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

TIKKUN

Allen Ginsberg Remembered by Danny Goldberg

Editorials on Alan Dershowitz and Philip Roth

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY MAY/JUNE 1997 $6.00



Jerusalem: Obstacle to Peace?

Blanchard, Hoffman, Kleiner, Kuttab, Seidemann, Weiss

Naomi Wolf on Promiscuities

Viktor Frankl on Meaning in My Life

Larry Amsel, M.D., on Corporate Health Care

Peter Dale Scott on Colombia Drug Wars

Michael Bader on Psychotherapy & Social Context

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Elegy

The page opens to snow on a field: boot-holed month, black hour
the bottle in your coat half vodka half-winter light.
To what and to whom does one say *yes*?
If God were the uncertain, would you cling to him?

Beneath a tattoo of stars the gate opens, so silent so like a tomb.
This is the city you most loved, an empty stairwell
where the next rain lifts invisibly from the Seine.

With solitude, your coat open, you walk
steadily as if the railings were there and your hands weren't passing through them.

"When things were ready, they poured on fuel and touched off the fire.
They waited for a high wind. It was very fine, that powdered bone.
It was put into sacks, and when there were enough we went to a bridge on the Narew
River."

And even less explicit phrases survived:
"To make charcoal.
For laundry irons."
And so we revolt against silence with a bit of speaking.
The page is a charred field where the dead would have written
We went on. And it was like living through something again one could not live through
again.

The soul behind you no longer inhabits your life: the unlit house
with its breathless windows and a chimney of ruined wings
where wind becomes an aria, your name, voices from a field,
And you, smoke, dissonance, a psalm, a stairwell.

—Carolyn Forché

We welcome Carolyn Forché as the new poetry editor of Tikkun.
In honor of this occasion, we print this poem of hers.

TIKKUN

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Letters

MARIO SAVIO

To the Editor:

The glowing accounts of Mario Savio (January/February, 1997) were fine and accurate. But what was not discussed was how Mario was abandoned by many people in the Movement in the subsequent years when Mario was blacklisted, couldn't get back into school, and suffered economically.

Many of his former comrades became successful professionals, lawyers, professors, social workers, editors, businesspeople, publishers, etc. They went off to successful careers and forgot about Mario in a basic way: his problems were his to resolve even though they were the result of the collective action that all of us were involved in.

In other countries and other places that I have been, people share a struggle to ensure that their blacklisted and fired comrades — whether they be student leaders or professors or workers or peasants — are reinstated.

The absence of solidarity with blacklisted comrades is a bigger issue than the tragedy of Mario Savio. It permeates the last 30 years of Left politics in the U.S.

Maybe Mario would have lived longer if he hadn't been so stressed out from the insecurity and frustrations associated with a low-paying job. Maybe solidarity in life and not celebration in death might have made a difference.

James Petras
Dept. of Sociology, SUNY
Binghamton, N.Y.

ECONOMIC STRATEGIES

To the Editor:

Thad Williamson's "Strategies for Meaning in the Economy" (March/April, 1997) is an extremely useful catalog of strategies that are now being discussed to return some

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meaning to our economic life.

On the other hand, the list underlines the depth of the problems that we face in truly creating a society that meets the needs of humans and the environment. The vision and strategy to take us beyond capitalism and beyond socialism to a system that values equity and justice, that values the environment as the basis of all life and production, and that values participation and democracy, is sorely lacking. His discussion of each of the proposals highlights the many barriers that make such a system seem a distant dream. The absence of political will, the inordinate role that money plays in politics, the absence of leadership, the confusion over "corporate free speech" as a first amendment right, the "right" of tobacco companies to maim and kill, and the "right" of corporations to pollute and similar issues all need our attention.

Those issues go beyond the scope of his article, but are where any politics of meaning must begin. Otherwise we have to hope that Sisyphus was having a good time, because he and we will continue pushing the rock without getting to the top.

Stephen Viederman
Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation
New York, NY

The Spat on Vietnam Vet

To the Editor:

My heartfelt thanks to Jerry Lembcke ("Myth, Spit and Vietnam Vets," March/April, 1997). His article is the very first time I have ever seen in print a challenge to the veracity of the Vietnam legend [about how Vets were treated].

Upon separation from the Marines in 1975, my worst adversaries were not hippies or anti-war protesters, but those God-fearing Bible Belt fellow students whose dorms I shared when attempting to complete my degree at several universities.

It was not the good-natured and moral peace-loving American who beat us up for being stupid enough to endure being dragged off to serve into our slave-state military (I enlisted). It was those piggy-eyed, grabby mean kids going for MBAs who are today's scumlords, corporate butchers, and promoters of the theocratic slave state.

There was never any doubt in my mind that had Vietnam been a fight for our national survival, those idealists

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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, 26 Fell Street, San Francisco, CA 94102.

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

who opposed the war would have been the first to enlist and the first to throw their precious youth away. Meanwhile the tubby, self-centered and greedy who now berate the presumed abuse of the veterans by liberals would fit the draft board like rats to avoid service, or would weasel their way into a non-serving staff slot as did Richard Nixon. All mean people are cowards — kindness is the highest form of courage, of which the enforcement of international law (which we violated) is a manifestation.

Walt "Bugsy" O'Brien
Barre, Vermont

PROMISE KEEPERS

To the Editor:

In Michael Kimmel's "Promise Keepers: Patriarchy's Second Coming as Masculine Renewal" (March/April, 1997), TIKKUN buys into the latest platitude of liberalism, namely that any movement undertaken by traditional people of faith somehow represents an assault on the integrity of American freedom.

"The Coach" launched Promise Keepers for many of the same reasons Michael Lerner set up TIKKUN and [became involved in] the Renewal movement in Judaism, namely to reach an entire genre of American men who were not being impacted by existing structures of organized religious life. As an observant Jew, I see the Promise Keepers as an organization that has tried very hard to live up to its theme song of "Letting the Walls Come Down" by developing a fully multiracial staff and encouraging men from all walks of life to come together and help solve the multiplex of problems facing our country. When Promise Keepers came to Chicago last summer, for instance, the keynote speaker was a noted Hispanic clergyperson, and a local African American pastor, Raleigh Washington, was one of its chief organizers. How many other nationwide movements go out of their way to insure that visible minorities are in positions of responsibility at all times?

There is much that we as American Jews can learn from the Coach and his movement. Bill McCartney's commitment to respectful diversity within the Christian community is something profoundly lacking among American Jews. Today it is routine for the official publications of Judaism's religious movements to hurl insults and attacks at each other. Just witness recent articles in the UAHC *Reform Judaism* and Agudath Yisrael's *Jewish Observer* magazines, which each took great pains to invalidate the legitimacy of their opposing movements. Even TIKKUN has been guilty of these shameful attacks. I recall how your publication, in its obituary remembering Shlomo Carlbach, bemoaned the fact that Carlbach's Orthodox synagogue offered separate seating for its worshippers. Against that background, Promise Keepers looks like a much needed breath of fresh air.

A talk given by Coach McCartney at a Promise Keepers convention, aired over a local Chicago radio station, helped me to be more forgiving of several individuals, all of them Jews, who I thought had wronged me in the past. In sharp contrast, it saddens me to see certain Jewish organizations embrace radical positions on abortion, homosexuality, and church/state issues as if they were entrenched canons of Judaism.

David L. Blatt
Chicago, Ill.

Editor Responds:

That last sentence tells the problem of the limits of the "respectful diversity" allowed within Promise Keepers.

SHAKESPEARE & GREENBLATT

To the Editor:

There was, I remember, a particularly disagreeable type of person in shul, when I was a child, who would insist, with a bigoted sourness my parents termed *fabissene*, that there was only one way of being a Jew. All other ways of davening or laying tefillin or even making kugel were greeted with stern disapproval, as if this person and this person alone possessed a magical certificate conferring an unquestionable moral, religious, and cultural authority. How odd to encounter this attitude once again, now thinly cloaked in academic discourse, in the pages of TIKKUN.

In "Greenblatt and the Jews," (March/April, 1997), Michelle Ephraim condemns a review I wrote of James Shapiro's *Shakespeare and the Jews* as both "emotionally dishonest and intellectually myopic." In part, it seems, she delivers this harsh rebuke because she thinks I was attacking ("scolding," "policing," etc.) Shapiro's book. For the record, I make it entirely clear in my review (*New York Times Book Review*, August 11, 1996) that I respect and admire the book, though I raised questions about certain of its arguments, especially concerning the number of Jews in sixteenth and seventeenth century England. Only Ms. Ephraim's highly selective quotations and outright distortions could obscure this basic admiration. But in larger part, Ms. Ephraim condemns me for being the wrong kind of Jew, indeed for hiding my Jewishiness altogether behind what she terms "elitist and aloof intellectualism." Of course, this critique runs up against the fact that I discuss my own Jewish identity directly, not only in many of my books and articles but also in the very review under assault. Never mind. Ms. Ephraim finds that in "outing" my own identity, as she puts it, I am merely participating in a rhetoric of exposure that extends "from the sixteenth century paranoia about Jews disguised as Maranos to Hitler's elaborate devices intended to identify the physical properties of the Jew."

Think about it. "Greenblatt and the Jews" suggests that I am wicked for concealing my identity as a Jew — failing "to publicly claim a personal stake" — and suggests at the same time that I am virtually a Nazi for making my identity as a Jew explicit.

Ms. Ephraim professes to have a larger agenda that somehow justifies this ad hominem attack. "We can," she writes, "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 [sic]." I think, by contrast, that it is wise to be alert to the differences, as well as the links, between ethics and emotions and wise, too, to preserve a place for scrupulous fair-minded scholarship. An unreflective, undisciplined emotional commitment, in the form of an overheated politics of identity, can have harmful effects upon the pursuit of truth. Among other things it can lead a person to imagine that she knows the only correct way of being a Jewish academic. Feh.

Stephen Greenblatt
Dept. of English,
University of California, Berkeley

ABORTION

To the Editor:

As a Jewish feminist, my message to Ms. Alvaré ("Abortion Debate," Jan./Feb., 1997) is very simple: My position on abortion is none of her

business. Nor is it the business of anyone in the Catholic Church hierarchy. Catholic Church dogma on abortion is useless and irrelevant to me.

In the context of a progressive Jewish publication, Ms. Alvaré's noblesse oblige attitude towards pro-choice feminists is offensive and tainted with theological anti-Semitism. The interests of Jewish women would have been better served if TIKKUN had allotted some of Ms. Alvaré's editorial space to a representative of Catholics for a Free Choice.

Finally, I do not believe Ms. Alvaré's self-serving claim that she wants women to be heros. The real heros continue to perform life-saving therapeutic abortions, despite bomb throwing and vilification from Ms. Alvare's extremist allies.

Marion I. Lipschutz
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Editor Responds:

This is the kind of discourse that makes people so angry at certain strands of left-wing "political correctness." TIKKUN has consistently opposed any attempts to pass legislation limiting women's ability to make these choices in their own personal life. Yet we remain committed also to making our pages a place in which opposing views (on everything from the politics of meaning to Zionism to Judaism to, yes, the range of issues that feminists, gays and lesbians, African Americans, and Jews consider sacrosanct and beyond the pale of discussion) can be debated. We reject the notion that it is "offensive" for a progressive magazine to air the views of people who have different or even outrageous views. It is this kind of totalitarian consciousness that is consistently used against us by the mainstream of the organized Jewish community, arguing that our criticism of Israel or of the lack of democracy and the lack of spirituality in the Jewish world is similarly "offensive" and hence unworthy of publication and that those associated with TIKKUN should not be quoted in their pages, and certainly not given space to articulate our position. We have no intention of following that distorted path.

ASHKENAZI MUSIC

To the Editor:

Ya'acov Gabriel's "Sounds of Renewal" column (March/April, 1997) reviews *Fringe of Blue*. In the same column he chose to disparage the music of my European and American Ashkenazi ancestors as "schmaltz" and "ear candy." Mr. Gabriel went so far as to say that, just as he's replacing traditional kiddush wine with the "new Kosher California and French wines," he prefers the "creative, hybrid musical explorations of Berger and Attias's Latin-tinged *Gather the Sparks* for their "complexity and piquancy."

Ashkenazi music, in all its complexity and piquancy, not to mention its robust muscularity, flourishes today at its creative, hybrid best in the able hands of Don Byron. Byron, a dreadlocked, African American clarinet and baritone and sax virtuoso, occupies the top rank of the newest generation of jazz players along with the likes of Joshua Redman and Christian McBride.

My current favorite Jewish music CD is *Don Byron Plays the Music of Mickey Katz* (Elektra Nonesuch 79313-2). The album is a musical tour de force which truly does justice to the often hilarious work of Mickey Katz, one of the unsung heroes of American Jewish popular culture. How interesting that while Jewish musicians are finally getting funky with World Beat, it takes an African American jazzman to do the same with Jewish music.

Like Mr. Gabriel, I'm elated that Jewish artists have taken up the world beat. However, unlike Mr. Gabriel, and as long as there are players like Don Byron around, I'm not about to replace my ancestral music (or wine).

Ralph Wittcoff
Minneapolis, Minnesota

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Free Associations

by Michael Lerner



Suicide as Usual vs. Cult Suicide

The media rarely comment on society's suicidal decision to rely on the automobile, which results in thousands of highway deaths each year. Nor do the media analyze the suicidal choice of consuming products whose manufacture pollutes the environment and decreases the ozone with resulting increases in cancer, or the suicidal choice made by those in corporate life who compete for power and wealth at the expense of health-threatening and eventually life-threatening levels of stress. These are all "OK suicides" because they involve maintaining the existing social order.

But the media go bananas with delight when some New Age sect decides to check out of the planet. They never ask about the meaning-deficits in daily life that open people to this level of desperation and irrationality — just as these deficits have opened others to the slower forms of suicide available in the mind- and spirit-deadening routines of the competitive marketplace.

It's not the number of cult-member deaths (fewer than those who die in a week of car accidents or from cancer due to smoking); it's the source that makes this headline news. If there is one thing the cynical media are appalled by, it's people who are willing to stick together and sacrifice self-interest for something they believe in. (Nothing threatened America's elites more than the solidarity of the labor movement or of sixties activism.) Nothing is more important to media cynics than to "expose" principled idealists as *really* crazy or secretly motivated by self-interest.

So cult suicide is the perfect story-vehicle for their cynicism: "Look where idealism and a search for meaning lead," the media shout at us. Though they dare not make this kind of frontal assault on mainstream religions, they can do so indirectly by suggesting to people that, if they ever join any kind of movement that challenges the alienation and one-dimensionality of daily life, they'll lose their minds and start thinking about spaceships; they'll be on their way to self-destruction.

The covert message from the cynical media, the lesson that deserves headlines, is: Stay in your mind-deadening isolation, else you join some group that will evolve into a suicidal community.

Applauding Murder

In response to a terrorist attack in a Tel Aviv cafe in March by what *The New Republic* (April 14, 1997) grudgingly admits was "a lone itinerant worker with a grudge," *TNR*'s editorial warns us that there were some Hamas people who publicly chanted approval of such terror. It goes on to tell us that, though there may be some Arab-hating gunmen, "there are no crowds cheering them on the Jewish murderers are treated by other Jews as a collective disgrace." Hello? Anyone home there? Is it extremes of Jewish chauvinism or simply ignorance that leads to this claim? Do they not know that hordes of Jews visit and honor the grave of murderer Baruch Goldstein? Do they not know the culture of Jews in Kiryat Arba? Could they not know about the honor received by Jews like Rabbi Moshe Levinger, who shot an Arab merchant, or about those members of the "Jewish Underground" whose sentences were commuted? When will the double standards end?

Living Wage

The Los Angeles City Council voted in March to overturn Mayor Riordan's veto of a "living-wage initiative," which will establish higher minimum wages for workers in companies that do business with the city. Perhaps it's now time for a politics of meaning agenda: the "Social Responsibility Initiative" proposed by the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning requires city governments to award contracts to corporations based on an assessment of which corporation, of those that would otherwise qualify for the contract, has the best record of social responsibility.

Southern Baptists Converting the Jews

Our first reaction on hearing that Southern Baptists were going to devote time and resources to converting the Jews was

to tell Southern Baptists that until they can stop their Southern Christians from burning down Black churches and voting for political candidates who wish to cut off food and income assistance to the poor, they'd be better off to spend their energies converting Southerners to the doctrine of love preached by Jesus. It might be a more effective way to build Christianity. Jews have good reason to be resentful of Christians seeking to convert us, given the as-yet-unatoned-for history of persecution and delegitimation of Jewish culture and philosophy. Yet the hysterical reaction of some Jewish leaders bespeaks a deeper insecurity. Jews are losing our young, and it's the inability to speak to their spiritual needs that is the heart of the problem. After being socialized in a Jewish world that honors and gives power to the fundraiser and the rich far more than to the scholar, the poet or the social-change activist, young Jews choose one of two responses: seek spirituality in other traditions, or cynically reject the notion that there could be anything spiritual (because they identify that word with the spiritual deadness they encountered in their synagogue). Then they move on to embrace American materialism. Want to protect the Jews from the missionaries? Renew Judaism — and that's not something the Southern Baptists have a clue about how to do.

The Joys of Capitalism

Seventeen years ago the workers of the Gdansk shipyard had their moment of fame as they challenged the communist regime in Poland. Lech Walesa and his Solidarity movement were made household names by a Western media beginning to smell the possibility that Communism was being overthrown from within. The allures of the consumer culture may have played as much a role as the legitimate anger at communist totalitarianism. Well, the workers got their market society. What an irony that they soon discovered what life is like without a safety net. In March 1997, the shipworkers got a full taste of the glories of the market. The shipyard, unable to "compete effectively," has been closed, and many of the workers are now beginning to get an experience they never had under the previous regime: unemployment without social supports.



Carolyn Forché

is our new poetry editor!

Thane Rosenbaum

Josh Ozersky

is our new fiction editor!

is our new media editor!

(and we wish to thank Marge Piercy, Melvin Bukiet, and Jay Rosen for years of inspirational service to TIKKUN)

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The book editor has a unique opportunity to bring important books to the attention of a wide and culturally influential audience. We don't pay for any of our editorial positions, so we need someone who is otherwise employed and who has lots of connections with talented writers and thinkers, who is capable of editing articles, and who shares Tikkun's passions and perspective. Submit a self-revealing personal letter explaining why you are right for this job and send examples of current books that ought to be reviewed and who you'd ask to review them, to: Michael Lerner, c/o Tikkun, 26 Fell St., S.F., CA 94102.

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Hayden's Puzzlingly Narrow Agenda

We like Tom Hayden's persistence. Too many sixties idealists have refused to subject their ideals to the rough and tumble of electoral politics. Good for Tom!

Moreover, more than most politicos, Hayden has an understanding of the spiritual needs that are often ignored in American politics.

But you'd never know it from the way he frames his political campaigns. Over and over again, Hayden focuses on narrow economistic issues and on electoral reform. The meaning issues are systematically ignored, and any spiritual vision for politics is shunned. His campaign should be a perfect proof-

text for those liberals and progressives who think that the reason Democrats are losing is because they are not really advocating their liberal stuff. Hayden is — and it is a losing ticket.

Moreover, it is a losing ticket in a city that voted against the dismantling of affirmative action, a city that has huge minority groups many of whom are poor and many of whom have benefited little from Mayor Riordan's fiscal conservatism. Yet this "natural constituency" for liberal politics can no longer be counted on to rally for a politics of narrow material self-interest that ignores the ethical and spiritual context of their lives.

Not that Riordan spoke to a spiritual vision. But Americans have had their hope for visionary politics beaten out of them by years of media cynicism and liberal/progressive one-dimensionality. Unless progressives address the cynicism head-on, they are likely to face an apathetic electorate more inclined to be "realistic" and vote with whoever is going to be the winner. That's how many labor leaders and minority community leaders explain why they lined up with Riordan rather than with someone who more clearly shared their politics.

Nothing rings more hollow than calls for electoral reform to a population that doesn't care about elections, doesn't believe that anything can be different, and doesn't see that anything they really care about will be won in the political arena. ❑

It's not enough to support our principles—we need your financial support. Subscribe to TIKKUN *and buy gift subs for your friends!*

JEWISH MUSIC

Sounds of Renewal

Ya'acov Gabriel

Folk musicians have it tough these days. Radio stations and mainstream record companies hardly give them any space, even though the really great folkies, like Bryan Bowers or David Wilcox, are every bit as interesting and talented as anyone in rock or pop music. Jewish folk musicians are also out there plugging along, creating beautiful and inspired work, to even less visibility.

Rabbi Aryeh Hirschfield has been quietly turning out neo-Chassidic musical gems in Ashland and Portland, Oregon, for twenty years now. His three recordings, *As the Deer Yearns, Wings of Peace* and *Let the Healing Begin* (2126 S.E. Taylor, Portland, OR 97214; 503-230-8060) have a log cabin simplicity to them — just bare bones guitar, piano, voice, and harmony. It's good music to bring on long car trips, when you can wrap yourself around the intimacy of his music and not notice the miles rolling by.

Let the Healing Begin is especially touching. It's a live recording, done in the summer of 1992 at the University Church in Freiburg, Germany during a time of anti-Semitic and anti-foreigner unrest. Playing to a mostly Christian audience, Reb Aryeh alternates between *nigunnim,* wordless melodies, and simple song chants translated into English and German from their original Hebrew. Meditative and lively tunes mix nicely on the recording. The audience, translators, and back-up musicians seem almost palpably reverent as they join in with his minimalist music and lyrics. It takes courage to go to where your people were once hunted and say that your intention is "to not be afraid of the darkness we sometimes see in ourselves...we can bring healing and light there." It also takes a goodmusician to make such sweet music and such instant friends so far from home.

A different folk music approach is taken in a strong Israeli-recorded project by Shlomo Gronich and the Sheba Choir (Tara Publications, P.O. Box 707, Owings Mills, MD 21117; 1-800-TARA-400). The Sheba Choir is a great group of songs done in a sinuous, orchestrated, Peter Gabriel-kind of way, by eleven young Ethiopian kids and a very talented Israeli singer/songwriter/producer. The record is alternately plaintive, playful, moody and kinetic. It also does not gloss over the life of Ethiopian Jews in their new/old homeland. On the first track, *Chasida* (the Stork), we hear a cool, African Jazz three-against-four-rhythm while the kids sing about a "stork" flying them to Israel, as they wonder, 'Will Jerusalem remember us?" It is simultaneously great dance music, childlike and poignant, invoking the joyous Ethiopian Airlifts of 1985 and 1991, as well as the concomitant dislocation and anxiety that the rescuees feel.

Another track, *In the Caravan,* says the children's parents are still dreaming of their Israel, the Israel where there will be food to cook and clothes to wear, with their children in good kindergartens, not the way conditions are in their "caravan," the temporary homes that sprouted up across Israel to house the new immigrants. The irony is that they now have a homeland, but their dream is not yet fulfilled, at least not when this recording was made, in the early 1990s.

Most of the record is in Hebrew, except for a great version of the African American spiritual Motherless Child. The music is very passionate and worth having, and is a good way to appreciate the gift Ethiopian Jews bring to the world and to Israeli culture.

Folk music lovers can take heart from recordings like these. The music is as alive as any pop record you can find. What's more, the songs will nourish you far longer than the latest hits will. ❑

Rabbi Ya'acov Gabriel leads the Jewish Renewal Congregation Har Shalom in Fort Collins, Co. He won a Canadian Grammy for producing and arranging and has recorded six albums of his own songs .

Editorials

Michael Lerner

The Good News: TIKKUN *Survives!*

Thanks to the generosity of our readers, TIKKUN has survived its latest financial crisis. There is now no chance that TIKKUN will stop publishing, assuming that you renew your subscription and that some of those who are reading the magazine on the newsstand begin to subscribe, and that most of you will respond generously to our annual fund appeal in the Fall.

Thank you for your vote of confidence. Now, let's spread the word: TIKKUN will continue to play the role of challenging the Jewish world to live up to our highest ideals, and the liberal and progressive world to deepen its understanding and begin to address the psychological, spiritual and ethical dimensions of human needs. We hope that you'll help us by showing the magazine to your friends and co-workers, make copies of articles and mail them to people who might find them exciting, and urge your friends to subscribe!

Netanyahu's Sleaze Factor and the Peace Process

The real reason to impeach Benjamin Netanyahu is that he has used his high office to undermine the peace process, violating the Jewish people by aligning it once again with injustice and oppression. Instead, it takes a scandal based on criminal activities, bribes, and lies to force the Israeli community to question Netanyahu's right to be Prime Minister. Unfortunately, neither a Netanyahu–led "National Unity" government with Labor as a junior partner, nor a new election that produces a government run by Labor-hawk Ehud Barak would change much for Palestinians or do much to slow the grabbing of land by Israeli settlers that remains the great stumbling block to ending the conflict. ❑

"OJ" Judaism

Fresh from his courtroom victory as part of the team that won OJ Simpson an acquittal from murder charges, Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz has published a new book, *The Vanishing American Jew*, to position himself as a Jewish leader with advice about how to save Judaism in the 21st century.

Dershowitz has made a career of accumulating large sums of money or publicity to defend and usually acquit well-known murderers, cynically manipulating the array of constitutional protections that we created to protect the falsely accused. With hands still dripping from the blood of the victims whose assassins he protected, Dershowitz turns to tell us how to build Jewish identity.

Dershowitz articulates the problem facing Jews very well. No longer faced with significant levels of anti-Semitism, Jews are free to make it in American society, and increasingly they are choosing to do so by abandoning their Jewish identification, intermarrying, and thinking of themselves as people who happened to have a Jewish parent rather than as deeply connected to the history, religion, and spiritual path of the Jewish people.

Dershowitz is not telling us something new. The Jewish world has been near-hysterical about "Jewish continuity" for the past many years, and Dershowitz's book, while likely to earn him a new round of high-priced speaking engagements, merely restates ideas that have been exhaustively explored.

Amidst all the moaning about the troubled Jewish future, Dershowitz and others in the Jewish establishment rarely bother to ask the assimilators why they are not attracted by the Judaism they were exposed to as children. I asked that question to several hundred Jews between the ages of twenty-five and fifty. In response, these young Jews described what they had encountered in the Jewish world:

- spirituality was largely absent and the dominant materialism and selfishness of American society had infused Jewish life;

- Jewish institutions were controlled by the wealthy and the fundraisers, and people were being valued only to the extent that they had or could raise money (one dollar, one vote);

- joyfulness was squashed in favor of obsessive focus on past suffering;

- dissent about Israeli policy was greeted with charges of disloyalty and people who questioned the right of Jews to deny national self-determination to Palestinians were called "self-hating";

- sexist and homophobic attitudes and practices remained a central reality; and prayer services were so deadly and synagogues so dominated by cultural assumptions more appropriate to the 1950s (for example, that the basic unit of affiliation is being part of a traditional two-parent family, or that the cost of membership should be based on the earning possibilities of the upper–middle class incomes) that even many synagogue members could only stand to show up once a year on high holidays, retaining their membership so that their children could have a Bar or Bat Mitzvah to please their aging grandparents.

Except for acknowledging joylessness, Dershowitz doesn't have a clue about any of this. He recommends a form of Jewish secularism as a solution to the problem — a secularism that is actually a restated version of his American liberalism. But then he is unable to account for why his own son Jamin has entered what they describe as an "interfaithless marriage" and why Jamin, who "understands a lot about me: what motivates me, what makes me happy and what makes me angry" is unable to understand Dershowitz's Jewishness. "My feelings toward my Jewishness have always been something of a mystery to my children, especially to Jamin." *And Dershowitz can't understand why.*

Yet my respondents helped make clear what it was that made it hard for them to see Judaism as valuable. What this generation of young Jews discovered in the Jewish world was the very set of values that predominate in the larger American world: a passionate commitment to "making it" (the title of the autobiography of the editor of a neo-conservative Jewish magazine, *Commentary*), a desire to protect one's own interests above all else, and a suspicion of "the other" as dangerous and not to be trusted.

After two thousand years of persecution and oppression, Jews understandably rejoiced in finding a society in which we would no longer be scapegoated as the primary demeaned "other." America already had Blacks as the minority group on which it could project all the evil and negativity that had, in Europe, been projected onto Jews (slothful, ignorant, irresponsible, sexually out of control, greedy).

Jews were, in effect, offered a special bargain: if we keep our social-justice attitudes neatly contained in the synagogue, while accommodating ourselves to an economic and political system that worships money and power and enshrines class inequality, we could become "white" (that is, part of the dominant society, no longer identified as a different race as we had been in Europe). While many Jews could not accept the deal as long as it meant overt political discrimination against Blacks, once the civil rights legislation had been passed many of us ignored the continuing legacy of economic oppression and began to pursue "the American dream" of unlimited

Not "Real" Judaism?

Although many orthodox rabbis critiqued the Orthodox Union for its public stand in late March announcing that Reform and Conservative Jews were not practicing Judaism, the more honest among them (like Rabbi Moshe Tendler of Yeshiva University) had to admit that this is what almost all orthodox Jews really believe, including those who are trying to do damage control on the public image of orthodoxy. Nor is it honest to talk of the Orthodox Union as a tiny fringe group. Though they represent a minority of orthodox Jews in the United States, their position is the official position of many of the most powerful orthodox political parties in Israel, and it is their perspective that has set the agenda and defined the status quo arrangements that currently do not recognize the legitimacy of Conservative and Reform movements operating in Israel.

American Jews rightly feel that their legitimacy as Jews is being questioned. The ultra-orthodox sects who are intent on defining out of Judaism the practices of the Jewish majority seem to have no understanding of *ahavat yisrael*, the mitzvah of loving their fellow Jews.

Nor do they have much understanding of the actual reality of Judaism. From the moment that prophets began to criticize the way the priests had created a Judaism focused more on animal sacrifices than on social justice and love, there have been multiple interpretations of Judaism. By the time of the struggles among the *Tana'im* who shaped the Mishnah, and the *Amora'im* who refined the Gemara — not to mention the struggles between Pharisees and Sadducees — it was clear to anyone with half a brain that there wasn't one correct reading of Torah or one definitive reading of Hallachah (Jewish law) , but rather a set of alternative, overlapping readings. ➤

wealth and power. And the organized Jewish community, once a place in which righteousness and learning were the highest values, began to resemble the worst aspects of American materialism and narcissistic self-indulgence.

It would be anti-Semitic and mistaken to suggest that the Jewish world is more materialistic or narcissistic than the rest of American society. It is not. It shares the same "bottom line" as the rest of the culture: "looking out for number one" and maximizing one's own wealth and power. But what our children have been asking is this: If the Jewish world has the *same* values and attitudes as the rest of American society, then why do we have to do that in Hebrew, and why do we have to marry only Jews? *What's so bad about assimilating if there really isn't a fundamentally different alternative worldview being put forward in the Jewish world?*

Dershowitz has no answer to this except a kind of inchoate nationalist sentimentality. He likes being Jewish and thinks other Jews ought to also. He spends a great deal of time arguing against the notion that there is any particular idea or perspective that is "essential" to Judaism, whether that be a belief in God or a left-leaning cultural secularism. He likes secularism, but he has no ideas about how secular Jews might develop a cultural apparatus that would enable them to pass on traditions from generation to generation. He insists that Judaism has no political inclinations, and seems completely unaware of the long Jewish legal tradition that requires the community to take care of the poor (not leaving it to the market) or the positive Jewish legal obligation to help others in need (not merely a matter of individual choice, as he implies). Dershowitz's Judaism seems indistinguishable from good old-fashioned civil libertarianism (pursue any goal, as long as you let others pursue their goals as well).

Civil libertarianism may be an important element in a society, but it doesn't provide a vision of the good or a social practice that can respond to our need for meaning and purpose in our lives. So what, on Dershowitz's account, is supposed to motivate Jews to retain their Jewish identity? Nothing, apparently, except a loyalty to the Jewish people and its process, whatever that might be. The people is everything, the specific ideals are always negotiable. Well, that might be a good approach for Jewish fundraisers, but it doesn't provide too much motivation for those whose experience in the Jewish world hasn't been overwhelmingly compelling.

And it has all the dangers of every form of nationalism: loyalty to the people quickly leads to a weakening of one's capacity to hear the pain of others, particularly if it is our people who are the cause of the pain. So when it comes to Israel, all of a sudden civil liberties take second place to blind loyalty, and we are instructed to unite "in support of whichever government happens to be in power," and "until we are prepared to put our bodies in harm's way by making aliyah, we should never try to dictate to a fellow democracy how it should balance the risks and benefits of different roads toward peace and security." By begging all the questions (Is a society democratic when it is ruling over another people and refuses to grant them the vote or to allow them national self-determination? Is it "dictating" when one publicly criticizes Israeli policy?), the Jewish nationalist preempts rational discussion and uses criteria he would never accept, say, in regard to criticizing other countries where he is similarly not willing to put his body in harm's way.

Blind allegiance to one's people is no more compelling than the forms of religious fundamentalism that Dershowitz rightly rejects. The biblical prophets had a view of right and wrong that allowed them to critique the Jewish people when

Anyone who thinks they have the only reading simply does not know anything about Judaism. In fact, Judaism is the outcome of the dialogue among many different readings.

Nevertheless, people are entitled to hold their specific reading, and the orthodox reading is one legitimate way to read the tradition. So, too, is the Jewish Renewal reading. And on that account, many orthodox Jews simply are missing what Judaism is about, since they systematically violate one of its central notions: that all human beings are created in the image of God and deserve to be treated with love and respect. It is because people have lost touch with this central core notion that they spend their energies trying to delegitimate everyone else, whether they be non-Jews or merely their fellow Jews who are discussed as "not really practicing Judaism."

In making this claim, I too am delegitimating, though in this case I am delegitimating the delegitimators. From my perspective, what is wrong with the Orthodox Union is not that they have a particular view of what Judaism is (so do we) but because they have the wrong view, one that is deeply at variance with a central and guiding insight of Jewish practice (namely, *adam nivra b'tzelem*, humans are created in the Divine image).

So am I equally intolerant? No. Because although from my reading of Judaism, their Judaism isn't really Judaism either, I have no intent or desire to use state power (in Israel or anywhere else) to prevent them from practicing their Judaism without penalty. But they do want to use the state and the mechanisms of communal coercion to force their vision on the rest of us. And it is that knowledge that makes us so particularly upset when they make their sweeping statements dismissing all forms of Judaism besides their own. ❑

they put their own wealth and power over the needs of the poor and the powerless. Dershowitz's Judaism has no place for such transcendent principles, and hence no place for being able to say "no" to anything that Jews are actually doing (unless, of course, it violates the civil libertarian principle).

What is missing from Dershowitz, as from so much of a Jewish world shaped by the ethos of contemporary market societies, is any sense of God or spirituality. To approach the world from the standpoint of the spiritual is to ask not how we are going to dominate and control, but how to respond to the universe with awe, wonder and radical amazement. The Jewish future, I submit, is more likely to be secured by Jewish renewalists who are concerned with infusing Jewish life with experiences of awe and wonder and celebration of the grandeur of the universe than by the technocrats who are trying to figure out some gimmick or formula for Jewish continuity. It is not Dershowitz's glitzy savvy that the Jewish people need, but rather a genuine encounter with a transcendent meaning and purpose.

Dershowitz seems totally unaware of the growing Jewish Renewal movement that has been sweeping through all branches of Judaism and seeking to reclaim the passionate and morally substantive heart of Judaism. Propelled by the wisdom of Jewish thinkers like Abraham Joshua Heschel and Zalman Shachter-Shalomi, insistent on challenging the materialism, selfishness and narcissism of American society, unwilling to settle for a Jewish life run by the conservatives and conformists of the Jewish establishment, drawing on the spiritual wisdom not only of previously undervalued Jewish texts but also on Eastern and alternative spiritual traditions, the renewalists are building a spiritually-oriented Judaism more likely to speak to the next generation than anything in Dershowitz's boring and humorless book.

The spiritual crisis in the Jewish world mirrors the spiritual crisis in the larger American society. And just as many Americans have moved to the Right to find their spiritual and ethical needs addressed because liberals often seem oblivious to anything more than individual rights — so, too, have many Jews returned to forms of orthodoxy that provide a spirituality nowhere to be found in Dershowitz's secular and politically-neutered Judaism.

But spiritual experience isn't Dershowitz's concern. When he sits in synagogue on Yom Kippur after the OJ trial, Dershowitz tells us in one of the most troubling parts of the book, he manages to come up with a reading of Jewish texts and traditions that justifies his role in the OJ trial. He is not the only one who has turned his religion into a comfort zone that sanctifies personal ambitions and the unrestrained pursuit of fame, money, and power. Yet ultimately it is this appropriation of Judaism to the most base personal aims that sickens so many younger Jews and makes problematic the future of a Jewish world that celebrates the likes of Alan Dershowitz.

Many Tikkun readers are secular, and yet they don't share the spiritual bankruptcy of a Dershowitz. Why? Because the variant of Jewish secularism that appeals to many of our readers has always been strongly identified with a powerful spiritual/ethical vision committed to the healing and transformation of the world. In my book, *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation*, I argue that the God of the Bible is the Power in the universe that makes for the possibility of healing and transformation. In that sense, many Tikkun-style secularists are actually committed to this God, though they reject theological language. Conversely, many of the most orthodox Jews actually are, from this perspective, Hellenists in drag — that is, people who actually do not believe that the world can be fundamentally transformed according to a moral/spiritual vision, and hence do not really believe in the YHVH transformative voice of Torah.

But Dershowitz's secularism is of a different, more neutered liberalism that lacks a moral vision or a moral center. It is this morally-neutered liberalism that has led to a legal profession ethos that frees lawyers of any responsibility for the social consequences of their legal activities. If one is defending OJ, or even Hitler, the only responsibility of the lawyer is to mount a powerful defense. Moral judgement is put on permanent hold.

Technique separated from moral accountability leads to the moral depredations of the contemporary world. The corporate businessperson follows the same line of argument: "I am only hired to maximize the profits of this company, so don't bother me with ethical considerations, since they have no place in my public role as a corporate manager. But after work, I'm moral in the way I treat my children and I'm even involved in my church or give money to charities in my private life."

This is not what Judaism was ever about, be it the full-bodied religious variety that some of us follow, or the secular variety championed by a majority of our editorial board and a majority of our readers. Judaism has always been a religion that called for transformation not only in personal life, but in public, collective life, and that demanded that we remake the social world to reflect our highest ethical understanding. Whatever may have been the limitations and distortions of previous generations of Jews, it was that world-transformative energy that defined the uniquely Jewish presence and gave it its powerful impetus.

