused almost exclusively on the question of whether or not the Jews did in fact have a great impact on English culture, the more striking issue raised by *Shakespeare and the Jews* lies in the fact that, in seeking to recognize a history of Jewish oppression, its subject matter inevitably evokes the historical moment of the Holocaust for the contemporary reader. While the leap from Shakespeare to the Shoah might seem impossibly large, I would argue that the subject of Jewish oppression, with the horrors of World War II just fifty some years behind us, conflates time and place. The resonance of the Holocaust continually informs the daily perceptions and experiences of every Jew, and most of us have struggled to reconcile a desire to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive with a desire to move past it, to be detached from this history of pain, loss, and victimization. For me, it is impossible to comprehend this current controversy surrounding *Shakespeare and the Jews* without thinking of my own family's history: my parents' escape from Europe in 1938, and my own childhood, continually haunted and shaped by this past.

Indeed, the stakes involved in contemplating the relationship between history, memory, and Jewish identity are particularly acute in relation to the study of Renaissance England. Given Edward I's expulsion of the Jews in 1290 and the later influx of forcibly converted Spanish Jews into England, many of whom secretly practiced their faith, the historical reality of sixteenth century England evokes the Jews' struggle to practice their faith during the Shoah, and more powerfully, the near extermination of the Jews in World War II Europe. Importantly, in remembering and inscribing the displaced European Jews of almost four centuries ago, early modern scholarship simultaneously evokes the most recent Jewish expulsion in the twentieth century: in this sense, the history of sixteenth-century Jews is not just about the Jews of the sixteenth century, but about contemporary Jews as well. And because of this struggle in the early modern period, Jewish scholars are in a unique position to examine their own experiences in relation to those of the suppressed and assimilated Jews of history.

Yet it is my central argument here that some of the most predominant Jewish scholars in the academy have not taken advantage of their proximity to Jewish history: in fact, the recent wave of literary criticism on *Shakespeare and the Jews* has been antagonized by Jewish scholars themselves—many of whom seem deeply uncomfortable talking about their own identity as Jews in relation to the Jews of the past.

The most disturbing response to Shapiro's study has been Stephen Greenblatt's condescending review of *Shakespeare and the Jews* (*New York Times,* August 11, 1996). For Greenblatt, Shapiro's Jewish identity, and his subsequent ties to the history of Jewish persecutions, impair his skills as a scholar. According to Greenblatt, Shapiro's gravest scholarly error lies in "sifting the evidence and taking the slightest hint [of Jewish allusions in contemporary texts] as a sign of Jewish presence." Yet what we find at the very heart of this review, behind Greenblatt's scolding of Shapiro for his insufficient evidence, is Greenblatt's desire to segregate issues about Jewish identity from the academic realm, a critical strategy that is both emotionally dishonest and intellectually myopic.

The touchstone of Greenblatt's review, at first glance, seems to be his argument that *Shakespeare and the Jews* irresponsibly privileges Jews over England's national poet:

"Though *Shakespeare and the Jews* returns again and again to the brilliance and awfulness of *The Merchant of Venice*, for Mr. Shapiro it is not Shakespeare who is at center stage, but the Jews."

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detach here

עַם, וְרוֹמְמָנוּ מִשִּׁבְלֵי

detach here

לְשׁוֹן, וְקִדַּשְׁתָּנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ

detach here

וְקַרַבְתָּנוּ מַלְכֵּנוּ

detach here

לְעֲבוֹדָתֶךָ וְקֵרַבְתָּנוּ לְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל

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

TIKKUN
Passover Haggadah Supplement 1997

Ever since Rabbi Akiba used the Seder to plan a revolutionary struggle against the Romans, Jews have used the Seder as a time to grapple with the current realities in our world. The Haggadah functioned not primarily as a sacred text, but as an inspiration to address reality and to imagine how to change it. It is in this spirit that we encourage you to make any Seder you attend a lively and spirited occasion by attaching this Haggadah supplement to whatever text is being used. This supplement is intended to add controversy and liveliness to your Seder discussions. Let the Seder table be filled with ideas, debate, and visions of what could be—and when people tell you to be realistic, tell them that God is the Force that makes it possible to not let existing reality constrain your visions. Recognizing that Transformative Force is the central message of Passover.

Kiddush

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

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

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

Ruling classes have traditionally tried to convince their subjects that domination is inevitable, built into the very structure of the universe. The Jewish people's Torah, telling the story of our liberation struggle, has been a perpetual thorn in the side of these ruling classes. Not only was our very existence a proof that the world could be changed, but every Passover, and every Sabbath, we insisted on recounting the story and drawing the lesson: The way things are is not the way things have to be; the world can be radically altered.

The constant recounting of our quest for freedom has predisposed Jews throughout the ages to support the liberation struggles of other oppressed groups. While there have been Jews in every age who thought that they best served the interests of our people by currying favor with the powerful and allying with them, most Jews have rejected this strategy and instead have sought ways to ally themselves with the oppressed.

Judaism has always insisted that spiritual and social transformation go together. *Tikkun*, the healing and repair and transformation that we seek, is not just a matter of politics, but of changing our inner lives, recognizing God in the world around us, in each other, and in ourselves. We need time to develop our inner spiritual lives. But *tikkun* is also about transforming the social world. And the Seder is not primarily a time for personal healing, but for world healing. So, like Jews of yore, we discuss concrete politics with all its complications and potential disagreements—recognizing that, as Jews, we cannot be satisfied with spiritual liberation that leaves the political and social inequalities of the world in place, the suffering of others unchanged.

Yet our concern is not only with economic inequalities, but with spiritual oppression as well. Most Americans learn their concept of what is "realistic" and how to treat other people from their experience all day in the world of work. We live in a society that teaches us to see every other person as a mere means to the satisfaction of our own personal needs or to our own success. The logic of the competitive market teaches us that "looking out for number one" is the common sense of the modern world. As market values permeate our society, every relationship is weakened, because people begin to relate to each other in terms of what they can get from each other. This instrumental attitude undermines our ability to see each other as created in the image of God. The result is a growing loneliness and mutual distrust, even in families and friendships.

וְרוֹמַמְתָּנוּ מִכָּל לָשׁוֹן, וְקִדַּשְׁתָּנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ וְקֵרַבְתָּנוּ מַלְכֵּנוּ לַעֲבוֹדָתֶךָ וְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל עָלֵינוּ קָרָאתָ׃

This has been a troubling year in Israel. Since last Pesach we have seen the ascendency of a new government in Israel that has been slow to implement the Oslo agreements and has accommodated to religious coercion and intolerance. In the aftermath of the partial withdrawal from Hebron, we hope that other steps will be taken so that Israel speedily ends its occupation and allows Palestinians full self-determination. But we continue to be deeply troubled by the way that Judaism has been presented in Israel in association with the least humanly sensitive and most arrogant and coercive voices. We are aware that there are sections of our holy texts that can be used to support attitudes that demean others and that provide chauvinists with apparent biblical sanction for insensitivity to the needs of non-Jews. All the more important that we support those who are seeking to build a Jewish renewal movement, in this country and in Israel, based on the equally valid strains of our tradition that have insisted that every human being is created in the image of God and deserves to be treated with caring, respect, gentleness and dignity.

Both chauvinists and renewalists can find adequate textual support for their respective positions. In the final analysis we are faced with a choice: which parts of our tradition do we seek to build upon and which parts do we seek to downplay, reinterpret or reject? For those of us connected with the community that has developed around TIKKUN magazine, the choice is clear: we affirm those Jews throughout Jewish history who have heard God's voice as the voice of a compassionate and caring force that helps us overcome our tendencies towards irrational anger, distrust, or denial of the holiness of others. We do not deny that others within our tradition have heard God's voice in a different way—suffused with anger, chauvinism and certainty that Jews are somehow better than others. We reject that vision of God.

We are proud that the State of Israel has not allowed itself to be intimidated by those who have resorted to violence to stop the process of peace, withdrawal from the occupied territories, and reconciliation with the Palestinian people.

As Jews, we recognize that our Jewish obligation is to care for the well-being of all people. Our tradition teaches us to care about every human being, including those who temporarily have set themselves up as our enemies. We reject the common sense wisdom of the contemporary world that encourages us to care only about ourselves or our own group or tribe or nation. Instead, we intend to widen the circle of our caring, so that it encompasses the poor and the oppressed, not only in the United States but also in Haiti, Mexico, El Salvador, Eastern Europe, Africa, and wherever else there is human suffering. And we intend to support those forces in Israel that are committed to peace, religious and ethnic pluralism, and recognition of the spirit of God within non-Jews as well as fellow Jews.

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

Bless the Vegetation of the Earth in Times of Ecological Crisis

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

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

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

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

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

destroy or endanger our planet.

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

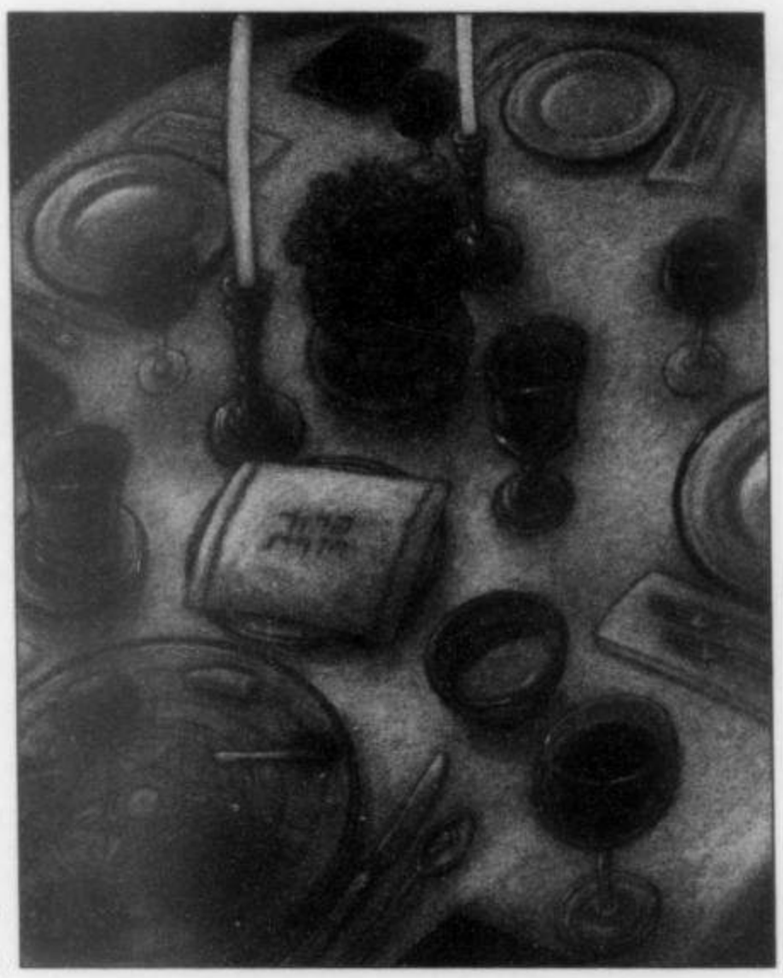
Blessed are you, God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the Earth.

Drops From Our Cup of Joy

Before reciting the Ten Plagues.

