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

Managing Editor's Archive

TIKKUN

Poetry: Marge Piercy & Robert Pinsky

Reviews: Peter Biskind, Linda Gordon, Peter Mellini, Barbara Rothman & Geoffrey Summerfield

A BI-MONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY JULY/AUGUST 1987 $5.00



Current Debates:
Strategies for a Left
God & History
Palestinian Jews & the Holocaust

Editorials:
The Democrats—Blowing It Again

■

The Left's Surplus Powerlessness

Abraham Brumberg
Poland & the Jews

Eric Alterman
On Elliott Abrams

Ismar Schorsch
Wissenschaft & Values

Gary Peller
On Deconstruction

Paul Wachtel
On Psychoanalysis

Arthur Green
Scholarship is Not Enough

Special Feature:

FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS TODAY

Roundtable with Jean Bethke Elshtain, Paula Giddings, Ann Lewis, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Jan Rosenberg, Sara Ruddick & Catharine Stimpson. Responses by Martha Ackelsberg, Jane Mansbridge & Ruth Rosen. Kim Chernin on Being a Jewish Woman. Debra Kaufman on Feminism & Orthodox Women.

A woman and a Jew, sometimes more
of a contradiction than I can sweat out,
yet finally the intersection that is both
collision and fusion, stone and seed.

Like any poet I wrestle the holy name
and know there is no wording finally
can map, constrain or summon that fierce
voice whose long wind lifts my hair

chills my skin and fills my lungs
to bursting. I serve the word
I cannot name, who names me daily,
who speaks me out by whispers and shouts.

Excerpted from
"The ram's horn sounding"
MARGE PIERCY



TIKKUN

A BI-MONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY — VOLUME 2 NUMBER 3

2 Letters
6 Publisher's Page

Editorials

7 Surplus Powerlessness on the Left
9 The Democrats—Blowing It Again
12 An International Conference for the Mideast
13 Gorbachev and the American Press — *Peter Gabel*
14 Stopping AIDS Euthanasia — *David Schulman*

Articles

15 Poland and the Jews — *Abraham Brumberg*
21 The Best and the Rightest — *Eric Alterman*
24 Are We Prisoners of the Past? — *Paul Wachtel*
28 Reason and the Mob: The Politics of Representation — *Gary Peller*
33 Wissenschaft and Values — *Ismar Schorsch*
37 Scholarship Is Not Enough — *Arthur Green*

Special Feature: Feminist Consciousness Today

40 Roundtable: The Women's Movement — *Jean Bethke Elshtain, Paula Giddings, Ann Lewis, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Jan Rosenberg, Sara Ruddick, Catharine Stimpson*
47 Recognition of Diversity — *Martha Ackelsberg*
50 The Need for Memory — *Ruth Rosen*
53 Gloom on the Campus, Doom on the Coasts — *Jane Mansbridge*
55 In the House of the Flame Bearers — *Kim Chernin*
60 Coming Home to Jewish Orthodoxy: Reactionary or Radical Women? — *Debra Kaufman*

Current Debates

64 God and History — *Arthur Waskow and Michael Lerner*
65 The Yishuv and the Holocaust — *Marie Syrkin and Idith Zertal*
68 Strategies for the Left — *Prudence Posner, Harry Boyte and Sara Evans*

Poetry

32 *At the New Moon: Rosh Hodesh* — *Marge Piercy*
70 *Visions of Daniel* — *Robert Pinsky*

Reviews

75 Nazi Feminists? — *Linda Gordon*
78 Abraham Cahan — *Peter Mellini*
79 Comics and Tragedy — *Geoffrey Summerfield*
81 Sexuality and Abortion — *Barbara Katz Rothman*
82 Hollywood! — *Peter Biskind*
84 Worthy of Your Consideration

Cover art: "Self Portrait," Shirley Faktor, 1983.

The drawings in this issue are by Yehuda Bacon.

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Letters

ON TIKKUN

To the Editor:

I had seen *Tikkun*, thanks to my wife, and am impressed by its breadth and scope. In a world surfeited with magazines, yours actually seems to fill a void, and that in itself is a major accomplishment.

Good luck in the years ahead.

Hodding Carter
Washington, D. C.

INTERMARRIAGE

To the Editor:

Anne Roiphe is certainly right on the psyche of an intermarrying Jew before marriage. There is, I take it, no such thing as "simple romantic love." Romantic love, yes, but not simple, and surely those Jews who, like myself, marry gentiles out of romantic love construct romantic love out of, among other things, the appeal of the exotic, though this need not be and probably in most cases isn't a principal component. Again, Roiphe is surely right that if our attitudes towards Jews and Judaism had been different we might have married otherwise; this is hardly disputable.

But here we are now, after marriage; and it is at this point that Roiphe's letter is only distressing, and Goldenberg's both attractive and cogent. Roiphe can accept intermarriage "when followed by conversion or synagogue affiliation for children." And without conversion? Without affiliation? Presumably not. Yet if we are married to someone who does not wish to convert, either because he or she is nourished by different religious tradition or because conversion seems tantamount to subordination, surely this need be no obstacle to domestic tranquility or human fulfillment. (What is such an obstacle, however, is the pressure *to* convert, as if the unconverted were so many depressing statistics. What is also an obstacle is the implicit denigration of the children of mixed marriages, especially among those Jews whose relation to Jewish tradition is most vital and most learned.) Nor—and this is the crucial point—is it a necessary obstacle to fulfillment as a Jew and as a parent and teacher of Jewish children. Roiphe's implicit model, it would seem, is the observant elder generation giving birth to errant children by whose intermarriage the tradition is thinned and weakened. This is not the model I observe or practice. I state my own case not as typical but not as anomalous. My parents are secular Jews, celebrating no holidays and keeping no commandments, cheerfully and forthrightly. My wife is an unconvertible and devout Quaker. My children are more vividly conscious of their own Judaism and more knowledgeable about it at seven than I was at seventeen. The tradition is not weakened in them; it is strengthened. It does, to be sure, have to live in companionship with another tradition—but is that a bad thing? Franz Rosenzweig's Judaism was at least in part the consequence of his ongoing and intimate dialogue with Christianity and Christian friends.

The attenuation of Jewish tradition distresses and appalls me, as it does Roiphe. The necessary connection be-

Tikkun (ISSN 0887-9982) is published bi-monthly by The Institute for Labor and Mental Health. Editorial offices: 5100 Leona St., Oakland, CA 94619; (415) 482-0805.

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Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a SASE, or they will not be returned.
Opinions expressed in *Tikkun* are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Editorial Board or those listed on the masthead.
Subsciptions: $30 for 6 issues, $60 for 12 issues, $90 for 18 issues. Add $7 per year for all foreign subscriptions (including Canada and Latin America)—please pay for all foreign subscriptions in U.S. currency. Institutional subscriptions: $40 for 6 issues. Single copy $5. Subscription orders and inquiries should be addressed to: *Tikkun* Subscription Dept., 5100 Leona Street, Oakland, CA 94619, (415) 482-0805.
Articles appearing in *Tikkun* have been indexed in *Index to Jewish Periodicals, Religion Index One: Periodicals* (*RIO*) and book reviews appearing in *Tikkun* have been indexed in *Index to Book Reviews in Religion* (*IBBR*).

tween such an attenuation and intermarriage hasn't been established. That being the case, those of us who care both for that tradition and for our families in whom many traditions are mingled will continue to represent a resource to the Jewish community that the Jewish community will probably ignore. But perhaps not.

Lawrence Rosenwald
Wellesley College, Massachusetts

The Holocaust

To the Editor:

Permit me as a spokesperson for a group of survivors to comment briefly on your "Special Feature: Rethinking the Holocaust" (Vol. II, No. 1). Arthur Waskow's attempt, in his fanciful (God-language, History-language, God-energy) article, to mystify and sanctify the Holocaust is appropriately counterbalanced by the articles of professors Adi Ophir and Richard Rubenstein.

While David Biale's article is a well-reasoned treatment of Jewish history, Dan Diner is too gentle when he calls the German Ernst Nolte "a generally respected historian."

Ms. Zertal's exposé of the inaction of the Palestinian Jews and Zionist leaders there during the Holocaust is painful to read. Ms. Lev's "unasked" question concerning women in the camps can be answered very simply: Most women in the camps ceased to menstruate.

As for Rabbi Schachter-Shalom's "chained souls," he admits himself that he "was attacked ... with such vehemence" for that concept that he decided to drop it. Let's leave it at that.

The Holocaust, in our view, was a human deed and must be treated as such. Any religious obfuscation only serves to play into the hands of the guilty party.

Isak Arbus
President
Holocaust Survivors Association, USA

Listen Democrats

To the Editor:

You did it again! Your article "A New Paradigm for Liberals: The Primacy of Ethics and Emotions" in *Tikkun* [Vol. II, No 1] is beautifully written and on target. Thank you! Your concerns and insights are precisely what I am trying to incorporate in my own writing.

I plan to make twenty copies of your article today. I want everyone on my staff to read it and plan to send it to many colleagues. I hope it gets wide circulation and that people listen!

Congratulations on the progress of *Tikkun*. I recommend it often.

Frankie Lappé
Food First
Institute for Food and Development Policy
San Francisco, California

To the Editor:

Three cheers for Lerner, Edelman, and Eizenstat. Each article has important insights. Taken together, they present a way of thinking that should offer the Democrats precisely the new ideas that they need to win in 1988.

Joseph Hein
Seattle, Washington

To the Editor:

Stuart Eizenstat, in his article "... Uniting North and South" in a recent issue of *Tikkun*, displays an error in judgment. He capitulates to conservatives by advocating the abandonment of those programs that made the Democratic party what it was—the champion of the American worker and the underprivileged. Eizenstat's formulation means capitulation to the demagogy of the Republican party and the right. Democrats were wrong not to challenge the shift from an economy addressed to meeting the needs of the American people, and to encourage instead an economy geared to military-industrial expandsion.

Armaments have become the leading industry in the United States, creating few new jobs for the unemployed. America has abandoned research in private industry, replacing it with military research. Eizenstat calls for a new Democratic party that will so closely resemble the Republican party that liberals will be forced to desert the former and moderates will be tempted to cast their votes for the latter. The author has chosen opportunistic tactics, abandoning a principled position for a winnable one.

His opportunism crops up again in his formulation of a foreign policy for the Democratic party. He infers, if not proposes, the right of the United States to intervene in the internal affairs of foreign countries. He takes the Republican position that third world problems stem from Soviet aggressiveness rather than from the poverty and oppression existing in these underprivileged countries.

Another false assumption is Eizenstat's belief that we can take advantage of disunity in the Soviet bloc without it, in turn, taking advantage of disunity in our spheres of influence. These policies would continue the present Cold War. He mentions Soviet intervention in the Third World, but takes it for granted that the United States has the right to interfere (as a last resort) in Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Angola, etc.

Win or lose, it is high time that the Democratic party lead us back to a policy of *non-intervention* in the Third World, offering instead economic, social and cultural programs of assistance. The Democratic party must become the party of high principle and moral stature. A bi-partisan foreign policy as flawed as that of the Reagan Administration will surely fail. The party must march forward on the road traveled by Franklin Delano Roosevelt, giving us prosperity and peace.

Frank Engelberg
North Bergen, New Jersey

To the Editor:

Why is it that liberals never seem to be able to do the kind of careful vote-counting strategizing that Eizenstat does so well in his article "Uniting North and South"? If there's one reason that the left always seems to be losing, it's because they'd rather be talking about their best fantasy than doing the hard work of matching their best ideals with existing realities and then coming up with programs and strategies that could actually win the approval of the American public. Eizenstat is to be congratulated—and *Tikkun* for printing it.

Sanford Meyer
Austin, Texas

To the Editor:

Stuart Eizenstat believes that we should use military force when "diplomatic and economic sanctions ... fail" against "countries which support terrorism" (his example is Libya) and against countries which subvert "friendly governments" through the "export of Marxism" (his example is

Nicaragua). He believes that "we can implement [this] tougher policy without skirting our own laws" and in a way that encourages "pro-Western, democratic forces."

Eizenstat states that the president "properly employed" the military in its raid on Libya. Yet West German intelligence officials have stated that there was no strong evidence that Libya was behind the disco bombing. American journalists, writing in the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, have demonstrated that the administration spread disinformation to justify the attack and that the raid, which killed sixteen civilians and injured many more, was intended to kill Qaddafi.

The raid on Libya was an act of terrorism. Plotting to kill a head of state is a violation of international treaties to which the US is signatory. As such it violates the law of our land and in no way encourages "pro-Western, democratic forces." Eizenstat and other shapers of opinion in the US accuse Nicaragua of subversion within Central America. Some historical information is in order.

The Nicaraguan revolution of 1979 was a broad-based nationalist uprising against the US-backed dictatorship of the Somoza family. Original members of the junta included church leaders, liberals, moderates, and leftists. With limited resources the new government galvanized the support of its population with literacy and vaccination campaigns. As the CIA sponsored attempts to overthrow the revolution and reinstate a government more wed to corporate interests, the hands of the more hard-line leftists in the junta were strengthened. Discipline, not liberalism, is what is needed when one is under attack.

Nonetheless, the junta was steering a course of mixed economy. Sixty percent of the economy was in the hands of the private sector in 1984 when Reagan made Nicaragua his number one foreign policy issue. Fully preoccupied with the struggle for foreign capital and political stability, Nicaragua was exporting bananas, not revolution. While enemies of fascism may have been cheered by the overthrow of Somoza, the wise adopted a wait-and-see attitude toward Nicaragua's attempt to be a third world country with a nonaligned foreign policy and a mixed economy.

If Nicaragua had succeeded at that course, it would have been truly inspirational not only to the people of Central America but to all of the third world. The chance of a successful middle course was the "subversion" that was preempted by Reagan and his national security squads. Simultaneously cutting trade and stepping up military attacks was the prescription to foil Nicaragua's attempts at mixed economy and nonalignment.

Despite the craft with which this policy can fulfill the prophecies of its authors (Nicaragua becomes a Soviet ally with increasing state control), many have questioned the expenses of propagating a Nicaraguan counter-revolution. Expensive it may be, but it is only a fraction of what we must spend to maintain the torturous status quo in Eizenstat's "friendly countries like El Salvador." And this intervention is a theater for all of the third world to observe what happens to the bad countries that try to take their futures into their own hands.

But the Reagan policy supported by Eizenstat would not be complete without distortion in the domestic press. The World Court decision condemning US intervention in Nicaragua was dismissed as the cant of those predisposed to anti-American attitudes. Nicaraguan elections described in the European press as free and legitimate were ignored. Evidence of Nicaraguan export of revolution is never shown, yet a climate is maintained in which such allegations may be made. The Contadora Treaty was hailed as the condition for peace in the region until Nicaragua agreed to sign it.

Eizenstat's foreign policy is based on illusion and misinformation. The best way to serve pro-Western, democratic forces is for the US to exhibit the ideals that it is supposed to stand for: free and independent press, commitment to respect domestic and international law, and refusal to support tyranny. By spending less money supporting unpopular governments we can invest our money in developing the sorts of programs that are worthy of emulation. Our hostility toward self-determination in the third world drives away countries which can gain from trade and good relations with us....

Charlie Brenner
Menlo Park, California

To the Editor:

I am moved to write by Michael Lerner's trenchant essay "The Primacy of Ethics and Emotions." Mr. Lerner has placed his finger directly upon some of the most painful and pressing issues of this period in American history, and his perceptive and original analysis of the opportunity facing the Democrats moves well beyond Edelman's or Eizenstat's in the same issue of *Tikkun*. His paradigm is one which every Democratic candidate for President should consider carefully....

Lerner suggests several tactics that could enable the Democrats not only to win, but to take the country in a new direction. Unfortunately, his specific suggestions for legislation on "workplace safety and health committees," "supplemental parental financial supports," and other issues do not sound as though they were thought through as rigorously as his philosophical line of argument. Nonetheless, his call for uncompromising concentration on the family-shattering effects of contemporary American economic and social pressures is a bold proposition which could provide vitality and credibility to a 1988 Democratic platform and a new Democratic administration.

The question is how to translate some of Lerner's most pertinent observations ("If liberals were to address the emotional crisis of self-blaming in daily life, the decline in moral vision, and the limitations of a philosophy of individualism, they could turn the tide in American politics") into campaign slogans which are salable, and therefore uncomplicated. I fear his suggestions may be too abstruse for Biden, Bumpers et al to adopt, and worse, I fear that if Jackson alone runs as the candidate with an overarching moral vision, as in 1984, that vision will not be exhibited by the next occupant of the White House.

George L. Leventhal
Takoma Park, Maryland

On Yuppies

To the Editor:

Your editorial "On Yuppies" is right on the mark. So many have been confused by the shallow media analysis on the generation of the 1960s. Your insightful and compassionate analysis and your proposal to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Chicago

demonstrations may begin the process of rethinking the lasting influence of the 1960s.

I've tried in my own small way to help the process along. As president of Antioch University I sometimes have a podium that enables a speech or part of a speech on the subject—I try not to miss the opportunity.

Keep up the good work of a first class magazine which challenges Jewish intellectual thought. We need you!

Alan E. Guskin
President
Antioch University
Yellow Springs, Ohio

The Disastrous Occupation

To the Editor:

Michael Lerner's editorial on the West Bank is an excellent example of the inherent contradictions found in trying to peacefully extract ourselves from the dilemma of being an unwanted occupier of the West Bank and Gaza....

The Palestinian people are now as scattered and politically diverse as the Jewish people, but all are fundamentally aware that the only reason their existence is known internationally is because of the threat and execution of terrorism which they have imposed upon Israel, the Middle East, and the Western world. To arbitrarily demand that their leadership give up this option and then subjugate their country to the military protection of the people and state they have spent all their lives fighting is not only naive but absurd.

Nonviolence as a political doctrine has a high value and could be used to achieve a great deal towards improving the conditions on the West Bank and in Gaza. However, Palestine is not India, Arafat is not Ghandi, the Palestinian Moslems are not Hindu, and Israel is not postwar Britain. Only in the context of a larger political theory will nonviolence help lead to the creation of a solution for the Palestinians. It is not the threat of strikes and civil disobedience that have made Israel and the world recognize the Palestinians as a major political force in the Middle East, but the combination of olive branch and Kalishnikov that Arafat held up in his hands before the United Nations.

Distasteful as it may be to us as a Jewish people and as Zionists, one has to recognize that the Palestinians have nothing to lose by continuing to exert all aspects of their power, including their military option, while at the same time continuing to exercise political options involving the possibility of future recognitions with Israel....

David F. Vener
Baylor College of Medicine
Houston, Texas

The Editor responds:

There are both moral and strategic grounds to ask the Palestinians to reject a leadership that remains committed to terrorism. The moral integrity of the Palestinian cause is thrown into doubt when it wages a war against civilians. And this tactic reinforces the right wing in Israel, giving them the credibility they need to prevent a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Far from being an effective tactic, Palestinian violence undermines the political credibility of the Israeli peace movement—the only force that could lead Israeli society towards a just settlement.

The American civil rights movement and the Gandhian movement in India used nonviolence very effectively to keep their cause before the world; but they did more—they were able to undermine the moral legitimacy of their oppressors in the eyes of the oppressors, and it was that which led to their ultimate victory. Palestinian violence does the opposite—it makes even the most right-wing Israeli seem to have a legitimate point. If the Palestinians' sole goal is to keep their issue burning in the public arena, Arafat's path may be effective. But if their goal is to win genuine self-determination, then the empirical evidence from thirty-nine years of belligerency is that they are going no place fast. Friends of the Palestinians who give them reason to think they should "stay the course" are giving advice that is both destructive and immoral.

Liberalization in the Soviet Union?

To the Editor:

Your article regarding the need for peaceful relations between the Soviet Union and the US is a good start, but I am afraid your name-calling does not help bring this about. Your use of loaded phrases such as "Evil Empire" and questioning of their record and sincerity will not motivate them to relax. Your reference to the bad deeds of the Soviet Union seems a little like the pot calling the kettle black unless we condemn our country's actions at the same time.

Our country's actions in the recent past include Vietnam. Also the fall and death of Allende in Chile, Mossadegh in Iran, Lamumba in Congo and others. In the more distant past our record is even worse. We also have a history of overt and covert actions against the Soviet Union....

Joe Stern
San Diego, California

To the Editor:

Your editorial "Liberalization in the Soviet Union" is so two-faced that it is almost beyond comprehension....

Why are you so blind to the facts that did not elude Lenin, Stalin, Brezhnev and other Soviet leaders. Marxist-Leninism, the system that guides the Soviet Union today, all the rhetoric of *glasnost* notwithstanding, cannot survive in freedom. The very nature of such a system requires a strong internal security force to circumvent dissent.

.... You trust the flowery speeches of Gorbachev, a man who even you agree is presently responsible for the horrible repression and imprisonment of our brethren.

Norman M. Palgon, M.D.
Hollywood, Florida

(Continued on p. 85)

ERRATA

Tikkun extends its apologies to Kathryn Hellerstein, whose poem "A Universal Language," appearing in Vol. 2, No. 2, was identified as a translation. This poem was not a translation but Kathryn Hellerstein's original poem. Her work appears in *In New York: A Selection*, edited by Moyshe-Leyb Halpern, and a book of her translations of Kadya Molodewsky's poetry, *Nights of Heshvan and Selected Poems*, is forthcoming (both by Jewish Publication Society).

Tikkun also regrets that Dan Diner, author of "The Historian's Controversy—Limits to the Historization of National Socialism," in the "Rethinking the Holocaust" feature of Vol. 2, No. 1, was misidentified. He is professor of Modern History at Essen University and editor of *Babylon*, a Jewish magazine published in West Germany.

Publisher's Page

We selected our special feature for this issue, Feminist Consciousness Today, because we have a strong commitment to use *Tikkun* as a place to explore feminist ideas and to voice women's concerns. After two decades of struggle, we see the strides that women have made, such as holding more public offices and entering male-only occupational fields. But we are also aware of how far there is to go before oppression of women is eliminated.

Additionally, we chose this focus because we were curious about what is happening within the women's movement. We had read our share of "the women's movement is dead" articles; yet at the same time, we knew of many exciting and important feminist projects around the country. It has been difficult in recent years to have a definitive sense of the state of the movement.

Once we decided to focus on Feminist Consciousness Today, the task was then to decide who to include in the discussion and how to frame that discussion. A roundtable with many participants seemed to be a good way to represent differing points of view. Consequently, several participants were invited to be part of the roundtable, all of them women who have been involved for many years in the feminist struggle.

Most striking about the roundtable discussion was the degree of support and consensus among the participants. Although differences of opinion existed, the main message was that individual differences were not divisive and that the movement provided room for all sorts of opinions.

We wondered if the lack of conflict apparent in the roundtable was, in fact, representative of the current state of feminism and the women's movement. Thus, we asked three women to respond to the roundtable discussion. Interestingly, they pointed out the diversity within the movement and the conflict which sometimes comes from this diversity.

As a Jewish magazine we are very concerned about the relationship of women to Judaism. Because of this, it seemed appropriate to include two articles about this relationship in the larger discussion of Feminist Consciousness Today. Chernin's article about how to be a women and a Jew and Kaufman's article about the relationship between Orthodox women and feminism both show how the larger, more universal concerns alluded to in the roundtable play themselves out in the particular search of Jewish women to relate in positive ways to Judaism.

While we were putting this issue together, I had two experiences which highlighted some of the concerns addressed in these articles. The first experience was in a Jerusalem Orthodox synagogue which, like almost all synagogues in Israel, seats the women away from the men. In this particular synagogue the women worship in an upstairs balcony which has an additional visual barrier made of two horizontal metal rods with rope strung horizontally. The women in this synagogue had shown their rebellion against this arrangement by taking little pieces of thread and pulling together three of four strands of rope in several places so that they could visually participate in the service going on below. Sitting with the women, I felt discouraged by all that needs to be changed before women can take their rightful place as equals alongside men.

My second experience was at a Jewish Feminism conference at Stanford University in May, co-sponsored by *Tikkun*. The discussions about Jewish women's history and theology were examples of the important and exciting thinking that is being done by many women—thinking that makes sense of and sometimes proposes changes in Judaism in light of the feminist consciousness that has evolved in the last two decades of struggle in this country. I felt hopeful at this conference, because many people are working together to untangle the web of oppression of women both within Judaism and in the larger world.

Moving away from the special focus of the magazine, we want once again to say some words about subscriptions. When we started *Tikkun* we contracted with a subscription house to handle our subscriptions. Unfortunately, the arrangement did not work out well. Many errors were made in processing subscriptions, with the result that some of our readers have had problems. We are very unhappy about this; our every intent has been to treat our subscribers well. We've now decided to change subscription houses. Hopefully, this will not even be noticed by all of you whose subscriptions are in order; and, hopefully, it will clear up problems that exist for some of you. Please, if you are having difficulties with your subscription, call or write us, and we will help you. □

Editorials

Surplus Powerlessness on the Left

The unfolding of the Iran/contra scandal has created a new opportunity for the recreation of an effective political opposition. So far that has not happened. In the following editorial [see below: "The Democrats, Blowing It Again"] we focus on the way one section of the left, liberal Democrats, continues to miss the opportunities available to it. Here we want to ask a deeper question that applies to all sections of the left: Why do we consistently manage to miss opportunities, position ourselves in ways that make ourselves irrelevant, and act in ways that confuse and repel the majority of Americans?

We formulate this question with love and not with rancor. Those who have remained committed to social change during the long dry spell of the last ten years deserve considerable respect. It took courage and discipline to maintain an active commitment when so many others of the generation of the sixties took time out to focus on their personal lives or to make their fortunes.

Yet it's hard not to notice how ineffective these activists have been. While the anti-nuclear and anti-apartheid movements gathered considerable support and momentum and demonstrated that millions of Americans were sympathetic to a perspective other than rampant individualism, they failed to harness the available moral and political energy for the long haul. In each case, they were unable to consolidate moral outrage into political power by forming national organizations, selecting leaders and developing several-year strategies that would allow them to function effectively.

It is not hard to imagine how the left could be more effective. Within the Democratic party, for example, the liberal and progressive forces [see below: "A Contest For Our Readers" to find a less awkward way to say who we are] could have organized a national caucus that would unite their energies in support of a presiden-

A Contest for our Readers

We invite our readers to come up with a good alternative to the words "liberal and progressive forces," those words we so often fall back on when describing our community. Most of the words we use to describe ourselves are more misleading than informative.

•"The left" is a description that comes from how people sat in the National Assembly during the French Revolution, no longer very descriptive. Moreover, it implies that we are in league with many forces with which we clearly want no association—various groups which justify totalitarian regimes by misreadings of Marx.

•"The New Left" emphasizes newness not just because in America everything that's good has to be new, but also as a rejection of the apology of Stalinism that became popular among those who described themselves as "the left." The New Left, however, referred to a specific historical phenomenon of the 1960s.

•The term "radicals" partially captures what we want to say, the feeling of a deep critique, but it was so misused in the 1960s that it now connotes a certain irresponsible wildness.

•"Liberal" has a checkered history—associated in past decades with those who do not fight passionately for their ideals. It retains some credibility because of its association with the laudable reformist energies of the New Deal and JFK.

•"Progressive" is a term which early twentieth-century reformers popularized—but which was later appropriated by the Communist party to describe some of its fellow travelers.

We considered "neo-progressive" as an alternative, but doesn't "neo" have a trendy and unsubstantive sound? "Democratic socialist" excludes too many people whose visions of social transformation have spiritual and psychological dimensions undreamt of in the popular socialist tradition. Nor does it necessarily describe activists in one or another of the more narrowly framed protest movements, such as the anti-nuclear, anti-apartheid, and anti-intervention movements.

We will publish the best suggestions sent to us by our readers in the November/December 1987 issue. The winner will receive a lifetime subscription to *Tikkun*! Send your suggestions now—or a one-paragraph argument for why a word dismissed above should be rehabilitated.

tial candidate who shared their perspective. Outside the Democratic Party, a national political structure could have decided on two or three major issues to emphasize in 1988 (issues such as non-intervention in Nicaragua, nuclear disarmament, child care legislation, South Africa) and then have worked decisively to put such issues on the political agenda, making them central to the national debate. A more coherent left could have created mechanisms that would have allowed all activists to participate in shaping an agenda for the next several years that could then be pressed upon a newly elected president's administration in 1989.

Yet we all know that the adoption of this, or any other relatively coherent strategy, will run into tremendous resistance. The divisions, the lack of coordination, the anti-leadership bias, the refusal to think nationally and strategically—all of these are fundamentally irrational choices that the people of "the left" make year in and year out, with the inevitable result of diminished effectiveness. This is a continuing reality: The fundamental fact about liberal and progressive movements is that they always make themselves more powerless than they need to be.

This is what we mean by surplus powerlessness. Over and above the real powerlessness that exists—which is a function of the economic and political realities that the left seeks to change—most people have internalized a set of ideas and feelings about themselves and others that leads them to feel even more powerless than "objective conditions" actually require. Moreover, they act in ways to actually ensure that this powerlessness continues.

Surplus powerlessness, then, is a psychosocial condition, hardly unique to the left. Most Americans, in one way or another, have been subjected to an intense psychological and ideological conditioning which has caused them to believe that they do not deserve real satisfaction and fulfillment, that there is something fundamentally wrong or inadequate about themselves which has made it somehow appropriate that their lives *not* provide them with the satisfaction and fulfillment that might have been. Each person carries around a complex story that purports to explain how they made mistakes along the way, did bad things or were in some way "not okay"—and it is in light of that story that they can justify to themselves unfulfilling work or frustrating and disappointing personal relationships. This litany of self-blame is usually quite painful, and is often buried under several layers of "I'm OK—You're OK" cheeriness. The self-blaming is deep and pervasive, and reinforced daily by the meritocratic ideology of the larger society. ("You get what you deserve to get.") The pain that people experience in their personal lives and their workplaces is thus transposed into a self-blaming that is crippling. And this spills over into politics as well. The pervasive attitude that underlies much of the defeatism people bring to politics is based on some version of the following: "Sure, I'd like to change things in the larger society, but who am I to expect that I can make things so much better on the grand scale when I can barely get my own personal life together, given my own inadequacies?" The stories that people believe about their own failures in personal life and in the world of work lead them to expect that they are going to fail in any larger arena—and that expectation often becomes self-fulfilling.

Surplus powerlessness is reinforced also by a set of ideas that teach us that nothing can or should be changed, that other people can't be trusted or counted upon to join with us in changing anything, and that, "human nature" being what it is, we would be better off leaving things well enough alone and tending our own personal gardens.

It makes little sense to develop endless strategies and public policies for a revived left in the absence of a systematic approach to surplus powerlessness. In the absence of a strategy to combat surplus powerlessness, we can be reasonably sure that the left will persist in refining its already highly developed self-destructive skills.

The critique of the ideology of disempowerment is part of our task at *Tikkun*. But there is another part of that task that must become central to the process of healing and repair, and that is the creation of psychological and social conditions that permit people to develop compassion for themselves and those around them. If we can begin to see how our own limitations, fears and failures have been shaped by social realities—and that while we are not total victims we nevertheless were not "bad" to develop in the ways that we did, given the circumstances that we faced—we may take an important step toward forgiving ourselves for the very aspects of our beings that had previously been the basis of this "justification" for our unfulfilling lives. Similarly, a political movement that can help us see how the others around us are also deserving of compassion—that the ways that they disappoint us are not intended to hurt but are products of the ways that they themselves have been hurt—will be in a better position to begin to build the kinds of real community that are necessary for an effective political movement.

Political people often find psychological analyses quite threatening. Yet after generations of watching the left compulsively destroy its opportunities it seems appropriate to switch the level of discussion from "If only we had a better strategy and/or a more attractive candidate" to "How are we contributing to our own failure? And how can we learn from our own experience the insights that will be useful to us in developing psy-

chological strategies for undermining surplus powerlessness in the rest of the population?" We ask these questions not to open the door to yet another form of self-blame, but rather to examine how we can work on this problem together.

This is a new way of thinking about politics. It leads to new tasks: to create a politics and a set of experiences that help build communities of trust. We believe that one part of the process is to encourage the articulation of a shared moral vision, always an essential part of building community. Another part is to study and eventually to combat the dynamics that always seem to undermine our efforts to bring people together: the fear that nothing will work, that we can't really count on each other, which then leads to various political distortions:

•My ideology is better than yours, and you aren't as smart or as politically correct as me.

•I don't trust anybody so I won't allow anybody to ever speak for me or build an organization that I can't personally control.

•I'm worried I'm not smart enough to follow the discussion I'm in, but since I'm afraid people will see me in the same unflattering way I see myself, I'll attack this whole discussion as useless intellectual masturbation or switch the topic of discussion to an area in which they feel as disenfranchised as I do now.

•I feel guilty that I'm spending my time with my partner and children, fixing nice meals and having a good time, so I'm going to find a way to see every new idea that comes from the left as somehow irrelevant, boring, or silly and misguided.

•I've made a lot of compromises in my own life, so I resent having to think about politics in ways that don't assume that all of these kinds of compromises are necessary and inevitable.

You could probably add to the list of distortions and the ways that they are manifested in your own community. There are special variants for the Jewish world, for the left, for the left-Jewish world, etc. It's somewhat harder to find the ways that we could work together to build the kind of confidence and trust that we need in order to act differently.

Building confidence and trust is not a function of getting everyone to share the same ideas. On the contrary, one aspect of trust-building is to make it safe for people to be able to struggle with intellectual or political differences without a fear that in so doing they'll have violated the "good vibes" injunction of their community. A good society is not one in which everyone will agree—or agree to suppress their disagreements—in the name of seeking immediate harmony and union with everyone else, but rather a society in which individual differences are respected and allowed to flourish.

We have touched here on some of the complexities in undermining surplus powerlessness, themes we shall return to in the future. A first step in the process is to recognize surplus powerlessness in ourselves and others, and to formulate ways to respond differently to the same "objective" situations. And that's exactly what we are going to do now, by analyzing the Democrats. □

The Democrats—Blowing it Again

The main problem the Democrats continue to face has little to do with the self-immolation of Gary Hart or the failure of their presidential aspirants to capture the public's imagination. Rather, it is that the Democrats present no coherent vision which explains what has gone wrong in the Reagan years or suggests what they propose to do to set things right.

The absence of such coherence has historically made it possible to keep Sam Nunn and Ron Dellums in the same party, but it makes it impossible for this party to effectively compete for the hearts and minds of the American public. The Iran/contra scandal may be sufficient to allow almost any Democrat to capture the presidency in 1988. And this may be all that counts for the rather large group of politicos who will ride into public office and access to federal monies with such a victory. But the rest of us may not benefit much from a victory which lacks a mandate to fight for liberal and progressive programs.

We went through this once before. Jimmy Carter won office in the wake of national reaction against Watergate corruption and domination of the apparatus of government by a coterie of professional insiders. But mere revulsion did not give him sufficient power to implement new programmatic directions, and he quickly succumbed to the pressures mounted by ideologically coherent and politically savvy conservatives. Democrats, brought back to the White House in 1988 on a similar tide of disgust, might find themselves so much on the defensive that they would feel compelled to engage in the same kind of indecisiveness that destroyed them in the late 1970s. This could be an even greater disaster this time around, because the country is likely to face a severe economic crisis in the early 1990s. Without a mandate to make comprehensive changes, a Democratic administration would be even more vulnerable in 1992 than it was in 1980.

The Iran/contra scandal provides Democrats with the space to challenge the Reagan consensus and build alternative visions for US foreign and domestic policy. But the Democrats are blowing it. At the very moment when the televised hearings are dramatizing the sys-

tematic deceptions and lies of the Reagan administration, the absence of a coherent political philosophy has forced them to take refuge in narrow legalisms. The Secords and Singlaubs appear as courageous patriots willing to bend the rules for the sake of "higher principles" while Democrats focus attention only on the disputed meaning of the Boland Amendment and refuse to take on the substance of the foreign policy issue.

The legal strategy is likely to go nowhere. Reagan is no longer denying his attempts to reinterpret the law and go behind the backs of Congress to get his policy implemented. For the sake of a "higher principle" (the allegedly democratic cause of the contras) he tried to bend the law. If the Democratic legalists were actually prepared to start impeachment proceedings on the grounds of law violations, then their narrowly construed policy would at least have some initial plausibility. But everyone knows that the opposite is the case—that no one, least of all these Democratic moderates who are defining the strategy, is willing to seriously be portrayed as trying to throw the "sweet, old man" out of office in his last year. Instead, the Democrats, following their present course, will only succeed in stirring up some doubts about legality, while the Republicans will recapture the moral highground as the people who were willing to risk for the sake of their ideals. The picture that plagued the Carter years of the Democrats as gutless and legalistic bureaucrats will be reaffirmed.

There is only one sensible strategy for Democrats: to proudly and consistently rearticulate to the American public why US policy in Nicaragua is a moral and strategic disaster, why the contras should never have been supported and deserve no support today, and what a sensible policy would look like. It's only in the light of such an approach that the sleaziness of the Reagan administration can be seen for what it is.

For several decades increasingly larger groups of peasants struggled to overthrow a vicious and oppressive Somoza dictatorship that had been supported by the United States. The opposition to that dictatorship was so widespread that eventually a vast majority of Nicaraguans, led by the Sandinistas, were able to overcome overwhelming military odds and to overthrow the oppressive regime. At that point the United States should have worked cooperatively with the revolutionary leadership to help develop the country economically and to strengthen the democratic forces within the coalition that was leading the country. A massive program of aid coupled with a serious American commitment to democracy throughout Central America would have created a very different climate and eventually weakened the anti-American sentiments that were the legitimate legacy of decades of American-sponsored dictatorship. Instead, after only token attempts to reach an understanding with the new regime, the Reagan administration insisted on globalizing the situation in Nicaragua, seeing it as part of the international struggle against the Russians, and thereby losing all chance of developing a realistic approach. The US proceeded to arm a motley band of former Somoza officers, joined in recent years by others disgruntled by the Sandinista policy.

Every attempt by the Sandinistas or by other states in the region to find a peaceful solution (the so-called Contadora process) has been blocked by the US. Instead, acting in clear violation of the will of the Congress, the US persisted in doing everything possible to intensify armed struggle and support the contras. The contras had no chance of winning popular support—so all they could do to show that they were a serious force was to engage in actions that brutalized people living near the borders. The ensuing murders, rapes, and drug dealings have been well documented. The Iran/contra scandal just gives us more clarity about the people involved on our side: one group of thugs giving money and arms to another group of thugs.

We have many criticisms of the Sandinistas themselves. Some of their policies are offensive and justifiably criticized—we don't have to pretend that they are the embodiment of all good in order to be repulsed by the indiscriminate use of force by our government. But, while we criticize the Sandinistas, we reject any notion that US support of the contras is justified by a commitment to "democracy." In the last year over a thousand deaths have been attributed to government and military actions against civilians in El Salvador—yet the US continues to support that government and to use it as an example of a "successful" US intervention. If the Sandinistas had acted like Duarte and the El Salvador military, the Reagan administration would have made such actions the basis for military intervention. The fact is that the Sandinistas need to change how they run things, but not as badly as many of the states we support.

At this point in the national debate it boils down to this: Supposedly, the Nicaraguans are in the Russian camp and therefore pose a serious security threat to the US. This is so ludicrous that those who say this could be made a public laughingstock if the Congressional Democrats were to push them about the details of relative strength between Nicaragua and the US. A Nicaraguan army with no airforce and no navy that can't even definitively crush the 10,000-man army of contras is supposed to march across our Texas borders and conquer the US!

In the end we are faced with a familiar and tragic story: The American government harasses and undermines a weak and largely defenseless people who have

angered American economic and military elites by deciding to try to shape their own destiny. It would be both more humane and more strategic to develop a national policy to help offset the poverty and hunger that are still pervasive throughout Central America. American policy violates the best democratic traditions of the American people. That those traditions can be twisted to support arming of the contras is a testimony to the scandalous ineptitude and moral cowardice of many Congressional Democrats, who have allowed the Republicans to define the public debate.

Why haven't the liberals in Congress organized themselves to make this case? Why didn't they struggle to have their own representatives on the committee—people who would be as consistent in articulating a liberal philosophy as many of the right-wing Republicans have been in arguing for their ideology? Indeed, Congressional liberals have consistently rendered themselves powerless, not just here but in almost every major issue facing Congress for many years. They have made it clear to their party's moderates that once they lost on a variety of symbolic programs, they could always be counted on to drop their objections, move right, and provide loyal troops for the triumph of the center.

Here is where the surplus powerlessness enters the picture. Congressional liberals, and with them other liberals in public office and in positions of influence around the country, are unable to conceptualize any other political style except compromising to the political right and hoping that someone, a magical presidential candidate perhaps, will come out of the blue and transform the political climate so that they can be truer to the ideals for which they are usually scared to fight. If they studied Reagan's transformative role for the right, they would discover that Reagan was made possible by years and years in which right-wingers articulated their critique and built support for their ideology. They were *willing to lose* for what they believed in, rather than winning on the basis of politics in which they didn't believe. This is the only model that can work for Democrats.

Eighty to one hundred liberal Congressmen and twenty to thirty liberal Senators could create a liberal presence in the country that would dramatically change the political dialogue. They could use their influence and power to create a nationwide organization, a kind of Liberal Democratic Assembly that could popularize their case and build a mass base for liberal ideas. Such an organization could produce national and local newspapers and magazines, think tanks, and build support for a liberal platform that defined a vision for Democrats.

There is no shortage of ideas and visions that these liberals could embrace. There are plenty of good progressive ideas, easily enough to provide a vision very different from warmed-over Carterism or from the lukewarm "neo-liberalism" that emerged as an attempt to make Democrats look more like Reagan. What is missing is the courage of liberals to stand up and fight for their own visions.

Many of us who were involved in the anti-war struggles of the 1960s are familiar with this phenomenon. Even then the liberals were very slow to oppose the war—despite the fact that many of them privately acknowledged the belief they shared with the protestors. It was only the successful work of the movement that created a space for liberals to move left while appearing "moderate" in comparison with the millions demonstrating in the streets. Because there is no effective left today, liberals have no such cover.

When you start to talk like this with Congressional staff or with liberal leaders in state houses and local communities, you find that many of them really agree with this. They, too, are disgusted with the failure of the Democrats to project a more coherent vision. But they are overwhelmed with a sense of their own powerlessness—they are convinced that the political climate just doesn't exist for them to take these kinds of steps. In some fundamental way they have missed a central point of politics, a point that has been much better understood by the right: Political climate is something that we create, not something that is found out there, as if it were a fact of nature.

To create a different political climate, people have to be willing to stand up for a different vision precisely when it is not yet popular—to articulate that vision, to not be "realistic," to create the times rather than to be "in step" with them. That is what was so impressive about the conservatives of the New Right—however loathsome their specific ideas. And that made an impact on the American people. When they rejected Carter and Mondale, more than anything else they were rejecting wimpiness, the unwillingness to fight for a vision, the lack of moral commitment.

You can't fight conservative ideology with a highway program. Or with any other set of economic goodies. What is needed is an alternative with moral vision, and people who are willing to fight for it. If there are no Democrats who are willing to lose with liberal principles, then we will never have Democrats who can win with those principles either. And this is how the Democrats are blowing it once again. □

An International Conference for the Mideast

Americans should make known their support for Shimon Peres's efforts to find a resolution to the terrible situation on the West Bank. Peres has shown considerable courage in pushing this issue, not only in opposition to the Likud, but also at the risk of alienating some of the "moderate" elements in his own party who seem all too happy to live with the status quo.

Peres deserves the outspoken support of the American Jewish community. Unfortunately, most of the officially designated Jewish elite are paralyzed whenever there is a moment which requires real leadership. Peres and the peace forces in the Labor party need to hear from Americans now—and Shamir and his hawks need to be told that they can't count on an endless blank check from the American Jewish community while they stonewall every reasonable attempt to advance the peace process.

We support the international conference because we think that once the process begins it is likely to strengthen those in Israel who are willing to take risks for peace. But we need to acknowledge that there is a serious weakness in Peres's conception which might ultimately weaken the prospects for success. Peres hopes to give away the territories, or some important part of them, to Jordan, in exchange for a peace agreement. But he proposes to do this without resorting to either of the two options which could plausibly involve the Palestinians—either including the PLO in the conference or holding an open election in the West Bank under Israeli military protection and letting the people there select their own representatives (including, if they wish, people associated with the PLO). Without real Palestinian representation, it is highly unlikely that the Palestinians would agree to accept any solution that emerges from the conference. A Palestinian entity which was set up in coordination with Jordan, therefore, would be subject to attack by Palestinians, who might eventually win military power within this entity and then use it as a launching pad for the goal of "liberating all of Palestine."