But this is exactly the opposite of Dershowitz's secular vision. Dershowitz takes great pains to show that he is not committed to any particular vision of Judaism. It is a

Judaism that can be all things to all people, as long as it's "Jewish." But what does that mean? In the end, it can only mean a secularism that has been turned into narrow ethnic particularism shorn of moral compass. I call it "OJ Judaism," the variant of Judaism that makes it seem perfectly fine to make one's fortune by freeing the murderers and ignoring the pain of the victims and their families. That may be reassuring to the self-interest profiteers. It might appeal to the Henry Kissingers of this world. But this is not a Judaism that has any chance of retaining the loyalty of the coming generations.

The Jews and the 60s: Philip Roth Still Doesn't Get It

Although he graduated Weequahic High School only a decade before me, Philip Roth was already a legend in the very sweet and lovely Jewish section of Newark in which we both grew up. His latest novel, *American Pastoral*, begins with a Weequahic reunion in which Roth reencounters a high school friend who is the uncle of a 1960s Weatherwoman terrorist. What a great premise for a novel, I thought.

For my parent's generation, Roth was a scandal. Roth was seen as the most culturally successful of those believed to be self-hating Jews. What else besides psychological perversion, my parents' generation asked themselves, could explain his vivid portrayal of the materialism and selfishness that had become the hallmark of an assimilatory American Jewish community? But to us kids, he was an anti-hero, revealing what we already knew: the spiritual emptiness and lack of moral compass that defined much of the Jewish world we were encountering.

Philip Roth never joined us in taking the next step: imagining an alternative and trying to build it. Trapped in the isolating individualism of the 1950s mind-set, Roth sought his salvation by becoming an acclaimed literary figure. To the alienated Jewish intellectuals of the 1950s, literature was secular redemption. Political and social movements seemed appropriate only for those who had not yet heard the bad news revealed by psychoanalysis and trumpeted by political scientists, philosophers, and ideologues of the new melting-pot politics: that underneath every individual was a seething cauldron of irrational drives, sexual energy threatening to get out of control, and Jungian-style "shadow impulses" that would necessarily lead every social movement into the kinds of destructive dynamics that yielded either fascism or Stalinism. In such a world, the emerging literati believed, the only purity came through self-reflection and the discipline of carefully honed language. The shmutz of capitalist materialism, egotism and narrow ethnic chauvinism that dominated both mainstream American and Jewish life could only be transcended through the purifying filter of literature. Judaism itself was, for most of them, a suspicious limitation that should either be ignored or rejected.

One can still feel the power of this religious sensibility in the hushed tones and worshipful sighs one hears at many a contemporary poetry reading. I first encountered it in my undergraduate days at Columbia, where I immersed myself in literature under the tutelage of Lionel Trilling. Trilling, Robert Alter, Ronald Berman, and their colleagues had become high priests of the secular messianism promised by the new literary religion. Its gods were as fierce and unforgiving as those whom they parodied, particularly the "Jehovah" that (with the exception of Alter) they seemed to know more through the frame of Christian apologetics than through encounter with the rabbinic tradition. I remember the first day of class when Trilling asked how many of us undergrads had read Mathew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (not assigned, by the way, in the reading for the course), and then, when less than a majority raised our hands, had declared he saw no point in talking to people with this level of cultural illiteracy, and stormed out of the classroom leaving us stunned and embarrassed that we had not yet become learned in the sacred texts. Here was a religious community whose intolerance and petty jealousies and blind allegiance to "making it" was every bit as egotistical and distorted as the materialist society that they imagined themselves to be transcending.

Though Roth made his career in this world, his brilliance was his ability to capture and expose it. (Many of his novels, including this one, are written from the perspective of a fictional literature professor, Nathan Zuckerman, whose adventures and aging Roth chronicles.) Roth retained in academia this Jewish outsider sensibility — the exile who would never be fully part of the world as constituted.

Yet even in exposing the pretenses of the literary world, Roth shared its individualist and anti-communitarian assumptions. There was little genuine transcendence, but only a bird's-eye view of a reality to which Roth was ultimately tied. Like so many who have "seen through" the pretenses of the contemporary world but not yet liberated themselves from its intense fear of community, Roth's stunning insights could only lead to cynicism and pessimism. No wonder, then, that in his later works Roth has returned to his Jewish identity,

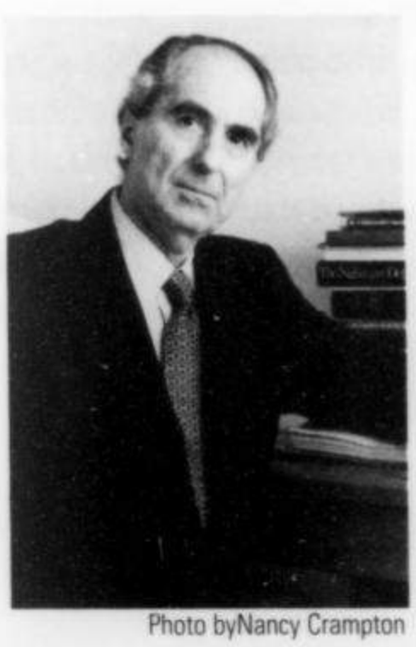


Photo byNancy Crampton

hoping to find there a path that maintains critique and yet allows for human connection. In his brilliant work *The Counterlife,* Roth imagines himself being reconstructed as part of a real community, now working as a secret agent for the Israeli Mossad. Yet the contradictions required by Israeli nationalism are ultimately no less troubling than the individualism of the isolated writer, and Roth can never fully immerse in an identity, no matter how rich and complex.

Roth knows that there is something missing in America, and that it is not just personal aberrations that lead people to question the underlying values in this society. In *American Pastoral*, Roth revisits the American Jewish pathology of goyim-envy, seeming to root the distortions in the life of a young Weatherwoman in the psychopathy of assimilation. If *only* Seymour Levov, the do-gooder liberal father who was Weequahic High School's number one hero — not only because he could win football games but because his blonde hair and goyish demeanor seemed to embody the vision of a Jew who could totally fit in and make it in America — had stayed loyal to his Jewishness instead of marrying the Catholic Miss New Jersey and buying a farm in Old Rimrock, and dedicating his life to the pursuit of money, status, and good vibes.

Roth's analysis of the Weatherwoman is: If only this father had recognized how much the goyim who seemed to be accepting him were covertly, and in the most gentile manner, continuing to despise him, he would have understood why his daughter was caught in a life so full of contradictions that she was reduced to stuttering — for fear that her clearer understanding might destroy the family she loved/hated. And then, like that other great stutterer Moses, she turned into a revolutionary and an assassin.

Roth considers, but rejects, a thin psychoanalytic explanation of the Weatherwoman's evolution. Was it the moment that her father responded to his daughter's request to "kiss me the way you kiss mother," with a full and momentarily lascivious kiss on the mouth? Was it the jealousy of a daughter ill-suited for Oedipal conflict against her still-beautiful, former - Miss New Jersey mother? No, it must be something deeper — the perversions of an unsuccessful assimilation.

Roth's Weatherwoman is a one-dimensional stick figure quite unlike anyone known to those of us who were active in the social-change movements of the 1960s, and who were, like Roth, appalled at what the Weathermen did. Roth puts into her mouth and her mind a voice that seems reminiscent of know-nothing television journalistic fantasies of the radicals that they could never understand. It's as if Roth got his material from TV docudramas rather than from having allowed himself to think his way into the consciousness of those who were moved to passionate struggle against the Vietnam war. One need only compare this with the masterful interpretive construction of the Rosenberg children in E.L.Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel*, or Roth's own understanding in *The Counterlife*, to see how deeply he has failed in this novel.

Many of us who rejected the Weathermen and their arguments for violence nonetheless understood the power of their vision in 1969.

The United States had decided that the only way it could undermine the infrastructure of Vietcong support in the South Vietnamese countryside was to systematically wipe out all rural life and force the peasantry into concentration camp-like absorption centers in the big cities. Implementing this policy was genocidal in effect though not in intent. The United States intended to continue this policy as long as necessary to teach all revolutionary movements around the world the "lesson" being taught in "free" South Vietnam: that there would be an overwhelming cost for opposing local military dictatorships friendly to American economic and political domination.

The Weathermen argued that the only way to change this policy was to move beyond mass demonstrations and electoral initiatives (both of which seemed to many by the fall of 1969 to be woefully ineffective), instead to focus on raising the cost of the war domestically by enlisting the youth of the United States in disruptive activities (ranging from non-violent attempts to disrupt the daily workings of institutions that collaborated with the war–machine to overt acts of violence). "Bringing the war home," as this strategy was called, had its risks: giving apparent legitimation to the Nixon Justice Department as it escalated repressive devices against the antiwar movement, supposedly in the name of preventing further violence; creating a generation gap and much unhappiness between parents and children; even allowing Democrats, who positioned themselves in the middle ground between the war-makers and the "irresponsible" protesters, to claim credit for ending the war; and allowing the Right to portray the entire moral movement as nothing more than a few crazed terrorists.

From my standpoint, the Weathermen were making a terribly destructive move when they championed violent struggle. Just as Stalin had permanently damaged the credibility of communist movements in Europe, so the Weathermen managed to undermine the moral credibility of social transformative movements in the United States. By celebrating "revolutionary violence" (at one point, they even seemed to glorify Charles Manson), they gave the cynical media the ammunition they were seeking to discredit all the peace work we were doing.

Yet the Weathermen's arguments could not be easily ignored: The war was daily killing hundreds of people.

Clinton's Community Summit

Remember the classic definition of chutzpah: the person who kills his parents, then asks the court for mercy because he is an orphan? Well, Clinton is following that same path...destroying the social support system built up over the course of fifty years, then turning to the American people and asking that we take responsibility for repairing the damage he has done.

Of course, we will do our best. The ethos of caring and solidarity lies deep within the American soul, and many people will respond to Clinton's call. An upsurge in volunteerism and taking responsibility is a good thing, and we welcome it!

One of the destructive things about liberal social programs was that they defined caring in "objective" terms — so that what really counted, supposedly, was the delivery of money, not the delivery of subjective caring. Objective caring was unable to sustain a constituency, because the recipients began to think of their benefits as "entitlements" and the taxpayers felt resentful that their tax monies neither solved the problems of poverty nor were they appreciated by the recipients (who rightly complained that these benefits were not adequate to sustain a reasonable living and so could not experience what they did receive as a manifestation of the community's generosity).

We need to rebuild the public sector. But Clinton doesn't seem to know how to do that. For starters, we'd need to insist that talking responsibility for our community" is not only a responsibility for individuals, but for corporations as well. We'd also have to insist that the government slash military spending and reward government employees for the degree to which they have acted in a caring way toward the public (as reported by the recipients of this caring).

But all the caring volunteerism we can muster will not be sufficient to adequately undo the massive damage done by Clintonian social policy. It may be hard for us to acknowledge, but Clinton may have done more damage than we have the capacity to repair in the next few years. ❑

Why pay attention to media complaints about a few small bombings aimed at shocking America, when the violence being mounted against the war was small compared to the violence that our tax monies were already financing. The repression that some of us warned would be evoked as a backlash against the Weathermen was already happening to African-Americans and peoples of color around the world; so, the Weathermen argued, the fear of "provoking" repression was only a fear for those who wished to protect upper-middle class kids and their "white skin privilege." The alienation between the generations was caused not by the protesters but by the moral obtuseness of American middle class parents so enamored of the pursuit of material well-being that they were willing to close their eyes to the suffering of the Vietnamese and other third world peoples. These Weathermen arguments were not so easily dismissed by those of us who were in real pain at the continued bombings and Nixon-Kissinger escalations of the struggle.

Later Watergate revelations demonstrated that most of the violence emanating from the antiwar movement in those days was not the product of the movement but of paid police agents who infiltrated our organizations and demanded that we live up to our ideals by being more militant. But emotionally most of us were intuitively in tune with the Weathermen's insistence that we had an absolute moral obligation to fight this war with every fibre of our moral sensibilities. Though I and others argued vociferously that violence and bombings would not be the best way to end genocidal policies, and would violate our own moral integrity, we could not deny the authenticity, power, and urgency of the Weathermen's argument, and it was sometimes difficult to stand up to their macho claims that those of us with moral scruples about violence were merely masking our (Jewish?) wimpiness.

Roth knows nothing of this. He is of a different generation that never had a clue about the moral seriousness of the 1960s. He now reflects it back to us through the distorted lens of the people who didn't understand it at the time and have been misremembering it ever since. Conservatives who felt threatened by the real power of the movement — who felt that they had to bow to its demands for equality for women and blacks, or to its insistence that the United States reduce its involvement in imperialistic ventures (remember how Reagan in the 1980s still felt impelled to rail against "the Vietnam syndrome" that tied his hands when he would have preferred to be deeply involved in the civil war in Nicaragua), or to its challenge to environmental degradation and consumer culture — should happily embrace this latest incarnation of Roth as ill-tempered grouch.

Yet for those who saw Roth as the writer who was on the side of the kids, the guy we believed could "see through hypocrisy" and expose its ludicrous underbelly, this book will force a serious re-evaluation. Many will question how much Roth ever really understood about what was happening around him.

Why is this masterful novelist suddenly tone deaf? Biographers will talk of the emotional betrayal Roth felt when his partner Claire Bloom went public with vitriolic portrayals of her former lover as a misogynist and nasty man. Perhaps by associating Bloom with the entire liberal consciousness, Roth is stabbing back at the Left.

Yet Roth's problem is not "political correctness" (a criterion many of us have happily rejected). Rather it is the "Higher Cynicism," the inability to imagine a world in which human needs cannot be reduced, not to id, not to money, nor to ego. Roth's cynical vision seemed liberating when he was seeing through the pretenses of American society, but it is stifling and repressive when he keeps us from ever imagining the possibility of something more than the life of the isolated individual critic. What Roth never recognizes is that his style of cynicism has become the mainstream cultural assumption of the 1990s. This cynicism makes him unable to understand the soul of people who actually are moved by principles, and who are willing to sacrifice their own interests for the sake of genuine moral convictions arrived at through painful self-refection and inner struggle. If there was one huge failure of the Jewish culture of Weequahic and Newark, it was its tendency to produce a generation of cynics who never knew that moral and spiritual vision can be as powerful a motivator as masturbation fantasies or accumulation of fame or money.

No wonder, then, that Roth's Portnoy could never understand the sabra woman he met at the end of Roth's fabulous *Portnoy's Complaint*. The sabra is in touch with a level of human need that Roth seems to momentarily understand when he discusses the consciousness of Israelis, but which he is unable to imagine in the consciousness of Americans: a hunger for meaning and purpose, a need for a life that is connected to some higher meaning than the pursuit of self-interest or pleasure or fame. In this sense, Roth is the quintessential liberal literature. It is the common worldview of most of the "hippest" of America's celebrated intellectuals and literateurs that this hunger for meaning is only a cover for something baser that must be revealed or deconstructed. Precisely because he shares their deepest assumptions, Roth will be one of their most popular authors, demonstrating in his work the "wisdom" and "maturity" of having given up on the hopes for social transformation.

What is particularly offensive in this book, however, is that the denial of any plausible motivation for involvement in antiwar activity leads Roth to a wild new avenue that may become the new *raison d'etre* for the estranged Jewish intellectual: goyim–bashing as proof of one's own Jewish authenticity. For those of us who have had to fight this pathology when it comes from the Jewish right, the appearance of this novel opens a new fight in the battle on the Jewish liberal intellectual left. Goyim–bashing coming from the assimilated, culturally liberal intellectuals smells no better than did the internalized anti-Semitism of some of the Jewish left.

Yet Roth is not entirely off base either. Assimilation was part of the problem that led to the movement not because Jews had tried to become like their Christian neighbors, but because both they and their Christian neighbors had given up on a religious/ethical/spiritual vision and had adopted instead the religion of secular material success. And for that perversion you didn't have to be assimilated. One need only watch the behavior of Hassidic right–wingers in Crown Heights or the young stockbrokers and lawyers that fill the orthodox synagogues of the Upper West Side of Manhattan, Englewood, Montclair, Riverdale, Scarsdale, and Woodmere to hear the melodies of a money and power-obsessed generation that bought American values even as they cloaked them in the lifestyle of mitzvot.

It is in reaction to this kind of assimilation that the 1960s were a first, but certainly not the last, outraged response. If Roth knew any of us who are seriously committed to the God of the universe, whether we be Jewish, Christian, Hindu, or other, he would know that our voices are as powerfully raised in protest of the spiritual wasteland of contemporary materialist culture, whether it appears in secular atheistic form or whether it appears in various religious garb. And here is the sad truth for Jews: most of the religious denominations of Judaism have made their peace with the individualism, materialism, and selfishness of contemporary culture, and hence can provide little direction for those seeking an alternative. Even the Jewish Renewal movement is on the verge of such an accommodation, joining the many spiritual traditions of the past that have immersed themselves in self-exploration while refusing to actively confront the depredations of their own social world. No wonder, then, that young Jews who get what's wrong with America don't flock to Judaism as the alternative, given that the Judaism they are offered has strayed so far from its original critical perspective. Ultimately, Roth's failures are merely a reflection of this spiritual failure of the Jewish world to which he remains so deeply tied in the love/hate dance of his life. ❑

"Elegy" by Carolyn Forché is reprinted from *The Angel of History*, Harper Collins, 1994.

In the January/February 1997 issue of Tikkun, we misspelled Jerry Lee Lembcke's name, author of "Myth, Spit and Vietnam Vets." We apologize for the error.

Dying to Work

Phyllis Berman

On a Tuesday in late February, immediately after the long Presidents' Day weekend, the Riverside Church in Manhattan was overrun by security guards.

Downstairs in the Assembly Hall, President Bill Clinton was proclaiming the success of the new federal welfare regulations before a group of civic and church leaders.

Upstairs, in space rented by the Riverside Language Program, adult students and staff, including myself, were in shock and grief because a nineteen-year-old legal refugee from Uzbekistan, scheduled to graduate that day from an intensive English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) class, had killed himself the day before.

According to Aron Akilov's family, a close-knit group of 16 that had emigrated from the former Soviet Union in September 1996, the suicide was in some way related to the new welfare regulations.

Shortly after his arrival in the United States, Aron had tried to find work to support himself and family members; but no one would even interview him because he couldn't speak or understand English.

He enrolled in the intensive daytime ESOL program, studying five hours a day, five days a week, with other non-English speaking adults from all over the world, and made good progress in his beginning level class. Highly motivated to learn and desirous to work as he had done in Uzbekistan, he was hopeful that English was the route to his success. As the 160-hour class neared its end, he was invited to re-enroll for one last six-week cycle.

Although a small number of people who have been exposed to English in their native countries need only one six-week intensive course to get on their feet, most new immigrants literate in their native language and of ordinary learning ability need six months or a year. However, new regulations from the New York State Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Affairs restrict funding to non-English speakers and provide assistance for *no more than two* courses of study. So Aron was entitled to only one more cycle of study before trying the job search again.

Nonetheless, he remained hopeful. Surrounded by a community of caring classmates in the same boat, he had grown in his ability to speak and understand English; he had another six weeks to study at a school in which everyone had to speak English together because they came from at least 30 different countries. When Aron got home from school the weekend before his graduation, there was a letter from the welfare department awaiting him. You applied for welfare, it said; therefore, report to workfare.

What Aron didn't realize was that in some cases the workfare site is willing to arrange workfare hours flexibly around school hours so that people don't have to drop out of the very classes designed to help them become employable, i.e., classes in ESOL, reading or vocational skills. He saw the letter from workfare as the final straw in a difficult and traumatic resettlement process. He believed that the summons to workfare meant that he would have to drop out of English classes, and he knew that without English he would be up against the wall. So he chose a desperate way out: he killed himself.

This was not an isolated act. In western Pennsylvania, a Latino immigrant, here five years but not yet a citizen, committed suicide after learning his food stamps were to end. Another immigrant living in California received notice that his benefits were to be cut off because he hadn't passed the citizenship exam; he had a heart attack on the spot and died. Both of these incidents occurred within the last three months.

New York agencies working with elderly immigrants say that the anxiety level alone, not just poor memories or disabilities, is likely to prevent great numbers of older immigrants from being able to absorb either the content or language needed to pass the exam.

Privately and publicly, Clinton has said that he intends to change the welfare regulations as they pertain

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to immigrants and refugees. So far, he's done nothing. In response to a personal letter about Aron Akilov's suicide and the need to rethink workfare so that it does not force students out of classes that enhance their employability, Clinton has been silent; the White House responded with its usual form letter.

When Manhattan borough President Ruth Messinger, a New York City Democratic mayoral candidate, told Clinton that thousands of students were being pulled from City University (and community-based organizations and the Board of Education) adult basic education, vocational and college classes in order to do workfare, the President acknowledged that this had not been his intention. Federal welfare regulations leave the definition of "work-related activities" loose enough that a number of states have defined it to include the basic skills education programs, but Clinton has done nothing to protect those people on welfare who are seeking the traditional route for self-improvement through education.

The day of Clinton's visit, the gossip at Riverside Church was that Health and Human Services Commissioner Donna Shalala was livid that Clinton had been challenged and embarrassed by local Harlem activists less than enthusiastic about "welfare reform" and its New York City variations. Evidently, Clinton had expected a warm welcome from a community asked, in churches and synagogues, to pick up the ball that the government has dropped.

A week after Aron's suicide, the executive directors of the Riverside Language Program held a press conference calling on Mayor Rudolph Giuliani to meet with adult basic education directors to discuss ways to make workfare more thoughtful and effective and less punitive. We recommended four points to improve the senseless, arbitrary plan now in place: (1) define adult basic education classes as "work-related activities"; (2) count hours that students are in such classes toward the required workfare hours; (3) schedule any additional workfare hours flexibly so that students can remain in classes; and (4) enable adult basic education sites to become workfare sites where students can complete additional work hours if needed.

From Giuliani's office, as from Clinton's, came a form letter referring the matter to the newly established Office of Immigrant Affairs, which has no power over workfare. Even Assistant Commissioner Barbara Ramirez of the Human Resources Administration in New York City admits that issues of workfare are not decided at the welfare department; such policies are made by the mayor.

Giuliani has ignored all attempts to talk seriously about workfare. He has used the press to take swipes at Ruth Messinger, labeling her a "radical" for her statements urging a workfare policy that encourages people to be allowed an education that's more likely to make them employable. Instead, he has talked about lazy people who need the discipline of workfare to develop a work ethic, or about immature people who come to the United States expecting streets to be paved with gold, or about haughty people who believe some jobs to be beneath their dignity. Giuliani has condemned all those who point to Aron's suicide as a public shame: they are misguided liberals who don't believe in work.

Indeed, Giuliani has attacked all of us who pointed to Aron's suicide as a symptom of social failure. It was, he said, a personal — not a political — tragedy; the act of an unbalanced young man. The pro-Giuliani *New York Daily News* editorial staff took that line of thinking as well, though its reporters had accurately described the crisis Aron was facing. For Giuliani and the *Daily News*, this is not so surprising a tack. More disheartening is that several seemingly liberal New York institutions said the same thing. Once fiercely independent, they now think it is important to have closer relations with the Mayor and the President. So they quickly backed away from a death that might make trouble.

A suicide is always complex, and resettlement is always traumatic, but Giuliani has chosen to make them simplistic. What *is* simple, though, is the desire of adult immigrants and refugees to work. Like most Americans, they want jobs that pay a living wage, that offer some security and health benefits for themselves and their families, that utilize their talents, training, experience, intelligence and motivation.

The first thing we hear, repeatedly, from all of our immigrant and refugee students is that they're dying to work. Unless we make some thoughtful changes to what is now passing for welfare "reform," we are likely to see many more immigrants like Aron Akilov dying. ❑

The Boston-area TIKKUN discussion group welcomes new members.

For futher information contact Howard Alper (617) 492-0697

Calling all Tikkun groups and salons...
we would like to list you in an upcoming issue.
Let us know how it is going. Please call home,
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Corporate Healthcare

Larry Amsel, M.D.



Illustration by Russ Ando

Introduction

Last year, in these pages, I described the serious damage that the corporate takeover of health care had wreaked on the American people. A new health care system based on corporate profits had been imposed on us without public debate, and was daily abusing patients while stealing their health care dollars. In the last year the health care situation has deteriorated so rapidly that what sounded radical in my article to some is now simply the staple of our daily newspapers. Things that seemed outrageous a year ago have now become commonplace —the new medical substandard.

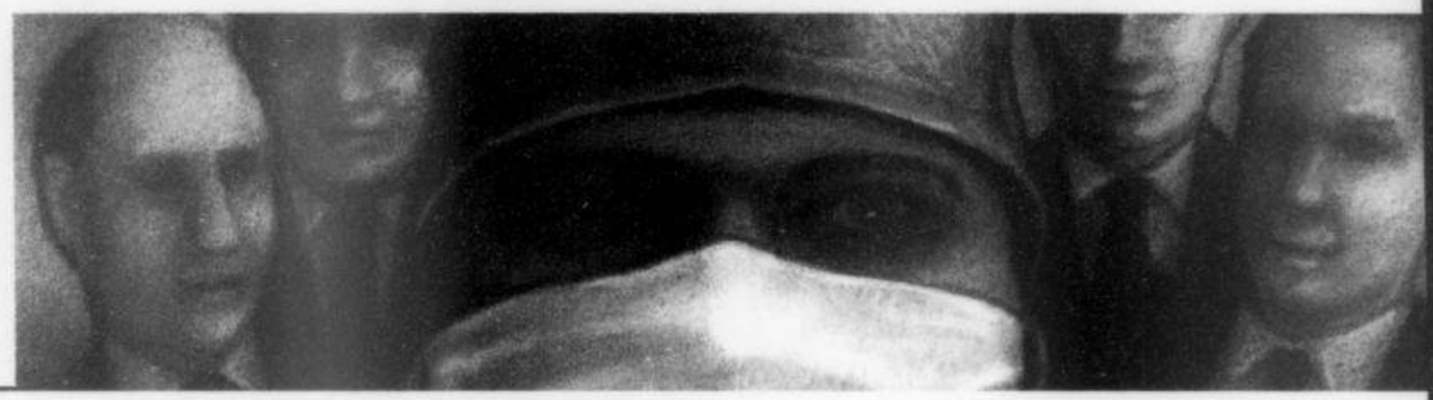
What this last year has demonstrated beyond a doubt is that the experiment in a market driven solution for health care has been an abysmal failure. In fact things have gotten so bad that they have created an historic opportunity: conditions under which health care reform is politically and economically feasible. Unlike four years ago, both the consumers and the health care stakeholders have finally had enough pain, and are willing to consider a comprehensive solution.

Bill Clinton should seize the moment and call for a national debate on comprehensive health care reform. He was right four years ago to say there was a crisis. It has gotten worse, and those who opposed reform in 1993 are screaming for it today. If Clinton can express the nation's anger and frustration over the health care fiasco and lead the country to an integrated health care solution, he will be a domestic policy hero and his presidency will have had a historic theme. If he misses this opportunity his successor will have to do it and will reap the rewards.

The Republicans were right in their political strategy in 1994, when they rode the destruction of health care reform into a Congressional win. The party that controls health care will control the country.

In this piece I will describe the current state of health care and demonstrate that the so-called market solution has failed. I will then argue that, in fact, we have nothing like a free market solution that is responsive to consumer demand, but rather one that is only responsive to corporate needs. I will discuss how this has transformed not only the organization and financing of health care but its very culture. I will then review how we got here, and why this moment is a perfect opportunity to reopen the debate in earnest.

Corporate Healthcare



The current system of health care in the United States is often referred to as a Managed Care system or a Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) system. In fact, these terms refer to older and more benign systems of health care delivery, and have been co-opted by the current system to take advantage of their positive associations. I believe it is more accurate to refer to our current system as a "For-Profit Corporate Health Care System" or simply "Corporatecare" — a health care system run by large for-profit corporations whose customers are large corporate employers who purchase health care benefits for their employees.

My thesis is simply this: For-profit corporate health care is not a workable and sustainable system. Rather it is one of the largest organized programs of consumer fraud in the history of the United States. It is backed up by a huge advertising and propaganda machine and has been tolerated until recently, in part, because of petty partisan bickering. In other words, we have gone from a health care system with some abuse and fraud to a fraud and abuse system with some health care.

When the history of this era is written, corporate-care will end up in the same shameful chapter as the S&L crisis and the tobacco industry scandal. Since I don't consider myself particularly radical in my politics or my economic outlook, I'm somewhat shocked by my own words. Yet I can draw no other conclusion from my own experiences or my reading of current events.

During the national debate on the Clinton health care bill, the opponents of the many different plans introduced to Congress argued that government should stay out of health care and let the free market solve our health care problems. They also successfully argued that for those who had health care there was no crisis. On the contrary, they were already receiving, to quote Bob Dole in his opposition to the Health Security Act, "the best health care in the world." Opting for the status quo and the security of their existing coverage, most Americans went along with this argument only to find that a new market had exploded on the scene. Within the last two years this market has transformed health care far more radically than anything envisioned by Mr. Clinton.

During the first year of this transformation, millions of Americans were forced to change their customary ways of getting health care, and many were forced to give up long standing relationships with their physicians. Simultaneously, physicians found that they were being micro-managed by a new cadre of "reviewers" who knew a lot about health care economics but little about medicine or patients. Dissatisfaction was widespread. A *New York Times* poll reported on July 30, 1996 found that nearly three times as many people believed health care had gotten worse than believed that it was the same or better. Yet there was relatively little outcry. Pundits and corporate representatives explained that these were inevitable dislocations of the free market and would straighten themselves out. Besides, they argued, we had all had just too much health care before and would have to adjust to the dictates of the market.

One particularly arrogant corporate-care executive, Malik Hasan, wrote in the April 18, 1996 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine* (NEJM): "Market based health care is the only means of guaranteeing high quality care at affordable prices...Investor owned plans have proved their capacity to respond to the demands of patients and employers...The market can and will resolve all outstanding health care issues." His remarks drew criticism in dozens of letters from physicians, yet they were quite typical of health plan executives. The sentiment was also strongly supported by the "Battle Hymn of the Republican Congress": keep government intervention out of health care, and out of everything else, and let the marketplace do its magic.

Given this background, the most notable development of the last year has been how remarkably unresponsive the private sector system has been to massive dissatisfaction. It seems to not function like a market at all.

Let's take a single example — the so-called "drive-through deliveries." In the last year, dozens of states as

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well as Congress have considered bills that would require health plans to allow women and their babies to remain in the hospital for 48 hours after delivery if they so wish. Why was legislation necessary for what should be a basic medical decision? How could it come about that women were being forced out of the hospital in less than 24 hours? If there really is a free market, where is its self-correction? Why was it not responding to the dissatisfaction of so many women? And where were their physicians? If professional clinical opinion carried any weight in the system these issues would not need debate and legislation. This is strong evidence that corporate health care plans do not offer consumers the protections of a free market; nor do they offer the protections of the traditional medical model.

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated example. Today in the wake of a flood of profitable but cruel abuses by health care corporations, small-government Republicans as well as Democrats are rushing to introduce new regulations to manage the managed care companies. In fact, since 1996 literally hundreds of pieces of legislation addressing health



care abuses were introduced in state legislatures while dozens of similar bills have been introduced in Congress. These bills have come about in the wake of thousands of newspaper accounts of health plan abuses as well as state and federal investigations leading to considerable consumer pressure on legislators. This piecemeal legislation is, however, the therapeutic equivalent of a Band-Aid on a trauma patient.

While politicians of all stripes have jumped on the bandwagon of consumer protection in health care, few have admitted what this clearly implies about the failure of the free market alone to solve our worsening health care crisis. And with health care plans demanding ever more cutbacks in services delivered, things are getting worse. Consider some of the abusive practices that have come to attention in the last year.

Emergency Room Visits

As a number of newspapers have reported, health plans have been retroactively denying reimbursement for emergency room visits when the person turns out not to have been in danger. This means that if you have chest pain, or if your mother has the early signs of stroke, you better hope it's serious. Because if after evaluation in an emergency room, it turns out not to have been serious, your health plans may stick you with the full cost of the ER visit.

This can easily run into hundreds if not thousands of dollars. For example, an MRI may be needed to rule out your mother's stroke. More importantly is the patently absurd and extremely dangerous message to people that they should avoid going to the ER unless they are sure they have a serious or life-threatening illness. As a society we have spent millions of dollars educating people to do the opposite, by stressing the importance of getting emergency evaluation at the first sign of stroke or heart attack. To introduce a major financial disincentive to people facing that sort of distress is not only bad medicine, it is cruel. Research shows that this financial disincentive is a major reason why people don't go to the ER when they should. Once again this indicates that neither physicians nor patients have any recourse within the current system, which functions more like an absolute power than a free market.

Legislation has been introduced to attempt to correct this gross abuse of patients. Health plans would be required to pay for all visits to the ER that a prudent layperson might reasonably make.

Mastectomies

The poor medical judgement and insensitivity of these plans is also well-illustrated by their attempt to cut down on hospital days no matter what. This absurdity is perhaps best captured in a recent remark by Alfonse D'Amato while introducing a bill to stop health care plans from forcing women who are having mastectomies to undergo ambulatory surgery in place of in-patient procedures. "I am not against profits," D'Amato said. "But if you are going to make profit by denying adequate basic medical treatment then that's wrong. That is immoral, and we in Congress have a business to do something about it." For D'Amato to feign surprise that profits are prioritized over patients' well-being reminds one of the line from *Casablanca*: "I'm shocked...shocked to find that there is gambling at Rick's."

Access To Specialists

It will come as no news to my readers that access to medical specialists has been seriously curtailed. What did come as a surprise to me is that the so-called "covered" specialists were often below par. When a friend needed a fertility expert she asked me to check up on the obstetricians whose services were covered by her plan. Of those listed in New York City, not a single one had completed subspecialty training in fertility. Yet the

coverage of fertility services was one of the selling points with which this plan marketed itself.

AIDS Patients

The hallmark of corporate health care is the Primary Care Gatekeeper System, which requires all referrals to a specialist to obtain pre-approval by one's Primary Caregiver. But AIDS patients have found it difficult to get to the Infectious Disease specialists that they need. Many have found that the primary care clinicians simply are not knowledgeable enough to care for them and have requested, logically, that ID specialists be their primary clinicians. Yet many plans refuse to make this adjustment.

Unfair Denials Without Access to Appeal

In another case, the courts and federal investigators have been dragged into the process of trying to extract minimally acceptable health care from the corporate stone. A federal report this year found that many health plans were unjustly limiting their Medicare patients' right to appeal when they were denied services. Patients were told that "because a service was provided, not denied, the reduction or termination of the service is not appealable." In other words the provision of some service is justification for denying any other service.

Federal District Judge Alfredo C. Marquez of Tucson, Arizona disagreed in his ruling in a nationwide class-action suit recently. The judge laid out a fair appeals process, and ordered the strict adherence to these guidelines. Moreover, he ordered the government to abstain from contracting with health plans that did not comply with these strict standards for appealing denials of services.

Clearly, any company that refuses to consider complaints or appeals from dissatisfied "customers" lacks the capacity for self-correction. In a functional market system this should merely drive the customers to competitors who are more responsive to their complaints. This would be competition by quality. But this is not the case, as evidenced by the need for judicial intervention to ensure the basic services which these companies have agreed to supply.

Prevention

From the beginning, the major innovative claim used in launching the new health plans was that they would focus on health promotion and disease prevention. The rhetoric of prevention was splashed over every brochure and invoked as a justification for every dislocation and denial of service. The moment of truth came with recent revelations that these plans don't actually offer preventive services unless they are cheap or particularly good for marketing.

Many preventive services that contribute to good health actually cost more than they save. It is precisely these that are rarely offered. Examples include screening and treatment for the AIDS virus and for high cholesterol. A positive result in either case calls for expensive preventive treatments before any symptoms are present. As many corporate health care companies now admit, their original model of preventive services was only viable if patients stayed with the same plan for more than ten or fifteen years. Based on their economic criteria, it simply makes no sense for these companies to spend thousands of dollars preventing a heart attack that is years away and that will most likely be paid for by another health plan.

Medicare

The worst abuses have occurred in so-called Managed Care Medicare, which targets the elderly and, in particular, the elderly poor, in the most egregious of corporate health care practices. Medicare patients, that is people who are over 65 or permanently disabled, have good health care insurance run by the federal government. This is increasingly being privatized, although currently Medicare patients can choose whether to remain in the federal system or to sign over their care to one of the commercial plans. For each patient that they sign up, the commercial plan receives 95 percent of the average health costs of a Medicare patient, theoretically saving the government 5 percent. In turn, the plan accepts responsibility for the total health care of the individual, who is no longer covered by the federal Medicare program.

Medicare patients are attracted to these programs through glitzy advertising and false promises of comprehensive care. In addition they are offered some real benefits like eyeglasses and prescription drugs that are not covered under standard Medicare. These benefits are particularly attractive to poorer elderly for whom prescription costs can be a real burden. What they often find, however, is that they have unwittingly signed away their access to specialists and sometimes to their own physicians. Moreover they now face denials without recourse for treatments that would have been automatically covered by traditional Medicare. For mental health services in particular, the private plans often fall short with strict limitations on in-patient treatments.

Many elderly are now outraged to find themselves victims of what amounts to a con game played with their health care. But this is only half the scam. It now turns out that these health plans have been shamelessly ripping off the government as well. A federal panel, the Physician

Payment Review Commission, found that instead of saving the federal government 5 percent on each patient, these plans were actually overcharging the federal government by billions of dollars per year. They were selectively attracting the healthier patients through clever marketing practices.

As described in the *New York Times* on March 29, 1997, the panel found that the subscribers to these plans were so healthy that they had cost only 63 percent of the average while they had been in traditional Medicare. So even if they were supplying the same level of care as the government, these companies were reaping, in the words of the panel, "windfall profits" at the cost of the taxpayer. The panel estimated overpayments of $2 billion per year. In a similar investigation, the General Accounting Office estimated excess payments of $1 billion in California alone for 1995. This pattern is what you might expect if the system was being run exclusively for profit without any sense of responsibility to patients, taxpayers or the U.S. government, let alone to the ethics of the healing tradition.

The glaring question is: why is the federal government not only allowing this to happen but aggressively encouraging it as our major solution to Medicare cost containment? How can we push our elderly and our disabled into these systems while we are simultaneously investigating the very same systems for fraud? How many more newspaper reports, pieces of legislation, judicial orders, and investigatory panels will it take before we realize that these health plans are simultaneously overcharging the government and withholding treatment from the elderly? Instead of Federal support, these plans need clear warning labels on their fraudulent advertising campaigns just like those on packs of cigarettes.

Overt Criminal Fraud

If corporate health plans have been abusive, another sector of the new health industry — the for-profit, investor-owned hospitals — have been overtly and literally criminal. Columbia/HCA, the largest of the for-profit hospital chains, is the ninth largest employer in the country, larger than McDonalds or General Electric. It owns 7 percent of all U.S. hospitals, and has $20 billion in annual revenue. In February a federal jury found that Columbia/HCA had bribed a doctor as part of an unlawful conspiracy to defraud. The company was ordered to pay $6.5 million in damages. It is also under multiple investigations for billing fraud, bribery, and illegal patterns of patient referrals.