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

Our people did not return to its ancient homeland with the intention of displacing or oppressing another people. The historical responsibility for the tragedy is two-sided; when we were refugees fleeing from the oppression of Christian Europe, the Palestinian leadership did all it could to block our return and refused to consider sharing the land. When the UN offered a two-state solution in 1947, Israel accepted and the Palestinians refused. Yet most Palestinians who fled were not involved in these decisions; they were peasant farmers with little knowledge of or involvement in the affairs that would eventually lead to displacement from their homes. Still, even in recent years, too many Palestinians have given tacit support to acts of terrorist violence against Israeli civilians, thereby increasing the anger of Israelis and pushing Palestinian self-determination further away into the future. It's time to stop this cycle of violence, and to recognize that responsibility for today's problems lies with both sides.



We are hopeful that Israel and the Palestinians will speed the pace of peacemaking and reconciliation, and remain proud of the courageous steps Israel has already taken. But we nevertheless cannot leave our cup of joy full as long as a million Palestinians live in refugee camps in surrounding Arab states or under Israeli military rule in sections of the West Bank (most of the land) that Israel still occupies. Yet we also dip drops from our cup in sadness for the many Israelis who have lost their lives to violent attacks by those who wish to undermine the peace accord.

We are particularly saddened by the continued economic oppression and spiritual suffering of African Americans, and by the assault on the poor among them by a right-wing Congress. For many African Americans, life deteriorates as people and corporations move from our inner cities, leaving them without a tax-base or employment possibilities, as social services deteriorate in the face of a mean-spirited backlash that defunds local and state governments, and as despair and meaninglessness yields drug abuse, alcoholism, and a surge in acts of violence. Escalating repression while reducing economic resources, the white power structure in Congress acts as a modern-day Pharaoh. Not much better were those Democrats who helped dismantle welfare without first creating a compassionate alternative. This may make good politics, but it runs completely counter to traditional Jewish values.

Some Jews are willing to close their ears to the cries of those who are suffering on the grounds that some among the most oppressed have uttered anti-Semitic language. Black Muslim demagogues and other rappers of hate manipulate the growing despair of some African Americans in racist, anti-Semitic, and misogynist directions. We are furious at the anti-Semitism—and commit ourselves to fighting it wherever it rears its ugly head. But we also identify with the pain of those who have been subjected to systematic humiliation and discrimination. Less than a century ago, it was Jews who were being blamed for having a culture that produced the sloth and ugliness of Eastern European ghetto life. Remembering our own scapegoating, we reject all attempts to blame the long history of oppression of Blacks on a "culture of poverty." Instead, even as we actively demand that Blacks repudiate and marginalize all anti-Semitic forces within their own communities, we simultaneously affirm our solidarity with them, and spill a drop of wine from our cups for the suffering and continued oppression of African Americans.

Halleluya

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

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

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

Venomar lefanau, shirah chadashah, halleluyah.

Pour Out Thy Wrath

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

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

It is not fashionable to speak about these atrocities—particularly since some reactionary Jews use these memories to legitimate human rights violations against Palestinians—as though they were still fighting the Nazis, as though shooting rock-throwing children could somehow compensate for our own failure to have taken up arms soon enough against the Nazi oppressors. Others use the violence done to us as an excuse to be insensitive to the violence done to others—as though our pain was the only pain—or to legitimate a general "goyim-bashing" attitude based on a total distrust of non-Jews. But though the memories of past oppression are sometimes misused to support insensitivity to others, it is still right for us to talk about our pain, what was done to us, how unspeakable, how outrageous.

Permitting ourselves to articulate our anger, rather than trying to bury it or forget it or minimize it, is the only way that we can get beyond it. So, tonight it is appropriate to speak about our history, about the Holocaust, and about the ways that the American government and peoples around the world failed to respond to our cries and our suffering. What was done to us was wrong, disgusting, an assault on the sanctity of human life and on God. It is with righteous indignation that Jews have traditionally called out *"Shefokh Chamatkha ha'goyim aher lo yeda'ukha"*—pour out your wrath, God, on those people who have acted toward us in a way that fails to recognize Your holy spirit within us as it is within all human beings. [This might be an appropriate place to pause for discussion.]

Tonight we reaffirm our commitment to the messianic vision of a world of peace and justice, in which inequalities have been abolished and our human capacities for love and solidarity and creativity and freedom are allowed to flourish, in which all people will recognize and affirm in each other the spirit of God. In that day, living in harmony with nature and with each other, all peoples will participate in acknowledging God's presence on Earth. We remain committed to the struggles in our own time that will contribute to making that messianic vision possible someday.

By Michael Lerner. From TIKKUN *magazine. Subscriptions $31/yr. TIKKUN, 26 Fell St., S.F., Ca. 94102.*

Yet behind this voice of academic propriety lies a more general critical anxiety about putting Jews at the center of early modern academia, privileging them as subjects of historical and literary inquiry.

Crucially, Greenblatt's response to the subject of the early modern Jew shifts the traditional academic debate about Shakespeare's sentiments about Jews from Shakespeare, the play's author, to Shapiro, the play's critic. And while countless Shakespeareans have defended Shakespeare from charges of anti-Semitism, Greenblatt, constantly policing Shapiro's level of emotional attachment to the subject, ultimately lays blame on Shapiro himself for being too sensitive to the history of Jewish oppression.

Greenblatt's review, ironically entitled, "An English Obsession," refutes Shapiro's assertion that the English were obsessed with the Jews by transferring this obsession to Shapiro. For Greenblatt, such an obsession means having too much of an investment in the past and perhaps an inability to leave it behind. Shapiro, Greenblatt implies, is the Jewish scholar who, in being overly invested in this project, has exposed his desire—a weakness, in Greenblatt's perspective—to be connected to this past.

My point is that there is a paradox at the heart of Greenblatt's response to Shapiro. While he denies the relevance of the Jewish scholar's personal investment in early modern studies, he simultaneously authorizes himself to make this claim on the basis of his own identity as a Jew:

"A few years ago a Renaissance scholar of some repute, comparing Christopher Marlowe's luridly anti-Semitic play 'The Jew of Malta' with Karl Marx's luridly anti-Semitic essay 'On the Jewish Question.' declared that there 'was no 'Jewish Question' in Marlowe's England; there were scarcely any Jews.' In 'Shakespeare and the Jews,' James Shapiro sets out to demonstrate just how misguided and untenable this view is. . .How could the aforementioned scholar—who had read many of these same texts—have made a claim so apparently

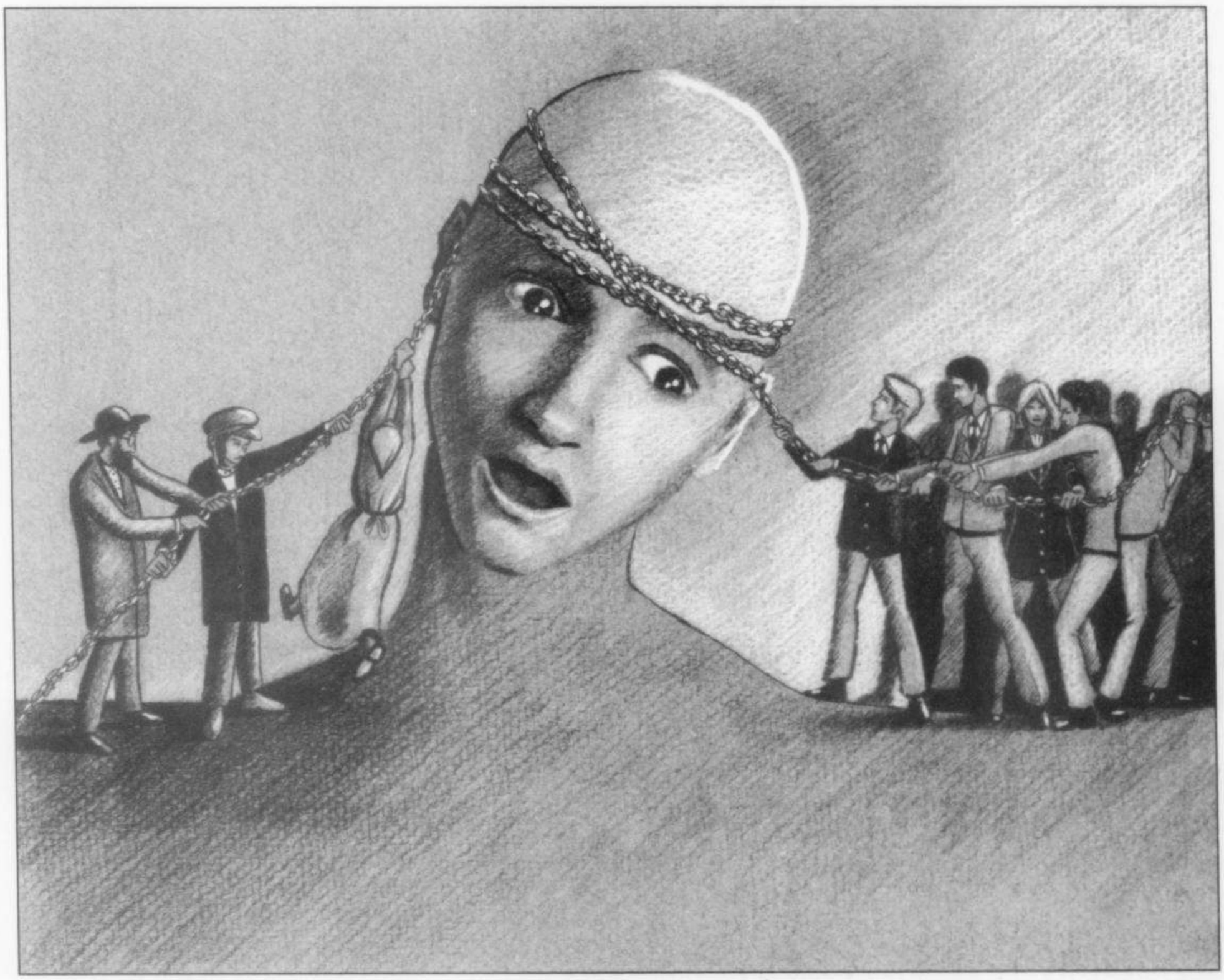


Illustration by Alvin D. Pettit

preposterous? I have a special interest in the answer, since I am none other than that scholar."

In revealing himself as this skeptical scholar, Greenblatt attempts to establish a clear distance from Shapiro whose emotional investment in the past—as Jew—has inspired him, in Greenblatt's opinion, to see Jews where there are none. Yet in facetiously "outing" his own critical identity, Greenblatt himself participates in a rhetorical stance that is distinctly part of the discourse surrounding the subject of the Jew from the medieval period to the present time. Greenblatt reinscribes the rhetoric of "detection" that he critiques Shapiro for in his own presentation of himself as scholar.