What keeps this from happening if we negotiate directly with the Palestinians' chosen representatives? In this case, not only will they be required as a condition of receiving statehood to proclaim to the family of nations that they officially, in the name of the Palestinian people, renounce all claim to the rest of Palestine; but, more importantly, they will feel that they have won something real and tangible, an actual state, that gives them a stake in preserving the final agreement.

Peres's plan may propose to trade the very same amount of land as would be necessary in direct negotiations with the Palestinians. Yet by not meeting the legitimate needs of the Palestinians for self-determination, by not taking into account the issue of dignity and self-respect, Peres's plan may actually be setting the stage for the very struggles it was designed to avoid. It is wiser for Israel to meet the Palestinians' needs for self-determination by letting them proclaim to themselves and the world that they have achieved a real victory in these negotiations—something Israel could achieve by giving directly to them what Peres is in any event prepared to give to Jordan.

Tikkun continues to stress that the Palestinian state we would support could only be created on conditions similar to those imposed on Austria after World War II—total demilitarization and political neutrality enforced by the Great Powers. Israel would have to have treaty rights to invade the moment there was any introduction of tanks, planes, or heavy weapons. We have no illusions about the PLO itself and would never agree to a Palestinian state that significantly threatened Israel's security. But we do think that most Palestinians would settle for a state in the West Bank, despite all the militant rhetoric that inevitably accompanies their total powerlessness. Security for Israel can be negotiated—but we should do it with the Palestinians themselves, so that it is they who validate the conditions of this agreement as a binding pact for the future. In the process of winning approval for negotiations, Peres should avoid concessions to the Israeli right which would become constraints on his ability to negotiate a peace agreement that could really work. □

Gorbachev and the American Press

Peter Gabel

The main reason for American hostility to the Soviet Union is supposedly that the Soviet system is anti-democratic and fails to protect basic civil liberties such as the right to freely criticize the government. How strange it is, therefore, to see many of our public officials as well as many segments of the media seeming to revel in the problems confronting Mikhail Gorbachev, who appears to be doing more to bring democratic reforms to his country than any Soviet leader since the Russian Revolution. Gorbachev-bashing has ranged from stern negative assessments of *glasnost* by "policy experts" (e. g., Zbigniew Brzezhinski seeming

almost to reassure MacNeil and Lehrer that Gorbachev's policies were likely to lead to a coup in the Soviet Union because of the power of entrenched elites in the Communist party) to newspaper headlines that can barely hide their glee at any sign of anti-Gorbachev sentiment ("Gorbachev Bombs in Romania," *San Francisco Chronicle,* May 27, 1987). It is difficult not to get the impression that there are many who want Gorbachev to fail, even though he is apparently trying to implement the very kinds of changes in Soviet society that Americans have been demanding as a condition to improved US-Soviet relations.

One might be tempted to blame this peculiar turn of events on the oft-repeated claim that Gorbachev has "stolen the policy initiative" from Reagan on issues like arms control, thus making America look bad in the eyes of the world. Anti-Gorbachev sentiment could thus be explained as an almost understandable response to feelings of national embarrassment, feelings intensified by the daily publicity surrounding the Iran/contra hearings. But in spite of its surface plausibility, this explanation somehow misses the boat—if Gorbachev is really trying to make the kinds of changes and advance the kinds of policies that we believe in, why not respond by saying that it's about time, and that we are glad to see a Soviet leader advocating even preliminary support for the kind of democratic values this country has always believed in? If we really wanted Gorbachev to succeed, it would clearly be in our interest to emphasize how much we are in favor of his proposed changes and then to hold him to his word if it begins to appear (as conservative politicians and journalists never tire of arguing) that *glasnost* is just a seductive public relations campaign. Aside from actually helping to promote the kinds of changes in Soviet society we supposedly believe in, such an approach would avoid any appearance of "embarrassment" by showing that Gorbachev is only advocating what we have been advocating for two hundred years.

To really understand what's going on, we have to deepen our psychological analysis and recognize that there is an aspect of the American psyche that wants Gorbachev to fail—namely, the aspect that is attached to the image of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" embodying all that is worst in the world. In spite of our professed commitment to democratic ideals, the truth is that we do not yet live in a society that could foster the kind of mutual connectedness and trust that is at the heart of any real democratic group feeling. Many Americans, especially those most cut off from progressive social movements that offer some plausible hope for creating such a society, tend to seek out fantasies of community that can both compensate for this lack of social connection and cover over the sense of isolation and loneliness that underlies it. The most common of these fantasies is the nationalism embodied in the fanatical patriotism that has played an important role in the appeal of right-wing forces during the last decade.

This patriotic imagery must constantly deny that there is anything wrong with America, asserting instead that everything American is pure and good and that "We, the People" are in a state of perfect connection and harmony ("the land of the free and the home of the brave"). The source of the underlying feelings of isolation and loss must be projected outside of the fantasized patriotic community onto a foreign object, a totally evil foreign "other," whose threat is constantly being warded off by the pure, patriotic group.

Belief in the evilness of "the Russians" is part of what enables the goodness of "America" to be constituted at the level of fantasy—and anything that threatens to dissolve this fantasy of the evil other also threatens to dissolve the feeling of frenzied (denying) unity with the patriotic group. *Glasnost*, as expressed in both Gorbachev's personal warmth and in the substance of his ideas, threatens to dissolve the basic us-them fantasy structure that defends against people's underlying feelings of disconnection and loss and therefore threatens to bring this underlying feeling closer to consciousness.

Americans have a powerful resistance to wanting Gorbachev to succeed, especially during a period where there is no visible social movement that could provide them with a real possible solution to their underlying feelings of isolation. Gorbachev threatens people with the danger both of losing their fantasy sense of feeling connected to others through right-wing patriotic imagery and of experiencing the underlying pain at the lack of real connection that is currently repressed.

This is the real reason that conservative ideologues feel emotionally compelled to see Gorbachev as dangerously seductive and to put down his efforts as a duplicitous public relations campaign, and it is also the reason why so many Americans feel compelled to believe them—even if this leads them to support policies that might heighten the risks of their own death in a nuclear war. □

Stopping AIDS Euthanasia

David Schulman

The phenomenon of mounting numbers of people with AIDS and increasingly scarce medical resources, compounded by growing economic and emotional pressures on their families, has already led some people to choose an earlier death than they would have otherwise—a kind of voluntary euthanasia. AIDS experts privately agree that the phenomenon is bound to spread unless a more humane care delivery system is quickly devised.

This development threatens to transform the moral fabric of our culture. Up until now the integrity of the individual has been paramount in the American model of clinical care. Yet in order to keep our health care system financially solvent, we are on the verge of encouraging large numbers of individuals to choose early deaths. The terminally ill in hospitals and nursing homes find the impersonality of institutional care so painful that they have, in increasing numbers, taken the extraordinary step of refusing further care.

The dimensions of the problem for our society are dramatically transformed by the emergence of a large population of people dying of AIDS. Although there were 32,000 reported cases of AIDS in the US as of March 1987, fifty times that number are actually infected—one and a half million. Recent findings of the sudden rise in the number of previously asymptomatic virus-carriers falling ill seven years after infection reinforce the fears of some researchers that many, if not all, of the infected population will fall ill. Despite the spread of the epidemic, policy-makers have not yet grappled with the need to alter our health care delivery system to accommodate this looming problem.

Faced with the need to change our health care system in fundamental ways, will we instead say to the dying, "We really have nothing against you because you are gay or an intravenous drug user, but we don't have sufficient resources to care for you and still treat broken bones, heart attacks, and the variety of other medical problems which offer hope of recovery. Since you have the legal right to refuse medical care, why don't you? You would be remembered more kindly. Besides, life in the hospital is sure to be depressing." Responding to these pressures, euthanasia could become a social reality without it being said that this is an explicit policy for dealing with AIDS. By its inaction, the state will have created a health care reality that is, in fact, destructive.

San Francisco's gay community provides an answer to the Reagan administration's search for an effective care delivery system. San Francisco has successfully contained AIDS costs through home care because of the gay community's commitment to creating extensive volunteer networks. Drawing on the lessons of ten years of hospice-style care in America, San Francisco gays realized that people cared for at home by committed volunteers would choose to live rather than refuse care early in their illness. The Reagan administration, which has championed a new path for delivering traditional social services through government grants to nonprofit, community, and religious groups, should embrace the San Francisco model and provide grants to America's religious bodies to train congregants and committed others to provide the volunteer support necessary for families and friends to care for the ill at home.

Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and other religious groups have powerful commitments to meeting the needs of the afflicted. Yet they have been remarkably slow in fashioning these commitments into specific programs to meet the needs of the chronically ill. The government can help here; it should fund religious and community groups to mobilize and train volunteers to provide the routine yet vital labor necessary for home hospice care, rather than underwriting the more costly and less humane care likely to be received in hospitals and nursing homes.

This approach adopted on a massive scale would potentially change the patterns of American life. A new ethos of caretaking could redefine one's weekly personal chores: along with getting gas and going shopping, we put in a couple hours a week at the neighborhood AIDS home or hospice, running errands, making meals, folding laundry. On a society-wide basis, this kind of activity can regenerate the caring and communal values so badly needed today. Such a massive effort will only be successful if the heterosexual community makes the AIDS epidemic a central concern.

Those who were committed to the civil rights and anti-war movements responded to the moral imperatives they perceived in the fire-hosing of Blacks in the South and the napalming of children in Vietnamese villages. Shouldn't the dying in our own hometowns bring us to their doorsteps to help? As Bob Dylan sang in the sixties, "He not busy being born is busy dying." □

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Poland and the Jews

Abraham Brumberg

I

The subject of Polish Jews and of Polish-Jewish relations seems to be suddenly in vogue.[1] What explains this extraordinary surge of interest? Surely not anything connected with the present-day Jewish community in Poland, which for all intents and purposes is no more. A tiny group, perhaps four to five thousand people, most of them elderly, they cannot even be said to represent a meaningful link with the pre-war traditions of Jewish life in Poland, notwithstanding their handful of institutions (the Yiddish theater, for instance, most of whose actors are gentiles; the newspaper *Folksshtime*; a religious association bereft of rabbis and cantors).*

Legitimate scholarly concern is one explanation. Jewish historiography on Poland has had a long and distinguished history.[2] Though most of its practitioners perished during the Holocaust, some important research was still carried on in post-war Poland by the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, as well as in Israel and—chiefly under the auspices of the Jewish Scientific Institute (YIVO), transplanted from Vilna to New York after the outbreak of the war—in the United States. The anti-Semitic witchhunt of 1968, which resulted in the exodus of virtually the entire remaining Jewish community in Poland, effectively ended the work of the Warsaw Institute, though a small staff, mainly Polish historians, still carries on; most of the Jewish historians who managed to emigrate were elderly and have since died. No wonder, then, that a new generation of scholars has picked up the threads of a discipline dealing with what was once the largest, most creative, and most diversified Jewish community in the world.

Yet however compelling this explanation, I believe there is another element involved, one that might be termed at once moral and emotional. Many young Poles, who have grown up in what is in effect an ethnically (and religiously) homogenous society, feel an intense curiosity about a national minority which resided for nearly a millennium within their country, creating a distinctive culture of its own while contributing to Polish learning, arts, and literature. For some the appeal is the exoticism of a now lost culture; for others, the study of Judaica takes on quasi-political overtones, standing for a kind of opposition to official values and policies. Still others, cognizant of the magnitude and virulence of traditional anti-Semitic stereotypes, believe that Poland must come to grips with this unsavory part of its heritage for the sake of its own future health as a society. The pseudonymous author of an article appearing in the Polish underground journal *Arka* put it forcefully and eloquently:

> To [settle accounts], therefore, is an important task in the attempt to bring our society into the community of nations with a civic, libertarian, and pluralistic culture. This is precisely why the tendency to close one's eyes to Polish anti-Semitism and minimize its role in our political traditions is so unreasonable and, indeed, so harmful. The conviction that to speak about it is to engage in something shameful, and something that paralyzes the national will of Poles and their faith in themselves, is in fact an expression of lack of faith in the self-correcting abilities of Polish culture. The only guarantee against similar errors in the future is to remember errors of the past, the wasted opportunities of utilizing the intellectual and social potentials that existed in our ethnic minorities, the insensitivity to other cultures'

Many Polish Jews harbored (and still harbor) a loyalty to and even affection for the country of their birth, despite all the humiliations and depredations to which they were subjected.

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*During my visit to Poland in October 1986, I visited the Warsaw Jewish cemetery: its caretaker, a young man in his mid-thirties told me that he had taken on the job from his father, who asked on his death bed that his son continue his work. "In five or maximum eight years," he observed with a sad smile, "I shall bury the last Jew in Poland, lock the gates of the cemetery, and depart with my family for Israel."

achievements, and the indolence and sloth of the troubadours of national self-glorification.[3]

There is a profoundly emotional ingredient on the Jewish side, too. Odd though it may seem, many Polish Jews harbored (and still harbor) a loyalty to and even affection for the country of their birth, despite all the humiliations and depredations to which they were subjected. This was true not only for "Jews of the Mosaic faith"—that is, assimilationists—and not only for Bundists, whose Marxist credo stipulated that anti-Semitism was a transitory phenomenon, born of capitalism and destined to disappear with the advent of a new socialist society. It was true also for many Zionists, and even for segments of the Orthodox community.* Did this allegiance spring from the spell cast by Polish literature, especially by some of the Romantic poets who (Adam Mickiewicz for one) preached Jewish-Polish reconciliation? Was it due to the attraction felt by a minority culture for a dominant—if not necessarily superior—culture? Is it simply too difficult to grow up in a country without developing loyalty toward it? Or is it because always, even under the most trying circumstances, Jews could depend on the friendship and support of at least some "righteous gentiles"? In his superb essay "A Dialogue" Rafael S. Scharf speaks of "the trauma of unreciprocated love." A graduate of the Jagiellonian University, a writer and editor and ardent Zionist who has made his home in London for nearly half a century, Scharf understands the essence of the matter: "Many Jews of this last generation, nearing its close, cannot erase from their hearts this country where 'they were born and grew up,' where ... they loved the landscape, the language, the poetry; where they were ready to shed their blood for Poland and be her true sons." He adds bitterly: "That this was evidently not enough leaves them broken-hearted."[4]

Scharf and others of his generation, as well as their sons and daughters, are among those who most actively promote the new scholarship and the new "dialogue" between Poles and Jews. They are willing to attempt to build a bridge, heartbreak notwithstanding, between the two communities, between the past and the future. They hope, by dint of common effort, to reinvigorate an important and congenial discipline, to exorcise ancient ghosts and perhaps to vindicate that "unrequited love." For those like myself, who have strong and warm bonds with many Poles, who have seen young people listening rapt to arcane lectures on Jewish life in Poland during the Middle Ages, who have heard them speak with objectivity and without self-consciousness about the persecution of Jews in interwar Poland, it is a goal worthy of respect and admiration. Nevertheless, one can properly ask whether it is a goal likely to be achieved in the foreseeable future, and whether the hopes generated by it will be—can be—realized.

*I myself, brought up in a Bundist home, had a triple loyalty: to the Jewish people, to "proletarian internationalism," and to Poland. The last was the most difficult to sustain: nearly all of my few contacts with gentile children were of a traumatic nature. Nonetheless, the pride I took in Poland, its literature, and its historic achievements, remained unshakable, sustained no doubt by the faith that once "socialism" was established anti-Semitism would automatically disappear.

II

Instead of presuming to predict certain answers to these questions, I propose first to outline some of the formidable problems that lie across the path of full understanding between Poles and Jews. On the Jewish side, among even major Jewish proponents of the ongoing dialogue, not to mention the larger constituency, there is a piercing consciousness of unhealed wounds, and along with it an overwhelming array of grievances and resentments against the Poles. As a result, many Jews all too frequently level unfounded and unjustifiable accusations against Poles and against Poland (that "country of classical anti-Semitism") and demand—often in harsh and vindictive terms—a collective *mea culpa*. I recall the eminent Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski, pleading with his co-participants at the aforementioned Oxford conference (see End Note 1) to put an end to the penchant for trading insults and mutual recriminations. It seems, he said (I paraphrase from memory), that no discussion on Polish-Jewish relations can proceed without Jews first pointing an accusing finger at Poles, and Poles countering with equally fierce accusations against Jews; no such mutual bashing is ever going to lead to anything positive.

Professor Kolakowski had a point. And Poles who bristle at the sweeping generalizations voiced by some Jews are legitimately offended. Yet many of them fail to realize that the Jewish "case," inflated though it may sometimes be, rests on the direct experience of perhaps hundreds of thousands of people who had emigrated to the West before the Second World War, or who, escaping the gas ovens, later settled in Israel, Canada, or the United States. It is the case, to put it bluntly, of *victims* of poisonous daily hatred, humiliations, discriminating practices, and physical violence, often sanctioned if not directly fomented by a large part of the Catholic clergy before the war. Those who survived the Nazi camps vividly remember the refusal of Polish armed units to accept Jewish partisans within their ranks, and other armed bands (most of them connected with the pathologically anti-Semitic *Narodowe Sily Zbrojne*—National Armed Forces) who combed the

woods in order to murder Jews who had escaped from ghettos and camps. Jews who found refuge and succor among thousands of "righteous gentiles" remember that their hosts were often more afraid of their neighbors, of being stigmatized as "Jew-lovers" or denounced to the occupying authorities, than of the Nazis themselves.[5] Nor can they forget the murderous atmosphere that pervaded Poland after the war, when Jews were afraid to ride trains or walk the streets alone lest they be attacked, beaten, or even killed by marauding gangs of hoodlums or remnants of the Home Army and NSZ units bent on "finishing the job Hitler did for us." Nor have they forgotten the exploitation of anti-Semitic prejudices by successive leaderships of the Communist party after the war, culminating in the effective expulsion, in 1968, of over 30,000 Jews. Even during the Solidarity period, with virtually no Jews left in Poland, the authorities manipulated hoary stereotypes to discredit the leaders of the political opposition; some Solidarity leaders, sadly, used the same stereotypes to malign the ruling elite and rival groups within the opposition.

For nearly forty years not a single prominent Polish intellectual, not a single dignitary of the Catholic Church, let alone any government leader, had felt it necessary or desirable to acknowledge the magnitude and perfidy of Polish anti-Semitism before, during, and after the war.

My blunt language is not meant to justify the excessive accusations hurled by some Jews against the entire Polish nation; indeed, such exaggerations are one of the regrettable obstacles blocking Polish-Jewish understanding. Rather, it is a plea for some moral imagination. Justice must not be retributive, but it requires, at a minimum, the full recognition and acceptance of incontrovertible historical truths, however painful they may be. The indignation of those who are asked to confront these truths must be tempered by compassion for those who ask it of them.

The Jewish obsession with Polish anti-Semitism often leads them, many Poles complain, to belittle or even forget that the architects and executioners of the "final solution" were not the Poles but the Germans. There is some truth to this. I myself have heard, with dismay and astonishment, a number of Jews, mostly survivors, tell me that they regard the Poles (and the Ukrainians) as being far more culpable than the Nazis. Yet while we must reject this plainly libelous attitude, we must also try to understand it. Germany, certainly, is far better cast for the role of the "land of classical anti-Semitism" than Poland: The underpinnings of the Nazi movement were developed mostly by German thinkers of the nineteenth century; it was the majority of the German people who, with indifference or outright approval, carried out the extermination of six million human beings with an uncanny blend of savagery and efficiency. Yet postwar West Germany has openly acknowledged and attempted to atone for its monstrous past, and not merely with repatriation money. German novelists have not shied away from the problem of German guilt. School curricula include courses on the history of Nazism. German television has regularly shown documentaries on the Nazi years, as well as the Hollywood miniseries "Holocaust," the 1979 showing of which attracted an estimated twenty million viewers and provoked a storm of soul-searching. The Federal Republic established relations with Israel early on; every summer hundreds of German youngsters travel to Israel to work or study. Two years ago, following the sordid Bitburg incident, West Germany's President Weiszäcker delivered a poignant speech reminding his listeners of the imperative need to recall and accept their national past.[6]

Nothing of the sort has ever happened in Poland. To be sure, Polish hostility to the Jews pales in comparison with the deeds of the Nazis. Yet for nearly forty years not a single prominent Polish intellectual, not a single dignitary of the Catholic Church, let alone any government leader, had felt it necessary or desirable to acknowledge the magnitude and perfidy of Polish anti-Semitism before, during, and after the war. I know of no Polish writer who, like Heinrich Böll or Günter Grass, has scrutinized his country's record in his books. By and large, Polish historians have either passed over in silence or distorted and falsified the history of their once 3,500,000-strong Jewish community.[7] When the Polish-Jewish literary critic Artur Sandauer published a brief pamphlet called *On the Situation of a Polish Writer of Jewish Descent*, detailing Polish anti-Semitism before the war and tracing its Christian genealogy (not only in Poland, of course) it was met with stony silence.[8] Moreover, the Polish state was for a long time loath to recognize the special case of Jewish victims of Nazism: until recently there was no special Jewish memorial at Auschwitz, and when one was finally built, it was kept locked. As I learned when I visited it in October 1986, special permission was needed to inspect it.

Yes, it is appalling and unjust to dwell on Polish anti-Semitism at the expense of the incomparably more

monstrous German version. It has happened in large part because Jews demanded, if not contrition, then at least an honest acknowledgement. In the absence of both, grievances burgeoned and historical perspective was blurred. Criticize the Jews who are prone to exaggerate; correct the exaggerations; but do not condemn them.

III

On now to the Polish side. The phrase is of course a misnomer: just as it is absurd to speak of a "Jewish camp",* so is it misleading to suggest that a uniform or monolithic Polish school of thought on Polish-Jewish relations exists. The more salient kind of pathological or "ideological" Jew-hatred—which persists to this day, and not only among members of the older generations—is easily identified and I will not address it here.† The same goes for the various anti-Jewish stereotypes articulated, for instance, by some of the peasants interviewed by Claude Lanzmann in *Shoah* (e. g., Jews are dishonest, they "stink," they controlled all the capital in pre-war Poland, their women seduced upright gentile husbands, they deserved their fate because they crucified Christ.‡) Slightly less coarse versions may circulate among other segments of the population—what Catholic writer and Solidarity advisor Tadeusz Mazowiecki once caustically called "the anti-Semitism of the gentlefolk." That variety has recently come in for some sardonic treatment by a number of Polish writers, as in the following irresistible excerpt from an underground piece by Antoni Pawlek:

> Poland is an amusing country. It is full of extraordinarily amusing people. None of them is an anti-Semite. Anti-Semitism is like a suit that has gone out of fashion, that is not worn in proper company. But it invariably creeps up in any conversation.
>
> "He is an honest man. Though a Jew."
>
> "I've got nothing against the Jews. You know, one of them is even a friend of mine."
>
> There are no bad intentions in these words. It's all automatic. Like the unconscious. The national unconscious. It isn't a good thing to be a Jew. Although anti-Semitism never existed in Poland. Anti-Semitism is an invention of red propaganda. And in the final analysis, of the Jews themselves.
>
> A cultivated woman looks at me with outrage. "Anti-Semitism before the war? The National Democrats beat up Jews at the universities? But my dear sir! Well, perhaps once in a while, some minor incidents. But they have nobody to blame but themselves. Yes, yes, don't shrug—after all, they didn't want to occupy the seats that were designated for them."
>
> Another elderly lady (an Endek [member of the National Democrats] before the war, a party member now) tries to convince me, with fire in her eyes, that the matzoh they make really uses babies' blood: "Because you know, where there's smoke there's fire. In every rumor there is a kernel of truth."
>
> But there is no anti-Semitism in Poland.[9]

But let me rather focus on those who are actively engaged in promoting the current dialogue, those whose good intentions it would be churlish to question. Recently the Catholic weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* opened its pages to a revealing discussion on Jewish-Polish relations; in the May issue of *Tikkun* Czeslaw Milosz expressed his views on the subject in a lengthy interview. Let us examine what emerges from these two sources.

Tygodnik Powszechny has a long and honorable record of opposition to anti-Semitism. Founded in 1945 and connected with the Cracow Catholic Archdiocese, the

*A favorite term of Prof. Norman Davies, who in his debate with me in the pages of the *NYRB* accused me of belonging to a "Jewish camp," which engages in "frantic efforts to pin the anti-Semitic label onto all manner of individuals and organizations," including people (Mr. Davies has nothing if not a delightful sense of humor) who happen not to like bagels.

†It can be found in the open association *Grunwald* whose monthly journal is so demented on the subject of the "Jewish conspiracy" that even the average self-respecting Polish anti-Semite would ignore it. In the underground, the group most programmatically anti-Semitic is the *Ruch Mlodej Polski* [The Young Polish Movement], which traces its antecedents to the pre-war National Democrats (*endecja*). In its journal, *Polityka Polska* (No. 4, 1984), the editor, Alexander Hall (a member of Cardinal Glemp's "Primate's Council"), disavows the anti-Semitic component of the *endecja*'s legacy, "all the more so since the material foundations for anti-Semitic attitudes, i. e., Jews, practically don't exist in Poland, and the revival of Polish anti-Semitism is not in the Polish interest." To which one can only add that it is fortunate that Mr. Hall has so broad-minded (and flexible!) an idea of what is "in the Polish interest."

‡*Shoah* was primarily responsible for the reemergence of the "Jewish problem" in the Polish press both in Poland and abroad. Most of the articles appearing in the Polish underground press were admirably honest and objective. The "open" press was another story, and attacks in the emigré Polish press have been even more strident. The most recent example I have read is a piece by one Wojciech A. Wierzewski in *Przeglad Polski* (New York, May 7, 1987). The author claims that Lanzmann "went to Poland with his camera in order to illustrate his altogether sensational theory that it was the Poles who were responsible for the atrocity committed against the Jewish people. This was the origin of the very concept of *Shoah*." In fact, nowhere in the film is this "theory" expressed or even implied; far from beginning with Poland, Lanzmann has many times said that the idea of going to Poland arose only two years after he began the film, and he resisted it for a long time out of fear of confronting a "huge and terrifying vacuum." Local Polish communities in Ottawa and Montreal organized boycotts of *Shoah* and distributed leaflets denouncing Lanzmann for his "odious slander" of the Polish people.

weekly has been edited almost continuously by Jerzy Turowicz and has been the principal voice for lay Catholics associated with the *Znak* (Sign) movement, which at one time was even represented in the *Sejm* (parliament). In the immediate post-war period, when Poland was inundated by a wave of anti-Semitic violence, *Tygodnik Powszechny* minced no words in describing and denouncing the atrocities; at the same time it adamantly rejected the notion that criticism of Polish anti-Semitism was proof of "hostility" to Poland. Subsequently the journal began to offer the more standard explanations, which have assumed mythic qualities: e. g., that pre-war anti-Semitism, while reprehensible, was but a marginal phenomenon; that the overwhelming majority of Poles tried to save Jews during the German occupation. Moreover, until recently *Tygodnik Powszechny* remained silent on the role played by the Catholic clergy—including then-Cardinal Hlond—in inciting and approving the venomous anti-Jewish campaign of the interwar period.*

Until recently there was no special Jewish memorial at Auschwitz, and when one was finally built, it was kept locked.

It was therefore a major event when *Tygodnik Powczechny* inaugurated, in its January 17, 1987 issue, a debate on Polish-Jewish relations which has had no precedent in either scope or candor in the official Polish press since the immediate post-war period. The articles which appeared as part of this debate offer a fascinating glimpse into the difficulties—moral and psychological—that many Poles face when attempting to grapple with the issue.

The opening salvo was fired by Jan Blonski, a distinguished professor of literature at the Jagiellonian University, and a participant in the various Polish-Jewish dialogues of the past few years. His article is called "A Poor Pole Looks at the Ghetto," paraphrasing the title of Milosz's searing poem "A Poor Gentile Looks at the Ghetto." Professor Blonski's essay is not an exercise in objective scholarship, replete with facts, figures, and footnotes. Rather, it is an appeal to the conscience of a people, reminding its readers that Poles—as human beings and as Christians—bear a large degree of responsibility for the injustices perpetrated on their erstwhile compatriots. Blonski locates the roots of Jewish resentment and even hostility toward Poles in "their personal experiences, whose authenticity, after all, cannot be denied." He calls his readers' attention to recent Church documents which fully acknowledge that Christian policies incited hostility to the Jews and "speak clearly about neglecting our responsibilities of brotherhood and charity," and goes on:

> I think that in our attitude to the Polish-Jewish past we must follow the same principle. We must cease to justify ourselves and to haggle over details ... We must stop blaming political, social, or economic conditions, but must first say: yes, we are guilty. We accepted Jews into our house, but told them to live in the basement. When they wanted to enter the rooms, we promised them admission if they ceased to be Jews, if they became "civilized," as they used to say in the nineteenth century, and not only in Poland ... There were some Jews who were ready to accept this condition. Then talk began about the invasion of Jews, the dangers posed by their entrance into Polish society! We began ... to posit conditions, such as stipulating that only Jews who would cooperate in limiting Jewish influences would be accepted as Poles. That is—to put it plainly—only those who would turn against their own kind, or against their parents! Eventually we lost our house and the new occupants began to kill Jews. Did we show solidarity by offering help? How many of us asserted that it wasn't our business? ... We didn't even manage to respect and welcome the survivors, however embittered, lost, or even irritating they might have been. In a word, instead of bargaining and justifying ourselves we must first reflect on our own sin or weakness. This is the kind of moral transformation that is required in our attitude to our Polish-Jewish past; only this can gradually cleanse this doomed land.

Painful, honest and harsh words—even more harsh, perhaps, than the charges sometimes hurled by Jewish victims. What was the reaction?

It would be pleasant to report that Professor Blonski's *cri de coeur* was greeted with admiration, if not unqualified approval. Unhappily, this was not the case. Some

*At the 1984 Oxford conference, and a year later at a special screening of *Shoah* sponsored by the Oxford Institute of Polish-Jewish Studies, Mr. Turowicz suggested that pre-war Poland could not conceivably be termed "anti-Semitic," since it was after all "a Catholic country"—which is rather like saying that Afrikaners cannot support apartheid since they are members of the Dutch Reformed Church. He also claimed that 100,000 Jews were saved by Poles during the war. It in no way minimizes or denigrates the heroic efforts of many Poles who risked their lives and those of their families to help Jews to correct that figure: out of 42,662 Jews who were in Poland immediately after the war, 30,000 had survived the Nazi camps, 3,000 had been partisans, and about 9,000 had been rescued by Poles. (See my review of Hersh Smolar, *"oyr der letster pozistsye—mit der letzter hofenung"* [*"At the Last Outpost, with the Last Hope"*], in *Soviet Jewish Affairs* (London, 3/85.)

responses met the moral challenge he posed; others, however, were ambivalent or even unreservedly critical. The editors admitted that readers' reactions were so negative as to "confirm the fact that anti-Semitism in Poland still exists, the virtual absence of Jews in our country notwithstanding." Church authorities in Cracow were dismayed (as an unimpeachable source informs me); the editors were gently rebuked by Cracow's Archbishop, Cardinal Macharski, and told that problems of this sort were "far better left alone." To their credit they refused to budge.*

A fairly representative example of the emotional and intellectual turmoil spawned by the Blonski essay is "The Deep Roots and Long Life of Stereotypes" by the eminent historian Stanislaw Salmonowicz. He admits, with obvious distress, the persistence of anti-Semitism in Poland, "especially among certain circles of young people in the countryside and small towns." He fully endorses Blonski's call for dialogue with the "Jewish side," though he is skeptical about the prospects of eradicating stereotypes, particularly in the short run. At the same time, Professor Salmonowicz castigates Blonski and others for unfairly criticizing the Poles' lack of "heroism" during the occupation: Heroism, Salmonowicz says, is by and large an "elite phenomenon" which cannot be expected of the average person. (Nowhere in his article does Blonski use the word "heroism.") Implicitly, then, Dr. Salmonowicz endorses the official myth that Poles did whatever they could to save Jews.

The bulk of Salmonowicz's article is devoted to the presumable mirror image of the negative Jewish stereotype: namely, the allegedly widespread Western image of a Pole, "that coarse, uneducated, avaricious simpleton, brute, drunkard—if not gangster—and . . . anti-Semite." The stereotype derives from Jews, though not, according to the author, Jews of Polish decent, "who frequently harbored a sentiment for Poland and for its culture." It stems from Jews "connected with German or Russian culture: it is they who assimilated the stereotypes which Prussian literature and historiography (G. Freytag, Treischlee [sic] and hundreds of their followers) formulated and disseminated on the subject of Poland and the Poles." Dr. Salmonowicz traces the spread of this "anti-Polish stereotype" through the last century, ending with a diatribe against the Anglo-Saxon world:

> By now we know full well . . . that in the years 1941–1944, when it was still possible to save at least part of the Jews of Europe, leading American-British circles, like the governments of neutral countries, did practically nothing to block the realization of German plans. The same circles, particularly in the US, are now in the first ranks of those accusing Polish society of insufficient heroism and humanity. Isn't this typical . . . Anglo-Saxon hypocrisy?

I don't know whether the editors of *Tygodnik Powszechny* were much pleased with this bizarre blend of truths, half-truths, and personal *resentiments*. But they were obviously placed in an embarrassing position by the next "Reply to Jan Blonski," written by Wladyslaw Sila-Nowicki (Feb. 22, 1987). A distinguished lawyer now in his seventies, with an admirable record of defending political prisoners, Sila-Nowicki was arrested and spent six years in jail in the 1940s as a member of a fiercely anti-Communist underground group. Before the war he was a member of the Labor party, whose program (like that of the National Democrats) demanded the expulsion of Jews from Poland, on the grounds that they constitute an evil religious element parasitically feeding on the bodies of other nations, and contended that any Poles "maintaining collegial relations" with Jews deserved the same treatment.

The Jewish community worldwide to this day lives with an agonizing burden of guilt, never to be shed, of having done so little to save European Jews from extinction.

I am not aware that Sila-Nowicki, in the years since the war, ever voiced any anti-Jewish sentiments; I should be surprised if he did. But Blonski's article clearly hit a nerve. It is, says Sila-Nowicki, full of preposterous distortions and lies and can only fuel the campaign waged abroad by Poland's "deadly enemies." Sila-Nowicki maintains that neither before nor after the war was Poland rife with anti-Semitic writings; Polish behavior toward the Jews during the war was exemplary. The Jews are people worthy of the greatest respect and admiration; for centuries, living among strangers, they have given the world some of its greatest scientists, writers, artists, bankers, poets, while preserving their separate identity by refusing to assimilate, by "loving" their own people more than their "hosts." (Note Sila-Nowicki's assumption that a people residing in a country for a millennium are visitors, not equals.)

(Continued on p. 85)

*When I was in Poland in March of this year, I was told by a personal friend and prominent intellectual of his "astonishment" at finding himself to be, in a discussion with some friends, "the only one to praise Blonski's article." "And what were the criticisms of it?," I asked. "That Blonski slandered the Polish nation," he replied.

The Best and the Rightest

Eric Alterman

While North and Poindexter are undoubtedly the stars of the Iran/contra melodrama, the struggle by Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs, Elliott Abrams, to retain his power has proven to be one of the more poignant subplots of the administration's contra calamity.

Like the Pentagon's Richard Perle, Education Czar William Bennett, and dozens of these men's deputies and special assistants, Abrams's rise to nearly unchecked power as a generalissimo in the contra war represented a marriage of political savvy and intellectual arrogance unseen in Washington since John Kennedy's good-looking smart guys dreamed up Vietnam. The neoconservatives came to town, as the Kennedy boys had done, straight from the Ivy League with undisguised contempt for the rules and regulations which had constrained the lesser minds of their predecessors. With their abilities to paint an elegant, often eloquent veneer on policies which rested somewhere in the right-wing twilight zone between Goldwaterism and McCarthyism—that is, between conservatism and hate-mongering—they managed to redefine the political culture of the city by effectively rewriting its rules of engagement.

Abrams came to conquer Washington in the Reagan era with a resumé so thorough it shone through the neoconservative movement like a magna carta. Of course he had graduated from Harvard and Harvard Law and even done a brief stint at the London School of Economics to prove his intellectual mettle. In law school he worked on the pro-war candidacy of Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson, minding his ps and qs until Perle introduced him to the boss and helped him land a job on the Senator's staff. Jackson proved a useful stepping stone to the staff of New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who named Abrams to be his chief of staff shortly after his 1976 election. Not too long afterward, Elliott went to the New York apartment of neocon hitman, Norman Podhoretz, to defend his boss's manhood vis-à-vis the Russians. The visit resulted, eventually, in the marriage of Elliott Abrams to Podhoretz's stepdaughter, Rachel Mark Decter. On that day shortly before the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan, a metaphor was born. Elliott Abrams became, in Sidney Blumenthal's memorable phrase, the American government's "highest ranking Podhoretz."

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Abrams is the youngest man in history to be appointed Assistant Secretary of State. When he came to Washington in the early 1970s however, he was just another ambitious young Harvard boy on the make. The softball fields on the Mall are literally teeming with them. Elliott and his friends, particularly Perle, appeared cast in the same mold as the men who had made the country's foreign policy since the onset of the Cold War. They were intelligent, articulate, confident, and, despite Vietnam, steeped in the Cold War faith which had guided American foreign policy from Yalta to Saigon.

As the Carter presidency collapsed, however, these young men proved to be something more—or perhaps less. They were ideologues, as convinced as Che Guevara of the righteousness of their cause. Whereas his in-laws, Podhoretz, and writer/editor Midge Decter, had made themselves the objects of considerable mockery and derision with their inquisition-style indictments of feminists, homosexuals, pot-smokers, "appeasers," and "anti-Semites," son-in-law Abrams managed to incorporate the neocon holy war into his persona while simultaneously refining its Podhoretzian hystericalisms to suit the WASP culture of the nation's capital. The combination of the two melded a bureaucrat who could fight and win bureaucratic battles with any Washington bureaucrat, while at the same time projecting an image to the public of easy self-confidence, charm, and moderation.

The human rights portfolio to which Alexander Haig appointed Abrams in late 1982 was a godsend for the neocons, providing them with an opportunity to steal the liberals' moral high ground in foreign policy. Nothing had so irked Podhoretz, Irving Kristol, and the entire *Commentary* crowd as much about Jimmy Carter as his constant kvetching about human rights violations in this or that friendly anti-Communist dictatorship. When Podhoretz published Jeane Kirkpatrick's intellectual sleight-of-hand, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," he declared war on the notion that the US should not cozy up to right-wing dictators and torturers. The argument, rather tortured itself, was given final expression in the policies of Abrams, who drove the Washington human rights community absolutely bonkers by successfully gutting the meaning of the term and casting unsubtle aspersions about its members' motivations.

Like Perle, Abrams was a new kind of diplomat. Instead of seeking compromise with his opponents he

sought victory and surrender. When they refused to capitulate, he called them names, questioned their loyalties, and insinuated that they really desired Communist victory.

Hypnotized by the script-reading abilities of the Great Communicator and charmed and amused by these well-groomed and well-spoken lieutenants, Washington embraced the neocons no less enthusiastically than they had the New Frontiersmen. Carter's human rights concerns had never been firmly entrenched in the Washington political psyche, even in the increasingly anorexic Democratic party. Meanwhile Abrams' image as a smart, tough, and effective bureaucrat won him many admirers in a media establishment nearly completely cowed by Reagan's PR blitzkrieg. He gave good "Nightline."

As a salesman for the neocon sensibilities in Washington, Elliott was a dream come true. Like Jerry Falwell, James Watt, and Joe McCarthy before them, Elliott drew a line between the type of American who could be trusted and the type who could not. In contrast to the yahoos, though, he also managed to put a nice clean, Harvard-educated gloss on the operation. So pleased with this was George Shultz that when the time came to throw over his Latin American Chief, Tony Motley, (just as Motley's predecessor, Thomas Enders, had been thrown, two years earlier) to provide red meat for the dogs of the Heritage Foundation and the New Right to chew on, Shultz naturally turned to Abrams.

Through his unchallenged knowledge, creativity, and dedication, Richard Perle has proven the most adept bureaucratic ally the nuclear arms race has ever enjoyed. So, too, has William Bennett proven a frightfully tenacious voice for bringing American education back into the dark ages. But neither Perle nor Bennett, nor even Podhoretz and Kristol, ever actually tried to conduct a real war, the kind where blood is spilled and women and children are killed and Congress is forced to get involved.

As a front man for the contra war in his human rights job, Abrams was undeniably a star. But when it came to financing, planning, and conducting the war in the Latin American Bureau, he proved himself dangerously out of his depth. The problem is that, unlike Perle's anti-arms control theology and Bennett's bible-thumping attack on liberal notions of morality and education, Elliott's wars had opponents who fought back with bombs and mortars. Hence the reality on the ground which could be measured against his rhetoric. The Sandinistas saw to it that the contras never developed into much more than a proxy force of little military consequence. Congress saw to it, at least for a while, that any arming of the contras the US did would have to be done surreptitiously and in direct contravention of US law.

But Elliott, with his partner Ollie North, appeared to have outgrown laws. Abrams chaired a weekly "Restricted Intelligence Group" (RIG) meeting in which Abrams, North, and people from the CIA and the Pentagon would plot out strategy for conducting the contra war more effectively. Treating Congress as an inconvenient interloper, Elliott, with the assistance of North, hit up the Sultan of Brunei for ten million dollars for the contras. According to North's memos published in the Tower Commission report, North, with Abrams's concurrence, called Costa Rican President Oscar Arias Sanchez to threaten a cut off of US aid, unless Sanchez cancelled a press conference in which his government would reveal the existence of a secret airstrip through which American officials in Costa Rica had been resupplying the contras without the knowledge or authorization of Congress (an accusation he and Ambassador Lewis A. Tambs have explicitly denied).* According to reports in the *Baltimore Sun*, Abrams also interfered with Congressionally ordered investigations by the Government Accounting Office of his Nicaraguan Humanitarian Assistance Office (NHAO) and steered State Department contracts, according to the *Village Voice*, to companies which were arming the rebels. All of these actions were taken, needless to say, in the name of Nicaraguan democracy.

Now that Contragate has reordered the political universe in which Abrams must operate, he has bet his political survival on exactly the same strategy employed by Reagan: professed ignorance. Only, for Abrams, whose entire career has been based on the implied assumption that he is a lot smarter than the guy he is talking to, the strategy cannot wash; his insistence that he had no idea what was taking place on his watch is viewed as an act of desperation.

The combination of the smart, powerful Abrams pretending to be ignorant, weak, and ill-informed when it comes to his own policies has provided some of the most rewarding theater of Contragate. Back in September, before the scandal hit, Abrams brazenly told the House Foreign Affairs Committee fifteen times that he had no idea who paid Eugene Hasenfus to fly supply operations to the contras or where those operations originated, but he was sure that nobody in the administration had anything to do with it. It was hard to swallow then, but since the scandal broke, it has taken on the character of burlesque. The emperor, to borrow from John Prine, is as naked as the eyes of a clown.

Abrams has been forced, under oath, to apologize for misleading the Senate Intelligence Committee about

*Costa Rican president Oscar Arias Sanchez has also denied ever receiving such a threat, which is to be expected.

his solicitation of that troublesome ten million dollars from the Sultan of Brunei. Respected members of the foreign service whom he purged for disloyalty to the neocon line have publicly accused him of "political McCarthyism." David Durenberger, then the Republican Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee has mused, "I would not trust Elliott Abrams any further than I could throw Ollie North."

While the swagger is gone from Abrams' walk and the smirk from his lips, the ruinous contra policy is still in place. Given the well-developed neocon proclivity for the political jugular, things could easily get uglier before they get prettier. Despite his public embarrassment, Abrams is still fighting. Congress does not appear to have anything remotely resembling the necessary backbone to terminate the contra war, despite the lies, despite the scandal, and despite the fact that public opinion polls reveal less than twenty-percent of the American public supports the war.