Investigative articles in *The Nation* and the *New York Times* reported that the company appears to be involved in illegal activities ranging from sophisticated billing scams to crude bribes of officials in the hospitals it was attempting

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to acquire. In one estimate the company's referral patterns and service utilization practices bilked the federal government of $50 million in 1995 from its Texas operations alone.

An analysis in the *New York Times* on March 28th of this year showed an unmistakable pattern of "upcoding" in Columbia/HCA's Medicare billing. Medicare pays hospitals based on the type and severity of illness. At one Columbia/HCA hospital, 93 percent of respiratory illnesses were billed in the highest reimbursement category. This was compared to a public hospital across the street where the highest paying code was used in only 28 percent of the respiratory cases.

David Manning, a Columbia/HCA Vice president, denied any wrongdoing: "We believe that [we] are more efficient in billing the Medicare program than are our competitors." So at Columbia/HCA fraud is spelled e-f-f-i-c-i-e-n-c-y. This misuse of the word "efficiency" to cover a host of abuses is actually quite rampant in the new health care. It is typical of a linguistic manipulation that substitutes managerial euphemisms for inhumane and often fraudulent practices.

California Representative Pete Stark, whose subcommittee on health monitored the activities of Columbia/HCA as well as its executives, is quoted in *The Nation* as saying, "Hopefully they will all be in jail soon for the crimes they have committed across the country."

So far this hasn't occurred. Richard Scott, CEO of Columbia/ HCA, personally received $967 million when the company merged with Aetna. The *New York Times* reports that while being deposed in the bribery case mentioned above, he was asked if he understood the definition of fiduciary duty. His response: "The exact definition I do not know." What is particularly ironic, and is left out of the *New York Times* article, is that the examining lawyer was referring to business-related fiduciary duty which Scott's company was found guilty of violating. Any fiduciary responsibility to patients is not even in question.

In summary, Columbia/HCA will do whatever it takes to make money. Contrary to its rhetoric of efficiency and health care cost-cutting, it has over-treated (or at least over-billed) when that was profitable, and undertreated when that worked. It has scorned the concept of responsibility to patients or to established standards of business ethics, and even to the law. Yet it is the largest single recipient of Medicare dollars and continues to transform ethically run hospitals into profit mills. There should be an immediate hold on federal contracts and payments to Columbia/HCA until these criminal allegations are straightened out in court.

Corporate Responses

When confronted with consumer complaints and the slew of proposed legislative and judicial remedies, the first response from the health plans is simply to deny the problem. Kathryn Allen, president of the New York State HMO Conference stated, "The HMO Conference has broad evidence that consumer satisfaction is already high." Typically the health plans have claimed that they have good "evidence" that the "quality" of health care has stayed high, and that claims to the contrary are merely "anecdotal."

In reality, the "quality" of health care has been extremely difficult to measure in a scientifically meaningful way but very easy to manipulate, for example, by asking vague and leading questions to the correctly chosen population. Moreover, as someone who has completed a National Institute of Health fellowship in statistics, I am convinced that the evidence overwhelmingly points to great dissatisfaction. All the polls taken in the last year bear this out, as does the fact that these "anecdotes" of dissatisfaction are so widespread. Sometimes the plural of "anecdote" is "evidence."

In another equally ludicrous response, Karen Ignagni, president of the American Association of Health Plans, complained that congressional action on health care constituted an inappropriate "effort to legislate clinical practice." In psychiatry this one is called projection.

But the most telling response to the newly introduced legislation is the claim by health plans that they cannot meet the new standards without large increases in premiums. William Roper of Prudential Health Care is typical. in saying, "Many of the proposed mandates would have the unintended effect of driving up costs by requiring plans to alter coverage and operations, thus potentially jeopardizing consumers' access to coverage." There was a similar response to New York State's new Managed Care Bill of Rights, which provides basic consumer protection. Kenneth Abramowitz, a health care analyst with Sanford C. Bernstein & Co. states, "I expect we'll see premiums increase 5 to 8 percent next year. Thank the consumers. The consumers asked for it and now they're going to pay for it."

In the health care economics literature there has been an ongoing debate as to whether the new managed care system was creating a sustainable savings or had merely seized on a one-time savings. The proponents of the latter view argued much of the touted savings comes from the initial sign-up of large number of enrollees from more expensive indemnity plans, and will not be repeated in future years. In the April 3rd, 1997 issue of the *NEJM,* Eli Ginzburg, the grandfather of health care economics, argues for the latter position. He points out that health care spending increased by 5.4 percent in 1995 despite all the hardships imposed on consumers. With the introduction of legislation setting minimal standards for care, the health plans themselves are admitting that they will have



to raise premiums considerably. They fail to mention that this just about eliminates their justification for interfering in our health care.

The reason that these plans cannot deliver the health care promised is no secret. The actual structure and function of the current system is openly discussed by financial analysts every day. The "industry" is not focused on health care delivery but exclusively on the redistribution of health care dollars away from clinical care and into administrative costs and profits. Within the industry the amount spent on clinical care is referred to as "medical loss." Executives are expected to keep this to 70–80 percent, while 20–30 percent goes into their own administrative costs, including the highest executive salaries in town (68 percent greater than in comparable industries), and into profits for stockholders. Were these companies to run all of health care in this country, this would amount to more than $200 billion dollars per year that is drained away from clinical care, and that goes instead into creating a destructive corporate bureaucracy and into shareholder profit-taking. This is just about enough to cover all uninsured Americans.

Taken together, these responses seem to me to be an open admission to the American people that they have sacrificed a great deal of health care, and gotten none of the promised benefits in return. Under this new system we have fewer insured, less choice, less access to hospital care, less access to specialists, less mental health benefits, major interference in the doctor-patient relationship, denials of appeals when services are cut off, less confidentiality of our medical records, less care for the poor, less medical education, less research, less accountability, and higher real costs for Medicare. What we don't have are any of the benefits we were promised. Most importantly we don't have less expensive health care. We also didn't get preventive services, better management of chronic illness, or better accountability. Also missing are better management of hospitals, greater responsiveness to consumers, a more holistic approach to wellness. Unless, of course, hearing about these things in endless advertisements is the same as getting them.

The Transformation of Medical Language and Culture

As dramatic as the changes in the financing and organizational structure have been, the "cultural revolution" in health care is even more startling to me. Cultural transformation of the language, the atmosphere, and the ethics of health care is inextricably linked to the financial changes. The working atmosphere of clinics and hospitals is being reorganized along corporate models, and a huge advertising and public relations machine is transforming the language of medicine and health into the language of marketing.

In clinics and hospitals there is a new managerial culture in which medical opinion is subordinate to the corporate strategic plan. As an industrial process, it favors the consistent delivery of a predictable unit of service over a healing relationship. In fact, despite rhetoric to the contrary, this culture views the relationship between clinician and patient as its greatest threat and seeks to limit this relationship and undermine the trust of this relationship whenever possible. This is not a demonic plot — it is simply necessary workflow engineering. As the doctor-patient encounter determines subsequent costs for tests ordered or specialists requested, it must be carefully controlled to minimize costs.

This undermining of the doctor-patient relationship is manifested in multiple ways. There are contractual "gag rules" under which physicians can be fired for telling patients about treatments that are not covered by their plan, or for disclosing to patients that bonuses are given for limiting tests and specialist referrals. Although this represents grossly unethical behavior and physicians have been advised by professional organizations to ignore these rules, they are nevertheless legal grounds for dismissal in many contracts. Clearly these rules weaken the possibility of trust between clinicians and patients, and they violate the principle of informed consent. This is not about eliminating unnecessary tests. This is about transforming doctors from their professional roles, in which they have profound responsibility to be their patients' advocates and obtain the best possible care for them, into corporate service representatives whose function is to reduce clinical demands.

In addition to destroying the doctor-patient relationship, the new health care culture de-professionalizes clinicians as a strategy to eliminate any legitimate opposition. Although most clinicians try to remain ethical, the threat of unemployment, unimaginable a few years ago, has become a powerful determinant of clinical behavior.

It has become common to speak of the introduction of "conflicts of interest into medicine." I think this is a misunderstanding. Licensed professionals have traditionally been charged by society with the task of dealing with conflicts of interest as an intrinsic part of their jobs. This is the reason for the licensing of professionals, for ethical standards, and for selection of professionals, at least in theory, on the basis of character. In almost every encounter with a patient in traditional medicine there was an opportunity for benefit at the patient's expense. What the new corporate system is

attempting to introduce is the absence of conflict of interest. The only rule is increasing profit. Patient welfare is irrelevant as long as it doesn't directly cost the company in short-term worsening illness or law suits. The results have been a distorting of language, standards, and the criteria for what is true. In its usual style of perverting language into its opposite, corporate health care uses words like "managed demand" to refer to denials of coverage and to rationing by inconvenience. "Medical loss" becomes the amount of money spent on helping sick patients. Standards of care have been reduced significantly as described above.

This substitution of corporate managerial culture for professional medical culture is actually codified in current law. Investor-owned health plans and investor-owned hospitals actually have a legally binding fiduciary responsibility to their stockholders to maximize profit. They can be sued for "business malpractice" for failing to do this. On the other hand they may not have any fiduciary responsibility for patient care. They have managed this incredible piece of legal gymnastics by claiming that when they deny a service they are merely denying payment for it and not giving a medical opinion as to its necessity. This arrangement is codified in the "hold harmless" clauses of their contracts with doctors, which state that the doctors alone are responsible for any adverse outcomes even when the health plan refuses to pay for needed tests and treatments. (Thankfully this arrangement is being challenged in the courts, where health plans have been named in malpractice suits by patients who were harmed as a result of denial of care.)

Organized medicine has taken mixed approaches to these crises. The AMA has loudly criticized gag rules and other overtly unethical practices. But at the same time most physician organizations run seminars in how to get along with the new system rather than overtly and unconditionally opposing it. The few lawsuits that are beginning to draw attention have more often been brought by individuals.

The tide is beginning to turn, however, as several recent events indicate. Physicians for a National Health Program, once a small fringe group, is attracting a lot of mainstream interest among physicians, and its membership is rising. Even physicians who are not sure that they want a single-payer program appreciate the organization's truth-telling about corporate care, and have found that its descriptions of the abuses resonate with their own experiences.

Another watershed was reported in the *New York Times* on April 5, 1997. For the first time, a group of physicians in the private sector has organized into a union in order to be able to negotiate collectively on quality of care issues. (There have long been some small unions for doctors in public sector jobs.) One of the organizers, Keith Shelman, MD, is quoted as explaining that the physicians' remuneration was good and had not been the issue: "It wasn't a dollar issue. It was the issue of not being allowed to be a good doctor."



Even the most widely respected, mainstream physicians have come to recognize that accommodation with corporate values won't work. As reported in the *New York Times* on April 6, 1997, three physicians, C. Everett Koop, the former Surgeon General, Arnold Relman, the former editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, and James Todd, former vice president of the AMA, jointly contributed to a brief in yet another lawsuit against Richard Scott and Columbia/HCA. In it they say, "[These incentives] take physicians into uncharted waters, where conflicts of interest abound and the conflict between business and professional aims is obscured. No longer are physicians the trustees for their patients' interests. They become agents for a corporate enterprise which regards patients as customers.

This is a huge step in the right direction, but it misses an important point: Patients are not even seen as customers in these systems. The customers are other corporations who are large employers.

The other sphere in which there has been a medical cultural revolution is the multibillion dollar advertisement and public relations machinery that has recently been introduced into the health care equation. This started with the "Harry and Louise" ad campaign, which in its day was the most expensive political ad campaign in history, and as I documented last year, has been found to be mostly fallacious in its claims. Since then what can only be called a propaganda machine of incredible proportions has emerged. Like all propaganda machines, its purpose is to tell people that they are not experiencing what they clearly are. Like all propaganda machines it uses words to mean their opposite. "Caring" must refer to denial of services; "quality" must mean fewer referrals to needed specialists; "continuity of care" means your emergency ER visit won't be paid for.

Perhaps the most important distortion of language is the corporate use of the terms "Managed Care" and "Health Maintenance Organization." These concepts have histories that go back half a century. The Kaiser-Permenente program started in 1938, and together with consumer cooperatives such as the Group Health Association of Washington (1937) and Group Health Cooperative of Puget Sound (1941) made valuable contributions to the economic delivery of health care. The difference was that they were organized fundamentally for the well-being of their consumer patient population. The corporate health plans have co-opted the positive associations that these plans created but have failed to follow their policies: "The words are the words of Jacob but the hands are the hands of Esau."

In one popular TV ad for a Medicare program an elderly man looks sincerely into the camera and says about his

(continued on page 76)

Colombia:
Washington's Dirtiest "War on Drugs"

Peter Dale Scott



Photo by AP/Gonzalez

With the slaughters of Guatemala and El Salvador receding, the bloodiest killing field of this hemisphere is now Colombia. Left-wing political leaders, union organizers, and many other civilians are being systematically slaughtered, while random terror is being used to drive peasants and shopkeepers from their land. Major human rights organizations agree that the United States should forthwith cease arming and training those who are conducting this organized counterinsurgency program of political terror and murder. A small group in Congress is increasingly concerned and vocal about the impact of U.S. aid on Colombian human rights.

Yet many people I talk to, even those who are veterans of the Vietnam anti-war movement, know almost nothing about the Colombian atrocities. The press also avoids this tragedy, discussing instead more remote horrors like those in Rwanda or Zaire. How similar this seems to the 1970s, when we were told so much about the atrocities occurring in Cambodia, and nothing at all about the mass killings occurring with U.S. support in East Timor.

In part, this ignorance and avoidance is psychological. People view "revolutions" and "guerrillas" as much less glamorous today, after the revelations about Pol Pot, than they did in the 1960s. And in truth there is no reason to romanticize the guerrillas of Colombia. Most of them have become little more than bandits — robbing, extorting, kidnapping and murdering in their turn, and causing vast ecological damage when they blow up oil companies' pipelines.

But this ignorance can be traced back to a systematic distortion of Colombian realities in the U.S. press and in Washington. We do not hear that in Colombia most of the killings are perpetrated by the military and its allies, not by the guerrillas. Nor do we hear that these killings are part of a strategy of terror that has been encouraged by so-called U.S. Special Warfare or Low Intensity Conflict theorists and trainers.

United States aid to Colombia is presented as part of a legitimate "war on drugs." The aid is said to help break what journalist Robert Novak recently called the "clear link between guerrillas and drug traffickers." Clinton drug czar Barry McCaffrey agrees, and has said that counterinsurgency and counter-narcotics are, in fact, "two sides of the same coin." But in practice the United States is supporting a military-paramilitary alliance that works in conjunction with — not against — the richest drug-traffickers and their private death squads. Some U.S. aid ends up in counterinsurgency operations where no drugs are present at all. An internal Department of Defense (DOD) memo has conceded that it is "unrealistic to expect the military [to] limit use of [U.S.] equipment to operations against narcotraffickers."

The American public is further confused by hearing that Colombia has been decertified as an aid recipient for not having "fully cooperated" with U.S. drug enforcement. But decertification, which embarrasses the civilian government, does not affect the flow of arms to the Colombian military and police. In fact, this is being augmented by a waiver in the name of national security, and again by supplemental "drawdowns" of arms in the DOD inventory, and finally by direct arms sales. U.S. arms grants and sales to Colombia in fiscal year 1997 are expected to be the highest ever.

For more information, contact the Colombia Support Network, P.O. Box 1505, Madison, Wisc., (608) 257-8753. Peter Dale Scott is the author & co-author of various books on drug trafficking, most recently Cocaine Politics *and* Deep Politics and the Death of J.F.K. *from Univ. of Calif. Press, Berkeley.*

Pacification Through Pure Terror

Consider the situation in Urabá, in northwestern Colombia. There, paramilitary units, some of them financed by drug-trafficking landowners, are mimicking the death squads of El Salvador to impose the "peace" that comes from maximized terror. This approach is suggested by the reaction last August to the "Peace Week" declared by Gloria Cuartas, the courageous Mayor of Apartadó. The Mayor was giving a lesson in conflict resolution to an elementary school class when her talk was broken up by two men outside who grabbed an eight year-old boy, chopped off his head, and threw the head into the classroom. The Mayor hid for the night under a neighbor's bed, and emerged the next morning to find her municipal car riddled with bullet holes.

In Apartadó alone, there were over three hundred political assassinations last year by the paramilitaries and their opponents. In Colombia as a whole there were over three thousand such killings, or more than the total during the seventeen-year military dictatorship in Chile. Groups attempting an independent analysis of these nationwide figures, like the Andean Commission of Jurists, estimate that 70 percent of the killings are committed by the army, police, and above all by the paramilitary groups. Of the remaining 30 to 35 percent, most are the work of leftist guerrillas. Less than 2 percent of the killings have anything to do with drugs.

Although the gross figure of three thousand political killings has remained fairly constant over the last ten years, the percentage attributable to paramilitaries has been increasing and the military's share declining. The result is a scene of untraceable slaughter, much as in Guatemala and El Salvador. All three countries have suffered from the counterterrror strategies developed and disseminated by U.S. counterinsurgency theorists. (Decapitations and mutilations, now common in Urabá, are a technique made familiar in El Salvador.)

The best proof that both the United States and the top Colombian military approve of paramilitary violence is that those responsible for coordinating it are usually promoted. Meanwhile, U.S. aid for the "war on drugs," despite official denials, continues to flow to those units identified with civilian murders. A few offending officers have been forced into retirement or dismissed, but almost none have been convicted of charges, while witnesses against them have been murdered, even when in official custody.

Left-wing political leaders, union organizers, and human rights workers are especially targeted for elimination. Wherever paramilitaries are working to consolidate their domination, they are committing spectacularly brutal killings of ordinary citizens as a means to displace entire communities from contested areas.

One of the largest paramilitary "self-defense" groups, the Autodefensas Campesinas of Córdoba & Urabá (ACCU), has been funded by two local drug-trafficking millionaires, the Castaño brothers. Not surprisingly, they are wanted for murder by the civil authorities. The army has also reportedly provided support to another paramilitary leader, Victor Carranza, an emerald dealer and reputed drug trafficker.

U.S. Counterterror Strategies & the Training of the Colombian Army

Rural slaughter by armed civilians is rooted deeply in Colombian history, and reached a high point in the civil war that followed World War II. Out of this chaos emerged guerrilla movements and a strategy of government counter-terrorism for which the United States has provided training and matériel since 1962. A top-level U.S. Special Warfare team from Fort Bragg visited Colombia that year and recommended the same deadly strategies then being applied for counterinsurgency in Vietnam. The core of the team's report focused on training of "civilian and military personnel ... to ... as necessary execute paramilitary, sabotage, and/or terrorist activities... backed by the United States."

Among the "terrorist activities" then taught by Special Warfare expert General Lansdale (and later incorporated in U.S. Army pamphlet 525-7-1), were the murder and mutilation of captives, and the display of their bodies. In the 1980s, Reagan-era counterinsurgency experts like Neil Livingstone (an Ollie North associate) explicitly endorsed the death-squad and mass-murder tactics employed in El Salvador and Argentina: "In reality, death squads are an extremely effective tool, however odious, in combating terrorism and revolutionary challenges." Livingstone even rationalized the tactic of killing not only the leftists themselves, but also their relatives, as a way "to prevent blood feud."

At that time, similar strategies, more cautiously expressed, were being taught to Colombian officers at the Fort Benning School of the Americas (SOA). Just last June, Washington's Intelligence Oversight Board found that the SOA training materials had recommended "executions of guerrillas, extortion, physical abuse, coercion and false imprisonment." A 1992 report by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which discussed human rights abuses by the Colombian military and police, found that almost half of those involved (105 out of 246) had been trained at the SOA.

After the 1962 visit, the Colombian Army promptly incorporated the notion of "civil defense" or "self-defense" paramilitaries into its own "Plan Lazo"

counterinsurgency strategy. Under the legal umbrella of a subsequent "State of Siege," a law was passed allowing the military to provide civilians with weapons restricted to the armed forces.

Political violence escalated dramatically in late 1981. At that time the death squad MAS was set up by leaders of the Medellín and Cali drug cartels, at a meeting that some say was also attended by Colombian army officers. Originally targeted against kidnappers, MAS then became a model (backed by drug lords who were becoming more and more powerful landowners) for the indiscriminate murder of leftists, civil rights activists, and civilian political leaders.

In Colombia's Middle Magdalena region, the MAS model of army-paramilitary cooperation evolved from a meeting called in 1982 by a local army commander, and attended also by businessmen, ranchers, and representatives from Texaco. (For a while this coalition sponsored training centers with instructors from the United States, Israel, and Great Britain.) According to Human Rights Watch, the army, while using the name MAS, essentially "authorized and actively encouraged civilians to pursue and kill suspected guerrillas." The targets soon included any civilians who opposed MAS tactics. (By the late 1980s Medellín traffickers controlled 40 percent of the land in this region, and funded most of the paramilitary activities.)

The Colombian human rights commission, Justicia y Paz, found that around just one village in the area's hundreds who refused to join the paramilitaries or leave the region were murdered. Several thousand more fled the area and settled elsewhere. Many such displaced persons have relocated to jungle areas, and now are trying to subsist by growing a plant new to them — coca.

After a few months of this terror campaign, the civilian government ordered an investigation. Of 163 people linked to MAS, 59 were found to be active-duty police and military officers, including the commanders of two local Army Battalions. The military tribunal, which insisted on handling the case, dismissed all charges. The government, paralyzed by rumors of a possible military coup, acquiesced. Since then the justice system has effectively continued to accept the impunity enjoyed by military and paramilitary killers. This is true even today, though the State of Siege has been lifted, and a 1989 decree has made paramilitary membership illegal. (Reportedly, even after this decree, army intelligence has continued to discuss operations planning with paramilitary leaders.)

The U.S. has helped to institutionalize this system of collaboration in murder. From Human Rights Watch we learn that, "Despite Colombia's disastrous human rights record, a U.S. Defense Department and ... C.I.A. team worked with Colombian military officers on the 1991 intelligence reorganization that resulted in the creation of killer networks that identified and killed civilians suspected of supporting guerrillas." Significantly, there is not a single mention of drugs in this secret order (Order 200-05/91), which was designed to combat what it calls "escalating terrorism by armed subversion."

The Order does not mention the murders and paramilitaries by name either, referring only to "covert and compartmentalized" civilian "intelligence networks." But it does lay out a system of military-paramilitary collaboration, modeled on that developed in the 1980s between the Army and the MAS death squads of the Cali and Medellín cartels. Under this system, laws continue to be flouted; military officers continue to equip and oversee



photo by Colombia Bulletin/CSN/Madison WI

hit men armed with prohibited weapons; civilians continue to be killed. Meanwhile, U.S. weapons have gone to one army unit, the Palacé Battalion, that has killed 120 civilians since 1990.

The U.S. press ignored a Human Rights Watch press conference last November that reported on U.S. support for Colombia's military-paramilitary killer networks. A March 1997 article in the *New York Times* about the Castaños' "self-defense group," the ACCU, also failed to mention U.S. support. The article did, however, mention past military protection for the Castaños. It observed that "it is unclear how serious the military really is about catching Carlos Castaño," and it noted the latter's wry comment about an army camp being "just over the hill" from his training camp.

In 1994, to placate the small but growing U.S. congressional group criticizing policy in Colombia, a State Department official testified that none of the Colombian military units identified with atrocities had received any assistance from the United States. But last October, William Schulz, U.S. Director of Amnesty International, produced official documents that, as he said, prove the

opposite: "almost every unit highlighted by Amnesty for murdering Colombian civilians was in fact receiving U.S.-supplied arms and other equipment." He called for an immediate halt to U.S. military aid.

Narco-Guerrillas: Left and Right

U.S. officials defend this aid policy with the rationale that it is needed to combat the "narco-guerrillas." As I explained in *Cocaine Politics* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1991), the notion of the left-wing "narco-guerrilla" is the legacy of a mid-1980s propaganda campaign that was promoted in part to disguise the true links between the military and the real drug traffickers. This notion relied on misleading and possibly planted evidence — such as an alleged uniform of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas found in 1984 at the major Tranquilandia cocaine laboratory. The U.S. Ambassador claimed (and the *New York Times* duly reported) that the laboratory had been guarded by communist guerrillas. But respected drug researcher Rensselaer Lee later concluded that this was incorrect; the lab had in fact enjoyed high-level protection from the Colombian military.

Recently, some guerrilla networks have focused increasingly on the profits available from the drug bonanza by taxing and protecting the cultivation, processing, and shipment of drugs. Officials estimate that between 1990 and 1994, guerrillas extorted $701 million from the drug trade. But this figure for a four-year period represents only 3 percent or less of an annual drug traffic averaging over $6 to $10 billion per year.

Narco-terrorism from the right has been the more serious matter, especially with the rise and fall of the Medellín cartel in the late 1980s and early 1990s. For a few years during this period, the U.S. press reported spectacular assassinations of judges and a presidential candidate, and also bombings of police headquarters and a civilian airliner.

The problem with the left-wing "narco-guerrilla" hypothesis is that it obscures the reality: these terrorist acts against the civilian state were financed by right-wing traffickers like Jose Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha, whose death squads functioned in alliance with the military, not against them. In these circumstances, uncontextualized talk of "narco-guerrillas" makes sense only as a way to hornswoggle Congress and the American people.

In a revealing article in the February, 1987 *Military Review*, Colonel John Waghelstein, former leader of the U.S. military mission in El Salvador, and thereafter an outspoken exponent of "Post-Vietnam Counterinsurgency Doctrine" described the usefulness of popularizing the "narco-guerrilla" notion: "A melding in the American public's mind and in Congress of this [narco-guerrilla/narco-terrorist] connection would lead to the necessary support to counter the guerrilla/narcotics terrorists in this hemisphere ... Congress would find it difficult to stand in the way of supporting our allies with the training, advice and security assistance necessary to do the job ... Above all, we would have the unassailable moral position from which to launch a concerted offensive effort using Department of Defense (DOD) and non-DOD assets."

Robert Novak and others have revived the "narco-guerrilla" as a justification for maintaining the arms pipeline. Behind this campaign are officials like General Barry McCaffrey, who, before becoming drug czar, was Commander of the Southern Command—a unit that collaborates with Latin American armed forces such as Colombia's. In 1996 and again in 1997, McCaffrey talked of the "narco-guerrillas" as a reason to increase aid to the Colombian army.

The Actual Allies of the Narco-Death Squads — and of the United States

According to Novak, McCaffrey told him that the chief of the Colombian military, General Harold Bedoya, is "clean and competent." (By "clean," McCaffrey may have meant that there was no cocaine powder in the man's pockets.) Bedoya is, however, one of the chief targets of human rights watchers in Colombia. The American Association of Jurists and other groups have identified him as founder and leader of the death squad Alianza Americana Anticomunista in the early 1980s.

Bedoya is both a graduate and a former instructor at the U.S.-run School of the Americas, and was once his country's military attaché in Washington. A year ago, after the Samper civilian government was first decertified, he tried and failed to secure U.S. Embassy support for a military coup. More recently he tried to convince the U.S. Congress that all the guerrillas in Colombia "are now narcotics traffickers" — an absurd notion.

Another SOA graduate is the army commander, General Manuel Bonett. Bonett has repeatedly resisted investigation of his troops' involvement with paramilitaries. In 1979–80, he was personally responsible for the area around Trujillo, an area then notorious for paramilitary murders protected by the military. (One of the killers was Henry Loaiza, a member of the Cali drug cartel). Recently the Army, under Bonett, fired one of its most decorated heroes in the war against the real drug cartels, Colonel Carlos Velásquez. His crime was to have complained that the Army was losing the support of the people by its cooperation with terroristic paramilitary groups. Bedoya has since defended the firing. Bedoya's

friend, General Yanine Díaz, is another graduate of the U.S. School of the Americas. Recently the Colombian Attorney General has issued a warrant for his arrest in connection with massacres. Apparently, the actions of Bedoya and generals like him are controversial in Colombia but not in Washington.

The Challenge for Colombia — and for the United States

It would be misleading to recount only these negative features of recent Colombian history. Non-drug sectors of the economy have improved recently, with a rise in coffee prices and a mini-oil boom. Over the years the civilian government has struggled to restore a rule of law, partly by negotiating with drug traffickers on the one hand and guerrillas on the other. Reinforced by the new 1991 Constitution, the civilian government has made periodic, if hitherto ineffective, efforts to track down and arrest paramilitary leaders like the Castaños.

It would also be misleading to speak only of the terroristic aspects of the U.S.-backed "war on drugs." Sometimes drugs themselves really are the target, as in the controversial fumigation project to eradicate coca from the air. (What happens in fact is that all local crops, not just the coca, are adversely affected —along with the health of those unfortunate enough to live nearby.)

The U.S. has taken some recent steps to address human rights violations by the Colombian military, such as vetting the officer candidates for U.S. training. Last September Senator Leahy managed to secure a congressional prohibition of assistance to military units known to abuse human rights.

In Colombia's relatively healthy, diversified, and turnaround economy, the business classes have reason to hasten normalization by throwing their weight behind the nascent peace process in their country. The government has just announced a plebiscite on the issue of negotiating peace with the guerrillas, and the issue of peace is likely to be important in next year's presidential elections.

The chief obstacle to a negotiated peace has been that the strenuous resistance from the Colombian military is not countered by but is in fact backed by U.S. policy. Historically, Washington has favored strong armies in Latin America, even at the obvious price of weakening democracy. Clinton has done nothing to change this policy direction. On the contrary, his budget for the "war on drugs" is now more than three times that of Reagan's. Currently, Clinton plans to maintain thousands of U.S. troops in Panama for counter-narcotics operations. The policy of aid decertification only further aggravates the Colombian crisis; as a Colombian Minister complained recently, the U.S. "helps us for war, but not to achieve peace. We need to be fighting poverty." The European Parliament, meanwhile, has voted to deflect half its anti-drug aid into health and other civilian programs.

As we learned in El Salvador, it is possible for seemingly hopeless slaughter to be curbed. Reluctantly, Washington came to accept the fruits of the peace process in Central America, a process that was in part the work of the Catholic church and other non-governmental organizations who were backed by their supporters in the United States. However, a key event in this turnaround was the 1988 vote by Congress against funding the Nicaraguan contras.

We need another such definitive congressional vote, a vote against aid and support for the military and police of Colombia. This vote would be not only our country's best contribution to peace and human rights in Colombia; it would also be the way to free up funds for a genuine strategy to address the drug-abuse problem. ❑

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The Children's Hour

Amy Aronson and Michael Kimmel

During her reign as resident feminist on the op-ed page of the *New York Times,* Anna Quindlen once asked her women readers which man they'd prefer for a mate: a short, thin, reedy man — careful, committed and chivalrous, always sexually faithful; or a dark, roguishly handsome, self-interested scoundrel, who would never be faithful. Readers, of course, chose the former (though when posed to our students, several women always note that they wouldn't mind having sex with the latter before they got married).

But what if, Quindlan asked, you gave them names. Call the first one Ashley Wilkes, the second Rhett Butler. Now whom would you choose?

"Well, that's different," said one woman student. "Rhett Butler's never been loved by me. When I love him, he'll change."

In a heartbeat, Quindlen had exposed the consequences of women's romantic fantasies: a woman's love can change a bad man into a good man. When Rhett is loved by that woman, he may physically remain Rhett (indeed, he'd better), but emotionally he'll become Ashley.

This romantic fantasy — "the angel in the house," in Virginia Woolf's famous phrase — is the centerpiece of feminine fiction; Jane Eyre, the mother of all women's novels, is a *locus classicus*. And it's been a Hollywood staple for decades; Eyre itself has been made into a film an astounding eight times. Think of *Magnificent Obsession* (1954) in which Rock Hudson renounces his wastrel ways and dedicates himself to medicine for the love of Jane Wyman. (And this was a remake of the 1935 film with Robert Taylor and Irene Dunn.) Or *San Francisco* (1936), where the bad gin-joint proprietor (Gable again), is transformed in his battle with the saintly priest (Spencer Tracy) for Jeanette MacDonald's soul (and other body parts).

Like Gable, Humphrey Bogart made a virtual career out of this transformation. In *Casablanca* (1942) his infernal, abiding love for Ingrid Bergman leads him to act heroically, the renunciation of love as its ultimate confirmation. In *African Queen* (1951), it's Katherine Hepburn who elicits the move; in *To Have and Have Not* (1944), it's Lauren Bacall (who is also the vehicle for the plunge into depravity and ruin in *The Big Sleep* (1946).

The transformative power of women's pure love has been one of America's most resilient cultural tropes. Except it doesn't work any more. Because it wasn't really femininity that transformed those bad guys. It was innocence. And once upon a time, women embodied that innocence — on screen and in real life.

Not anymore. Feminism has changed all that. In the movies, feminism's changed good girls, innocent and pure, into worldly women — corrupted by power (*Disclosure*), tainted by greed (the bony climber Sigourney Weaver compared to the zoftig wannabe Melanie Griffith in *Working Girl*), inured to the needs of their children, (*Kramer vs. Kramer*). Some have even become murderous (*Thelma and Louise*).

And they've got better things to do with their time than changing bad men into good ones. In *An Unmarried Woman*, Jill Clayburgh opts to stay that way, while in *Waiting to Exhale*, the ensemble waits for men who are already good. In *She's Gotta Have It*, girls just wanna have fun, too.

About the only recent movie in which good women turn bad men into good men is *The First Wives Club* — but that's after they've been dumped, and against the men's wills. About the best women can get from men these days is grudgingly ethical behavior, which, fortunately, is more than compensated by sisterly solidarity.

So what's a bad man to do? What force is innocent and virtuous enough to change him? In Hollywood these days, it's a little child who will lead them.

Only young children embody the virtuous innocence that can change bad men into good men. In *Liar, Liar*, currently the nation's top box office hit, for example, it's sheister corporate attorney Jim Carrey's revelation that he's a bad father to his five year-old son that leads him to the righteous path. His Dantean descent into the depravity of unbridled honesty, occasioned by Justin Cooper's birthday wish that his father couldn't lie for twenty-four hours, transforms a bad father into a good man, literally overnight.

And the pivotal scene in Jerry Maguire, the biggest hit of the past year, comes not through a magical romantic moment or ecstatic sexual passion between Tom Cruise

(continued on p. 75)

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Jerusalem
roundtable

The Oslo Accords indicates that the status of Jerusalem will be decided as part of the final round of talks of the peace process. That process has been temporarily stopped now because Palestinians believe that building apartments for Jews in a Palestinian neighborhood of East Jerusalem in effect alters the facts on the ground, and thus attempts to settle the issue of Jerusalem unilaterally. Underlying this particular dispute, however, is the larger issue of what should be the lasting solution in relationship to Jerusalem. Should sovereignty for all parts of what now gets called Jerusalem remain in the hands of Israel? If so, how will Israel deal with the fact that there are tens of thousands of residents of Jerusalem who seem to wish to be part of a Palestinian state? What kind of peace is possible under those circumstances?

Michael Kleiner: My views on the issue of Jerusalem represent a wide Israeli consensus that goes from Right to Left, from Likud to parts of Meretz and certainly most of the Labor Party, all of whom believe that an undivided Jerusalem is the Eternal Capital and the practical capital of the State of Israel. It is not part of the Oslo Accords. Of course, we are ready to negotiate everything, but the Israeli consensus is that the other side wants some things from Israel, and we want something from the other side, and one of the issues Israel is insisting upon is Jerusalem. For the time being, according to Israeli law Jerusalem is part of Israel, and we are as free to build in Jerusalem as the Palestinians are free to build in Ramallah, Nablus or any other part that was allocated to the Palestinian Authority.

Arabs who live in Jerusalem have the right to become Israeli citizens, and in the last few months ten to fifteen thousand Jerusalem Arabs are trying to get their Israeli identity cards — perhaps they are afraid of coming changes.

Jerusalem was the uniting element for the Jewish people throughout the past many centuries. We pray to Jerusalem everywhere. Jerusalem may be holy for all monotheistic religions, and in 1967 at the peak of our power we gave control over the religious sites to the Arab and Christian authorities. We respected their places, unlike what happened 19 years of Jordanian Arab rule when Jews were unable to visit the Wailing Wall. A Muslim, even in Jerusalem, faces Mecca to pray, whereas Jews always face Jerusalem, and there is no other place that is holier for Jews. It was our historic capital and so has not only a religious but a national significance.

Dauod Kuttab: Jerusalem is of course also very important for Muslims and for Christians.

But instead of focusing on the religious significance, we ought to talk about the people who live there, and the people who were born there and who wish to return there, which includes many tens of thousands of Palestinians.

Palestinian and Israeli leaders agree on at least one thing: both sides wish the city to be open. There is consensus on not having any wall separating any parts of the city. But we have to be very creative in finding a solution that also meets the political and religious aspirations of Palestinians and Arabs, as well as of Jews and Israelis. To do that we need two very important things:

a.) We should depoliticize Jerusalem. Leaders on both sides are using Jerusalem for making political gains within their larger constituencies without really taking into account the needs of the people who live in Jerusalem. Jerusalem should be a spiritual capital for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Perhaps it should not also be a political capital — and both sides might serve the people of Jerusalem better if they found alternative sites for the political capital.

Participants: Rabbi Tzvi Blanchard, senior teaching fellow at the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership (CLAL); Michael Kleiner, Member of Knesset from the Gesher-Likud-Tzomet bloc, head of the "Eretz Yisrael front" in the Knesset; Anat Hoffman, Jerusalem city counselor for Meretz party; Danny Seidemann, legal advisor for Ir Shalem, Peace Now's Jerusalem project; Daoud Kuttab, a Palestinian journalist; and Rabbi Avi Weiss, an orthodox rabbi and activist who has opposed any territorial compromise in Israel. Weiss and Hoffman were only present during part of the discussion.