Jewish identity, being largely defined through the experience of persecution, has always involved this rhetoric of exposure. From the sixteenth century paranoia about Jews disguised as Marranos to Hitler's elaborate devices intended to identify the physical properties of the Jew, the Jew's potentially unseen identity has occasioned the same language of "detection" and "exposure" through which Greenblatt portrays himself here. Even in contemporary films such as *Europa, Europa*, *School Ties*, and, most recently, in an episode of comedian Garry Shandling's *The Larry Sanders Show*, Larry's sidekick, Hank Kingsley, reveals his Jewish identity by suddenly appearing with a yarmulke on television, we see again and again the theme of the Jew existing undetected within a Christian society, a presence whose identity must at some point come to the surface to the surprise of those around him. Indeed, Greenblatt's own Jewishness swells under his critique of *Shakespeare and the Jews*. And ironically, as he insists that Shapiro makes too much of the Jews, Greenblatt's identity as Jew becomes the most glaring absent presence to his reader.

In discussing *Shakespeare and the Jews*, Greenblatt conveys an acute sense of discomfort with the Jewish scholar who is both Jew and scholar of the Jew. By refusing to acknowledge the relevance of Shapiro's Jewishness to his scholarship, Greenblatt participates in an exclusively academic discourse through which he avoids all emotional investment in the subject matter. This dry and disappointing approach to Shapiro's work underscores the pitfalls of circumventing Jewish identity politics in the academy. This omission may prevent us from illuminating for our audience how an investigation of Jewish history can instill a larger social and ethical function in academia—what I consider to be the most important purpose of scholarship.

Importantly, as a Jewish scholar, a self-conscious awareness of a history of oppression has a particular purpose: it can provide a poignant and dynamic framework from which to foreground, for our colleagues and students, Jew and non-Jew, the relevance of our "real" lives to our scholarship. In doing so, we can encourage less of a rift between the academic arena and our emotional and ethical concerns—a growing problem in the current state of post-structuralist economics. As Jewish scholars, we continuously have to choose whether or not to bring up our personal feelings about this struggle when the subject of Judaism arises in our pedagogical and scholarly work. As a Shakespearean scholar who writes on Jews in the literature of the period, I have had to ask myself whether or not to bring up such emotional and personal sentiments when I talk about, for example, *The Merchant of Venice* in my scholarship as I might in doing so risk appearing academically irresponsible. What I want to stress here, however, is that the Jewish scholar, in an authoritative position to elucidate the emotional significance of the past in a public forum, has not only a responsibility as a Jew to publicly claim a personal stake in the ethical and emotional lessons drawn from this past, but also an opportunity to challenge the elitist and aloof intellectualism of the academy and its often sterile approach to history and memory. Just as each Jew inevitably recalls a history of Jewish oppression, each Jewish scholar brings the ability to impart a continuing meaning to this history within the classroom. By making the choice to assert a personal stake in grappling with the past, a Jewish scholar can also reinvent and reinspire the emotional component of scholarship so often lacking in the academic lives of Jew and non-Jew alike.

And I worry that if we, as Jewish scholars, do not emphasize these complex personal connections to the past as they come up concurrently in our studies and in our lives, we will be encouraging our students and our peers to be safely detached, emotionally and spiritually, in academia's ivory tower. And at a time when the academy, in its embrace of a post-modern ethos, so assiduously celebrates the experience of loss and the irrelevance of personal identity, the need for this personal investment in history is especially crucial. As teachers and critics we should, unlike Greenblatt, consciously admit to our identities as Jews, making the risk of exposing ourselves part of the process of scholarly work so that we can encourage others to see the connection between scholarship and human experience—in essence, fostering a community that does not, in its sophisticated intellectual pursuits, lapse into spiritual paralysis. And ironically, Greenblatt points the way: as he aptly demonstrates, we do always, however unknowingly, underscore the feelings closest to our hearts ourselves—both as scholars and as Jews. ❑

REVIEW

What Jews Can Learn from Buddhism

Nathan Katz

That's Funny, You Don't Look Buddhist: On Being a Faithful Jew and a Passionate Buddhist, by Sylvia Boorstein. Harper San Francisco, 1997.

"I am a prayerful, devout Jew because I am a Buddhist".

Sylvia Boorstein's claim is that she is both a Buddhist and an observant Jew. This is a significant, difficult claim. She is not saying she is Jewish by ethnicity and Buddhist by practice and conviction. That claim might be lamentable, but it is not difficult or very important. A respected teacher of Buddhist meditation, she writes: "I am describing how my meditation practice and Dharma understanding have made me more awakened as a Jew."

This claim is a challenge to anyone who takes Judaism seriously because it implies that practicing Buddhism adds something to Judaism which was otherwise absent, and that if Buddhism can enhance one's Judaism then in some sense Buddhism must be "kosher."

More than that, Sylvia Boorstein is not alone in her contention. Her journey is not simply idiosyncratic but it reflects the experience of an indeterminate number of synagogue-attending, *kashrut*-observing, Torah reading, *shomer Shabbat* Jews. I often lecture on this and related topics as scholar-in-residence in synagogues, and it never fails that during *kiddush*, some congregation members talk with me about their experiences in such-and-such *ashram*, or at a *vipassana* retreat, or under this or that guru. And they all tell me essentially the same thing: that their spiritual peregrinations have made them better Jews.

Sylvia Boorstein's claim is an important one because it speaks not only for her, but for many. What are we to make of it?

Whether we are aghast at the thought that *avodah zarah* (commonly translated as idolatry) is being sanctioned Judaically, or whether we believe in a post-modern ecumenical openness, reading this book forces one to *like* Sylvia Boorstein. Here is a sixtyish Jewish woman with intelligence, humor, great warmth, and an indomitable spirit. She has the depth of character which invites confidence and intimacy. Her book is a very personal one, chronicling her mid-life discovery of Buddhism, the experiences triggered by meditation, her *yehidut* (one-on-one encounters with rebbes) in Jerusalem, and her *teshuva* (return) to Judaism without leaving Buddhism behind.

One has to like Sylvia Boorstein's book because one has to like Sylvia Boorstein.

One has to like her book even if it is at times precious, as when she describes an Israeli acquaintance as "the first person in the Upper Amazon Basin to put on *tefillin* while reading Padmasambhava's *Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*."

One has to like her book even if she expresses a Pollyanna-ish, yet defensive, lack of concern that her children have all married Gentiles because "they are married to wonderful people."

One has to like her book despite its lack of intellectual rigor in raising and dismissing without reflection the crucial issue of *avodah zarah*, idolatry. After all, for the observant Jew Sylvia Boorstein claims to be, the issue of *avodah zarah* must be one of the thorniest.

One has to like her book because she is able to articulate how Buddhist meditation led her to Judaic observance: "Practicing mindfulness I felt peaceful and happy. Feeling peaceful and happy caused me to say blessings. Saying blessings reminded me of prayers, which I had found comforting as a child, and inspired me to pray again... I'm fairly sure my Sabbath observance is a direct consequence of my monastic practice. The possibility of a regularly scheduled day set aside for mindful recollection, meditation, and study—one that I could ritually celebrate with my family—is compelling."

That the practice of meditation can enhance the observance of Judaism is not problematic; our *rishonim* used to spend an hour centering themselves before *davenning* every morning. What is problematic is the Buddha's view that God is spiritually insignificant, and this forces us to squarely face the issue of *avodah zarah*. Taken in its literal sense it means "other people's worship." In this sense, *avodah zarah* may be perfectly acceptable for a Gentile. But *avodah zarah* came to be a synonym for idolatry, an abomination for Jews and Gentiles alike. In a more modern tone, our rabbis teach that idolatry is valuing anything higher than God. This is precisely what the Buddha seemed to do in the *Culamalunkya Sutta*, where he taught that concern for God is as irrelevant and counterproductive to *the* spiritual task of the pursuit of *nibbana* as is a warrior's ludicrous concern about the origin of an arrow by which he had been pierced; refusing medical aid until he could ascertain the direction from which the arrow had been shot and the caste of the archer, the warrior dies before his wounds could be treated. In the very first text of the Buddhist canon, the *Brahmajala Sutta*, the Buddha taught that belief in God is an egoistic mis-remembering of previous lives and a hindrance to spiritual progress. Contemporary western Buddhists are often proud of their adopted religion's purported atheism, proof of its modernity.

A Buddhist nun of Jewish origin, bemused at Sylvia Boorstein's focus on teaching meditation to Jews, asked her, "What do you say to people who ask if you believe in God?" to which she replied, "I say, Yes." Admittedly, Sylvia Boorstein would have preferred not to have the God issue arise, but it is unavoidable. In fact, the Buddha taught ways to God for those who insisted upon it, and Sylvia Boorstein describes

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her experience of God through Buddhist meditation:

"In periods of intensive meditation practice, at times when I have been very, very still, I've seen the world I know and recognize as myself and my story dissolve and become the vibrancy of infinite space...I can look into the emptiness of undifferentiated Mind and know it as Source. I can look at elaborated Mind and see it as creation and know that everything, absolutely everything, is God in temporal, particular form. Looking at emptiness, I feel I see God."

From this testimony, one is tempted to agree that Buddhist meditation could be a mystical path toward God, but Sylvia Boorstein evaluated her experience in an explicitly Buddhist, non-Judaic way: "It's an altered mind awareness, and I know how to achieve it, but it isn't a big enough allure for me to take the time to reside in it regularly." It is at this point that Buddhism and Judaism, momentarily conjoined harmoniously, must diverge, because for a Jew, such diffidence towards God is impossible. Whether viewed from a mystical perspective which understands God impersonally, or from the normative view of God as a personal being, God by definition is that which is most alluring, is the highest good, is that beyond which there is nothing greater, to borrow an *Upanishadic* metaphor. In other words, Judaically God cannot be just another experience, which is what He must be Buddhistically. And it is at just this point that harmony becomes shrill.

I want to single out two other important questions which underlie this book. What kind of Buddhism is it which attracts Sylvia Boorstein and many others? And what kind of Judaism do Sylvia Boorstein and others create as a consequence of their *teshuva*-without-rejecting-their-past?

The Buddhism which Sylvia Boorstein embraces is clearly not the Buddhism one finds in Thailand, Japan or Tibet. Traditional Buddhism has been disparaged by some American enthusiasts as "ethnic Buddhism," of little relevance for the meditation-oriented, elitist path they and their teachers have created. "Blue collar Buddhism," the type found in much of Asia and in Thai and Vietnamese temples in the United States, to them is basically an embarrassment, an inferior path of devotion. Attracted to the clarity and precision, the lack of ritual embellishment and the non-dogmatic, self-reliant doctrine invented by western scholars of the scientifically-minded nineteenth century, Buddhism as actually practiced by hundreds of millions of Buddhists is irrelevant.



Illustration by Cyn Maurice

The kind of Buddhism which western Buddhists construct is a path of meditation. The kind of meditations they do compensate for what they found lacking in the synagogues and churches of their youth, a system of experiences which leads to an enhanced aesthetic appreciation of this world. When this appreciative awareness is brought to bear on familiar rituals and liturgies, they take on vibrant, new meanings. This is both the appeal of Buddhism in the first place, and the avenue for a return to synagogues and churches. It is far too easy to be cynical about their path, which might reduce God to an experience and lead one to pick and choose religious practices based on the superficial criterion of a rite's aesthetic appeal. When one's religion sacrifices all sense of obligation on the altar of choice, one is left with something far less than Judaism.