Thus we are left with a paradox. The neocons came to Washington contemptuous of their predecessors and completely lacking in respect for the democratic basis of their power. They reached their powerful positions fair and square and now Congress and the rest of the country could just butt out, thank you very much. In his six years at the Pentagon, Perle did his damnedest to turn arms control into a dirty word and succeeded only in vastly increasing its popularity at home. William Bennett tells America that the surest way to stop the spread of AIDS is to tell sexually active teenagers not to have sex ... most Americans wonder what planet the guy is living on. The consequences of these policies, however, frightening as they may be, have yet to reveal themselves. The same cannot be said of Abrams. Contragate has revealed the lying, the arrogance, the chicanery, and, ultimately, the self-defeating nature of his ideologically driven policies. And yet even if Abrams is eventually forced to resign over his participation in North's funding network, it is obvious that the policies which he and his neocon brethren have foisted upon the politically purged Latin American desk in the State Department will continue to hold sway through the end of the Reagan Administration.

The Democratic Senators and Congressmen chosen to conduct the Contragate hearings by the two select committees seem intent upon questioning only the means by which Reagan's ruinous policies have been carried out. Thus the hearings have not provided Americans with the opportunity to examine the actual policies which led North, Casey et al off the deep end. However discredited these policies may be in the eyes of the American public, they nevertheless remain in force in the absence of any concerted effort by the Democrats to reverse them. In fact, the commitment to militarize Central America and graft Soviet-American competition to the mountains and graveyards of Nicaragua and El Salvador may have been strengthened by the cleansing process undertaken in the wake of the scandal. The Administration has purged itself of North, Poindexter, and Donald Regan just as James Watt and Alexander Haig were done away with in the first term. The crazies are gone; the neocons remain. The policy is unchanged.

These hearings provided the Democratic party with a golden opportunity to distinguish itself before the American public as a true alternative to the disastrous path which Abrams and company have led American foreign policy in Central America and elsewhere in the third world. Instead, the public has been treated to the sorry spectacle of leading Democrats falling all over themselves to be uncritical of the motives of Abrams, North and company, and instead to make their stand on such irrelevancies as the President's "management style" and whether the National Security Council should be reorganized to work more closely with the State Department. The Democrats seem to have taken the opportunity of the scandal to conclude that the White House will be theirs in 1988 just so long as they promise not to send any birthday cakes to the Ayatollah. In doing so, they have forfeited the playing field to the increasingly partisan Republicans, who continue to insist that Texas is in danger of Cuban invasion.

In the old West, Hollywood likes to tell us, it was not uncommon for a bunch of outlaws from nowhere to ride into town, shoot their guns in the air, throw their money around in the saloon, and charm the ladies and even most of the menfolk ... for a while. Eventually, the townspeople grew tired of the outlaws' lack of respect for their ways, the cocksure attitude they displayed and the liberties these charming bad guys took with their law and their women. The people trembled in their boots until the town's one honest man—who never took to these guys in the first place—reclaimed the town for its honest but cowardly citizens. Generally speaking, those bad guys who are not killed were run out of town on a rail, often at high noon.

If Washington were the old West, then Abrams and company would be hightailing it for the Mexican border now. Instead, they are still conducting a war, not far away, in Central America—in our name but against our wishes.

The Vietnam war was born not only of the hubris of the Kennedy crew, but also of genuine ignorance and innocence. Washington has no such excuses this time. Nor does it have an abundance of honest men. The clock has long ago struck noon. □

Are We Prisoners of the Past?

Paul L. Wachtel

Claims by psychological theorists that personality is "set" rather early in life have been a source of considerable anxiety for millions of parents, fearful that one false move in the crucial early years will seal their child's fate. These theories also have had an unfortunate influence on psychological thinking about social problems, diverting the focus of our efforts to understand the sources of problematic behavior away from the conditions of adult life and tempting us to write off millions of people as already beyond help. Inordinate emphasis on the impact of early experiences has in addition placed unnecessary constraints on the practices of many psychotherapists, preventing their patients from getting the best help they could. I wish here to reexamine the prevailing view of the role of early experiences and to consider an alternative.

Clearly the most influential figure shaping our modern ideas about the impact of early experiences on character development was Freud. His influence upon our culture is nowhere more evident than in instilling a sense of the absolutely crucial importance of early childhood. More recent psychological theorists have even upped the ante. Whereas Freud believed that our personality structure was largely set around the age of five or six, the most influential recent theorizing in psychoanalysis locates the source of our ability or inability to function successfully as adults even earlier, in the first year or two of life. As will be made apparent as I proceed, these efforts to go further than Freud lead, in fact, backward.

* * *

The evidence of how early experiences shape later development is much misunderstood and the possibilities for alternative accounts are not well appreciated. This confusion is evident not only in the technical psychoanalytic journals but also in efforts to apply psychoanalytic ideas to broader cultural and historical questions. Peter Gay, one of the most distinguished historians to advocate the relevance to his discipline of psychoanalytic theory and a widely acknowledged expert on Freud, has stated that "more than any other psychologist in history, [Freud] provided scientific demonstrations for Wordsworth's overworked poetic dictum that the Child is father of the Man." This is simply not so. It is very likely true that Freud stimulated interest in this question as no one had before, and his speculations offered detailed hypotheses—some probably correct and some wrong—where before there were vague generalities. But the most humble contemporary, longitudinal researcher, lacking Freud's genius but utilizing agreed-upon rules of evidence to relate observations made in childhood to observations made later in life, can provide more "scientific demonstrations" regarding the relationship between childhood experiences and adult character than Freud's method could possibly have provided.

A related assertion by Gay further illustrates the prevailing confusion. In the midst of a defense of Freud's psychosexual theories, Gay makes a passing comment about the currently fashionable diagnosis of narcissistic personality. Casually, as if it were perfectly obvious and beyond dispute, Gay states that "after all" narcissism is a disorder "originating in a very early, markedly pre-genital sexual phase." Gay seems not to recognize here that this common psychoanalytic assertion is scarcely based on reliable systematic evidence but is almost totally a product of theory. There is evidence of a sort that certain *themes*, which Freudians call "pre-genital," are common in the associations of individuals diagnosed as narcissistic personalities. But there is absolutely no evidence as to when narcissistic disorders begin, or that they begin earlier than, say, the neuroses, which are supposedly "oedipal" in origin.

In order to understand this more fully, it is necessary to consider what analysts actually observe and how they go about making sense of it. Though there are significant differences among analytic observers, virtually all note that under the lens of the psychoanalytic situation people reveal wishes, fears, and fantasies that seem quite at odds with ordinary conscious adult thought. Freud's way of understanding these seemingly "infantile" mental activities was to liken them to archaeological residues, which when uncovered reveal early layers of the individual's psyche. This is the basic position of contemporary Freudians as well and of the most influential recent variants of psychoanalytic thought,

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such as "object relations" theory and "self psychology." Theorists of these latter persuasions dispute certain specifics of classical Freudian theory but share the view that the early history of the psyche can be reconstructed from patients' associations in analysis and from their way of relating to the analyst.

Central to such theories are concepts such as fixation and developmental arrest. They conceive of the strange mental productions emerging in analysis as remnants of archaic psychic formations which, because they were split off from the developing ego—the part of the psyche that can grow and change in response to perceptual input from the environment—remained infantile while the rest of the personality grew up. Like the woolly mammoths that explorers occasionally find buried under the arctic ice, these psychic formations were preserved in their original form, protected against the ordinary processes of change by layers of defense as the flesh of mammoths was protected against decay by layers of deep freeze.

To those who hold such a "woolly mammoth" view of psychological development, the unconscious is timeless and unchanging because new experiences, which must be mediated by the ego, do not penetrate below layers of defense to alter what has been frozen in time. "Archaic" or "infantile" wishes and fears persist in spite of any new experiences which might seem to contradict them.

But if one looks more closely at the minute details of people's lives, it is possible to see how these seemingly infantile thoughts and wishes in fact persist not in spite of everyday reality but precisely because of that reality. Consider, for example, the so-called narcissistic personality referred to in the comment by Gay above. This personality type has been the object of enormous interest in recent years. These individuals, because of their combination of insecurity and grandiosity, tend to elicit from others either admiration for their exploits or hostile, competitive, or rejecting responses to their pretensions and self-involvement. This combination of reactions feeds both their grandiosity and their insecurity and reinforces the feeling that who they really are is insufficient, that only a blown-up version of themselves can survive in this world.

At some level, however, this inflated version feels false and hollow and thus contributes both to a sense of vulnerability and to further defensive efforts to cover over that feeling—with the result that they set up similar interactions with other people that keep the whole process going. If one looks closely enough—with more probing questions than free association permits—one sees that the past is endlessly re-created in the present and that the wishes, fears, and fantasies that (however unconsciously) dominate the person's life do not persist as a simple archaeological preservation but rather as the ironic product of the very efforts the person makes to overcome them.

From such a perspective, it does not make sense to ask from when a person's difficulties date. In a certain sense *all* disorders—indeed, all personality traits—originate early, but only in the sense that early experiences skew the kinds of later experiences we encounter. Whether one grows up to become neurotic, psychotic, or unusually healthy, one's development can be traced back to the very earliest stages of life. One type of personality does not begin any earlier than any other. Rather, what is crucial is the direction of development, the kinds of influences one encounters, and the nature of the patterns of human interaction one establishes and, in all likelihood, repeats.

* * *

The archaeological, "woolly mammoth" model is problematic in a number of important respects. Because it locates the heart of the causal nexus not in the continuing series of experiences—right up to the present—that are engendered by experiences early in life, but rather in the persisting direct influence of unassimilated and unaltered bits of childhood psychic functioning, it focuses psychoanalytic inquiry on the epistemologically suspect quest to reconstruct the earliest years of childhood from the experiences of analysts with their adult patients. This greatly increases its vulnerability to criticisms such as that of Frederick Crews, who ridiculed the penchant of psychoanalysts to "base conclusions about early childhood on remarks made by supine grownups."

Infantile thoughts and wishes persist not in spite of everyday reality but precisely because of that reality.

At the same time, while not totally excluding attention to the actual world of interacting adults, the archaeological model subtly but significantly renders such concerns secondary and sometimes even superficial to many analysts. This has had problematic implications for the application of a psychoanalytic perspective to social analysis.

There is an important place for a psychoanalytic perspective in probing social and historical processes. The moving forces of history include more than the rational pursuit of national and class interests. Understanding the role of psychological conflict and of hid-

den desires, fantasies, and fears provides an essential dimension to social analysis. But ways of framing this understanding that stress "early" experiences can be incomplete and even seriously misleading.

Efforts, for example, to understand some of the differences between men and women that affect our society in so many ways have relied considerably in recent years on theories about differences in the earlier influences on boys and girls. According to Nancy Chodorow's influential book, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, boys must separate from the primary object of attachment in order to gain a sense of male identity, and this has fateful consequences. Girls, according to Chodorow,

> emerge with a stronger basis for experiencing another's needs or feelings as one's own.... Furthermore, girls do not define themselves in terms of the denial of pre-oedipal relational modes to the same extent as do boys. Therefore, regression to these modes tends not to feel as much a basic threat to their ego. From very early, then, because they are parented by a person of the same gender ... girls come to experience themselves as less differentiated than boys, as more continuous with and related to the external object-world.

Despite some oversimplifications, these conjectures are interesting and suggest research to determine whether children parented more equally by the two sexes turn out as predicted by the theory. But even if these highly speculative notions about largely preverbal years were to be confirmed, extremely important questions would remain. Theories which focus very sharply on the consequences of very early experiences can lead us away from asking how tendencies developed very early are maintained and, very importantly, how they can be altered.

However it comes about, for example, that men tend to be less openly expressive of fear, less able to cry and to seek help, once such a pattern is established it tends to be maintained by its own consequences. Males, in defending against such "soft" feelings, afford themselves fewer opportunities for gratifying or putting to rest these needs. As a result, they build up and become even more threatening. It thus becomes necessary to defend against them still more intensely, and the vicious circle is repeated.

The consequences of such a pattern of suppressed longing and unacknowledged defense on the part of males in our society are manifold. Very likely it contributes to the considerably shorter life span of males. There is evidence, for example, that male health is at considerably greater risk following the death of a spouse than is the health of women. Some experts have suggested that the ability of women to establish more nurturant mutual support networks than men do, as well as their greater ability to cry and express emotion, helps to mitigate the impact of the loss.

The male pattern of defense—the ongoing vicious circle of stoic unemotionality and counterdependency both generating and masking powerful but unconscious dependent longings—likely has other important consequences, both personal and social. The relations between the sexes, and the ways in which each seek to maintain—and thereby continue to generate the need for—particular images of gender are important determinants of almost every feature of our society. Indeed, it may well be that the self-perpetuating pattern of male defense against "softer" needs contributes to the likelihood of war. Examination of this dynamic as it repeats itself throughout the life cycle, and not just in terms of early childhood events, is essential to the understanding of a host of social processes.

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The departure from the archaeological model has significant implications for the practice of psychotherapy as well. For many years that model has placed serious limits on what analysts were permitted to do. The rules of psychoanalytic practice are largely negative ones, forbidding analysts to be too active or too personal, to give advice or direction, or to make use of the variety of new kinds of interventions that have been developed by therapists of other persuasions in recent years.

The rationale for these proscriptions is complex, but a number of key features are rooted in the assumptions of the model of the buried woolly mammoth. Since the primary forces feeding the patient's difficulties are seen as not just unconscious but—even more importantly—as inaccessible to the influence of ongoing events in the person's life, there would seem, from this perspective, to be little point in attempting directly to change anything about how the person is presently living. The "real" sources of the person's difficulties would remain untouched, and one disturbance or another would be expected to persist. Moreover, actions to aid the patient with his or her difficulties, outside the limited range of possibilities that analysis permits—mostly listening and occasionally interpreting the meaning of what is being said—are seen as not just ineffectual but as positively antithetical to the attempt at cure. A key aim of the therapy is for the patient to understand that the reactions s/he is having (to the analyst and to others in his or her life) have less to do with what is actually going on than with inclinations deeply buried within him/herself long ago. If the analyst were to intervene in a wider range of ways, or in any other way to make him/herself

known to the patient, it would be much harder for the patient to recognize that her or his reactions came from within. Only by remaining a shadowy, highly ambiguous figure, whose behavior (or apparent lack thereof) could not possibly justify the patient's feelings, could the analyst persuade the patient that his or her reactions to the analyst were rooted in the past and not in the realities of the interaction between them.

There are a number of difficulties with this position. To begin with, it is virtually impossible to remain anywhere near as anonymous as would be necessary for this approach to make sense. Consider, for example, the following description by Ralph Greenson, an analyst who believed firmly in the notion of analytic neutrality, but whose reports of what actually transpired showed an unusual candor. A patient of Greenson's, a Republican, had told him that he had tried for a while to adopt Greenson's liberal Democratic politics. Greenson, thinking that like any good analyst he had refrained from revealing his own inclinations, asked the patient how he knew about Greenson's politics. Greenson reports:

> He then told me that whenever he said anything favorable about a Republican politician, I always asked for associations. On the other hand, whenever he said anything hostile about a Republican, I remained silent, as though in agreement. Whenever he had a kind word for Roosevelt, I said nothing. Whenever he attacked Roosevelt, I would ask who did Roosevelt remind him of, as though I was out to prove that hating Roosevelt was infantile.

Interestingly, Greenson discussed this event under the rubric of "contaminations" of the transference. But there is little reason to think there was anything exceptional about this occurrence other than that the patient was able to articulate it to Greenson and that Greenson had the honesty to report it in public. Analysts cannot control such patterning in their interactions with patients for a reason one would think they would readily accept: As with everyone else, important aspects of their behavior are not under conscious control.

Even if anonymity were not so quixotic a goal, without the constraining assumptions of the model of the locked-in past there would be little reason to attempt it. Over the past few decades, important advances have been made by therapists operating from premises quite different from those of psychoanalysis. These therapists—behavior therapists, family therapists, and others—have developed innovative methods of intervention in ongoing patterns of behavior that have clearly demonstrated effectiveness. Based on the critique of the "woolly mammoth" model presented here, it has been possible to develop an integrated therapeutic approach in which these newer modes of intervention are combined with a psychodynamic understanding of unconscious motivation, conflict, and defense.

The key to reconciling approaches previously regarded as antithetical is an understanding of the circular nature of causality in human behavior. In contrast to the theory of the locked-in past, the model implied here is one in which unconscious processes are not impervious to life events but are maintained by the consequences they generate. They do indeed tend to persist, but the way they persist is different. As a consequence, the way they can be changed looks different. What becomes apparent is that there are *many* ways they can change—and many ways that change can be undermined.

The moving forces of history include more than the rational pursuit of national and class interest. Understanding the role of psychological conflict and of hidden desires, fantasies, and fears provides an essential dimension to social analysis.

Consider, for example, someone for whom early in life strong feelings of anger were stirred which needed to be defended against. As part of the defensive effort, such a person might be unusually meek, cooperative, unassertive. The defensive nature of these behaviors (some of which would in other circumstances be healthy and socially valuable) would be revealed by their being compulsive and undiscriminating and by indications in the person's dreams, slips of speech, and so forth, that behind them lay a good deal of anger. From the orthodox psychoanalytic perspective the anger would be seen as a direct continuation of the anger from childhood, still pressing for expression and hence still being desperately defended against. It would be like a foreign body in the psyche, having to do with a prior era in the patient's life, not with the present. The causality would be one-directional: The persisting anger from the past would clearly be the impetus and the defensive effort to ward it off a reaction to it.

But from the perspective I have offered here, which I call cyclical psychodynamics because of its emphasis on the repeated cycles in people's lives, the anger is as much a *product* of the person's way of life.as the cause.

(Continued on p. 90)

Reason and the Mob: The Politics of Representation

Gary Peller

you might be sitting in a history class/ listening to the analysis of "what was going on" in the thirties in new york, say/ and you hear nothing of shtetls where grandma's generation came from/ and the descriptions of sweatshops sounds oddly abstract and disembodied, that is, emphatically unsweaty-scientific-full-of-clear-light—spared of the dust of ripped cloth—and quiet so you can hear yourself (someone else) think and the machines' screaming bobbing has stopped, all put in terms of an analysis of the labor structure of the immigrant population, complete with statistics/ and politics sounds like this or that labor policy adopted by this or that administration/ not at all what grandma described going to work as/ but you came to school to learn/ and it feels like an interesting addition to what you already know from family history and hot tea mornings in kitchens in brooklyn apartments/ but it still seems like the viewpoint of the other, of the officials giving the official line on what was happening—the politics at the pinochle games just can't be reduced to "labor unrest"/ but we're going too fast

then it's years later and you wonder again about the shtetls and what you might have lost in the history class/ and you focus on some imaginary moment when it happened—when the statistics and the analysis of the labor structure were no longer just interesting additions to the lived experience in new york of grandma and her friends but instead became the reality itself; and grandma's description about why her boss acted like he did was just shtetl superstition, or worst, silly. because at some point the feeling of learning new things was replaced by the idea of learning things the way they really are, free from superstition and prejudice, and stuff might be left out for the sake of time but what was there, presented as knowledge, was knowledge, in a particular form and in a particular language that you recognize as not the way you started out looking at things. but we're for education, after all

and then you start wondering, what if the language of true knowledge that you learned, the way of talking about things intelligently and dispassionately, was itself a mythology that contained prejudice and superstition; and then that it's not just new york in the thirties, it's the way the whole picture is organized, a whole hierarchy of what counts and what doesn't that might present itself as neutral knowledge but is really just an ideology of power/ and the imaginary moment that you crystallized, the moment when the statistics and the analysis began to represent the true and the real against the superstitious, was the moment of self-denial and treachery as you implicitly agreed to a test of truth that would count out most of what you know most deeply. even if you can't prove it.

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The moment that I have tried to evoke here, the point at which we begin to believe the dominant Enlightenment teaching about the differences between truth and myth, between reason and sentiment, and simultaneously begin to suppress our particularity, our history and our place in the social world is incredibly important in the creation of social power in society. Even after the philosophers have abandoned the epistemological project, the attempt to find some firm ground to distinguish truth from myth, and even after the notion that the world can be neatly divided in the Cartesian way between the mind and the body has been rejected intellectually, these categories for perceiving and talking about the world continue to play powerful roles in our day-to-day lives, in the way that we understand ourselves and each other.

And the reason is simple. The construction of a realm of knowledge separate from superstition and the identification of a faculty of reason separate from passion was not, after all, simply some mind game played by philosophers and professional intellectuals. These categories have always served political roles in differentiating groups as worthy or unworthy and in justifying particular social hierarchies. They were not mere abstract musings about the ultimate nature of things, but rather part of the everyday texture of the way we construct our world and its possibilities. And a continuing thread of that construction of the world has been the notion that there is a radical distinction between truth, the representation of the way the world really is, and myth, an interpretation of the world that cannot be

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proven and thus is merely sentimental or poetic. It is this sense, of some grand distinction between truth and myth, that is supposed to distinguish the rational from the emotive, the legal from the political, the scientific from the aesthetic, the civilized from the primitive, the objective from the subjective, the neutral from the interested, and fact from opinion.

Which brings us to the topic of this essay: the current intellectual controversy about new critical attitudes toward interpretation. For the past decade or so in the United States, and a little longer in France, traditional interpretative assumptions have been directly and fundamentally challenged by the rise of "deconstruction" and other "post-structuralist" approaches to interpretation. Here the notion of "interpretation" is broadly conceived to include issues about the meaning of such things as literary works, newspapers, philosophical texts, and legal documents, as well as the meaning of social events such as the relations between doctors and patients, teachers and students, or workers and managers. The general idea, characterized by the term "critical theory," is that similar issues are confronted whenever one is involved in thinking about the meaning of social products, whether those social products are the traditional "texts" of literary interpretation or, in the newer forms of critical practice, the "texts" of our social institutions and interactions.

The construction of a realm of knowledge separate from superstition and the identification of a faculty of reason separate from passion have always served political roles in differentiating groups as worthy or unworthy and in justifying particular social hierarchies.

The labels "deconstruction" and "post-structuralist" have been used fairly loosely to describe what are actually widely diverse critical practices. The new critical modes do, however, share the commitment that there is no possibility of a neutral or objective interpretative practice or of merely representing (as opposed to interpreting) the world. When we attempt simply to represent, free from bias or distortion, we must always do so through language, broadly conceived as a socially-created way to categorize perception of and communication about the world.

But language necessarily mediates perception and communication by shaping ways of thinking about the world that are themselves not necessary and natural, but social and contingent. When we try to move beyond language and rhetoric, beyond the means of representation, to what is being represented, we find only more language, more metaphor, more interpretation. According to the new critical approaches, there is no objective reference point, separate from culture and politics, available to distinguish truth from ideology, fact from opinion, or representation from interpretation. And thus philosophy, science, economics, literary criticism, and the other intellectual "disciplines" can be interpreted according to the same process that has been traditionally reserved for literature and art—they, too, can be read merely as "texts" organizing the thick texture of the world according to their own metaphors. They enjoy no privileged status vis-à-vis the "merely" aesthetic or subjective because they, too, are simply languages, simply ways of carving up what seems similar and what seems different in the world. Moreover, these approaches are "post-structuralist" precisely because they reject the notion that there is some deeper logic that governs the production of meaning, and thus they include within their critique the grand theories of Freud, Levi-Strauss, Marx, and other structuralists who purport to have found a unified, underlying scheme of social life that itself stands outside the play of rhetoric and metaphor.

This is not, of course, to say that the new critical approaches deny that we can, and do, make decisions about the world—about what is important and what is bullshit, about what makes sense to us and what doesn't. The point is that there is no grand organizing theory or principle with which to justify our social choices as neutral and apolitical, as the products of reason and truth rather than of passion or ideology.

These new critical approaches, in short, deny the central Enlightenment notions that we have described above, that is, that there is a difference between rational, objective representation and interested, biased interpretation. This new attitude toward interpretation emerged first in literary criticism and philosophy and now has at least some practitioners in virtually all the fields of the humanities, including sociology, anthropology, history, economics, and law.

The controversy about the deconstructive stance is in many ways played out in professional journals as a typically dry, intellectual competition between philosophical positions. (My theory is bigger than yours.) But the issues that have emerged in the controversy seem to me to present important political questions about the way that power works in social life—questions that revolve around what I have described above as the struggle over truth and reality presented as one

confronts official knowledge and compares it with one's own experience of and feeling for the world.

As I see it, the deconstructive approach puts at issue what have been the traditional mainstays of our liberal and progressive commitment to Enlightenment culture. Indeed the whole way that we conceive of liberal progress (overcoming prejudice in the name of truth, seeing through the distortions of ideology to get at reality, surmounting ignorance and superstition with the acquisition of knowledge) is called into question. The new critical approaches suggest that what has been presented in our social-political and our intellectual traditions as knowledge, truth, objectivity, and reason are actually merely the effects of a particular form of social power, the victory of a particular way of representing the world that then presents itself as beyond mere interpretation, as truth itself. The deconstructive attitude is oriented toward uncovering the ways in which, say, the rational sociology of New York in the 1930s is a cultural and political construct, built on exclusion of other, "less worthy," knowledge, like my grandmother's knowledge of her social situation.

The deconstructive approach is controversial to traditionalists because it challenges what they believe their whole task is about. If what separates the rational from the irrational is the claim that the rational approach is able to purify itself of ideology and mere social conventionality, the deconstructionist wants to challenge reason on its own ground and demonstrate that what gets called reason and knowledge is simply a particular way of organizing perception and communication, a way of organizing and categorizing experience that is social and contingent but whose socially constructed nature and contingency have been suppressed. When the particular way that knowledge and legitimacy have been organized is rejected, the traditionalists see an abyss of meaning and therefore charge that the deconstructive stance is "nihilist."

On the other hand, to those who have already rejected the traditionalist vision of knowledge and truth as ideological and biased, the deconstructive approach seems abstract and apolitical, a kind of super-skeptical discourse that is of no help in getting past the ideology of official knowledge to the imbedded reality of our lives. Moreover, to many committed leftists, the deconstructive stance appears disengaged, as a kind of radical chic that stands outside the existential questions we face in social life.

I believe that the rise of the new interpretative approaches marks an important movement toward unmasking the politics of intellectual life, and opens up new possibilities for understanding the politics of social life more generally. Accordingly, I want to discuss deconstruction with a particular focus on the social and political issues that I believe are imbedded in the current intellectual controversy. And rather than attempt some kind of summary of the "premises" of deconstruction or post-structuralism (a slightly absurd task for an intellectual movement that poses itself against totalizing theories or methods), I will first provide an example of a deconstructive reading of a text.

I have chosen parts of an article from the *Virginia Quarterly Review* by Nathan Scott, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia. Since Scott is writing about deconstruction, which he believes has engendered a "crisis in humanistic studies," his article provides a convenient starting point from which we can get an idea of what a deconstructive approach might do with a particular text and at the same time consider the political and social implications of the deconstructive stance through the issues that are raised in interpreting Scott.

> Today, of course, the enterprising anti-humanism of the post-Structuralist movement is in full tide, and it presents us with the great example in contemporary intellectual life of the new *trahison des clercs*. This phrase forms the title of a once famous book by the French critic Julien Benda which was first published in 1927, and in English the phrase is best rendered as the "betrayal of the intellectuals".... [Benda] was moved to advance the rather extravagant charge that the typical intellectuals of the modern period, identifying themselves with class rancor and nationalist sentiment, have abdicated their true calling in the interests of political passion: instead of quelling the mob and beckoning it toward true community, they have joined the mob, concurring in its lust for quick results and adopting its devotion to the pragmatic and the expedient.... And it is his fiercely reproachful term that appears now to be the appropriate epithet for the intellectual insurgency that is currently sowing a profound disorder in the ... humanities.

This paragraph is supposed to form the general context for Scott's warning about the threat of post-structuralism to modern intellectual life. As Scott sees it, the humanist approaches he defends depend for their "cultural authority ... on what can be claimed for them as disciplines aimed at *knowledge* and *truth*." The problem with the new critical approach is that it is a form of "nihilism"—as such, it "radically impugns any truly cognitive dimension of the human endeavor. It strikes at its most vital nerve—more threateningly than anything else in our period, since it strikes from within."

Scott identifies the humanist approach with the "intellectuals" and the "post-Structuralist" approaches with the "mob." But in order for these associations to constitute an argument against the new approaches, the reader must first understand what is bad about the mob and what is good about the intellectuals. Thus, a useful place to begin unpacking the text would be to determine what the contrast between the intellectual and the mob means and what conceptions allow us to make sense of the elevation of the intellectual over the mob.

There is no grand organizing theory or principle with which to justify our social choices as neutral and apolitical, as the products of reason and truth rather than of passion or ideology.

Scott's rhetoric helps in this analysis because it contains a group of associations with the intellectuals and with the mob that can assist us in determining its meaning. The distinction between the mob and the intellectuals and the justification for the superiority of the intellectuals are suggested by the fact that the mob is characterized by social desire—it is associated with "class rancor," "nationalist sentiment," "political passion," "lust," "disorder," and "insurgency."

The intellectual, on the other hand, stands in contrast to these features: the intellectual is supposed to represent order and dispassion rather than "rancor" and "sentiment," neutrality as opposed to politics, the "disciplined" search for "knowledge and truth" rather than the lustful satisfaction of passion and desire, the ideal and the long-term as opposed to the "pragmatic and the expedient."

In short, Scott's argument seems animated by a structure of meaning where reason and passion are distinguished from each other. Reason is associated with the intellect, knowledge, truth, neutrality, and objectivity; passion is associated with disorder, politics, sentiment, class rancor and unthinking nationalism. Finally, reason is elevated to a superior position vis-à-vis emotion.

Next we must consider why reason should presumptively enjoy this privileged status, what it is about the two categories that makes it seem beyond question that right-thinking and progressive minded people would "naturally" understand from the text both the contrast between the two categories and the superiority of the rational over the emotive.

To understand the way that Scott succeeds in communicating, to uncover the manner in which his language resonates with what a reader might already understand about the world, we might at this point imagine the contrast between the rationality of the intellectuals and the passion of the mob in terms of individual, rather than social, issues. Here we recognize the relationship between the mob and the intellectual in the relationship between reason and desire, the mind and the body. Just as the text associates being civilized at the social level with subordinating the mob—social desire—to the intellectual, so we have reference to a cultural language in which being civilized and mature as an individual means subordinating the passions to reason, making the mind the ruler of the body rather than the other way around. In addition, the sense of the temporal relation between the short-sightedness of the mob and the long-view of the intellectuals is repeated in the notion that the mind must delay the satisfaction of desire in the civilized individual—the regulative function of reason is temporal, to keep emotion and desire in their proper places at their proper times, to resist the animal urge for immediate satisfaction.

And at this level of the individual, the full force of the superiority of the intellectual and the mob is exposed, for the body represents our natural, animal side, and the mind our human side. Just as the intellectual must "quell" the mob's passion and lust in order for the humanist position to survive, so the mind must quell the urges of the body if we are to be civilized and escape our animal selves. Our animal passions represent the continuing hold of nature over us, just as the possibility of mob action represents the need for the continuing vigilance of the intellectual, lest social life degenerate to an animal state. To transfer the issues back to the social level, then, Scott's appeal is to a general language of social progress and development—the intellectual is favored over the mob because the mob is, in a sense, less human, closer to nature, primitive.

We have in our cultural knowledge concrete historical images that support the reasonableness of the hierarchy of reason over passion. Probably the most powerful single image in the American experience is the image of the Southern lynch mob—there, in the common understanding, the mob, ruled by irrational racism against Blacks, bypassed the orderly, rational, and judicial means of dispensing justice in favor of the "pragmatic and the expedient," simply acting on the basis of their passionate emotions. In this image, reason can play a heroic role and justify its privileged status vis-à-vis passion, by standing against the forces of the mob and speaking from principles, objectivity, and dispassion.

(Continued on p. 92)

At the New Moon: Rosh Hodesh

Marge Piercy

Once a two day holiday, the most sacred stretches
in the slow swing of the epicycling year;
then a remnant, a half holiday for women,
a little something to keep us less unsatisfied;
then abandoned at enlightenment along with herbals
and amulets, bubeh mysehs, grandmothers' stories.

Now we fetch it up from the bottom of the harbor,
a bone on which the water has etched itself,
and from this bone we fashion a bird, extinct
and never yet born, evolving feathers
from our hair, blood from our salt, strength
from our backs, vision from our brains.

Fly out over the city, dove of the light,
owl of the moon, for we are weaving your wings
from our longings, diaphanous and bony.
Pilots and rabbis soared. The only females
to fly were witches and demons, the power
to endure and the power to destroy alone

granted us. But we too can invent,
can make, can do, undo. Here we stand
in a circle, the oldest meeting, the shape
women assume when we come together
that echoes ours, the flower, the mouth,
breast, opening, pool, the source.

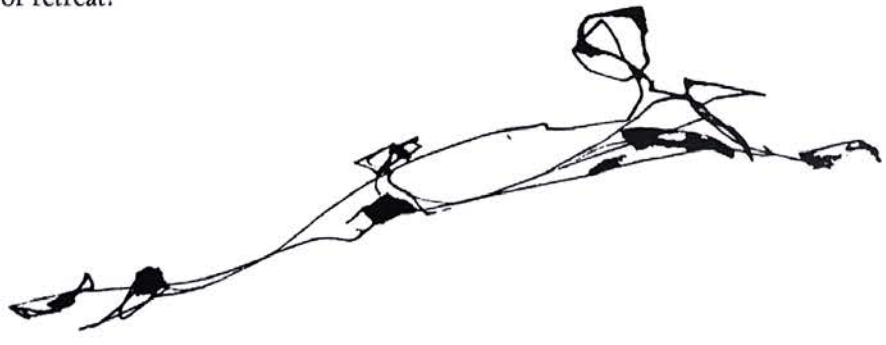
We greet the moon that is not gone
but only hidden, unreflecting, inturned
and introspective, gathering strength to grow
as we greet the first slim nail paring
of her returning light. Don't we understand
the strength that wells out of retreat?

Can we not learn to turn in to our circle,
to sink into the caves of our silence,
to drink lingering by those deep cold wells,
to dive into the darkness of the heart's storm
until under the crashing surge of waves
it is still except for our slow roaring breath?

We need a large pattern of how things change
that shows us not a straight eight-lane tearing
through hills blasted into bedrock; not stairs
mounting to the sacrificial pyramid where hearts
are torn out to feed the gods of power, but the coil
of the moon, that epicycling wheel

that grows fat and skinny, advances and withers,
four steps forward and three back, and yet nothing
remains the same, for the mountains are piled up
and worn down, for the rivers eat into the stone
and the fields blow away and the sea makes sand
spits and islands and carries off the dune.

Let the half day festival of the new moon
remind us how to retreat and grow strong, how to
reflect and learn, how to push our bellies forward,
how to roll and turn and pull the tides up, up
when we need them, how to come back each time
we look dead, making a new season to shine.



Marge Piercy is a poet and a novelist living in Wellfleet, Massachusetts.

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Wissenschaft and Values

Ismar Schorsch

The centennial of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America ought to prompt some reflection on the legacy of modern Jewish scholarship, for the rabbinical schools founded by Zacharias Frankel, Sabato Morais and Solomon Schechter played pioneering roles in the history of the discipline. The Breslau Seminary constituted the first institutional framework in Germany and, in truth, in Europe for the academic study of Judaism and, no less importantly, dared to make of it the bedrock of rabbinic education. At the turn of the century, Breslau's American counterpart, especially under the leadership of Schechter, served as one of the main conduits for transplanting the new learning to these shores. Both seminaries were part of a small number of Jewish institutions that nurtured a field of study long deemed unworthy of admission to the halls of the university. In the process they set a high standard for applying the canons of Western scholarship to the sacred texts of Judaism and created a rabbinic leadership equipped with startlingly new conceptions of the Jewish past.

The continued exclusion of Judaica from the university bespoke a view of Judaism that still accorded with the unequal and separate political status of medieval Jewry. A new political status for Jews begged for a reevaluation of Judaism. It made little sense to invite a minority into the body politic for whose religion one had only contempt, unless the ultimate expectation was to free them of that religious legacy. With nearly prophetic insight, Leopold Zunz argued that respect for Judaism was the very precondition for emancipation.

> So let us grant the spirit its right. Approval of the individual will follow from approval of his spirit. We should perceive and respect in Jewish literature an organic spiritual activity, which accords with world developments and is thereby of general interest, which inspires empathy by virtue of its struggles. This always unprotected literature, never subvented, often persecuted, whose authors never belonged to the mighty of the earth, has a history, a philosophy, a poetry which makes it the equal of other literatures. If this be granted, must not then these Jewish authors and in fact the Jews themselves attain to the citizenship of the spirit? Must not then humanity spread out from the fountain of scholarship among the people, paving the way for understanding and harmony? The extension of equality to the Jews in society will follow from the extension of equality to the academic study of Judaism.*

It is no historical accident that in the country of its birth, where Wissenschaft des Judentums (the scientific study of Judaism) never gained entry into the university, emancipation would eventually be revoked.

I stress this political import of Jewish studies to highlight the significance of what has happened to the field in America since the 1960s. The proliferation of courses, professors, and programs in the university attests to the unheralded political security of Jews in American society. The theoretical right to be different has been anchored in a high regard for Judaism. Emancipation required of Jews to explain themselves to a Christian society pervaded by the prejudice of centuries. In 1949 Louis Finkelstein wrote in the foreword to his ambitious collaborative synthesis entitled *The Jews* "it is no extravagance to call Judaism the unknown religion of our time."† Nearly four decades later we can declare that the ever-broadening study of Jews and Judaism at the pinnacle of the educational system has diminished that ignorance, enhanced the dignity of the discipline, and above all solidified the place of Jews in American society. The contribution of the Seminary, especially under Dr. Finkelstein, played a vital role in that process of mediation and quest for respect.

The scientific study of Judaism is more than footnotes, variant readings, and bibliographies. These are but the fearsome trappings of the field. They are not to be taken as the tools of a burial society or the diet of fallen angels. Every serious intellectual and artistic enterprise has its arcane mode of expression which eludes and irritates the uninitiated. At the core of modern Jewish scholarship there is a new way of thinking about Judaism. Emancipation exposed Jews inexorably to the historical perspective: to understanding the present in terms of the past and the past in terms of itself. A religious tradition indifferent to the category of time in comprehending itself, that indeed made a virtue of leveling chronologically all its literary strata—*ein mukdam u-meuhar ba-Torah*—was suddenly confronted with a mode of

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*Leopold Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur* (Berlin, 1845), p. 21.
†Louis Finkelstein, ed., *The Jews*, 3rd. ed., I (Philadelphia, 1960), p. xxvi.

cognition that rested on contextual interpretation. Dating became the key to eliciting the meaning of a text and no contemporaneous piece of evidence—Jewish or non-Jewish—could be arbitrarily dismissed in the interpretive exercise. The title of Krochmal's early and seminal response to the challenge of history, *Moreh Nevukhei ha-Zeman*, adroitly alludes to his audience—Jews perplexed by the introduction of time.

It was not the first era in which a new consciousness had ruptured the continuity of Jewish thinking. The midrashic thought processes of the Second Commonwealth had transformed the literary legacy of the First Commonwealth. The precedence of sage over prophet signaled not only the end of Scripture but its subordination to a method of reading pioneered by the Greeks. The sustained exegetical genius of the rabbis eventually lifted the Oral Law to the rank of the gate keeper, the final arbiter of the meaning of the Written Law. Similarly, by the tenth century Islam had begun to imbue Jews with a new philosophic sensibility. The anthropomorphic language which gives the Bible its pathos and immediacy was suddenly felt to be offensive. Jews were acutely reminded of God's unfathomable transcendence, and whether in philosophical or mystical terms, they struggled to restore God to His rightful grandeur without losing access to His presence. Against the backdrop of these earlier encounters with Greek thought, Zunz located his own age of Wissenschaft. "Three times did Jews encounter the Hellenic spirit, the emancipator of nations."* Each time an infusion of consciousness had rendered the natural painfully problematic. Each time it had provoked a confrontation that led to an outburst of creative cultural transmission. Confrontation, it seems to me, is one of the wellsprings of the still undiminished creative vigor of the Jewish people.

Wissenschaft des Judentums, therefore, is the most important legacy of German Jewry, a community that served as both cutting edge and laboratory for the emancipation experiment. In its transcendence of constraints, modern Jewish scholarship is the intellectual counterpart to the political freedom of emancipation. It embodies a basic shift in perspective from the dogmatic to the undogmatic, from the exegetical to the conceptual, from the acceptance of unexamined knowledge to a deep concern with method, from resting content with the normative texts of Ashkenazic Jewry to an ever-widening canvass of Jewish creativity. Wissenschaft as ethos bespeaks a profound respect for the integrity of the individual entity—be it fact, text or person. It bitterly contests the essentially disjointed and disjunctive way of reading texts sanctified by rabbinic tradition.

Above all, Wissenschaft venerates the importance of details. In the memorable motto of Abby Warburg, "God is to be found in minutiae." For all his antagonism toward the Wissenschaft of his predecessors, Gershom Scholem personified its spirit when he wrote in 1945: "We have sought to submerge ourselves in the study of details and of the detail of the detail.... We have sought the light of the scientific idea, which illuminates the welter of details like sunlight dancing on the water, and yet we know.... that it dwells only in the details themselves."† Attention to details, a maddening degree of facticity, became the scalpel by which Zunz and his disciples cut through the miasma of errors and the overgrowth of *derash* which obliterated the original and literal sense of a text. Not unlike the circle of the Vilna Gaon, the practitioners of Wissenschaft were in hungry pursuit of the *peshat*, the plain meaning of ancient texts. What distinguished the two groups was the equipment they were prepared to use in the chase. With their receptivity to gentile wisdom, Western scholars were uninhibited about adding to the cache of internal tools already available.

One way of understanding Wissenschaft des Judentums is as a collective act of translation, a sustained effort to cast the history, literature, and institutions of Judaism in Western categories.

In fact, I have long felt that the single-minded quest for the literal meaning of the text is what rendered Wissenschaft scholars deaf to the mystic chords of Kabbalah. To be sure, questions of authorship also got in the way. The traditional and often untenable claims for the antiquity of mystical texts provoked the scholarly wrath of historical positivists crusading for truth. But, in the final analysis, as champions of the long-neglected *peshat*, they were unable to appreciate even the distortions of midrash, let alone the exegetical violence of the Kabbalah. The source of their revùlsion was not a rational bent per se, because some of the bitterest critics of Kabbalah like Luzzatto and Graetz had a pronounced romantic streak, but rather an obsession with what they held to be the sanctity of the literal

*Leopold Zunz, "Essay on the Geographical Literature of the Jews" in A. Asher, *The Itinerary of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela*, (London and Berlin, 1841), p. 303.

†Gershom Scholem, *Devarim be-Go* (Tel Aviv, 1975), p. 401.

sense of the text. It was only the rare scholar like a Landauer, a Joel, or a Jellinek who rose above these alien and confining categories of analysis to approximate a more sympathetic understanding of the Jewish mystical tradition.

But the real evaluative question is not what is Wissenschaft des Judentums but, rather, what has it accomplished? The European founders of the academic study of Judaism suffer from a notoriously bad press. The stature of Scholem as a scholar has given his highly charged indictment an authority which seems to settle the matter. He could not forgive his forerunners for their denigration of what he believed to be the lifeblood of rabbinic Judaism. And yet the basis of his judgment was far too narrow. For all his achievements, he tended to minimize their contributions to his own field. No less significant, the resounding impact of his own career is irrefutable evidence of the continuing centrality of scholarship in the shaping of modern Judaism. Would the strains of Jewish mysticism beckon our attention if not for the gargantuan labor of excavation and reconstruction performed by Scholem?

One way of understanding Wissenschaft des Judentums is as a collective act of translation, a sustained effort to cast the history, literature, and institutions of Judaism in Western categories. Emancipated Jews quickly lost access to the language, wisdom, and symbols of their religion. Mendelssohn's translation of the Torah proved to be emblematic. Luther's translation would not do, for Jews and Christians read Scripture differently. Mendelssohn's fidelity to the plain sense of the text and interest in Hebrew grammar and literary style adumbrated emphases of modern scholarship. More important, his work bespoke the need to retain contact with the past through a new medium. Without translation, sacred texts would soon have become sealed for all except the cognoscenti. The Hebrew Bible would be translated at least ten more times into German during the next one hundred and fifty years, telling evidence of a broad and lively religious sentiment, with the Zunz Bible alone going through some eighteen editions.