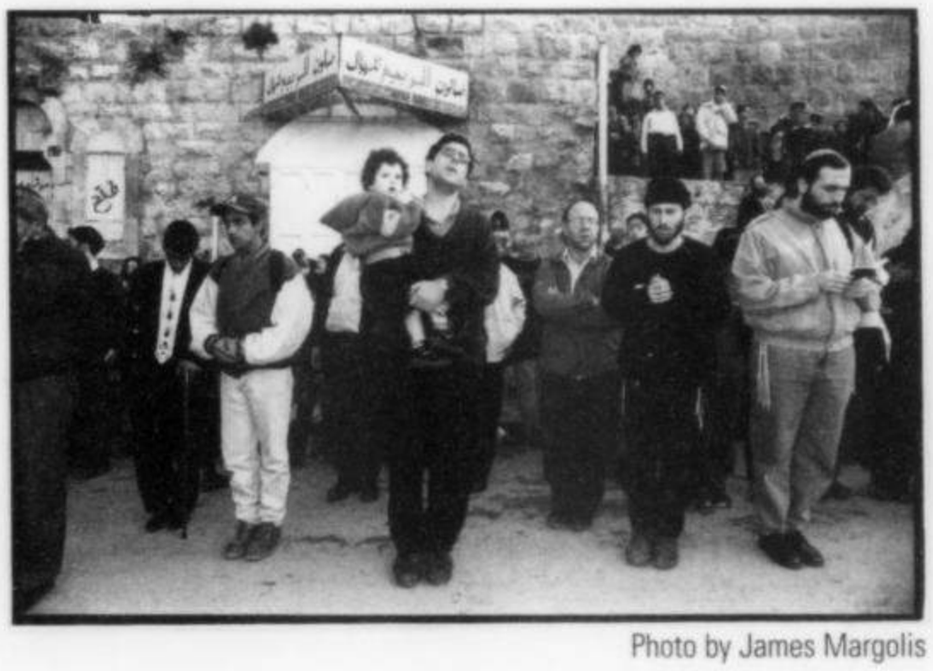


Photo by James Margolis

b). When Jews pray for Jerusalem, they don't pray for Jabal Abu Nef or what is now being called Har Homa or Beit Hanina. These Palestinian villages that got incorporated into Jerusalem by Israeli political decision are not part of the prayers of most Jews. When you start to talk not about historic Jerusalem but about the politically created "Greater Jerusalem," you are talking about one third of the total area occupied in 1967, a huge area. We ought to limit the discussion to the areas within the Walls of Jerusalem, the historic Jerusalem (what Jews call The Old City), because it is this that was the focus of the three religious traditions. If we focus on that area we certainly could find a solution that people could live with.

Finally, you cannot create a ghetto for 170,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem and cut them off from the rest of the Palestinians in the West Bank who are their natural community.

Danny Seidemann: Israelis have received stewardship over one of the most complicated and delicate cities in the world, and we should be worthy of that task. There is no consensus over how best to do that.

In my view, the status quo is untenable. Let's look at how we have actually run Jerusalem since it has been in our hands. Since 1967, one-third of the land of East Jerusalem has been expropriated from Palestinians. 40,000 housing units have been built for Israelis on this land, none for Palestinians. 60% of the land remaining has not even been planned. Only 7 to 8% of the municipal budget goes to the 29% of the Jerusalem population that lives in East Jerusalem. The investment in Israeli residents is six times greater than its investment in Palestinian residents. There are 170,000 Palestinians living in East Jerusalem. They are not "Israelis of the Islamic persuasion"; they are proud Palestinians. Even the Likud platform will not make these Palestinians evaporate. The Oslo agreement doesn't pertain to Jerusalem, but the spirit of Oslo certainly does. The untrammeled use of power to the benefit of one side of the Oslo agreements while ignoring the interests of the other side has led to several major explosions of violence in the past few years. Dialogue must replace dictate. If we do not internalize the fact that we are not alone in Jerusalem, we create peril for our own Israeli interest. We are undermining the moral and political claim to the continued unity and integrity of the city.

Before Jerusalem belongs to God, history, or the Jewish or Palestinian peoples, it belongs to the 600,000 or more people who live, sweat, suffer and die here.

There are people who are trying to use Jerusalem to show that the whole idea of Palestinian/Israeli rapprochement is an impossibility. Jerusalem is too important to be left in the hands of politicians. Israel must find ways to empower the Palestinian population without necessarily waiving claims to Israeli sovereignty. The Palestinians need to be given enough power, including recognition of their Palestinian national identity, and at least partially embodying an expression of Palestinian claims to East Jerusalem, in order to accept the situation.

Anat Hoffman: Jerusalem is a place that so captures the imagination that we tend to lose sight of practical realities. Knesset member Naomi Hazan says that when she tried to call Jerusalem from Africa, the telephone operator told her emphatically: "There isn't really a Jerusalem on the earth. It's only in the Bible." All over the world people tend to see one of two Jerusalems: the one that is in the realm of the imagination and religious spirit. But they tend to overlook the one in which real people live.

The place where real citizens live is not being taken care of and its resources are being squandered. For the last fifty years, we have literally let our sewage run down the mountains and contaminate the springs. Jerusalem's best economic resource is its potential for tourism, but fewer tourists come because they sense a lack of safety. Even I was recently warned by the Israeli police that I shouldn't walk through the *shuk* in the Old City because it isn't safe. This lack of safety simply reflects a political situation: we have squandered our faith in each other. It makes it hard to walk the streets or attract tourists.

As a religious Jew, I believe that we are measured by how we treat the *ger:* the minority, the least powerful among us. As a Jerusalem city counselor, I am ashamed of how we treat our Arab minority. It's painfully easy to guess if you're in East Jerusalem: If you're standing in sewage, but you can't find a sidewalk or a streetlight — you know you've reached the Arab quarter. (Forget about finding a park or swimming pool there; the city council forgot it long ago.) We have created a tremendous chasm in social and economic services.

The only solution is to give up building Har Homa and start building confidence. If we gave the Arab minority streetlights, sewage, or other basic services, would that undermine our sovereignty? Yet under Israeli rule, we haven't done more than make empty promises. And the Palestinians have learned this the hard way.

That's why the Arab minority needs to be allowed to run their own affairs. Of course, they might decide to use the money to build mosques, rather than streetlights or swimming pools. Yet it is their tax money, and they should use it as they choose. The idea of Oslo was that for five years, people would begin to run their own affairs and confidence would grow between them. Yet we are not letting Oslo happen in East Jerusalem, and until it does, we will not be able to learn how to work together on recycling sewage, educating our youth or

strengthening communication. Maybe we should focus less on theories of religion and holiness and focus more on practical social justice.



AP Photo by Eyla Warshavky

Tsvi Blanchard:

Because a capital in many way represents the highest aspirations of a nation, we need to think of Jerusalem in terms of our own long-term vision of our goals as a nation and our highest values. Though I have less of a claim to this discussion, because I do not live in Israel as most of the participants in this roundtable do, I do want to say that the process of arriving at what we want from our national capital should have certain elements or guiding principles, the equivalent for us today of what was the fire and cloud that guided the Israelites as they traveled through the desert after the Exodus from Egypt. Among those elements:

First, *tselem elokim*: Every human being is created in the image of God, sacred, of infinite value, and this commits us to wanting to enhance certain features of human life. The ability to be powerful, influential and to create is essential to what it is to be god-like; a powerless person is not godlike. Similar is having the dignity to have a voice in a conversation. Given this ideal, the process of determining Jerusalem's future must feel to all participants as though they have real voice.

As I listened to the previous speakers it struck me that there is in the current situation, and in the determining of Jerusalem's future, an unequal distribution of power, dignity, voice and freedom. Palestinians are not being given the same power and voice in shaping a solution to Jerusalem.

Secondly, *brit*. Jerusalem is the capital of a covenantal peoplehood. The culture we build there must reflect the covenantal status we have with God. Jerusalem in Jewish tradition is associated with our messianic vision, a manifestation of what it would be like if we could express our ultimate values. In much of Jewish tradition, that has meant a covenant not only with Jews but with all people, a universal covenant, and even at times the tradition seems to indicate that this is a covenant with all beings, including the animals. The Jerusalem we should be dreaming of is one that gives full status to the Jewish people and its ideals, but on the other hand also gives full status to the universal covenant of which Palestinians and others will experience themselves as part. To the extent that I understand what has been happening so far, it seems as if there has been an overemphasis on guaranteeing the Jewish side of that covenant, and not enough attention paid to helping other cultural and religious groups to develop their covenant around Jerusalem.

So if Jerusalem is the symbolic center for all cultures, then I can imagine Jerusalem being a city with shared sovereignty. On the practical levels of how to decide how the material and cultural resources get allocated and the various practical problems get decided, it's hard not to conclude, listening to this discussion, that some parties are disadvantaged in this process in being guaranteed basic material resources or being guaranteed that their basic cultural or covenantal needs are being appropriately and equally met.

History has not shown that Jewish needs were well met when others besides the Israeli Defense Forces were in charge of Jerusalem's holy sites. So under any circumstances, it's going to be a long time before Jewish occupants of Jerusalem will be willing to give power to anyone else who might use that power to impact on our access to our holy places. I imagine mutual sovereignty as a goal, but we must take into account the legitimacy of Jewish concerns about having enough power to protect ourselves and our access in the meantime, while not losing sight of this ultimate goal.

Kleiner: I agree with Anat Hoffman's description of what has been going on in Jerusalem and even with her point about the moral obligation of Israel to supply equal

services to Arabs living there. If they would participate in the municipal elections they would have gotten more weight in the political process and would have been better off — but even if this is true, it is nevertheless our obligation and our interests to invest more in the Eastern part and give them better services (even if now those services are better than what Palestinians have in Judea and Samaria).

Palestinians living in a Jerusalem that remains part of Israel can remain proud Palestinians, just as many Palestinians who now live in Uhm el Fahm and other Israeli cities continue to be proud Palestinians as well as citizens of the Israeli state.

Teddy Kollek's Labor party led coalition that ruled Jerusalem for many years failed to invest in East Jerusalem. The solution to that is not to divide the city, but to change the investment policies so that we should now invest in Arab neighborhoods and give equal rights to the Arab citizens.

After a final settlement with Palestinians, we will still be a society with a Jewish majority and a million-person Palestinian minority, and the needs of these Palestinians should be taken into account.

Dauod Kuttab says that these Palestinians want connection with the Palestinians in the Palestinian entity. If we are speaking about peace and not about war and conflict, then everybody will be able to travel and connect and have relationships with everyone else in Eretz Yisrael, just as people in Kiryat Arba will likely be inside a Palestinian entity but still have contact and connection with their fellow Jews in the rest of Eretz Yisrael.

Kuttab: The Likud government wants to have exclusive control over Jerusalem. Palestinians are saying that this is a city that is holy to all of us, so let's find a shared, inclusive solution.

The reason why the Likud government is trying to build on Har Homa is because it is the only connecting point between Bethlehem and East Jerusalem, and the Likud wants to make this kind of physical contiguity impossible.

We opened a process through Oslo that talked about a process of negotiation, in which it was agreed that the issues of settlements and the issue of Jerusalem would be postponed to the final stage, and the Israeli government has violated this by beginning to build a new settlement in Jerusalem.

East Jerusalem has to have a unique special status separate from both Israel and Palestine. It must be a solution which guarantees physical, geographical and economic continuity between East Jerusalem and the rest of the Palestinian state. In my personal opinion, I don't think Jerusalem should be the capital of either Israel or Palestine.

Seidemann: Jerusalem is already and in fact the capital of the West Bank economically, politically, spiritually. Even Har Homa can't change that, despite the intentions of the Israeli government. We Jews are not alone in Jerusalem; there is a critical mass of Palestinians, and living in this city will require that we find pragmatic ways to allow them to run their own lives and that will allow Israelis to communicate our deep historical ties to the city. This requires interim arrangements in which we cede power, not sovereignty, not symbol, but power, while we Israelis retain our claims to the integrity of the city. We have to depolicitize Jerusalem, but today we don't even have the vocabulary of rational discourse on this city.

Avi Weiss: There is a strong consensus emerging in Israel after many difficult years of inner conflict. The Right has come to recognize that "not one inch" (of territory to be ceded) in regard to all of Yehuda and Shomron [the West Bank] is no longer a political reality. The Left-Center has come to realize that uprooting settlements, wherever the settlements may be, contravenes the will of the people. And across the political spectrum a consensus has emerged that Jerusalem is inviolate. Those who wish to live in peace under Jewish sovereignty in Jerusalem should be embraced. I live in New York City and there are two million Hispanics who live here, yet New York City is under one government.

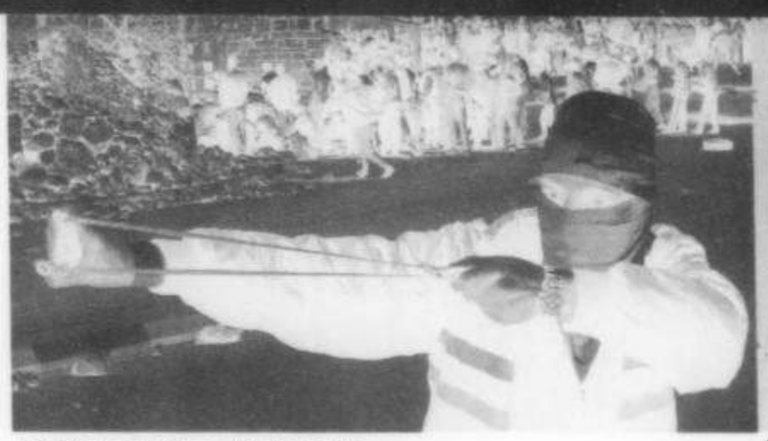
Is there any difference between the legitimacy of Jewish claims to Jerusalem which we liberated in the 1967 war and the legitimacy of our claims to the lands liberated in 1948?

Kuttab: The whole world recognizes the legitimacy of the post 1948 boundaries, and the whole world rejects the appropriation of the part of Jerusalem Israel won in 1967 into an Israeli State.

Weiss: The placement by the Palestinians of Jerusalem as a key issue is perceived by many as a ploy to destroy the soul of Am Israel. One has to remember the history of Jerusalem. Between 1948 and 1967, we were denied entrance, synagogues were desecrated, and no Jew was permitted entry into the city.

In the days ahead two issues will surface: The Right and Left in Israel are coming together around a consensus, and will find themselves standing up against the Clinton administration, which is very supportive of Daoud Kuttab's position that we should go back to the 1967 lines that Jerusalem should not be under the sovereignty of a Jewish state.

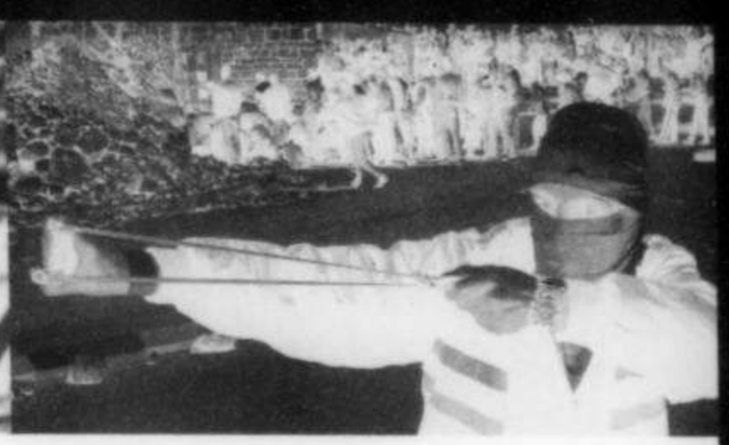
As this gets resolved, we are going to have to face another question: Is Israel a democratic state where many Jews live, or is it a Jewish democratic state — and there is a world of difference between the two. As important as the borders of Israel may be, the spiritual quality of its people is more important — and that will become the central point of debate.



AP Photo by Greg Marinovich



Photo by James Margolis



Blanchard: Mr. Seidemann insists on the importance of a pragmatic approach. But when one listens to Rabbi Weiss and his insistence that Jerusalem is inviolate, I think one has to recognize that peace forces are not going to get very far without a wider vision beyond pragmatism.

Why not widen the discourse and the vision? Why can't a city be the capital of two groups at once? Jews will never agree to another capital, but we might agree eventually to Jerusalem being the capital of more than one state.

If Jews cannot be convinced that what it means to be Jewish in the Land of Israel involves a responsibility for vulnerable Palestinians in the Land of Israel, pragmatic arguments will never work to change the situation, given the current power realities. I see no evidence that pragmatically-oriented Jews have ever given one inch more than they've had to give. Such pragmatic Israelis have been using power to take lands and resources with no genuine concerns about the well-being of Palestinians, except at such moments when they've been forced to take this into account.

A long term solution needs to come out of a larger vision, and that must include the principle that no one should be pushed out of the process of working out a solution just because we have the power to push them out. But if you don't have fundamental mutual respect and the other is just an obstacle in our way...

Weiss: You speak about vulnerable Palestinians. But there are vulnerable little Jewish girls, seven of whom were just murdered. There are people like myself who believe that Arafat gives the green light to this kind of stuff. I would ask that we acknowledge that people on all sides feel vulnerable.

Blanchard: But is the vulnerability really comparable? Would you be willing, Avi, to trade places with the Palestinians in terms of how much power Jews would have in shaping the outcome? Would you give them the amount of power and affluence that we now have and take what they have, on the assumption that somehow there is an equivalence of vulnerability?

Avi Weiss: I'm just saying that we have to be careful with our language. Both sides feel vulnerable.

TIKKUN: The consensus that Rabbi Weiss talks about may only exist among the secular Israeli community. Rabbi Blanchard argued before that from a Torah-based vision, caring about the rights and giving equal voice to the concerns of Palestinians is mandated by Jewish tradition, whereas you, Rabbi Weiss, have argued that a spiritual Torah-based vision requires as its bottom line the inviolability of Jewish control over this territory.

Weiss: My concept of Or LaGoyim is all-embracing. It's not a particularistic vision in the sense of being exclusionary. I want a Jerusalem that would be open and embracing to all people, Jews and non-Jews who wish to live with peace with us under Jewish sovereignty.

Seidemann: You talk, Avi, about inviolability. But this city has been violated already in many ways. The Jordanians violated it by keeping us out of our holy sites. But we Israelis have also done so. The Jerusalem Municipality allocates one-sixth of the amount of funds to the Palestinian child who will go to school tomorrow morning than it allocates to the Israeli child. We have undermined our own claims to unity in the city.

TIKKUN: But Michael Kleiner says that you can retain Israeli control over all of Jerusalem and just change this policy. If that is the basis of your disagreement with Kleiner, then he says that that problem could be worked out.

Seidemann: I am not committed to any particular formulation on the issue of sovereignty. Nor are many East Jerusalem Palestinians. Many would not be running to be living under the Palestinian Authority. Many would probably tell you that they want a lot more respect than they get under Israeli control and a lot more democracy than they would get under the Palestinian Authority.

There's a lot of room for political imagination before reaching the issue of sovereignty.

Weiss: It's important to recognize that no one has a monopoly on truth. I am not claiming that I love Jerusalem more than Mr. Seidemann, but I ask the Left to recognize that they have no monopoly vis-a-vis concerns for non-Jews living in Jerusalem. I care just as much, but I find a different way of achieving that end.

Kleiner: I wouldn't be against the idea of boroughs for Jerusalem, including some that are Arab boroughs. And if

they participate democratically, maybe some day there will be an Arab mayor in Jerusalem if we have a peace environment.

Kuttab: I don't agree with either Seidemann or Kleiner in their suggestions that Palestinians would accept living under Israeli rule. They do appreciate and would like to copy some aspects of Israeli democratic procedures. But they are unwilling to accept the building at Har Homa or other moves that are intended to exclude and eventually ethnically cleanse Palestinian Arabs from Jerusalem. Palestinians are being denied residency and housing rights, their I.D. cards are being removed because they are not living in Jerusalem, but they can't find housing there because they are not being given permission to build, while thousands of housing units are being built for Jews.

To create arbitrary facts like the building at Har Homa at a time when we are supposed to be engaged in a process of finding a way to peace is very discouraging.

The question is not whether Israel can build more schools or improve the sewage system in East Jerusalem. People are experts on their own lives and must run their own lives and no matter how much Israel would try to improve the situation, you can't force people against their wills to live in a political situation that denies that self-determination. So the only solution must be inclusive.

Kleiner: But 75 percent of the land in Har Homa belongs originally to Jews.

Kuttab: The files that you rely on in order to establish that claim would also show that Palestinians own a great deal of land in West Jerusalem and in Jaffe. If you want to open that file, we Palestinians will come out much better than you will.

Kleiner: How do you explain the trend of more than fifteen thousand Arabs who are asking for Israeli citizenship?

Kuttab: Some of my relatives are among those Palestinians applying for Israeli citizenship. The reason why so many people are doing this today is because it is the only way that Palestinians are allowed to stay and live in Jerusalem and having the right to travel in and out of Jerusalem. The Israeli Interior Ministry is removing thousands of residency permits from people who grew up in Jerusalem but who now live outside the city limits because there are no houses.

Seidemann: Palestinians are being required to periodically reestablish their right to live in Jerusalem.

Kuttab: Jewish settlers living in the West Bank get social security benefits and the right to travel into Jerusalem...whereas Palestinians from Jerusalem who can't find a house within the boundaries immediately lose their right to residency or to travel in from the West Bank. You create legal structures that require people to apply for citizenship, and then you use that as grounds to think that Palestinians want to be Israelis.

Blanchard: I note that others share with me the notion that everyone should be treated as though created in the image of God. But to take that seriously should have some political consequences: namely, to increase their power, their ability to make free choices, their sense of dignity. If your guiding value is on the importance of giving to Palestinians full rights to make choices, have their voices respected and full power to shape their own lives, I don't think you'd end up with some of the facts on the ground such as they have been described here.

Kleiner: I'm in favor of us taking steps now to rectify the unfair conditions you describe even if they don't participate. But the tempo will certainly be faster if they did have more political power within the framework of the State of Israel. And remember that we are having this discussion in the context of a situation in which there are many inside Israel who believe that the Palestinians still hold to a desire not to have a state alongside of Israel, but in place of Israel. Remember that Jerusalem is part of this most more complex issue.

Kuttab: East Jerusalem is recognized by the international community, including the U.S., as occupied territory. Israel within the pre 1967 borders is recognized by the international community, including by the PLO and the Palestinian Authority. So this fear has no reality behind it.

Blanchard: People often get hung up on symbols. As long as we get our material, cultural and spiritual needs met, we should stop worrying about someone else who is getting their needs met as well. If you get a little identification sticker that says you live on block 3 of the Palestinian state and block 14 of the Jewish state, people shouldn't get hung up on that. Inclusivist mutual sovereignty could work. Christians also probably need a capital in Jerusalem. We can put signs on the different buildings saying, "This is the capital of the Jews, and this other is the capital of the Christians, and this other one is the capital of the Palestinians." If the people who are residents there are able to get the material resources to build a life and a culture for themselves in the way that recognizes their mutual equality, then we have people being treated as though created in the image of God. As

(continued on page 74)

Shavuot:
Spiritual Awakening & Community Building

Estelle Frankel

Said Rabbi Abahu...in the name of Rabbi Yochanan...When the Holy Blessed One gave the Torah, no bird chirped, no fowl fluttered, no ox lowed, the angels did not fly, the Seraphim did not utter the Kedusha, the sea did not roar, the creatures did not speak; the universe was silent and mute. And the voice came forth "Anochi Adonai Elohecha" ("I am Yah, your God").

— Shmot Rabba 29-7

One of the most amazing experiences I had during the eight years I lived in Jerusalem was the annual celebration of Shavuot. Every year on the eve of this holiday that commemorates the revelation of the Torah at Mt. Sinai, religious Jews hold an all-night vigil for study and spiritual reflection. As the dawn approaches the horizon, a massive procession of Jews from all corners of Jerusalem moves toward the Western Wall to greet the rising sun in prayer. Each year I joined this procession, I felt as if I imagine I might feel if we were on our way to greet the Messiah.

Although celebrating Shavuot back in the States does not always measure up to my experience in Jerusalem, I have retained certain teachings from the Jewish mystical tradition that deepened my appreciation of the holiday's universal spiritual appeal. The revelation at Sinai, which marks the moment of Israel's marriage-like covenant with God, is a paradigm for the human experience of spiritual awakening.

In Judaism and many other religious traditions, spiritual awakening is described as a death or mortal blow to the individual ego. It is a death, however, that also brings life: as one enters into proper alignment with the totality that is God, healing occurs. At moments of spiritual awakening, we realize we are not only who we thought we were — not just an individual consciousness or separate self who lives within the boundaries we call "I"— but also part of an ineffable unity. For the Jewish people, the revelation at Mt. Sinai was such a transformative moment.

The holiday of Shavuot, which commemorates this transformative experience, marks the collective awakening of Jewish spiritual consciousness. Every year, beginning with Passover and culminating on Shavuot, Jews relive the ancestral journey from national liberation to spiritual awakening that began with the Exodus from Egypt and culminated in the revelation at Mt. Sinai. According to Jewish tradition, the transformation from slavery to freedom was not complete until the Israelites stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai and collectively heard the commanding voice of the Divine "I am." The process of liberation, sparked by the Exodus, comes to a climax only as the Israelites are initiated into a covenantal community through the revelation that they collectively witness at Mt. Sinai fifty days later.

Embedded in the legends and mystical teachings about the Sinai revelation are a plethora of metaphors for the spiritual journey. These legends, which contain all the symbolic death-rebirth motifs of classic shamanistic initiation rites, provide a unique model of spiritual awakening that is community-based. Unlike spiritual traditions oriented toward individual enlightenment, Judaism begins with the collective epiphany we call *mattan Torah* (the giving of the Torah). For one moment, all of Israel simultaneously witnesses a revelation that sparks a collective transformation of consciousness.

The Sinai revelation occurs at a moment when the Israelites catch a glimpse of their essential unity with one another. In the words of Rashi, the famous medieval biblical commentator, they were "as one person, with one heart." This idea is reflected in the use of an unusual grammatical construction in the passage: "And Israel encamped facing the mountain" (Exod. 19:2). In contrast to all other passages referring to Israel's encampments that use the plural form of the verb *va'yachanu* (to encamp), in this passage, which directly precedes the revelation, the Torah uses the singular form *va'yichan* as though Israel were one person.

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The revelatory experience of Sinai begins with this moment of unity and shalom among the Israelites. As the revelation continues, the people enter into a state of unitive consciousness characterized by synesthesia — the merging of all the senses. In referring to the passage "and all the people saw the voices and flaming torches and the voice of the Shofar and the mountain smoking" (Exod. 20:15), the Midrash says: "They saw what usually is heard, and heard what is usually seen." This experience of synesthesia described in the Torah is a classic component of the mystical encounter.

The Israelites, novices at the spiritual, fear that they will die from this ego-annihilating experience, and they say to Moses: "Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Exod. 20:16). According to legend, they actually do die from the power of the revelation, only to be resurrected by a host of angels who heal them and bestow them with celestial crowns for enduring their ordeal. According to Chasidic thought, the Israelites heard only the silent Hebrew letter aleph of the first word of the revelation "Anochi" ("I am") before their souls left their bodies. Aleph, which is equivalent to "one" in Jewish numerology, symbolizes the divine unity that was revealed at Sinai.

My understanding of these teachings is that, as one perceives God's ultimate unity, one dies to the sense of oneself as separate. It is not that the individual self we have always known permanently disappears, but that there is a shift in one's primary identification with the individual ego. Instead, we recognize we are but players in a much larger web of meaning. (As in marriage, one's identity expands beyond the boundaries of the self.) No longer isolated individuals, we, like the Israelites, begin to see ourselves as a People, and as deeply connected with all of life.

Rabbinic thought refers to this moment of sensing communal interconnectedness as *arevut*. In the Talmud is a saying that "every Israelite became responsible for [interconnected with] every other Israelite," or "*Kol Yisroel arevim zeh la zeh*" (Talmud Shavuot 39). At Mount Sinai, the Israelites enter into a covenant with God predicated on this notion of mutual responsibility and caring. The spiritual metaphor suggested by this saying is that we come into relationship with the Divine "One" only as we perceive how humanity is one.

Jewish liberation begins with the freedom from political, social, and economic oppression, but is not complete until the Israelites enter into covenantal community and awaken to the commanding voice of the Divine "One." The freedom afforded by the Exodus from Egypt does not result in the individual right to do whatever we please. Instead, it is an imperative to listen deeply for the commanding voice of justice that issues forth from the awareness of God's unity.

When we read about the Sinai revelation in Exodus, chapters 19–24, one interesting thing we find is that the mystical revelation includes the passages known as *parashat mishpatim*, which explain the basic laws of social justice and how to treat those who are less fortunate. In fact, they open with the laws regarding treatment of servants — people who, like the Israelites themselves, experience powerlessness. Thus, Torah teaches the Israelites to use their woundedness from the experience of oppression and slavery as a source of empathy for the less fortunate. Similarly, the injunctions to love the stranger, widow, and orphan aim to prevent the Israelites from passing on their internalized pain to other disempowered groups.

The mystical experience at Sinai of God's oneness becomes the immediate basis for the Jewish vision of community and social justice. Although some of the specific laws outlined in *parashat mishpatim* seem outdated (for example, the institution of slavery), their intent was to bring the mystical vision of Sinai into the most mundane and earthly matters. In this perspective, the spiritual and social-ethical domains are inextricably intertwined.

Another intriguing thing we find when we study the text of *mattan Torah* is that the revelation has no exact date. In fact, all references to the "temporal" seem intentionally vague. Likewise, the true location of Mount Sinai is unknown. The mountain retained its power and sanctity only as the revelation took place. When it ended, Mount Sinai became just like any other mountain in the Sinai desert. Chasidic commentators have suggested that the revelation at Sinai has no precise date or place because Torah is continually revealed in every place at every moment.

The voice of God that went forth from Sinai is a voice that reverberates throughout time and space. To hear it we must leave the "known" and enter the *midbar*, the place of "no-thingness." We must ascend Mt. Sinai, entering a state of consciousness in which we experience *bitul* (self-nullification). Only then is it possible to hear the word of God that emanates out of the silent void.

There is an ironic dimension to celebrating Shavuot, because the great revelation it commemorates was seemingly undermined by the building of the golden calf and the breaking of the Tablets that Moses brought down from the mountain. Despite Israel's failure to sustain the vision, we still celebrate that moment they were graced by the revelation. (Perhaps a fitting analogy is marriage: although we may not be able to sustain the level of love we experience at the time of the wedding, we draw on those early memories of union as a way to recapture that moment of perfect love.)

(continued on page 48)

the case of Jonathan Pollard: Ten Years Later



Photo by AP/J. Scott Applewhite

David Biale

Jonathan Pollard, sentenced ten years ago to life in prison for spying for Israel, continues to nag at the American Jewish conscience. For right-wing Jewish nationalists, Pollard presents no ambiguities. Having discovered that the United States was withholding information vital to Israel's security, Pollard sacrificed himself to save Jewish lives. Pollard is a true Jewish hero and one of the most important spies in Israel's history. It is no surprise that most of Pollard's vocal support has come from the right, both in the United States and Israel.

What should the rest of us, especially progressive Jews, think about this case? Ten years ago when Pollard was sentenced, I wrote an editorial in these pages implicitly comparing Pollard to the Dreyfus case. I now believe that any such comparisons are misleading. Pollard is rather more like Julius Rosenberg (his wife Ethel seems to have been framed), who evidently also spied for an ally (the Soviet Union during World War II) but whose crimes were undoubtedly exaggerated by the government and whose sentence was likewise excessive.

Instead of black-and-white certainty, the case of Jonathan Pollard evokes the kind of moral ambiguity that makes us much more uneasy than confident. The ambiguity of the Pollard case lies in its messy details. On the one hand, Pollard claimed that he revealed material vital to Israel's security which the Americans had withheld. Anyone who cares about Israel must respond with some sympathy to this motive. On the other hand, Pollard himself also claims that he could not have known the kind of secrets which would have damaged U.S. security, and that the government has inflated its case in order to keep him in prison. Since the United States gave Israel enormous amounts of intelligence information in the 1980s, it is hard to reconcile these two claims. Either Pollard passed the kind of information which revealed U.S. "sources and methods" of espionage, and therefore caused real damage to U.S. intelligence or, conversely, the information he gave to Israel wasn't very important in terms of U.S. security, even if it did help Israel.

Interviews that I have conducted with a number of former intelligence officials tend to support the second hypothesis. These sources find it virtually incredible that Pollard, who held a relatively low level job, could have had access to the kind of information that would have either severely damaged U.S. security or that would still constitute a risk if he were released. Even if Pollard had passed potentially damaging material to the Israelis it is still unclear if any actual damage resulted from it.

Yet, as Wolf Blitzer reported in his 1989 book, *Territory of Lies: The Exclusive Story of Jonathan J. Pollard*, Pollard himself is no unambiguous hero. He was prone to fabricate tall tales about himself and to inflate his own importance. Driven by a naive, ideological Zionism, he believed the worst about the U.S. government and was so sure that the United States was selling Israel down the river that he jumped at the chance to "save Israel" by espionage. He was also a compulsive leaker of secrets: aside from what he gave the Israelis, there are allegations that he also leaked classified documents to stockbroker friends and to the Chinese.

Since Pollard was never formally tried (he pled guilty and was sentenced without a trial), the facts of the case may never be fully known. But Pollard's treatment has been so anomalous that it seems only right to demand some kind of public accounting from the government. No one else who has spied for an ally ever received such a long sentence and a number of recent cases were not even indicted — even some Soviet spies got off more lightly. Aldrich Ames, whose espionage led to the deaths of perhaps twenty American agents, is serving his life sentence in a minimum-security prison, while Pollard has spent many years in maximum security and is now in

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medium security.

There is, then, something very puzzling about this case. Even if one believes, as I do, that Pollard committed a grave offense and deserved a significant sentence, ten years of very hard time seems excessive. What reason could there be for keeping him imprisoned? In the absence of any credible government justification, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Pollard has become a pawn serving someone else's political game.

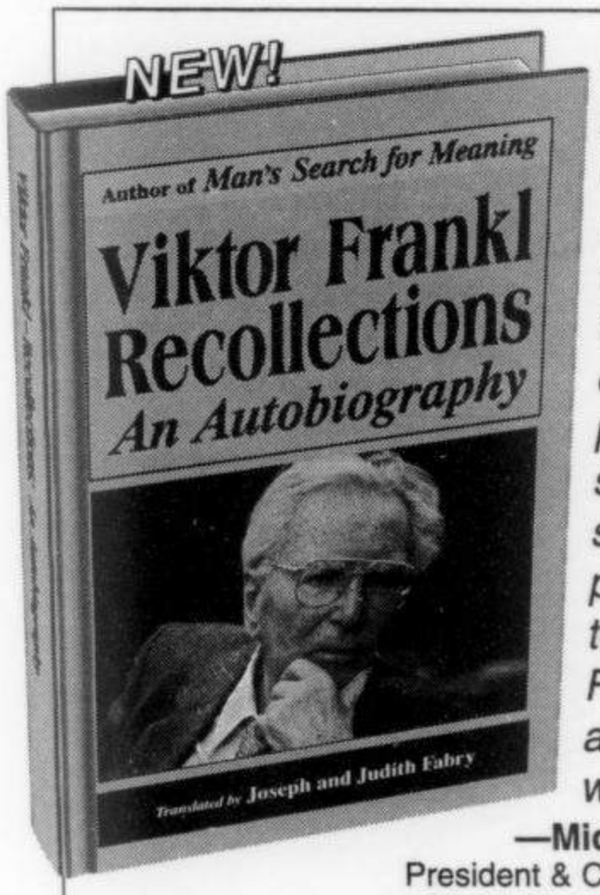
Last October, Steve Rodan reported in the *Jerusalem Post* that an informal group of officials, both active and retired from the Pentagon and the intelligence community, lobbied strenuously to keep Pollard in prison. Contrary to the belief of some, including Pollard himself, these people are not primarily hostile to Israel. Instead, many of them, such as Sumner Shapiro, the former head of Naval Intelligence, are Jews who appear to be outraged by the shadow that Pollard cast over their own positions in intelligence agencies. Pollard was their worst paranoid nightmare come true, something that only an anti-Semite could invent: an American Jew in the defense establishment more loyal to Israel than to the United States.

Given the large number of identifying and non-identifying Jews in high positions in the Pentagon and the intelligence community (John Deutsch, the last director of the C.I.A., is just one example), it is not surprising that Pollard is still a red flag. Pollard seems particularly dangerous to them because he was an ideological spy. Although he did accept some money from the Israelis, it seems to me less likely that he would have aroused such anger if his main motivation was greed. Indeed, Pollard stands out among the sorry crowd of spies of the last decade precisely because he is one of the few who truly had dual loyalties. But, is it just to keep him locked up for life because of this pervasive Jewish anxiety, however correct it may have been in his case?

Moreover, Israel — which so recklessly recruited Pollard — has evidently decided not to expend political capital on his behalf. Although the Israeli right has championed Pollard now that it is in power, it has bigger fish to fry. The feckless Netanyahu government might have used its concessions over Hebron or over the release of Palestinian security prisoners to ask for Pollard's release, but they appear more concerned with holding Israeli settlements in the territories than with freeing its own agent. Whatever one might think of Pollard, Israel's behavior toward him since his arrest has been nothing short of shameful.

Unfortunately Pollard has become a poster boy for the right-wing settler movement and their U.S. supporters. It was exactly this brew of ideological hubris that got Pollard in trouble to begin with. The ambivalence that the American Jewish establishment feels about Pollard owes much to the fact that he was motivated by an ideology which is quite remote from their own pragmatic, but essentially non-ideological, support for Israel. Yet, it is essential to distinguish between Pollard (and his most ardent supporters) and the case itself. One need not feel great sympathy for his ideology or his actions to sense that, on the human level, he has paid his price.

And, most importantly for American Jews, resolution of the Pollard case should be seen as part of a much needed re-evaluation of our relationship with Israel. Pollard was driven by unthinking hero worship of Israel, a Massada on the verge of another Holocaust. With the peace process and the profound changes in Israel itself, this ideology seems increasingly out of date. The peace process — as tenuous as it may seem today — means, above all, putting the past to rest. Even if Pollard and his supporters remain captives of the old ideology, progressive Jews ought to call for his release as one more way of contributing to fulfilling the progressive Zionist vision of a normal country at peace with its neighbors. ❑



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HUMOR

Lieberman's Renewal

Ira Wood

Lieberman was waiting for the rabbi, determined to get his money back. If anybody asked him, he would say that things were wonderful here: who wouldn't like beans twice a day for a week and a bed as thick as a mouse pad. But nobody was talking to him, so he didn't get a chance. To think that he had paid two hundred dollars plus an extra four hundred for a private room in the first place was crazy. These summer retreats didn't work for him; they were okay for Sixties people, for vegetarians and Buddhists and Jews who were grasping at straws, not an accountant from Fort Lee, New Jersey who couldn't wear shorts and had never believed in God. He had promised himself that he would try it and he tried it and as soon as he got his deposit back he was leaving. But the intern at the desk couldn't give him his money back and the rabbi who ran this place was off chanting in the hot tub and so he waited in the lobby preparing his case.