Jews who opt for Buddhism are not finding there a less demanding path than the one they left behind; the irony is that the same individuals who find Judaism's demands antiquated and patriarchal willingly prostrate themselves at the feet of male gurus; those for whom minor fast days and the details of *kashrut* are tedious welcome the rigors of 4 a.m. *pujas* and twelve-hour meditation sittings. Demands are not the problem; a tepid religiosity is. Although many Orthodox Jews observe their religion passionately, daily prayer and the observance of *mitzvot* is no guarantee of the vital, creative religiosity which seekers like Sylvia Boorstein rightly demand. Traditional Judaism minus a sense of beauty, lacking the refreshing breath of wonder, is no great bargain. In the modern (or postmodern) world, many find it impossible to be both honest and credulous about religion. Modernity teaches us that we cannot be naive about the truth claims of a religion, but even a healthy skepticism ought not blind us to the obvious: that the modern world is not beautiful, while tradition often is. Sylvia Boorstein, having cultivated an appreciative awareness through Buddhist meditation, and then directing that attention toward Judaism, demonstrates both what is appealing about Buddhism in the first place, and indicates the avenue back to Judaic practice for those who make the journey.

In doing comparative religions, one point I insist upon with my students is that one compare like with like. It seems obvious, but it isn't. It is all too easy to compare one's own ideals with the other's practice, to compare one's own religion as one would like it to be with the other's religion as it is. Of course, the scales are irrevocably tilted unless one painstakingly identifies what is justly comparable with what. In the case of so many JuBus (the term was applied by Rodger Kamenetz in *The Jew in the Lotus* to ethnic Jews who practice Buddhism, yet feel some nostalgia for Judaism), the Buddhism in their comparison is of the highest meditative and philosophic order, while the Judaism in the equation is a dysfunctional family, cholesterol-laden ethnic food and a boring synagogue service. No wonder they became Buddhist!

But Sylvia Boorstein's Judaism is richer than that, thankfully. Her Judaism is a composite of religious grand-

parents whom she loved, stories and prayers, secular parents, and a spiritually vacuous synagogue... enough to make her eventual return possible, and enough to make for meaningful comparisons.

So we know what kind of Judaism many left, and we know what kind of Buddhism many found. The next step in tracing Sylvia Boorstein's steps is to imagine what kind of Judaism they experience if and when they return, when they "do *teshuva*." And the first part of that Judaism is an understanding that their *teshuva* does not reject the path which led to that *teshuva* but which incorporates it into their newly-recreated Judaism. Their Judaism is one which includes Buddhist meditation.

Meditation apparently gives them an appreciative perspective on Judaic practice, a perspective otherwise unattainable and which opens Judaism to new interpretations. For example. Sylvia Boorstein describes the liturgical recitation of the penultimate blessing to the *Shema*: "When I say '*Vehaviyeyenu l'shalom meyarbah kanfot ha'aretz* (And bring us in peace from the four corners of the earth)', I do not think about *people*, I think about attention. When my mind is distracted and my mind is confused, I don't feel 'at peace'. So, when I say that line, I am trying to collect scattered attention."

What Sylvia Boorstein does with this phrase is typical of what Jewish mystics have done for centuries, and what the Jewish Renewal Movement is doing today: valuing an esoteric interpretation over an exoteric one. Of course, orthodox mystics have never allowed the esoteric to *replace* the exoteric, but they have *supplemented* the latter with the former. It has been the heretics who have favored the *kavannah* over and against the *mitzvah* (the intention over the act). Which alternative Sylvia Boorstein intends is not at all clear, but there seems to be nothing amiss if her meditative understanding of focusing attention is added to the traditional hope for a return to Eretz Israel, but does not abrogate it.

These issues pertaining to Jews who practice Buddhism and their relationship to Judaism arose in a meeting with the Dalai Lama six years ago.

Long intrigued by Jewish experience, several years ago the Dalai Lama invited Jewish scholars and rabbis to be his guests for an intensive Tibetan-Jewish dialogue in 1990. He wanted to learn the "Jewish secret" of survival in exile—a reasonable question, even if it's the first time anybody ever asked us.

It was a great honor to be invited to join an 8-person delegation to journey to his palace in the Himalayan foothills in north India, on behalf of the Jewish people. We were all too happy to tell him about our "Jewish secret" as best we understood it, but he shared his "Tibetan secret" with us Jews, too.

After a week spent talking with lamas, abbots of monasteries, educators, secular leaders, even the State Oracle, we were in a final wrap-up session with the Dalai Lama. Towards the end, on behalf of the Jewish delegation I raised this difficult issue with the Dalai Lama—of Jews who convert to other religions, including Buddhism. Having seen our very strong sense of family, he readily understood our loss, our pain, when any one of us opts to leave. And having heard about our Kabbalah, about Jewish meditation and spirituality, he, too, was perplexed about our loss.

The Dalai Lama responded with his characteristic compassion and understanding. He told us his secret: that we need to lower our traditional barriers to esotericism, that we ought to make our spiritual teachings more readily available to our own seekers. If they have these teachings, he reasoned, then why would they want to leave?

But the matter is not quite that simple. The fact is that even today, most spiritually-inclined young Jews, especially those outside of Orthodoxy, find few opportunities to learn Judaic spiritual practices. The Dalai Lama asked us what happened to our esoteric traditions. Why is it so difficult to study them?

Rabbi Moshe Waldoks, a member of the delegation, told him a sobering truth: it was because of the Holocaust. During this blackest of eras, fully one-third of all the Jews in the world were murdered. As if that weren't bad enough, more than eighty percent of rabbis and teachers were murdered.

The Dalai Lama readily understood the profundity of our loss, that the murder of many of our people was also the murder of our spiritual traditions. He knows as well as anyone how delicate is esotericism. In every tradition, esoteric traditions are preserved though an unbroken chain of oral transmission. One can read the *Zohar* or a work of Buddhist Tantra and will likely find them opaque without the vitalizing oral commentary from one who has mastered the text, the rebbe or the lama. The transmission of the oral commentary is known as lineage, and once a lineage is broken, it cannot be repaired. Our spiritual teachings, too, were gassed, and whenever a Jew leaves Judaism for lack of "spirituality," Hitler must smile from his grave because his project to destroy Judaism continues after his death.

In this light, what are we to make of the claim which Sylvia Boorstein proffers on behalf of so many Jews who have "gone East," some to return and some not? Clearly, our esoteric lineages are broken. But it's more than that—the world is broken, history is broken, which is to say that we live in exile. How timely is a deep teaching from the Kabbalah, the idea of *tikkun*.

As readers of this magazine well know, *tikkun* means to repair or mend. In an exoteric sense, *tikkun* means social action with the goal of improving the world. In the Jewish Renewal sense, *tikkun* refers to a spiritualized politics. But in the esoteric sense, a *tikkun* is a mysterious, mystical act which in ways not readily apparent plays a role in mending a broken world. Rabbi Isaac Luria, perhaps the greatest Kabbalist ever, taught that to perform *tikkun* is our highest purpose, that the deepest and most profound act of all is to mend.

One day I was discussing all of these mysterious matters with an associate, truly a profound Kabbalist, in his apartment on Manhattan's East Side. I had just told him about Jews like Sylvia Boorstein who opted for Buddhism but who, unlike Sylvia Boorstein, did not find their way back to Judaism. I had in mind another powerful, Jewish woman who has become a Buddhist meditation master, Ayyah Khema, a Buddhist nun. I had commented that leaving Judaism for Buddhism was her loss.

"Maybe not," he replied. "Maybe this is what was best for her." I backtracked. Perhaps it was not her loss, but surely her adopting Buddhism was a loss to the Jewish people.

"Maybe not," he replied again. "From what you have told me about these Jews who have gone east, I suspect they may be participating in some very deep *tikkun*. They are mending the fissure between east and west, but this is deeper than politics. They may be mending the souls of the Jewish people."

For years I've been thinking about what this rebbe suggested. And every time I hear a Jewish "leader" trivialize

Asian religions as "cults," I shudder. By using the label "cult," we insure that we will never understand; it is no more than theological name-calling. We will never understand the religion we condemn, and worse yet, we will never understand what leads young Jews to these alien faiths.

Worse perhaps is that we fail to take seriously the spiritual aspirations of Jews who don't find their needs met in their synagogues. Does anyone really believe they will bring a Jew back by poking fun at her or his searchings and strivings? When we misrepresent Buddhism, we only display our own ignorance.

I don't know whether it's kosher to practice yoga or Buddhist meditation; such a question could only be addressed by rabbis who know the pertinent *halakhas* and who have a deep understanding of Buddhism or Yoga—an unlikely coincidence of expertises.

My point is that spirituality is an approach to religion which can be learned. And if Sylvia Boorstein, for one reason or another, did not find it in Judaism, maybe she found it elsewhere. And now, she has returned to Judaism with it, thereby re-injecting Judaism with a spirituality which had been broken. Maybe that's her *tikkun*. Maybe that's why she wrote, "I can say—with perfect faith—that my contribution to *tikkun olam*... begins with my dedication to maintaining a loving heart." Maybe this rebbe was correct when he suggested that Jewish spirituality, which was burnt in Hitler's ovens, might possibly be reclaimed from India! ❑

REVIEW

Returning to Jewish Texts

Marc M. Epstein

From Jerusalem to the Edge of Heaven, by Ari Elon, JPS, 1996.

Until recently the names Elul, Milah, and Almah were virtually unknown in America. The proliferation of institutions in Israel devoted to the study of traditional texts in a new non-sectarian, extra-academic, post-rabbinic context was hardly deemed worthy of comment in the media. But in the wake of the Rabin assassination, with the quest for a new sense of purpose and direction for the whole of Israeli culture, these bisyllabic acronyms have become increasingly familiar to more and more people both in Israel and abroad. What is happening in upscale neighborhoods in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv is nothing less than a quiet revolution: a broad spectrum of individuals of the political left who exhibit an extraordinary religious and spiritual diversity—identifying as *halakhic* and post-*halakhic*, orthodox, traditional and secular— are getting together to 'learn,' (rather than to 'study' or to 'research') the classic texts of the rabbinic tradition. Previously established arenas for the study of the political implications of religious texts, such as the Hartman Institute, are expanding, and institutions such as Pardes and Yakar, which seek authentic, open-minded (though not necessarily always liberal) and inclusive socio-political direction within the four *amot* of *Halakha* are attracting larger and larger numbers of people. The salient question of this revolution, like any revolution is, of course, "Whose culture is this, what will we take from the tradition and how will we use it?"

Every revolution needs a manifesto, and some are predicated on declarations of independence. In *From Jerusalem to the Edge of Heaven*, the recently released English translation of Ari Elon's epically challenging work, *Alma Dee*, this nascent movement 'back to the sources' finds both its manifesto and declaration of independence. Elon is the scion of a prominent Israeli family which has produced scholars and politicians representing the entire continuum of Israeli political opinion, and now Director of the Rabbinic Texts program at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. His work, stunningly produced by the Jewish Publication Society, is rendered in a pellucid translation by Tikva Frymer-Kensky, through which we can clearly see Elon's clever and incisive mind at work and at play. The book itself combines elements of memoir, diary, religio-political manifesto and literary critique in a quirkily poetic, often dreamlike stream-of-consciousness anti-narrative.