But of course I am not speaking of translation merely in the literal sense. The whole gigantic enterprise to impose a semblance of system on an untidy traditional Judaism, to recover the contours of Jewish creativity, to reconstruct Jewish history, to study normative religious texts from fresh perspectives, and to mediate the burgeoning results in a variety of popular forms constituted a rendering of the Jewish experience in terms comprehensible to the Western mind. In the process vast changes in self-perception occurred. To give but one example, Mordecai Kaplan is inconceivable without Zunz and Steinschneider, who expanded the conception of Jewish literature to include religious and secular works by Jews in any language. While Zunz unfurled the unimagined fecundity of Jews in Hebrew, Steinschneider demonstrated their deep involvement in the literature of other languages. The conception of Judaism as a religious civilization rested squarely on a century of prodigious scholarly excavation.

The effective translation of Judaism into Western categories, in turn, served to inculcate Jews with a sense of historical consciousness that at least partially offset the loss of communal constraints and personal piety. At the end of the nineteenth century Dubnow, who sought to replicate the achievements of German Jewish scholarship in the Russian empire, could write "in these days the keystone of national unity seems to be the historical consciousness."* In an age of individual freedom and growing secularism, scholarship had become the ground for consent. Accordingly, Zunz detested Jewish scholars who disparaged their subject matter. "It is better to praise Israel's antiquity two or three times than to traduce it once," he declared in 1846. "Where the craft goes under (i. e. of Jewish scholarship), the craftsmen preceded it."† And of course no scholar contributed more directly to fortifying and fertilizing Jewish consciousness than Heinrich Graetz, whose extraordinary blend of narrative vigor and scholarly depth stirred a legion of readers, including men as diverse as Hess, Dubnow, Scholem and Rosenzweig.

To be sure, much of that consciousness was filled with the history of Jewish suffering. The martyrdom of past generations laid claim to the loyalty of their descendants. A common fate united Jews even in an age of unprecedented individualism. But the undue attention given to persecution is precisely what linked the modern mentality to older layers of Jewish consciousness. The memory of misfortune is a dominant thought pattern in the history of Jewish consciousness. The modern historian merely had more tools at his disposal to carry out the ancient rabbinic injunction of *mahabevin et ha-zarot*—to preserve the memory of the community's affliction. Each new misfortune amplified ancient strains. In the aftermath of the decimation of eastern European Jewry in World War I, Simon Bernfeld produced his majestic if funereal anthology entitled *Sefer ha-D'maot*—The Book of Tears—the literary remains of Jewish suffering through the ages. Our own preoccupation with the Holocaust is fueled not only by the horrendous uniqueness of the event itself but also by the affinity of the subject to very deep constructs of the Jewish mind.

*Simon Dubnow, *Nationalism and History*, ed. by Koppel S. Pinson (Philadelphia, 1958), p. 266.

†Leopold Zunz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, II (Berlin, 1876), p. 190.

Finally, the emergence of Wissenschaft has made historical thinking the dominant universe of discourse among modern Jews. Reading the past correctly has become the key to future planning. The countless programmatic debates which punctuate the history of the emancipation era are redolent with historical rhetoric. At the threshold of the classical age of German historicism, the German philosopher Schelling spoke of the historian as a "backward-looking prophet." The stuff of prophecy was historical research; to look forward one had to look backward. "The child is father of the man." The most formidable thinkers of modern Judaism were its historians, with the example of Scholem being merely a case in point. To restrict the history of modern Jewish thought to philosophers or theologians is to impoverish the field. It was Jewry's great historians who provided the values and verities, the constructs and consolations, the programs and paradigms that informed Jewish identity and prompted Jewish action. At the end of the first edition of his *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Baron intoned the normative role of his work.

> To put it in a nutshell: the interpretation and reinterpretation of the history of the people, a kind of *historic Midrash*, is now to serve as a guidance for the future. A new divine book has opened itself before the eyes of the faithful: the book of human and Jewish destinies, guided by some unknown and unknowable ultimate Power. This book, if properly understood, would seem to answer the most perplexing questions of the present and the future.*

Written a few years after the ascendancy of the Nazis, the book placed the most dispassionate scholarship at the service of Jewish survival. It was by no means the first time in the history of Jewish studies that historical perspective had turned into consolation.

Modern scholarship has permanently affected the way we think about Judaism. It constitutes the necessary point of departure. To ignore its insights and discoveries is to return to a state of dogmatic thinking. That was the fatal flaw in Franz Rosenzweig's alluring conception of Judaism as ahistorical. In his rejection of jüdische Wissenschaft, he embraced a static view of Judaism that posited its exit from world history after 586 BCE and argued for its quotidian embodiment of the final messianic goal. On the contrary, the cumulative evidence of modern scholarship and the achievement of a Jewish state suggest the extraordinary ability of Judaism to contend with survival in the very midst of the historical maelstrom. It is simply a starry-eyed reading of Jewish history to assert that Judaism promoted a surrender of engagement and creativity in this world for a mundane foretaste of ultimate redemption.

It is a starry-eyed reading of Jewish history to assert that Judaism promoted a surrender of engagement and creativity in this world for a mundane foretaste of ultimate redemption.

Entirely at odds with the romantic mood of Rosenzweig, the great accomplishment of The Jewish Theological Seminary, long a center for the study of rabbinics, has been to reveal the degree to which rabbinic Judaism was an integral part of the Greco-Roman world. It was not the presumptuous fabrication of schoolmen insulated from the dilemmas of life, but rather the concerned and resourceful response of men who understood the challenges posed by their time. Witness the declared intent which informed Saul Lieberman's *Greek in Jewish Palestine:*

> In the present book the author tries to develop the subject of the relation between the Jewish and non-Jewish cultural spheres in Palestine. This undertaking, I feel is justified and desirable in view of the opinion to which my very learned colleagues, the Talmudists, persistently adhere, namely that the Rabbis were very little influenced by the outside Hellenistic world.*

It is worth recalling in this regard that the renowned Yeshiva of Volozhin was closed by the Russian authorities in 1892 for refusing to introduce the most elementary level of secular education. In contrast, emancipation sensitized Jewish scholars to dimensions undreamed of in the most well-mined Jewish texts. Lieberman's dictum and the massive scholarship behind it project a paradigm of dynamic rabbinic leadership unafraid to face the bullying and blandishments of a triumphant civilization. The survival of Judaism, historically considered, bespeaks an unceasing dialectic between provincialism and responsiveness, constancy and innovation. □

*Salo W. Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, first ed., II (New York, 1937), p. 457.

*Saul Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York, 1942), p. vii.

Scholarship Is Not Enough

Arthur Green

In 1945 the late Gershom Scholem published a scathing and somewhat sensational article entitled "Amid Second Thoughts on the Science of Judaism." Accusing Leopold Zunz and Moritz Steinschneider, the founding fathers of the Wissenschaft des Judentums, of having "danced amid the graves" of the Jewish past (one to which they sought only to offer a "decent burial"), Scholem discusses the renewal of the scholarly enterprise in the context of the Jewish national revival, that scholarship conducted in Hebrew and in the Land of Israel. Scholem the scholar and Zionist might have wanted a truly Zionist renewal of Jewish studies, one in which the drama of Jewish national rebirth would be accompanied by truly dramatic breakthroughs in historical self-understanding. Thus far he finds only disappointment:

> Is this what we were longing for? Is this the inheritance? Is this our destiny? Where is that building we had promised to erect, that house of so deep a foundation in our shared existence that it would reach into the skies? ... Or might we have seen wrongly? Could it be that we blew the shofar when the time had not yet come, like those fools in Jerusalem of old? Perhaps the spiritual air is still polluted and there is no renewal. Then we would have announced something that never happened, a redeemed Jewish scholarship that has not yet come to be.

A great deal has happened in Jewish scholarship in the last forty years. The acceptance of Scholem's own work and the far-reaching implications it has had for our understanding and definition of Judaism in several periods is but one of several earth-shattering—or perhaps I should better say "idol-smashing"—events that has happened in Judaic Studies in the postwar period. Foremost among these is the placing of Jewish religious and intellectual creativity in the context of the broader cultural realms in which it existed. Even the Talmud, long kept aloof from contextual study, is viewed as a literature reflecting Jewish life in late antiquity, rather than as the abstract creation of trans-historical schoolmen. The impact of the social sciences on every aspect of historical research has also had a revolutionary effect on Judaica in recent decades. Controversies once described as theological in nature are now examined for their social and economic implications. Sophisticated historians of Jewry now face, along with their colleagues in other historical fields, the difficult questions raised by the sociology of knowledge as to the nature and unspoken assumptions of historical judgments. As psychoanalysis has sought to assert itself as the most profound of sciences (or most compelling of myths) in the late twentieth century, both heroes and villains of Jewish history are subjected to psychohistorical investigation. The growth of history of religions as a field and the new understandings of Judaism it has offered—all of these have taken us worlds beyond Zunz and Steinschneider. Even the works of such early twentieth century masters as Solomon Schechter, Simon Dubnov, and others now seem simplistic to us. The truly incredible growth of Judaica as a field, both in North America and in Israel, can also hardly be dismissed. There are now many times more working scholars, positions, monographs, and journals devoted to such research than would have been dreamed of in the prewar period. It would seem that in America and Israel—places offering a freedom from apologetics unknown to the early Wissenschaft scholars and a range of scholarly sophistication far exceeding that of nineteenth-century Germany—Jewish scholarship has finally come into its own.

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And yet Scholem's challenge still seems to haunt Americans as well as Israelis. Has there yet been a true renewal of Jewish studies? What might be the indicators of such a renewal? Has the old value of Torah study, so central to Jewish life throughout the ages, yet found a garb in which it will excite the minds of our century's Jews? Has *Wissenschaft* been able to create a compelling rationale for the continuation of Jewish existence, or even for its own self-perpetuation? One might argue that these are not its tasks, that a scholarly endeavor cannot be burdened with constructive rather than reflective tasks. Was Scholem here not demanding—or are we not demanding in his name—a function that more properly belongs to the sphere of prophets than

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that of professors? Perhaps so. But if our scholarship is to meet the pressing needs of the Jewish people, it must be more than critical and historically sound.

The suggestion that history plays a role in our age similar to that played in Jewish history by the great intellectual currents of centuries past seems in itself somewhat dated. Indeed Wissenschaft first blossomed in a nineteenth-century Germany that was possessed with the historic muse, an outgrowth of the Romantic movement. The fascination with history in that age, we can now say with the wisdom of hindsight, helped usher Germans as well as Jews into an era of national self-assertion. But the heirs to the Wissenschaft tradition who live in America have made their home amid one of the least historically self-aware of peoples. Perhaps because of our nation's long period of peace and relative stability, Americans are little driven by the quest for historical authenticity. Change is too permanent and accepted a feature of the American landscape to allow history to provide the ideological underpinning of this nation; Americans will not do things because their ancestors did them, nor will they be terribly excited by any but the greatest discoveries of literary history or archaeology.

If Jewish learning is to speak to future generations in America it will have to find an American voice. Such a voice is neither that of Volozhin nor that of Berlin. It will have to recognize history but be willing to go beyond it in response to an American search for meaning that is couched in essentially religious terms. Judaism will be important to American Jews because it has something to say about God and "man," because it offers a reason to go on living and dreaming of a future despite the Holocaust and the nuclear shadow, because it is a way of being human in a deeply dehumanizing age. The Jewish scholar, who must take care not to become an apologist again, can alone provide the raw materials for this most important construction. Our community has yet to create a new *talmid hakham* (scholar/sage) who can be both teacher and leader of Jews as they face a new and uncertain future. The Judaic scholar cannot complete this task, to coin a phrase, but neither is he or she free to escape it. Academically, perhaps even intellectually, Jewish scholarship has been an overwhelming success. Spiritually it has been something of a failure.

It is clear that the university cannot be the sole setting for the accomplishment of this task, which is at least as much that of rabbis as that of academics. There are subtle as well as obvious ways in which the university setting is alien to the spirit of traditional Jewish learning and inimical to the task at hand. Jewish learning has a devotional character, even if unarticulated, and a social context which are not those of the university. The personal concerns Jews bring to their reading of texts—theological, halachic, or simply anecdotal—are inappropriate to the academy. The graduate seminar may become a *hevra* engaged in *talmud torah* only if those unwilling to see it as such are excluded. The nurturing of a search for personal meaning in the sources is something the university instructor—especially the untenured one—does while casting a nervous glance over his shoulder.

Knowing all that we do about the this-worldly origins of texts, practices, and beliefs, we must nevertheless insist that all of our Jewish existence is brushed by the divine hand and thus continues to be for us a source of personal and ultimate meaning.

Here I must turn to the role of the seminaries. Few as we are, we seminary faculties are the only ones who can and must commit ourselves to the high-level of a vital Judaism. Only in the context of a Jewish institution, dedicated to the ongoing life of our people, can we teach and study the Jewish past in such a way that will make for the building of a Jewish future. Torah—a new living Jewish wisdom built on the legacy of all the ages past—will not go forth from Harvard, Columbia, or Pennsylvania. It *must* go forth from Jewish institutions which are both centers of learning and of planning for the Jewish future. The task of Jewish seminaries is too important for us to allow ourselves to become small parochial universities. Only we can take the legacy of Jewish learning and breathe new life into it.

We may not seek to accomplish this holy task by recourse to intellectual dishonesty or sleight of hand. Our *mitzvah* of *Talmud Torah*, to say it in traditional terms, must not become a *mitzvah ha-ba'ah ba'averah* (a good deed brought about by wicked means). We are all products of the late twentieth century world, and our seminaries, unlike the yeshivot for *ba'aley teshuvah* (penitents), are not places where either faculty or students should be expected to check their twentieth-century intellectual baggage at the door as they enter. We, too, are fully aware of historical development, of comparative studies, of the social and psychological factors underlying theological claims, and so forth. Without

rejecting these, we must seek to move beyond them. What is required is an act of transcendence, not one of denial. Knowing all that we do about the this-worldly origins of texts, practices, and beliefs, we must nevertheless insist that all of our Jewish existence is brushed by the divine hand and thus continues to be for us a source of personal and ultimate meaning. This act of transcendence cannot be accomplished by all through the use of a single formula. For some it will be a matter of personal or existential statement. Others will have recourse to new sorts of philosophical language or reference to a truth that appeals to a different level of human consciousness than does history or the critical sense, perhaps moving toward a new *pardes* of multi-tiered claims of truth. The seminary historian will bring the past to bear on a new age in Jewish history; the biographer will cast light on a figure of the past that may help the reader to achieve a measure of human understanding that will work as well for the present. The scholar of exegesis or hermeneutics will present a model of past re-readings of text that can open the possibility of new readings in the future. Whatever our particular language, and no matter how uncomfortable the scholar in us may be in articulating contemporary meaning in the texts or periods we study, we are not free to abandon the task. The rabbinical college that becomes a graduate school—or a professional school, for that matter—has lost its real reason for existing.

Despite its veneer of materialism and crassness, ours is an age of great spiritual hunger. Growing up in the shadow of both Auschwitz and Hiroshima, living always under threat of ultimate destruction, this is a generation that longs for a new sense of ultimate meaning and guidance. Jewish learning once provided such a system of meaning, in an age when it could truly be said that "the only free person is the one who studies Torah." Modern Judaic scholarship, for compelling historical reasons, sought successfully to free itself from the burden of that role. In doing so it has created, at its best, a product of great intellectual vitality, one that can stand proudly with the finest of humanistic studies in the Western academy. But now that Judaic liberal intellectuality must transcend itself and become once again a spiritual wellspring that can provide nourishment for a people's life. That is the task that lies before us. □



Roundtable: The Women's Movement

In the spring of 1987 Tikkun *invited seven women to participate in a roundtable discussion about the women's movement. Included were the following participants:* **Jean Bethke Elshtain** *is professor of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and is author of, among others,* Public Man, Private Woman *(Princeton) and* Women and War *(Basic Books).* **Paula Giddings** *is author of* When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America *(William Morrow, Bantam) and the UNCF Distinguished Scholar at Spelman College in Atlanta.* **Ann F. Lewis** *is national director of Americans for Democratic Action in Washington, D.C., and former political director of the Democratic National Committee.* **Letty Cottin Pogrebin** *is editor of* Ms. *magazine and author of* Growing Up Free, Family Politics, *and most recently* Among Friends: Who We Like, Why We Like Them, and What We Do With Them *(all McGraw-Hill).* **Jan Rosenberg** *teaches Sociology at Long Island University, Brooklyn, and is author of* Feminism Into Film *(UMI Research Press) and "Hard Times for the Women's Movement,"* Dissent, *Fall 1986.* **Sara (Sally) Ruddick** *teaches Philosophy and Feminist Theory at Eugene Lang College of the New School for Social Research and is co-editor of* Between Women *(Beacon Press) and* Working It Out *(Pantheon).* **Catharine (Kate) Stimpson** *is professor of English and dean of the Graduate School at Rutgers University. She writes about education, modern culture, literature, and feminism.*

The discussion began in response to the following statement:

> *A distinction exists between a reformist view and a more liberatory view of social movements. The reformist view looks at the actual conditions of an oppressed people and asks: How can we, in a narrowly defined but clearly discernible way, improve the conditions or lessen the oppression? A more liberatory view says there is something about the transformation of the conditions of an oppressed group such that the achievement of the liberation of this group leads to the liberation of all. That was originally a view put forward by Marx for the working class. In the beginning days of the women's movement many people talked about a total transformation of the society which the liberation of women would generate. This would be not simply a set of advances in women's status but a fundamentally new set of human relationships. Is there anything left to this liberatory vision of what feminism portends, or is the women's movement now more reformist? Should it be reformist in the future or is a liberatory vision important?*

Stimpson: It is a false historical narrative to say that first there was a liberatory vision and then there was a fall into reform. You cannot understand what's going on unless you understand that from the beginning in the late sixties there was a multiplicity of common and yet separate feminist impulses. There has never been one feminism in theory and practice; there were always feminisms. I think one of the healthiest things of the 1970s and 1980s has been the increasing recognition of this.

Elshtain: Diversity was there from the beginning, despite pushes toward this or that orthodoxy. If you look at the American feminist movement of the nineteenth century, you find a romantic like Margaret Fuller, you have practical politicos, and you have someone who goes back and forth, like Elizabeth Cady Stanton. So I think it's important to acknowledge that diversity and to speak in the plural of feminisms. Then we can deal with some nitty-gritty stuff like what this means in terms of public policy, or how this translates into a political agenda. Or if it does? Maybe it doesn't. Maybe it can't, in some direct sense.

Pogrebin: If we accept the diversity of feminisms, we understand why for many of us the notion that the women's movement is dead is inaccurate. When you assess the many ways in which the women's movement has redefined its own functions as it went along and has created constituencies based on issues and needs, then you cease to look at it as either collective or nothing. You begin to see that its very diversity is its strength and proof of longevity.

Rosenberg: I'd like to dissent from this view of feminism as initially and continually appreciative of complexity and diversity. I think that that's more accurate now than it was in the earlier stages of feminism.

And I think that change needs to be applauded and encouraged. The notion of feminist orthodoxy should become and, hopefully, is becoming something that's very suspect among feminists. There's a growing appreciation of the diversity that exists in the lives of women—single women, women in families, women at different stages of their life cycle, women at different class levels, ethnic and racial differences among women, and so forth. But masking the oversimplifications that characterized earlier stages doesn't help anyone.

Elshtain: The notion that women are a universal class, that somehow gender overrides every other kind of difference, lends itself to a push for an orthodoxy. There *was* an attempt to create a feminist orthodoxy. The differences that we're talking about, that we acknowledge, were there, but they were very hard to assert at a certain point in the movement. If you wanted to be counted as belonging to the camp of feminism, you had to constantly reaffirm that you were a feminist against those who said, "Oh, no, she can't be. Feminists must believe 'x' or 'y' without question." I think it's easier now—you don't have to justify your point of view by saying it's feminist.

Giddings: Feminism, of course, has also meant different things to different groups of women. As perceived in earlier years, it excluded the majority of women who saw themselves as disempowered primarily because of racial and/or class issues. But I think something very interesting has happened over the years. Black women are much more conscious now of how sexism—particularly in our own community—diminishes our lives and the group as a whole. We are also at the point of focusing on the psychosocial issues that confront us. More and more white feminists, on the other hand, are increasingly looking at race and class issues. So several points of contention between us in the past are now beginning to converge.

Rosenberg: I think that one of the issues that has expanded the most is the issue about the family, which in the language of the opening statement made by *Tikkun* is both a reform and a transforming issue. Among feminists and feminisms there is a different and more nuanced sense of what families mean to people than there was in 1965 or in 1970.

Stimpson: One of the transforming elements of the women's movement is the breaking down of the binary distinctions between mind and body and between thinking and acting. The development of feminist theory is a sign of this dissolution. We should be conscious of thinking and acting, of hands-on and brain-on work, as going together and not make a rigid distinction between them.

Lewis: The brain-on and hands-on work that Kate just referred to may not have been part of the original theory of feminism, but it's clearly one of the realities. No woman I know is capable of insulating herself from daily life as most men can. One of the most important changes coming from the women's movement is bringing people into power who understand the realities of daily life. No matter how "important" they are, women still have to go to the cleaners and be concerned about whether or not the children are going to get off the bus. I think that is a strength. Too often right now in society as it is organized, people who make policy decisions live apart from the real results of those decisions. And that's a weakness that feminism corrects by bringing the two together.

Pogrebin: Part of the synthesis is that feminism has integrated the reformist and the radical vision in some way that no prior movement has experienced, and therefore it can't be compared. I often have a lot of trouble deciding what's reformist and what's radical.

Lewis: On the one hand, the revolutionary aspect is that we literally are talking about changing the fundamental status of half the world. No revolution, in anybody's name, ever made a change so great; even our reforms are radical.

Elshtain: The point about bodies, mind, etc.—I was thinking of a moment as a graduate student when I felt completely schizophrenic. I was reading Hegel's *Phenomenology*, and my son needed tending. So I put down Hegel to change his diapers, and I thought: This is impossible, this is crazy, it can't be done. Finally, you know, it could be done, or at least I have always managed to do it, but it's with a great deal of difficulty. Women feel terribly torn because careers, as we understand them, were structured without reference to the sort of nitty-gritty we all have to deal with. What counts as a career, or achievement, or success, doesn't, in fact, make much provision for these other aspects of life.

Lewis: And those problems are easier for academics than for almost everybody else who tries to earn a living. It is even worse if you're on an assembly line, or if you're trying to make it as a domestic worker with a twelve-hour work day.

Elshtain: But I think that it's important for us to speak from our own experiences, and if it's difficult in academia, where we have incredible flexibility com-

pared to other kinds of positions, then that just indicates how much there is left to do in terms of the assumptions that are embedded in what might be called the culture of productivity and in terms of how we measure human dignity and human worth and so on. The assumptions of the culture of productivity have to be challenged if we're going to change some of the conditions that make it very difficult for people to live rich and full lives.

Rosenberg: I think a revolutionary reform in the world of work is underway now. Trade unions are really taking a lead on some of these family-work strains. It's not just the female unions such as the CWA (Communication Workers of America) who are backing the Parental and Medical Leave Act, for example, and trying to provide more kinds of family supports for their members. It's also the predominantly male unions—the United Mine Workers, for example. Why is this happening? One possibility is that men don't want to do the nitty-gritty work the women have done all these years—so they're leaning on their unions and they're going to lean on the federal government and the state government and anyone else they can to provide some of that support.

Does this mean that the inequalities within the family and within the home are just going to be replicated in a somewhat new way, with the same kind of speed-up for women and less for men? Or does it mean that people are going to redefine the relationship between their personal lives and public space, public institutions and the government, and, in the course of doing that, redefine their own more personal relationships?

Giddings: There is another relationship that I think important, one that goes back to the fallacy that feminism, in itself, will "save the world." We have seen over and over again in this country the very profound relationship between the progress of the Black movement and that of the feminist movement. When Black movements falter, the women's movement also becomes static. Historically, Black women have understood this interrelatedness. That is why, more than other groups, they have sought their aspirations through universal rights concepts. Unfortunately, though, when the Black and the women's movements go through their most radical, or operational, phases, they tend to disconnect. Consequently, both lose power.

Stimpson: Would you say that one of the backlash reactions of the dominant class, in this case white males, to both the success of the Black movement and the success of the women's movement is simply to divide and conquer? So that we become very enmeshed with differentiating ourselves and then struggling for a place in the sun and for whatever public monies might be available.

Giddings: Of course that's a factor. But I'm not so sure anymore to what extent you can blame the divide and conquer tactics of others. There are so many problems within ourselves. We talk about the concept of healing; there's so much of that healing that we need.

Stimpson: I think this fits with what you're saying, Paula: These internal problems play themselves out, especially in white middle-class women, in a real reluctance to give up the woman-as-victim theory.

An example of this occurred when I was teaching a course on women writers. The issue of victimization versus taking responsibility for your life was there in the texts that we encountered. A handful of my students, both lesbian and straight women, were very loath to give up the notion of women's victimization, clinging to a notion of universal victimization. They didn't want to see that women are sometimes mean to other women and that women can do vile and horrible things.

This has unhappy political consequences, such as a reluctance to act in public, to go on a picket line, to argue back. Then when they don't argue or fight back, they say, "Well, I can't do it because I've been socialized not to do it."

Elshtain: I encounter the victim syndrome in my classes as well. And it comes up sometimes in the form of an obsession with the worst possible things that can happen to women—they don't want to talk about anything but rape, or battering. Then there is the notion that victimization carries with it a kind of purity, as if being a victim somehow gives one moral privilege. Too many think that's the voice that should predominate and don't want to give it up because of the moral privilege it provides.

Ruddick: On the other hand, though, I want to say something about the importance of being able to speak as a victim. Also to see and hear other people's victimization. There are victims, countless millions of them, who suffer from violence, poverty, and bigotries of all sorts. They are victims of evils they cannot control and in no way deserve. This is very hard to hear and for many people very hard to say. It is so much easier to believe that if only they—or we—had been a little stronger, more resourceful, more active, terrible suffering would have been avoided. One element of the transformative vision, coming from feminists, is just this ability to see and hear and remember the suffering of victims, and to cast their lot, to stand with the victim

against the oppression.

Pogrebin: I see where victimization is transformative in terms of the connections that we make intellectually and emotionally. That is, one kind of victimization is so close to the other that suddenly we understand the other. Okay. But apart from that, can victimization be a wellspring of transformative change? Or does one need the polar opposite? It seems to me the polar opposite of victimization, if there's a continuum, is power. Do you need power to transform? Or can weakness give rise to true change?

Giddings: I think it can, if put into a political context. I have tried to convey to my classes how impersonal racism and sexism are, how they are part and parcel of a system whose ends have little to do with any empirical assessment of Blacks or women. Ideologies and prejudice aren't based on the "truth" about a class of people but are created to serve, often, an economic end. Once that is realized, then victimization is no longer internalized, and it can be used as a focal point for change.

Lewis: I want to talk about victimization in its political manifestation because I think there are strategic consequences. I was very encouraged by a recent meeting in Cincinnati. Four years ago both women incumbents lost their city council seats, for basically local reasons. Since then the women there have really pulled themselves together very successfully. They found it intolerable that they be excluded from city government and, by God, they were going to do something about it. And they are. So, on the local level, women are claiming power. But on the other hand, when I talk to women about presidential politics or when I raise the question of our choices in presidential politics, they talk almost passively. What can we do? What is to be done? They feel, if not quite victimized, certainly cut out of the process. But women are still the majority of the electorate, the largest group up for grabs. We have exactly as much power—or more—in terms of making those choices as we did four years ago. One problem is the extent to which women seem to need public support for actions they take. Strategically thinking, we should note that on the local level women understand and can organize, but on the national level they feel paralyzed.

Stimpson: It seems to me that one of the great accomplishments of feminism in the last fifteen years has been women's growing participation in local politics. But is it premature for women to assume presidential politics will break their way right now? I think we should absolutely be in there. But I think our success will take real preparation, in the way that it took twelve to fifteen years to quadruple the number of women in state legislatures.

Lewis: It is essential that we be in there in the way that ninety-nine percent of the people who participate in presidential politics are in there. That is, as staff, as insiders, as doers. Candidates are a very small percentage, and women could and should be involved on all the other levels.

Presidential politics is right now the last bastion of an all-male atmosphere. And it is very important that women be players in that arena as well. That doesn't necessarily mean a symbolic or real woman candidate. It means being involved in everything else that goes on around those politics. Presidential politics is the one political event in our society that everybody pays attention to, so it's really important to have women as players in this group.

Ruddick: Are you suggesting that feminists should engage in the two-party system as it now exists? That we shouldn't try to form third parties or devote our energies to movements outside of electoral politics?

Lewis: From my hands-on experience I don't think that there is going to be a third party in the country that is politically effective in my lifetime. The number of people who are willing to put in the time, energy, and personal resources to make politics function at all is not quite sufficient to keep two parties going.

Elshtain: I think Sally is suggesting that there is a role for third parties, perhaps not so much in terms of traditional electoral politics as in terms of raising certain kinds of issues that get screened out by the two major parties. Historically, the populists, as but one example, started outside party politics. Feminists initially were outside party politics. So movements—if not parties—have a very important role to play in terms of raising issues, being a conscience, pushing the agenda that the two-party electoral system just doesn't push.

Stimpson: One of the things I think feminism contributes to politics is that women are both mainstream and vanguard. Because we have this mix of positions, we're not going to have, for example, a feminist position on national defense.

Lewis: I'll tell you what we *will* have, however. Again, partly because we do pay more attention to the quality-of-life aspects of life, a woman in power will talk about devices that would prevent nuclear mistakes. She will talk about expanding the hotline so that it works. The

majority of people in this country are glad we have the military—they think it is essential for their protection and the lives of their children. And I do not think we should add to the burden of a woman candidate for president, when the time comes, by expecting her to challenge their belief that they need to be protected by the armed services. That's asking too much.

Ruddick: Something in this disturbs me. I fear feminist energies being used and feminist thinking being molded by the demands of electoral politics.

Lewis: The reality of it, however, is that at any given time there's only a handful of people running for political office and you have to make choices between them. I think it is possible to do the theorizing to raise the issues, to structure all kinds of ways to change the policies and attitudes of this country generally. But once you get down to the six months before an election, then it's a choice: You can support one of the two candidates or you can opt out as a feminist. I hope people will opt in.

Pogrebin: But then the question is, How much does complicity in this process postpone radical change?

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Pogrebin: I'd like for us to talk about how feminism has changed the nature of discourse, raised consciousness, and caused issues to surface that hadn't before. Some of the issues in which I think feminism has played a central role are the work-family questions, all of them. Also, decoding the nature of power, what it means to use power, power-over versus power-to, and specifically how power interferes with gender, class, and race. Then there's a whole agenda of international feminism and the braiding of what once were called political issues with feminist issues, which has been a result of the UN Decade, among other things; and the struggle with cultural relativism and ongoing disputes about clitoridectomy and economic development. Here at home we are grappling with questions about continuity—how does a movement establish continuity without dictating to the next generation—generational differences, stylistic difference in acting on one's heritage as a movement person. The Freudian ethos, which I really thought was going to be long gone by this time and isn't. All the violence issues. The growing debate about women's culture. Deconstructing the meaning of gender. Pornography as an ideological dividing line. Straight/lesbian issues—is it only my impression that in college settings feminism has become almost exclusively personified as lesbianism? As I go around, that's often how it seems to be perceived. Then there's the new backlash: starting with the put-down of Alan Alda, as the mass culture's masculine ideal, and his replacement with Rambo, which I consider a much more profound development—not something to laugh at. And the backlash in the form of the great hype surrounding the Yale/Harvard Study, coercive domestication of women in all its forms—better hurry up and have a baby, better hurry up and get married, or there won't be any men. And all the reproductive issues—reproductive freedom, reproductive technology, and reproductive ethics.

Rosenberg: To your list, Letty, I want to add a contradiction. The contradiction that during the life of feminism, women and children have become poorer. What do we do with that? To me that speaks to the reform and the transformative issues.

Stimpson: Yes, I think the feminization of poverty is the single most pressing international issue. I would also stress more than you did, Letty, that feminism has made women not an object of study but a subject. What feminism has done is create women's subjectivities: woman as speaker, as writer, as painter, as actor, as will. We have also made great accomplishments in education—one of the most enduring accomplishments of women's movements so far has been Women's Studies. A third accomplishment is the wondrous debate about women and spirituality. I see that debate taking two forms—one is the reform debate, which is, Can you make the major religions responsive to issues of gender, equity in ritual, liturgy, theology, and governance? The second form, if you're interested in questions of the sacred, is whether you have to go outside the established religions and either create your own or ransack the nonorthodox.

Pogrebin: I think we're at the stage now where we're trying to deconstruct controversy. I started to realize this in the Baby M case. Although the press kept trumpeting our differences as a split in the movement, I think it was the first time in a long time that we all felt comfortable with our differences. We made a conscious effort, those of us who were active around the issue, to really separate out the larger surrogacy questions from the Stern-Whitehead case and the custody issue. We tried to clarify, when we were on the side of Marybeth Whitehead, that this didn't mean we were on the side of biological determinism or the maternal instinct. When we sided with the Sterns, we emphasized that it was on the grounds of contract rights, not patriarchal imperatives. In speaking to the press, we tried to explain our areas of consensus and the areas where we can agree to disagree. But a contrasting situation is the pornography

debate. There the subtleties have been absolutely bludgeoned out of existence and people can't find a place on the spectrum, because the spectrum is so polarized.

Stimpson: Letty, why do you think the pornography debate got so out of control? Was it because we don't know how to handle controversy well enough? Or because of the personalities involved?

Pogrebin: Sexuality is inherently out of control. People get immediately enmeshed in defining it in terms of their own feelings, their own norm.

Giddings: Deconstructing division and arriving at some kind of consensus within movements is not a linear process. It is cyclical, and at different points perceptions will converge and then become polarized again. I think it's dangerous to measure the ultimate success of the women's movement, for example, by quantifying the points of agreement on issues. We saw how such a consensus between Black and white feminists fragmented after the Civil War over the issue of race. There is always an ebb and flow, a coming together and separation. The question, though, that I'm interested in is how do we really envision the future, the new society, when we are finally able to transcend internecine battles.

Stimpson: My vision of the future is to have mechanisms of social decision making that aren't rigidly either/or, that aren't mechanically yes or no.

Lewis: I think we as women know, whether genetically or by experience, that yes or no is not enough. In many cases it just doesn't work, but in almost every major powerful institution the program is to accept only those two answers. The question then becomes, Do institutions change us as we enter or do we change the institutions?

Pogrebin: I think the woman's movement has matured since the beginning, because our early controversies were for the most part more extreme. Now we are not drawing lines about working inside or outside the system in quite the heavy-handed ways we used to. Even though there are still plenty of doctrinaire people—certainly around the pornography issue, for example—we are recognizing many more distinctions of opinion. Today most of us allow feminist opinion to be refined and qualified in ways that we weren't giving one another permission to do in the early seventies.

Ruddick: Feminists are now determined to let differences flourish. But we should not be too self-congratulatory. There are still divisions among us—ideological, cultural, racial, religious, national, sexual—many, many differences and, along with them, fear and confusion and arrogance and anger. We are governed by an ideal—we aim to recognize difference as a source of strength. But we fool ourselves if we think we've realized that ideal.

Pogrebin: I have to say I still feel an enormous frustration at our inability to break through the public perception of feminism as a white middle-class movement, because we've been working together in so many places for so long. Why isn't that getting across? Why haven't the breakthroughs inspired more cooperation, more commonality, more faith in our working together?

Giddings: One reason is that we are not very good at working together in the same organizations. And I'm not really optimistic about that happening any time soon, because we are shaped by very different histories and experiences regardless of similarities in our social, educational, or economic status. The good news, though, is that we have become much better at political alliances on issues of common concern. Many of our coalitions have been very successful. And I think that's really for now the best way to do it.

Rosenberg: Paula, if you had to look ahead for the next fifteen or twenty years and forecast the coalition issues crossing sex, race, and class, what would you see?

Giddings: For the first time in history large numbers of white middle-class women are in the workplace. The interracial relationships made in the workplace will lead to commonalities of interest. And these common concerns will be coalesced around family and politics. I hope, though, that we go beyond these coalitions that are formed to reach specific, reformist goals. That we really internalize the idea that the transformative vision will never be realized as long as the aspirations of any significant class of people remain denied. We can debate the reasons why the Black inner city, for example, remains impoverished and despondent. But the fact remains that the women's movement, or any movement of liberation, will not fully succeed—and will be rendered meaningless—if that situation continues to exist.

Stimpson: Since this roundtable is winding down, I do want to get back to the question of vision. In part, where I find my vision is in women's science fiction, which is a wonderful cultural tradition that has come out of feminism. The women now writing science fiction—Sally Gearhart and Marge Piercy, for example—have taken as seriously as possible the question of what we want the future to look like. They are giving us quite beautiful and interesting utopian visions.

Pogrebin: But, also, there is the other side of that vision—the warning that comes in Margaret Atwood's form of feminist science fiction.

Ruddick: The idea of nonviolence is central to my vision of the future. By nonviolence I mean ways of struggling with and against each other, speaking out of anger and love, getting what we need, protecting the people and places we care for—but doing all this without resorting to organized military violence.

Although many feminists are militaristic, feminism still has a part to play in developing nonviolence. Feminist analysis shows the ways in which military practices and thinking are permeated with sexual fantasy and gender prerogatives. Although militaries vary immensely, their masculine and patriarchal character is evident. Good feminist work is pouring out on this now and will undermine the naturalness and attractiveness of violence. We are developing a way of thinking about nonviolent struggle which is less moralistic and more pragmatic than traditional pacifism. Nonviolent struggle is only an ideal—women, like men, are often violent or bigoted or passive in the face of others' violence. Nonetheless, there is a vision of nonviolence latent in women's lives and work, a vision which will be transformed and strengthened by feminist politics.

Rosenberg: I think that the increasing poverty in our midst is a tragedy that we didn't foresee and that we need to respond to in any way possible. What's happening in our economy is a disaster, and women are at the leading edge of the disaster. Women as mothers, as heads of families, whether they are very young, whether they are very old. Any age segment of the population you look at, women are the poorest. And that's increasing, not decreasing. This polarization has implications for our notions of democracy, the economy, the workplace, and through that our lives. So that's where I begin. It's not an exclusively feminist issue by any means. But I think it has to be a feminist issue. I would hope to see a kind of generosity, a looking for accommodation, in dealing with this issue.

Lewis: Part of my vision is a redistribution of power—not just women in power, but the unrepresented in power. Also, I hope that we continue to form and use coalitions effectively, ad hoc strategic groupings across race, sex, and class on specific projects. I don't believe there will be one great overarching coalition, but as we learn to work together, especially around issues of economic vulnerability, personal connections will be formed. A third part of my vision is that we expand the options for the lives of women around the world. These things are all connected, because if we achieve the first two, I'm sure we will affect the third. Where I think we are right now is that women and other groups are becoming more powerful. We are conscious of the need to have a Congress that looks like the country. A whole lot of people understand now why that's important. I think we are learning to work at coalitions. I'm basically optimistic because of how far we've managed to get, and I am almost absolutely sure that if we don't keep working at it, we will slip back. So we must keep working at it.

Giddings: Beyond the ideas of thinking differently and doing things differently, I am concerned about actually *seeing* ourselves differently. To actually envision ourselves in power, which I'm not so sure we've always done. And that goes back to the problem of victimization that we talked about earlier. It is restrictive when we don't have a vision of what our lives would and should be, once we get everything we have been struggling for. We are realizing that to move to that point, a lot of internal healing has to be done. We have to have a true sense of entitlement.

Elshtain: I want to get back to the reigning notion of the self. It seems to me that we're dominated by a notion of a sort of producing, consuming, self-sufficient self, and we forget that we're pretty fragile, vulnerable critters when you come right down to it. We start out helpless and dependent—and most of us are going to wind up at the end of our life cycles in a situation of dependency. I think feminism needs to address this.

And even more importantly, feminists must come to grips with the fact that eugenics is back on the agenda in new and potentially terrifying ways. I include here sex selection as a basis for abortion. Language central to the feminist movement, particularly "rights" and "choice," is being used to justify such interventions. This is sobering and demands more serious thought than it has yet received from feminists.

Pogrebin: What has occurred to me listening to others is that I think most of us have reached a point where we have integrated an economic and patriarchal analysis of what's wrong. And so, as much as economics and militarism are going to be areas of struggle in the future, I think the question of childrearing, the basic socialization of human beings, will become increasingly important as we search for the root causes of inequality and violence. I think we have to really look at en*gender*ing and the use of power in the home and the way that children grow up with their concepts of power having been formed by the family politic. And that's going to take a long, long time. □

A Response to the Roundtable

Recognition of Diversity

Martha Ackelsberg

I am surprised and disappointed that the vision and vitality which characterizes much of the contemporary feminist movement seems strangely absent from this roundtable discussion. While many aspects of the feminist vision are deserving of attention, three which were mentioned in the roundtable need further exploration here: (1) new understandings of power and action; (2) new understandings of families; and (3) new understandings of who "women" are.

Redefining Power and Action

The early years of feminist activism and theorizing in the late sixties and early seventies in the US clearly challenged conventional understandings of the nature of power and offered new models for engaging in the process of changing the world. Kate Stimpson and Ann Lewis, for example, claim that recent feminist writing has insisted on joining together thought and action. But this insistence is hardly recent. The clarion call of sixties feminism was, after all, "the personal is political"; this was, at base, an insistence that the traditional liberal (male) way of dividing the world between thought and emotion, and even between thought and action, was wrong. Our foresisters (or we, in earlier incarnations?) envisioned women bringing into political life our firsthand knowledge of the importance of the *connection* between thinking and feeling, which had been devalued in our own lives but which we knew to be a source of our power.

That insight had a number of important implications for action. For one, it meant that we came to define "power" in new ways: not as "power over" (another) but as "power to." Hence the feminist concern with the *empowerment* of women: the consciousness-raising groups and affinity groups which would enable us, together with others, to develop and experience our own capacities and to use them to try to change the world. But in what ways would that world be changed? Here "the personal is political" surfaces again. For early feminists insisted that the range of activities which had traditionally been relegated to the "women's sphere" and, therefore, defined as "nonpolitical" were, in fact, important issues which needed to be explored and addressed *collectively.** Hence the focus on "the politics of housework" and discussions of the need for communal responsibility for childcare, public welfare, sexuality, "reproductive rights," sterilization abuse, and the like. Feminism insisted, that is, that those concerns traditionally taken to be women's private issues were highly political and required the attention of the community.

Feminism also insisted that personal lives and personal relationships mattered, and that the structure of work, and particularly of professional work in the US, did not allow time or space for personal life. Thus, many feminists insisted that the goal of the movement ought not simply be to get women into formerly men's jobs (physicians, lawyers, stockbrokers, corporate managers) but to change the definitions of those jobs so that one would not have to sell one's soul or give up one's private life to succeed. Unfortunately, as the proliferation of "dress-for-success" and other corporate "how-to" manuals for women makes evident, *that* aspect of the feminist vision has largely been lost. But it is important for us to remember that it was there, virtually from the beginning.

Finally, what would it mean to question the success ethic? As we see in the roundtable, it means different things to different women. Some feminists believed (and still believe—Ann Lewis among them, apparently) that simply getting women into positions of power and authority will change institutions, because (in Lewis's words) "we do pay more attention to the quality-of-life aspects of life." It is from this perspective that the dress-for-success, "let's get women into the world [be it corporate, social, religious, political, or what have you] on the same terms as men" stream of feminism developed. Others believed—and have come to believe

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*The early work of Jean Elshtain, among others, was crucial in developing this argument within the context of academic feminism. See, for example, "Moral Woman and Immoral Man: Reflections on the Public-Private Split," *Politics and Society* no. 4, (1974).

even more strongly during the past fifteen years—that simply putting women into positions of power won't necessarily change anything (viz. Margaret Thatcher or Golda Meir). Institutional structures, that is, have a life of their own; if we wish to become corporate lawyers, we must play by the rules. But, as all too many women have discovered, the rules may well change us before we change them. If we wish to make those structures more humane, we must address ourselves directly to that challenge.

All this, I think, marked what I would term the first stage of the transformative vision which feminism offered.