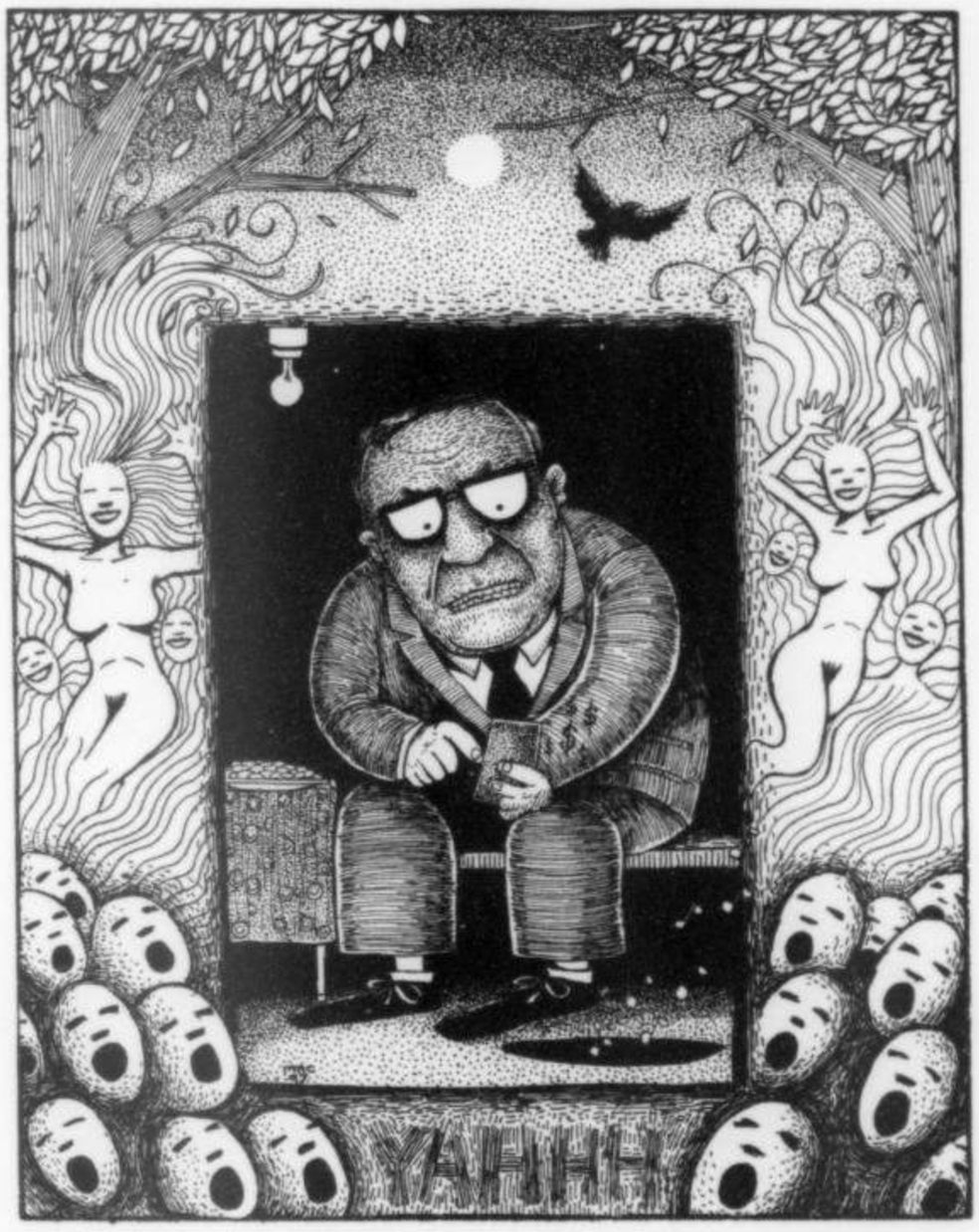


Illustration by Mac McGill

First of all, his room was hot. Where there was supposed to be a vent for air conditioning, there was a hole in the floor, right over the basement, a perfect place for someone to stand there and look up at him. Lieberman was not paranoid — he had tried it. By balancing on a wooden crate and craning his neck, he could look up the vent and see his bed, a fact that determined Lieberman to remain fully dressed in his room at all times. As to the problem of fresh air, when he opened his windows he heard drums and singing, day and night.

Lieberman would be the first to admit that he was not musically inclined, but he did enjoy the traditional songs in shul. Here he didn't recognize one tune. They didn't even use words, these people, they sang "dai-dai" this and "dai-dai" that like dancing Chassids; even the Sh'ma they changed. What would be so bad if they said Adonai — but no. Here it was Yah they said for God's name; "Yahhhh," like you're opening your mouth for a tongue depressor. *Sh'ma yisrael Yah* (on the out breath) *elohanu* — and what was it with these people and their breathing? He didn't drive all the way up here to learn how to breathe; he knew how to breathe and when he forgot he'd be dead anyway.

Lieberman sat in the lobby next to the big stone chimney he had seen in the brochure that had convinced him to come here in the first place, that had put him in mind of mountains and nature. He needed nature. He had been married at nineteen; a father at twenty-one. He had studied for his CPA while the Columbia campus was exploding. Since then, he had steered clear of politics and drugs and sex with other women; he sent three children to college and kept his

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Ira Wood teaches workshops in fiction, screenwriting and the personal narrative. His first novel, The Kitchen Man, *will appear this year in a new trade paperback edition by The Leapfrog Press. His latest novel is forthcoming from Fawcett.*

Oldsmobiles until they had eighty thousand miles on them. While his older brother was looking for yet another job at fifty years-old, Lieberman was about to become first vice-president of his firm. But he was dead inside, his wife had told him so; his ex-wife, who had insisted on ball room dancing lessons and aerobics and couples counseling and finally a restraining order because he put his fist through the windshield of the Oldsmobile the night she told him she wanted a divorce. So he was starting over again and things were different now.

Women expected him to talk about nature, the trees, the water, recycled paper. But the trees all looked the same to Lieberman. Yes, he would admit, on close inspection, some had leaves shaped like almonds, some like mittens, but they were all green, they had trunks in the middle, and branches and roots. If anybody asked him he would say, "Beautiful, beautiful," but nobody talked to him here, so he didn't have to say anything. He was an accountant from Fort Lee, New Jersey, and he looked it, he couldn't even wear shorts. He had legs like big pink bologna sausages. Since he was twelve years old, people laughed at his knees. His world was numbers, tax laws; his specialty the home office deduction. Years ago, he had spotted a trend, when his brother had been laid off. Others, too — loyal and experienced people, men and women both — fired one day after thirty years of service with all the appreciation of a bullet to the back of the head. He advised them to become consultants, work out of their guest bedrooms, take the home office deduction. Now he got calls from California, from Florida and Wisconsin, in response to his article in *Money* magazine. He was pioneering the mobile office deduction, for those who worked out of their cars. There were fax machines and cell phones and ink jet printers that worked off the cigarette lighter. Some day the IRS would have to open their eyes, see the world as Sherman Lieberman predicted, and on that day, whether he was alive to see it or not, millions of dashboard executives would finally get their due. In the world of finance, he was a visionary, but here he sat alone and unmoved, numb to God and the natural world, unable to tell one tree from another.

The rabbi wore Bermuda shorts and a tank top. Lieberman had to admit it, he had good knees. When Lieberman was growing up, he could never conceive of a rabbi showing his knees and on the odd occasion that he could remember such a thing, at his grandfather's workmen's circle picnic, the rabbi was an old man with skinny legs and high black socks. Here they had young rabbis, women rabbis, student rabbis, gay rabbis, gay women student rabbis, rabbis who got naked in the hot tub and told you to pay attention to your breath. But this one with the good knees looked to be around forty-seven years younger than Lieberman, with broad muscular shoulders like a weight lifter and an embroidered pill box yamulke like Thelonius Monk's. Lieberman geared up for a fight. "I need to talk to you," he said to the rabbi, who took long strides across the lobby and disappeared into his office.

"You want your money back, right?" the rabbi said, "Okay."

Lieberman was not about to be stranded in the lobby for another two hours and followed the rabbi into his office. "Look," Lieberman said, "The air conditioning doesn't work, the room is noisy, there's a hole in the floor and if you stand on a box in the basement — "

"I said I'd give you a refund. I'll write you a check."

Lieberman was an accountant and no fool in the ways of the business world. "Just like that."

"We're full up," the rabbi said. "I can use your room."

"Aha!" Lieberman needed no calculator. "I've got a large room I'm using as a single. You can put four people in there. At two hundred fifty a person, you'll give me back my four hundred and make six."

"I thought you were unhappy," the rabbi said.

"Not unhappy enough so you can make two hundred dollars with the stroke of a pen."

Lieberman went up to his noisy room with the hole in the floor. Yes, he could have been back on Route 17 to Jersey by now. Yes, he would have to wait until dark to take his clothes off so nobody could see him naked from the basement. If anybody asked, Lieberman would say he stayed because he was damned if he was going to contribute to the easy profit of some young rabbi who looked good in shorts. But nobody asked him. And the fact remained, something was wrong with him. Maybe it was his breathing.

The next day he went to his meditation class and promptly fell asleep. But his dreams were sweet and he woke up refreshed. The following day, he hummed along with the blessings after lunch. He banged the table. His fork ended up in his juice glass. When he raised his voice, he realized, nobody thought he was an outsider because he didn't know the words. There were no words, just dai dai dai. On the third day, the woman next to him in class said, "You never talk. What do you do?"

He knew she was married, she was here with her husband, but still, she was a woman and the first one who had spoken to him since his divorce. He said, "I'm an accountant."

She was not unimpressed. "Wish we had a good accountant. We just got audited. The IRS questioned

our deduction for a home office."

Lieberman swelled and gave her a business card.

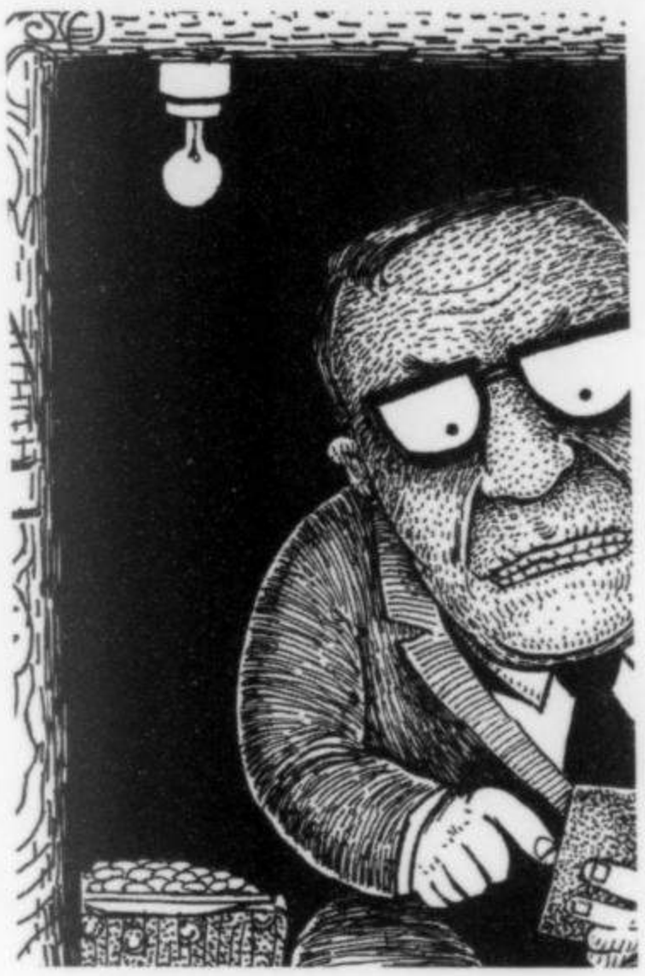
She turned it around and around in her hand. "Isn't this recycled paper?" she asked.

Still, nothing moved him. A bird was a bird; a tree just a tree. He was as blind to beauty as a smoked whitefish on a bed of crushed ice, eyes open and dead.

On Friday afternoon, he attended his last meditation class, took his cat nap, counseled his friend during the break on how to amortise her equipment deductions, and walked slowly up the hill to his room. In an hour it was men's mikvah time — a hundred naked men holding hands in a swimming pool, no thank you very much. This evening, services; tomorrow night, home to Fort Lee. Lieberman felt the weight of the week on his shoulders and lay himself down on the grass. He felt a breeze from the north and closed his eyes. He heard the shouts of children and their parents calling, but in the distance, and getting farther and farther away. He felt his chest rise and fall, as they had taught him to do everyday in class. He heard a kind of rumble from inside him, which at first he took for stomach acid but which he finally recognized as a strange vibration he had never before noticed. Rise and fall, rise and fall. Nothing but his breath seemed to exist. He imagined his chest to be a mountain, heaving and contracting, as if he, Sherman Lieberman, was attached to the fiery liquid core of the earth itself.

This is all very nice, Lieberman thought, but nothing more than a product of sensory deprivation. Simple brain-washing. A week of no meat and no sleep. Deprive yourself long enough and you'll believe anything. He thought of Patty Hearst locked in a closet, announcing she was Tanya of the Symbionese Liberation Army.

When he opened his eyes to leave, however, he was struck with wonder and unable to move. What he saw in front of him was a confluence of heaven and magic, accident and coincidence, and a pure act of God. There, just over the hill, between the



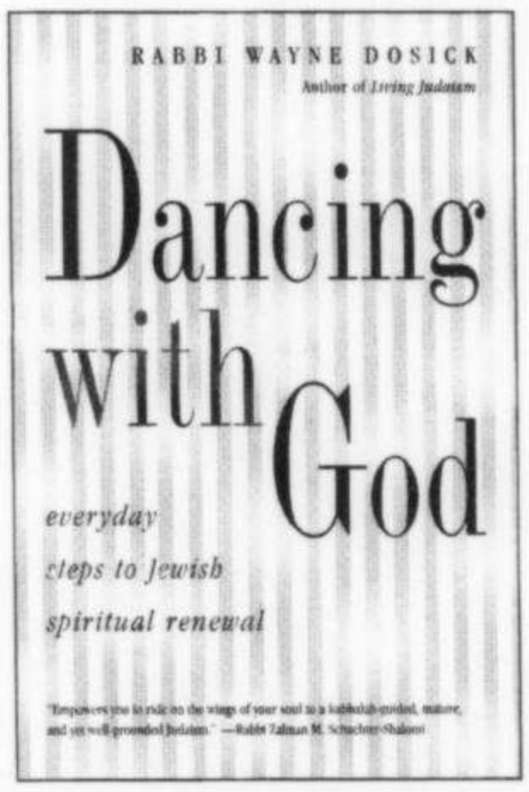
trees, was a mass of naked female flesh, shimmering breasts of all sizes, succulent hips, pink and brown limbs, hair drenched and matted across strong and delicate backs, pillows of buttocks and the sweet chocolate triangles of a hundred pudenda dripping wet from the pool. The women's mikvah. Their prayers mixed with laughter and rose like the notes of an orchestra of angels.

Blessed, blessed, blessed came to Lieberman's lips, for surely there was no more magnificent sight on God's earth or limitless universe. He closed his eyes as if to squeeze out the illusion. When he opened them again, the scene had not changed. One hundred wet and laughing sisters helped each other from the pool; daughters, mothers, toweling their hair, slipping on their sandals, walking half dressed up the hill.

He ran away, so as not to be seen, but the image remained like a flash of brilliant light. He'd been offered a glimpse of perfection. On the eve of Shabbat. Between the maple and the willow, the green mittens and the green chains — two trees Lieberman recalled by name for the first time in his life. ❑

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Meaning in My Life

Autobiographical Reflections

Viktor Frankl

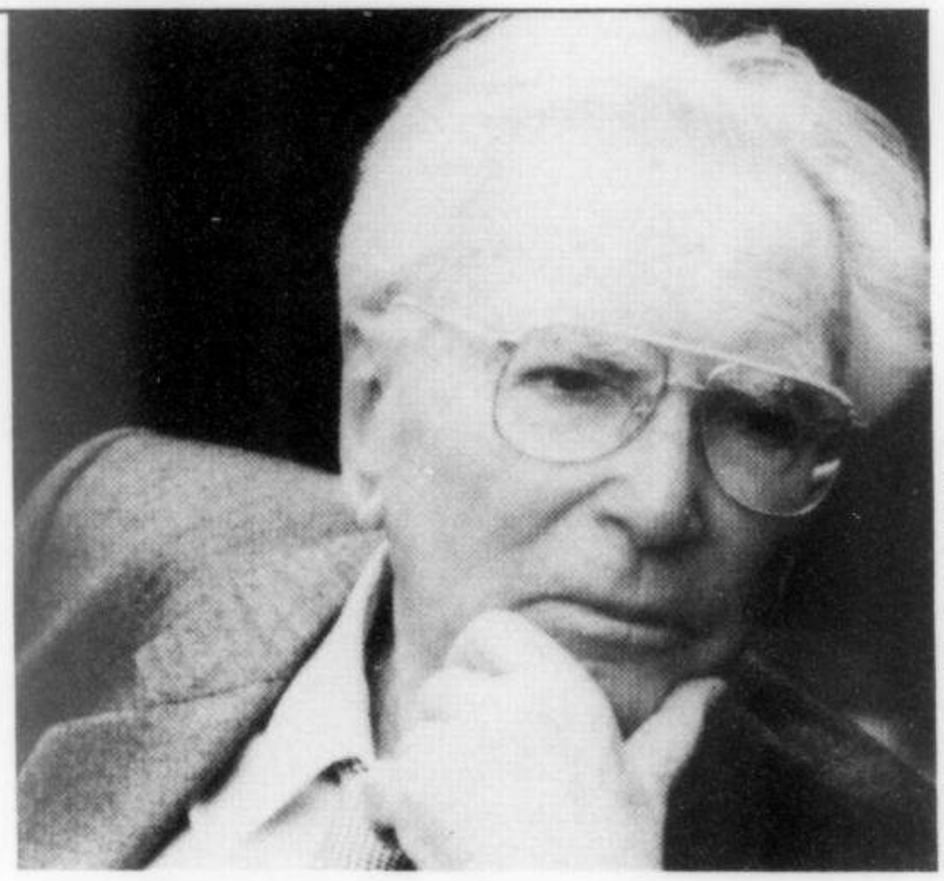


Photo Courtesy of Plenum Publishing

. . . I can spot the weaknesses in a person. But as a psychiatrist, or rather a psychotherapist, I can see beyond the actual weaknesses and can also recognize intuitively some possibilities for overcoming those weaknesses. I can see beyond the misery of the situation to the potential for discovering a meaning behind it, and thus to turn an apparently meaningless life into a genuine human achievement. I am convinced that, in the final analysis, there is no situation that does not contain within it the seed of a meaning. To a great extent, this conviction is the basis of logotherapy.

But what is the use of having a talent for psychiatry without the urge to become a psychiatrist? We just ask ourselves not only what enables a person in this profession, but what motivates him or her? I believe that for immature people the lure of psychiatry lies in its promise to gain power over others, to dominate and manipulate them. Knowledge is power, and so knowledge of some mechanisms possessed by us and not by others gives us power over them.

This is the most obvious in the case of hypnosis. I admit to an early interest in hypnosis and, at age 15, was able to use it correctly.

Power, schmower. I agree with John Ruskin who once said: "There is only one power: the power to save someone. And there is only one honor: the honor to help someone." It must have been 1930 when I gave a course in a Vienna adult education program on mental illnesses, their causes, and prevention (note: not their diagnosis and treatment). I remember how I entered the classroom at dusk, and the electric lights were not yet on. I explained to an attentive audience of a few dozen people the significance of a meaning orientation, and that life has meaning, unconditionally. I felt strongly that these people were receptive to my words and that I had succeeded in giving them something worthwhile — even that they had, in a sense, been "clay in the potter's hand." In this way, perhaps, I had made use of my "power to save."

As the Talmud says: "He who saves but one soul is to be regarded as one who has saved the whole world."

I also remember the not-so-young daughter of a world-famous zoologist who had been my patient in a mental hospital in 1930. She suffered from a severe obsessive-compulsive neurosis and had been a patient for many years. Again it was dusk, and I sat on the edge of the empty bed next to hers, and spoke to her persuasively. I did my best to motivate her to distance herself from her compulsive actions. I responded to all her arguments and countered all her fears. She became calmer and calmer, less and less burdened, less and less depressed. Clearly, every one of my words fell on fertile ground. And again I had the experience of "clay in the potter's hand."

Philosophical Questions

As a youth I remained enthusiastic about psychiatry, and about psychoanalysis particularly. I was also fascinated by philosophy. The adult education school offered a philosophical workshop led by Edgar Zilsel. When I was 15 or 16, I gave a lecture there; the subject was "The Meaning of Life." Even at that early age I had developed two basic ideas. First, it is not we who should ask for the meaning of life, since it is we who are being asked. It is we ourselves who must answer the questions

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Viktor Frankl's book Man's Search for Meaning *is a classic in existential psychology. We excerpt here selections from his forthcoming biography* Viktor Frankl Recollections.

that life asks of us, and to these questions we can respond only by being responsible for our existence.

The other basic idea I developed in my early years maintains that Ultimate Meaning is, and must remain, beyond our comprehension. There exists something I have called "suprameaning," but not in the sense of something supernatural. In this we can only believe. In this we must believe. Even if only unconsciously, essentially we all do believe in it.

It must have been at that time, at the same age, that one Sunday I was on one of my typical walks through the streets of Vienna. At a certain spot on Tabor Street, I pondered what I almost might call a hymn-like thought: Blessed be fate, believed be meaning.

By this I mean that, whatever we have to go through, life must have ultimate meaning, a suprameaning. This suprameaning we cannot comprehend, we can only have faith in it. In the last analysis this was only a rediscovery of Spinoza's *amor fati* — the love of fate.

The primary motivation to do this work, however, has been my effort to overcome the psychologisms in the field of psychotherapy where it usually coexists with a "pathologism." But both are aspects of a more comprehensive phenomenon, namely reductionism, which also includes sociologism and biologism. Reductionism is today's nihilism. It reduces a human being, disregarding the entire human dimension. It projects what is uniquely human from the three-dimensional domain of the total human being into the two-dimensional plane of the subhuman. In other words, reductionism is subhumanism.

As early as 1929 I had developed the concept of three groups of values, or three possible ways to find meaning in life — even up to the last moment, the last breath. The three possibilities are: 1) a deed we do, a work we create; 2) an experience, a human encounter, a love; and 3) when confronted with an unchangeable fate (such as an incurable disease), a change of attitude toward that fate. In such cases we can still wrest meaning from life by giving testimony to the most human of all human capacities: the ability to turn suffering into a human triumph.

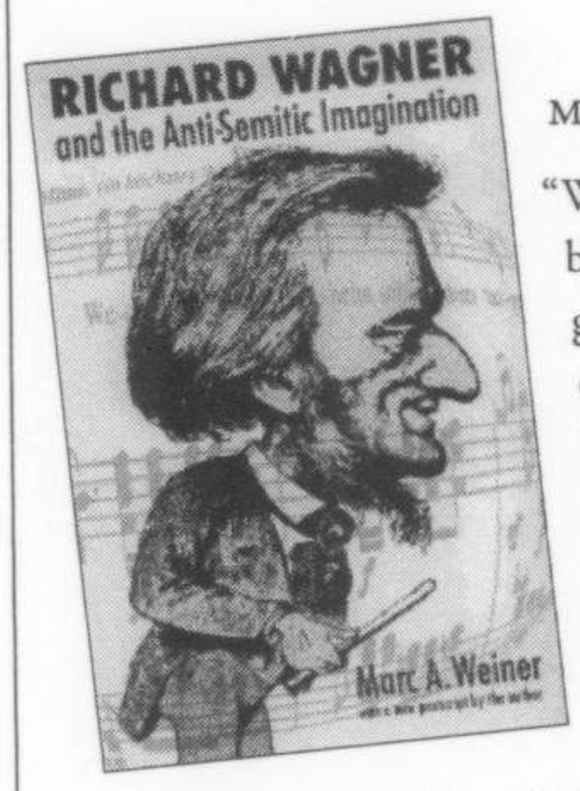
But if one searches for the ultimate causes and deepest roots, the hidden reasons for my creating logotherapy, I can only name one thing that spurred me on to develop and to continue working on logotherapy tirelessly: the compassion I feel toward the victims of today's cynicism, which has also infested psychotherapy, that rotten trade. When I say "trade" I refer to its commercialism, and by "rotten" I mean its scientific uncleanness. If one faces patients who not only suffer psychologically, but who in addition have been harmed by psychotherapy, one's heart goes out to them. And indeed, the fight against these depersonalizing and dehumanizing tendencies, which have their roots in the psychologism of psychotherapy, has been a bright red thread that runs throughout the fabric of my work.

Auschwitz

Until now, I have never published the story of what happened at the "first selection" at the Auschwitz railroad station. This is partly because I sometimes wonder if I must have imagined it. This was the situation.

Dr. Joseph Mengele, one of the Holocaust's most notorious mass murderers, was selecting prisoners: to the right for labor in the camps, and to the left for the gas chambers. In my case, Mengele pointed my shoulder toward the left. Since I recognized no one in the left line, behind Mengele's back I switched over to the right line where I saw a few of my young colleagues. Only God knows where I got that idea or found the courage.

Entering Auschwitz, when I was required to discard my own perfectly good coat, I took an old, torn one. It had apparently belonged to a person who had been gassed. In a pocket I found a leaf, torn from a prayer book. On this scrap of paper was the principal prayer of Judaism, the Shema Yisrael ("Hear, oh Israel, the Lord our God is One"). How else could I interpret this



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"coincidence" than as a challenge to me to live what I had written, to practice what I had preached? From that point on, that prayer book page stayed with me, hidden in the lining of my coat (as my lost manuscript had been). I get an uncanny sense when I think how I was able to save — back into freedom — the bits of paper on which I had reconstructed my book manuscript; yet the scrap from the prayer book inexplicably vanished at the time of my liberation.

Collective Guilt

Those who propound the concept of collective guilt are mistaken. Whenever possible I have fought this idea, and in *Man's Search for Meaning,* my book about the concentration camps, I tell the following story:

The head of the camp from which I was liberated was an SS man. After liberation we heard what, up to then, only the camp physician (himself an inmate) knew. This SS man had secretly spent considerable sums of his own money at the drug store in the nearby village, purchasing medications for the camp inmates.

The story had a sequel. Jewish prisoners, after their liberation, hid this SS man from the American troops and told the commanding officer that they would deliver him only on condition that no harm would come to him. The American commander gave his word of honor, and the former inmates turned in the SS man. The commander re-appointed him, as it were, this time to organize the collection of food and clothing for us in the surrounding villages.

In 1946, it was intensely unpopular to take a stand against collective guilt, or to defend some National Socialists, as I have done. In doing so I drew reprimands from various organizations. I hid a medical colleague in my apartment, thus protecting him from prosecution by the authorities simply for having received a badge of honor from the Hitler Youth organization. He would have faced a trial at a special court for Nazi crimes, with sentences restricted to two: acquittal or capital punishment.

In 1946, I lectured in the French occupation zone of Austria. I spoke against collective guilt in the presence of the commanding general of the French forces. The next day a university professor came to me, himself a former SS officer, with tears in his eyes. He asked how I could find the courage to take an open stand against collective guilt.

"You can't do it," I told him. "You would be speaking out of self-interest. But I am the former inmate number 119104, and I can do it. Therefore I must. People will listen to me, and so it is my obligation to speak against it."

My own bias, about which I am both aware and outspoken, attacks the cynicism for which nihilism is to blame, and the nihilism for which cynicism is responsible. This is a vicious cycle of nihilistic indoctrination and cynical motivation. What is needed to break this cycle is for us to unmask the unmaskers — those advocates and practitioners of a thoroughly biased "depth psychology," which prides itself on its powers "to unmask" the dark, unconscious mysteries in persons. Freud has taught us how important unmasking is. But the unmasking has to stop somewhere, and the place to stop is where the "unmasking psychologist" is confronted with something that cannot be unmasked for the simple reason that it is genuine. Those psychologists, however, who do not stop their unmasking even there only disclose their own tendency — be it conscious or unconscious — to devaluate what is genuine, what is truly human, in human beings.

Suffering and Meaning

I have gone through the school of psychologism and the hell of nihilism. It may be that each person who develops his own system of psychotherapy writes, in the final analysis, his own case history. But we must ask ourselves if this therapy also applies to the collective neuroses of our time. This would justify the bearing of our suffering for the sake of others. In a sense, our illness could then help to immunize others.

All this is true not only for the collective neuroses, but for neuroses in general. It is true for all suffering humanity. ❑

Shavuot

(continued from page 40)

According to legend, the Israelites held onto the broken pieces of the first tablets and carried them around on their journey to the Holy Land along with the second set of tablets. Although the second tablets, given on Yom Kippur, may have been more realistic and sustainable, they can never totally replace the "big bang" of Sinai. I like to think of the Israelites' journey as a metaphor for hanging onto our youthful visions even when we have been unable to live up to their idealism. ❑

The Gilded Age of American Popular CULTURE

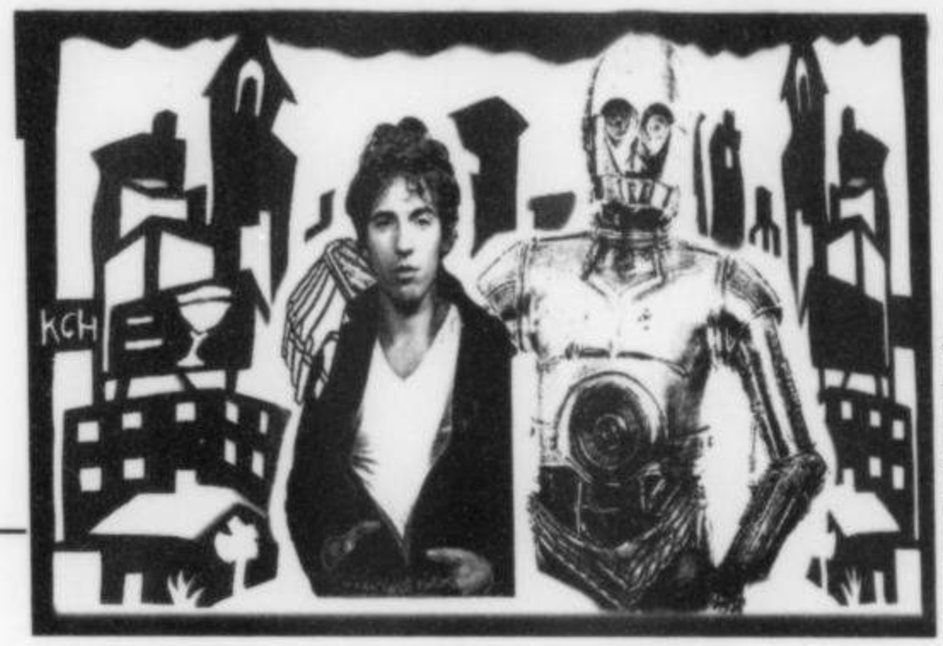


Illustration by Kevin Harris

Josh Ozersky

The way decades remember each other is as much neurosis as history, and maybe more. The "happy days" imagined by the 1950s revival during the seventies, for instance, bear little resemblance to either troubled decade any more than the "Wild West" that the urban folks of the 1890s doted on reflected the newly vanished frontier; or the antebellum south the magnolia dream of Jim Crow's imagining. Now we see the mid to late nineties indulging in a broad-gauge seventies fetish, of all things, of which the rerelease (and subsequent #1 grossing status) of the 1977 hit *Star Wars* was only the most recent symptom.

Has any decade in our history been so painstakingly recreated, drawn upon, revised and tributed? The decade's popular music, which was everywhere decried at the time as corrupt, decadent, and soul-less, fills dozens of anthology CD series (Rhino Record's *Have a Nice Day* series is up to Volume 17), and has colonized whole stations across the country into seventies revival organs. Television is crammed with seventies tributes both explicit (VH-1's Eight Track Flashback hosted by Suzanne Somers) and implicit (*Beavis and Butthead*, both supposedly fifteen years old in the mid-nineties, wear AC-DC shirts, and take Black Sabbath's 1974 hit "Iron Man" as their anthem). Commercials and videos expertly parody the Peter Max designs, the "funky" fashions, the visual cliches of seventies television, while movie after movie (*I'm Gonna Get You Sucka*, *Wayne's World*, *Dazed and Confused*, *Reservoir Dogs*, *The Brady Bunch Movie*, etc.) draw on the pop-culture catalog of one of the bleakest eras since the depression.

Why? TIKKUN readers can supply their own answers. But surely the mood is not unconnected to the essential cynicism behind so many seventies enterprises. Nineties culture, we are often told, is one defined by an ironic posture, one that recoils from any suggestion of earnestness or idealism. Could such a posture be any better served than by the garish excesses of the seventies, a time when the last vestiges of counter-culture were purged out of the pop mainstream, and every medium became disfigured by profitability and artistic gigantism? Having reached the dead end of the experimental, emancipatory rhetoric of the sixties, the culture of the seventies opted instead for mere bigness — double album rock operas, grandiose mini-series, platinum and double-platinum albums accompanied by immense football-arena concerts, blockbuster movies like *Star Wars*. And undergirding all this opulence was a bone-deep cynicism, midwifed by Watergate, the Ford/Carter interlude, the OPEC debacle, and the "culture of narcissism."

Endless examples present themselves from the popular music of the day, which carried the greatest burden of utopian fallout. In so many of the songs now popular, the theme of worldly resignation — "I'd love to change the world, but I don't know what to do," "Just another brick in the wall," "Don't fear the reaper", etc., takes the place of "Put a little love in your heart," "The times they are a-changin'," and the like. Stylistic extravaganzas produced in expensive studios define the era, as opposed to the open-air concert which was the sixties' trademark image of rock music.

One need not look to the freakish excesses of rock music, however. Look at *Star Wars* itself. 'The Force' which is the source of all power in the film is a kind of ultra-potent transcendental meditation, which accomplishes by itself what politics and warfare (that is, positive action) cannot: 'The Force,' old Obi-Wan Kenobi tells Luke Skywalker, "is an aura which at once controls and obeys." Obi-Wan counsels Luke not to try to change the world: "You must try to divorce your actions from conscious control," says the sage.

And yet, no film to date offered more action than *Star Wars* — which ends, after all, with Luke allowing 'The Force' to guide his missile into the Death Star, blowing it into a million pieces. Such best-of-both-worlds excess typifies the popular art of the 1970s, or at least that portion of it which seems to appeal most to today's post-ideological audiences.

Because, we should note, we can tell a lot by looking at the parts of seventies culture that have not been picked up. John Travolta, The Eagles, Aaron Spelling's

(continued on p. 75)

Josh Ozersky is the media editor of TIKKUN.

The Cultural Dimension of Psychoanalytic Practice

Michael Bader

In the last issue of TIKKUN ("Post-Modernism and Psychoanalysis: Fiddling While Rome Burns", March/April, 1997), I argued that the current interest among psychoanalysts in post-modern epistemology sponsors, under the banner of a philosophical critique of positivism, a retreat from therapeutic aims. I argued that although post-modern theory usefully contextualizes clinical reality, it is oblivious to the social context within which its own message is increasingly popular — a context of pessimism and cynicism about progressive social change. Some of my colleagues felt falsely accused. They argued (rightly) that they care deeply about helping their patients. Other analysts might defensively philosophize about Truth in response to a general feeling of clinical pessimism, but they didn't. Other analysts might be expressing some of the prevailing social cynicism about helping the disadvantaged, but not them. I responded: "I know you're humane and dedicated therapists, but it's in spite of post-modern epistemology, not because of it. And, besides, I'm describing a tendency in our professional culture to feel hopeless about systematically improving our results. I'm not accusing any individual of abandoning his or her therapeutic aim."

Still, this is a hard argument to make with psychoanalysts who resist seeing themselves as vehicles for the expression of culture, or as unwittingly transporting the "mood of the times" into the sacrosanct privacy of their consulting rooms. Just as most of us resist the notion that our private lives are as socially constructed as our public ones, analysts — even post-modern ones — have always had a great skepticism that the intimate domain of their personal clinical experience is a mirror of the world at large.

The presence of this kind of blind-spot in myself and other analysts was brought home to me in an interesting way in a conversation I recently had with a Norwegian analyst. I discovered that we both followed the same policy of billing our patients for missed appointments unless we could fill the hours. But there was one striking difference. My colleague mentioned that his patents rarely complained about this practice. He told me that he rarely volunteered — nor was asked for — a rationale. I told him that in my practice, and in those of my colleagues, many patients tended to feel burdened or even exploited by this policy, sometimes voicing their complaints or hurt, other times not. Not surprisingly, patients were unable to understand and tolerate the need for financial security that generates this kind of billing practice.

In response to his claim that this was not a big deal in his practice, I reflexively assumed that this was a blind spot in his personality or theory. I wondered if he was overlooking the possibility that his patients might be compliant with authority or engaged with the analyst in some type of collusion. I offered that my own experience and theoretical bias — not uncommon in the United States — led me to be particularly sensitive to the subtle ways that uncontested dimensions of certain analytic arrangements involving time and money often expressed covert resistances, collusions or enactments. Further, I had been taught that all of this stemmed from the particular psychology of the patient — in which the "reality" of the analyst's self-interest was subtly disavowed in order to avoid conflict, protect the patient's narcissism, and/or mitigate the analyst's guilt. I said that in my experience (and infinite American wisdom, of course) the analyst's non-defensive acceptance of his/her own needs, including financial needs, was important. Also extremely important was a willingness at times to candidly acknowledge the underlying "reality" within which the analyst's and patient's interests conflicted, and a readiness to explore and analyze the multiple fantasies that tend to form around these issues. In other words, I explained that I had been taught — and experience had borne this out — that the business aspect of the analytic relationship stirred up important conflicts in both patient and analyst and were often the hardest conflicts to talk about.

My Norwegian friend was puzzled. He understood about collusion, unanalyzed enactments, narcissistic injuries, and even the occasional usefulness of candid

Michael Bader is a psychoanalyst practicing in San Francisco and is on the editorial board of TIKKUN.