Early on in this profoundly difficult and often disturbing work, Elon tells what can only be described as a postmodern horror story. He describes entering a senior class at a well-known secular high school in Jerusalem in order to teach, well, 'Judaism.' The students insist that he cannot be their Judaism teacher because such a teacher would necessarily wear a kippah and a beard and tzizit; he counters by asserting that he does not know what 'Judaism' is, and then asks the boys if they wear kippot in math class. No—they do not wear kippot in math class. As for Judaism, it consists of "the subjects of the *datti'im* [the 'religious']... subjects that the *datti'im* teach." And as for themselves:"...We're Jews a little—they [the *datti'im*] are much more Jews than we."

The story is frightening on a number of levels. For one, it shows that 'secular' education in Israel has not succeeded any better than American after-school Hebrew schools at inculcating a sense of Jewish identity in Israeli students. But much worse than that, it shows that Israelis— the very people held up in afternoon Hebrew

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schools as alternate paradigms for what it means to be a Jew—have fallen into the very same trap of defaulting on the tradition as have the majority of American Jews. Ask most of my intelligent college undergraduates how they identify Jewishly and they will answer, "Well, we don't do very much—so I guess we're Reform." (Imagine Geiger spinning in his grave to be identified with this sort of Judaism by default). Or, wear a kippah in class, on campus, and (yes) at home, and students will assume that you are "more religious" than they are, "very religious" in fact, "very orthodox" perhaps, or even that pinnacle of the scale, "hasidic."

There is something very wrong here. Religious authority has become so intertwined with conservative politics as to be identified with it. To make matters worse, a polymorphous and diffuse 'spirituality' is differentiated from religion and has become the purview of the left. This 'spirituality' resists any attempt at quantification or particularization, and has consequently come to represent that which is universal. This is wonderful, progressive perhaps, except for the fact that it leaves only dry, spiritless 'religion' to represent all that is particular and quantifiable about Judaism, making "authentic" Jewishness the property of those who wear fedoras. The fedora-less masses can only, at best, feel that "...they (the *datti'im*) are much more Jews than we."

Elon objects to this: Why are we on the left so willing to accept the 'fact' that "the Talmud says...." "the rabbis teach..." or "the *Halakha* is..." while delegating to the right the privilege and responsibility of working with the text. But what if, Elon asks, we reclaim from the right the idea that rabbinic texts are at the center of Jewish existence? And what happens if it should turn out that the culture those texts represent, a culture we are perhaps prepared to condemn, ends up speaking to us? What happens in the likely event that parts of our cultural heritage make us bristle while others are in direct confluence with our ethos? Will it do to deny interpretive responsibility? On the contrary: such ambiguity should be a call to interpretation, an invitation to learn how to learn texts in such a way that one can appreciate them as an integral tapestry.

Elon recognizes in an agonized and visceral way that Jewish culture is in crisis, and that neither bagels and lox, nor liberal or conservative politics, nor the *ba'al teshuva* nor the Renewal movements will save it. What, he asks, will save Jewish culture if not learning Torah? And perhaps rightly so—for what, besides raw genetic material, makes Jewish culture Jewish? Only an active and lively engagement with Jewish texts—what has classically been called *limud Torah*. In an intensely personal poetic memoir, Elon charts his path from being a rabbinically determined (*rabbani*) to becoming a self-determined (*ribboni*) Jew. He uses his own experience as an example of the way in which Jews need to free themselves from the myth that only those who live the lifestyle described in rabbinic texts are suited to study them; that such texts, in other words, are, by and large about how to live a certain way, and if one does not live that way, one does not need them. He reveals the ways in which those of us who choose not to live that way have, in effect, walked over to the nearest person in a fedora or a *sheitel* and handed over to him or her our most sublime possession and inheritance: "Here," we said, "Take this. We don't need it. You have better use for it than we do. You can Jew for us." And then the fedora and *sheitel* people replied, "But of course you need this, in fact you must have it for the salvation of your soul! Only you must not only learn it, but live it, you must do what it says." But we refused it because making those oh-so *halakhic* texts central to our identity as Jews, seemed so inexorably intertwined with the observence of a *Halakha*, a Way we wanted no part of. Thus, we gave away our greatest national literary and moral treasure to people who tend to conceptualize it as an elaborate instruction manual. But how can we, having lost our faith and abandoned our observance, reclaim our texts?

Various post-war solutions to this problem, including the "return to orthodoxy" of the *ba'al teshuva* movement of the sixties through the present and the American Jewish Renewal movement of the eighties through the present have failed to achieve the marriage of liberal politics with a true return to and embrace of rabbinic texts that Elon clearly desires; *ba'alei teshuva*, in searching for religious 'authenticity' very often find themselves involved with teachers and communities which are politically conservative. Some accept this equation as a 'package deal'— quietly disagreeing with the politics, but remaining with such teachers or communities for the sake of the religious environment. Others are converted to the belief that conservative politics is the necessary end of a truly 'authentically Jewish' lifestyle. If a formerly liberal *ba'al teshuva* speaks out in the cause of conservative politics, s/he is celebrated as one transformed by the wisdom of the Torah from a path of ignorance and blindness to the True Way. If that same *ba'al teshuva* were to have spoken out in the cause of liberal politics, s/he would be 'read out' of the community, dismissively condemned for lack of learning or improper upbringing. Unlike the *ba'al teshuva* movement, Elon calls for no repentance in the classical sense, no 'awakening' to Jewish observance, and certainly no adherence to conservative politics as the only authentically Jewish politics.

Renewal, on the other hand, seeks to legitimate the individual's spiritual experience, whatever it may be, as part of the Jewish tradition. When texts are studied, it is often in translation, and the discussion centers more around the discussants than around the text. Renewal celebrates Jacob's discovery that "God was in this place, and I did not know it—" God is wherever we are. In this sense it can be a bit disingenuous: by accentuating the positive and the relevant, it tends to ignore aspects of the tradition which are problematic. It disregards the fact that we would never set foot in some of the places the tradition says that God is, as well as the fact that the tradition would assert that some of the places (philosophical and otherwise) we find ourselves, are antithetical to God's presence. Thus, while the *ba'al teshuva* movement requires us to become 'authentic,' by buying into a certain conservative world-view, Jewish Renewal grants blanket spiritual authenticity to anything done by a Jew, and celebrates the authenticity of "being here now," but is somewhat unclear concerning its sources of authority and connection to history. Yesterday's innovation is as sacred as

the *Halakhot* explicated by the rabbis of the Gemara. While Elon might sympathize with some elements of this approach, teaching as he does at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, it seems clear that he wants to move beyond it into something radically new.

What Elon, in fact, advocates in his desire to encourage those who are post-*rabbinic* Jews is no less than a culture of what many present day observant Jews would label *epikorsut*. A culture of Jews who know as much as a Jew can know about how to learn, but who aren't committed to actively observing any specific part of it. Yet it has been observed time and time again that whatever the criticism of Jews who default on the ritual laws, there are plenty of ritually observant Jews who default on the ethical laws, particularly in the areas of interpersonal relationships and respect for all people as the image of God.

No one would deny that these commandments are as critical as those of mixed seed types and the depth of ritual baths. One is bound, in Elon's opinion, to learn Torah in such a way as to uncover the myriads of *halakhot* concerning human interaction and society-building which can be derived from the midrashim in particular. How many *yeshiva bokhurim* are taught to scorn the midrashim as fairytales which break up the study of "the real thing"—*Halakha*? Is any learning truly deep which plumbs the depths of Ukzin, (the Mishnaic tractate dealing with the ritual impurity of roots, stalks, husks, shells and kernels) while allowing the broad field of midrash to lie fallow? If R. Akiba could learn "heaps and heaps of *halakhot*" from the tiny crowns on the letters of the Torah, then why should we not gain humanistic insight of similar depth from the aggadic fox fables of R. Meir? And why should the *halakhic* and the humanistic, the 'religious' and the 'spiritual' be so unnaturally divided out and set against each other?

Elon makes compelling arguments for the holiness of the vocation of traditional Torah study for Jews for whom God may be dead, or at least sleeping. It is true that the vast majority of us no longer live a lifestyle where, say, the dimensions of ritual baths are either compelling or apropos. We are certainly alienated from much of the content of Jewish learning. But it is equally true that we have institutionalized and synagogified Judaism to a point where it is unrecognizable as a living pathway— we have transformed *Halakha* from Tao to Law. *Halakha* works for the right because they live a life within its boundaries, their Judaism is integral, not something to do for a couple of hours on a Saturday morning.

But Elon asks why the love and learning of rabbinic texts should be any less 'natural' for post-*halakhic* Jews, and he muses about how to make such learning holistic and contiguous with the rest of our lives. Unlike the traditional *epikoros,* Elon doesn't want us to learn for the sake of knowing what we're rejecting. Elon is revolutionary in that he is not afraid not to reject. Elon proposes that we approach rabbinic texts in a way which will suit people for whom God exists as well as people for whom God is dead.

Elon's ideal of learning "Torah for its own sake" is based not in the authority of divine commandment, but in the free spirit of academic inquiry. One learns texts because they are important, but recognizes that such texts, to paraphrase Barthes, suspend meaning while perpetually dispatching one toward interpretation, urge one beyond dogmatism, beyond ideology, beyond authority. One studies text because it is the place wherein answers are provoked but not given.

While Barthes' approach is fine for literature, it is risky for cultural continuity. When one's very identity— both one's selfhood and one's peoplehood are at stake, one cannot help hoping against hope for answers. *From Jerusalem to the Edge of Heaven* is a brilliant critique which stops short of concrete solutions. Elon sensitively, subtly, despairingly, overwhelmingly cries out to us that things are terribly wrong, and describes the profound spiritual transformation which needs to come about in order to awaken ourselves to our destiny as *ribboni* Jews. And after reading Elon, one might find oneself wandering in the wilderness and despairing, "From whence shall our salvation come?"

If *From Jerusalem to the Edge of Heaven* stands as a manifesto and declaration of independence, then Elul, Milah, Almah, Hartman, Pardes, and many other groups and institutes which are likely in formation, are writing the constitution of a new and revolutionary Jewishness. The movement in Israel is the concrete solution, whereby post-*halakhic* Jews will take the necessary next step, to now seek to become equally learned as the self-appointed custodians in the *yeshivot*, since Judaism has developed since the period of the Second Temple as a democracy of learning and a hierarchy of authority based on text study.

Questions remain about the dilemma and its solution: What is the imperative behind the learning of rabbinic texts if not a Divine mandate, and what is its goal, if not observance? Elon proposes that rabbinic literature is the foundational document and the most profound expression of the cultural heritage of the Jewish people. But it happens also to be in great part a legal corpus: one doesn't find secular Muslims studying *hadith*, lay Catholics intimately involved with Canon Law, or ordinary Americans devoting their lives to Constitutional Law. What do we do, ultimately with the legal corpus? And if it is not a legal corpus which is to be followed, what is to compel us to study it and what do we pass on about the value of this literature?