Rethinking Families

A second, and related, aspect of the feminist transformative vision had to do with challenging conventional understandings of the relationship of women to families and of families to the larger society. Traditionally, women have been identified with families; their relationship to the public realm has been mediated through the assumed primacy of their familial relationship. Hence, for example, the assumptions that there is little need for women to receive higher education, that women do not make reliable workers, and that it is inappropriate for them to participate as equals in the larger political arena.

Simply putting women into positions of power won't necessarily change anything.

Feminists of the sixties and seventies challenged those assumptions, insisting, first, that women deserve to be treated as independent, autonomous adults and, second, that patriarchal families have often limited women and contributed to their oppression. The consequences of this changed perspective have been manifold. For one, demystifying the traditional family and ending the isolation of those who have been abused within it—victims of incest, child abuse, battering, and so on. For another, providing options for women: no longer is it to be assumed that a woman needs a man to be a whole person. Feminist theorists and communities have attempted to validate a variety of choices for women in addition to traditional heterosexual marriage, including celibacy, "living together," and lesbian relationships.

Finally, opening up the institution of "family" for discussion has laid the grounds for redefining the relationship of families to the larger social context—a redefinition which is now taking place, and being challenged, at the highest levels of politics. Feminist theory and practice have led us to insist not only that women can be whole persons even outside of traditional family contexts but also (a) that heterosexual nuclear families are not the only possible building blocks of a society and (b) that children, the elderly, and the disabled (and those who care for them) deserve the support—both emotional and financial—of society, regardless of the sort of "family" structure in which they live. Obviously, each of these claims is contested in our society. But together they offer us a different image of society and of women's place within it—an important aspect of the feminist transformative vision.

Nevertheless, it is important to mention that there are limits to this vision—limits which were alluded to in the roundtable but not developed in any depth. For one thing, the feminist emphasis on women as autonomous, independent beings who can be "whole" outside of traditional families, has sometimes been taken to imply an overly individualist perspective about the relationship of people to their communities. That is, in emphasizing the humanity of women, some have seemed to deny, if not denigrate, the importance of affectional, emotional ties to all people. Surely that is a serious misdirection of initial feminist insights. For another, many early (white) feminist critiques of the family implied that families are *always* oppressive to women, thus denying the experience of many working-class and ethnic women who have found important sources of support in their family networks. Clearly, we cannot make monolithic statements about "the family," whether these be positive or negative.

Rethinking "Women"

But this discussion of families—and of the strengths and limits of feminist visions—points to the third major arena of feminist transformative vision: diversity, the changing understanding of who we take "women" to be. As the roundtable acknowledges, albeit in a very indirect way, much of the creative energy of the feminist movement in recent years has been directed to dealing with diversity. It may be, as Kate Stimpson noted, that there has never been "*feminism*," but, rather, there have always been "*feminisms*"; but it is also the case, as Jan Rosenberg suggests, that *feminists* (read: white feminists who have dominated the media and the popular perceptions of what the feminist movement is about) have not always been "appreciative of [the] complexity and diversity" that characterize women's lives. Feminists have struggled mightily with these issues over the years, both in theory and in practice. Forced to do so by the insistent demands of Black and other third-world women, many white feminist theorists and organiza-

tions have examined their goals, structures, and strategies to find the ways in which they may have excluded (wittingly or unwittingly) the needs and experiences of women of color. Feminist theorists and activists are increasingly trying to be aware of the ways in which their goals are class or ethnically biased, based on the experiences of white, middle-class women, and necessarily treating the experiences of working class, racial-ethnic, Jewish, aged, or disabled women as anomalous or, at best as "different."

In short, in recent years feminist theory and practice have been both torn apart and energized by questions of "difference." As we have attempted to address, and take responsibility for, the situation in which we find ourselves—that our movement has been, for the most part, one which has spoken from and to the experience of white, middle-class women—important new questions arise. How, for example, can we incorporate the experiences of ethnic and working-class women into the *center* of "feminism"? Is it possible to take account of the diversity of our experiences, and the differences in our lives, and still to theorize about "women"? What are the conditions under which we can work together? Around what issues? How can we begin truly to build coalitions which do not simply draw on the creativity and power of the "other" but which make the other's concerns central to our own visions?

I end by noting that these questions provide the context for some of the most exciting (as well as troubling) work that is now going on, both in the feminist movement and in the larger political world. For it is not only women, of course, who must confront issues of diversity; we live in a society made up of a plurality of groups. And, as the founding of the women's movement itself attests, we have yet to discover how to live and work



together in ways that are respectful of the full, multi-faceted humanity of our citizens. It is this aspect of the transformative vision of feminism that has the most to offer to "the world" at this point. None of us—none of our communities, none of our movements—has yet developed strategies and understandings for fully incorporating the diversity of who we are. Feminists, at least, are struggling openly and directly with the issue. In this respect, the movement has much to offer to the repair of the world: probably more than we can even begin to imagine. □

A Response to the Roundtable

The Need For Memory

Ruth Rosen

In recent years, feminism has been blamed for the destruction of the family, women working outside the home, the high divorce rate, the neglect of children, the feminization of poverty, the lack of child care, women's failure to find marriage partners, women's infertility, men's sexual impotency, the superwoman syndrome, the nation's moral flabbiness, rising unemployment, and the debasement of intellectual standards. And this is only the short list. Just last year, a perfectly intelligent young woman at the University of California, Berkeley, wrote a paper in which she stated as fact that the women's movement played a very large role in creating eating disorders. Feminist-bashing has become so common that I thought the Tower Commission might somehow implicate feminism in the Iran-contra affair.

What creates such sensational claims? One obvious answer is the media, which, while making feminism a household word, also created fraudulent celebrities, ridiculed participants, distorted ideas, equated feminism with individual advancement and self-improvement, and then, in 1980, with a particular kind of vengeance, repeatedly pronounced it dead. But the media's biased translation of feminism is too partial and easy an answer. The real problem is that the media, like the rest of American society, lack historical perspective on the origins and development of contemporary feminism.

Americans are notoriously ignorant of their history. The Hearst Corporation recently reported that 45 percent of Americans believe that the phrase "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need" appears in the United States Constitution. A few months ago, a woman on the Phil Donahue show warmly reminisced about the good old days in the sixties when we women marched for the ERA. Nobody bothered correcting her; it wasn't even clear anyone noticed.

It's naptime in Reagan's America, and the truth is that both conservatives and feminists alike exercise an extremely selective memory in recalling the history of the women's movement. The forgetfulness has its motives, and in this case the motives differ. To support their current agenda of demolishing the welfare state and restoring patriarchal authority to a much- mythologized nuclear family, conservatives blame feminism for most of today's ills. For many feminists the past is simply too embarrassing or too painful to admit into our collective consciousness.

Let us restore some historical perspective. Yes, the early movement included both reformist and liberationist tendencies. And yes, the civil rights wing of the women's movement played a key role in securing important rights for women. But at the height of the late sixties' intoxication with liberation, it was the youthful radical groups that provided the transformative vision and gave this wave of feminism its distinctive political culture and some of its greatest strengths and weaknesses. Feminists want to forget the rage, stridency, and antimale, antimotherhood, and antimarriage attitudes that fired the young radical members of the early movement and influenced some of the older members as well. A few embarrassed souls repent; some deny their youthful excesses; many concede them but respond, "Yes, but *I* was never like that."

Feminists also want to forget the devastating battles that divided members and subjected too many individuals to ostracism and exclusion. The twin notions that "the Personal is Political" and that "Sisterhood is Powerful" fired the imagination of many feminists and provoked extraordinary intellectual insights. But they also had the unanticipated effect of subjecting members' personal lives to excruciating scrutiny and demanding, in the name of unity, unquestioning loyalty to a political line. The members of the *Tikkun* roundtable, all highly respected and admired feminists, exhibit a refreshing tolerance and generous pluralism. But we should not read history books backwards from the present. Their willed acceptance of diversity is a mature and dignified response to the pain many of us witnessed or experienced when difference meant disloyalty. In scores of interviews with feminists, I have been struck by the deep pain feminist activists suffered from the very women they expected to provide a refuge from men.

Rather than deny the embarrassing or painful parts of the recent feminist past, I would rather ask: Why did

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the women's movement develop as it did? And what I want to argue is that we can best understand the women's movement of the sixties if we grasp two points: that feminists' fury against men, marriage, motherhood, and children was actually a war against the *zeitgeist* of the fifties; and that feminists fought their battles with the only language and symbols they had at the time, those of the New Left and liberal men whose political limitations they rejected but whose political culture profoundly shaped the early years of the women's movement. A fully developed feminist language, grounded in women's experience, would only begin to emerge later.

As the feminist revolution revved into high gear in the late sixties, critics sniffed out a certain hostility toward men, motherhood and marriage, nuclear families and traditional sexual mores. They weren't entirely wrong. There are reasons why movements target certain enemies, flash particular symbols, choose specific metaphors, and set the goals that they do. The past shapes how people view the present and how they imagine the future. The feminists of the sixties, largely white middle-class women, were recent refugees of the fifties, a decade that vilified female independence and insisted that women's anatomy become their destiny. For these mothers and daughters of the fifties, the immediate past conjured up images of claustrophobic marriages, coercive motherhood, and constrained chastity. Terror of being trapped—again, or for the very first time—drove activists to try to dismantle what Betty Friedan, in her pioneering and best-selling 1963 exposé, termed the feminine mystique, the belief that women should devote themselves exclusively to marriage and motherhood.

The rage that characterized the American women's movement is only comprehensible if the tyranny of the feminine mystique—and women's collaboration in it—is fully understood. Although the feminine mystique accurately described the lives of only the white middle class, its power to induce conformity was breathtaking. In a 1955 survey, forty-six out of fifty sophomore college women chose identical futures: marriage to a successful professional or junior executive, three or more children chauffeured from suburban home to various activities, and leisure time spent volunteering in civic affairs. They were not alone. Middle-class America had a dream and the affluence to achieve it. More than 70 percent of American families in the fifties consisted of a breadwinner father and a mother who stayed at home caring for the children. Sheer numbers alone permitted the feminine mystique to achieve a hegemonic tyranny in American culture.

But the very power of the feminine mystique to limit women's aspirations and choices also created a vast underground of seething discontent. Many women secretly experienced the fifties as a private nightmare. As women strained to comply with the demands of the feminine mystique, they discovered they could not win. Critics blamed housewives and mothers for creating "suburban matriarchies" that emasculated men. McCarthyites denounced working women as traitors, and psychiatrists labeled career women neurotics. Whatever women did, they were deemed failures. Such a double bind silenced a generation of mothers and sowed the seeds of revolt in their daughters.

The movement publicized and politicized the private agonies that the fifties had effectively silenced; it addressed the massive problems that accompanied women's infusion into the labor force and legitimized women's resentment and ambivalence toward an accelerating sexual revolution.

The fifties was also an age of cognitive dissonance: Millions of people believed in ideals that poorly described their experience. While the media painted a roseate portrait of suburban motherhood and the happy nuclear family, women began moving into the labor force, the sexual revolution heated up, growing numbers of couples ended up in divorce court, and the young crossed over an unbridgeable generational divide. During the fifties, McCarthyism silenced dissent. Still, every once in a while, someone noticed the growing discrepancy between myth and fact. And, on occasion, some brave and daring soul opened the closet door, allowing some of the dirty little secrets of the fifties to tumble into public view.

By the late fifties, the feminine mystique had begun to collide with the reality of women's growing sexual and economic independence. The contradictions and frustrations faced by large constituencies of women—housewives, working women, and rebellious daughters—in effect set the agenda for a new women's movement. Housewives, as Betty Friedan discovered, quietly endured profound despair, interminable boredom, and unbearable isolation. Working women, whose numbers doubled during the fifties, quietly suffered sex discrimination and sexual harassment at their jobs. Daughters of the fifties, sensing the bitterness and disappointment of their mothers and other women, entered a new

decade eagerly mapping escapes from the constraints of the fifties.

But it wasn't until the sixties that the details of the nightmare trickled out and the mothers and daughters of the fifties became the feminists of the sixties, launching a revolution whose secret agenda was to exorcise the fifties from themselves and the nation. For these refugees, the women's movement seemed like an exhilarating revolt against the coercive authority of the feminine mystique. The movement publicized and politicized the private agonies that the fifties had effectively silenced; it addressed the massive problems that accompanied women's infusion into the labor force and legitimized women's resentment and ambivalence toward an accelerating sexual revolution.

Clearly, not all American women in the late sixties remembered the fifties in this way. At least half the female population didn't, and the feminist attack against the nuclear family—the only refuge left against a hostile and impersonal consumer society—sent many women rushing into the waiting arms of the New Right in the seventies. But, in fact, many women felt stifled by the feminine mystique.

Not everyone articulated that discontent, of course. Movements are always led by activists, who, by their particular social locations and temperaments, are best situated to name problems that have remained invisible. As two generations of women grew dissatisfied with the limits of liberalism and the New Left, they founded, respectively, NOW and the autonomous women's liberation movement. But they also drew heavily upon the men they had left. Older women who founded NOW—many of whom had been mothers or working women in the fifties—took up the liberal program to secure women's equal rights. Their assertion of the individual rights of each woman gained important victories, even as it limited a broader political agenda. The more radical women's liberation movement—made up of rebellious daughters of the fifties, many of whom were also disgruntled veterans of other movements—questioned everything. From the civil rights movements they inherited the certainty that "separate but equal" would never guarantee equality; from the counterculture they acquired the moral imperative to live as though the future had already replaced the present; from the late New Left—in the midst of its own self-destruction—they inherited an apocalyptic utopianism that shunned structure and leadership, spoke a garbled revolutionary rhetoric, glamorized vanguardism, romanticized irrationality, and demanded moral absolutism and ideological purity. In this language, and with cultural styles and political symbols drawn from the late sixties' revolutionary fantasies, radical feminists battled with the ghosts of the fifties. The result: a discourse about men, marriage, and motherhood in which rage against and fear of the feminine mystique were expressed in the inflammatory language of revolutionary warfare.

As was the case for other movements of the sixties, many opportunities to move further were squandered in the push toward revolution. Extreme moralism, unwillingness to tolerate difference, inability to appreciate the sexual and economic fear of dependent women, failure to comprehend the importance of racial and class divisions, and ambivalence toward authority all helped undermine the women's movement's ability to speak compellingly to the majority of American women on all but a few issues. Until, that is, the larger culture assimilated a transformative feminism and turned it into an agenda for individual self-improvement and self-advancement.

Feminism is an easy scapegoat for today's ills. It is easy to forget that many of the economic and social changes that have transformed the family and men's and women's lives antedated and speeded the rise of the women's movement. In turn, the women's movement played an essential and pivotal role in accelerating that change, interpreting the significance of gender to a bewildered society, and pushing reluctant Americans into the next historical stage of gender relations. By addressing invisible changes that had already occurred in the fifties, by demanding that men and the government assume their fair share of responsibility, the women's movement punctured sacred myths and forced American society to acknowledge the painful reality of a changing world.

These were extraordinary accomplishments. For all the movement's errors and excesses, a generation of feminists have every reason to honor our recent history. We honor it best when we continue the good fight, persevere in the face of backlash, and transmit the whole truth to the next generation. □

A Response to the Roundtable

Gloom on the Campus, Doom on the Coasts—But We Aren't Dead

Jane Mansbridge

Look Closer: The old anger, now refined, is generating energy, expertise, and diversity!

Gloom On Campus

Dress for success. Go for the grades. Young women have it made.

ITEM: The percentage of college women saying it was one of their "very important goals" to "be very well off financially" rose from 32 percent in 1966 to 67 percent in 1985. (The percentage of men rose from 54 to 75 percent, closing the gender gap from 22 to 8 points.)

During the same years, the percentage of first-year college women choosing to major in English, fine arts, and the humanities dropped from 25 to 7 percent. (For first-year men, the percentage dropped from 11 to 7 percent, and the gender gap disappeared.)

Q: How do we build a women's movement with this material?

A: a) We don't.
b) Encourage left-leaning women students to "find themselves" in a feminist political context.
c) Make coalitions with Black and minority organizations, and go in with them on counselors for personal growth and sensitivity to race.
d) Highlight issues, like date rape and male pressure to have sex, that make sense to a broad cross section of women.
e) Figure out forms of direct action (and guerrilla theater) that take commitment and energy but little time.
f) Show how feminist thinking has turned many liberal arts disciplines upside down.
g) All of the above.

I choose "All of the above," and more.

We shouldn't expect the sixties to come again. Unless the country drafts troops for another Vietnam war when another demographic bulge reaches college age, we will not see the turmoil, anger, and openness to new ideas that we saw then. So (a) makes sense as an answer—but so do the others, if we don't expect a revolution.

Doom on the Coasts

New York, Washington, San Francisco, and Los Angeles don't look very different from the campuses, though their professional women are writ grown-up (or almost) with the acronyms DINK and YUP. So is there any hope?

Look Closer

ITEM: In a 1986 poll, 56 percent of American women answered the question "Do you consider yourself a feminist?" with a "Yes."

ITEM: Every year the percentage of women in state legislatures grows. It has almost quadrupled since 1969.

ITEM: Groups of professional women, such as the prestigious Chicago Network, ostensibly gather only to further their careers but discuss issues with strong feminist undertones.

ITEM: Feminist scholarship is the hot, paradigm-transforming new wave in anthropology, literary criticism, social history, and other disciplines. Almost every student in the US can, with or without effort, find a faculty member on her campus who defines herself as an active feminist.

Energy, Expertise, Diversity

Energy: In the Midwest and South, the struggle for the ERA transformed the lives of thousands of women in the way the movement of 1968–70 did for some on the East and West coasts. "Click." (A legislator didn't listen.) "Click." (A husband saw red.) The cumulated "clicks" generated a larger analysis that overthrew a lifetime's socialization and generated divorces, commitments to political activism, new and deeper friendships, and new joys and despairs as well. Newly created feminists—and antifeminists—discovered that "the personal is political" and unleashed their pent-up energy in trying to change the world.

Expertise: When the Baby M case arose, we had

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feminist lawyers, feminist writers, and feminist thinkers who could bring many years of experience to this brand new issue. And when parental leave comes to a legislature, we now have experienced sponsors who will know how to work the party leadership, get the bill out of committee, and neutralize the opposition. We have that expertise, ready to go, in a hundred other fields.

Diversity: A majority of this country is female. Of course we will be diverse. In the late 1960s we were diverse too. I remember getting a questionnaire from Massachusetts NOW (I had joined to get their newsletter, the only place in town to learn what was going on), which asked whether the organization should become more radical. "No," I wrote in response from my self-satisfied membership in Bread and Roses. "The movement needs a conservative women's organization too." Not being an active NOW member, I saw them, incorrectly, as monolithically conservative. But in the "radical women's movement" I saw almost every day a new perspective—celibacy, smash monogamy, dyke gangs, anti-imperialist women, factory solidarity, motherright, Marxist-analyst, women's culture, anarcho-feminism, Trot takeovers, feminist therapy. Even the labels "liberal," "radical," and "socialist" feminist, or "straight" and "lesbian," straitjacketed this ferment of competing visions into artificially homogenous categories.

Twenty years later we are learning to live with diversity. We form political coalitions that work, and we keep challenging our own views as well as those we see as wrong-headed. You can find feminist coalitions—both shifting and stable, suspicious and trusting, experienced and novice—wherever you find a legislature. From rape to poverty and from schooling to set-asides, most state legislative bills affect women. As for feminist controversy, you can't find much in *The National NOW Times* or (usually) in *Ms.*, but you can get it in *Off Our Backs* and occasionally in *The Women's Review of Books* or *In These Times*. And you can find it in local NOW chapters or in the women's centers of a thousand college campuses.

To keep the ferment coming and the ideas alive, what we need now is a functional equivalent of the old consciousness-raising group, where women can discuss, once a month, in small groups of *non*like-minded friends, the new issues that constantly erupt—surrogate motherhood, parental leave, sadomasochism, women in combat, pornography, new perspectives on abortion, even what to do about the ERA. If we hassle these over together, we'll see diversity aplenty.

The Future

Diverse though we may be, every individual, splinter group, and coalition will have to face the issues of poverty and class. We will face a growth in the feminization of poverty. And we will face increasing inequalities in family income as women, generally married to men of the same class, enter the paid labor force, doubling the inequalities between families. Class inequalities will also increase as good industrial jobs that were mostly monopolized by men give way to service jobs where men and women compete for equally low wages. The resulting policy issues will divide feminists along with other American women.

But within the diversity on these class issues, we will see elements of a common perspective. Feminists (and perhaps antifeminists too) will stress the welfare of women and children. In the debate, it will be women who will point out how difficult it is to raise children, how childrearing deserves praise, and how the work women do commands pride. Feminists across the board will also point out, against those who talk indiscriminately of encouraging the nuclear family, that public policy should not make women and children depend on men who are batterers or drunken or heroin-addicted or even irresponsible or completely self-centered. Feminist perspectives will emerge, unpredictably, to unite women across standard political lines, as well as to divide them.

No one can predict what issues will arise and in what context we will see them in the next decade. Our strength as a movement has always been that we are diverse enough, hydra-headed enough, to respond quickly, creatively, and with energy to any constellation of events. The task ahead is how to connect that organizational flexibility with durability, accountability, and the modicum of centralization that the larger polity demands. We have organizational consultants who got their start in the sixties and now have considerable expertise in making alternative organizations work. Let's use them to give our organizations advice.

We need, too, to give feminist organizations consistent support. Not the individualist support that waxes when a good fundraising letter catches our attention and wanes when the next letter isn't so good. Not the individualist support that only sends donations to organizations that promote the particular mix of causes in the particular way that the donor desires. But a form of class consciousness that, as a matter of course, supports (even when they are not perfect) NOW, WEAL, the NWPC, and other more local or more radical feminist political organizations. In a polity that works through organized groups, we have to maintain both our ferment and our clout—ferment by living with diversity, and clout by living with an accepted and consistent drain on our pocketbooks. □

In the House of the Flame Bearers

Kim Chernin

Don't you believe her," my mother used to warn her sisters, "that girl is always telling stories."

I want to tell you a story about my family, about my mother and her mother, a story about three generations of women and the ways in which they were Jewish.

My mother and grandmother came to the United States from a shtetl in Russia. They arrived here just before the First World War, when my mother was thirteen years old. Her mother was deeply troubled by this forced emigration to a new world. She had preferred to stay in Russia, with her father; she was sent for by her husband, who had left for America some years before. She had no choice about the matter, her father had no choice about the matter; in this case, tragically, the husband's word was law.

My mother worked in a factory from the age of thirteen; nevertheless, she managed to graduate from high school and move to New York, leaving her mother behind in Waterbury. Her mother later broke down and was hospitalized in a state mental institution in which, my mother always said, she had been confined because her husband, who beat her, had grown sick of her.

This legacy—of madness that may not be madness, of having to do what a man wants you to do unless you do something about it, of struggling to better yourself, of wanting an education so much that you sacrifice your mother—these troubled matters came down to me from my mother.

She also managed to hand down a nostalgia for Russia, the fields of rye that grew around her village, the bathhouse, the oven lighted on the Sabbath by the *Shabbas goy.* But this love for Russia, for her grandfather's house, for her life in the shtetl before the war, was well disguised as a loyalty to Soviet communism. My mother herself knew nothing about it, did not recognize it, would have vehemently denied it if I said it was there. It came through to me in spite of her, in a tone of voice, her hand not quite shaking, something beneath the surface, a sigh, a tremor, a sob?

Yet it was a militant inheritance, this legacy from my mother, and it was filled with struggle: against the past, the limitations of shtetl existence, against the forces that oppress mothers and women and workers. And, of course, Jews.

My mother moved to New York at the age of eighteen. There she got involved in radical politics. During the twenties she joined the Communist party, married my father, gave birth to my older sister, got her mother out of the mental hospital. In the thirties she went back to the Soviet Union for three years, returned to organize for the Communist party in California, moved back to New York with my father and sister, and became a leader of the Party in the Bronx. In 1940 she gave birth to me.

My family was opposed to Judaism not because it kept us apart from other Americans but because being Jewish seemed to limit our participation in the class struggle that should, it was said, drown individual national identities in its universal urgency.

We were a family obsessed with repeating and remembering, drowning in nostalgia, with no clearly acknowledged idea that we longed for things that had vanished forever from the world. Some years ago, writing to a friend in England, I suggested he and I make a trip to the Soviet Union and visit the shtetls from which our parents came. I wrote this although I knew perfectly well the shtetls had vanished, and the bathhouse and the snow of my mother's childhood, and the *Shabbas goy.* I wrote it sincerely, longing so much for what my mother and grandmother had left behind that finally I was driven to create it again on the page, between one word and the next, in language.

I sat down one day to tell my mother's story. I wrote for seven years. Each time I finished I started again; something was missing; something had not yet been said. If I'd gone on writing, if the book called *In My*

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Mother's House had not been published, I might eventually have told the story I will tell here—the tale of the missing Jewish identity, the inheritance that should have been mine but was not handed down to me in my mother's house. Writing that book, I was so preoccupied with the struggle to be different from my mother that I did not notice how much I regretted my failure to become one of the things she undeniably is. For my mother, in spite of critical ideology and personal ambivalence, is very much a Jewish woman.

My mother spoke Yiddish to her mother; not one word in any other language, not even after her mother had lived in the United States for thirty years. Yet when I was growing up in my mother's house, I was not supposed to become a Jewish woman. I became, instead, a young Communist who knew very little about Jewish life and culture, and I imagined that there was no difference between me and a boy. Later, as an adult, I set out quite consciously to acquire both these identities: as a woman, as a Jew. And then, having done so, I faced the possibility that these two missing identities for which I had so ardently struggled and yearned might well be intrinsically incompatible; they perhaps canceled one another out, leaving me with the necessity to create a new identity from the fragments and ruins of the old. For I had begun to wonder by then if there was a place for women in Judaism.

This question, which does not get asked directly in my story about my mother's family, is answered ambiguously in *The Flame Bearers*, my novel about a sect of Jewish women who worship the Goddess and have done so since before the Hebrew conquest of Canaan. These women regard themselves as Jewish; they marry Jewish men, live in Jewish communities, bring their vision and message to a Jewish world. Some members of the sect grow violent with outrage and frustration because of their exclusion from traditional Judaism. They disguise themselves as cantors, change the writings in the mezuzot, attempt to create havoc in traditional Jewish life. Other members of the sect feel that they preserve the old religion within Judaism itself. They do not care about their exclusion from Orthodoxy. They have their own writings and scribes, but they are also familiar with the patriarchal Holy Book. They read it as other Jews do, but they observe differently what they read there.

Although the Flame Bearers are an ancient sect and have been going about their business for a long time, they look at the Bible from what might be called a Women's Studies point of view. Sometimes they tell the story exactly the way the Old Testament does. But then they ask you to notice something you might have missed before. They are fascinated by what happens to women and children in the story.

This story. It is told, as I shall now retell it, in the Book of Numbers.

The Lord speaks unto Moses. He says, "Vex the Midianites, smite them." And so the Israelites make war against the Midianites as the Lord has commanded; they kill all the men and take the women captive, with their children and their cattle and their flocks and their goods. They burn their cities and castles with fire. They bring the women before Moses, who grows angry and says to them:

"Have ye saved all the women alive? Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord.... Therefore kill every man among the little ones, and kill every woman who hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children who have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves."

A man telling this story celebrates the warrior virtues of the Hebrew soldiers who have laid waste the towns and castles of the Midianites. A woman storyteller, opening these same words upon her harp, sings differently.

She raises her voice. All the women children, she says, all that have not known a man. The innocent ones, the virgins. These whose fathers have been put to the sword, whose towns have been burnt to the ground, their mothers and brothers cut down before their eyes. For these little ones given to the warriors, to the Israelites, I weep. She lifts a handful of dust, she throws it upon herself. And now she is silent.

In my case, the failure to be cut from Jewish cloth did not arise from the usual process of immigrant assimilation. My family was opposed to Judaism not because it kept us apart from other Americans but because being Jewish seemed to limit our participation in the class struggle that should, it was said, drown individual national identities in its universal urgency. As Communists, materialists, atheists, we did not attend synagogue, we did not pray, we did not keep a kosher house. As Internationalists, we were critical of Israel, militantly opposed to Zionists, and contemptuous of nationalistic Jews, who seemed to imagine that Jews and anti-Semitism rather than workers and the class struggle had the most meaningful place in history.

On the other hand, my mother was unable to tear herself away from her Jewish origins. She might want me to think of myself as a Communist rather than a Jew, but she sent me to a Jewish day camp in the summer, where I learned to light the candles on the Sabbath and to speak Hebrew prayers I was not allowed to repeat at home. Similarly, my parents spoke

to one another in Yiddish, telling secrets they did not want me to understand. Briefly, for a few months, they sent me to a Yiddish school, sponsored by a left-wing Jewish organization. But by then I must have acquired the sense that Jewish identity was not something I was really supposed to achieve. When the teacher spoke to me in Yiddish, I answered her by quacking like a duck. I did it time and again, with a grave frown on my face, seriously listening to her question and then quacking.

Why didn't I want to learn Yiddish? Perhaps, since Yiddish was the language spoken over my head and behind my back, I was attempting to allow my parents to preserve their privacy. What a strange situation they had placed me in—sending me off to learn a language in which they kept secrets. For me, Yiddish had become a forbidden code, the language of secrets, whose mystery and incomprehensibility I preserved by refusing to learn.

But then, too, by quacking like a duck I may have been expressing a sense that by that time a Jewish identity had become as alien to me as duck-talk. I could as well fly as be Jewish, I could as well lay an egg as speak a Hebrew prayer at home, I could as well grow feathers as dress up on the High Holidays and go to synagogue with other Jewish kids. I never crossed the threshold of a synagogue until I grew up. To be Jewish seemed to me a transgression. And my yearning therefore became secret, ambivalent, forbidden, my yearning to sit down in a synagogue and chant and wrap tefillin around my arm and daven and hold discourse with a God who might, after all, know something interesting about the world.

Women have something meaningful to hand down: receiving it is simultaneously an act of self-affirmation and self-transgression.

Does eating gefilte fish on Passover make you Jewish? It might; it certainly gave me a taste for ceremonial foods. Passover was a holiday I was allowed to celebrate. My mother, an organizer, organized my father's family to observe both nights of Pesach. She liked Pesach because it told the story of a people escaping from bondage. She had no patience with the sea opening, but she liked the fact that it was a red sea and that Moses was a radical, a people's hero. That's how she told the story to me.

The story more traditional Jews told was repeated at the far end of the table, where my father and his three brothers chanted in Hebrew, while we younger nieces and nephews pelted each other with olives and slurped down glasses of sweet wine. My mother, who could have put a stop to this uproar, could not resist our wild spirits. My father and his brothers were far too mild-mannered to object, my older cousins chatted among themselves, my father's sisters served traditional foods they had spent the day preparing. I got a new dress for each of the nights of Passover. In the beginning I liked these dresses, but one year I finally figured out that because of them I had never asked the four questions. Not that it mattered much. I preferred the din of battle and the olive wars. But still, I noticed.

Does lighting the menorah on Channukah make you Jewish? It might; it certainly left me with a sense of ritual yearning for events that are repeated on certain occasions regularly over thousands of years. My mother liked Channukah because it commemorated a liberation struggle against a foreign imperialist ruling class. She did not think much of the oil lamp that burned without oil for eight days, but she did admire the muscular rebelliousness of Judah Maccabee, whom she regarded as an early Communist, a man definitely before his time. Consequently, Channukah came into our home as yet another October Revolution, the Jewish element in it far less striking than the people's struggle for liberation from bondage.

My mother started something larger than she imagined when she retold these traditional stories in her own way. This peculiar way she placed me within Judaism, but did not allow me to belong to it, became an inheritance in its own right. From then on I would have to approach Judaism, and anything else I belonged to, at a slant. My mother's reworking of Judaism was evidently a more powerful teacher than her loyalty to the Communist world view. She wanted me to acquire her dogma; she handed down to me her rebellious daring. And no doubt because Judaism can tolerate such a stance far better than Communism, I have remained Jewish where I have ceased to read Marx.

In my mother's house, where Judaism was concerned, I breathed a strange air of subversion, contempt, ambivalence, yearning, an inability to do without something you somehow remained, no matter how critical you grew to be of what you were. It was a pure dust from the affikomon, hidden away and forgotten, the search interrupted perhaps by the sudden arrival of Elijah before the second glass of wine. It made me Jewish, as the gefilte fish and the candles had done, and the disruptive olives and the idea that a story was only a story and could be told with every sort of vision and revision—but not exactly Jewish; that wasn't her intent. She made me a patchwork Jew, stitched together from every sort of scrap, leaving me the task to make whole-cloth of it, if I could.

I was lonely as a child. My sister died when I was five years old. My mother was away at work all the time, organizing. I came home to an empty house after school, climbed up on the counter next to the sink, and watched the children next door with their mother. I was confused about what I was in the world. When the teacher asked us one day at school who was Catholic, who was Episcopalian, who was Buddhist, who was Jewish, I never managed to raise my hand, although my arm twitched when she said Jewish.

When I came to write *The Flame Bearers* I must have wanted to undo and redo certain aspects of my childhood. Above all, I probably wanted to fill my loneliness, and so I created a house in which several generations of women are still living together, preserving an ancient female tradition that has somehow managed to come to the new world. In this house contemporary women must define themselves with reference to the past. They must work out their relationship to a body of stories that is their birthright.

In *The Flame Bearers* I created a grandmother who is never absent from her granddaughter's life and thought. She is a matriarch of formidable power; she bonds her grandchildren through her power to tell stories, to preserve an ancient tradition, to gather them to her on the Sabbath and make them part of her past. She has three granddaughters who have been raised in her house, together. In the House of the Flame Bearers no child is ever left alone in the afternoon, and especially not on a Saturday, when there is no school and time weighs heavily if you have a mother who is out at meetings. In the House of the Flame Bearers the Sabbath is filled by an old woman telling stories.

The old woman who talks and talks. The old woman telling stories. That is the image through which a tradition is passed on. In this kind of storytelling what is said matters less than the way the storyteller says it, who she is, what she gets out of telling her stories. Through this image reality is presented, transposed, annihilated, and reestablished, simultaneously.

Through the old grandmother telling stories in *The Flame Bearers*, my frequent boredom with my mother's doctrinaire repetitiveness was put into question, made a matter of misunderstanding on my part, a failure to know how to listen to a story. Through the old woman telling stories my mother's tendency to repeat herself, which infuriated me, is imagined to have a hidden meaning and purpose, to be an incantation, a power of evocation that can unstitch the tyranny of time and bring back the past.

In reality, I cast aside my mother's dogma and broke her heart. In my work of fiction, the granddaughter cannot abandon the old lady because these stories have tangled themselves around her very core. She does not choose to lead the sect or preserve the tradition. She cannot choose, she can only acknowledge. She has broken the bread, lighted the candle, tasted the ash. She is a Flame Bearer in the same sense that I am Jewish.

Who is this old lady, really? She has a great deal to do with my mother's mother, who was constantly making up stories, changing them a bit, adding some color here and there, weaving them out of threads borrowed from unrestrained imaginings, other people's tales—from lies, even? But she is also a woman who hands down a militant tradition. A woman who awakens in her granddaughters an ambivalence they must spend their lives attempting to resolve.

It is a highly radical and subversive act to tell a familiar story in a new way.

For that is, isn't it, the way a tradition is authentically handed down? This matriarch, who stays at home, who gathers her family to her, who lays claim to their lives, possesses their imaginations, who doesn't leave them at peace, who makes it impossible for them to move away to New York and become normal, assimilated Jews and forget her, this visionary tyrant whom one cannot manage, cannot ever manage, not to love—these are the things she has in common with my mother.

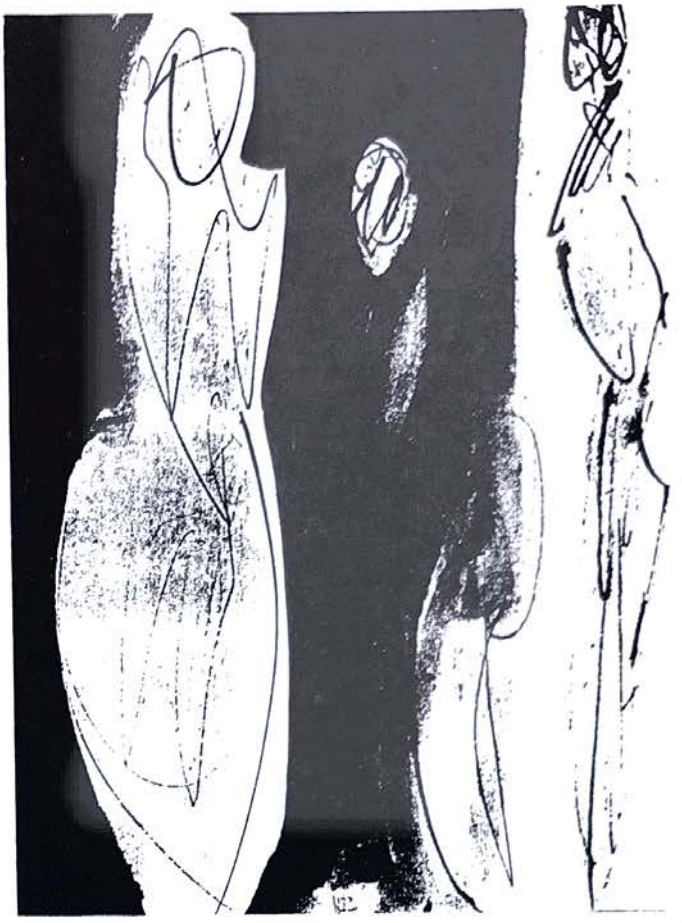
The ambivalent nature of one's love for a powerful woman. This ambivalence for a woman so much older than oneself. The relationship to this woman one loves and hates and must abandon and whom one can never fully leave behind—that is also one's relationship to the world she embodies. Tradition is the mother one finds oppressive, the source of one's inspiration, and intolerable.

That is the moment of truth: Women have something meaningful to hand down. That is the story: receiving it is simultaneously an act of self-affirmation and self-transgression.

But maybe the contradiction and ambivalence, far from being problematic, are in fact exactly the right attitude towards a tradition one inherits and must alter? The Flame Bearers are Jewish in precisely this way. They speak of a radical critique of Judaism. They have enacted a subversion of its basic tenets from within. They worship a female God. They are a secret, mysterious, brooding heart of outrage and discontent and love and vision, but they cannot abandon Judaism, shrug it off and be done with it once and forever; they have to live that contradiction.

Does Jewish experience rest upon the idea of a single God who is God the Father? That is a fundamental question for Jewish women today. We are what we worship; we become what we are able to imagine. In the name of our God, we give shape to ourselves. Is a Jewish woman conceivable as a fully developed woman without a deity who shares her sex? Is a deity who shares the female sex imaginable as a Jewish God? That is the sort of question you are driven to ask in the House of the Flame Bearers. It is the sort of question that pushes the Jewish question into the lap of feminism, the sort of question that makes you wonder about the things not said in the dominant tradition.

Growing up the way I did, I have learned to brood about those things excised, omitted, expunged from, driven out of the standard, authoritative version, which nevertheless come down somehow, in a tone of voice, a hand not quite shaking, something beneath the surface, a sigh, a tremor, a sob.



It isn't easy to be born to a tradition that must stay the same and simultaneously be constantly changing.

I like to think about the stories women might have, or must have, or certainly did tell to one another. I sit down at night in front of a fire and I start inventing such a tradition to fill the gap in the traditional stories I have inherited, those stories in which there are simply not enough women to suit my taste. And soon, drifting and dreaming there in front of the flames, I find myself coming to believe that I haven't invented anything; it seems to be there, just waiting for me to discover it, bits and pieces of it, broken off, hidden away, forgotten. Left behind in the glass when Elijah isn't thirsty. There when the bread doesn't rise. Or in the lamb shank—what kind of an offering? And who is it anyway, the warrior or the housewife, who knows how to make a dry lamp burn for days without oil?

It is a highly radical and subversive act to tell a familiar story in a new way. Once you start to do it you realize that what you call history is another such story and could be told differently, and has been. And then the authoritative tradition starts to crack and crumble. It too, it turns out, is nothing more than a particular selection of various stories, all of which have at one time or another been believed and told. At that point you become far, far less certain how to define the Jewish experience. Perhaps it has been torn with struggle and bloodshed because it is itself filled with self-contradiction and ambivalence, told differently depending upon who is telling the story. And perhaps it has been constantly changing, in spite of the study-houses where God the Father was worshiped, where women were excluded, where the text was memorized and passed on, always the same?

In *The Flame Bearers* three daughters and three granddaughters must figure out what to make of their matriarchal tyrant and her old tales. They have to struggle and doubt, grow bitter, run away, get burned up in a fire, go mad, study, set out, try to leave it all behind, get caught by it, return to the old stories, tell new tales, burn up all the old papers, mix new ink with the ash, rescue the fragments from the fire, burn them up all over again in their passion. It isn't easy to be born to a tradition that must stay the same and simultaneously be constantly changing.

But that's what it means to be Jewish.

And, as my mother always said, why *should* it be easy?

That's what it means to be a Jewish woman, isn't it? □

This article was presented at the Women's Studies/Jewish Studies Convergences Conference (co-sponsored by Tikkun*) at Stanford University in May 1987.*

Coming Home to Jewish Orthodoxy: Reactionary or Radical Women?

Debra Kaufman

In recent years increasing numbers of baalei teshuva (previously uncommitted Jews who in their adult lives make a commitment to Orthodox Judaism) can be found from coast to coast. Although the measure and meaning of this renewed interest in orthodoxy is debatable, the fact that so many young, relatively affluent, well-educated and assimilated Jews have embraced orthodoxy poses intriguing questions. Perhaps most provoking is the return of women to orthodoxy, the most traditional arm of Judaism. Orthodox Judaism, after all, yields ample evidence of women's second-class status—from divorce and desertion laws to the exclusion of women from secular and religious leadership within Jewish communal and religious agencies. More strikingly, the inviolable basis of authority for Orthodox Jews is halachah, the code of law which requires that women adhere to a legal system created, defined, and refined exclusively by males. Moreover, since women customarily are prohibited from studying the very texts from which the halachic interpretations derive, they have little opportunity to challenge those laws in a manner that will be perceived as authentic or legitimate.

Conversations I have had over the past few years with more than one hundred and fifty baalot teshuva (women who choose to be Orthodox) across the country, as part of a larger project about women, feminism, and the religious right in America, reveal how similar these women are to the white, middle-class, educated women who have generally populated the feminist movement. In fact, one-fifth of these baalot teshuva had identified with the women's movement and women's rights before they became Orthodox. At first glance, their defection seems to represent a symbolic victory of the religious and political right over feminism.

However, I found that women embrace orthodoxy for a variety of reasons, very much like the multitude of ways in which feminists might analyze their commitment to feminism. To explore the baalot teshuva's world is to uncover the ambiguities, tensions, and conflicts inherent in everyday experiences of human life where thought, behavior, and political direction often express contradictory impulses and reactions. In this spirit of paradox, I shall conclude before I begin by suggesting that to make sense of these women's motivations, choices, and "born-again" attitudes we should suspend immediate judgment and labeling. As the first stage of understanding, we should engage in what sociologists refer to as *verstehen*—giving up, in this case, preconceptions about "Orthodox revival" in order to understand it from the perspective of the "returnee," not the observer.

The odysseys of these baalot teshuva often began within a context of social protest. One-half of the women under study identify themselves as countercultural in their youth. Like many others of their generation, they describe themselves as starting out by rejecting the brash consumerism, the bureaucratic utilitarianism, and the hedonistic individualism of their parents' society. Yet, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, these women abandoned their countercultural practices and journeyed "home" to Orthodox Judaism. Although Jews by birth and upbringing, they describe a return to a religious orthodoxy that they had never known, yet one which they experienced as somehow comfortably familiar. Why had these women made so radical a change from the liberal iconoclasm of the counterculture to the most traditional values of orthodoxy? From the radical politics of the New Left to the reactionary worldview of the New Right?

As is so often the case where apparent polar oppositions reveal hidden affinities, the "coming home" of these baalot teshuva may not be so dramatic a departure from their countercultural roots or from a feminist tradition as it seems at first. Many hoped when they began their quests in the human potential movements of the sixties and seventies to use self-awareness as a way to grow individually and in their personal relationships. For many of these women, however, the search for authentic selfhood led merely to a deepening discon-

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nection from others and a recognition of the diminished sense of personal meaning and responsibility. In one important sense their "coming home" to orthodoxy might be viewed as a new and curious turn on the convoluted road to meaning, integrity, and value. If the fork on the left had failed to yield meaning, the turn to the right might still lead to the promised end.