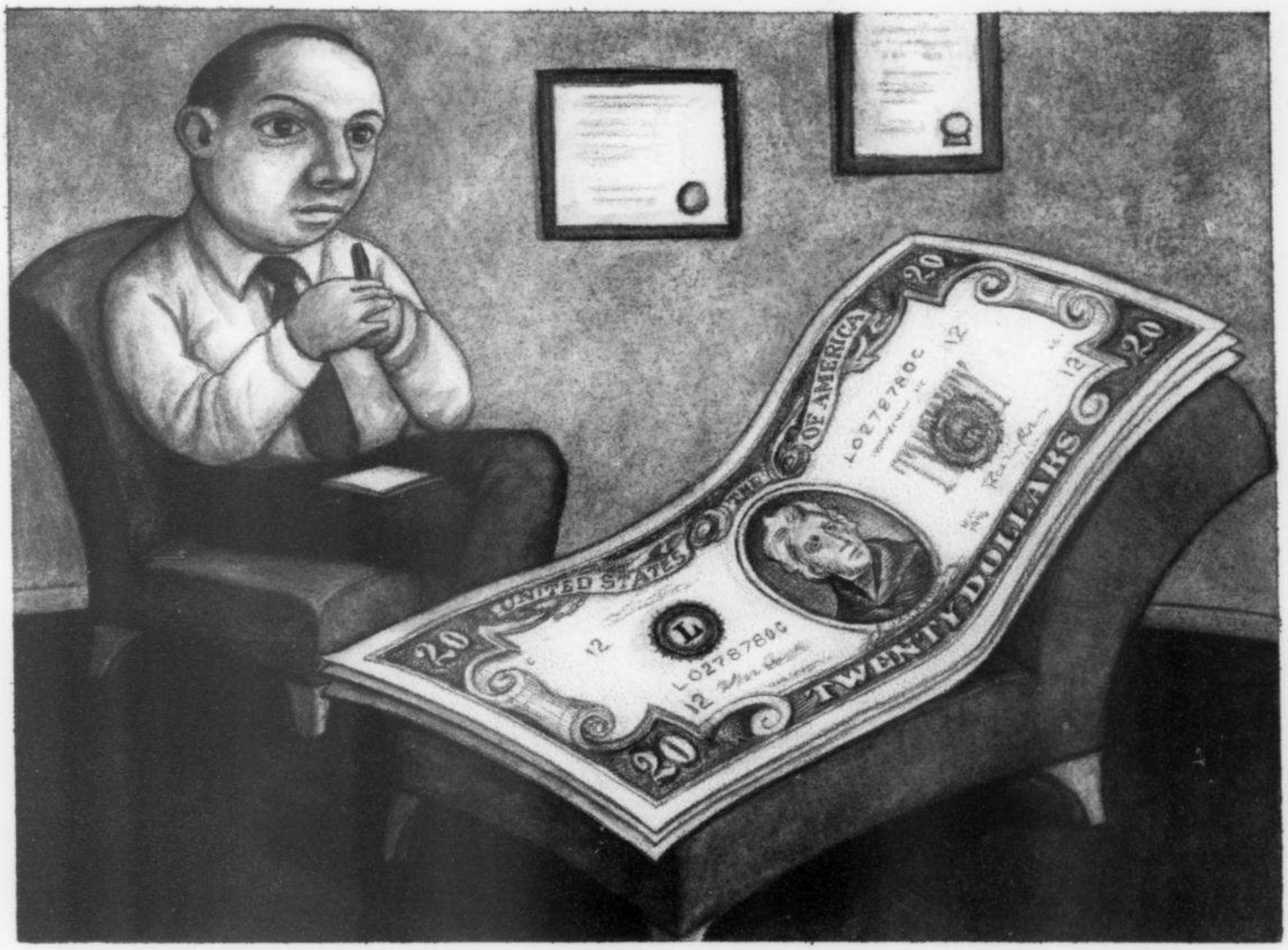


Illustration by Russ Ando

self-disclosure, but he couldn't see how these things would arise in relation to his billing policy. After all, he said, he explained — by which he meant described — his billing practice to patients, who understood and accepted it. His patients (and he) would be no more likely to get worked-up about his financial arrangements than about his expectation that they meet in his office! Since I believed my colleague to be an extremely sensitive, skilled, and thoughtful clinician, I began to look for less personal factors that might account for our different clinical experiences.

Certain broad social differences that impact on psychoanalytic practice and on the meanings to both parties of the analyst's business practices were immediately obvious. In Norway, psychoanalytic fees are regulated and subsidized by the government. The government pays a good portion of the fee, although not for missed appointments. Further, since the demand outweighs the supply of psychotherapy in Norway, patients tend to wait for long periods to be seen and, therefore, tend to feel somewhat grateful to have a therapist at all. In contrast, in San Francisco where I practice, there is a surfeit of therapists who often compete via a wide variety of fees, cancellation policies, etc. In other words, that aspect of the therapeutic frame involving the analyst's fee policies tends to be more influenced here by market forces. And, finally, since fees are fixed by the government in Norway and the analyst's income is secure — albeit relatively static — the analyst's financial needs and desires are less visible. Even though the patient is still responsible for a small portion of the fee in Norway, their system of universal health care tends to mitigate the analyst's financial dependence on the patient.

Norwegians have a social contract. They expect to contribute substantially to the common good via high taxes and expect to benefit from a wide range of basic social services, including health and mental health care. And while one must be careful not to idealize Norway — their social democratic system is not without problems, stresses and conflicts — there is a fundamental assumption in the culture that their political leaders, as well as other authorities, are not crooks. The citizenry is critical but not cynical. There is a background sense of trust in the "system" and the motives of its key players. With all of its flaws and for a host of complex historical reasons, Norwegian citizens tend to have a fundamental sense of entitlement that they will be supported by structures of authority, and an expectation that these authorities will tend to act in a way that is more benign than self-serving.

In contrast, our culture is marked by an ethos of selfishness. We intuitively expect that everyone is out for him or her self. There is a powerful notion in American society that we're each responsible for ourselves, our successes or failures, our place in society, and that through unfettered markets and competition the greatest good will result. Just as we take for granted that corporations will put their profits, their "bottom line," above social or ecological considerations unless induced to do otherwise, we also tend to see these same priorities in other walks of life. We are inclined to expect that we'll be taken advantage of, or that our interests will be ignored, our place in line usurped — unless we're vigilant, protect ourselves, and assert our own self-interest. In contrast to Norwegians, we tend to assume that our political leaders are crooks, liars, or at least self-serving. Our normal and adaptive sensibility tends to become one of cynicism, a reflex distrust of authority, and an acceptance of the omnipresent reality of a "bottom line" mentality in our professional, economic, and social relationships. In this context, for instance, the consumer rights movement can be seen as rational responses to the assumption that no one in authority can be trusted or has the consumer's interests at heart. Obviously, this competitive ethos and reactive cynicism isn't universal and doesn't always feel problematic. And it is certainly not always conscious. Other traditions of caring and responsibility also exist in our society and these, too, influence our experience. Nevertheless, the particular competitive and mistrustful ethos that I am describing forms an environmental context, a "ground" upon which the "figure" of individual psychopathology emerges in the clinical setting.

At some psychic level in which the social world resides, in some dimension of the psyche where social rules are internalized, my Norwegian colleague's patients accept his terms of treatment as benign or at least as sensible — they don't expect to be exploited or taken advantage of by authority as readily as do my patients. I speak here not of clinical paranoia or a symptomatic narcissism. I refer to social norms, social expectations, social character. I am trying to tease out the psychological dimension of normal role-based behavior. It is a layer of what Erich Fromm called our "social character" that operates silently, difficult if not impossible to "catch" in pure form, refracted, instead, through the personal prism of unique individuals. The everyday background social experience of our patients, of competitive individualism and the unbridled pursuit of self-interest predisposes them to experience such things as our rational pursuit of economic self-interest via our billing policies as exploitative. They see what they expect to see. One of their most important experiences of public life is that it's dog-eat-dog. When the economic dimension of the analytic relationship becomes visible — which it dramatically does when the patient is billed for a missed appointment — it tends to be registered by the patient as a reflection of the same "bottom line" mentality that they already know so well.

A contradiction exists in all analytic work between analytic intimacy (with its healing safety and nonjudgmental empathy and acceptance) and the contractually-based pecuniary interests of the therapist (as it is expressed via the fee and frame). The normal sensitivity most patients feel about this contradiction is heightened by the conscious and unconscious association of the therapist with other exploitative or selfish authorities in the patient's social life. Also, in this society a patient's protest against the imposition of the analyst's selfish economic needs tends to be viewed as primarily a private, idiosyncratic, psychodynamically-meaningful reaction rather than containing a resistance to a broader social alienation in which we all participate.

Because individual competitive self-promotion is not the only or even the main "bottom line" in Norway, I think that patients there enter therapy less prepared to see, feel victimized and duped by, and defend themselves against perceptions of the analyst's greed or avarice. Paranoid, competitive, and narcissistic issues tend to take other forms or attach to other features of the analyst. The cultural milieu, then, might be seen as shaping at least the content and form, if not the amount of certain psychological sensitivities in the clinical situation. The social context affects the kinds of issues that appear to be clinically salient and it does so in ways that are invisible to the analyst. It creates generalized expectations that can function as a kind of background psychological operating system. Within this system the more variable, idiosyncratic, and dynamically significant clinical processes play themselves out.

This kind of invisible social dimension of psychoanalytic practice is in need of further study. The clinical consequences of doing so are not clear. For instance, how does a heightened awareness of the cultural context concretely alter our approach to the deeply and distinctively personal pain which psychoanalysis so brilliantly addresses? In this instance, however, the danger of not understanding the broader issues is clear: we lose a chance to understand and validate an alienation that is both neurotically personal and rationally responsive to an alienated set of social relations. The analyst's ability to move back and forth between these roles both enhances her/his effectiveness and humanizes the process. ❑

Reframing the Debate: Sexuality and Abortion

Jodi Perelman

It's time to blow the abortion debate open *and look at the wounds that lurk underneath. If we emerge from the blame-and-shame dialogue surrounding abortion, we can ask the pertinent question: How does the way that our culture explains sexuality and intimacy influence our sexual behavior, and subsequently, our rate of abortion? In this section, these underlying and neglected issues are explored by Naomi Wolf in a series of excerpts from her forthcoming book entitled* Promiscuities: The Secret Struggle Toward Womanhood, *and by Anna Runkle in an article entitled "Unsafe Sex". These writers urge us to face how we conceive of women's bodies and female sexuality, and the cultural dynamics produced as a result.*

Promiscuities: *The Secret Struggle Toward Womanhood*

Naomi Wolf

From "Third Base: Identity"

. . . He and I could have been a poster couple for the liberal ideal of responsible teen sexuality — and, paradoxically, this was reflected in the lack of drama and meaning that I felt crossing this threshold. Conscientious students who were mapping out our college applications and scheduling our after-school jobs to save up for tuition, we were the sort of kids who Planned Ahead. But even the preparations for losing one's virginity felt barren of larger social significance.

When Martin and I went together to a clinic to arrange for contraception some weeks before the actual deed, no experience could have been flatter. He waited, reading old copies of *Scientific American*, while I was fitted for a diaphragm ("the method with one of the highest effectiveness levels if we are very careful, and the fewest risks to you," Martin had explained after looking it up). The offices were full of high school couples. If the management intended the mood to be welcoming to adolescents, they had done an excellent job. Cartoon strips about contraception were displayed in several rooms. The staff members were straight-talking, and they did not patronize. The young, bearded doctor who fitted me treated it all as if he were explaining to me a terrific new piece of equipment for some hearty activity such as camping or rock climbing.

In terms of the mechanics of servicing teenage desire safely in a secular, materialistic society, the experience was impeccable. The technology worked and was either cheap or free. But when we walked out, I still felt there was something important missing. It was weird to have these adults just hand you the keys to the kingdom, ask, "Any questions?" wave, and return to their paperwork. They did not even have us wait until we could show we had learned something concrete — until we could answer some of their questions. It was easier than getting your learner's permit to drive a car. Now, giving us a moral context was not their job. They had enough to handle, and they were doing so valiantly. Indeed, their work seems in retrospect like one of the few backstops we encountered to society's abdication of us within our sexuality. But from visiting the clinic in the absence of any other adults giving us a moral framework in which to learn about sexuality, the message we got was: "You can be adults without trying. The only meaning this has is the meaning you give it." There was a sense, I recall in retrospect, that the adults who were the gatekeepers to society had once again failed to initiate us in any way.

For not at the clinic, at school, in our synagogue, or anywhere in pop culture did this message come through clearly to us: sexual activity comes with responsibilities that are deeper than personal. If our parents did say

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this, it was scarcely reinforced outside the home. No one said, at the clinic, "You must use this diaphragm or this condom, not only because that is how you will avoid the personal disaster of unwanted pregnancy but because if you have sex without using protection you are doing something antisocial and morally objectionable. If you, boy or girl, initiate a pregnancy out of carelessness, that is dumb, regrettable behavior." Nothing morally significant about the transfer of power from adults to teenagers was represented in that technology. It was like going to the vet: as if we were being processed not on a social but on an animal level.

...Unsurprisingly, the more forbidden women are to own their sexuality lest they become "sluts", the more inclined they are to project an out-of-control sexuality onto men. The more a woman's "appropriate" sexual persona is defined as being for others, the more the demon lover stands in her mind as promising a sexuality that can be, subversively, for herself.

From "Fourth Base: How to Make a Woman"

Losing our virginity was supposed to pass for attaining sexual maturity. But it was too easy, what we did, and it didn't matter enough to satisfy us more than physically. The end of our virginity passed unmarked, neither mourned nor celebrated: the worldview we inherited told us that what we gained by becoming fully sexual was infinitely valuable and what we lost by leaving behind our virgin state was less than negligible. In other cultures I have looked at, older women, who upheld the values of femaleness, decided when a girl could join them in womanhood. Their decision was based on whether the girl had attained the level of wisdom and self-discipline that would benefit her, her family, and the society. Those older women alone, through their deliberations, had the power to bestow womanhood on the initiates.

In our culture, men were deciding for us if we were women. Heck: *teenage boys* were deciding for us if we were women.

Instead we should be telling girls what they already know but rarely see affirmed: that the lives they lead inside their own self-contained bodies, the skills they attain through their own concentration and rigor, and the unique phase in their lives during which they may explore boys and eroticism at their own pace — these are magical. And they constitute the entrance point to a life cycle of a sexuality that should be held sacred.



Illustration by Oenone Terrell

From "Cheap or Precious?"

...Within the Judeo-Christian tradition, there are systems of belief in which female desire is valued more highly than we can imagine. The Zohar, the Jewish European mystical tradition, charges, "When the wife is purified [that is, after her ritual bath when she is finished menstruating], the man is duty bound to rejoice her, in the joyful fulfillment of a religious obligation....It is his duty, once back home [from a journey], to give his wife

pleasure, inasmuch as she obtained for him the heavenly union [of male and female aspects of the Divine Presence]." A man should please his wife because "this pleasure is a religious one, giving joy also to the Divine Presence, and it is an instrument for peace in the world." Like the Taoists, the Jewish mystics believed that sexual satisfaction given by men to women helped to please the Maker and created balance, order, and harmony on a cosmic scale.

Islam, too, has a tradition of valuing female desire. Today, of course, the Koran and the commentaries, the *Shari'a,* are used to condone the most egregious abuses of women, from murders of teenage girls who lose their virginity before marriage, married women accused of adultery, to cliterodectomy and infibulation. The widespread practice of cliterodectomy in some Moslem countries is performed on the basis of the belief that "without it a woman wouldn't be able to control herself, she would end up a prostitute." But the journalist Ceraldine Brooks points out in *Nine Parts of Desire,* her study of women in Islam, that "the lessening of women's sexual pleasure directly contradicts the teaching of Mohamed." Islam held, and still holds, according to Brooks, "almighty God created sexual desires in ten parts; then he gave nine parts to women and one to men." There is a large body of commentary on the Koran which maintains that Mohammed and his disciples praised female sexuality and upheld women's entitlement to sexual pleasure within marriage.

Among the sacred books of Hinduism, the *Kama Sutra* and the Tantric literature, women's sexuality is also seen as sacred, and women's desire as slow to kindle but more sustained than that of men. They, too, view women's erotic "essence" as beneficial to men and consider the act of forcing women against their will destructive.

The *Kama Sutra,* the ancient Sanskrit text on erotic pleasure, also shows respect for women's sexuality in ways that would be foreign to the frat-boy culture: the advice it gives men focuses their attention on female pleasure. "For a man to be successful with women he must pay them marked attention... do not unite with a woman until you have excited her with playful caresses, and then the pleasure will be mutual."

From "The Time and The Place: 1996"

...If one is allowed to grow up being proud of one's sexual womanhood as it develops day by day, one may acquire that "sureness" that



Margaret Mead spoke of, and be far less susceptible to the blandishment of industries or ideologies that promise to bestow a sexual womanhood, as well as being less susceptible to the pressures in the marketplace that stand ready to stigmatize women for any hint of their sexuality.

Obviously, girls need better rites of passage in our culture. Such rituals, we have seen, require rigor, separation from males and from the daily environment, and the exchange of privileged information. It is important, in such rituals, for grown women outside the family to do the initiating. I'd like to propose that groups of friends with children sign one another up, upon the birth of a daughter, for the responsibility of becoming part of small groups — Womanhood Guides. Instead or in addition to the familiar role of godparent, someone who signs on for such a task will join with a few other women, and a small cohort of girls, in the girls' thirteenth year, for a retreat into the wilderness — something as simple as a trip to a state park, organized through the schools, church, groups, or through individual family groups. There, amid stories, songs, and hikes the older women would pass on to the younger everything they have learned about womanhood, and answer *every single question* the girls want to ask — questions that will be far more trusting and substantive than those asked in the constrained, public environment of a sex education class. The older women can certainly, depending on the religious and cultural sensitivities of the group, show the girls birth control devices and explain how they work. They would explain a sexual ethic that, as women initiates, the girls would be asked to commit to — an ethic that might include committing never to do anything one does not fully consent to do; never to use sex to get something (love, status, money) that one should seek in other ways; never to have sex without consciousness — not to use drugs or alcohol to mask one's sexual intention and responsibility; to practice saying what one wants; to practice saying what one doesn't want; to seek conscientiously, with every means at one's disposal, to avoid having to undergo an abortion or to bring into the world a child one is not ready to parent; never to degrade or violate one's own sexuality, or tolerate others' degrading or violating it. But their most important task — one that the culture would value these women for undertaking — would be to explain to the girls, in clear, compassionate terms, just how to explore female sexual desire in such a way as to

postpone intercourse until they are really, truly, feeling safe, sensually aware, and ready; until, that is, whether the marker is their eighteenth birthday or their engagement or their marriage, they feel ready to undertake such a profound step not as curious, passionate, half certain girls, but as *empowered, self-knowing, mature women.* When the retreat is over and the girls have proven to the older women that they have mastered some of the skills and knowledge of womanhood — the rudiments of taking care of themselves professionally and sexually, and of understanding what it means to take care of children — they return to their neighborhoods and a great big party is thrown to welcome them back and celebrate their changed status.

In addition to the sexual education, a family's friends can commit to being part of a wisdom initiation: transmitting their professional skills to the girl whom they are assigned to guide. I have, for instance, such a commitment of exchange from the scientist parents of a two-year-old girl; as my daughter grows up, they have agreed to teach her about earth sciences, show her experiments, and explain to her the jobs that one can do in that field — something in which I have no expertise — and I in turn have committed to working with their daughter on writing. In this way, through these commitments of mentoring exchanges, girls feel specially valued not only by their families but by the extended community — the locus of the initiation tension, and the possibilities of what they might love and become good at expands, and these skills are undertaken at the special time when they begin to cross the border into womanhood. "Privilege knowledge" associated with becoming women need not be sexual; through adolescent exchange relationships, that hunger for a special women's wisdom is filled.

...If women's sexuality weren't in fact subversive in some way, why should those who have sought to control women have had to work so very hard for so very long? Perhaps men have intuited in women a potential for wildness that, if neither repressed nor integrated into society, threatens to lure women — as it did those bored, undervalued Roman matrons — away from familiar hearths, toward fire and rivers and the arms of strangers.

The long, rigorous record of masculine efforts to punish the slut seems to rest upon an intuition of women's actual erotic nature and its actual magical potential. It seems premised on the suspicion that women can, like sorceresses, shape-shift and escape erotically to a place where no man can follow. Anatomically, as we've seen, that may well be true. Women are the more carnal sex. Tiresias was right. The nature of female desire can in fact lead women into a level of pleasure that must seem otherworldly to an observer whose body cannot take him into this state of consciousness. Traditional feminist theory has taught that the male fear of female sexuality is merely a projection of male lust and misogyny. But what if the struggle to contain women's passion has been a struggle against a powerful, potentially disruptive force that inheres in women themselves?

This possibility must never excuse misogyny; it could explain, though, the enduring belief, found in many unrelated cultures, that women's desire renders them, sexually, powerfully magical beings. Maybe women really are, sexually, powerfully magical beings.

If so, what can we learn from accepting that? Not to repress female desire, as it has been repressed in the past; nor to devalue it as a way to make it a joke at women's expense, as we often do today; but to finally integrate it into our civilization. In a sense, our resistance to dealing with the true nature of female desire is destructive to us as a society. Half of marriages today end in divorce; most of the divorces are initiated by women. At least some of these are initiated by women who are worn down by feeling erotically lonely and emotionally starved.

What would happen to our divorce rate if we accepted that, when women long to be attentively touched, gazed at, caressed, deeply kissed, and surrounded with sensuality — when they long to be given a kind of sexual adoration or devotion, and an abundance of pleasure — it is not because they are neurotic, possessive, or pathologically needy, but because, as other cultures have better understood, that is how women are made and their erotic nature brought into balance? What would our culture — and our divorce rate — look like if we dared to teach men the skills that could keep women's promiscuously responsive bodies happy in monogamous lives? What would male adolescent sexual behavior look like if boys were taught to treat teenage girls not like prudes or sluts but like nascent sexual goddesses, and respect their sexuality and reproductive potential accordingly? What would our violent landscape look like if men believed that true masculinity meant becoming an extraordinary lover to a life partner?

What would we get if we let women's passion truly enter and dwell in our social world? The religious right fears frank talk about women's desire; but my bet is that if we integrated the passion of women into our world, we would have more love, stronger families, truer commitments.

And we would have our girls enter into womanhood in a state of being fully alive. ❑

UNSAFE SEX



Illustration by Russ Ando

Anna Runkle

When faced with the troubling fact that our nation's abortion rate is the highest in the industrialized world, it is tempting to speculate that something must be changed about the way we view abortion. In the January/February issue of TIKKUN, Naomi Wolf asserts the problem is a pro-choice rhetoric that induces irreverence toward fetal life. Helen Alvaré blames women's failure to honor their debt of maternal loyalty, "even to those we do not choose." Women, according to this logic, are failing to recognize the moral gravity of the decision to end a pregnancy, and consequently are using it too much, too early as "birth control," or without appropriate remorse. If Americans agree that our goal is to reduce the number of abortions, however, then attempts to change abortion laws — or even our attitudes about it — are strategies that come too late. In our national obsession with abortion, we have overlooked and hidden our real problem: an epidemic rate of unintended pregnancy.

We as a society are responsible for this problem. We have looked the other way while subsidized family planning has been gradually defunded, and we've ignored international models for improvement. We have allowed television to dominate our families' lives and inundate us with sexual images and information void of realistic information about sexual responsibility. We are collectively both the actors and shapers of sexual morality. When we cry out for personal responsibility, we must stop pointing fingers and understand that "they" who suffer the consequences of unintended pregnancy are *we*.

Sixty percent of all pregnancies in the United States are unintended, a classification including pregnancies that have come at an inopportune time and those that are unwanted altogether. Like our abortion rate, our rate of unintended pregnancy is two to four times higher than in other industrialized nations, and cuts across all ethnic, age and income groups. Unintended pregnancy is sufficiently oppressive a condition that when abortion is not legally available, women will risk death, mutilation and imprisonment to end pregnancies they feel they can not carry to term. Most unintended pregnancies, however, result in births.

Research suggests that the United States abortion rate has remained relatively stable at about 20–25% of all pregnancies since the colonial era, even after elective abortion was banned in the late 1800s, and even after Roe v. Wade. Today, almost half of all Americans will have an abortion during the reproductive years, (if men may also be said to "have" an abortion) totaling about 1.3 million abortions annually.

Here is the question we avoid: With the advent of widely available contraceptives, shouldn't rates of unintended pregnancy (and consequently abortion) in the United States have declined, as it did in other industrialized nations? Why, with the best birth control technology in history, in the richest country in the world, is our unintended pregnancy rate so high?

The stock progressive answer focuses on contraceptives and the barriers women face in acquiring them. For many women, access to birth control and information *is* fraught with barriers — including cost, poor sex education, geographic availability, confidentiality limitations (one's parents might get an insurance report in the mail), and the fact that the major methods of contraception are not covered under most private insurance. Undoubtedly, removing these barriers would substantially reduce the number of women who find themselves unhappily pregnant.

Nonetheless, most unintended pregnancies happen to people with good access to contraceptives and knowledge of how to use them. What is different about us compared to, say, the Netherlands? People are just as sexually active there but are one-fourth as likely to experience an unintended pregnancy. What distinguishes the Dutch is a

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greater cultural consensus that sex is acceptable before marriage and that couples are expected to protect themselves against unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Sex education for young people is mandatory, consistent and thorough, and television is used to educate viewers about the finer points of safe and responsible sex. Here in the United States, we compound our social ambivalence by treating contraception like a big secret, and forbid its discussion on television or in most schools.

Conflicting messages about sexual behavior compete like schizophrenic voices in our heads: *Respectable women wait until marriage (or at least very serious commitment), but desirable women provide spontaneous, fulfilling sex without pathetic and cloying expectations of commitment.* The need to be both respected and desired is natural for all people, but for many women in our culture it is something of an oxymoron. One way to heed both messages is to have sex and act as though one is swept away with passionate surprise. If you doubt the destructive symbiosis of both messages, consider that one of the most common reasons given during counseling of pregnant women for their non-use of birth control: they did not want to appear to their male partners as though they were expecting sex. Sex is already a mysterious form of communication; contraceptives may enter like a drunken elephant into the subtle realms of intimacy, trust, abandon and power. It is not always acceptable for a woman to express aggressive sexual desire; the non-use of birth control is a mask she may use to appear as some men's idea of "girlfriend material," cautiously self-respecting and sexually innocent when, in fact, she is ashamed of her sexuality and ultimately failing to care for herself.

Family planning clinics necessarily refrain from moralizing lest they scare away those in need of contraceptives. And religious–right groups' only solution is abstinence for the unmarried. It is true that such an approach, if universally practiced (a big if), would significantly reduce the number of unintended pregnancies. But what about real life? What institution can address the great, contradictory, mysterious in-between, where sensible people make senseless mistakes no matter what they believe?

Without consensus or a publicly expressed ethos about healthy sexuality, all we have are vague platitudes. If a young person *should* wait until later, just when is later? At what age do kids begin to worry that virginity is the mark of a loser? How exactly do you know what feels right? How many partners is too many?

These questions are never acknowledged in progressive discourse, in which any act with consent and a condom is lumped under the labels "healthy" and "safe." If things were that simple there would be no unintended pregnancy. But there is — in shamefully high numbers — and so, inevitably, there is abortion. ❑

Reducing the Rate of Unintended Pregnancy

As a society we need consensus that all pregnancies should be planned, and that all sexually active women and men who don't intend to conceive have a responsibility to practice rigorous contraception.

remove all financial, bureaucratic, ideological and informational barriers to contraception for those who want it.

develop more effective contraceptives with fewer side effects and that are easier to use.

insist on greater access to postcoital contraception — "the morning after pill" — so that careless mistakes and contraceptive failures can be amended before an unintended pregnancy occurs.

keep abortion safe and legal, and work to revoke restrictive laws that cause nothing but difficulty for all involved.

openly embrace the idea that early abortion is better than later abortion, and remove legal, financial and insurance barriers that delay procedures for women who want them.

make even earlier abortions possible, we must work for the safe availability of mifepristone, formerly known as RU-486, and other early methods.

Let's get out of the opinion business regarding others' sexual behavior and respond to their misfortunes with compassion and support. When we hear of the drug addict having her fifth abortion, we may pray for her recovery and be thankful she will not be raising a child in her present condition. When a daughter gets deliberately pregnant to test her boyfriend's love, we can wake up to her desperate need for love and give her as much as we can. We should admit that a woman's reproductive choices are between God and herself, and if she has no God, our judgments and interference are no substitute. To second guess a woman's moral agency in this most personal realm is an act of arrogance and denigration. The right to abortion is like the right to free speech; we may not like what everyone has to say, but if we don't let them say it, we might be the ones silenced next time.

We have no choice but to take an introspective look at our personal problems. As a nation we lack agreement about sexual morality; as individuals, too many of us lack coherence. Despite the best knowledge and ideals for our own behavior, few of us can claim we have never experienced irresponsible sex. Either we've had sex that did not feel right or was clearly not right, or we've used dishonesty to smooth over its wrongness, or we were careless about preventing conceptions (or diseases) we did not want. If we want to heal our nation's sexual ills, we must first practice sanctity around our own sexuality, and lead, without preaching, by our example.

– A.R.

Orthodox Feminism:

A Movement Whose Time Has Come

Naomi Grossman



Photo by Joan Roth

The leading turn of the century rabbis were fiercely opposed to Sara Schnirer, founder of the Bais Yaakov school system, when she insisted on providing a Jewish education to orthodox women. The rabbis contended that Torah knowledge, even in the limited sense that Schnirer was then proposing, would confuse Jewish women and lead them to question their traditional roles. And who knows where that would lead to?

As we near the end of the century, it is clear that those rabbis who opposed Schnirer were right. Though they predated Michel Foucault by a few decades, they knew instinctively that knowledge does indeed equal power, or at least leads to the quest for power.

Still, even they could not have anticipated that it would take only eighty years, from the opening of Schnirer's first school in 1917 that gave orthodox women their first heady taste of learning, for the floodgates to burst wide open. Women's prayer groups have sprung up in orthodox communities across the country. The Women's Tefilla Network, which was founded twelve years ago, estimates that as many as four thousand women pray in these groups on a weekly basis. Orthodox girls' schools teach Torah, Mishna, and Halacha, and the more modern schools teach girls Talmud. It is accepted that high school girls will study at a yeshiva for a year in Israel before going on to college, and many will continue their Jewish studies when they return. Learning programs such as Drisha in New York or Ma'ayan in Boston have sprung up nationwide, offering high-level courses and programs of study in Talmud and Torah. Female baby-naming ceremonies are often taking place, and orthodox girls are regularly celebrating their bat mitzvahs. Within orthodoxy, the more radical elements are starting to agitate for the movement to ordain women as rabbis.

But all of this was still a relatively quiet rumbling until this past February when the first International Conference on Feminism and Orthodoxy was held in New York. It was then that many orthodox women realized they had crossed the line from interested participants to real activists. The conference defined their

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cause and put a name on a movement that many hadn't been sure really existed. While the organizers of the conference had anticipated that only about 250 people would attend, they registered 450 people and counted over a thousand attendees each of the two days.

Until the conference, no one had seen how intensely women within the orthodox community needed to be heard. Judith Plaskow, a non-orthodox feminist theologian, observes that, "The orthodox feminist movement has the same kind of energy and excitement now that the Jewish feminist movement had over twenty years ago."

But what is impelling this movement to rise to the surface now? In 1973, organizers of the first Jewish women's conference would not use the word "feminism" in the title.

"Feminism was such a dirty word," said Esther Farber, one of the organizers of the recent conference. The women's rights movement had barely begun to permeate secular society, much less the insular and more conservative orthodox Jewish world. Twenty-four years later, thanks to the feminist movement and because of the economic realities that dictate the need for two–income families, orthodox women are both more educated and more visible in the work force. Feminist sensibilities have even penetrated the ultraorthodox world, where the desire of many men to study Torah as a full–time occupation has forced many of the women to find work to support their large families. As orthodox women have begun finding their voice in the secular world, so it seems they are now looking for it in their religious world as well.

Unlike the movement that sparked the 1973 conference, however, today's movement is as much about orthodoxy as it is about feminism. To be a Jewish feminist is to struggle against a patriarchal system with no imposed limits. But to be an orthodox Jewish feminist is to struggle against that same system yet at the same time adhere to an ideology based on a belief in the divinity of both oral and written Torah — a body of teachings and laws not open to compromise but, significantly, always open to scholarly interpretation.

"The orthodox woman is not looking to put herself outside her community," said Blu Greenberg, a pioneer in the orthodox feminist movement. "She wants to integrate new values into the rich texture of her orthodox way of life. It is not a battle with orthodoxy but a contribution to it."

That need to integrate feminism and orthodoxy was so potent among those who attended the February conference that it defied the usual social constraints. Women in shaitels, in jeans, in hats, in suits, with backpacks, and in long, flowing skirts, came from Brooklyn, Tenneco, Portland, Monsey, and Baltimore. The mood was non-judgmental, and the sense of sisterhood was abundant. None of these women want to abandon their communities, to leave the richness of their tradition, to discontinue living according to Halacha. They have too much invested in their way of life. But they also know they are at the point where, to continue their way of life, they have to be allowed to develop their religious selves in a more profound way.

Just how those selves will be able to develop was still open to question after the conference. Although many issues were raised and questions discussed, no sweeping resolutions or formal declarations emerged. There was no consensus that orthodox women could be rabbis, and no definitive answer to how orthodox women can be ensured of a way to take their study of Torah and Talmud as far as they would want. After listening to many people proposing different ideas, a lot of women left the conference more confused than when they came in. Even the main goals of the orthodox feminist movement remained unclear — and they still await definition.

Yet the fact that these issues were being raised in a very serious and very public forum makes the confusion worth enduring and gives the conference its historical importance. This was the first time many of these women had attended a women's prayer group and felt firsthand the power of leading a ritual rather than following along. This was also the first time many of these women had voiced to a large group their questions and fears about their faith and their communities. And here they were voicing them into a microphone to a huge group of a thousand like-minded people. Passionately religious women were standing up to declare that, along with their need to be taken seriously as women in their secular lives, they have the need to be taken seriously in the Jewish world.

Rather than being forced to make a choice between two seemingly contradictory ideologies, these women want to effect changes that will allow them to be part of both. Some women stated that they want traditional practices reassessed, because it is not Halacha but the rationale of "it has never been done" that is commonly invoked to prevent women from participating in or leading certain rituals. While Halacha states that women cannot be witnesses, there is no halachist dictum that states that women cannot be ordained as rabbis. Other women at the conference insisted that only by reinterpreting Halacha could women achieve the status they were searching for in orthodox Judaism.

Along with all the women committed to the cause comes another indication of the intensely challenging nature of this movement: the intense reaction it has



Photo by Joan Roth

engendered within the orthodox Jewish community. In Queens, New York, this past winter an eleven year-old orthodox girl wanted to celebrate her bat mitzvah by reading from the Torah at a women's prayer group. Word of the event, which was to be held in the basement of an established orthodox synagogue, reached the Queens Rabbinical Council that usually deals with issues of kashrut. Apparently, the Council felt that certain boundaries were being pushed too far and issued a declaration banning women's prayer groups. It stated that the women were not contravening Halacha but that they were going against tradition by praying in a women's prayer group.

Once again, women were not in violation of Halacha but they were doing something that traditionally orthodox women have not done. The Queens Rabbinical Council feared that the breaking of tradition would ultimately lead to the violation of Halacha. But for the women who chose to continue attending the prayer groups despite the ban, their need is to have tradition redefined to enable them to feel fulfilled as Jews. (Ironically, the organizers of the conference can partially credit the ban, issued shortly before the conference, for dramatically increasing the attendance.)

In addition to receiving considerable mainstream press coverage, the conference was vigorously debated in the pages of the right-wing and more modern press. Modern orthodox editor of *The Jewish Week*, Gary Rosenblatt, championed the conference, saying the women who attended represent "not a danger to Jewish life and its future but a blessing....Perhaps the rabbis feel threatened by the fact that increasing numbers of Jewish women seek a greater degree of direct participation in Jewish study and prayer than any previous generation?...Are the rabbis...worried that women are moving toward achieving equity, jeopardizing male control of Jewish authority?" In the right-wing *Yated Ne'eman*, Rabbi Pinchas Lipshitz countered by deriding orthodox feminists' quest for power, saying that historically women have shaped Jewish destiny "their way—the woman's way....[But this] striving to duplicate men's roles is harmful to individuals and to society." Orthodox feminists, he wrote, will realize that "they have created for themselves a movement of disillusionment."

Judging by the right-wing critics' responses, the movement is worth talking about and, perhaps for them, even worth being frightened of. Interestingly, though, their argument is largely based on the belief that the movement would break with certain conventions that orthodox feminism requires — an argument that echoes the critics of the feminist movement over twenty years ago.

Unlike that feminist movement, however, which encouraged women to demand many kinds of rights, today's movement has the boundary of a belief in the divinity of the Torah to guide it. "This is a quieter revolution," says Greenberg. "We respect the lines of authority and the chains of tradition. But we want to take a greater part and have greater access."

The difficulty of understanding how to simultaneously work within one boundary while pushing back the limits of another is what makes the orthodox feminist movement so challenging for its members. Orthodox women are insisting that their religious beliefs stand up to the scrutiny of their feminist ideologies. At the same time, they are using the spirit of feminism to deepen their connection to their faith by claiming their right to equal participation. "To have it all" once meant juggling family and career, but to these women, it means adding spirituality to that act. Perhaps they are creating a new model of feminism, one that integrates the spiritual quest for meaning with the struggle for equality and fulfillment.

What is clear is that both the quest and the struggle are under way.❑

The author would like to thank Naomi Mark for her contributions to this article.

A Second Look at Homosexuality

Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis

Many years ago the issue of homosexuality was for me a matter of theoretical interest. Intellectually I knew there were homosexuals, but personally I knew none. Whoever they were, they were well-closeted, out of sight, out of mind. These last years they have lost their anonymity. Real blood and flesh persons, they come into my study. Now visible and audible, they have come to speak to me. Out of desperation they have left their closeted lives to reveal themselves.

They have come carrying a fateful knowledge, one that most of them discovered early in their lives: They are attracted to persons of their own gender. As they grew up, the whispers they overheard became loud stories: *Homosexuals are unnatural, perverse, pathological, sinful. They dress differently, molest children, and are wildly permissive, hedonistic, and outrageous.* Gay men have seen themselves portrayed on the stage and on television as lisping, swishy, effeminate wimps whom others call f*eigele-boychik.* Supposedly they live in wretched places and hang out in dark bars and dark bath houses. Lesbian women have heard themselves called "butch-dykes," and are portrayed as angry, unattractive, emasculating man-haters.

Those who come to see me know they are hated, rejected, mocked, scorned, reviled. They are frightened. The hatred they know is not confined to particular places, or to particular groups of people from different ethnicities, faiths, or races. On graduation night at Calabasas High School in Woodland Hills, California, a white middle-class teenager named Robert Rosenkrantz shot his schoolmate Steve Redman ten times with an Uzi semi-automatic rifle. What turns a teenager like Robert into a murderer? It was fear, desperate loneliness, and a rage sparked by Robert's schoolmate and his brother Joey, who spied on Robert in an attempt to prove he was gay. When they caught him in a homosexual encounter, they told his parents. Robert disclosed at his trial that he had hidden his homosexuality from his family in fear of their rejection. Sixteen year-old fellow student Wendy Bell said, "If people found out you were gay at this school, you would be verbally tortured."