These are, in some senses, the same questions which European and American Jews faced at the end of the last and at the beginning of this century. How will they be answered in the Israeli context at the end of the century? Can we have any expectation that it will be answered in ways other than the dry and non-compelling ways in which they were answered in America? Judaism is going through its post-adolescence in Israel. The rebellion has been accomplished, now it wants to settle down and start a family. To what extent will it replicate the mistakes of the American and European experiments? I am encouraged by the developments afoot in the creation of a new democracy of learning in Israel. And I feel confident that with Ari Elon as one of its seminal thinkers, and *From Jerusalem to the Edge of Heaven* as one of its critical texts, this approach cannot but have some profound impact on the development of Jewish culture well into the next century. ❑

Sikkum

Susannah Heschel and Shalom Goldman

Fragments, by Binjamin Wilkomirski. Translated by Carol Brown Janeway. Schocken Books, 1996.

What was the fate of the Jewish children taken to Nazi concentration camps? We know that around 1.5 million were murdered and an unknown number survived internment in the camps and ghettos, but we have little information about their experiences. What happened to them, and how did these children make sense of their lives?

In one of the most moving books I have ever read, Binjamin Wilkomirski gives us the fragments of his memories. He remembers little of life before the war, just the murder of his father and a momentary encounter at Majdanek with a woman he is told is his "mother," a word he doesn't fully understand. He vividly knows the terrors in hiding, the beatings, tortures, murders, deaths of the children in his barracks, but also the affection of his fellow child-inmates. Without artifice, he manages to capture the mind of a little boy describing the horrors he endured, horrors which continued after 1945, when the Swiss couple who adopted him told him to forget his experiences, and neglected to tell him that the war had ended. Only years later, in a high school history course, did he learn that the camps had been liberated and shut down.

In the immediacy of his language, his unpretentious recounting of a child's inner life and ways of viewing the world, Wilkomirski has given us a masterpiece. As much as it is a stupendous memoir of the Holocaust, this is also an important book about human existence, as profound as the writings of Primo Levi and Jean Amery.

Susannah Heschel

French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial, by Serge Klarsfeld. New York: NYU Press, 1996.

Nazi-hunter Serge Klarsfeld and his wife, Beate, tracked down Klaus Barbie, the Gestapo chief of Lyons, and other Nazi war criminals. Himself a child survivor, Klarsfeld has now produced a massive and moving documentary history of the deportation and murder of the 11,400 Jewish children arrested in Vichy France and murdered in Nazi concentration camps. This meticulously organized volume (at 1881 pages) opens with a chronology of the war against the Jews of France. Through photos and detailed charts we read of the 75 "transportations" in which these children were deported. The book's charts list the names and addresses of all 11,400 children and photographs of over 2,000 of them, and attempts to provide a brief biography of the children so that each one is remembered as a personality, not a statistic. The book is a great tribute to the children, and a heart-rending venture to read.

Shalom Goldman

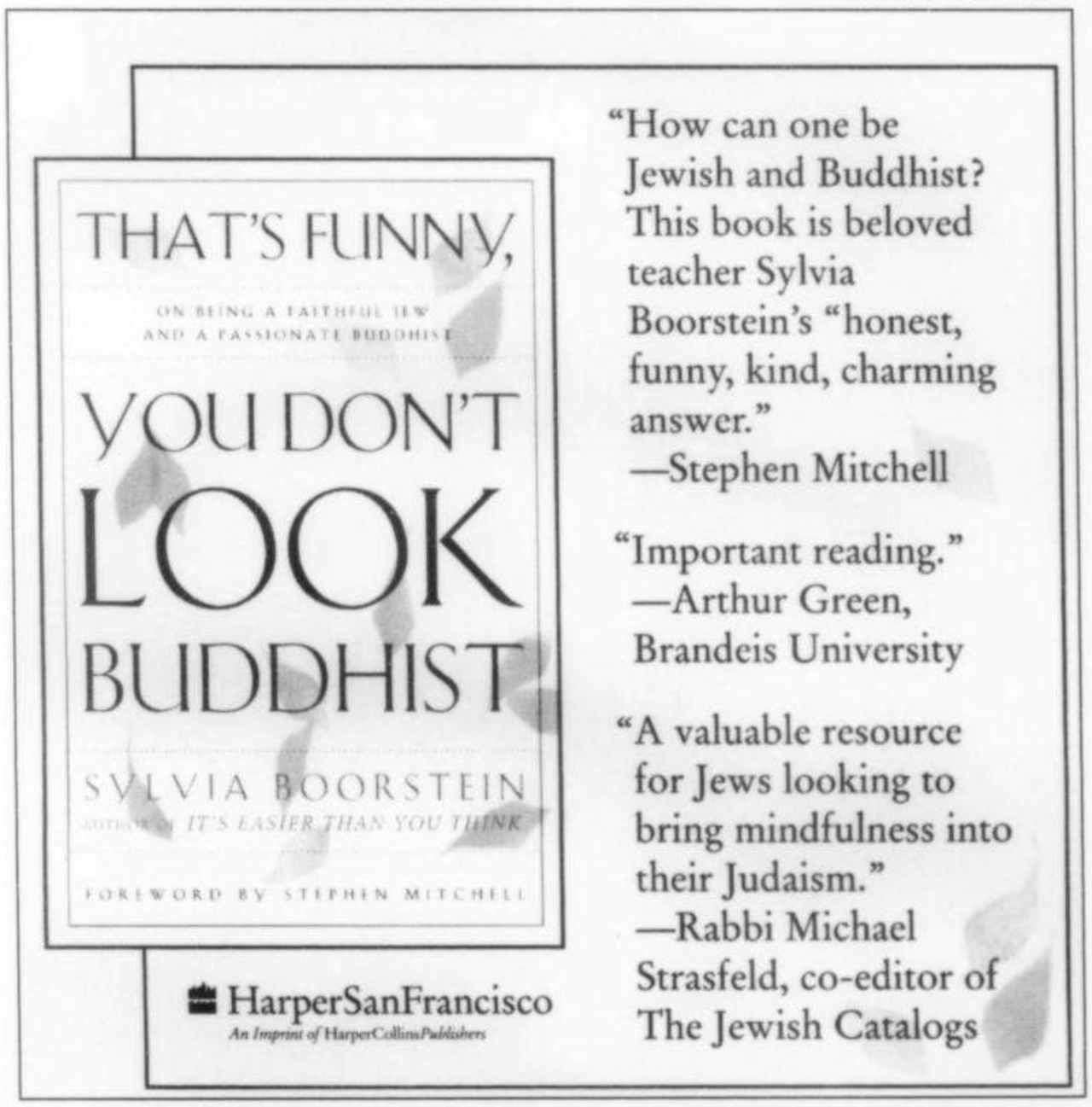
Music Minus One (Poems), by Jane Shore. New York: Picador, 1996.

This collection captures the experience of growing up in the fifties in a way that few novelists, and even fewer American poets, have managed. Jane Shore's work is not prone to nostalgia, but rather to evocations of the crankiness, loneliness, and small joys of a New Jersey 1950s childhood. Listen to "Crybaby," in which the world of summer camp is skillfully evoked:

> "I was miserable every day that summer
> at Camp Bell, summer of the iron lung
> and Joe McCarthy. Miserable
> eating my kosher lunch and playing tag
> in scratchy new shorts, my name repeated
> on the labels my mother whipstitched
> to the stiff elastic waistbands of my underpants."

This was my favorite. I'm sure you'll find yours.

Shalom Goldman



JEWISH MUSIC

Sounds of Renewal

Ya'acov Gabriel

In many of today's better music stores, you'll find a section called "World Music". Until now that's stood for Celtic, African, Carribean and other assorted folk artists who borrow inspiration from each other and integrate it, using pop music technology. Some recent Jewish artists are seeking to add their voices to this already burgeoning field.

Bruce Burger, a San Francisco-based multi-talent, put together a persona called RebbeSoul in 1992 and his second release, *Fringe of Blue*, is an atmospheric and eclectic surprise. Playing guitars, balalaika, bass, keyboards and percussion instruments like the berimbau and oil cans, he says he seeks to give the world a glimpse of the Jewish Soul. He creates a sense of yearning for the long ago and the far away, and it's as much for Andalusia as it is for Eastern Europe. Traditional and modern ballads like "Avinu Malkeinu" and "Jerusalem of Gold" sound like they might have been arranged by Gil Evans for early Miles Davis' *Sketches of Spain*.

The most powerful song for me, Prayer for Peace/Harachaman, has one of the few vocals on the recording, and is the most overtly political. In a passionate Hebrew, Bruce sings "All Merciful One, create Love between the children of Isaac (the Jews) and the children of Ishmael (the Arabs)". The strong and sensuous rhythm of the song is obviously Middle Eastern and points out, subliminally, that both cultures have so much in common musically.

I was doing dishes at 4 a.m. the other day, and his CD was a moody, evocative compliment to the silences and spaces of that time zone. It is not surprising that it is on a label (Global Pacific Records, P.O. Box 2001, Sonoma, CA 95476; or phone 1-800-545-2001) that advertises itself as delivering the cutting edge in jazz, as well as new age and alternative music. The label also has a pro-ecology agenda. On the card insert, they ask us to write to Earth Communications Office (ECO, 12021 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 557, Los Angeles, CA 90025) to "do something about our environment...to help save it before things get hopeless."

A second recording I came across, *Gather the Sparks*, by Yitzhak Attias (Hashofar 4, Old City, Jerusalem, Israel; or phone 011-972-2-286789) is Latin American Jazz, even though it was done in Jerusalem in the late 1980s. I don't know that much about the artist but he sure can samba. His politics are those of the mystic, asking the One Musician, the "Universal heartbeat, master of the symphony of life" to make him an instrument of song. What knocks me out about the record is the seamless way he melds phrases from the Talmud and Reb Nachman, a late 18th century Hasidic Master, with melodies and arrangements that are pure Bahia and Mexico City.

I was turned on to him by a jazz pianist friend in New York, who told me he was a *ba'al teshuvah* (a returning, deep believer) and a follower of Reb Nachman's 20th century disciples. I resonate with his Stevie Wonder and Antonio Carlos Jobim influences. They elegantly wrap up the lyrics of his South American Messianism, in a way

(Continued on p. 77)

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Strategies for Meaning in the Economy

(Continued from p. 31)

focus of most activism), but more especially within the firm. What does a model firm, be it private or cooperative or public, act like in practice? How can wage labor be made "meaningful," if at all? Everything from child care to leave policy to advancement procedures to advertising practices to salary structures should be discussed. What would be a meaningful place to go to work, that sustains you and doesn't beat you down? Do we know anything about such places? Simply put, what would be the nature of working life in a healthy society?

Second, I think it is best, at this stage, to let other activists take up the more technocratic or very mild (i.e. "community recognition") items—although certainly PoM people should not be discouraged from involving themselves in them—and instead try to stake out a position that is fairly dramatic. The notion of rechartering corporations, challenging the definition of wage labor itself, developing alternative indicators to the GDP, and shortening the work week would all fall into this category.

Third, if the PoM movement can develop a clear vision of what economic life could be, it may be possible to learn to meet particular crises and events that arise with a powerful response. For instance, the removal of the Cleveland Browns from that city in 1995 helped spur discussion of community-owned football teams, like the Green Bay Packers; the occasion of a company shutting its plant and moving to Mexico might stimulate activism on behalf of a worker buyout of the remaining plant. PoM activists should always be on the lookout for specific issues or problems related to the economy to which the PoM perspective might have something powerful to contribute.