Irrespective of their political roots and former lifestyles, all these women consciously reject secular culture. In telling their stories, they report a common experience: Their lives had been spiritually meaningless. But more than a mere disenchantment with modern secular society prompted their homeward journeys. For most, emptiness of modern living became a euphemism for specific complaints, most commonly expressed as the culture's confusion and ambivalence toward women, women's sexuality, and family and gender roles. Their return to orthodoxy, in some fundamental way, constitutes a protest against secular society, which most characterize as masculine in orientation and organization.

All women expressed concern about the loss of clear rules and expectations in marital, familial, and sexual relationships in secular culture. In discussing their relationships prior to their return, they especially emphasized their relationships with men who were unwilling or unable to make lasting commitments. As one woman expressed it:

> There I was, twenty-five years of age. I had had my fill of casual sexual relationships, drugs, communal living. I looked at myself and said: What will I be like at forty years of age? An aging hippie with no roots and maybe just a history of bad relationships? I wanted something true and lasting.

For many of these women the statistics of twentieth-century living and the "dark side" of individualism had become a real, not theoretical, problem in the reconstruction of personal life.

Ironically, it is through their return to a patriarchal tradition in Jewish orthodoxy that many of these women claim they are in touch with their own bodies and the "feminine virtues" of nurturance, mutuality, family, and motherhood. For example, their perceptions of *taharat hamishpacha* (the family purity laws which prohibit sexual contact between wife and husband during the days of menstruation and seven days thereafter and require a ritual bath before sexual contact is resumed) are particularly instructive. Although many feminists have stressed the insidious political implications of menstrual impurity beliefs, these women view the family purity laws quite differently.

Almost all women I spoke with described the family purity laws as positive. Many felt that these laws increased their sexual satisfaction within marriage. Even among the newly married, many claimed that forced separation heightened desire. Others referred to the "autonomy" and "control" they experienced when practicing the rituals of sexual separation. Invoking Virginia Woolf's phrase, one woman noted, "It allows me a bed of my own." Other women emphasized the increased time for themselves, and still others spoke of a kind of control over their sexuality. Because women have to attend intimately to their bodies to engage in sexual activity according to religious law, many baalot teshuva speak of an increased awareness and harmony with their bodies they had never known before.

Women, in their roles as mothers and wives, are central in maintaining those rituals which separate Orthodox Jews from other Jews and from the larger gentile world. From this perspective women are central to Orthodox living.

While I do not intend to imply that all of these women are sexually satisfied, in control of their sexuality, or personally happy with marriage and/or sexuality, they clearly believe that the family purity laws function positively for them within marriage. Frequently women would state, "My husband cannot take me for granted," or, as one woman put it, "My husband's sexual desire is not the only consideration." However, the experiences that grow from their practices are more than responses to limiting or controlling males. While these women believe that the purity laws encourage men to respect them as sexual beings and while this, in turn, increases their own self-respect (particularly toward their bodies), there seems to be even more at stake in such ritual practices. From the imagery of their language and the descriptions of their experiences, a symbolic framework for social existence emerges which transcends the self and the couple and embraces, ultimately, the entire community.

These women clearly feel connected to something larger than the community that defines itself as male. "I feel connected to history and to other women," says one woman. Feeling a sense of history, another woman mused: "The Jews at Masada used the mikvah [ritual bath]. Each time I use the mikvah I feel I come back to the center of Judaism and to my own core." What

became clear after talking with so many women was that for them the core of Judaism emanates from activities and obligations shared with *other* women even, and perhaps most ironically, when speaking of the religious rituals surrounding their heterosexuality.

Caught in the dilemma of twentieth-century individualism, these women seem to reconstruct their personal lives by moving beyond the self to the community and to what they believe to be timeless truths. Sexuality within orthodoxy is not merely a biological need or a means of self-expression but, rather, a holy ritual.

The very terms these women use to describe their orthodoxy meet requirements which have been identified by some feminists as necessary for a feminist theology. They focus on women's dignity and deep spirituality as they describe their experiences with religious symbols, tradition, and beliefs.

While these women do not directly challenge male authority in the Orthodox community (thereby limiting whatever effect they can have on the community as a whole), they claim very powerful sacred images of themselves and their functions. The family, "their" domain, is described as "the sanctuary on earth." They often refer to the Shabbat (Sabbath) as "feminine" or as "a taste of the world to come." Among many of the women there is an implicit belief that they "will prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah;" still others refer to the "indwelling" of God as female. These powerful images embody a sense of the sacred community of which they are a principal part as "feminine," in direct contrast to the male, secular culture which they reject.

Their return to orthodoxy contains no world-escaping visions, no models for alternative realities, but rather a tradition with a moral ordering in which women play a fundamental role. For them the Orthodox religious and social community is more than synagogue and study. Women, they claim, in their roles as mothers and wives, are central in maintaining those rituals which separate Orthodox Jews from other Jews and from the larger gentile world. From this perspective women are central to Orthodox living.

These women use the feminine and the family to relate to the world in a spiritual and moral way which they claim is personally satisfying. They find purpose and meaning in their female activities and positive self-definition in feminine attributes. The familial and the feminine provide a counterbalance for them to a world "run amok" with masculine notions of success, achievement, and status acted out through competitive individualism and self-aggrandizement. In this sense many have come almost full circle back to their countercultural roots. They view themselves not merely as passive reflections of male imagery but, rather, as moral agents for positive action.

The baalot teshuva not only believe in gender difference—they celebrate it. Yet there are some twists on their ideological commitments. Although these women take a clear pro-family stance, their emphasis on family and motherhood does not negate working or help with childcare. Of the little more than half of the women with whom I spoke who were not working, almost all intend to join the paid labor force at some time. Nearly all those without advanced degrees intend to retrain and/or obtain more education before returning to the labor force. Most mothers use some form of childcare or day care services regularly, whether they work or not. Of those working full-time, half have someone living in the household to help with childcare responsibilities, and all mothers share childcare responsibilities with their husbands, at least to some extent. Because of their religious commitment to prayer (three times a day) and study, many men create flexibility in their work patterns. Their presence in the home, often during the day, provides them with frequent contact and often more responsibility for children than fathers gone all day.

Is the "feminine orthodoxy" of the baalot teshuva just another version of the "feminine mystique"? In a society where the number of divorces is slowly coming to equal the number of marriages, where one in three women can expect to be sexually assaulted by a man during her lifetime, where women can expect to earn little more than half of what men do, despite their talent, experience, and education, it is not surprising that women still see themselves as economically and socially oppressed despite their steady gains in the public world of education and work. For the majority of women, steady and increasing entry into the labor market, even in the most educated and highly trained sector, has not offset economic vulnerability. National quality of life studies indicate that both working and nonworking wives and mothers maintain the major responsibility for domestic and childcare activities. If "destructive dependence" had been the code word for the feminine mystique, "false independence" may characterize the feminist one.

The baalot teshuva defend their choice of life-style within a contemporary familial context. They regard orthodoxy—from the family purity laws to the value and dignity accorded them as wives and mothers—as institutional protection. In this very specific sense they are not dependent upon individual males but upon a theology they believe "feminine" in values and principles. Although the depth of religious commitment among these baalot teshuva should not be minimized, the phenomenon of becoming Orthodox may also be an expression of a quest for revalued domesticity, an emphasis on their everyday lives as wives and mothers.

By reviving a focus on these roles, roles which every national survey suggests most young women intend to play, these women refocus on an area of women's lives they claim contemporary feminism—which they associate with the liberal feminism of Betty Friedan and NOW—disregards and devalues.

Yet many of the issues raised by these baalot teshuva do come from a feminist tradition. For instance, at the turn of the century a vital and lively feminist tradition existed whose members advocated the transformation of the home. These feminists were concerned with the place of women within both the family and society at large. They advocated reform from the perspectives, experiences, and concerns of women, celebrating gender differences and the feminine.

Historian Estelle Freedman (1979) argues that there is a "dialectic of tradition" in the experiences of many nineteenth-century feminists who, as oppressed women, wished to affirm the value of their own culture while rejecting the past oppression from which that culture in part originated. Domestic, social, and cultural feminists of the nineteenth century all shared a common approach: the reclaiming of the autonomous values attached to women's "community."

Feminist historians and anthropologists have emphasized how female institution building and sex-segregated living at times have enabled women to resist male domination or to gain control over those spheres of life that are defined as women's. Some historians claim that it is antagonism with men and male culture that prompts women to seek and defend separatist living, showing ways in which sex-segregated living may create structural opportunities for a certain degree of psychic autonomy from men and perhaps for the formation of group consciousness among women.

The contemporary liberal feminism to which these baalot teshuva allude, rooted in an ideology of individualism, does not address many issues some early feminists and many of the baalot teshuva raise. Feminist campaigns in the public realm of work and education have perhaps inadvertently exaggerated the importance of the public sphere of life. Liberal feminism does not necessarily engage in a critique of materialistic market society, nor does it challenge the morality of utilitarian ethics. It leaves individuals to deal with the problems of personal life as if those problems were separated from the larger public context in which they occur.

These baalot teshuva, like many feminists of last century, juxtapose idealized images of the family/the feminine with the economy/the masculine. They use the sacred and the feminine to hold impious men to pious rules. Visions of homelike communities based on concepts of mutual aid and service to others strike a contrast with the competitive economic model of individual rewards. The union of shared action and a collective sense of self which comes from their sex-segregated living constitutes the moral community most were searching for in the earlier stages of their lives. Many women claim they have succeeded in overriding the narcissistic elements of our times in the reconstruction of their personal lives.

Yet while there is a feminist ancestry to many of these baalot teshuva's claims to feminine values, they are not feminists. Their concerns are limited to Orthodox, heterosexual, Jewish women. Unmarried, divorced, widowed, separated, and childless women face clear problems within such communities. While the baalot teshuva may reclaim or retrieve values attached to the women's community, those values are limited almost exclusively to the roles of motherhood and wifehood. At best, this is a short-term tactic which allows them some amount of woman-centered identity and, perhaps, some psychic autonomy from men. However, it is still within a patriarchal context. Therefore, while they may claim positive values associated with the feminine, they do so without the mechanisms or legitimacy to reject what is still oppressive. In the long run this is not a feminist vision.

However, women attracted to the religious right do have something to say to contemporary feminists. The baalot teshuva, similar perhaps to other right-wing women, vocalize profound popular concerns. Feminism must provide not only a broad social and political vision but also a responsiveness to daily concerns. The voices of these women, be they a moral majority or a moral minority, cannot be placed in isolation from ongoing or historic feminist debates about sex/gender and the family. While our political and individual motivations may vary, it seems useful for contemporary feminists to engage in a "dialectic of tradition," just as it has been useful for feminists in the past. For without that "dialectic" we may lose the intellectual and political legitimacy of our trenchant criticisms of the organization of familial life. We may lose our credibility in guiding decisions about childcare and our children's needs. We may lose our rights over our bodies and our sexuality. Without a claim to the feminine in our feminist past we may be falsely characterized as hostile to children, to the family, or simply as man-hating. While I do not believe we must embrace patriarchy in order to defeat it, I do believe we must engage in a "dialectic of tradition" with our feminist past, a clear part of patriarchy itself, if we are to have a feminist future. □

Current Debate/God and History

A Comment by Arthur Waskow

It was delicious to read *Tikkun*'s editorial on God—even though I hold a different view. Delicious because so few political or literary journals would have thought to say aloud what their theology was.

Since I do think theology matters, I want to share my disagreement and concern. *Tikkun*'s experience is that once upon a time God spoke to us across the chasm of being, but nowadays is utterly silent and has nothing to do with us. All we have are wistful memories and a powerful Teaching from the past.

This does not accord with my experience. The rabbis said, "When two talk real Torah, the Shekhinah (God's Presence) is with them in the room." This *does* accord with my experience. That is, in slightly more modern language: At moments of wrestling with my own life in the light of words of Revelation that have been recorded by others who have wrestled—from Moses to whoever wrote the Song of Songs to Heschel to Plaskow—I myself experience a sense of Wholeness, of Unity, of Truth flaming up inside me. Connecting me with all of life, all of the cosmos. In my own experience, Revelation is not over.

And it is not only from the study of the texts of Revelation that this knowledge of Unity comes. I was present in Israel when Sadat visited Jerusalem, and I experienced the society-wide opening of hearts and minds to peace, to hope, to the profound freedom that it was possible to make new choices—as a coming-together of the broken world into a Whole, a Oneness. Just for a moment . . .

And when, at the nuclear testing site in Nevada where we were celebrating a Shalom Seder in the desert, I looked up at the sky and saw—without a raindrop anywhere—a rainbow that blessed us for twenty minutes. And when my beloved, my *bashert*, and I make love—or simply turn to look at each other. And sometimes when the cherry trees blossom near Mr. Jefferson's Memorial.

And once when I saw all of Sinai as an infinite array of mirrors, in each of which the Universe was reflected slightly differently, each mirror mirroring in its own way the people and the wilderness, the whales and the palm trees, the paintings and the algebra, the galaxies and the law codes, of it All.

These envisionings of God do not locate God *outside* the universe, or outside us. I agree with *Tikkun* that if we first experience God as utterly Other, then there is a profound danger that treating God as a continuing reality will release us from our own responsibilities. If we blame the God-Who-is-Other for the Holocaust, then perhaps human beings are absolved.

And I also understand *Tikkun*'s fear that to celebrate the God-Who-is-in-Us runs the risk of confirming that whatever is, is right: that the Holocaust too—and maybe a nuclear one as well—have their place in the ultimate scheme of things.

I can only say that there is a kind of Transcendence within this Immanence—a kind of critique of the world-as-it-is that comes not from outside it but inside it. The best way I can describe this critique is to say what I hear: "I am the Unity of the Universe: when the Universe is *conscious* of its Unity and ready to act as if all its parts were parts of One, then I am fully present. When these parts of Wholeness act to torment and destroy each other, there is still a kind of Oneness—for what each part does to another will recoil upon itself—but it is only an unconscious unity. Hear! Be conscious! That I am One."

In the hearing of this voice, it does not seem possible to think that whatever is, is right.

Arthur Waskow is director of the Shalom Center at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Seminary. His most recent book is Seasons Of Our Joy *(Bantam, 1982).*

A Response by Michael Lerner

By arguing that we cannot read God's will in the vagaries of contemporary human history, my hope was to dispell two common distortions: one, that the Holocaust (or, for that matter, other instances of unnecessary human suffering) *really* is somehow a manifestation of God's will (some say a punishment for sins, others a warning of impending nuclear disaster); and, two, that the conquest of the West Bank and the reunification of Jerusalem are signs that God really wants the Jews to rule all of Palestine.

It was not my intent to deny the reality of the experiences Arthur and other mystics, myself included, have had in our spiritual lives. What may be at issue is not the validity of the experience, but the words we choose to use to describe that experience. This was Heschel's point in insisting that God is the Ineffable: that our language is always fundamentally and necessarily inadequate, and that at some fundamental level the best response to our spiritual encounters is to offer prayers of thanksgiving, sing psalms, write poetry, create beautiful art, act in holy and divinely sensitive ways toward our fellow human beings, engage in social action—but be very careful of any theological language or theological claim that would use our spiritual life as the intellectual warrant and foundation.

So, although I tend to be more circumspect in describing my spiritual life than Arthur Waskow, I have had experiences that are similar to his. Jewish tradition correctly proclaims that "the whole earth is full of Her/His glory," and that the Divine Presence, the Shekhinah, is potentially available to us in our daily life experience. In fact, a primary purpose of Jewish ritual life, embodied in the mitzvot, is to help us peel away the levels of intellectual and emotional defense that prevent us

from being more constantly in touch with that Divine Presence.

Nor do I want to deny that in such moments of contact with the spiritual forces of the universe one can sometimes hear the voice of God. We are still living in the immediate aftershocks of a spiritual earthquake that our people describe as Sinai, and we can still hear the voice of God in those reverberations. But we also face the same danger previous generations faced: Just as they interpreted their experiences through the limited conceptual and psychological framework available to them, so our perceptions are limited by our own conceptual and psychological makeup. That is why it is essential to try to understand God's word both through our own direct experience and through a process of studying and struggling with the insights of the generations that went before us, embodied first in the Torah and subsequently in the experience of our people expressed in the texts we created—not only the Talmud and the halachah, but the texts of psychoanalysis, Marxism, feminism, and the other manifestations of Jewish ethical and spiritual inquiry that have lately attempted to dress themselves up as "science."

I think this may be the process that Arthur Waskow himself goes through and why he often comes forward with such insightful formulations. His rewrite of the *Shma* in his statement above precisely exemplifies the interaction between how he hears God directly and how he interprets his own experience within the framework of the tradition. But when this dialectical interaction fails, we get proclamations of a new Judaism that often sound more like recycled Eastern religions or recycled liberalism than something more authentically rooted. My caution here is to beware of how easy it is to deceive ourselves by believing that the common assumptions of our age are the final embodiment of truth and by rushing to reframe Judaism within this context without questioning how contemporary ideologies may themselves be limited.

Yet none of this addresses the fundamental point of the editorial to which Waskow is responding. There was a time when it seemed appropriate to conceive of God as having intervened directly in history, and it was the encounter with that experience that profoundly transformed our people. We call it the Exodus, and retell its story throughout the year. That form of intervention may no longer exist, and those who discover it in the actual workings of recent history have other agendas to which they wish to give divine sanction. God's role would better be conceived as a Divine Mother or Father who, having given good teachings, may still be available but whose children must be free to make their own mistakes, tragic though they may be, if they are ever to develop their full human—and divine—capacities. It is precisely because God will not intervene either to stop a holocaust or to shape the details of a Jewish state that we need to stop blaming God and to start repairing our humanly constructed social world. □

Current Debate/The Yishuv and the Holocaust

A Critique by Marie Syrkin

The Poisoned Heart: the Jews of Palestine and the Holocaust" is another example of the lengths to which revisionists of history are prepared to go in support of a favorite thesis, namely that the Zionists subordinated the rescue of European Jewry to their political obsession—the creation of a Jewish state. Yet even in this unhappily familiar context Zertal's interpretations and omissions of salient data are striking in their dogmatic bias. As the centerpiece of her indictment Zertal quotes from Yitzhak Zuckerman who, like his wife, Zivia Lubetkin, was a leader of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Both spent their lives in the Ghetto fighters' kibbutz in Israel. Zertal quotes Zuckerman's words, "If you could lick my heart, it would poison you" (heard in Lanzmann's *Shoah*) as though they applied to his disillusionment with the Jews of Palestine. Zuckerman's original words, written in 1945, were different: "If a dog were to lick my heart, it would be poisoned." They were then used with specific reference to the savagery of a world that could find no place for Jewish survivors during and after the Holocaust. In 1945 Yitzhak and Zivia sought to reach Palestine through illegal immigration as their sole salvation. What warrant has Zertal for her changed interpretation?

The Zuckerman accusation that Zertal quotes as a "historical reckoning of the failures of the Jews of Palestine" is his complaint that five hundred Palmach fighters did not set out for Europe to parachute into Poland: "You could not have saved us: You were not supermen. But why didn't one come? One." Of interest here is not the accusation of a tormented individual whose psyche I would not presume to probe, but Zertal's failure to point out to the reader that the notion that the Palmach in the forties had five hundred trans-Atlantic planes at its disposal indicated a complete divorce from reality. And surely at this point Zertal might have introduced her account of the parachutists from Palestine who sought to penetrate the fortress of Nazi Europe. Instead she relegates this spectacular and heroic attempt to the end of her article as though it had no bearing on Zuckerman's charge, characterized as "symbolic." When she reaches the parachutists, she minimizes the prolonged efforts of the Jewish Agency and the Hagana to persuade the Mandatory Power to train Palestinian Jews and provide the planes to drop them behind enemy lines—an effort that began early in 1943. When she finally describes this mission, she assures the reader that this unique attempt to enter the Nazi charnel house was not the work of "leaders" but of simple workers "free of a commitment to a great Zionist design." Was Eliahu Golomb, who planned it, not a Zionist "visionary" whose life was dedi-

Marie Syrkin is the author of Blessed Is The Match, The Story of Jewish Resistance, *based on interviews with ghetto fighters and parachutists.*

cated to a "Zionist design"? Why does she not mention that among the seven parachutists who perished was Enzo Sereni, a foremost Zionist leader captured and killed in Dachau? Hanna Senesh, the legendary heroine of Palestine, may have been a simple worker in her kibbutz but she, like the others, had been impelled to martyrdom because of her Zionist conviction.

The writer mentions but minimizes the role of the Yishuv's emissaries in seeking to establish contact with the immured Jewries of Europe to devise schemes of rescue. The files of the Jewish Agency bulge with correspondence and descriptions that circumstantially describe the workings of this elaborate network of rescue.

What about her charge that Jewish Palestine and Zionists relegated rescue to a role "of secondary importance both on the Yishuv's practical agenda and its consciousness and ethos"? The trouble with this stale canard is that the cart is placed before the horse. From the Evian Conference in 1938 to the Bermuda Conference on Refugees in 1943, it became plain that the Allies would not make any move to rescue the Jews of Europe and that they would oppose every such endeavor. Jewish organizations, led by Stephen Wise, had prepared detailed memoranda pressing for (1) liberalized immigration quotas, (2) havens in neutral countries, and (3) free immigration to Palestine. At Bermuda, Breckenridge Long, an American in charge of the Visa Division of the State Department, found Jewish efforts so troublesome that he complained of "the aggressiveness of our Jewish friends." The answer to every Jewish demand was invariably that the first priority was to win the war. The pleas of the Jewish Agency and of Weizmann to bomb the crematoria were ignored.

This record of obstruction brought home the realization that only the third of the three demands put forward by the "aggressive" Jews had a chance of implementation—immigration to Palestine—because only in Palestine could Jews act with some independence, even if illegally and by defying the Mandatory Power. Small wonder that Golda Meir, who had watched the shameful proceedings in Evian as an observer, declared in 1943, "There is no Zionism except the rescue of Jews." She and her comrades, including Ben-Gurion, concluded that only a Jewish state, even one amputated through the sacrifice of partition, offered hope. The Jewish struggle against Great Britain was launched not under the slogan of "A Jewish State" but "Open the gates of Palestine." The creaky illegal boats filled with Jewish refugees brought in by young Palestinian Jews bore that inscription on their banners, and the subsequent battles were waged with that cry.

So strict is Zertal's adherence to her central thesis that she is forced to pirouette between the evidence she adduces and her interpretation. Like a good scholar she meticulously quotes statements by Ben-Gurion that reveal his awareness and anguish but she dismisses them as rhetoric. He was too busy with party work to bother. As a clincher she quotes the conclusion of one such statement, "The party's work.... is perhaps the only road to rescue." As a final assessment she offers an evaluation by Shabtai Teveth, Ben-Gurion's biographer, to the effect that Ben-Gurion did not give rescue top priority. Since she quotes lavishly from Teveth, let me quote from the preface of his monumental biography: "Ben Gurion, who saw in Zionism the only solution for the problem of confronting the Jewish people and the sole chance for their rescue, was utterly convinced that if Zionism was not realized at once, the Jewish people were doomed." This puts a rather different aspect in Ben Gurion's view of "party work"—work that encompassed the parachutists, the emissaries and the organization of Alya Beth, and illegal immigration, in addition to political demands.

Berl Katznelson, the spiritual leader of the Yishuv, also gets his comeuppance. His outcries, too, are lachrymose rhetoric; he is too busy with factional strife. Zertal might have mentioned that Berl, all his life ideologically opposed to political solutions and statehood, in 1940 declared himself for a Jewish state, one year before the Biltmore Conference, in order to save European Jewry, and that ideological opponents of partition among the Zionist leaders began to press for that sacrifice because of the Jewish survivors. In discussing the Yishuv's leaders Zertal presents Yitzhak Gruenbaum, a General Zionist who outraged Labor, as the true standard bearer, though why he is viewed as more representative than the "activists" David Remez or Golda Meir or Eliahu Golomb boggles the mind. These significant figures, who Zertal admits were activists, are mysteriously dismissed as peripheral.

Even the statistics Zertal honorably quotes lead her to perverse conclusions. Compare 647,000 Palestine pounds raised for rescue by 500,000 Jews of Palestine with the 512,000 pounds of the JDC and the 170,000 pounds contributed by the Jewish communities of the free world. Per capita the amount raised by a tiny community of workers and immigrants overshadows any contribution elsewhere. What is Zertal's censorious verdict? They should have done more.

Zertal describes Palestine during the war years as a prosperous, "safe, placid and enjoyable place to live," practically an oasis in a world at war. Nobody presumably worried about the advancing armies of Rommel or lost an hour's sleep about Nazi triumphs. Of course people ate, drank, and sat in cafés when they could. What does that prove except that human beings are human? Even in the Warsaw Ghetto and in Lodz people tried to simulate a tolerable existence as long as possible. Anyone who lived in Palestine in the tension of that time knew that the involvement of the Yishuv in the destiny of European Jewry was direct and passionate as nowhere else. The state was the result of that passion.

Like a good sociologist Zertal painstakingly counted the poems of Natan Alterman (who wrote weekly verse on currents events for *Davar*) and reached the shocking conclusion that only eleven poems dealt with the Holocaust. I have not counted Alterman's production but I can testify that among these were some of the most poignant written about the Holocaust (I translated some of them). These poems were recited by the Yishuv, just as the poem Hanna Senesh wrote before her execution, "Blessed Is the Match that Is Consumed in Kindling Flame," became the theme song of Jewish Palestine.

True, despite the parachutists, the emissaries, the illegal immigration, the unending negotiations with the Allies, little was achieved in terms of numbers—thousands not millions were saved. But the fault lay not in the will or readiness for action of the Yishuv's best spirits. Jewish powerlessness was the tragedy—a powerlessness that the Zionists dreamt of solving.

True, the Yishuv did not at first believe the reality of the fearful rumors

that reached it about the fate of European Jewry. Zertal explains this incredulity by a ponderous psychoanalytic theory: The Zionist leaders could not perceive the full horror of Nazism because such recognition would have inhibited them from "creating a Jewish state." This tortuous logic is countered by all the Zionist declarations in which the fate of European Jewry is presented as the central reason for demanding a Jewish state. American Jewry, too, like the rest of the world, was at first incredulous, though American Jews of the forties could hardly be accused of being victims of a Zionist fixation.

True, there was a "psychological abyss," as Zuckerman charged, between the Jews of Palestine and the Jews of Nazi Europe; so there was also a psychological abyss between the Jews with visas and those in the ghettos, between those in the ghettos and those in the death camps, between the still living and the dead.

And today there is a psychological rift, if not abyss, between industrious students, who with all the intellectual acrobatics at their command seek to measure the emotional temperature of the forties, and those who experienced or witnessed the helplessness and desperate efforts of that time. □

A Response by Idith Zertal

I would like to thank Ms. Syrkin for the attention she devoted to my article, and for the trouble she went to in producing her lengthy and furious response.

It is nevertheless saddening that Ms. Syrkin's fury disrupts her line of reasoning and adds to the historiographical distortions of the type I tried to rectify in my article, which itself is an almost telegraphically condensed version of a comprehensive study still being written.

Is it really by chance that Ms. Syrkin quotes from my article only one sentence uttered by Antek Zuckerman ("If you could lick my heart, it would poison you to death"), and goes so far as to define it as "the centerpiece of my indictment"? (Incidentally, Zuckerman repeated this sentence many times, with reference inter alia to the Palestinian yishuv's attitude toward the Holocaust). She also fails to contend with Zuckerman's other remarks quoted in my article, which are more significant and truly explicit—for example, "The Land of Israel, our heart's beloved, did not love us. There was a psychological abyss ... it will never be forgiven"?

She claims that I failed to inform the reader that Zuckerman's notion that the Palmach had five hundred trans-Atlantic planes at its disposal indicates "a complete divorce from reality." Her contention is puzzling, at the least. Zuckerman, of course, did not speak of five hundred trans-Atlantic planes. To fortify his argument as to the yishuv's failure to offer its assistance, he invoked the symbolic number of five hundred Palmach fighters. My central premise is that the yishuv did *not* have the strength—in view of its political, military, and demographic limitations, and considering the circumstances prevailing at the time—to offer the Jews of the Diaspora any real assistance and to make any impact on the overall devastation. The second and complimentary section of this premise is that the expectations of both the Jews of Europe and parts of the yishuv focused in the main on a symbolic act, a gesture of solidarity, an effort neither aspiring to a goal nor providing any benefit. Antek Zuckerman expressed precisely this kind of expectation when, in his conversation with poet Haim Guri, he complained that no member of the Palmach, not even *one*, reached the Jews of Poland as they were being sent to the death camps or were struggling in the ghettos. To put a sentence about five hundred trans-Atlantic planes in Zuckerman's mouth, and to attempt to hint at Antek Zuckerman's divorce from reality, his mental state, and my failure to make note of these, is misleading and outrageous.

Ms. Syrkin mentions the saga of the parachutists. She need not be concerned. I, too, consider it a marvelous episode of uncommon valor and humaneness. It is my opinion, however, that the exception proves the rule. My work, by the way, singles out this episode for an extensive and major chapter. Because Syrkin mentioned Enzo Sereni, however, I shall say a few words about him that strengthen my premise. He was a legendary figure indeed, one who makes clearer the gap between the few who set out for the Diaspora, motivated by a supreme sense of obligation—for which they even gave their lives—and the many who pursued their routine lives in Palestine with no deviation. This man, approaching forty, set out on his last mission in 1944 against the counsel of his comrades and the leaders of his movement, the Labor Movement, propelled by that unrestrainable sense of mission. It is surely tragic that as he penned his farewell letter to the movement's three founding fathers—Berl Katznelson, Ben-Gurion, and Yitzhak Tabenkin ("May we meet again soon, and if not, may great peace be yours, and thank you for everything you gave me in life, for the light I saw in your light")—the movement was on the verge of splitting. Indeed, by the time the letter reached its destination a few weeks later, the tragic schism had already become a fact, with repercussions and after-effects that were evident many years later in the Israeli political and social scene.

Finally, a general comment: Marie Syrkin belongs to a generation of writers and historians who—correctly—consider themselves partners and soldiers in the Zionist struggle. Asking no questions and harboring no doubts, they placed themselves at the service of this struggle, to their great merit.

I and others of like mind—who were born in Israel, who live Zionism every day in Israel, and who belong (speaking for myself) both by birth and by faith to the Labor Movement—no longer need to adopt an apologetic tone or across-the-board hero-worship when discussing recent Jewish and Zionist history. On the contrary: We feel duty-bound to examine matters with neither fear nor favoritism, using the most professional and sensitive tools possible.

Obviously we cannot shake free of our heritage and our set of values. Neither do we want to do so—certainly not in the context of as painful and loaded a theme as the Holocaust. But it is essential to inquire into the past soberly and courageously, however painful this may be, for several reasons.

One reason is simple: our desire and urge to know the truth as best we can.

For the sake of our present-day sanity as a society, our culture, and our obligations as a public and as individuals toward the Jewish people whatever that is—our neighbors, and ourselves—it is our duty to work through our past, to acquaint ourselves with its less amenable aspects as well, and to come to grips with them. It is always more healthy to know than not to know or to repress.

Finally, I think it best to entrust the study of these matters to responsible and serious researchers, whose Zionism does not necessarily disqualify them, rather than leaving the field to non-professionals whose guiding motives are political. The latter truly belong to that category of "revisionist" writers which Marie Syrkin correctly denounces. □

Current Debate/Strategies for the Left

A Critique by Prudence S. Posner: Solidarity for What?

In *Tikkun*'s premier issue, Christopher Lasch, Alan Wolfe, Harry Boyte and Sara Evans joined in a funeral dirge for the left in America. Wolfe ("Is Sociology Dangerous?") lamented that "our [leftist] traditions have failed to produce alternatives for us." Lasch ("What's Wrong with the Right?") would have had us bury the left. And Boyte and Evans ("The Sources of Democratic Change") caricatured the leftist utopia as the replacement of natural identities with the sorts of associations formed by large institutions. While there is a dark humor in the metaphor of a socialist paradise as the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, metaphor cannot substitute for the serious examination of ideas. Nor can the new left populism which informs these essays substitute for the challenging philosophical groundwork urgently required for social change.

In mourning the passing of the left, new populist social commentators (and I do lump all four essayists in this category—fairly, I believe) hold in common an allegiance to what they call majoritarian or traditional values as a source of democratic change, a rejection of what they identify as Marxist concepts of class and class conflict, and a view of government which reduces issues of social welfare policy to statism. They also share considerable confidence in the good will of the white Christian majority toward members of minority racial or religious groups.

On the other hand, even among the more thoughtful new populist, post-Vietnam era organizers of groups such as Associated Communities for Reform Now (ACORN), Citizen Action, and various labor, energy, and community coalitions, there is a growing awareness of the need for a changing moral discourse. For the activist or organizer concerned with larger issues than traffic lights, the urgent question is where, indeed, are we going if not left? In his history of ACORN, Gary Delgado concludes that democratic social change cannot be based solely on the mobilization of people's immediate concerns, anxieties, and interpretations of the world. It requires a commitment to social philosophy and to the effort to link political activity to philosophical principles. In their emphasis on the need for a sense of personal connection and accountability, for rootedness and community, populists such as Lasch, Wolfe, Boyte and Evans contribute little to linking social philosophy with political action. They have, in fact, completely neglected and excluded from their formulations three vital philosophical links to political practice: the concept of the left as minority opposition, the potential of the state as an agent of democratic social change, and the role of a "social democratic minimum" in shaping social values.

The Moral Discourse of the Left

In his important collection of essays, *Toward a Marxist Humanism* (1968), the former dissident Polish philosopher, Leszek Kolakowski insists:

> The Left must define itself on the level of ideas, conceding that in many instances it will find itself in the minority ... [For example,] the working class of a given country may be greatly influenced by nationalism, yet the left will not support nationalistic demands; elsewhere, the working class may have deep roots in a religious tradition, yet the left is a secular movement.

The key point here is the legitimacy, even necessity, of the left's minority status, a position taken not for the pleasure of persecution but out of the recognition that societies tend to promote values which support the status quo. The task of a left is to articulate ideas and struggle to promote policies which oppose these values. From the point of view of the organizer and political activist, this means a willingness to come into conflict with the ideas and values of the majority. It means recognizing that these conflicts are, in and of themselves, leftist activities insofar as they are grounded in principle and not in expediency.

The second blind spot in new populist formulations concerns the very nature of the political mechanism. German political philosopher Franz Neumann, in his essay "The Concept of Political Freedom" in *The Democratic and Authoritarian State* (1957), reminds us that democracy is not simply a mechanism to secure participation in decision-making or the accountability of representative decision-makers, but that "its essence consists in the execution of large-scale changes maximizing the freedom of man." In this century, for better or for worse, the only agent of society capable of carrying out large-scale democratic projects has been the federal government. This is not because the left has been too willing to rely upon the government to solve social problems but because most of the problems which Americans face as workers, parents, and residents of communities are due to the functioning of highly concentrated, internationally mobile corporate capital. Only the government has even potenti-

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ally sufficient power to exercise any control over the behavior of these corporate bodies. In this country, only a few efforts to carry out "large-scale projects of democracy" have ever been made, most, such as Social Security, initiated during the Great Depression.

As a left, our commitment to end social privilege and inequality translates into democratic projects of social policy such as universally available health care, the federally guaranteed right to decent housing, full employment based on need rather than profit, racially integrated schools and neighborhoods. Our commitment to combat racism and gender discrimination requires support for policies of affirmative action, comparable worth, and programs which do not leave issues of child care to the forces of the market and tradition. Is there some agency other than the federal government with the power necessary to force corporations to provide a safe and healthy workplace, to cease dumping toxic wastes in public air, soil, and water? Can communities enforce minimum wages or the right to collective bargaining? Perhaps even more important, would they even want to as long as they must compete with one another in order to obtain the benefits of employment and tax revenue provided by industry?

It is precisely at the level of policy that a left is needed to raise the moral issues of social responsibility, of justice and equality. The problem is not that the left fails to engage in moral discourse, as Lasch and Wolfe argue, but that Americans are uncomfortable with the language of social responsibility. Our ideas move habitually in channels dug by the dominant individualist values and relationships of our society. In *Habits of the Heart*, Robert Bellah warns against confusing the widespread nostalgia for the intimacy and face-to-face relationships of a small community with a real understanding of the power relations of our society. He suggests that the popular idiom of liberal individualism actually conceals the realities of power and causation in the globally interdependent capitalist society of the mid-1980s:

> The extent to which many Americans can understand the workings of our economic and social organization is limited by the capacity of their chief moral language to make sense of human interaction. The limit set by individualism is clear: events that escape the control of individual choice and will cannot coherently be encompassed in a moral calculation. But that means that much, if not most, of the workings of the interdependent American political economy, through which individuals achieve or are assigned their places and relative power in this society, cannot be understood in terms that make coherent sense.

The task of the left is to alter the terms of discussion by articulating, through education and organization, the moral discourse of progressive democratic social policy. The new populists would instead have us alter our concept of democratic social policy to fit the procrustean bed of contemporary moral discourse.

The third concept neglected by new populists, proposed by Ira Katznelson in his discussion of the possibilities of socialism in the United States, is the notion of a "social democratic minimum"—and the social policy correlate of whether surplus should be appropriated as profit by the owners of capital or as collective goods by the society through taxes and redistribution. In *Comparative Politics* (1979), Katznelson points out that the social democratic minimum "connotes a widely shared set of meanings and understandings about the appropriate dimensions and character of state interventions in the market." By "social democractic minimum" we mean the level of expenditure on policies designed to promote public welfare which have been won through class and group struggle and which are no longer the subject of political contest. No longer, at least, with regard to national health in Britain and public education in the US. That this minimum is so much lower in the United States than in other industrialized nations should serve as a warning to those who would bypass the issue of social policy. They forget that the social democratic minimum becomes part of a society's set of moral meanings, that it *shapes people's values*. Not even President Reagan can attack Social Security. It represents a social democratic minimum which even this most individualistic of societies finds acceptable and normal. To eliminate or reduce it is regarded widely as immoral. Its meagreness, however, speaks of a people whose ideas are confined by the liberal individualist notion that each of us is responsible for his or her own fate. That there is no general acknowledgment that as a society we are responsible for the quality of life experienced by all of our members is due in part to the absence of a left, a Social Democratic party, which offers class-based social policy alternatives. But we must live with that for the foreseeable future.

Boyte, Evans, and the Sources of Democratic Change

> ... the heart of effective, majoritarian change involves ongoing education and action through those mainstream, locally based voluntary networks with which most citizens identify and through which they seek to make a difference.

So Boyte and Evans end their essay on "the sources of democratic change." From their examination of the history of democratic social change movements in the United States, they conclude that mainstream voluntary associations are "the main instrument through which most people express democratic aspirations in times of social unrest." These voluntary associations, including the PTA, Camp Fire Girls, civic leagues, self-help and service organizations, union locals, small business and ethnic organizations, constitute the "free spaces" which Boyte and Evans take to be the sources of democratic social change activity. Free spaces are "owned by ordinary people, grounded in the fabric of daily, communal life with a public dimension that allows mingling with others beyond one's immediate circles of family and friends ... [They] have been the primary settings where people have been able to act with independence, dignity, and vision." Although Boyte and Evans have done an extraordinary job of assembling the scholarship of the past decade, peeling back layers of institutional history to reveal the dense network of community interaction and organization beneath, their assertion that these associations are themselves the source of democratic change is insupportable.

Their model of free space as the arena in which dominated groups learned the skills necessary for democratic resistance and change has limited applicability to twentieth century history. The role of Black churches in initiating and sustaining the civil rights movement in Black communities is a valid enough

case, and the WCTU and other types of nonpolitical women's organizations may very well have played a key role in sustaining the Woman's Suffrage Movement in the nineteenth century. But Boyte and Evans seem to quite miss the point in other instances. While they acknowledge the role of radical, often Communist, organizers in the CIO drives of the 1930s, they conclude that "... while the radical leaders of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee ... clearly played crucial roles in the formation of the Steel Workers of America, they succeeded mainly by giving new vision and purpose to the organizations and networks that had already created themselves." For those interested in truly identifying sources, does the emphasis not belong on that very "new vision and purpose" which transforms essentially defensive, survival-oriented organizations into movements capable of engaging in struggles for democratic social change? Without the introduction of the "alien" notion of industrial unionism by "outsiders," these ethnic networks, after all, would have remained primarily Marching and Burial Societies, part of the ethnically-based urban machine of Democratic party politics ... no more, no less.

The anti-war and women's movements of the 1970s also elude the free space model. These movements created their own free spaces, new associations which were not the cause but the product of the social movement. These associations and networks sustained the movement but did not outlast it and certainly would not be identified as "mainstream voluntary associations."

Beyond problems of historical interpretation, Boyte and Evans offer no explanation for the frequent appearance of neighborhood and voluntary associations on the side of exclusionary and generally undemocratic politics. They dismiss the undemocratic values which are frequently part of the life and sometimes the raison d'être of voluntary associations as "lingering parochialisms of class, gender, race and other biases of the groups which maintain them." There are no empirical grounds for assuming that voluntary associations operate in a democratic manner, "offering experience in citizenship and democratic values." Some do; some don't. For example, PTAs are often little more

(continued on p. 72)

Visions of Daniel

Robert Pinsky

Magician, appointed officer
Of the crown. He thrived, he never
Seemed to get older.

Golden curly head.
Smooth skin, unreadable tawny eyes,
Former favorite, they said,
Of the chief eunuch of Nebuchadnezzar,
Who taught him the Chaldean language and courtly ways
And gave him his name of a courtier:
"Daniel who was called Belteshazzar"
In silk and Egyptian linen.
Proprietor, seer.

The Jews disliked him,
He smelled of pagan incense and char.
Pious gossips in the soukh
Said he was unclean,
He had smeared his body with thick
Yellowish sperm of lion
Before he went into the den,
The odor and color
Were indelible, he would reek
Of beast forever.

Wheat-color. Faint smell as of smoke.
The Kings of Babylon feared him
For generations.

And Daniel who was called in Chaldean
Belteshazzar, meaning spared-by-the-lion
Said as for thee O King I took
Thy thoughts into my mind
As I lay upon my bed: You saw O King a great
Image with His head of gold His heart
And arms of silver His belly and thighs of brass
His legs of iron His feet
Part of iron and part of clay
And then alas
O Nebuchadnezzar the image fell

And clay and iron
And brass and gold and silver
Lay shattered like chaff on the
Threshingfloor in summer.

Robert Pinsky's most recent book of poems is History of My Heart.

Terrified Nebuchadnezzar
Went on all fours, driven
To eat grass like the oxen.
His body wet by the dews of heaven,
Hair matted like feathers, fingers
Hooked like the claw of the raven.

Interpreter, survivor,
Still youthful years later
When Nebuchadnezzar's son Belshazzar
Saw a bodiless hand
Scrawl meaningless words on the plaster
Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin,
Interpreted by Daniel, You are finished,
God has weighed you and found you
Wanting, your power will be given
To the Medes and the Persians.

And both King Darius the Mede
And King Cyrus the Persian
Feared him and honored him.

Yellow smoking head,
High royal administrator.
Unannointed. He declined
To bow to images.

Then one night God sent him a vision
Of the world's entire future
Couched in images: The lion
With the wings of an eagle
And feet of a man, The bear
With the mouth in its side
That said, Devour Much Flesh,
The four-headed leopard
Of dominion, and lastly
The beast with iron teeth
That devoured and broke
And stamped and spat
Fiery streams before him.

And he wrote, I the Jew Daniel
Saw the horn of the fourth beast
Grow eyes and a mouth and the horn
Made war with the saints and
Prevailed against them.

Also, he saw a man clothed in linen
Who stood upon the waters
And said, As to the abomination
And the trial and the making white
Go thy way O Daniel, for the words
Are closed up and sealed till the end.

For three weeks after this night vision
I Daniel, he wrote, ate no pleasant
Bread nor wine, my comeliness
Turned to corruption, I retained
No strength, my own countenance
Changed in me. But I kept the
Matter in my heart, I was mute
And set my face toward the earth.
And afterwards I rose up
And did the king's business.

Appalled initiate. Intimate of power.
Scorner of golden images, governor.
In the drinking places they said
He had wished himself unborn,
That he had no navel.