What greater humiliation than to discover that in the eyes of your society you are really not human? And what makes a human being more human than his or her ability to love and be loved? But homosexuals are not seen as lovable and are not allowed to love. They live in silent shame, fearful of the revelation that will shake the foundation of their being. Theirs is a monstrous burden to carry. Even the most innocent question can be fraught with emotional terror. To hear well-meaning aunts and uncles say, "Do you have a boyfriend?" or to hear someone plan to set up a date, starts a panic in their hearts: *Do others know? How long can I bite my tongue?*

They have come to see me because I am a rabbi and they are Jews. Every Yom Kippur they hear the same selection read from the Torah that sanctities homophobia. It is chanted in the afternoon of Yom Kippur when some are reporting headaches and discomforts that come with fasting the entire day. But this day, one young man who reads from the Torah has more than a migraine, and not from fasting. He reads as it is written, "If a man lies with a male as one lies with a woman, the two of them have done an abhorrent thing. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them." Such an act is a capital crime punishable by stoning—*sekilah* (Lev. 18:22 and 20:13). This aliya is no elevation. The young man is cast into despair.

What do they who come to see me want of me? Absolution? Assurance? Protection? A Jewish voice? What does the law state? What does Judaism say? I am faced with not only a text of so few verses but also with human beings I now know personally, and whose families I know. I look from the law into the eyes of those before me. Without knowing them, I might find it an easier matter to judge. But the Talmud says: "You have to judge according to that which you see with your own eyes" (Baba Bathra 43a).

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What do I see with my own eyes? Honest, decent, God-fearing, loving men and women. And what do I hear but the penetrating words of Micah, the prophet who tells me what God requires: "It has been told you O man what is good and what the Lord demands of youóto do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with the Lord thy God." Yet what is just and merciful here? The persons who have come to me carry their own testimony. In the privacy of my study, they tell me they have not chosen their sexual orientation or lifestyle, that theirs is not a matter of sexual preference. They have chosen nothing except to bury their terror: "It has been for me a living hell. I no more chose my attachments to another of my own gender than you, Rabbi, chose the love of a woman. It was not something taught or modeled or revered in my home or in my circle. But I sensed it early in my childhood. I denied it, fought it, but it would not be denied."

Scholars agree that the authors of the Bible and Talmud took their position on the issue of homosexuality from the assumption that homosexual behavior was an act of freedom of choice, that the homosexual acted either to defy God, or to oppose the law, or as a holy prostitute using his or her body to serve a pagan cult. This assumption of the ancients about the motivation of the homosexual was based on factual error. The rabbis of the first centuries did not know the etiology of homosexuality, or the character of constitutional homosexuals. Their judgments were made with only the knowledge of their time.

Therefore, the ancient rabbis cannot be blamed for their position on homosexuality any more than, for example, they could be blamed for the talmudic position on the deaf-mute, the *cheresh.* In the Talmud a *cheresh* fell into the same category as a *shoteh* and a *katan,* a person who was *non compos mentis.* The assumption was clear. Since the *cheresh* cannot communicate, cannot speak or hear, he or she was considered only to be "dumb"— a word that originally meant mute and was turned into a colloquial expression meaning stupid. Until the nineteenth century, halachists held that the deaf-mute could not serve as a witness, dispose of property, be counted into the minyan, or effect a marriage or divorce.

But traditional laws are not frozen. When Rabbi Simchah Bunem Sofer of Hungary visited the Vienna Institute for the Deaf and Dumb, he observed the accomplishments of its students and realized that the *cheresh* is far from mentally incompetent. In our time, Rabbi Isaac Halevi Herzog has continued to maintain that the laws prohibiting the deaf-mute from ritual and commercial acts are now void, and that the *cheresh* can indeed participate fully in religious life. And so it should be for all rabbis today, who are living on the edge of the twenty-first century: We must review traditional laws with the knowledge of our time.

To do otherwise is to treat Halacha as so much dead weight. This would be caluminous. Those who know its history know that Halacha changes with new knowledge and with new moral sensibilities. Consider cases in which the rabbis nullified or circumvented the biblical law, as in the case of the *ben sorer v'moreh*, the rebellious delinquent son who could be brought to the elders and stoned for his abominable acts (Deut. 21:18), or the case of the *sotah,* the wife suspected of adultery to whom the ordeal of jealousy was given (Num. 5:12), or the case of the *ir nidachat,* the heretical city tainted with idolatry that was to be destroyed (Deut. 13:13). All these biblical laws were dismissed by the rabbis of the Talmud as purely theoretical but having no application to life: *Lo hayah v'lo atid lihyot.* The same talmudic courage and sensitivity should be applied to judging homosexuals who testify that their sexual orientation is not an act of will.

I hear questions from people who are far from homophobic and deserve answers. They ask, for example, if this inclusiveness of homosexuality is accepted, why that same kind of tolerance is not extended to non-converted intermarriage. But when we speak of gays and lesbians, we are speaking about Jewish gays and lesbians, upon whom we make the same religious and moral demands of loyalty to people and to the Jewish faith as we do upon all Jews.

For those who are constitutional homosexuals, is there no choice except the denial of their sexual lives? The options are to "either closet or cloister," leaving no alternative but celibacy and sexual abstinence. Yet that counsel is contrary to the affirmation of life and of sexuality that is so basic in Judaism: Would a loving God create such a being in His image to be condemned to lifelong suffering and frustration? When these people come to me, I cannot counsel them to deny their emotional and sexual feelings, but only to live out their lives in ways that confirm the deepest expressions of their love.

Others argue that the purpose of union and of marriage is procreation, and that homosexuality was prohibited because it denies history, denies the future, and defies the purpose of marriage. Are we not mandated to multiply and fructify and fill the earth? Is that argument not further substantiated by the talmudic ruling: "If a man took a woman and live with her for ten years and she bore no child he may not abstain any more from the duty of propagation" (Yebamoth 64a). Consequently, the man is justified to divorce her and to marry another after a decade of barrenness. Yet the

rabbis could not find it in their heart to dissolve such a union: *Lo m'laah libam.* Such a divorce would wrong another human being. So, they may live together because the purpose of union is not just for procreation, but also includes the blessedness of companionship and love that does not always eventuate in having children.

Were having children the only justification of marital union, would we deny *kiddushin* because of infertility or the medical disability of bride or groom? The head and heart of Halacha concede that procreation is not the only goal of human sexuality. Moreover, in an age in which artificial insemination and adoption exist as choices, a homosexual union is not a barrier for the having of children and raising of family.

The underlying issue is moral, not textual. Surely even the most stringent followers of Halacha would not apply the traditional law that demands death to the homosexual. Who would call for us to criminalize homosexuality? We cannot, as thinking, feeling Jews, base our judgment solely on a verse or two in the Bible. Consider the fact that an entire corpus of religious text and spiritual principles informs rabbinic conscience. The Torah cultivates Jewish conscience: "The Torah's ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace." It reminds us that we are to love the stranger and to know his or her heart. If we do not know the heart, if we do not know the humanity of society's pariahs, we do not know our own humanity. Until we discover the stranger in our midst as "human being," we will not discover our own humanity.

What is demanded of me and of every Jew is to protect the hounded, the persecuted, the humiliated, the ostracized, the pariahs—who are created by human beings, not by God. What is required of us is to accept the dignity of each individual, to know the hearts of these strangers, to make them feel at home with us, and to encourage them to live out their lives with dignity and within compassionate communities.

Every human being is created in God's image: "The Lord God formed the human being of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the human being became a living soul." For us to make the innocent afraid, to make the human being cry, to force people to hide from their own flesh, or to humiliate God's creations is to spit in God's face. We are taught by the rabbis that to shame God's creation is to shed His blood. This shaming is an abomination that we can cleanse from our midst. ❑

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FICTION

The Family Romance

Lawrence Douglas



Illustration by Michael Bass

The first time I heard my mother mention the sucking candies was shortly after my brother set his medical school applications on fire. It was the beginning of my junior year in high school, a whisper of fall was in the air, and I was upstairs, doing yoga by the book on the shag carpet in my bedroom.

Mother cried, "Milt, have you had any of the bonbons in the den?"

Since the burning incident, things at home seemed a little odd. Mother didn't do anything differently, she just did it *more*: her hands fluttered a little faster, her nose sniffed a bit more acutely, the counter tops were even more immaculate than usual.

Father also was uneasy. Dad was an advertising executive, the genius behind oat bran marketing, an account he pioneered after Space Food Sticks drifted into oblivion in the late seventies. At night, he liked to tear through the crossword puzzle, munching on apples, the gnawed cores wrapped in the business pages. But lately he had taken to dozing off midway through the "downs," an empty bag of potato chips yawning on his lap.

"Oh, Millllt!"

Virgil, our bulldog who faithfully responded to any name, struggled down the stairs, his paws clicking across maple. "Milton, can you *hear me*?"

"For Christ's sake," Dad grumbled, his voice gravelly, "I still have ears."

"Then answer me. Some of the candies are missing. Have you been eating them?"

"What are you talking about? You know I've never touched those candies."

"Ben, have you?" Mother enlarged the pool of suspects.

"Nope," I called down.

"Are you sure?" Mother chirped suspiciously, "There's a wrapper just lying here on the floor."

The issue was trivial, but the allegation grave. Mother had ordered the sucking candies specially from the Netherlands to match the interior of the den. Collected in a crystal bowl, they sparkled like precious gems, delicately picking up the colors in the oriental rug and the stone mantelpiece. The candies were to snack food as the "living" room was to living or the ivory chess set in the study was to the game Paul and I played sprawled on the floor of his bedroom. Eating them could not occur through mere blunder but only through some malicious, diabolical design.

"I think I'd remember if I had one," I said settling back into the yogic corpse pose.

Later that night, we called Paul. My brother was a senior at Yale, a double major in biology and philosophy. Ever since I played nurse to his meticulous dissection of a fetal pig in the basement, he had seemed destined for medicine.

"It's a great career," Dad would say. "You're a helping professional and can support an attractive life style."

But one night, a week into the fall term, Dad had answered the phone to hear Paul bark, "I'm not applying." A few days later an envelope had arrived in the mail. It contained a short message — Harvard, Penn, Hopkins, etc. — and a handful of ashes.

At five past eleven, as soon as the rates went down, we retreated to our respective extensions — Father manning the phone in the master bedroom while I listened in upstairs.

"Hey, there Paulie," Father said, his voice upbeat, "so how are you feeling?"

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"Getting by." My brother sounded remote, as if he were reading while Dad spoke.

"Well, are you feeling okay? There's a flu going around here. You're not sick or anything, are you?"

"Of what?"

"I mean are you all right?"

"Fine, just fine."

"You better take care of yourself, kiddo. When was the last time you had a check-up?"

Paul remained silent.

"God, where did I get such a pigheaded son," Father groaned, "You're as stubborn as your Mother. Just because you say you don't want to be a doctor, doesn't mean you can't see a doctor, right?"

"Western medicine isn't interested in prevention," Paul muttered, "Doctors use any technique that can help them buy a new condo."

I took a deep breath. It was going to be one of those conversations.

"What's wrong with being able to afford nice things in life?" Father said, following his script. His voice had his typical tone that he adopted whenever he discovered the logical flaws in one's deepest beliefs. "I didn't hear any objections when we bought you that new Jetta. And who insisted on the convertible?"

Paul sighed, "That was a gift. That wasn't using people for prestige and money."

"Hah! Just your parents," Father laughed, "But they're not really people, right? God forbid you should drive an hour and visit us more than once in a blue moon."

Paul didn't answer.

"You know, you're still such a kid," Father said, "How much do you want to bet that this time next year, you'll be applying to med schools?"

After a moment Paul said, "I'll bet my life."

Father laughed nervously like he did when one of his jokes fell flat, but I tried to match Paul's voice of derision in my laugh; it was meant to declare my allegiance to my older brother.

"Well, suit yourself," Father said, "Since you're not going to be a doctor, have you given any thought to your future? Or are you just planning on living off your Western father?"

There was a pause followed by the gentle click of disconnection.

A few days later, as I was walking up our driveway, I saw Mom standing motionless in the kitchen. She was frozen by the sink, as if this were how she spent the hours alone in the house. Three years earlier, she had redecorated the house. She borrowed books from the library and covered the living room floor with swatches of material. I had never seen her so animated. Afterwards, she enrolled in an interior decoration certifying program at the adult-ed center, but dropped out after a semester. "Who wants the pressure of doing this full-time?" she said. "The only house I really could get my heart into is my own."

As I threw down my books on the counter, Mother opened the refrigerator and grabbed a fistful of carrot sticks. The *Stay Trim!* piglet-shaped magnet on the fridge door turned askew and Mom righted it. Of course, Mom *was* trim and when we'd go to a restaurant Dad would try to cajole her, without success, to share in the obligatory tiramisu. "C'mon Gloria, you used to love this stuff. You're getting a bit bony as it is."

I opened a cabinet to get some crackers and made my confession, "I flunked a physics test today."

Mother nibbled quickly, "That's what you always say. Just like your brother."

"But this time I *really* screwed up."

Mother retrieved more carrot sticks and again readjusted the magnetic piglet. Then she reached into the pocket of her pants outfit and extended her arm. "Here," she said, "This should take your mind off an A-minus."

She handed me an envelope which I studied for a few moments before I realized that it was a letter from my brother. It was his handwriting, but the letters were large and loose, as if written in a rush.

"This is also for you," she said. On the countertop she placed an empty cellophane candy wrapper. She smiled tightly and a pattern of crow's feet radiated from the pinched corners of her eyes.

"Why's it for me?"

"Because you left it on the floor in the den."

When I was younger, I divined that a hidden spectator followed my worldly course with a hand-held movie camera. I stole a glance at this hidden camera. Then I looked into my mother's eyes, "I didn't leave that wrapper anywhere. I told you that the other night."

"This one is new. I just found it on the floor this morning."

She stared at me for another moment and then left the kitchen.

That night I read Paul's letter:

Ben. Here's something from the Upanishads — *read it and try to understand:*

"At night, Nakiketas was afraid. Death came to him and together they played a game of chess. Death whispered, 'The Good is one thing, the pleasant another. The wise follow the Good; he who chooses pleasure misses his end.

The self, smaller than small, greater than great, is hidden in the heart of man. A man who is free from desires and free from grief sees the majesty of the self.

But he who is not turned away from the sin of avarice

and pride, who is not tranquil, and subdued, he can never obtain the Self even by knowledge.

Children follow after outward pleasures. Wise men only do not look for anything stable here among things unstable. He, the highest Person, who is awake in us while we are asleep, struggles to cleanse the world of its misery and sweet contamination.

When all the ties of heart are severed here on earth, then the mortal becomes immortal — return to your father and mother, Nakiketas, and show them the way, for here the teaching ends."

The next few days were cool and clear, and after school, I followed a trail through the woods of the golf course at my parents' country club. Dad had picked up the game during his time in the service, and had developed into a passionate golfer. "It's the only sport," he would say, "in which you're truly competing against yourself." His efforts to spark enthusiasm in us, however, met with dismal results. The only time Paul consented to a golf lesson, he showed up at the club in ragged cutoffs and a filthy T-shirt, crushed a pail-full of balls down the center of the driving range, and stormed off, sneering at startled housewives. Now the despised clubhouse, a white-washed porticoed northern dream of a southern slave-holder's mansion, looked almost benign. It was dusk, and the last rays of sun threw long purple shadows on the rolling grass hills and grazed the tops of the trees with a brilliant fiery light.

As a lone golf cart trundled by the fifteenth fairway, I thought about Paul. I knew something odd was going on, but I wasn't worried. His burning of the applications, the letter — it was weird, but thrillingly so. Following his recommendations, I was reading Hesse and Dostoyevsky and was prepared to believe that any step toward freedom required some untoward display. Where Paul was headed I didn't know — to becoming a carpenter, an Eastern mystic, a ski bum — all I knew was that I wanted to follow. We would cycle through the Amazon rain forest or travel to the unspoiled landscape of the Himalayas. We would hike, yodel, write poetry, play gin rummy; together we would stand atop a peak and embrace the world. In a moment of true feeling, I burst into laughter and extended my arms toward the manicured greens.

At dinner, I was still feeling unusually sublime. Father was also in a good mood. "Guess who I got to endorse the new campaign we're running?" he asked. He named a famous baseball player. "Not bad, huh?"

"Wise men," I said placidly, "do not look for anything stable among things unstable."

"I think you mean wiseacres," Dad said.

After dinner we retreated to the den and with Virgil at our feet watched a "Kojak" rerun.

Years before, my brother and I had nagged our parents to get us a Golden Retriever. Mother was afraid a dog would chew up her furniture and pee on her silken drapes, but one Chanukah Father surprised us with a puppy. "Bulldogs are uncommonly gentle," Father said in defense of his less than popular choice, "Besides, it's Yale's mascot." Father named him, a reminder of the time he had earned a gentleman's "C" on a mandatory Latin exam.

At the first commercial, Mom left the room. She had developed complex viewing habits, never watching a full episode, disappearing to the corners of the house during breaks, and trailing back to the den long after the program resumed. It drove Dad crazy.

"It's not as if I'm stopping you from watching," she said re-taking her position on the couch.

Dad grumbled and cracked open some walnuts in a wooden bowl on the leaded glass coffee table, "Hey, I have a joke for you," he said. "Why didn't Cain have any children?"

I stared at him.

"Because he wasn't able."

I sat motionless, my expression unchanged. Father laughed, "You really are a bastard child, you know that?"

As we continued to watch the episode, I became aware of Mother staring at me. At some point I stole a glance at her, but her gaze was fixed on the television. But then it struck me that she wasn't really following the show; she was watching Kojak suck his Tootsie Pop.

I was being tested. She was playing with me just like the lieutenant was playing with the guy he knew was the killer. But how does one maintain an appearance of innocence which is real? Out of the corner of my eye, I glanced at Father. He stroked Virgil, munched on a nut, and filled in a few spaces on the crossword puzzle.

The television went dead.

"Hey! What the hell—" Dad cried, "Turn the goddamn show back on."

Mother stood by the mantelpiece with the TV remote in her hand. "Look," she said. Her other hand was balled in a fist, and she opened it slowly, as if she feared some tiny animal might escape. In her half-open palm she held two wrappers. "Look."

"Look at what?" Father said, "Can't this wait? We're missing the best part —"

"It's the wrappers. The wrappers from the bonbons. Now you see I'm right. Ben's been eating them."

"Well, for Christ's sake, Ben, stop eating your mother's candies."

"I haven't touched them."

"Are they just disappearing on their own?"



Mother said, "Are they just tossing off their little wrappers and running away?"

"For Christ's sake," Father muttered, "What the hell's going on around here anyway? This house is turning into a..." But his voice trailed off as he dumped Virgil off his lap and shuffled from the room in his old slippers. A few years back, he had accidentally dropped an outsized storm window on his slippered left foot, crushing the big toe like a dashed sausage. Paul was nearly hysterical and Mother called an ambulance but Father insisted on driving himself to the emergency room. Afterwards, he never wore the new slippers Mom bought him. The old ones were still comfortable, he said, and the blood stain had faded to the color of the leather, more or less.

I was astonished to see Mother's eyes edged with tears. "You're just like your brother," she said, her words like pebbles rapping on glass. "Always taking."

"I didn't touch those stupid candies. You're starting to sound weird."

"Is that the way you talk to your mother? Who did?"

"I don't know. I didn't."

I watched her expression toward me mellow. Then it turned inward, frantic.

"Paul," she said quietly.

At first I thought she had inadvertently called me by my brother's name. But in the same moment, I realized that she was talking to herself.

I left my mother standing alone in the den.

The next morning, when I entered the kitchen, Mother stood by the refrigerator, breathless. In the palm of her hand she held another empty wrapper.

"Something terrible is happening here," she said.

Father rushed into the kitchen with his briefcase. He tossed back the fistful of vitamins, medicines and herbal cures he took every morning with a single massive gulp of orange juice. It was all supplied free, courtesy of the bran people.

"It's probably a mouse," he muttered. He readjusted his tie, avoiding Mother's stare. "I'll set some traps tonight."

Mother shook her head. "You know that's not it."

Father struggled into his trench coat. He headed toward the door but ran back to the closet for an umbrella.

I went out with Dad, glancing back as I swung the kitchen door shut. Mother stood in her bathrobe, shoulders sagging, eyes puffy. "Always trying to deny..." she muttered. I thought of what Paul had written: *He, the highest Person*, who is awake in us while we are asleep, struggles to cleanse the world of its misery and sweet contamination.

That night I started secretly monitoring the bowl, counting the candies before going to bed, racing down the stairs first thing in the morning, checking to see if they had been disturbed. For several days, I found nothing. Then one morning I noticed light glancing off something bright on the floor. It was a wrapper, neatly unfolded, beside the unsprung trap.

We started receiving a flood of letters from Paul. Each day would bring a new batch, one for each member of the family.

The letters were addressed to me, but at the very end Paul typed, like some corporate executive, *cc: Mom, Dad*. They told stories from his childhood. Some of the incidents were familiar, such as the one about the debate tournament. As a senior in high school, Paul qualified for the state championship. We all planned to go to Albany to hear him speak, but every time Paul sat down to work on his presentation, he would start tearing away at his fingernails and running his hand through his hair. The night before the tournament, he started to cry and locked himself in the bathroom. Father yelled at him through the door and Paul screamed in return. I remember finding it peculiar how long Paul stayed in the bathroom — even long after Father had paced away — not crying, not showering, but silent. The next morning he wouldn't get out of bed and Dad had to call to cancel.

Other letters blamed our mother and father for making him into a weak, frightened, damaged person. He wrote that they had never loved enough — either him or each other. *Remember the great high school cross-country star?, he wrote, I did it only to prove myself to Dad, running until dizzy, stopping only to vomit by the side of the road. It got to the point that I knew I hadn't run well unless I had thrown up.*

One letter was about his sex life. He had always been very popular with girls, with his pitch black hair and blue eyes, but he wrote, *Sometimes I think the monks have it easy, free of all that filth.*

One had a strange end, *It's not enough to understand the Truth,* he wrote, *I want to be able to taste it.*

At dinner, Mother handed us our letters and we ate in silence — it was like the waiting room of a hospital. Father looked ashen and small; he picked at the salad he had every night to keep his cholesterol down. Mother nibbled at small spoonfuls of cottage cheese.

Father tried to tell a joke. But it was the same one he had told us a couple of weeks earlier, and he had gotten no further than saying "Why didn't Cain —" before Mother punched out, "Not able, not able..."

I looked down, mortified. Mother sighed and began clearing the table.

"This is a difficult time for all of us," Father said, after a silence. He looked at me and smiled. "We just have to

remember that however hard this is for us, it's Paul who really is suffering. These things happen and with some rest he'll be back to his old self."

I nodded but after a pause I said, "What are 'these things'?"

Father did what I suppose fathers do in such moments. He looked first at Mother, removed his glasses and rubbed the bridge of his nose. He took a deep breath and clasped his hands. Finally he turned to me and said, "Your brother is having a breakdown."

My teeth clamped together and I kept nodding. I suppose I already understood this, but something about hearing the words made the blood rush to my head. Yet I also felt relief. Now we could begin thinking as a family about all the things Paul had written. We could hold up a mirror to ourselves, as one letter had said.

But Father said no more. He finished his salad in silence and folded the puzzle over his knee, adjusting the bridge of his glasses. It was as if someone had spilled a small puddle of juice that had been quickly whisked up with one of the two clean sponges always mobilized for action by the kitchen sink. I glanced at Mother. "Your father has never been one to talk about emotions," she said.

Father ignored this, filled in a clue with his Cross pen.

Mother sighed, "It's no wonder that with a father like that your brother would —"

"Don't start with me Gloria," Father said. He placed the paper on the table and turned to me, "What Paulie needs is our support and love. Whatever terrible things he's writing us, we have to remember that he just isn't himself these days."

I felt my lip quiver, "What's that supposed to mean? I've read those letters. Maybe he's upset, but nothing he's written is crazy. Right, Mom?"

Mother stood by the sink, a distant look on her face. Father took my napkin away from me before I could finish shredding it. He shook his head tiredly, "Ben, your brother is going through a very difficult time. Now, it's understandable that you'd try —"

"Try and what?" I screamed, "You're the one who's just trying to ignore what he feels."

Father ran his hand over his bald pate. It was glistening with sweat, "Benjamin, stop tapping that damned spoon."

"You're just trying to deny everything," I shouted "Paul predicted you would and you are. Everything!"

"That's your father for you," Mother muttered.

"I told you to stop tapping that goddamned spoon," Father yelled, "Now, that's enough."

"You're just afraid to admit it!"

"Enough," Father screamed, his face grey, "My God, he's my first-born ..." His lips trembled. He grabbed the spoon from my hand and threw it to the floor. He kicked at it. He threw the letters on the floor, kicked at them. My heart rapped against the inside of my chest. My mother's eyes twitched as she bent down after the letters, like someone reaching for her own innards.

I took my letter and ran upstairs.

The year before, Paul had brought home a book called *Genius and Madness*. Sprawled on his floor, cheeks in my hands, I read about Edvard Munch and Vincent van Gogh. Van Gogh had also written copious letters to his brother, Theo, and though everyone knew that Van Gogh had chopped off his ear for a woman, fewer knew that Munch had once sent a friend a mole from his back. I was comforted by the knowledge that, at some point in their life, every serious artist or thinker had suffered from a nervous illness.

It was past midnight when I tried to call Paul. I let the phone ring and ring. Perhaps he was there, but wouldn't answer my call. Or perhaps he was already on the road, driving the sixty miles from New Haven to sneak into our house and steal a candy. I listened for a sound from below, but there was only silence.

I climbed into bed and tore open the envelope.

"The Saga of the Perfect Family continues. Chapter XII: Dread With Mommy"

Did I ever tell you the story of when I played hide and seek with Mom? (You were but a sad scrape of Nothingness at the time.) She hid and I sought. I knew where to look. She always went for the cedar closet. Once I found her there crying. She was curled in a ball, tears running down her cheeks. She held me tight and I found myself crying, too. We sat like that for a long time, in the dark closet. Of course, if you ask her, I'm sure she'll deny the whole thing. Isn't forgetfulness a wonderful gift? But I can't forget, Ben.

Then there was the time I saw her naked, the shock of black hair. She screamed. I was six — who knows, perhaps I was a threateningly virile first grader. I've never seen Dad naked, only in that loose white underwear. The man's got droopy balls, Ben.

Since we're on the topic, have you ever heard them going at it? Don't you wish you had some memory of the sounds which attended your procreation? But nothing. Do you think maybe they've never done it? Seems unlikely, but there is historical precedent for such a thing.

But I made their bed move, Ben; I used to jump into their bed early in the morning on Sundays. She would cover her mouth with the sheet, ashamed of her morning breath. But it wasn't like I was going to French kiss her or anything. Later she'd come racing into the kitchen, screaming if a crumb fell to the ground. By God, if there wasn't love, at least there was order. But I have a

theory — she puts out for the garbage man. Remember that repulsive hairy one who'd ring the bell and say, "Anything else, ma'am?" I bet he banged her right on that immaculate kitchen floor.

Enough for now, Ben. The lessons will continue; the lies will be torn down. Hrishikesa spoke these words, "Do not grieve for those who deserve no grief. The way to purity is the destruction of the impure."

And then this:

cc: Mom, Dad.

The next night, after Dad started snoring, I pulled on a pair of sweat pants, wrapped a scarf around my neck, and tiptoed down the stairs. Lights from our neighbor's yard cast dark shadows across the hallway. The den was cool and I sat on the couch with my legs crossed, toes curled under the cushions. With the volume muted, I watched the late show on TV. It was an old black-and-white mystery. A man was searching for his lost friend in post-war London. At last, the man caught a glimpse of his friend in a dark pub, but all you could see was a silhouette and plumes of grey smoke spiraling from a cigarette, its ember glowing with each histrionic drag.

I waited. The den was dark save for the television's ghostly flicker. As the hero crept through the murky gloom of London sewers, I sensed movement in the corner of my eye. To the room's shadows, I whispered, "Paul."

The floor in the living room creaked heavily. My heart was in my throat. The darkness blinded my gaze, became radiant.

"Paul," I whispered.

There was a strange, portent silence — the sound of two people holding their breath. I was frozen, with an animal's keenness.

"Benny..." A figure appeared in the doorway to the den, a dark silhouette, "Is that you?"

It was Mother.

"I've had some trouble sleeping these last weeks," she whispered. She wore no bathrobe, only a thin nightgown, and the blue light from outside outlined the contours of her body. I forced my gaze away. Something was wrong — wrong on the deepest level of things.

Her voice was airy, "You're not eating one of the candies, are you? Good. They're awfully sweet. I doubt you'd like them anyway."

Neither of us moved. Then Mother began to vaguely tremble — started to cry, softly, arms at her sides. I took steps toward her, placed a hand on her shoulder, and then she shrieked.

It was strident, ear-piercing, yet completely without passion and emotion, as if her vocal chords were the unwitting vehicle of a cry that came from elsewhere. She looked terrified, but her scream was not the expression of this terror; rather, the terror was her own reaction to the awful sound issuing from her mouth. For a moment, it stopped — we stood in stupefied silence. Then her mouth opened wide and out it poured; her eyes, filled with their own silent cry, started to bulge as if she were choking on this vomiting of sound.

Father came running down the hallway in his underwear, "What the hell is going on here?" He motioned for me to leave him alone with Mom. Standing in the dining room, I could hear Mother's weeping punctuated with an occasional cry. The sounds awakened some unknown vesitigial response within me; I found myself in the grips of ancient biology. My every sense was acute. My ears pricked, my eyes darted around like those of a grim survivalist. I quickly catalogued those things in the dining room that could support life and threaten it. I glanced at the carving instruments, felt dimly menaced by the china cabinet.

Father shuffled from the den, his arm curled around Mother's small shoulders. He spoke wearily, "I think it would be best for me to take your mother to the hospital."

I quickly packed her a little suitcase, rifling through the bathroom and the drawers of her dresser. As I touched her things, her make-up, panties, tampons, toothbrush, blouses, I thought of her packing our trunks for summer camp. The feeling was beyond one of indescribable inversion — I felt like a blasphemer, someone violating a sacred order.

After I watched Father's car pull from the driveway, I stood in the kitchen, frozen. By the phone were the notes with the frequently used messages. At the club. *Playing tennis. Walking Virgil.* I jotted down *Taking Mom to the mental hospital* and pinned it to the fridge with the magnetized piglet. I stared at the message, hoping I could make sense of what I had written.

The next day, Father drove me to visit Mom. "The doctor thinks she just needs rest," he said, his voice husky. It was an overcast day, but he wore sunglasses. "I gave him a detailed description of what's been going on, and he believes the stress with Paul just got to her. He said such a reaction is not unusual, especially with highly sensitive persons like your mother."

The clinic was bright and open, with large plants and cheerful prints on the wall. Mother sat alone, in a soft chair in a corner, flipping through a magazine. She wore a simple dress and no make-up, her face colorless and beautiful. When she saw me, she began flipping the pages faster. A nervous smile played about her mouth. She looked to speak, but her smile simply tightened.

When Father phoned Paul to tell him what had happened, Paul insisted on coming down to visit. "I want to see Mom," he said.

"I think that would be a very poor idea for the present,"

Father said.

Paul arrived home that night, his Jetta bursting into the driveway and screeching to a halt. He wore black billowy paratrooper's pants, and a black jacket. His hair was swept off his forehead.

"Where's Dad?" he snapped.

"He's at the clinic. He's staying over with Mom."

Paul snickered, "As if that's what she needed. So now he thinks I'm to blame for all this."

We circled each other in silence, and, as if by default, found ourselves on the carpet in Paul's room, playing chess. Exhausted, I watched Paul move his pieces. His hands were steady, but at the tip of each finger was a crescent of raw picked skin.

When he spoke his voice was hard, fiercely disciplined, "I know this may be difficult to grasp," he said, "but it's good that this has happened to Mom. That means she's still able to feel. She can be reached. Dad's a basket case. It's impossible to get him to look at his life."

I pressed my finger against the chipped bishop, set him back up when I accidentally knocked him over.

"Fools cannot be helped, and our father is a fool. He lives this life of lies, and blames *me* when I try to open their eyes. In the long run, Mom is going to be grateful for this, Ben. The Greeks had a saying, 'That which doesn't destroy me makes me stronger.' Do you understand?"

I glanced down at the board and nodded.

"Do you *really* know what I mean?"

"I think so..."

"It's always easier to live by falseness and lies. The truth is a difficult thing."

"Uh-huh."

"You understand this?"

"Yeah..." A leaf was blown against the window, trapped against the pane by the wind. It trembled, spun, and lifted away. But then I heard myself say, "What's the point of writing that stuff to Mom about garbage men? I mean, I can see just writing to me, but also sending it to Mom ..."

I could feel Paul glaring at me. "I don't like your tone, Ben." His words had a strange cadence, like steam forced through a valve. "You're starting to sound like Dad. Whose side are you on anyway?"

"For Christ's sake, Dad isn't *against* you." My chest was thumping, "He's just worried... We all are."

"Worried about what — that I'm going to turn us all into a bunch of raving lunatics?" Paul laughed and then began to shout, "Maybe that would be a welcome change, Ben. Has it ever occurred to your sheltered little brain that madness is just another word for clarity? Ben, there are things I see — things I *know* — that could tear us all to shreds. I'm trying to go slow, make it all a gift. Surely you see that ..."

I stared at the board. A part of myself was closing off, crawling deep inside me. We played on in silence. I kept my eyes riveted on the pieces. I avoided taking Paul's exposed bishop and tried to even the game by throwing away a knight. But at some point, I began studying Paul's expression as he played, how he examined the board with the look of an angry genius; how he nodded knowingly to himself, his eyes sparkling. He seemed thrilled by some secret understanding of the game, as he gravely moved his pieces. His face must have had this same expression when he composed the letters — one filled with its own urgent purpose, with its own crusading vision of apocalyptic truth. I was alarmed, numb with self-pity and pity for Paul, but the expression also excited something remorseless within me. I played with new concentration, surgically destroying my older brother in a few moves.

Paul spent the rest of the afternoon pacing around the house. Then he got in his Jetta and took off. A few days later, Mom returned from the clinic, skinnier, with nervous eyes. For a while she teetered at the edge of a delicate equilibrium. Father helped her reassemble a life as one repairs a broken vase — you put it in a safe place with the cracks turned to the wall. The other vase, the one that had contained the candy, was quietly removed — it wasn't thrown out or given away; it was placed in a cupboard packed with chipped heirlooms and old promotional Flintstone glasses Mom had gotten at gas stations.

Paul didn't return to Yale. After he left us that day, he just drove around, making a slow trek across the country. He sent a few postcards, bursts of anger mixed with fervent plans for a new life. He worked as a dishwasher for a month, camped out near a Zen center, enrolled in a massage school and then dropped out. Finally he was picked up by the police in a suburb in Texas staring in at a dinner party from some bushes. Dad flew out to bring him home.

The night they got back, Mother took extra medication and I was so nervous that I went out for a five mile run. I got back just as they turned into the driveway. Paul was pale and his black hair was shorn in a crew-cut. Mother stroked his cheek. Her eyes were glassy with tears. "What a handsome tired son I have," she whispered, then hustled like a speed-walker to her bedroom.

In the middle of the night, I tiptoed to Paul's room and silently nudged the door open. Here as a child I had sought refuge from nightmares and thunder. Paul lay on his blanket, curled in a ball, shaking. I settled myself on the edge of his bed. I reached out and gently stroked his hair, "I don't want to hurt Mom and Dad," he sobbed, "But can't you feel it? — they're with me in my head ."

I stared out the window, at the dark, sealed frames of the silent homes that lined our curving street. As I climbed under the blankets and held Paul, it was as if I had passed into a dream, the houses suddenly afire, the long rubber hoses spewing nothing but words. ❑

REVIEW

The Holocaust Luster on "Shine"

Thane Rosenbaum

The magic of movies has the power not only to invade dreams, but also to recreate nightmare and offer a glimpse at madness.

The extraordinary achievement that is *Shine*, director Scott Hicks' tribute to the restored life and art of the Australian pianist, David Helfgott, embraces art and genius, madness and atrocity, but does so in such an intentionally ambiguous way that it ultimately obscures what is a central source of the film's dramatic conflict.

By now, with all the Golden Globe and Oscar gloss that has surrounded this film, at least the cinematic life of Mr. Helfgott is well-known. A child prodigy, he became the instrument through which his domineering father, Peter, realized his own unfulfilled musical ambitions. Obsessively driven to achievement, David is all the while reminded of the violin-smashing grandfather who, because the Holocaust had claimed most of the Helfgott family, he would never know. As a response to these losses, his life is deemed too precious to share with others, making the fragile child a virtual prisoner in his own home.

Retreating from the trauma of being his father's son, David loses himself in his music. Finally, years later, he escapes to study in London. There, during a school competition, he successfully conquers the music of Peter's deepest passion: the Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 3 ("the Rach 3"), which former teachers had warned as being a trap door to madness.

David triumphs in the competition, but in the process also suffers a mental breakdown that separates him from his mind and his music. While the film ultimately ends on a life-affirming high note, the heart of the story lies in the damage that was done, and more importantly, how it was done.

But the answer is not offered willingly in *Shine*. Mr. Hicks obviously has deep respect for his audiences; perhaps too much. The film treats the complexity behind Peter and David's actions — and the mental collapse itself — like a celluloid puzzle of ill-matched pieces. Is it a family history of child abuse? How about the Rach 3? Perhaps the Holocaust had something to do with it? Mr. Hicks gives us tantalizing messages to ponder in the dark, but that doesn't guarantee that as audiences we'll know what they mean.

Mr. Hicks may have chosen not to "shine" the light too blindingly in this direction (and for this reason most people will miss it), but this film is very much about the Holocaust — a generation removed from the chimneys, but still responsible for the damage to both father and son. Yet the Holocaust images in *Shine* are elusively presented, as though a plot device in disguise, a walk-on role intended more to confuse than explain.

Unfortunately, there is a danger in not knowing the significance of the Holocaust in *Shine*. Without a meaningful appreciation of the demons that drove Peter, *Shine* reduces him to the Jewish equivalent of *The Great Santini*. Child abuse becomes the focus of the film rather than the horror that lurks underneath it. Yes, Peter wants to keep the family together, fencing them in even if it sabotages his own dreams for David. But as Eva Fogelman, a psychologist who works with survivors and their children, says, "For Holocaust survivors, separation means death. There is no expectation for a reunion." The intensity of Peter's reaction to the possible loss of yet more family is the calling card of every survivor of the Holocaust.

Similarly, this film is not merely about a passionate artist's response to repression, or how music can be more siren than scream. As a child of the Holocaust, David is desperate to escape from the nightmare — and nightmares — of his father. But the legacy given to him from parents for whom the ghosts of Auschwitz are always present — even in the post-Holocaust world — intercedes, and he finds himself lost in a private cocoon of silence and mental illness. When he finally emerges, he is exuberantly childlike (perhaps for the first time), speaking a newly-invented language that allows him to say freely and without inhibition all that he had been denied as a child. Only then does the music follow.