Finally, I believe that the Politics of Meaning must recognize the power and pervasiveness of the existing economic culture, and recognize that introducing ethical criteria into the economic life of a corporate-based, consumer society will always be an uphill struggle. Hence, it is especially important to recognize the fact that alternative economic structures to the modern corporation do exist and are workable. In addition to the burgeoning range of community-based economic development now underway in the United States, the historic experience of the Israeli kibbutzim and the Mondragon cooperative system in the Basque region of Spain also lends credence to this claim, although the lessons from the limitations and problems within each of those systems are at least as important as what we can learn from the successes.

America badly needs a new bottom line. Establishing a different set of norms to govern economic life will require nothing short of a major institutional overhaul—that is, the construction of the institutional basis for a political economy of meaning. While the task is daunting, already a wide range of activists and organizations have taken up this task, and there is enough successful experimentation visible to suggest that constructing a different kind of economy is not utopian fantasizing, but an achievable strategic goal for a meaning-based politics in the coming decades. ❑

Pinch-Hitter

(Continued from p. 56)

shape inside it—perhaps this was his stance. After all he was just beginning. He was, it seemed to him, always beginning. But what happened when you stopped beginning? What else was there to look forward to?

He glanced at his watch. He was going to be late for Judy Jacobs, and for the Hospitality Committee as well. They would have to get used to it. He would do his best, but he was new in town; the odds were he'd be arriving late for much of the year.

A gurney went by, I.V. swaying like a metronome.

He took his finger off the button and waited for the doors to close. At the last moment a man slipped in behind him—a young doctor, too thin, hairline receding, eyes bloodshot behind his glasses. He sucked the tip of his pen as he studied a chart. Tests, and more tests. Joey stepped back to give him some room. ❑

Jackie Robinson

(Continued from p. 32)

strong political views. As an Army officer in World War II, Robinson was courtmartialed (although later acquitted) for resisting bus segregation at Ft. Hood, Texas. Rickey calculated that Robinson could handle the emotional pressure while helping the Dodgers on the field. Robinson promised Rickey he wouldn't respond to the inevitable verbal barbs and even physical abuse.

Rickey could not count on the other owners or most players to support his plan. But the Robinson experiment succeeded—on the field and at the box office. The Dodgers soon hired other blacks who helped turn the 1950s club into one of baseball's greatest teams. But as late as 1953, only six of the then-16 major league teams had black players. It wasn't until 1959 that the last hold out, the Boston Red Sox, hired a black player. Today Black and Latino players are well represented. The Cleveland Indians hired the first black manager, Frank Robinson, in 1975; today there are four.

Robinson's achievement did more than change the way baseball is played and who plays it. His actions on and off the diamond helped pave the way for America to confront its racial hypocrisy. The dignity with which Robinson handled his encounters with racism among fellow players and fans drew public attention to the issue, stirred the consciences of many white Americans, and gave black Americans a tremendous boost of pride and self-confidence.

By hiring Robinson, the Dodgers earned the loyalty not only of blacks but also among many white Americans—most fiercely American Jews—who believed that integrating our national pastime was a critical steppingstone to tearing down many other obstacles to equal opportunity.

After Robinson had established himself as a superstar, Rickey gave him the green light to unleash his temper. On the field, he fought constantly with umpires and opposing players. Off the field, he was outspoken—in speeches, interviews, and his newspaper column—against racial injustice. He viewed his sports celebrity as a platform from which to challenge American racism. Many sportswriters and most other players—including some of his fellow black players, content simply to be playing in the majors—considered Robinson too angry and vocal.

Until his death, Robinson continued speaking out. He was one of the NAACP's best fundraisers, but resigned in 1967, criticizing the organization for its failure to involve "younger, more progressive voices." He pushed major league baseball to hire blacks as managers and executives and even refused an invitation to an Old Timers game, "until I see genuine interest in breaking the barriers that deny access to managerial and front office positions."

When Robinson retired from baseball, no team offered him a position as a manager, coach or executive. He joined the business world and became an advocate for integrating corporate America. His initial faith in free enterprise led Robinson into several controversial political alliances, including a 1960 endorsement of Richard Nixon—a stance he later regretted.

Baseball has changed dramatically since Robinson's day. Then, baseball had little competition from other sports for fan loyalty. Subject to the feudal reserve clause, players remained with the same teams for years, binding them to local fans. Most players' salaries were not much higher than those of average workers; indeed, players lived in the same neighborhoods as their fans. Sportswriters rarely probed players' personal lives or potential scandals, allowing athletes to become All-American heroes. Today, the public is angry with both spoiled million-dollar players and greedy owners. Teams are no longer family businesses, but owned by corporate conglomerates. Baseball is now beset by strikes and footloose teams threatening to move unless cities build tax-funded megastadiums.

The celebration of Robinson's achievement comes as Americans, disenchanted with the current corporatization of baseball, are awash in baseball nostalgia. His saga offers America a chance to remind disillusioned fans about a time when baseball occupied the nation's moral high ground and helped move the country closer to its ideals. But Robinson's legacy is also to remind us of the unfinished agenda of the civil rights revolution. ❑

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Surprise Exercise

(Continued from p. 63)

thrown himself on the dirt path during the exercise, and he feared bruises. His legs felt like two sandbags, sapping his strength with each step he took.

He mounted the last stairs and stood facing his front door. Why not stay out all night? Perhaps Ohana was right about Tsilla; one word might have made her available. What, after all, was he returning to? Margalit would be as icy as when he'd left her. And his kids — they would awaken to scream in an increasingly foreign tongue. If he had any sense he would flee while he could. He would go abroad, build a new career. Perhaps in another country he could find solace against the frustrations that life heaped upon him daily in the Promised Land.

He turned the key and tiptoed into the salon. Switching on the light he pondered his order of priorities. What if he fled? Was there a minimum he could pack? His passport and bank book were in his work corner on the balcony. He could take them without waking Margalit.

Suddenly he felt thirsty, and short of breath. It was too hot for a shot of his imported whiskey. Perhaps another cup of coffee would make him strong, like the British colonials once were. Or, like those two half-dead Arabs who'd been captured that night, during his exercise. He moved forward and bumped into the phone. He was startled by the half ring it made. Was the army about to phone him, demanding he return to the school for a recount? And if they called, would he be prepared to go? Or was he strong-willed enough to say no?

"Is that you?" a voice said.

His whole body was reduced to a solitary, loud, repetitive heart beat. Had he really heard those words, or was it just a voice within his own head? He took a step or two towards his bedroom.

"Sam?"

His name floated towards him like a rare incense; it was as if he had been called back from the dead. He entered his bedroom and the weight of the dark, unremitting skies, seemed to slide off his back.

"Yes, it's me," he confirmed.

The bed sheets rustled.

"How was it?" came the sleepy, yielding voice.

"As usual," he lied. "How was the birthday party?"

"Good," came the still disembodied voice. "But the kids missed their abba."

In the dying darkness he made out two horizontal shapes in his bed. He lifted the covers slowly and pulled his daughter's slightly damp body from his wife's side. Careful not to wake her, he squeezed his child's body close to his and took her across the hall into her own bedroom. He laid her down in her bed, kissing her gently on her broad forehead before covering her and tiptoeing out the door.

Back in his own bedroom, Margalit's body now lay singly beneath the sheets. Her limbs looked solid, like a piece of covered sculpture. Perhaps she had gone to sleep again; perhaps she had merely dreamed of his return. He took off his civilian clothes and moved next to her bed-warmed flesh. His desert smells mingled with the odors emanating from her body, as though, during the night, she, too, had encountered death. Her nightdress was open at the front, generating the peculiar heat of the human species. Samuel pushed his hands forward. Outside the window, the night sky had begun to crack, sending thousands of stars into oblivion. But inside, under the sheets, all was dark and formless. Yes, he, too, was part of all this — the sky and the earth, the living and the dying, the past and the present. He felt Margalit's breathing coming at him from her swelling bosom, and heard the sound of her bones cracking beneath the weight of his body. He might have been utterly alone. But he was not. ❑

Sounds of Renewal

(Continued from p. 74)

that is light years away from the Moshiach (messiah) songs of Eastern Parkway. As Reb Nachman said, it is a great connection to the Divine to always be in a context of Joy. Yitzhak Attias does that by creating shoulder-swaying dance music and ethereal ballads.

Both these recordings bode well for the renewal of Jewish music. Like the new Kosher California and French wines that are replacing the hyper-sweet New York varieties in my house, I like their complexity and piquancy. Schmaltz is a nice kind of ear candy sometimes, but these days I prefer creative, hybrid musical explorations like these two artists do. ❑

Letters

(Continued from p. 6)

the White House and not Dole. I agree with many of your writers who seem doubtful that Clinton will do much good, but I want to remind them that he is also unlikely to do much bad. Until all of the liberals and progressives get it together to build a serious political party, don't get so angry at the rest of us who continue to vote for the best among the available alternatives. And that could certainly not be Ralph Nader who, besides being unelectable, was unbelievably arrogant in the way that he accepted the Green's nomination, then failed to run a campaign. I'm a loyal Tikkunite, and I haven't given up on healing the world, but I'm not a political Luddite and so I allow political reality to be a factor in my thinking when I enter the ballot box.

Gwendolyn Smith
Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Editor:

I admit it. I was one of those who, despite all that you told us about your experience with Clinton, bought the argument that once reelected, he would emerge as a solid liberal. Yet, as you point out, his speeches after reelection in which he continues to justify his assault on welfare, and the empty rhetoric of his second inaugural address, convince me that I have been deceiving myself. I sure hope that your Politics of Meaning works—it seems like it's the only direction left.

Sally Sindowitz
Chicago, Illinois

Ethics Summit

To the Editor:

I have been a dedicated follower of James Hillman for a number of years now. I find him to be an original and exciting thinker; or at least I have up until recently. His talk at the Summit on Ethics and Meaning, "Aesthetics and Politics" (Nov./Dec., 1996), was great. I was really enjoying it, until I read this: "Look at Pandora and Eve, so beautiful, yet all the troubles and sins started with them."

Can this be? Did he really say this? How can someone of Hillman's caliber be this unaware? And how can it be that no one has pointed this out to him?

Sara Engel
Bellingham, Washington

Conversion & Intermarriage

To the Editor:

I went through hell in my own conversion to Judaism, so I was particularly appreciative of Nan Fink's discussion of her own experience ("Stranger in our Midst," Jan./Feb., 1997). For years, I felt like I was still a stranger in my Reform congregation. But I had a very different experience when, for a short while, I tried out the Orthodox world. There, people seemed far less concerned about my origins than about my present practice. When I made it clear that I was living a religious life according to Jewish law (*Hallacha*) I found few people questioning my legitimacy. Had it not been for the sexism in that world, I would have felt more comfortable there than in the seemingly more tolerant Reform community in which I had originally converted. But in the Reform community I felt that people didn't care much about my religious practice, since nobody else practiced very much; but what they did care about was that I couldn't share ethnic stories about growing up in a Jewish community and facing the typical Jewish problems (e.g. not looking like the society's conception of "goyish" beauty). I was really hurting about all this till I read TIKKUN's editorial attacking "goyim-bashing" some many years ago, and then I realized I wasn't alone. I've kept quiet about these issues, but now that I read Nan Fink's article, I'm reminded at my anger at the whole way I was treated.