So tawny Belteshazzar or Daniel
With his unclean smell of lion
And his night visions,
Who took the thoughts of the King
Into his mind O Jews, prospered
In the reign of Nebuchadnezzar
And of his son Belshazzar
And in the reign of Darius
And the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

(continued from p. 70)

STRATEGIES

than creations of school administrations, expending their energies on bake sales and raffles as members compete for the few part-time jobs available in the school system. The undemocratic tendencies of the Boy Scouts are well documented. Too often civic and homeowner's leagues have as their major purpose the maintenance of property values in zoned neighborhoods.

Finally, as a Jew, I confess that I am uncomfortable with the cheerful assumption that traditional Christian values can be counted upon to protect me from my neighbor's anti-Semitism. Cornel West points out in his essay, "Populism: A Black Socialist Critique" that the central paradox of populism is its reliance on the good will of the American people when, from a Black perspective, it has been "primarily when the federal courts and government have imposed populism's law upon the American people that there has been some Black progress." While I applaud the vision of a democracy grounded in the independent associated life of a people, "a rich pluralism of free, nongovernmental associations," the ethnic, religious, and neighborhood-based life of the American people has a weak track record in dealing with differences of race, religion, or sexual preference and lifestyle.

Contesting Social Policy: Getting Out of the Grooves

To explore the importance of organizations independent of the mainstream voluntary associations, let's turn again to Gary Delgado's analysis of ACORN, as he quotes Miles Rapaport in a 1979 address to the Midwest Academy:

> I think it is also necessary for our organizations to have our own independent base. That is, we cannot rely on organizing primarily through other institutions, whether they be unions or churches. I think the only way that I've seen that you can really have a coalition that means something is when you bring some independent power, when your organization brings some troops, some people, some leadership, as well as ideas and a plan. I think that organizations that primarily build themselves through existing institutions are going to have serious weaknesses.

This analysis goes beyond the concern for the distribution of power within a coalition to suggest that progressive community organizers begin to think more in terms of ideology and larger political frameworks. Even the democratic potential of the voluntary associations which constitute Boyte's and Evans's free spaces cannot be realized unless organizers are willing to come into conflict with those aspects of popular values which uphold the existing structure of society—racism, sexism, national chauvinism, and the fundamental belief that making it is evidence of one's personal or group superiority.

At the level of grassroots organizing—that slow process of bringing people and organizations together to seek solutions to problems—there aren't many different ways of getting a job done. Whether the organizing process consists of knocking on doors in a constituent neighborhood, working with and through a friendly church, a caucus in a union local or association of retired workers, on a daily basis, there is little difference between the routines of Communist and radical organizers for the Unemployment Associations and the CIO in the 1930s, peace activists in the 1950s, civil rights workers in the 1960s, or new populists in the 1970s and 1980s.

The difference between a leftist approach and a populist approach lies in the recognition that democratic social change in the United States involves raising the level of the social democratic minimum. This requires a struggle for social policies which cannot be grounded only in the values of liberal individualism, as vital as these values are. The emphasis must be on policies of national health care, federal support for public education, expanded public employment, housing, or day care which express values of social responsibility rather than some vague commitment to community. The fact that social welfare policy is not popular right now does not make it legitimate for self-identified leftist organizers and organizations to abandon the issue. Who else will place these issues on the agenda? In the absence of a political party or movement which can bring these issues into the national arena, they must remain part of the debate conducted on the local level.

Consider, for instance, the struggle to protect a particular community or neighborhood from destruction due to a plant closure or government highway or urban renewal policy: Should the campaign be based on the principle that a "community" has a right to decide its own future or on the principle that the larger political community has a responsibility to plan land use in terms of the needs of people for affordable shelter and communal space? Given the current political constellation, the outcome may be the same either way; the latter philosophy, however, offers a greater possibility for creating a broad movement or coalition based on an important social value.

Or consider instead that parents need day care because they work and attend school and that children need day care to partake of the fuller enjoyable learning that cannot occur in a non-educational setting. Any grassroots organization, whatever its ideological orientation, involved with this issue would move into action to keep a center from closing, take busloads of parents, teachers, and children to the state capitol, where funds are distributed by the state Social Services Department, to protest restrictive regulations, inadequate budgets, and so forth. The New York State Day Care Coalition, which was organized by the United Community Centers in Brooklyn—a leftist rather than populist community group—moved one step further.

The Coalition included in its campaign the demand that day care be removed from the auspices of Social Services, where it is identified as a means-tested program for the poor, to the Department of Education, where it would be available to the pre-public school population on the same basis as public education. Was the Coalition successful? If success is measured by the degree to which one has sparked a "social movement," no. If success is measured by the extent to which one achieves one's entire program, no. However, the issue of moving day care into the Department of Education is now under consideration in Albany. The Coalition raised the level of political discourse among parents at the grassroots level from "Save our center" to "How should our society care for and educate young children?" On this local level, the politics of social policy shifted dramatically in favor of a higher social democratic standard.

In times like these, the primary function of left politics is to precipitate public discussion about social values,

even such currently unpopular ideas as the responsibility of the government to subsidize housing or improve education. It is only through such conflict that new ideas become thinkable, not to mention politically plausible. In a society saturated with the ethics of individualism, the issues which comprise a social democratic minimum are moral coin. At present these issues are only being raised on a national level through the presidential campaign of Jesse Jackson —with all the limitations that a presidential campaign imposes. The new populists have turned their back on social policy and, with that, abandoned the possibility of seriously contesting the direction in which this country is rapidly moving: privatization of public goods, retreat from the small steps taken to end racism and gender discrimination (domination never having been addressed), a fantastic arms build-up based on outrageous chauvinism and parochialism. Since neither I nor anyone else knows what brings a social movement into being, it may be that the best we can do is to dig some new trenches —not merely deepen the ones excavated by our traditional values and social structures. Perhaps when the currents of discontent erupt one day as a raging river, they will run in new directions, instead of following the well-worn paths. □

A Response by Harry Boyte and Sara Evans

Prudence Posner's article, "Solidarity for What?," has the virtue of thoughtfully articulating many of the widespread leftist criticisms of our position that are rarely brought together. Their presentation in her piece, however, constitutes strong evidence of the need for basic rethinking on the left. For the relevant issues are not matters of abstract theory and historical interpretation. They concern precisely what to do in the wake of the Iran-contra scandal that has derailed the momentum of the religious right and the growing unease that millions of Americans feel with the greed and glitter which deflect attention from fundamental problems today.

In the first instance, leftist approaches like Posner's threaten to consign those committed to far-ranging egalitarian change to a marginal status fraught with an all too palpable despair. There are, however, far more positive readings of the possibilities. And progressives will be essential to furnish the energy, vision, and analysis necessary to act on those potentialities. Put simply, the challenge for progressives today is the development of language, strategy, and vision that deeply ground our practice in the indigenous democratic traditions and Judeo-Christian values which constitute the basic alternatives to raw commercialism and overweening international arrogance in American culture. Such traditions and values have inspired every great moment of democratic action and constructive change in American history. They continue to furnish the wellspring of democratic politics.

Posner argues for a leftist stance as minority critic and outsider, estranged from a culture she views as irredeemably corrupt, racist, chauvinist, and sexist. In practice, she urges a social democratic agenda (national health care, federal support for public education, public employment, housing, day care, and so forth) that can be commonly found in reform organizations.

The role of prophetic minority is one of long-standing power and importance in American social and political movement history. From the abolitionists and women's rights advocates of the nineteenth century to the disarmament protestors and civil rights workers of the 1950s, prophetic minorities have frequently raised issues and moral questions from outside the conventional parameters of political language that served to open up new imaginative and political terrain. They have been able to do so, however, because of their appeal to deeper cultural and civic traditions widely shared in the broader culture—most especially, the rich Judeo-Christian heritage and republican understandings of citizenship and commonwealth. Prophetic minorities have impact because they are able to point out and organize around the contradictions and hypocrisies between professed American values and actual practice. What relegates many contemporary liberals, social democrats, and socialists to the desperate and despairing role of perpetual critic is their severance from such traditions. In Posner's terms the left's understanding of "moral discourse" is radically secular and Eurocentric, drawing its terminology and categories from European social democracy. But many of her arguments are also shared by mainstream liberals.

Posner is skeptical of the value of working in "mainstream voluntary settings," which she points out have "a weak track record in dealing with differences of race, religion, or sexual preferences and lifestyle." She prefers alternative institutions and liberal or leftist organizations as the primary arena for work, and points to the role of "new associations" in the new left and parts of the women's movement.

In *Free Spaces* we analyze the associational base of the new left, the labor movement, and the women's movement in some detail and make an argument which, in fact, has been amply illustrated during the last two decades. Social movements always produce new associational forms. But unless democratic movements also retain deep roots in the community, they lose much of their democratic energy and spirit. They are prone to a kind of chiliastic and destructive militancy as was the case with the new left in the late 1960s, when it scorned earlier ties with student government networks, campus religious centers like Hillel and the YM and YWCA. Or they become culturally and politically marginal and ghettoized, the fate of many countercultural institutions. Or they become bureaucratized and stagnate like much of the labor movement when it became detached from ethnic and communal roots. Our point is that free spaces are found, in the main, within the context of mainstream associational life. But they are particular sorts of associations, with an openness, experimental quality, and independence from rigid adherence to orthodoxy and tradition that allow buried democratic possibilities to be explored and developed. In other

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words, free spaces are free not only from dominant centers of institutional power. They are free from static, settled, and given traditional relations as well. Most often such freedom requires an active process of struggle and commitment, whether in one's local PTA or a synagogue or church—but one well within the capacities of serious, thoughtful activists and progressives.

In the last decade, organizing strategies which have spurned close involvement with existing associational life, like ACORN's, have again and again proven unable to involve a broad cross section of the community over time. Sometimes they barely survive past their initial issues. In striking contrast, we now have multiple examples of deep democratic transformation through mainstream associational networks. In Posner's own community, the Queens Citizen Organization has brought thousands of white ethnics into working relations with Black and Hispanic communities in Brooklyn and the South Bronx through effective congregationally based organizing around issues ranging from tenants' rights to economic development (a story which the media has found uninteresting).

What happens in an organization like Queens Citizen Organization is the creation of new community forums and meeting grounds where previously private grievances and hurts (those shared only by one's immediate group or family) are no longer sources of defeat and self-doubt but motivate effective, powerful action. Changes of the last decade have shattered bonds holding communities together. American society today is in urgent need of such forums and meeting grounds, where people can learn the practices of work in common and discover a language that highlights common interests and values. There are rich buried languages of "moral discourse" in American culture that offer alternatives to the dominant vocabulary of radical individualism and interest groups. But here the conventional left makes matters worse. Posner's equation of large-scale federal programs with "social responsibility, justice, and equality" entirely detaches such values from the context of community responsibility. Indeed, for Posner and the conventional left, the entire concept of citizenship as an active practice far more complex than the act of voting or occasional protests and letters to the editor is conspicuously absent.

Posner's definition of democracy illustrates the invisibility of the citizen in her political universe. Thus, she defines democracy in the conventional socialist terms of Franz Neumann, "the execution of large-scale changes maximizing the freedom of man," undertaken by national governments. This is a definition that has some meaning in the European context, where political change has largely occurred through the political party process (and where parties, as a result, are far more ideological). But in America, as Robert Bellah and others have observed, parties generally follow what happens in the broader society, and constructive change is almost always the product of social movements. This was certainly true for civil rights. Civil rights victories were not, in the main, the federal government's. They were won by a vast community-based movement which understood, as two astute observers Pat Watters and Reese Cleghorn put it, "the more important participation was to be not just at the moment when the ballot was cast but in all the moments that led up to that moment."

Finally, in concert with her social democratic vocabulary and strategy, Posner's programmatic ideas aim simply at an expanded welfare state. It is worth noting the defensive tone of this sort of program on the contemporary left, devoid entirely of a broader transformative and utopian dimension. Posner defines the left's educational role as advocacy for a "social welfare policy" that she admits is unpopular. The assumption is that growing state control over fields like day care and health care is the only possible democratic solution. Though this is not the space to argue the point in detail, in Sweden we talked with parents who raged at the impossibility of forming day care cooperatives because day care, like many other areas, was defined as a state activity. It was a bracing reminder of the positive virtues to be found in community based services that derive from republican and religious traditions. Similarly, in Sweden, the state's claim to have dealt with the "equality problem" served to suppress feminist voices, vision, and organizing.

In fact, the community and citizen efforts of recent years have recast the conception of government's role into the republican terminology of Lincoln—not only "for the people" but also of and by them. Or, as many citizens and community groups today rephrase the point, the issue is how to make government neither the *problem* (the view of the right) nor *the solution* (conventional liberalism's perspective), but rather the *public servant*, the instrument of the organized and active citizenry. There are many examples of successful programmatic reformulation in these terms, especially at local and state levels in recent years, from neighborhood-based nursing programs to citizen advocacy programs in Georgia and elsewhere, which help pair disabled and institutionally victimized people with citizens willing to help them survive in community life, from decentralized public service projects to weatherization and economic development with a bottom-up, participatory flavor.

All of these form building blocks for something more: a reinvigorated democratic movement that would weave new themes of racial justice, feminism, ecology, internationalism, together with America's enduring traditions of popular empowerment, civic value, and religious concern. There are signs that the American people are increasingly receptive to such a message—every major Democratic presidential candidate, for instance (drawing on in-depth focus group research about the public's mood), is developing campaign themes that attack the greed, selfishness, and radical individualism of Reaganism and call for a rebirth of public commitment. If these themes are to find a deeper foundation than thirty-second television ads, new forms of progressive action, education, and visionary articulation are demanded. To act effectively in the time before us, we need to develop a majoritarian strategy and language grounded in the American idiom and experience that also conveys our mutuality with all humanity. □

Nazi Feminists?

Linda Gordon

Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics by Claudia Koonz. St. Martin's Press, 1987, 556 pp.

I first turned to this book, by a professor of German history, out of my interest in Nazism, the Holocaust, and right-wing movements in general; a study of Nazi women, I knew, would also illuminate a great deal about Nazi men. As I expected, *Mothers in the Fatherland* demonstrates the significant contribution of feminist analysis to our understanding of conservatism and authoritarianism. As I did not expect, however, it also raises troubling and stimulating questions about feminism.

Koonz discusses many aspects of women's participation in Nazi life but focuses particular attention on Nazi women's organizations. Over four million women participated in the *Frauenwerk*, Nazi government-sponsored women's activities; five million belonged to the women's division of the Nazi Labor Front. The Nazi purpose in encouraging such organizations was to mobilize women for all aspects of the Reich's programs: production, social control, "purification of the race," war. Nevertheless, many of these women joined in the belief that they were thereby working for the advancement of women. They believed that promoting womanly virtues and achievements—motherhood and service, above all—could provide for women the respect they deserved. Women leaders often protested the slighting of women's interests by the Nazi party and government. Indeed, one of Koonz's central arguments is that women joined these organizations for many of the same reasons they have joined progressive and feminist movements: They were rebelling against the low status and confinement of women's conventional role and were seeking recognition, an arena for political activism, and power. She does not dismiss these conservative women as dupes of men, inauthentic to a true female character, but emphasizes the degree of genuine conviction among them.

This argument—indeed the whole study—takes risks which I initially doubted could be carried off. Koonz attempts to portray the world from the perspective of these often repulsive characters. Although the book contains two substantial chapters with important new material about Jewish and non-Jewish victims and resisters and pays close attention to anti-Semitism among the Nazi women, it does not place Jews centrally in the picture and hazards the intellectual and moral disadvantages of seeing problems from the myopic point of view of oppressors. The perspective of Nazi women is particularly distorted because it was in support of one of the most woman-hating regimes of the modern world. Yet not to adopt the perspective of one's subjects constricts insight and prevents depth. Much critical work about oppressors is disappointing because it is limited to muckraking, listing atrocities and corruptions, failing to uncover deeper meanings. Koonz's book easily overwhelmed all my misgivings.

Koonz maintains distance by interlacing the perspective of her subjects with her own author's voice. In an extraordinary opening she describes her discovery in 1980 that Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, chief of the Nazi Women's Bureau, was still alive. (She found Scholtz-Klink's book in a feminist bookstore in Berlin, a store that did not carry Richard Evans's good history of German feminism because it was written by a man.) Scholtz-Klink agreed to an interview. Doubting whether this important ex-Nazi would speak openly, Professor Koonz expected denial, evasion, and contrition. Instead, Scholtz-Klink was loquacious and opinionated, offering advice to contemporary leaders:

> "You know, if our politicians learned from the past, they would not have to complain about the unruly youth of today. Why don't they ask us for advice on social problems? ... In the Depression, we sponsored a national labor service that took teenagers off the streets and taught them patriotism.... Mitterand is on the right track, but he doesn't go far enough. He created a ministry for women's rights. My own women's division concerned itself with women's responsibilities..."
>
> "Then you were not concerned about Hitler's policies on the Jews?"
>
> "Of course, we never intended that so many Jews would disappear. I had grown up in an anti-Semitic family so the ideas did not seem unusual.... Besides, until the war with Russia, all of our policies were strictly legal..."

Once she had sent money to a Jewish woman who went into exile. "'What ingratitude! After I helped her out ... she publicly accused me after the war...'"

Koonz soon realized that she was not interviewing an ex-Nazi but a Nazi. This presentism pervades *Mothers in the Fatherland*. Nothing in the book is safely past. In its meanings for feminism, Jewishness, and the appraisal of conservatism, the book seems to send periodic projectiles, many of them sharp, into the present. There is pain in reading this, not mainly from the description of atrocities, but from having certain intellectual comforts torn away, as if an old and beloved quilt is being shredded.

One such loss is the idea that there is something about femaleness that can insulate us from Nazism and its like. For two hundred years, one strain of feminism has emphasized the moral superiority of women. This is not necessarily a biologistic view; many modern feminists believe that women have been

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made different from men, but that these differences are nevertheless deep and thorough. Women have been acculturated, they argue, to be more nurturing, less violent, less aggressive, more cooperative than men. The history of Nazi women belies such views in several ways: There were many women responsible for substantial brutality, and many more enthusiastically supported men's brutality. Indeed, adopting for the moment the view that men and women are deeply different, one might say that as the masculine style (at its worst) produces violence and brutality, so the female style (at its worst) produces submission to authority that is an equally important base for fascistic regimes. Hitler himself believed that his regime, the obedience and adoration he required, depended on the feminization of the population.

> "Someone who does not understand the intrinsically feminine character of the masses will never be an effective speaker. Ask yourself, what does a woman expect from a man? Clearness, decision, power, and action.... Like a woman, the masses fluctuate between extremes.... The Crowd is not only like a woman, but women constitute the most important element in an audience. The women usually lead, then follow the children and at last ... follow the fathers."*

If femaleness does not protect us from Nazism, what about feminism? Germany had a relatively strong feminist movement—not, perhaps, as strong as in the US but stronger than elsewhere in Europe. Why, then, was there no evidence of feminist or woman-centered resistance to the Nazi takeover? Koonz tells many ugly stories of women's organizations agreeing without protest to the expulsion of their Jewish members, for example. Part of the answer lies in the fact that the German women's movement was deeply split between its bourgeois-liberal and its socialist varieties. The former organizations were so driven by their class interests that they could not experience the world through the eyes of their poorer sisters. Putting it another way, their feminism, like all feminisms, had class as well as gender content. Another historian of German women, Renate Bridenthal, has written about the Reichsverband Deutscher Hausfrauenvereine (RDH—German Housewives' Assn.), part of the main umbrella organization of the German women's movement, the primary purpose of which became resisting unionization and higher wages among domestic servants.† Many working-class German women were organized into socialist women's organizations, but these tended to follow the Socialist and Communist party strategy and did not promote an independent, feminist opposition to Nazism.

These class and religious divisions may explain the lack of unified resistance, but they do not explain why so many women activists were attracted in the first place to Nazism, a political movement with an openly anti-feminist platform. It stood for the submission of wives to husbands, the restriction of women to domesticity, the exclusion of women from the public sphere. During the War, Koonz relates, Hitler called upon SS men to produce as many illegitimate babies as possible, and asked the women's organizations to endorse this project.

This is not to say that there was no gender gap in Nazi support. Before the panic caused by the Depression, the women's Nazi vote was fifty percent lower than men's. In 1932 boys in the Hitler Youth outnumbered girls by almost two to one. This gap, however, disappeared by the end of the 1930s, and the reasons for this equalization deserve further study.

The most delicate part of Koonz's interpretation is her identification of elements in Nazi ideology that were attractive to some aspects of feminist sensibility. A pause here to describe what I mean by feminism is necessary, in order not to overstate what Koonz means or what I infer from her work. Today many political groups try to define a specific ideology that is feminism and criticize women's groups with whom they do not agree for being non-feminist. As an historian I have been forced by the evidence to adopt a definition broad enough to encompass a great variety of changing feminisms, movements whose common denominator is that women are subordinated and disrespected, and that something can and should be done about it. I do not for a moment suggest that the Nazi women leaders were feminists; the title of this article is wholly ironic. The Nazi women themselves considered feminism their main enemy and did not agree that women were subordinated. Nevertheless, in some of their grievances and programs they were like some types of feminists, and it is difficult to define the boundary. The entrance of women into a wage-labor force and into modern politics produced resentment among women themselves against the devaluation of their domestic and maternal labor. The conservative ideology that women *should* be maternal and domestic can appear as an expression of respect for women and for the maternal and domestic arena. And vice versa, expressions of respect for women's domestic labor and nurturing capacities often contain disapproval of women who choose otherwise. There is a feminist orientation which calls for greater respect for women precisely on the basis of their traditional roles and looks askance at women who desert these roles.

In Germany the contribution of this sort of feminism to conservatism, even military expansionism, can be seen in the history of the term *lebensraum*. Literally "living room," the phrase came to be associated with the Nazi justification for eastward territorial expansion, but had been used earlier by the bourgeois women's rights movement to refer to a woman-dominated space—nurturing, refined, insulated from the masculine world of money and politics. It was women's responsibility to protect this space for Germany and to nurture the men who would create this "civilized" space for Germans in "barbaric" Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the Ukraine.

Feminism is not only complex and varied but also contains contradictory perspectives: There are, for example, feminisms that assert women's difference from men, and those that assert their essential human similarity; those that call for ending the sexual division of labor and gender difference, and those that prefer to claim and defend different roles for men and women. At its edges feminism shades imperceptibly into non-feminist women's movements. One may dis-

*from a letter by Hitler to Ernst (Putzi) Hanfstangl.

†Bridenthal's article can be found in an excellent anthology on this topic, *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (Monthly Review Press, New Feminist Library, 1984), edited by Bridenthal, Grossmann, and Kaplan.

agree with many, but I would be loathe to label any of them inauthentic without a serious attempt to understand their motivation. In some of the most conservative, intolerant rantings, we may nevertheless recognize the same thwarted but unstilled aspirations that drive our own movements. The goal is not reconciliation, but a better explanation of conservative women's activism.

Recognizing these political differences helps identify not only women's different interests but, perhaps more importantly, the ambivalence and conflicting interests within individual women. Industrial societies have presented women with countervailing pressures, even double binds. Women's employment and economic independence represent both opportunity and increased burdens. Women's new roles, combined with the continuation of traditional responsibilities for child-raising and domestic labor, offer autonomy while heightening exploitation. Naturally, women have differing and ambivalent responses.

The ambivalence in women's situation is a problem not only for feminists but may be one of the most important conditions of modern conservative politics. Another message of Koonz's book is that widespread anxiety about the place of women—and also therefore about masculinity—pervaded the whole society, male as well as female, the powerful as well as the powerless. She shows that this anxiety was fundamental, intense, and extremely influential in the rise and maintenance of Nazism. She uses to great effect a survey of working-class Germans conducted by Erich Fromm just before the Depression. Virtually the only finding that surprised him was the vehement reaction against women's changing roles. People not only complained about bobbed hair, makeup, and women's employment, they blamed most social problems on these changes. Presciently, Fromm wrote, "Here is an opportunity for political propaganda writers ... to use for their purposes." The Nazi promise to restore women to their place in the family, and thereby to restore stability to the family and authority to men, was a vital part of its appeal, as it has been in many conservative social movements. As Koonz suggests, the apparent traditionalism of Nazi family policy helped mask the radicalism of its other policies. Moreover, as in the US today, the accommodation of liberal, socialist, and even feminist movements to these mythically nostalgic yearnings weakens their ability to resist conservative and authoritarian "solutions."

This gender analysis of Nazism—seeing it, in part, as a movement for the restoration of patriarchy—offers insights about anti-Semitism, particularly connections between anti-feminism and anti-Semitism. The rhetoric of conservatism is rich with such connections: Jewishness = modernism, individualism, cosmopolitanism, internationalism—all of them the breeding ground of women's rights. As Gottfried Feder, a Nazi ideologue, put it, "The insane dogma of equality led as surely to the emancipation of the Jews as to the emancipation of women. The Jew stole the woman from us...." But these connections must not be oversimplified. German gentile feminists did not see anti-Semitism as hostile to their own interests. Judaism has been as patriarchal as the other religions. Some Jews, particularly those of the business class, were attracted to Nazism themselves, and for the same reasons as gentiles of their class: an approval of authority, order, German nationalism, and family stability. (This attraction to Nazism has been neglected in discussions of why German Jews were so slow to believe the Nazi threat to them.) And the Nazis were as hostile to other groups not particularly associated with individualism and modernity, which threatened their domination; a case in point is the Jehovah's Witnesses who were near unanimous in their total noncooperation. Still, Hitler's greatest personal intensity and consistency was arguably his anti-Semitism, and the success of this hate in organizing German support can hardly be considered marginal.

Of course Nazism was by no means consistently anti-modernist, committed as it was to the rapid development of military and industrial technology. Koonz shows, in fact, that the Nazi regime was unable to turn around even those modernizing, feminist tendencies it most deplored. The birth rate, for example, despite the government's incentives to maternity, never even rose to equal that of the pre-Nazi 1920s. The abortion rate rose, which can be taken as an indicator of the overall birth control rate. The divorce rate increased faster than the marriage rate. Nazi social conservatism had aimed to restore not only male authority over women but also parental authority over children, and that, too, failed. On the contrary, the Nazi ideological and patriotic mobilization subjected children to influences independent of their parents, even encouraging defiance. The Nazi leadership found itself in a double-bind with respect to women's employment: During the War, facing a serious labor shortage, managers still found it hard to coerce women into the factories because they were faced with contradictory policies which lauded and rewarded domesticity. Hitler's rigidity regarding traditional sex roles continued to the end, and the War only redoubled his view that women were more valuable to the state in maintaining men's domestic privileges than for their own industrial labor.

Ironically, the Nazi regime itself hastened the destruction of this idealized domesticity. It did so through its expansion of state control of many apparently private activities: through its eugenics and reproduction policies, its drive for ideological conformity, its control over youth. This contradiction appears most intensely in the activities of organized Nazi women. There is always an irony inherent in the role of conservative women activists—to wit, Phyllis Schlafly—who spend their lives traveling, speaking in public, and vying for public power as they instruct other women to make domesticity and the private sphere their first priority. They joined a movement that directed women to a special, exclusively private role, but which also called upon women to mobilize and provide public leadership toward achieving those ends. The contradiction is not simply in the mixed motives of the Nazi women; it is a contradiction in the very nature of conservative politics in a period of women's emancipation.

Koonz's book is sprinkled with implicit comparisons with the contemporary right. To articulate them is tricky because the specialness of the time and place of Nazism was extremely important. For example, the pro-family content of Nazi ideology is very similar to that found in virtually all socially conservative movements—nineteenth-century anti-woman suffrage campaigns, early twentieth-century "social purity," Italian fascism, Vichy patriotism, the contemporary "Moral Majority." Yet the intensity of the Nazi panic against women's "selfishness," men's "emasculation," and women's "mannishness"

was unparalleled. During the Depression in the US, there was also a pro-family reaction against women's employment, sexual freedom, birth control, and cultural modernism, but it did not provoke so much nationalism, racism, anti-feminism, and anti-communism as in Germany. (The closer resemblance is to the US in the 1950s, when those tendencies were more virulent, but, in part because of a healthier economy, they did not become a mass movement.)

Two generalizations arising from this book can safely be ventured. First, anxieties about the erosion of traditional gender arrangements can contribute to mass susceptibility to authoritarian solutions. Indeed, among all the anxieties created by the destruction of peasant society and its patriarchal order, and its replacement by big cities, industrial labor, and individualist values, those associated with women's new roles and claims to individual rights are often most vivid. In the US the most consistently controversial domestic issues for the last one hundred and fifty years have been women's rights and reproductive rights. Second, women, too, have anxieties about these changes, and the process of modernization has by no means meant reliable and steady improvements for women. While women's movements have in the main been more progressive (that is, leaning more toward greater democracy, equality, and civil liberties) than men's, there is no guarantee that this is always the case, and many women have been attracted by authoritarian promises to restore traditional (albeit usually mythical) stability.

If there are lessons here, they include reminders that the enemy is within us as well as outside us. The vulnerability and manipulability of the citizenry is a function of anxieties already present in us, created in large part by instability in "personal" life—family and community. Conservatives are not entirely wrong in viewing women's individual aspirations as hostile to family stability *on the old terms* (e. g., coercive marriage and childbearing, male authority often enforced by male violence). But a return to the "traditional" family is no more possible now than it was during the Nazi regime. We must expect repeated bouts of intense reactionary responses to these instabilities until there is some new modicum of stability—which can only be achieved on the basis of recognizing women's aspirations.

Koonz's book reveals the limitations of the work of liberal and socialist feminists in Weimar Germany. Both groups focused on individual reforms—absolutely necessary reforms, such as political rights, legalized contraception and abortion, equal pay, homosexual rights—but neither offered a coherent vision of a new society based on sexual equality and freedom. They could not conceive of new bases of stability. That task remains ours today: to articulate a society that meets people's needs for stability as well as adventure, community as well as individual freedom, difference without domination. □

Book Review

Abraham Cahan

Peter Mellini

Grandma Never Lived in America, edited and with an introduction by Moses Rischin. Indiana University Press, 1985, 538 pp.

"Long Live America!" said Mary.
"Even the Gentiles are fond of Kosher."

Magistrate as Rabbi,
September–October 1899

By resurrecting the English language journalism of Abraham Cahan (1860–1951), Moses Rischin has opened a series of windows into the American Jewish experience at the turn of the century. Cahan used his Russian education, his literary inclinations, and his wide-ranging experience in America to forge a new journalism that anticipated the writing of a Tom Wolfe or a Norman Mailer. Teacher, factory worker, labor organizer, socialist and speaker, translator, Yiddish journalist, novelist (in English) in the 1890s, he alone represented the American Jewish labor movement at the Second and Third Congresses of the Second Socialist International in Brussels and Zurich. Cahan's new journalism, then little noted, or perhaps overwhelmed by the muckrakers, is aptly codified by Professor Rischin. "Aspiring to quiet art, this genre aimed to penetrate beneath surfaces, and to educate and extend reader sensibilities and perceptions, rather than to titillate and inflame their imaginations."

Until now Cahan has been known primarily for his realistic novels, and above all as the dynamic editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*. According to Rischin, he "transformed an unreadable sectarian Yiddish daily into an American journalistic landmark, no less than the world's greatest immigrant, Socialist and Jewish newspaper." By the 1920s the *Forward* published twelve metropolitan editions from Boston to Los Angeles; in 1922 they earned profits in excess of one and a half million dollars. In October 1933, at a dressmakers' union victory celebration at Madison Square Garden, Cahan shocked his socialist colleagues by inviting Franklin Roosevelt to join the Socialist Party.

Cahan was one of the great Americanizers and interpreters of the Jewish immigrant. Through him Eastern European Jews learned about socialism, and much else. "As the Nestor of

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Yiddish letters," Cahan was a beacon for literary talent. The *Forward* was the first newspaper in America to place novelists, such as Sholem Asch and I. J. Singer, on a regular weekly salary. In 1896 Cahan's *Yekl* elicited a front-page rave review by William Dean Howells in the Sunday *New York World*. His second major novel, *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), is, according to the *Cambridge History of American Literature*, "the most remarkable contribution of an immigrant to the American novel." Saul Bellow considers Cahan to be "a gifted writer."

Cahan's intellectual and literary interests, his style and talents gave him a unique view of the immigrant "maelstrom" (Rischin's apt descriptive), of the dynamic America in the making, and of the New York metropolis—arguably where this storm of assimilation and adaptation blew hardest. Cahan arrived in New York in 1882, twenty-one years old, one of 800,000 immigrants (the heaviest ever from Germany and Scandinavia) and in the vanguard of the extraordinary Jewish migration from Poland and Russia. In twenty years they would transform New York City into, in Rischin's words, "the greatest, most vibrant, and most diverse center of Jewish life in all of Jewish history." Cahan, who spoke and wrote Russian and Yiddish, rapidly acquired a remarkable fluency in English and a facility in German, as well as an ear for the nuances of immigrant speech. These qualities give his new journalism "an immediacy of revelation," which enables the reader to expand on the story from his own imagination and experience. Cahan conveys the speed, rhythms, reactions, feelings, and anecdotes of those he interviewed, revealing the whole range of bewildering processes that converted immigrants into Americans. By resorting to dialect only rarely, Cahan's journalism is as comprehensible today as when it was written, where Finley Peter Dunne's rollicking, topical *Mr. Dooley* anthologies, once the rage of American journalism, no longer are. In his elegant introduction to Cahan and his journalism, Rischin sums up his accomplishments: "Combining craft, prescience, crystalline candor, and a deep compassion for everyday humanity, Cahan gave even his least-finished writings a universality and accessibility that defy fashionable literary and ideological strictures and bridge the generations even more effectively in our time than they did in his."

Almost all of Cahan's journalism for the *New York Sun* and New York's oldest paper, the *Commercial Advertiser*, appeared without a byline. Rischin, one of North America's most assiduous, imaginative social historians specializing in the history of immigration, has performed a textual analysis of the files of the *Advertiser* (affectionately nicknamed "Grandma") and the *Sun* to uncover and organize Cahan's wide-ranging journalism. Tom Leonard, an historian of Journalism at University of California at Berkeley, aptly calls Rischin's work a feat of "historical archeology." Professor Rischin, a native born New Yorker who teaches at San Francisco State University, also includes pieces Cahan wrote for the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Ainslee's Magazine*, the *Bookman*, the *Century*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Harper's Weekly*, and *Scribner's Magazine*. Eight are original Cahan stories, and five are his path-breaking translations from the Russian of Anton Chekhov, Ysevolod Garshin, Ignaty Potapenko, and a memoir by Vera Mikulich.

Rischin's selection of Cahan's stories, feature articles, and reports marvelously illuminates the period and the people. The voices we hear range from the notorious Emma Goldman to the anonymous Black soldiers sent to fight in Cuba in 1898 because they were believed immune to yellow fever. Through Cahan's alert, sensitive prose, European immigrants of all ages, status, and origin relate their feelings and experiences. His pieces on the varieties of Jewish (Russian and Polish) and German immigrant experiences in America are especially enthralling and informative. Cahan's kaleidoscope of bewildered immigrants passing through the Barge Office and its replacement at Ellis Island show this process with much more humanity than conventional accounts suggest. This book's title comes appropriately from a story of a bewigged, silk-kerchiefed Russian Mother's spirited refusal to Americanize by donning a black velvet rose-trimmed bonnet on arrival. When her children insist: "This is America, Mother. One must be dressed like a lady here," she vehemently points out: "Your Grandma did not wear such an affair, did she?" "But Grandma," one of her children protests, "didn't live in America." This stubborn mother was an exception. One of the many insights provided by the collection is the rapidity of the adaptation and assimilation of most of these immigrants.

This is a vital, entertaining, important book. Anyone concerned with the transformation of the urban immigrant, the process of accommodation to the New World, as well as the development of high journalism and American literature at the turn of the century will revel in Moses Rischin's felicitously edited collection. □

BOOK REVIEW

Comics and Tragedy

Geoffrey Summerfield

Maus: A Survivor's Tale by Art Spiegelman. Pantheon, 1986, 159 pp.

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Around 1830 Goethe encouraged Rudolphe Töpffer, the Swiss artist and teacher, to publish the picture-stories he had produced for his students. There is a consensus that the publication of Töpffer's *Mr. Tarbot* in 1833 marked the birth of the strip-cartoon. Since then, the medium has produced a dazzling display of talents, including the lyrical chiaroscuro of Jack Yeats and the dynamic expressionism of Lyonel Feininger.

H. L. Mencken in 1919 was quick to recognize the potent influence of comic-strip lingo on the American vernacular, and in 1924 Gilbert Seldes included the comic-strip in his anti-Pantheon of America's "Seven Lively Arts"—a resounding counterblast aimed at genteel Americans' tendency to apologize for American culture, touching their forelocks to Europe. Edmund Wilson responded to Seldes with a finely tuned enthusiasm, and most recently McDonnell, O'Connell, and DeHavenon have given us their well-documented monograph on George Herriman, creator of *Krazy Kat*, which in turn provoked a sharply perceptive essay from Adam Gopnik in the *New York Review of Books*.

The peculiar glory of the American comic-strip derives from the graphic élan and zest with which it has created so many various counter-worlds or anti-worlds, serial microcosms offering variations on one of the fundamental elements of narrative—in Jerome Bruner's words "human intentions and their vicissitudes"—mediated acutely and obliquely either by a human zoo of odd-balls (as in a Preston Sturges movie) or by the metamorphoses of the Aesopian fable-tradition, dogs and cats performing acts of human folly.

In the 1970s Charles Schultz of *Peanuts* fame found it "surprising ... that so many cartoonists working in such a marvelously flexible medium have not dealt more closely with the real essential aspects of life such as love, friendship, and day-to-day difficulties of simply living and getting along with other people" (in Jerry Robinson, *The Comics*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1974). What, then, will Schultz make of Art Spiegelman's *Maus?* It is not only the story of a survivor of the Holocaust; it is also mediated, anamorphically, through the figures of mice, cats, and pigs. Imagine the rodents of Grahame's idyllic pastoral, *Wind in the Willows*, transported to the ovens and gas-chambers. Some years ago Russell Hoban, that greatly underrated American novelist, took a step in such a direction in *The Mouse and his Child*, a nightmare of a tale authenticated by the stench of a vividly rendered squalid environment, and, in England, Raymond Briggs has twice wrenched the child's picture-book to confront both a future nuclear disaster and the sufferings of old people. Like Briggs's, Spiegelman's subject is not a fiction—however compelling or plausible—but an historical actuality.

How, then, has Art Spiegelman managed to produce a little work of art, perfectly serious, perfectly clear in its presentation of horror, terror, and genocide? His gift lies, I think, in his talent for particularization. The grim story is framed not so much by the sequential simplified images as by the rambling, inchoate meditation of the father of the artist. The story is a record not only of obscene crimes but also of the tense, delicate, painful relationship between the father, whose story it is, and the son, who is the elicitor and recorder.

The father was a survivor, living in Queens, New York, and the son's narrative technique is to offer not only the father's story—the story of the six million—but also the story of the task itself, the task of making the effort to visit a sick, rather paranoid, kvetching old man and inducing him to tell his story. The images thus offer Spiegelman *père* not only as a young man living through the gross terrors of the thirties and forties but also as an old crotchety man in Queens in the seventies, irritating his interlocutor-son almost to a pitch of total exasperation. Given the double-frame, with its interactions of then-and-now, the story is rooted within a particular predicament. Spiegelman *père* was probably never very likable or admirable; thus his story, his representative story, is saved from the polarization of good and evil. Spiegelman *père* was *not* a very good man: all the more reason, therefore, to recognize the enormity of his suffering. Spiegelman *père* is an archetypal bourgeois: not specially thoughtful, not exceptionally intelligent, not particularly sensitive. The fate of such a man, the story of such a man we can indeed believe: He is no plaster saint.

The fact that Art Spiegelman has chosen to represent all Jews as mice, all Nazis as cats, all gentiles as pigs, and that the simulation-metamorphosis works, simply demonstrates that there is still mileage in that fabulous tradition that began for most of us with Aesop. For the convention *works*: one is convinced. I will not attempt to explain, even to myself, why or how such an emblematic convention works: it is simply that the inverse anthropomorphizing is somehow telling. I can only bear witness to its poignant and edgy efficacy.

When children pose their troubling questions, one is often at a loss for an adequate and appropriate answer. Art Spiegelman's *Maus* is a vivid and morally powerful answer to one such question. It is infinitely more important than most of the textboooks that America's children drudge their somnolescent way through. The most that we can hope for is that all schools, all children's libraries, will make *Maus* freely available. Lionel Trilling's tribute to Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* is appropriate to *Maus*: "one of the great moral efforts of our generation."

It is a deep paradox of Spiegelman's talent that his graphic microcosm draws on the same conventions as Beatrix Potter. The distance between them is a measure of the terrible journey we have all made, actually or vicariously, since the 20th century lost its innocence. Irrevocably, cartoon mice now haunt us as graphic surrogates for those who went, not on jolly picnics in Edwardian summers, but to the gas chambers and the ovens.

One small reservation: When, in the father-son narrative, the son discovers that his father has destroyed his mother's notebooks, he cries out in the last frame of the book against his father: "Murderer." It's a difficult moment: perhaps its hyperbole is a measure of the emotional torments that Spiegelman himself endured in confronting his father. Perhaps it's his strongest and most melodramatic bid to desentimentalize his story. Whatever in Spiegelman made that accusation necessary, I still have difficulty accepting it, try as I may to legitimize or rationalize it. □

BOOK REVIEW

Sexuality and Abortion

Barbara Katz Rothman

The Regulation of Sexuality: Experiences of Family Planning Workers by Carol Joffe. Temple, 1986, 208 pp.

I read Carol Joffe's book with sadness. She describes a time when there was a wonderful opportunity for feminists to reconstruct sexuality; there were counselors ready and willing to do the work, but I'm afraid we blew it.

The world Joffe describes, that of the abortion and birth control counselors in the 1970s, has changed, and the opportunity to use their skills to help women rethink their sexuality may be gone. Abortion has been routinized, and, more than routinized, it has been thoroughly *medicalized*. Clinics today revolve around the medical procedure of abortion, with counseling relegated from the heart of the event to a support service for medical staff. Counselors serve the clinic and the medical workers as much or more than they can serve the women—who themselves are relegated to the status of "patient."

Abortion has been legal since 1973. Abortion clinics and abortion counselors have been part of the open, legal landscape for less than fourteen years at this writing. For some people, that is just as good as forever—for the very young teenagers now coming to abortion clinics, it truly is a lifetime.

Abortion had been legal for just a few years when Joffe interviewed abortion counselors and made her observations. Rules, relationships, structures were being negotiated. Now, a decade later, we see the legacy of legalized, medicalized, routinized abortion. Joffe's work stands not only as a fine piece of qualitative research in sociology, but also as an historical document—she tells us what abortion was like in those years.

In the past twenty years abortion has shifted from illegal political work—work highly valued by the counterculture within which it was performed and strongly disdained by society at large—to the more mundane work of easing women through legal and often profit-making clinics. Joffe's study took place right in the middle of this transition. Abortion counseling was no longer the province of the feminist underground, but neither had it been fully routinized. The particular location at which she chose to study was also "in the middle"—neither a feminist clinic nor a for-profit abortion "mill," but a family planning clinic run as an affiliate of a nationwide federation of family planning agencies.

Joffe accomplishes what she set out to do: "uncover some of the contradictions that present themselves whenever a paid workforce (especially one not protected by the firm professional identity of doctor or nurse) engages in the task of dispensing contraceptives and abortions." The question I find myself asking, after having read this book, is: How have these contradictions been resolved in the past decade? And it is in the answers, I find, that my sadness lies.

Very few of the current counselors have been doing abortion counseling for even as long as four years—that is, most of those working now entered the field after Joffe's work was completed. And while the counselors Joffe interviewed had been at the clinic for longer than was typical, then or now, for abortion counselors, Joffe reports that "most of the counselors, irrespective of how long they had actually been at Urban, did not plan to remain there indefinitely. Their present job at the clinic was thought of as an early step in a rather fluidly conceived social service career." (p. 56) That remains true today. Counselors these days* say they "stumbled" onto it, got involved "accidentally." They feel, as one current counselor put it, "No real firm commitment" to doing abortion work. In marked contrast to the way it was seen by those interviewed by Joffe, abortion counseling today is more likely than not "just a job." The political commitment, the sense of doing something important for women, those feelings that motivated the counselors Joffe interviewed, are strangely lacking now. One of the current counselors spoke almost longingly of how things were in the years before she entered the field, precisely the years Joffe has written about, when people were:

> ... adamant about it. And that's gone ... after a while it's easy to start forgetting what's going on here and why you're doing it.... The awareness is gone, lost. At least here and a lot of places—now it's just shuffle, shuffle, shuffle the people.