There are just two problems. First, *Shine* — although made by Australians — adopts Hollywood's preference for depicting Holocaust survivors as either perpetual victims (*The Pawnbroker*, *Schindler's List*, and *Enemies: A Love Story*) or as persecutors, in some cases, of their own children (*Substance of Fire* and

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Shine). While it is true that Holocaust survivors are themselves a haunted people, and they often do pass onto their children a warped vision of the world, physical abuse is quite rare, and a survivor who has mastered the lessons of the Nazis with this level of perfection is indeed a cinematic stretch. In fact, despite Mr. Helfgott's conflicting recollection, his older sister, Margaret, publicly denies that her father ever beat his children.

The second problem is that Mr. Helfgott's parents were not in fact "survivors" of the Holocaust. Despite the film's subtle imagery suggesting otherwise, they were safely down under in Australia during the war, having left Poland before Hitler's invasion. The Helfgott relatives who remained, however, did not survive, which perhaps underscores yet another psychological component of this film, applying equally to both the real-life and fictional Helfgotts.

Survival in the face of so much family death is a prescription for lifelong guilt. Peter Helfgott knew all about that. David is warned not to abandon his family, although his father once did with his own parents years earlier. For Peter, the act of survival also carried the seeds of guilt, which he carefully planted in his own children. David manages to survive the physical and psychological tyranny of his home, but once cut off from his family — and the finality with which his father treats their separation — he discovers that madness may be the only safe haven he will ever know.

While Holocaust survivors — particularly those who were in concentration camps — have cause to be outraged when their experiences with hell are universalized and relativized, *Shine* is really speaking to a deeper truth shared among all those who suffered losses during the atrocity of Europe. The evil of the Nazis was far-reaching, leaving a trail of damaged lives that suggested no immediate end to the Final Solution. Peter Helfgott had been reduced to a man of fear, regret and rage. This was the ultimate legacy that he left to his son.

Shine may be a tribute to the spirit of man and the power of redemption. But it is also a film about the burden of history and the passing on of a torch that still burns thick with the smoke of Auschwitz. ❑

REVIEW

Judaism by Adoption

Judith Bolton-Fasman

Swimming Across the Hudson by Joshua Henkin, G.P. Putnam's Sons.

"The question of who we are is intertwined with our sense of community. How different do we become if we attempt to forge an identity independent of family and community? A Jew is a Jew is a Jew," Ben Suskind's father tells him. It's especially important for Ben, the wry narrator of *Swimming Across the Hudson*, to hear that kind of reassurance. He and his brother Jonathan are adopted.

Ben learns that his parents had him converted upon birth and that knowledge causes him to rethink his place in the Jewish community and his relationship with his parents. For Ben, to be embraced by the community is clearly an act of fate rather than a consequence of choice. He is confronted with the very essence of what makes a Jew a Jew.

"It was no longer clear what made me Jewish. Had I been Jewish only because I thought I'd been born Jewish, and now that I was wrong, I wasn't a Jew? If my parents hadn't converted me and everything else had stayed the same — the Sabbath, the kosher home, the Jewish day school — I wouldn't be a Jew no matter what I thought."

Jonathan and Ben, who have been raised as Jews, are unsure how much Jewish history truly belongs to them. Ben muses about how "my father wanted Jonathan and me to be like him — to keep kosher and observe the Sabbath, to pepper our conversations with words of the Torah, the way his father and grandfather had done, generations of Jews speaking the same language, stretching back to Moses."

For those raised as non-Jews, reclaiming a Jewish identity is a trickier and in some ways a more daunting process. *In This Dark House*, a memoir by Louise Kehoe, is a detective story of sorts, in which the author discovers the lengths to which her father went to conceal his Jewishness. Part of the book's success can be attributed to the fact that Ms. Kehoe's determination to recover her own identity enabled her to be so understanding of someone who abandoned his.

In many ways, Ben's dilemma further mirrors that of Madeleine Albright's in the reverse. One question that people are asking, now that her Jewish roots have been exposed: will she be perceived differently?

Jews themselves may be asking "is she really one of us?" Or even more

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Her work has also appeared in the Washington Post, Baltimore Sun, *and the* Forward.

directly "does she really deserve to be one of us?" After all, Albright successfully lived out the assimilationist fantasy of many American Jews.

These very questions send Ben on a heart-rending exploration of his own Jewish identity to arrive at some answers. For Ben and Jonathan, their adoption intensifies the need to claim some version of personal history. Using every piece of information available to them, they carve a niche for themselves in the Jewish community.

At home, the inherent tensions usually found between maternal and paternal families translate into competition between the family they could have had and the family they actually have. Ben comments that "when you're adopted, everything's contingent. All roads are mired with offshoots; you always see the path not taken. No wonder I studied philosophy in college, all those counterfactuals piled on each other. What if? What if? What if?"

These Yeshiva alumni frequently answer those "what ifs" with examples from the Bible. At one point, the boys pretend to be Jacob and Esau, a story of a birthright gone awry. Jonathan later sees himself as the infant Moses on the banks of the Nile. Moses, who was adopted, clearly serves as a role model. Ben imagines that like his biblical namesake, he too killed his birth mother.

Ben has created another scenario for himself. According to Jewish law, when a non-Jew wishes to convert, a rabbi must refuse the initial request. If the potential convert returns two more times, the rabbi may then treat it as a serious inquiry. After learning that he was not born Jewish, Ben visits an orthodox rabbi who reassures him that his conversion is valid. "A Jew is a Jew even if he sins," says the rabbi, echoing the elder Suskind's encouraging "a Jew is a Jew is a Jew."

Ben proceeds to measure himself as a Jew against the non-Jewish birth mother that he meets. Eventually, he secretly meets Jonathan's birth mother by posing as Jonathan himself. Each encounter strengthens Ben's Jewish identity. Even his romantic relationship with the non-Jewish Jenny is more circumstance than rebellion. That's clearly evident when she sets up a Christmas tree in their apartment, bringing out the latent Jew in him: I thought of Christmas trees as bottom-line. I was a history teacher. Judaism was about nothing if not history. That history included centuries of anti-Semitism. The Crusades. The Spanish Inquisition. The Holocaust. These lessons had been hammered into me all my life. To a Jew like me, Christmas was a reminder that I was a stranger in a strange land. It was about being swallowed up."

Joshua Henkin belongs to the current generation of Jewish American writers who strengthen their stories with Jewish learning. For this generation, in contrast to writers like Saul Bellow and Philip Roth, tradition and the history of Jewish survival are sources of inspiration. Through the Suskind brothers, Henkin has offered an original understanding of what it means to be a Jew as well as conveyed the complexities of identity. *Swimming Across the Hudson* also gives a fresh reading to age-old stories of Jewish survival — ones which relate that no matter how far we wander from our past, it is always a fixed point on our horizon. ❑

Jerusalem Roundtable

(continued from page 38)

much as possible, people in the local situation should have the power to shape their own situation.

Kleiner: If you want people on the local level to make these decisions, you should know that 90% of the Jewish citizens in Jerusalem do not want to give away parts of East Jerusalem to a Palestinian authority.

Kuttab: If people are made in the image of God, then they should have equal rights to make their choice of the kind of government and political entity of which they would be a part. To say that "We create the rules of the game and now you have to participate if you want to have equal treatment, and if you don't, don't be surprised if your material needs are not being met." But your annexation of East Jerusalem has not been recognized by a single country in the world, and we are not going to participate in your illegal action on your terms. For pragmatic reasons people might decide to participate, but in principle this is a wrong.

Seidemann: I don't agree with Rabbi Blanchard's theoretical framework, but I've never encountered anyone who has had such an intuitive grasp of the situation in Jerusalem from someone who does not live in the city. The kind of ideas that I've arrived at from my daily work in this city, you've arrived at from the standpoint of Jewish values, and that is certainly to be commended.

We are currently at a low point in the peace process. Jerusalem is not Hebron, where "co-existence" is none other than thinly veiled mutual hatred tenuously maintained by force of arms; there is a broad consensus within both Israelis and Palestinians that the city should remain an integral city. That provides an enormous opportunity to work things out.

Kleiner: Jerusalem is a city of peace — so we hope that one day that can turn from a slogan to a reality. ❑

The Children's Hour
(continued from p. 32)

and Renee Zellweger, and not even in the racial healing generated by his friendship with Cuba Gooding, Jr. It's when Cruise is sitting on the sofa with Jonathan Lipnicki, Zellweger's adorably bespectacled nerdy son, that he realized the meaning of life and the importance of acting like a mensch. It's doubly significant that in both cases, the guy then gets the girl. Not only must he prove himself worthy as a father figure to their children, but he can only be changed by their sons.

And what about some other recent "classics," like *Vice Versa,* in which Judge Reinhold is changed from a demanding workaholic to an understanding boss, and a bumbling boyfriend into a loving mate, by walking a mile in his son's moccasins and listening to his sage advice. Or *Made In America*, in which the conniving used car salesman Ted Danson becomes a smoke-free, teetotaling, virtuous father to his black daughter. And what about *Bye Bye Love* in which three divorced dads (Randy Quaid, Paul Reiser, and Matthew Modine) suffer more from being away from their children than from their divorces, and after painful revelation become better fathers, and therefore better men. Even Oscar Schindler is haunted by that little girl in the red dress, whose terror transfixes and then transforms him. (In case viewers missed the point, Spielberg colorizes her image in the stark black and white world of the Holocaust.) And then there's *Three Men and a Baby*, in which gurgling infantile innocence tames three devoutly philandering bachelors the way no women ever could.

In a sense, *Kramer vs. Kramer* is the touchstone text of this new genre. There, Dustin Hoffman, an absentee landlord of domestic patriarchy, is converted to devoted daddydom by making breakfast and sitting by the playground, while his ex-wife, Meryl Streep, is climbing the corporate ladder. Not only can men be nurturing fathers, the film suggested, but they can be better mothers than modern women.

Taken together, these fatherhood fables can be read as part of the "backlash-bind" against women. If women would only get out of the workplace and go back home, where they belong, they could do their job of taming men and raising children, who would not be placed at such risk that they have to transform a man. (Of course, women can keep working and being independent, but they'll never get a man that way.) Women can either be powerless, long-suffering saving graces (as of old), or powerless, man-less figures on the margin — ultimately to be rescued by their children as well. Writing men in can mean writing women out.

Writing children in as the Rousseauian repository of innocence and virtue may make plots simpler, but also blurs the politics. Gone are the little monsters of Puritanism, whose wills must be broken; gone, too, the Freudian bundles of sexual energy and infantile aggression. In the depoliticized world in which everything you really needed to know you learned in kindergarten, compassionate politics has become a form of infantile regression.

Such fables also fit a bit too snugly into a right-wing family values agenda, almost suggesting that children need fathers more than they need mothers. (If not fathers, at least patriarchs.) There are no "feminist" marriages here, with two good parents balancing career and family, working as equals for the good of all concerned.

What may finally be the most troubling about these films is their view of men. Yes, it's true that such films reveal how desperately in need of change men are, and they also show that men can love children, and even do housework and child care without sacrificing their masculinity. But they also show that men require some external agent to prompt the transformation, something outside themselves. Men won't get better unless they are pushed, we're told; but despite all the prodding and shoving toward heroism and glory, left to themselves they can barely manage a nudge toward being better fathers and husbands. Nary a whiff of compassion or nurturing wafts upwards from men on their own. In the world of Hollywood masculinity, ethics seem still to reside in some mythic "other," waiting to be inhaled. ❑

The Gilded Age of American Popular Culture
(continued from p. 49)

trashy television shows, disaster movies — yes, they seem to fascinate today's public. But where is the audience for the social conflict and ethnic ire of Norman Lear's situation comedies? Or the uncomfortable realism of such films as *Taxi Driver*, *Network*, or *The Godfather Part II* with their unhappy endings? No popular singer was more visible in the seventies than Bruce Springsteen, but his particular earnestness has not aged well, and his current, socially-aware record *The Ghost of Tom Joad* sells poorly. Instead, it is teen idols, the Peter Framptons and Meat Loafs, who flourish.

The gilded age of American popular culture was the product of cash and a gloomy social and political context. Should it not surprise us that an era not much different in aspiration would be drawn to the seventies' more baroque productions? Barbara Tuchman once referred to quattrocento Europe as "a distant mirror." For our millennial malaise, the seventies provides a much closer one — not that anybody's looking. ❑

Corporate Healthcare
(continued from p. 26)

new health care program, "They're like family to me." Buyer beware, not all families are alike. Remember *King Lear* before you sign away the good coverage available under traditional Medicare.

The Patient's Bill of Rights or The Rites of Bill

While current political wisdom calls for the president to shy away from health care or to make incremental changes, this would miss a historic opportunity for the country. In the last health care debate, Bill Clinton was too far ahead of the public and he ended up isolated and defeated. Today the American people are looking for leadership to take them out of the current health care morass. If Bill Clinton doesn't supply this leadership then his successor, Democrat or Republican, will reform healthcare and reap the rewards.

Bill Clinton should reopen the health care debate in the broadest sense. What is needed is a major national commitment catalyzed by the president over an extended period of time in which all options are considered and which is as inclusive as possible. We need the type of public discourse that we have been hearing so much about but getting so little of. Clinton should make health care a political priority for his administration, the Democratic party, the Congress, and for the public during the remainder of his term. This means setting a goal that in the year 2000 we will have a comprehensive health care plan. And it means creating a political process now that will make this possible. Choosing a health care plan for the country is as important as choosing a president; it should get at least as much time and attention.

Clinton has the leadership capability to succeed if he can manage to avoid the political minefields of the last attempt. First, instead of presenting the American people with a solution we need the president to galvanize a political process in which a multiplicity of solutions are considered and debated in detail. He should call upon our vast talents in medicine and health care delivery to suggest solutions in open forums allowing for citizen participation rather than in closed "expert panels."

Although the panel that Clinton has appointed to define the "patient's bill of rights" and the current spate of legislation will help consumers in the short run, regulating a fundamentally abusive system will not work. Even if such a panel could define a set of rights that protected the quality of care — a highly dubious proposition — health plans will find ways to be minimally compliant and will raise premiums again. Nor will this solve the problem of the uninsured, Medicare, the VA system, medical education, etc. And these plans will continue to drain 25 percent out of clinical care to pay obscene corporate salaries, support an obstructing and clinically useless bureaucracy, and pay for a lot of false advertising. This is another experiment in corporate health care which we do not need to carry out.

A serious commitment by the president will compel Congress to have non-partisan hearings on comprehensive solutions rather than focusing its attention on patching a system that doesn't work. If Congress held as many hearings on health care problems and their solutions as it does on character assassination we could be taking a giant step toward a plan.

In addition to congressional and executive-level forums, the president should call upon his earlier successes with the town meeting structure to increase citizen participation. State and regional hearings should be organized to involve as much of the public as possible.

Finally, this discussion should take place not only in the political sphere, but in the clinical sphere and at work. Patients have a right to ask and be told about the coverage arrangements under which their treatments are being given. This includes the details of the clinical constraints and financial arrangements with the health plans. Moreover they should have access to any reviewer who has access to their chart. Clinicians still enjoy the trust of their patients and they will need to adopt a policy of full disclosure if they want to keep it that way. Similarly, benefit managers and union representatives will need to be far more responsive and involved as we collectively decide how to spend a trillion dollars keeping ourselves healthy.

Once a number of options and the public's attitude toward them has been aired, the President should commit the Democratic party to having a health care platform by the 1998 elections and challenge the Republicans to do the same. These need not be completely worked out in every detail, which would be the work of the next Congress, but they should encompass a vision of a solution. The parties and the voters would then be forced to seriously confront available choices, and make health care an open political issue rather than the covert one it has become.

As part of this process we cannot ignore, as we did last time, the concept of a national health plan. Every other Western democracy uses some form of national health — we should at least consider a number of these plans as well as other innovative plans that are responsive to our uniquely American society. To this end I would like to hear from people and organizations who have devoted themselves to improving health care. Fortunately there is no shortage of dedicated advocates and advocacy organizations whose credibility with the public would be high. My personal favorites include: Quentin Young, MD, president elect of the American Public Health

Association, who has spent a lifetime working to improve the health of the poor in Chicago. James McDermott, MD, a psychiatrist and Congressman, who has worked tirelessly to improve mental health services in this country. Physicians for National Health Program (PNHP) is an organization of doctors devoted to universal coverage. Physicians in PNHP have long argued for national health though this might mean lower salaries.

I am aware that this approach has similarities to the last health care debate which did not succeed. However, we are now in very different circumstances and health care reform *can* work: it is the right thing to do; it is the right time to do it. And it is a clear political winner.

Why it is the right time: The opposition to a comprehensive plan for health care reform has been significantly weakened by the disaster that is corporate care. Consider the stakeholders. Physicians, having lost not only income but the ability to practice their beloved profession, are in fact anxious to participate in a justly organized health care system, and most recognize that they must compromise economically. The general public is much better informed on health care issues than it was a few years ago. This is partly out of personal experience and partly from the significant improvement in journalistic coverage of the health care system and its problems. As a result, the public has come to accept the idea that there are limits to what we all can afford in health care, but they want this dealt with fairly and they want honest opinions from their doctors which are unencumbered by financial considerations. They are not only willing but anxious to engage in a political process that will lead to a comprehensive health care plan.

Also, the large employers did not receive as much savings as they had hoped. Their benefit managers have been swamped with complaints, and are now being told that, as regulations are imposed, their premiums will again rise. They, too, might be willing to participate in a more constructive way.

Republicans, many of whom were opposed to heath care reform and to government regulation in general, are introducing HMO regulatory bills as fast they can write them. They have not missed the message from their constituents, and they will not let themselves be seen as standing in the way of reforming an abusive system. Today, any Republican would have a difficult time arguing that we have the best health care system in the world, or that the status quo is the best policy. If the president and the Democratic party mobilize a real effort at comprehensive health care reform, the Republicans will not be far behind. And then we might get what we were cheated out of last time: A real debate on the health care issue and alternative solutions followed by a national commitment to making the chosen plan work.

There will be, of course, a great deal of powerful opposition from the health plans. However, they have lost credibility with the public, and their expensive ad campaigns will have less effect than previously. Moreover, as detailed by health economist Eli Ginzberg in the April 3, 1997 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, their financial health, as currently organized, is questionable at best.

It is a political winner. By now it should be obvious that health care is a volatile political brew. In 1993 the Republicans were able to give the impression that Clinton's plan would take away the middle-class health care to create another entitlement for the poor. This not only killed health care but projected the Republicans into the leadership of the house. "Boomerang!" as Theda Skocpol called it. But with health care the American people got exactly opposite of what they voted for. If this point could be clearly articulated and an inclusive national debate initiated, the voters will be very responsive. Double Boomerang! The party that controls the health care debate will also come to control Congress.

Finally we must stress the fundamental fact that health care, whether organized in the public or private sectors, inevitably involves sharing risks and sharing communal resources to meet those risks. Even in the poorest cultures, the sick are cared for beyond their economic value to the community. ❑

The author would like to acknowledge Tad Schull, Ph.D., for valuable research assistance.

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– R. David Cooper

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Allen Ginsberg Remembered
(continued from p. 80)

musical version of Allen's protest poem "The Ballad of the Skeletons." Because I thought to record and release it on a CD single (Mouth Almighty/Mercury Records) that was later made into an MTV video, we ended up spending a fair amount of time with Allen in his last year of life.

Since I was the latest connection Allen had to rock and roll, he would call like any other artist, excited about opportunities to promote his music and expand his audience. When Tom Freston, the CEO of MTV, bought five of Allen's photos, Ginsberg promptly called me, not too subtly implying that if Mercury would fund production of a video, we might be able to get on MTV. Allen had an unerring instinct of how to mobilize his mystique for those who were interested. He regaled Freston with stories of the beatniks one night at our house, which made it almost impossible for MTV to reject his video despite the fact that he was decades older than typical MTV artists and audience members. A political satire of both generations, "Skeletons" received highly publicized and much-coveted "buzz bin" rotation on MTV in the weeks before the last election — to the consternation of other record companies who were submitting artists with more conventional credentials. This made Allen the only seventy year-old besides Tony Bennett to ever be played on MTV.

Around Christmas time, the San Francisco radio station "Live 105" asked for Allen to appear at their holiday broadcast. Allen agreed, always happy to make another trip to the Bay area where so much of the Beatnik revolution, including the writing and publication of "Howl," took place. After performing — at age 70 — to 14,000 rock fans, he called me and said, "You know, I met the program director of the station and he hasn't been playing the record much. I think we'll get more exposure now." Allen had unwittingly tipped me off and chided me. (Always a pragmatist, Allen recorded a clean version of "Skeletons" changing the phrase "fuck you in the face" to "much you in the face" to facilitate radio broadcast of the song. He would work around the "indecency standard" even while fighting to end it. He also rejoiced that he had spent more than an hour in the dressing room of Beck, the young rock poet whose work Allen greatly admired and who, not surprisingly, greatly admired him.

He loved that Paul McCartney had overdubbed drums on "Skeletons." He said, "It's the closest I'm going to ever come to being in the Beatles," and giggled like a teenager. Because of the devotion MTV's Freston and Judy McGrath had for Allen, they were planning an MTV "Unplugged" that would have been shot this coming July. Allen would periodically call me with bulletins: "Dylan is definitely doing it," he announced one day. There was no one Allen admired more than Bob Dylan, with whom he famously appeared in the introductory scene to "Don't Look Back," D.A. Pennebaker's ground-breaking documentary on Dylan. He was proud that Dylan had been influenced by himself and the other beats.

Time magazine did an article in 1959 about the prosecution of a magazine called *The Big Chair*. During our last phone call several days before he died, Allen said, "And Dylan read the article and realized there were other people who thought like he did in the world."

But Allen's public relations genius and joy of celebrity was firmly subservient to his core identity as a poet, an activist, and a truly kind and generous person. His father, Louis Ginsberg, was a respected poet but not remotely the towering figure that his son was. As long as his father was strong enough, Allen would graciously include him in readings he would do in New Jersey. When Rosemary and I joined those friends and family visiting Allen's loft on the day he died, I noticed a pile of Louis Ginsberg's anthologized poems stacked in the vestibule near the front door, a continuing testament to the respect and dignity he accorded his father.

The previous summer, while Rosemary and I were renting a beach house in Malibu, an exhibit of art by and about William Burroughs opened at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. Rosemary has done some legal work for Burroughs and one night it transpired that Burroughs and friends, including Allen, came over to dinner. Appropriately flustered by the impending arrival of these legends, we asked if any special provisions should be made and were told that Burroughs liked to drink vodka and Coca-Cola, which I hurriedly procured. Sure enough when we offered drinks, Burroughs (then 82) asked in his legendary drawl for the combination. As I hastened to the kitchen to make the drink, I was followed by Allen who, like a Jewish mother, protectively wanted to make sure that I didn't over-do it on the vodka. "We don't want him to start slurring his speech."

Allen's compassion was not limited to his elders. He was forever alerting me to young obscure artists, and he was deeply committed to assisting private foundations in helping struggling artists. He was unstintingly gracious in providing thoughtful autographs to all who came for a piece of history. He had nothing but good things to say about each individual in the quirky world of financial angels, hangers-on, and fellow artists who circled around literary and artistic geniuses.

During one of Allen's visits to our house, our six

year-old daughter Katie, accustomed to the doting solicitude of our family and friends, showed him a picture she had just drawn of a cat. I held my breath, worried on the one hand that he would not be particularly interested in Katie's charms and that her feelings might be hurt, and on the other hand that I was imposing on Allen's good nature. However, Allen studied her drawing carefully and advised her that it would be a more realistic looking cat if it had whiskers. Thankfully, Katie recognized that his suggestions were more valuable than the fawning compliments of typical grown-ups (including her parents) and dutifully drew in whiskers and a few subsequent suggestions that Allen gave her until he nodded "good," and the drawing was done.

Allen Ginsberg was not assassinated; he did not kill himself. He never betrayed his ideals. He cherished his past but never got stuck in the past. He was a fully realized hero and role model, an icon of the counter-culture that did not disappoint on any level.

Allen did not suffer from the after-climax that devastated so many principal actors of the sixties counter-culture, after its bubble seemed to burst. He had, after all, been through tremendous personal travail in his teenage years, which "Kaddish" — his truthful ode to his departed mother Naomi — accurately described. Later the poem became a protegé of Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs as the beatnik vision evolved. The beat philosophy was based in art and a multi-faith spiritual vision. It turned out to be a much more enduring rudder than any purely political, "radical" philosophical statement that would emerge from Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) or other like groups.

I asked him once if he knew why *Commentary* Editor and arch neo-conservative Norman Podhoretz was so obsessed with attacking Jack Kerouac. Podhoretz occasionally took time away from attacking the political left to attack cultural trivia like Kerouac's home town of Lowell, Mass. for having erected a monument to Kerouac. Allen's eyes lit up, "Podhoretz went to Columbia at the same time I did, and he was a bad poet! He submitted a poem to the *Columbia Review* when I. was the editor there and I edited it!" he continued gleefully. The next week, in an interview with *New York Times* reporter Dinitia Smith Ginsberg, Allen had developed his thoughts about Podhoretz to say that he had become mellow about the neo-con because for decades he's established Podhoretz in his mind as the person he was internally arguing with all of these years. He also said that he was actually indebted to him for providing such useful internal opposition to sharpen his arguments. Fifty years of mental debates between Allen Ginsberg and Norman Podhoretz! The reporter, in a back interview with Allen a few days later revealed that she had called Podhoretz and he had revealed his own mellowing toward Ginsberg.

Unstinting in his opposition to the Vietnam war, Ginsberg led protesters at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago in spiritual chants to try to reduce the likelihood of violence. In fact, the group closest to Ginsberg was exposed to less teargas and police violence than many others. He was later critical of the 1968 protest and blamed the alienation among the left as a failure to support Hubert Humphrey. To Allen's way of thinking, the alienation of the left also resulted in Nixon's election and the extension of the war. (This critique did not prevent Allen from testifying on behalf of the defense at the Chicago Eight trial.)

Perhaps mindful of the Humphrey/Nixon race, Allen would often look askance when I criticized Bill Clinton. However, by election time, confident of Clinton's reelection on the one hand and wishing to cast a vote to protest Clinton's signing of the welfare bill, he voted for Ralph Nader.

Allen called me a few days before he passed, as he did so many other friends and colleagues, to tell us that he had terminal liver cancer. Typically, he started with a detailed list of outstanding recordings he had, and ideas he had to facilitate their release. At some point, after trying to have a normal conversation, my voice choked and my heart broke. Allen, his own voice wavering, quoted some Buddhist sages who said to a disciple: "You will live or you will die — both are good. I know there are tears but they're just love."

At the memorial service at the Shambhala Center in New York, the temple was overflowing with hundreds of people, all who had been called by someone who knew someone. In between Tibetan chants designed, as I understand it, to make easy the spiritual passage of Allen's soul, and the recitation of the Hebrew Kaddish, there were reminiscences from several people who were closest to him.

No one wanted to talk about his historical importance. People wanted to say again and again how generous, how loving and how loved he was. There were people there who'd felt for decades what Rosemary and I had felt for months. Among Allen's other virtues was this astonishing gift for friendship. In a matter of moments he made almost everyone he met feel like they were special.

Oh Allen, I love you so much. Thank you for what you did here on earth, the suffering you endured and the suffering you relieved. I know you are in some divine, peaceful and blissful Buddha light, and God knows you deserve it. But it would mean so much if you could send down the occasional Allen Ginsberg thought to the rest of us every once in awhile. ❑

Allen Ginsberg Remembered

Danny Goldberg

I met Allen Ginsberg in person a total of ten times, the last time being when my wife, Rosemary Carroll, and I joined some of his friends and family in his recently acquired loft. He was so proud of watching his life fade away as an oxygen tank pumped air into his beautiful comatose body the afternoon before he passed on. We had only gotten close to him in the last of his seventy years and yet, like thousands whose lives he touched, he seems like an intimate family member.

The last time we had Allen over to dinner, I asked him if he had known in the fifties that J. Edgar Hoover was gay.

"I had a friend at Columbia in 1949," said Allen, "who was propositioned by Hoover. We all knew about it, Kerouac and some of the others."

But, I wondered, wasn't it tempting to try to get the word out while Hoover was persecuting the American left? Allen responded by telling me about another male friend of his who had an affair with Cardinal Spellman, another pillar of the anti-communist right in the fifties and early sixties. Allen's friend, who apparently liked Spellman, asked the Cardinal one day if he wasn't ever worried about his homosexuality becoming known.

"Who'd believe that?"' replied Spellman.

"I did have a reference to it in "Wichita Vortex Sutra" in 1965, in which I wrote 'How big is the prick of the President, how big is Cardinal Vietnam. How little the prince of the F.B.I., unmarried all these years.'" Allen concluded somewhat apologetically, "That was about all I could do." Like so much of Allen's career and life — it was more, much more, than anyone else had done.

I first met Allen in the early nineties because of my work on free speech issues with the Southern California ACLU. He was frustrated that the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) "indecency" standard had caused Pacifica Radio to refrain from broadcasting his reading of "Howl" in 1989. The FCC's standard to this day makes it impossible for such a broadcast to take place — even at midnight. Allen asked to have lunch with me to inquire whether the Southern California ACLU could be helpful in aiding the Boston civil liberties lawyer Harvey Silverglade in challenging the FCC. Allen told a story he loved about being on a panel with FCC Commissioner James Quello, a major proponent of the "indecency standard" at which Allen showed Quello a copy of "Howl" and asked whether he thought it was inappropriate to read on the radio. Quello responded that the poem was very good and only would need a little editing to be broadcast. Editing "Howl"! Didn't that exquisitely illustrate the philistinism of Washington policy wonks?

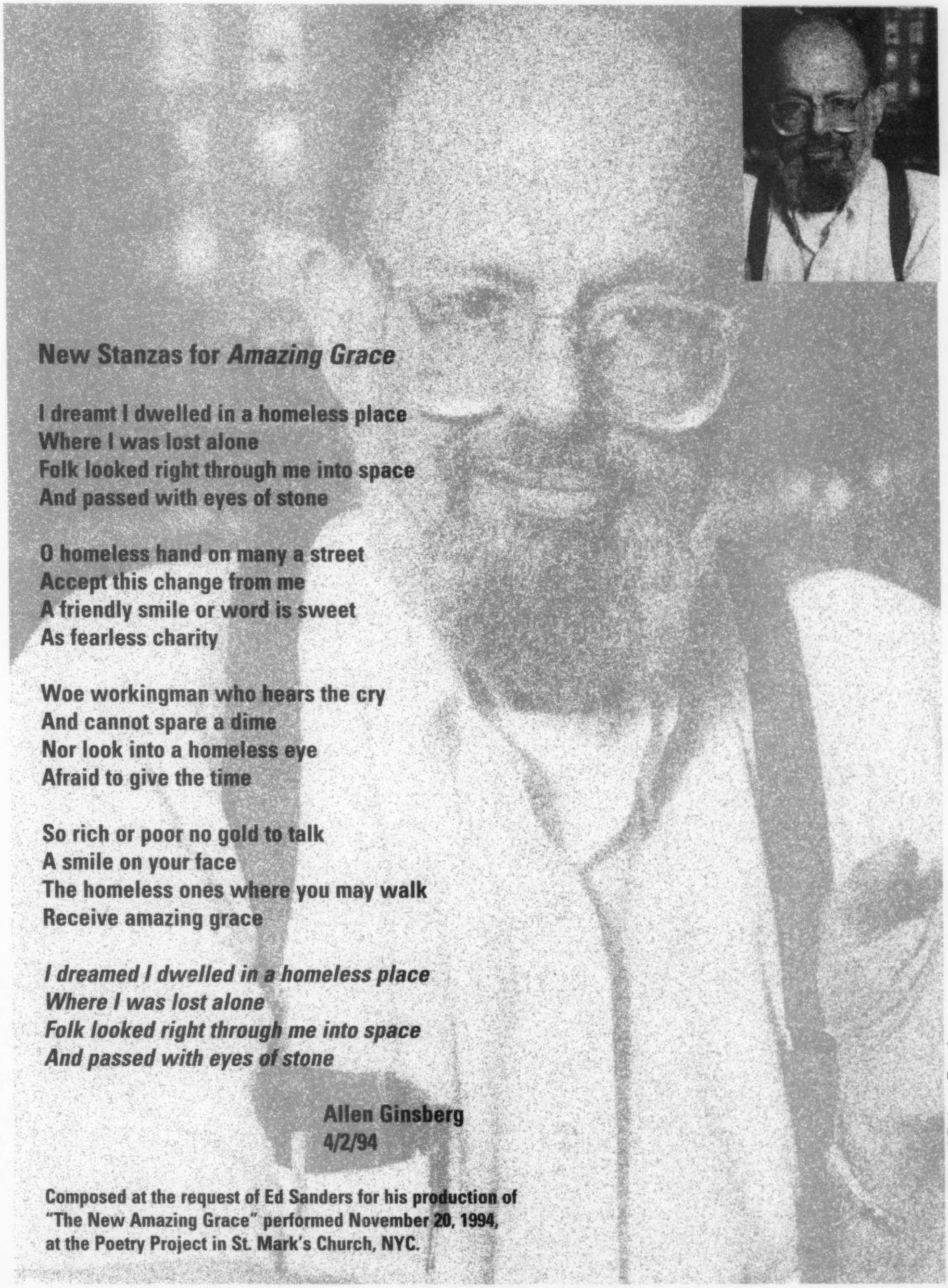
I pointed out that there had been several lawsuits brought by parents of murder victims or suicides who'd claimed that the creators of popular music were liable for their offspring's deaths. I said something about the paradox of conservatives who generally preach individual responsibility for criminals while denying, as a matter of social policy, the effect of poverty on criminal behavior, claiming that music or other entertainment would affect people's moral behavior. Ginsberg firmly told me that while of course he believed that claims of legal liability for the actions of people who consumed art or entertainment were absurd and unconstitutional, he did not agree with an argument stating that art had no effect on people.

"I've spent most of my life working in the belief that art does affect people. That's one of the main ideas," he said kindly but sternly. Lest anyone infer from this that Allen would find common cause with the William Bennetts of the world, Allen also contributed to a man-boy organization dedicated to normalizing adult sex with children.. "To me, it's a free speech issue. It shouldn't be illegal to even discuss the age of consent. A twelve year-old is not the same as a seventeen year-old, but the current laws treat them the same," he said. Allen wanted free speech defended on the basis that its overall effects were positive and that the effects of repression were negative.

I make my living as a record executive and Rosemary is a lawyer for musical artists. Some of her clients performed at a benefit for Tibet House in February 1996, at which Allen, with an impromptu group of musicians put together by Lenny Kaye, performed a

Danny Goldberg is the president and CEO of Mercury Records and President of the ACLU Foundation for Southern California.

(continued on p. 78)



New Stanzas for *Amazing Grace*

I dreamt I dwelled in a homeless place
Where I was lost alone
Folk looked right through me into space
And passed with eyes of stone

O homeless hand on many a street
Accept this change from me
A friendly smile or word is sweet
As fearless charity

Woe workingman who hears the cry
And cannot spare a dime
Nor look into a homeless eye
Afraid to give the time

So rich or poor no gold to talk
A smile on your face
The homeless ones where you may walk
Receive amazing grace

I dreamed I dwelled in a homeless place
Where I was lost alone
Folk looked right through me into space
And passed with eyes of stone

Allen Ginsberg
4/2/94

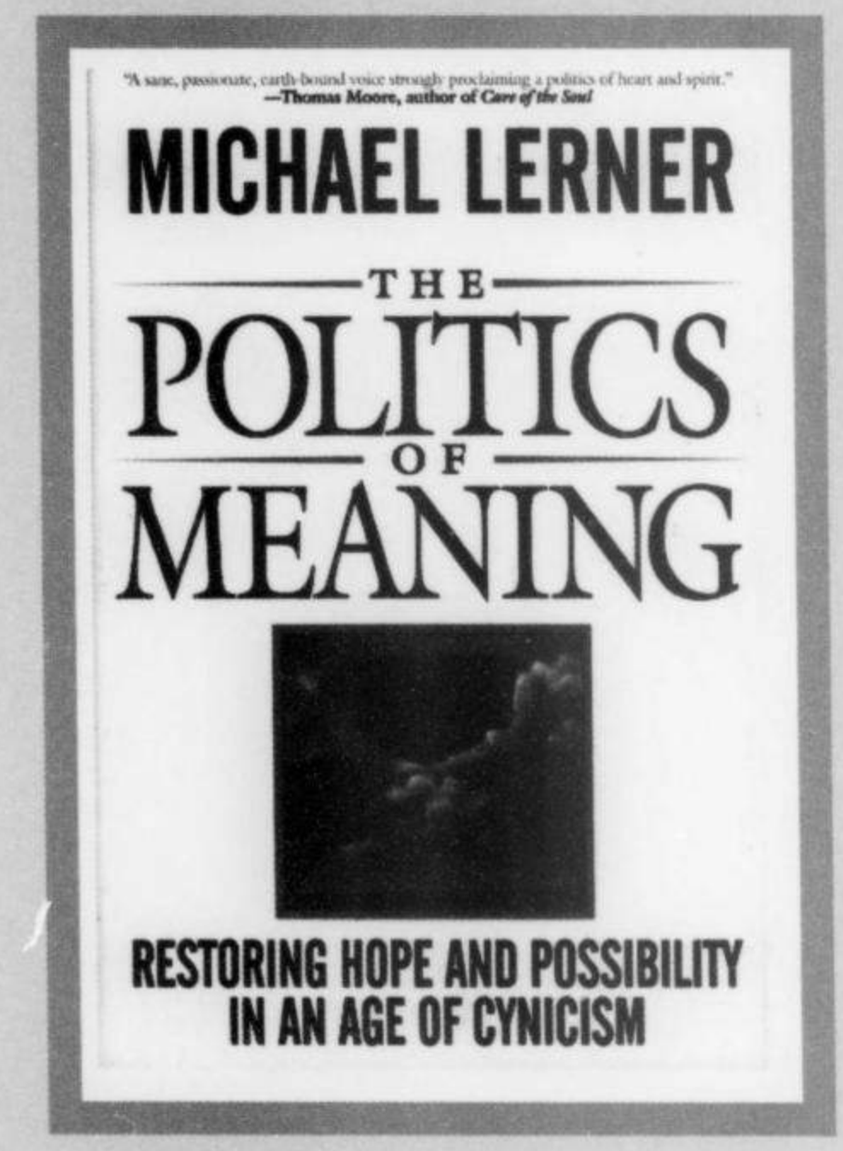
Composed at the request of Ed Sanders for his production of "The New Amazing Grace" performed November 20, 1994, at the Poetry Project in St. Mark's Church, NYC.

Photo courtesy of Robert Frank

Tikkun (te-kün) ...to heal, repair and transform the world. All the rest is commentary

תיקון

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