Miriam bat Sarah Eemeynu
Santa Monica, Ca.

To the Editor:

Kudos for your roundtable on intermarriage ("Lovers and Other Strangers," Jan./Feb. 1997). I particularly appreciated the range of positions. Personally, I side with Blu Greenberg. I'm very delighted when non-Jews convert, but I think that will happen less and less if they are given to believe that they are equally welcome in our community even if they don't convert.

Stanley Ross
Chicago, Ill.

To the Editor:

My wife has never agreed to convert to Judaism for one simple reason: the hostility she encountered when she first started to attend synagogue with me shortly after our marriage. I tried to assure her that it was only because people were jealous at her beauty and my luck at having had her fall for me, but she was positive (and, in retrospect, I think she was right) that it had to do with her not being or looking like a member of the tribe. I only wish she had encountered the kind of humanity and openness that emanated from Rabbis Tirzah Fireston and Lawrence Kushner in your Roundtable on the subject.

Lawrence Cohen
Atlanta, Georgia

To the Editor:

I sense a certain desperation in the participants in your intermarriage Roundtable—as though the Jewish people are so badly in need of more members that we should take anyone who comes, even if they aren't sure they want to be part. I don't get that desperation. The decimation from the Holocaust was terrible, but not because we need a certain number of Jews or else there is no Jewish community. American Jews could shrink to a million, and still have a strong Jewish life, perhaps even stronger, if everyone in that community was really deeply committed to observing Jewish law and Torah commandments. It's only the fundraisers at the UJA and the people who live off Jewish charity who would feel the pinch from the decreased funds available. And perhaps there would be fewer Jews in Congress and in positions of political influence. But so what? Judaism is not about having money or influence, it is about serving God. And we can do that with far fewer people.

Jerry Schwartz
Boston, Ma.

Evita

(Continued from p. 80)

tary junta. Who could have predicted that this handsome ambitious soldier would break so many of the rules that tradition had established for South American dictators?

Peron married his mistress and brought her into the center of political power and, unlike Hilary Clinton, Evita effectively used her opportunity to champion the most oppressed. Eva Peron understood the Argentine proletarians, peasants and lumpen underclass. She knew they wanted something more than abstract rights and occasional handouts. They also wanted to be loved, protected and recognized as noble human beings. They craved dignity and meaning for their lives.

Evita spoke to their hearts, on radio broadcasts, at mass rallies, and most importantly in one-on-one meetings. She seized control of Argentina's charities and set up her own foundation. And she occupied her business office on a nine-to-five basis, making herself available to ordinary citizens. Through its doors marched an endless array of hard luck stories and monumental tragedies. And Peron would share their tears, comfort and hug them and yes, there was always some sort of Lady Bountiful handout or "fix" thrown into the mix.

Like many reformist social democratic regimes in Europe, Peronism did not attempt to abolish the class structure, but only to soften its excesses. In practice, they were authoritarian social democrats. But Evita added something that European social democrats and their technocratic methods never delivered—a focus on the psychological needs of the average citizen. She gave them the recognition, and, through that, empowerment that no economic benefit could ever offer.. And if Eva Peron said her husband was a great guy who really loved his "descamisados" (shirtless ones)—and didn't he always take his jacket off when he gave those ferocious speeches—then many poor and working class Argentinians were ready to believe her that Juan Peron certainly deserved to be their President and maximum leader.

Rumors still abound that Evita, while she was on a European friendship tour, picked up on Nazi gold in Switzerland which was being paid out to the Perons for offering sanctuary to German war criminals. While Peron worked within a constitutional framework he was always contemptuous of its democratic niceties. And it wasn't only British Capitalists and Buenos Aires oligarches who suffered under Peron, but leftist trade unionists, students, artists, journalists, priests, and just about anybody who asked questions about where all the money was coming from and why Evita's wardrobe kept growing. Peron was a fascist, dictatorial, and at time allied with the worst anti-Semitic forces in the society. Yet much can be learned from asking why Peronism was so popular. Peronism was a highly Quixotic brand of fascism. It was under its rule that women finally received the vote. Eva Peron was particularly strong and effective in encouraging super oppressed women workers to organize and fight for decent treatment. She also founded her own Feminist Party.

She wanted to be Vice-President. The military opposed her. Before the matter could be settled she developed cancer and died.

Two years later, Juan Peron was ousted in a military coup. The post-World War II world was economically recovered enough to no longer be dependent on Argentine meat and wheat. Inflation was eating away at the Argentine currency. Peron had run out of money but much more importantly he no longer had Evita to guarantee his good intentions.

Still, Peron was not politically dead. Twenty years later, largely on the strength of Evita's enduring myth, he returned from exile and once again won a Presidential election.

Admire the Perons or disdain them, you must admit they understood something about people's needs that is not always recognized by the left and progressives. People respond strongly to something besides economics and ideas.

All human beings need to be loved and recognized. Eva Peron knew this because her own life had been greatly lacking in these elements. Was she just "acting," just pretending she cared about the "shirtless ones?" I don't think so. She wasn't that good of an actress. All sorts of individuals and groups have offered themselves to the Argentine working class as leaders and protectors but only the Perons really succeeded in winning and holding their loyalty.

Con art can go just so far. What this film splendidly portrays is this: that somewhere in Evita's wounded soul, beyond all the power lust, there was a real compassion and caring for ordinary people, and a real willingness to address their hunger for meaning and recognition. If only rightwingers and fascists speak to those needs, the left may continue to find itself without adequate support and without a clue as to what it is doing wrong. ❑

Movie Review

Evita

Stew Albert



Not since Bonnie and Clyde has there been such a notorious, sexy and adventurous screen couple as Eva and Juan Peron. The cinematic version of *Evita* presents a Madonna doing a magnificent job playing the former first lady of Argentina as a combination of the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene.

Ever since *Evita* debuted as a Broadway musical in the late 1970s, progressive political critics have complained about a splashy, expensive operatic production that celebrates a couple of Mussolini-minded fascists. But the real Juan and Eva never fit easily into the sure categories of political science. And their legacy includes right-wing and left-wing Peronista movements. Besides, the stage version included a handsome witty, ironic sardonic version of that other giant of Argentine politics, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, who provides the theater audience with a running commentary about the hypocritical, corrupt and authoritarian side of Peronism. In the film version "Che" is no longer the guerrilla leader but an Argentine "everyman" who guides the audience through the dark and selfish side of Peronist populism.

The film is very successful at portraying just why the real Evita was so incredibly successful at upsetting the male military macho, rich man's applecart of Argentine politics. From birth she was poor, illegitimate and unrecognized. She was not able as a young child, to attend her fathers' funeral because her mother was only a mistress and not his wife. Always an outsider, she *shtupt* her way up the Argentine social ladder as an actress trading sex for career advancement—first with entertainers, then promoters and finally in the early 1940s with generals. And then she met Peron.

By some strange chemistry of historical circumstance, Eva Peron was different than the typical social outcasts, who dream of fame and fortune through show business, athletics, winning the lottery, drug dealing or getting elected to Congress. Evita wanted something more: to change the society that rejected her. Or more accurately, she craved the exuberant love of the defeated classes that they usually reserve for a great savior and she also desired revenge on the heartless oligarchy and its middle class servants.

And what an unpredictable odd bird was her latest, greatest and last lover, General Juan Peron. Himself of humble rural, if more socially illegitimate beginnings, he served as an Argentine military attache in fascist Rome, and hoped Hitler would win the war. In 1944 he became a rising star in the governing Argentine mili-

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Stew Albert, a founding Yippie, is a member of the Advisory Board of the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning and of the Havurah Shalom congregation in Portland, Oregon.

Why is TIKKUN the ONLY remaining liberal/progressive Jewish institution in the U.S.?

Every objective indicator shows that American Jews are the most consistently liberal and progressive ethinic group in the U.S.

So why do we not have any national organization or institution that reflects these values except for TIKKUN?

True, we have wonderful narrow sectoral organizations: e.g. Peace Now and the New Israel Fund addressing Israel issues, a variety of local feminist and gay and lesbian projects, and in the specifically religious community, organizations like Aleph, the Reconstructionist movement, and the Religious Action Center of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. But what if you want to find an institution that addresses the full range of issues?

Only a few decades ago, there were a full range of such liberal and progresssive institutions. The American Jewish Congress, as recently as the days when it was headed by Henry Siegman, took progressive stands on many issues. Today, except in a few local chapters where it retains its liberal thrust, the Congress tends to bend to the right, particularly on Israel-related issues. New Jewish Agenda, once a powerful voice for progressive ideas, no longer exists as a national organization. The *Jewish Forward*, originally a socialist newspaper in Yiddish, has a right-wing tinge on issues concerning African Americans, Jewish renewal, and the Israeli peace movement. Magazines like *Present Tense* have collapsed, and *Moment*, once a proud product of Leonard Fein's centrist liberalism, has now become a handmaiden to the Federation elites, and is being taken over by the same forces that control the *Jewish Forward*.

Part of the reason, of course, is that the Jewish establishment, despite its squawking about continuity, actually would prefer to let the entire ship go down rather than support liberal institutions financially. Moreover, the systematic beating that liberal and progressive causes continue to take in the weekly Jewish newspapers makes it difficult for us to approach people in the Jewish world whose vision has already been clouded by distorted stories that portray us as "self-hating Jews" because we have criticisms of the State of Israel.

But liberals and progressives bear some of the responsibility as well:

• The sad fact is that many Jewish liberals see their Jewishness as far lower in their list of priorities than other aspects of their identity, so they are unwilling to donate money to keep liberal Jewish institutions alive.

• There is a pervasive anti-intellectualism among liberals that makes them undervalue theory and overvalue "action" regardless of where it might ultimately lead. So right-wingers supported *Commentary* magazine or think-tank enterprises like the Anti-Defamation League, whereas the Left often prefers muckraking to theory, and action over strategy.

• Despair about politics leads many people to withdraw into personal life, and so they no longer think about supporting the liberal or progressive institutions that share their worldview.

• When liberals do give money, they often focus it on the one issue they care about, neglecting the need for sustaining institutions that address the full range of issues.

• Too often, liberals think they've done their duty when they've complained to their friends about what's wrong with the world.

And that's why TIKKUN has become the one last remaining national liberal and progressive Jewish institution, supportive of civil liberties and civil rights, feminism, gay and lesbian rights, the Israeli peace movement, Jewish renewal, economic justice, environmental sanity, and the struggle for human liberation in every sphere.

But TIKKUN is in danger of collapse...unless YOU, the readers and browsers of this magazine, act now to send us your contribution to keep us alive. In later years, you'll wonder why there is nothing but centrist and right wing mush.

Don't let it happen. Act now to save the magazine by sending your tax-deductible contributions to TIKKUN, 26 Fell Street, S.F., Ca. 94102. Or send us your credit-card info, plus a one-time donation or an amount we can deduct from your card each month.

Please join the TIKKUN community--keep this voice alive!



Illustration by Russ Ando

Tikkun (te-kün) ...to heal, repair and transform the world. All the rest is commentary

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Among the people you've read in Tikkun in the past years:

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