What has happened in these intervening years to change this work? Some of the changes are in the social meaning of abortion. In the early years, the activism, the energy, came from the pro-choice groups. But these days, the pro-choice people are holding a defensive line at best, and the activism comes from the right-to-life people. Joffe predicted that the pressure of the right-to-life movement would have the effect of stifling whatever discomfort counselors might feel about abortion. But that is not what seems to have happened. Counselors themselves are no longer uniformly pro-choice. Doubts come creeping in in two ways. Some of the women who "fell into" abortion counseling as "just a job" came without pro-choice feelings, certainly without a strong pro-choice commitment. Others find themselves swayed by right-to-life arguments, or just the right-to-life presence. As one current counselor said, "When you see people fighting so hard, you wonder."

The changes in the political atmosphere have been more important, I

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*One of the sources of information about current abortion counseling is a research project conducted in 1984 by Melinda Detleffs (unpublished Master's Thesis, City University of New York). When I quote from counselors other than those Joffe interviewed, my source will be Detleffs' interviews with counselors who worked in a variety of settings.

believe, than the changes in the organization and structure of abortion clinics. Whereas the counselors Joffe interviewed talked longingly of broadening the scope of their work to include pre- and post-natal care, sex counseling and a range of reproductive issues, today's counselors seem to struggle just to bring abortion counseling back to abortion.

Counselors used to see decision-making as the primary goal of their work. But clinics today are not designed to deal with true decision-making counseling. Where Joffe did her research, decision counseling took place on a different day than the actual procedure. More and more often now we see that the abortion counseling is not for decision-making but just in preparation for the event, for the actual procedure. The counselor serves the function for the clinic of getting medical history and the "informed consent" papers signed. For the client, the counselor serves the function of easing her fears, answering her questions, addressing her concerns. The counselors have moved from raising decision-making issues to providing "emotional support." In a medically oriented setting, they may be the only people in the clinic who provide such support.

And that is the sadness with the medicalization of abortion. The clinic is structured around the medical procedure of the abortion, and it is that for which the client/patient or her insurer is paying. Counseling is extraneous to the true work of the clinic. Group counseling becomes more and more common, with its demands that emotional outbursts be discouraged so as not to upset other members of the group. The counseling ceases to be even the most rudimentary decision-making counseling and becomes preparation for the abortion, itself defined as a medical procedure.

The medicalization of abortion has meant that medicine defines the meaning of the experience for all of those involved, the other health workers just as much or more than for the women seeking abortion. The actual abortion, the physical act of suctioning, becomes the center of the clinic, the heart of what happens. The women counselors are used to doing the "people" work for the technicians, who do the "real" work of the clinic. The counselors mediate between the institution, which encourages a speedup to get the women on and off the tables as quickly as possible, and the human being who is being "processed." Rather than simply giving orders—sign on the dotted line, undress here, lie there, pay on your way out—the counselors are engaged in a face-to-face interaction with the clients, easing them through the clinic.

When the counselor does her job well, the client feels she is being treated "as a person" by the counselor and thus by the institution. "As a person" is an interesting expression Planned Parenthood now uses in subway ads, to contrast with "as a patient." Clients and counselors value what the counselors do, but the institution uses that work to maintain *institutional* goals, not client or even counselor goals. Even in nonprofit settings, the institutional goals of processing as many women as possible, of avoiding lawsuits and of freeing highly paid technical workers to do only highly valued technical work, are met by having low-paid nurturant individuals mediate between the client and the institution.

The very important work that Joffe wrote about, the construction of an ideology of sexuality that places the needs of women at the center, has little place in the modern business of abortions. Joffe documented a moment of struggle, as counselors tried to define abortion in the context of women's lives. That struggle continues, but I am afraid it may no longer be the work of abortion counselors. □

Book Review

Hollywood!

Peter Biskind

City of Nets by Otto Friedrich. Harper & Row, 1986, 495 pp.

City of Nets is a peculiar book. It is an account of Hollywood in the forties—not so much the movies as the people who made the movies—by a historian of sorts who admits in the preface that there is nothing new under the sun, no one who hasn't already been interviewed, no anecdotes that remain untold, no scandals unrevealed, yet who plows ahead anyhow, plundering five hundred or so books he claims to have read, retelling the old stories, repeating the old anecdotes under the assumption that, as he also says in the preface, if you know something about Rita Hayworth, you may know nothing about Arnold Schoenberg, Bugsy Siegel, or Howard Hughes.

Thus Friedrich shamelessly recycles the hoariest of Hollywood tales about the "dream factory." We hear once again that the moguls were penniless immigrants from Eastern Europe; that Louis B. Mayer served chicken soup at the MGM commissary; that Sam Goldwyn was given to malapropisms; that Herman Mankiewicz telegrammed Ben Hecht "claiming that 'millions are to be grabbed out here and your only competition is idiots'"; that Rita Hayworth was insecure and allegedly told someone that every man she'd ever known fell in love with Gilda and awakened with her; and that Billy Wilder once said of the Hollywood Ten, "Only two of them had any talent. The rest are just unfriendly."

But skimming the cream off five hundred bottles of badly homogenized anecdotal milk does have its charms. *City of Nets* is a good read. Friedrich is the Robert Ludlum of Hollywood history; he's written a page-turner that

Peter Biskind is the editor of American Film *and author of* Seeing is Believing: How Hollywood Taught Us to Stop Worrying and Love the Fifties *(Pantheon).*

races along at a lively pace. And he's right about one thing: If you know all there is to know about Rita Hayworth, you're unlikely to know anything at all about Heinrich Mann or Hans Eisler. Friedrich's interest in the European exile community—Brecht, the Manns, Schoenberg, Stokowsky, etc.—is one of his signal virtues. So, too, is his interest in the labor wars of the forties and the blacklist. All of this has been told before, and often better, but given the notorious historical Alzheimer's that afflicts Americans, these stories can never be told too often.

One of the most interesting aspects of Friedrich's story, perhaps the least remembered and therefore the most in need of retelling, concerns the anti-Semitism that pervaded America in the forties, and particularly the self-inflicted variant that infected the Beverly Hills ghetto. Thus we hear that Harry Cohn once said, in response to a fund-raising appeal, "Relief for the Jews? What we need is relief from the Jews," and that Cohn was "quite accustomed to addressing a writer as 'Jew-boy' [and] liked to boast that the only Jewish actors he had under contract with Columbia played Indians."

Ultimately, *City of Nets* stands or falls on the question of how well it succeeds in fulfilling its author's stated goals: "What is needed now ... is not more tape-recorded interrogations but rather a new effort to synthesize what has already been said, to combine, to interpret, to analyze, to understand." Friedrich is rather good at synthesizing and combining, but less so at the more difficult task of interpreting, analyzing, and understanding.

He is reasonably sympathetic, for example, to the victims of the blacklist and to Congress of Studio Unions leader Herbert Sorrell's efforts to break up the sweetheart deals between the producers and the racket-ridden International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees. But his accounts of both are enervated by the kind of plague-on-both-your-houses cynicism that was a fashionable staple of (pre-New Left) fifties and early sixties accounts of the period. Thus, so far as his account of the postwar strikes goes, he says, on the one hand, that MGM executive Eddie Mannix "lied" to Congress about the strikers but, on the other hand, that Sorrell "gloated" over his victories, and he finally gives up trying to "analyze" and "understand" the strikes altogether: "Whether" what seems to have been on the evidence of his own text a lockout "represented an unprovoked strike by aggressive leftists ... or a deliberately calculated provocation and lockout by the producers remains arguable to this day." The limp phrase "may quite possibly have been" crops up repeatedly as an answer to various questions, e. g., was Sorrell a Party member? Was Gerhart Eisler a master spy? Vexing questions indeed, and perhaps Friedrich can't be blamed for not supplying the answers, but his version of these oft-told tales hardly amounts to a great leap forward in historical scholarship.

So far as the blacklist is concerned, Friedrich calls HUAC Chairman Parnell Thomas an opportunist, but his victims were barely any better. John Howard Lawson was "pious" and "noisy," Lester Cole "abusive," Herbert Biberman "pompous." Hollywood Ten sympathizer Thomas Mann "professed" (i. e., insincerely) to see similarities between the HUAC hearings and the early measures of Hitler. Moreover, the absence of broader Cold War perspective reduces Friedrich's commentary to the Emily Post school of blacklist Monday morning quarterbacking: If only the unfriendly witnesses had been more polite to Parnell Thomas & Co., they would have won the day. "It is quite possible that if the Hollywood witnesses had politely declined to answer any questions and cited the First Amendment as their reason, they might have won their fight."

All in all, Friedrich gives us a whole lot more "synthesis" and "combining" than "analysis" and "understanding." He pays almost no attention to the films of the period and makes virtually no effort to understand them in terms of their historical context. *City of Nets* is like the proverbial Chinese dinner. It tastes good going down, but an hour later you're hungry again. □

Worthy of Your Consideration

Televangelism: The Marketing of Popular Religion by Razelle Frankl (Southern Illinois University Press, 1987). An exploration of the marriage between old time religion and megabuck fundraising via the secular miracle of television, with assistance from the IRS and FCC. Frankl places the current urban-based revivalism in historical context and shows how tax exemptions and the suspension of the Fairness Doctrine for religious programming give our latter-day Elmer Gantrys their enormous exposure and treasure. The author is less adept, however, at explaining the persuasive powers of the Swaggarts et al.

A History of the Jews by Paul Johnson (Harper and Row, 1987). A lively overview of Jewish history by a neoconservative ideologue. Predictably, it is more balanced before it reaches the last few hundred years, where it suddenly becomes a hymn to the Jewish genius for building capitalism. Ferreting out the small percentage of moneylenders and making them the paradigm of Jewish life is an old story—and it reads no better when told by a non-Jew who is a great fan of economic inequalities than when told by others who use this same distorted information to villify the Jews. Johnson has little sympathy with Judaism as a religion—he leans heavily toward what he calls "the secular spirit and intellectual freedom which flourished in the Greek gymnasia and academies" and is more sympathetic to Greek imperialism than to Jewish anti-imperialism. The modern State of Israel fits better into his politics because he can interpret its experience as confirming his view that one "must be ruthless to survive in a hostile world." Throughout the book there are formulations that lead one to suspect that "this philo-Semite speaks with forked tongue."

Post-Revolutionary Nicaragua: State, Class, and the Dilemmas of Agrarian Policy by Forest Colburn (University of California Press, 1986). Essential reading, not only for those who wish to understand Sandinista political economics, but for its insights into the virtually insurmountable obstacles facing left-wing third world regimes dependent on imports for survival. Colburn highlights the contradiction between satisfying the material needs of the poor—the Sandinista political base—and the importance of maintaining a healthy export sector of the economy. Maintaining high levels of productivity pushed the Sandinistas into a position where they had to turn their backs on their chief allies and court the economic elites whose politics they rejected but whose economic and managerial resources they relied upon. The author, through comparative analysis, shows that this dilemma is endemic to revolutionary leftist regimes and denies that the economic problems in Nicaragua can simply be traced to the contra war.

Dilemmas of Security by Avner Yaniv (Oxford University Press, 1987). A balanced and sophisticated account of the Israeli experience in Lebanon from 1982 to 1985. Precisely because it eschews any particular political position, it is one of the most damning accounts of Israel's folly in the Lebanese war.

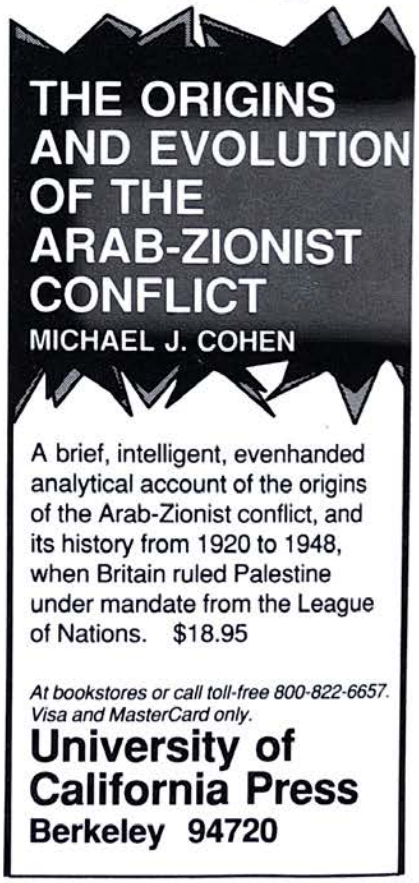
The Original Sin: Incest and Its Meaning by W. Arens (Oxford University Press, 1986). Arens turns the received wisdom of incest and the incest taboo on its head. He convincingly argues that rather than incest being a *natural* human desire thwarted only by the *culturally* imposed taboo, there is actually a natural avoidance or aversion to incest shared both by non-human and human beings. Familiarity within the nuclear family is an antidote to lust. When incest occurs it is not nature's responsibility, but the *cultural* meanings humans, unlike other animals, place on sexuality (e. g., power, duty).

On Boxing by Joyce Carol Oates (Doubleday, 1987). For those who preferred, despite guilt, to spend forty dollars to see Hagler-Leonard on closed circuit rather than contribute to Amnesty International. Oates is a heavyweight wordsmith who can run rings around Dr. Joyce Brothers and virtually all male aficionados of the sweet science as well. She uncovers the symbolic appeal and sociological realities of our "tragic theatre." Boxers confront each other and their own character, fear, and mortality in rituals which reveal humanity stripped of all the layers of culture and technology. Only the referee speaks for civilization; the crowd is both awed and repelled by its psychic identification with those who symbolize a life few of us will ever have to live and truths we need not face.

The Captive Public: How Mass Opinion Promotes State Power by Benjamin Ginsberg (Basic Books, 1986). A cogent examination of the relationship between elections, public opinion polling, and democracy. Ginsberg persuasively argues that elections and polls, rather than insuring governmental awareness and responsiveness to mass sentiments, have historically served to channel politics into relatively harmless avenues. The expression of political *attitudes* to pollsters and even voting are seen as passive political behaviors with little capacity for intimidating policy-making elites. This is particularly true because the author believes elites have learned to mold public opinion, its measurement and dissemination, as well as separate voters' power to select candidates from their control over post-election decision making.

Night as Frontier: Colonizing the World After Dark by Murray Melbin (The Free Press, 1987). A rare work which forces one to step back and take a new look at the evolving world. Melbin documents the dawn of a new era, one in which geographical frontiers have largely been explored and only the colonization of virginal hours of the night offers stimulation for the restless pioneers among us. He charts the gradual disappearance of unused time as business enterprises, media, and entertainment increasingly liven up the night. Most provocatively, he explores not only the institutional and cultural realities of night colonization, but suggests that with proper planning the full utilization of the entire twenty-four hours at our disposal can help us cope with a variety of economic, ecological, and even familial problems.

The Jesse Jackson Phenomenon by Adolph L. Reed, Jr. (Yale University Press, 1986); *The Rainbow Challenge: The Jackson Campaign and the Future of US Politics* by Sheila D. Collins (Monthly Review Press, 1987). Both books attempt, from opposite standpoints, to determine the significance of Jesse Jackson's political efforts. Reed is highly critical of what he sees as the politics of "catharsis" which prevent the development of institutionalized Black participation in policy-making bodies. Collins, an activist-observer in Jackson's 1984 campaign for president, views the emotional dimension as vital in mobilizing Blacks who would otherwise remain apathetic and hopeless in the face of white power. □



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(Continued from p. 5)

LETTERS

The Oppression of Gays

To the Editor:

As a gay man I commend your editorial against the oppression of gays in the Jewish community, but I must insist that no facile advancement of tolerance will ever undermine the carefully thought out moral posture which forms the basis of our mistreatment. Instead, you must present a counter-argument which, with moral reasoning, substantiates your endorsement of fairness, inclusion and sensitivity. You must demonstrate how to work through (or around) halachah to arrive at this position. Otherwise, your editorial pleas amount to little more than a call for blind acceptance of gays based upon the tenet of liberalness. That call has never been heeded by Jews.

Jews need moral justification for turning against the grain of tradition. Otherwise they will be wholly unmoved by the assertion that they are unrelenting oppressors. And the oppressed—the gay men and lesbians like myself who feel belittled, betrayed, and sacrificed by organized Judaism—also need more than superficial acceptance. We need to hear in what way you are judging us before we return to the synagogues and communal institutions which once laughed in our face. Will we be accepted as members but not allowed to be openly gay or lesbian directors, presidents and rabbis? Will we be asked to listen and learn but never invited to speak, teach or represent you? Will our intimate relationships be accorded equal value with yours—will you actually long to dance at our weddings? As these questions suggest, there are many levels of acceptance, each with their own set of moral beliefs and justifications. We must try to be clearer about the depth of our common ground, about how much moral authority we can entrust to each other at present.

Daniel V. Najjar
Washington, D.C.

Believing in Magic?

To the Editor:

I am disappointed in your thumbnail review of my book, *Do You Believe in Magic?* as "nostalgia to go with the Beatles on CDs." All the more so after reading your editorial "On Yuppies," which says (so well) *precisely* what my book said. Like yours, my "goal is not just to relive the past or to pander to nostalgia but to reaffirm a commitment to the future," and like you, on a recent PR tour I stressed again and again that "people whose present lives do not provide them with the opportunity" to live out their values and dreams have not necessarily abandoned them. Did you read my book, I wonder, with anywhere near the care with which I read your magazine?

By the way, your magazine has begun to make me feel good about being Jewish for almost the first time in my life. As a child (whether I was taught this by my parents or just intuited it, I don't know) I was very turned off by temple adults' proprietary attitude towards the Holocaust, as if the most important things about it was that it confirmed the imperiled specialness of Jewish identity. Like many of my generation, I refuse any special identity—be it "Jewish" or "American" or "feminist" or "sixties generation"—that does not encourage me to be a better citizen of the planet.

Annie Gottlieb
New York, New York

(Continued from p. 20)

POLAND AND THE JEWS

Given Jewish domination of Poland's pre-war commerce [false] and the high percentage of Jewish lawyers and doctors [true], how can one blame "a society for defending itself against the domination of its own intelligentsia by an alien intelligentsia?"* As for the war years, wasn't it that centuries-old Jewish "passivity" that allowed the Germans to exterminate them and prevented the Poles—heroically resisting the German invaders, unlike the obedient Jewish victims—from giving them any assistance?

Reaction was not slow in coming, and *Tygodnik Powszechny* published several angry replies. One of the most moving was written by Teresa Prekerowa, herself active in the wartime *Zegota* (Council for Aid to the Jews) and author of a book on this subject, *Konspyracyjna Rada Pomocy Zydom w Warzawie 1942-1945* (*The Conspirational Council of Aid to the Jews in Warsaw 1942-1945*) (Warsaw, 1982). She challenges Sila-Nowicki's claim that Poles helped Jews as much as they possibly could. Ms. Prekerowa calculates that one and a half to two percent of the Polish population offered refuge to Jews: Is this, she asks, something "to be proud of?" Further, "those people who were friendly to the Jews, especially those who helped them, had to be quiet, while the anti-Semites, frequently recruited from the most primitive layers of society, had no compunction about voicing their views loudly and publicly: in street cars, on trains, at work."

Prekerowa also disposes effectively of Sila-Nowicki's offensive references to alleged Jewish passivity (mentioning, in passing, that "similar notions are today instilled in school children, as exemplified by the history textbook compulsory for the eighth grade"). She notes that one manifestation of resistance in the ghettos was the remarkable network of organizations: political parties, schools, medical and cultural institutions. She takes issue with Sila-Nowicki's astonishment that more

*Mr. Sila-Nowicki alludes here to the Jews being barred from certain professional organizations in the 1930s, part of the "economic boycott," one consequence of which was the alarming pauperization of the Jewish population (which he does not mention). By the late 1930s, on the eve of the outbreak of the war, the ruling party, OZON (Camp of National Unity), prepared a program which in effect would have established Nazi-like racial criteria for the admission of Jews to virtually all other sectors of the economy.

Jews did not risk escape when being driven from their towns to the nearby railway stations, herded by a mere handful of guards:

> A Pole risking escape had a chance to dissolve in some city crowd or in a village. But not a Jew. Semitic features or a poor knowledge of the Polish language could easily constitute a death sentence, because it was difficult to rely on the chance that he might meet somebody belonging to that two percent of the population ready to offer him refuge.*

By adding a few footnotes to her article, I in no way impugn Ms. Prekerowa's courage and integrity: She exaggerates the number of Jews saved by the Poles; she does not mention that the Council for Aid to the Jews was created only at the end of 1942, by which time most Jewish victims had already been gassed, nor does she mention the basis on which the Council appealed to the Poles to save their fellow human beings: "Our feelings toward the Jews have not changed. We continue to deem them political, economic, and ideological enemies of Poland. Moreover, we realize that they hate us more than they hate the Germans ... Awareness of these feelings, however, does not release us from the duty of condemning the murder."[10]

It may be unjust or come uncomfortably close to what I earlier called "retributive justice" to quibble with so honest and honorable a piece as Prekerowa's. I have far greater reservations about another article in this series, "Please Do Not Speak For Me," by Kazimierz Dziewanowski (April 5, 1987). Mr. Dziewanowski accepts Blonski's plea that Poles make the necessary reckoning with their own conscience; he condemns Sila-Nowicki both for his complacency and refusal to acknowledge the truth, and for his arrogance in presuming to speak for "the entire Polish people." But Polish guilt, he goes on, in no way absolves Jews of their own: "the calculus of guilt and grievances is not a zero-sum game."

What, precisely, is the basis of the collective guilt that Jews must accept and expiate? Apart from the charge that a high percentage of torturers in the Polish security apparatus right after the war were Jews—which I will address in my comments on *Tikkun*'s interview with Czeslaw Milosz—the main basis for the guilt according to Mr. Dziewanowski is in the failure of Jews in the West to prevent the Nazi slaughter. Dziewanowski does not content himself merely with equating the "indifference" of the majority of Poles (which he acknowledges) with that of Jews in the West. He goes further:

> I am even of the opinion that the guilt of the Atlantic Allies as well as of the Jews of the United States and Great Britain is enormous, immeasurable, yielding only to that of the Nazis. Comparisons are, of course, difficult to make, but the indifference, stupidity, disbelief in the validity and accuracy of reports provided by the Polish government [in exile] and couriers from Poland, especially Jan Karski, are incomprehensible and far more horrible than the indifference of the passengers of that notorious carousel about which Milosz has written.†

The Jewish community worldwide to this day lives with an agonizing burden of guilt, never to be shed, of having done so little to save European Jews from extinction.[11] American, West European, or Israeli Jews can never be absolved of their historic responsibility. But it is difficult to conclude, as does Dziewanowski, his disclaimer of comparisons notwithstanding, that the guilt of the West, including Western Jews, is exceeded only by the guilt of the Nazis, and that Western behavior was "more horrible" than that of the passengers on Warsaw's merry-go-round. The West was asked to believe the unbelievable. Besides the messages from the Polish government in exile, desperate representations were made by Jewish organizations; the Bundist Shmuel Zygelbojm committed suicide in March 1943 in London, in a fruitless effort to shake the conscience of the world. Riders on that carousel saw the slaughter with their own eyes. Jews outside of Nazi-occupied Europe did fail to act as their Warsaw informants—Zygelbojm, Karski, and others—demanded. They failed to lie down on the streets en masse, ready to die unless action was taken. The terrible failure of Jews in the West to act quickly and decisively arose

*An even angrier reply appeared in the New York newspaper *Przeglad Polski* (April 2, 1987): "According to Sila-Nowicki ... an escape [from a handful of guards armed just with rifles] presented 'no special difficulties, at least for people still in relatively good physical condition.' No *special* difficulties? How does the author imagine such an escape from a death transport? Was a Jew simply to wander through meadows into some village or town, only to meet people who were waiting with open arms for a Jew dressed in rags, 'with those special features,' and without money or documents to boot? Often money made denunciation more profitable. To be sure, there were merciful people, too, who helped without payment ... It is instructive to recall what happened in Auschwitz, when thousands of prisoners, non-Jews, were being evacuated on January 18, 1945, and when Cracow had already been liberated from the Germans. Over 60,000 prisoners ... marched four days and nights to the railroad station in Wodzislaw, whence transports would leave for Mautthausen, Gross-Rosen, Dachau—in a word, into the depths of Germany. I don't know how many SS-men (also armed just with rifles) surrounded our transport—perhaps a thousand, perhaps five thousand, perhaps no more than five hundred. We trudged through meadows and woods by night and by day—*and no one pounced on the guards!* And there were *over 60,000* of us! ... 'still in relatively good physical condition' ... " (Signed: Halina Nelken, Cambridge, Mass.)

†The reference is to Milosz's famous poem, "Campo di Fiori," written in 1943, in which he draws a shattering parallel between Poles cavorting on a carousel near the ghetto as the ghetto burns with Roman crowds in 1600 watching the heretic Giordano Bruno being burned at the stake on order of the Inquisition.

from a tangle of reasons, including the inability to believe something so utterly unbelievable, but certainly not out of "indifference."[12]

Of the other contributions to the *Tygodnik Powszechny* symposium, perhaps the saddest and most revealing is an article entitled "In Some Sense I am an Anti-Semite," by Janina Walewska (April 5). The title itself suggests the piercing honesty of the piece: the author admits to finding herself continuously torn between resentment of and distaste for Jews (a legacy from her parents), and contempt—as a practicing Christian—for those feelings. Her "anti-Semitic" side leads her to accuse the Jews of having on their conscience "innumerable wrongs in their attitude toward Poles" (she doesn't specify what wrongs; one can only wonder what she has in mind); her Christian conscience acknowledges Jewish grievances against Poles, and the cataclysmic tragedy that befell the Jewish nation. She recalls as a young girl during the war (with her girlfriends, all brought up in pious homes) having been completely indifferent to "those people who were perishing in the ghettos. This was 'they' and not 'we.' I saw the smoke rising from the burning ghetto, I heard what was happening there, but ... it was 'they'!" The internal conflict she experiences leads her to accept, "on the factual level," Sila-Nowicki's position, and on the "moral" and "Christian" level, Blonski's. While both men, she suggests (with more emotion than logic), are right, she ends with a plea that Poles accept Blonski's vision, for "we are equally responsible for the extermination of Jews, for continuous war, moral corruption, and for all evil in general." (The equation of "responsibility" for "moral corruption" in general with specific Polish attitudes and policies towards the Jews, whatever its theological framework, is something which—to put it gently—I find incomprehensible.)

In the same issue of *Tygodnik Powszechny*, Ewa Berberyusz conducts a long interview with Stanislaw Krajewski, a young "born-again Jew" who has often written, with intelligence and cogency, on the subject of Polish-Jewish relations. Krajewski ruefully admits that it is well-nigh impossible for most Poles to understand the "Jewish experience." The interviewer, who also has contributed an essay on the topic of "responsibility" to the symposium, notes that the public reaction to Blonski's article was "like a litmus test of a certain social consciousness, revealing the complexes, xenophobia, and intolerance" of a large part of the Polish population. In spite of all the progress that has been made, Krajewski sadly observes, the chances of eradicating those xenophobic stereotypes are—certainly in the short run—very slim.

In another interview Jan Karski describes not only the experiences he so graphically relives in *Shoah*, but the ghastly failure of his mission in the West. He also firmly rejects—for the first time in *Tygodnik Powszechny*—the imputation that *Shoah* is anti-Polish: "Lanzmann made a film about the mechanism of the Holocaust. Not about the attitude of Poles or of any other nation's attitude toward Jews, not about any activities of aiding the Jews." When asked about Lanzmann's questioning of the village peasants, Karski is firm: "It isn't Lanzmann's fault that they are presented as they are ... He did not instruct them how to speak or what to speak about." (The interview will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Dissent*.)

Perhaps most remarkable is the essay concluding the symposium, Jerzy Turowicz's "Polish Rights and Jewish Right" (April 5). In effect disavowing some of his own earlier views, Mr. Turowicz rejects the equation of "the fate of the Jews with those of the Poles," on the grounds that "we, too, were being murdered." He reminds his readers that among those three million Poles who lost their lives during the war "many perished not necessarily at the hands of the Germans," and many died during uprisings such as the 1944 Warsaw uprising, while all Jews—"representing ninety-five percent of the Jewish population of our country"—were exterminated only and exclusively because they were Jews. Yes, he says, Jews were the beneficiaries of Polish tolerance during the Middle Ages—and became victims of steadily burgeoning anti-Semitism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. "Let no one say that there was no anti-Semitism in Poland before the war, or that it was weak, increasing only—as Sila-Nowicki claims—in the 1930s." It was part and parcel of the programs of nearly all political parties in Poland, "as demonstrated by the literature and press of those years, including also, unfortunately, the Catholic press."[13]

In the same calm, objective spirit, Turowicz demolishes one myth after another—about Jewish "passivity"; about Polish wartime attitudes; about the pre-war Church and the doctrine of Jewish "deicide" rejected rather belatedly, he suggests, by Vatican II. He is unambivalent; the discussion of Polish-Jewish relations is not an indulgence or "masochism": It is a challenge to which Poles must respond without hesitation, if only for the sake of their collective conscience.

IV

The editors of *Tikkun* have invited me to comment on their interview with Czeslaw Milosz. I do so with a heavy heart, for I admire Milosz as a man and as a great poet, and consider myself a friend of his. He is the author of two beautiful and moving poems about the extermination of the Jews; he is one of two

Honorary Chairmen (along with Professor Salo W. Baron) of the Advisory Board of the Oxford Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies. To accuse him of harboring anti-Semitic prejudices would be reprehensible. Yet I confess that some of the statements he made during his interview baffle and dismay me.

I find some of *Tikkun*'s formulations misleading and unduly provocative. Using the term "collaboration" in a discussion of Polish anti-Semitism during the Nazi occupation is inappropriate, indeed objectionable. "Collaboration" suggests that the Nazis and Poles worked in tandem to exterminate the Jews. No wonder Professor Milosz reacted to it with such heat.

Many of Milosz's reactions and observations are as valid as they are understandable. He is not the first person to disagree with Raul Hilberg's thesis that the Holocaust was a natural consequence of the history of Christian anti-Semitism: Professor Israel Gutman, of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, voiced the same objection in the post-*Shoah* discussion at Oxford two years ago. Professor Milosz comments perceptively on the range of Jewish attitudes toward their own cultural and religious heritage, on the anti-Jewish animus of the Home Army, and much else, although he is rather too charitable in his characterization of Polish pre-war anti-Semitism as being "primarily [an] attitude of completely unjustifiable superiority." The ghetto benches, the pogroms, the economic boycotts, the attempts of most political parties to create a *Judenrein* Poland by "promoting" mass emigration—were these simply expressions of "superiority"?

"Life in Poland between the wars," says Professor Milosz, "was quite complex." All the more reason, then, not to simplify. Pilsudski did indeed begin as a socialist, but after the coup that brought him to power in 1926, his regime adopted and eventually implemented much of the program of the "nationalist" camp headed by the National Democrats. It is not sufficient to say that the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) was "not anti-Semitic"; its program was staunchly opposed to anti-Semitism. It often worked with the Jewish Socialists (the Bund) on protest demonstrations, May Day parades, and the like. Yet by the late 1930s the anti-Semitic animus among its rank-and-file had grown to such a point that cooperation between the two socialist parties became very difficult. Milosz uses the term "left" ("young Jews went to the left") without defining it, leaving the implication that Jews flocked to the (illegal) Communist party. While some certainly did—more Jews than Poles, no doubt—the overwhelming majority of left-leaning young Jews joined either Zionist socialist groups or the Bund; the "venom" he refers to represented the quasi-fascist right's fantasy of "Jewish communism" (*Zydokomuna*). Nor is it accurate to charge that "the young generation of Jews was very sympathetic to the Soviet Union and of course greeted the Red Army to the eastern part of Poland very favorably, immediately after the Stalin-Hitler pact." To be sure, more Jews—having suffered under the Polish regime—expected help from the Red Army than did Poles; so did more Ukrainians, who also had been victims of persecution before the war. Yet fully a third of those deported by Soviet troops to the Soviet Far East, about 300,000, were Jews. Were they deported because of their pro-Soviet sympathy?

Milosz asserts that Jewish Communists after the war "occupied all the top positions in Poland and also in the very cruel security police." This is not only an unfounded generalization, but a myth. It is undeniable that a disproportionate number of Jews held high positions, including posts in the security apparatus.[14] By and large they had no sense of identification with the Jewish community at all, the majority of which emigrated as soon as possible after the war. Some were Stalinists, others more liberal: as Milosz himself wrote on this subject some time ago, during the Gomulka "thaw" ten years later, Jewish Communists were well represented in the liberal wing in the Party, e. g. among those who advocated certain democratic reforms within the Communist system. The Stalinists then were almost all blue-blooded Poles.[15] The same is even more true of the "revisionist" intellectuals who renounced not only Stalinism but also Leninist dogmas and who were later to become the nucleus of the "democratic opposition" to the regime. Quite a number of them, as Milosz himself notes in the interview, were of Jewish descent. It seems to me obligatory for anyone who writes on this subject to elucidate these crucial distinctions, if only (as Milosz, of course, knows) because the spurious equation of Jew equals Communist is so deeply rooted in the public imagination and to this day is still used for scapegoating the Jews as "enemies of Poland."

Finally, Milosz is wrong in claiming that "the whole wave of so-called anti-Zionism in Poland in 1968 ... was an internal purge within the apparatus." Indubitably, the political ambitions of certain Communist party leaders, especially General Mieczyslaw Moczar, played a decisive part in unleashing and directing the orgy of anti-Semitic hatred that occurred, but unleash it they did, and thousands of Poles responded to this provocation with a gusto unparalleled in the history of any East European country in the last thirty years.

I dwell on some of Professor Milosz's statements only to illustrate the tenacity of certain misconceptions even in a man so admirably open, temperate, and judicious as he. In similar fashion the recent writings on Polish-Jewish relations exemplify the thorny, indeed torturous problems faced by well-intentioned and honorable men

and women in coming to terms with unpalatable truths. I have concentrated, in this article, on only a few examples; many more could be easily produced.

Will the current dialogue prove fruitful? "Now," Krajewski wrote under the pseudonym of A. Kainer, "when competitions, conflicts, and persecutions are a thing of the past, more profound similarities [between Jews and Poles] offer an opportunity for more profound understanding and *rapprochement*. In order to make use of this opportunity, the entire truth on the subject of Polish-Jewish relations must be expressed and accepted."[16] While "expressing" and "accepting" the truth is an obligation of both Poles and Jews, it is above all a matter for Poles to confront: for Jews, the chapter of Jewish history in Poland has been closed forever. In any nation, negative stereotypes die hard—all the harder if they function not merely to obscure reality, but to imbue those who believe in them with a sense of self-righteousness on the one hand, and a conviction of being maligned and slandered on the other. As Professor Ezra Mendelsohn wisely observes, "victims are extremely reluctant to admit that they have victimized others."[17] Poles certainly have the right to see themselves as victims of a cruel history, especially of the last two hundred years. But this does not absolve them of the obligation to pursue the truth as objectively as possible, however extravagant and unfair some of the grievances voiced by their critics. Constructing an elaborate defense mechanism, such as some of my examples display, is not only unproductive but profoundly self-demeaning.

What if Poland's intellectual spokesmen finally divest themselves of this proclivity, settle their accounts with their past and conscience, and reach an understanding with those on the Jewish side who wish and sometimes even crave it? Will this cure Polish society at large, major segments of which—as many Polish participants in the debate admit—are still suffused with anti-Semitic prejudices? Will the time ever come when the very word *Zyd* (Jew), uttered either by a Pole or a Jew, will not produce almost invariably—as Ms. Berberyusz and Mr. Krajewski in their interview agree and as I myself can testify from personal experience—a "jarring" effect? I cannot answer these questions. It is certainly difficult for members of the older generation to shed beliefs to which they have clung with such tenacity. But there are many people, and a great many young people, who have shaken off the obsessions of the past. The kind of "pluralism" for which the anonymous writer of the *Arka* article appeals depends in no small measure on whether Poland succeeds—is allowed to succeed—in becoming a more democratic, free, and genuinely tolerant country, in which no subject, including that of Polish-Jewish relations, can be manipulated, suppressed, or distorted. Only then, perhaps, will the agonizing reappraisal finally be put to rest. □

1. The Institute of Polish-Jewish Studies was established in Oxford in 1984; it has thus far published a collection of papers delivered in September of that year at its International Conference on the subject, as well as the first volume of an annual journal called *Polin. The Jews in Poland*, edited by Abramsky, Jachimczyk and Polonsky, and *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies* were both published by Blackwell (London: 1986). The Institute plans more symposia, to be funded in part by its American-based foundation. In May 1986, Brandeis University hosted a three-day colloquium on Jews in interwar Poland; those papers will soon be published. The newly organized Center of Research on the History and Culture of Polish Jews, at Jerusalem's Hebrew University, is sponsoring a conference next January (1988). And Columbia University recently published the proceedings of its conference on Polish-Jewish relations, held in 1983. *Poles and Jews: Myth and Reality in the Historical Context* is available as bound typescript from Columbia University's Institute on East Central Europe.

All these activities involve both Jewish and Polish participants. Of the seventeen essays in *The Jews in Poland*, for instance, seven were contributed by Polish scholars, the rest by Jewish scholars from Western Europe, the United States, and Israel. More than that: Cracow's Jagiellonian University recently created a center for Polish-Jewish Studies and last September hosted a five-day conference on Jews in pre-partition (pre-1800) Poland, in which a large contingent of Jewish historians from abroad took part. A special chair in Judaic Studies was established in 1986 at the University of Warsaw. Over the past few years the Polish press has devoted a considerable amount of space to Jewish issues; some of that attention has been echoed in Western Polish-language periodicals.

2. See the essay "Polish Historiography Between the Two Wars (1918–1939)" by the late historian Philip Friedman in *Roads to Extinction—Conference on Jewish Social Studies*, (New York and Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1980).

3. Marek Leski, "Glossa do 'Zydow Polskich' Normana Daviesa" (Gloss on Norman Davies's "Polish Jews"), *Arka* (Cracow, 1985), No. 10. The essay constitutes a strong and penetrating critique of the chapter "Jews" in Norman Davies's *God's Playground—A History of Poland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), Vol. II. See also my exchange with Norman Davies in *The New York Review of Books*, April 9, 1987.

4. Rafael Scharf, "In Anger and In Sorrow," *Polin*, p. 277

5. See Jan T. Gross, "Polish-Jewish Relations During the War: an Interpretation," *Dissent* (New York, Winter 1987).

6. For an intelligent overview of current German attitudes toward Germany's Nazi past, see the chapter "Hitler and the New Generation" in Gordon Craig's volume *The Germans* (New York: New American Library and Putnam, 1982).

7. For an analysis of the treatment of the Jewish question by Polish historians in the 1960s and 1970s, see Tadeusz Szafar, "Endecized Marxism: Polish Communist Historians on Recent Polish Jewish History," *Soviet Jewish Affairs* (London), 1/1978. To my knowledge, the first article that attempted to wrestle honestly with this problem was "Two Motherlands, Two Patriotisms," by Jan Jozef Lipski, a Polish historian and one of the founders of the Workers' Defense Committee (KOR), in the emigré Polish monthly *Kultura* (Paris), May 1983.

8. Reprinted in his *Pisma Zebrane* [*Collected Works*] (Warsaw, 1985). A chapter from this study is soon due to appear in English translation.

9. Pawlak's piece is entitled "Children of the PRL," the acronym for *Polska Rzezpospolita Ludowa*—Polish People's Republic.

10. This comes from one of the leaflets preceding the formations of *Zygota* and written by one of its founders, the writer Zofia Kossack Szczucka. The text is included in Prekerowa's book; an English translation appears in Nechama Tec's *When Light Pierced*

the Darkness (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 111.

11. For a harrowing account of the failure of the Palestine Jewish community to make the rescue of Jews its overriding priority (a failure, the author notes, explained at least in part by the ideological maxim that "the building of a Jewish State" takes precedence over everything else), see Idit Zertal, "The Poisoned Heart," *Tikkun*: Vol. 2, No. 2.

12. Two of the many studies probing the "how" and "why" of this complex issue are Walter Laqueur's *The Terrible Secret* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980) and David S. Wyman's *The Abandonment of the Jews* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), both impeccably documented. Laqueur concludes: "Jewish leaders and the public abroad ... found it exceedingly difficult in their great majority to accept the ample evidence about the 'final solution' and did so only with considerable delay. They too thought in categories of persecution and pogroms at a time when a clear pattern had already emerged which pointed in a different direction. It was a failure of intelligence and imagination caused on the one hand by a misjudgment of the murderous nature of Nazism, and on the other hand by a false optimism ... If the evidence was played down by many Jewish leaders and the Jewish press, it was not out of a desire to keep the community in a state of ignorance, but because there were genuine doubts. As the worst fears were confirmed, there was confusion among the leaders as to what course of action to choose." When Jewish organizations were, far too late, galvanized into action, they made, as Wyman says, some "important achievements." Laqueur writes plainly, "hundreds of thousands could have been saved." Nowhere, however, does either he or Wyman indict the Jews of the West for "indifference."

13. To appreciate how unprecedented Mr. Turowicz's words about the Church are, note that only a few years ago *Tygodnik Powszechny* published an article about the canonization of Father Kolbe, which praised him for his extraordinary achievements as editor of *Maly Dziennik* (*Small Daily*) while neglecting to mention that this paper published some of the most revolting anti-Semitic propaganda in pre-war Poland.

14. See Michael Checinski, *Poland: Communism, Nationalism, Anti-Semitism* (New York: Karz-Cohn, 1982).

15. Czelsaw Milosz, "Anti-Semitism in Poland." *Problems of Communism*, 3/1957, pp. 35-40.

16. "Stosunki polsko-zydowskie" (Polish-Jewish Relations), *Spotkania—Niezalezne Pismo Katolikow* (*Encounters—An Independent Catholic Journal*), #29-30/1985, p.62. The journal is published clandestinely.

17. "Interwar Poland: Good or Bad for the Jews?" In *The Jews in Poland, op. cit.*, p. 138.

(Continued from p. 27)

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND FREUD

Whatever its origins, it is now perpetuated by the very efforts the person makes to keep it under wraps; in being so excessively self-effacing, the person induces others to act in ways that ignore or override his or her needs, and this frustration eventually stirs anger, either consciously or unconsciously. Since anger is unacceptable to such a person, it must once again be defended against, and the stage is set for still another repetition of the cycle. The anger being defended against today, therefore, is not anger from childhood but, as it were, anger from yesterday. And that anger, in turn, is a product of defensive efforts taken the day before. In all of this, a crucial factor is how the conflict over anger and the defensive efforts undertaken lead to behavior which enlists other people, often unwittingly and unwillingly, into the role of oppressor. Such a process can always be found in neurotic patterns of living. Put differently, every neurosis requires accomplices.

This analysis suggests that intervening in this self-perpetuating cycle would be aided by active and systematic efforts to help the patient begin to act more assertively and hence to elicit different responses from potential accomplices. The initiation of new patterns of interaction with others would be viewed not as the final outcome of the therapy—following rather automatically and spontaneously from the gains resulting from the therapist's interpretations—but as part of the very process by which change occurs. In a given case, the therapist might, for example, work with the patient on practicing ways of handling differently situations in which s/he had tended to automatically submit. Or patient and therapist might agree upon a series of graduated challenges that would enable the patient to effectively take on new ways of interacting without getting in over her or his head.

Such methods have been most closely associated with the work of behavior therapists, but they are not the exclusive property of that school and fit readily into psychodynamic therapy of the kind I have described. In being incorporated into therapy of this sort, however, the procedures change in subtle ways and their overall meaning changes quite considerably. In part this is a result of the cyclical psychodynamic therapist's concern with the unconscious conflict, fears, and fantasies that are associated with the patient's inhibitions. This will lead the therapist to assess differently what is the appropriate next step and to anticipate differently what kinds of resistances, "misunderstandings," changes of heart, and so forth are likely to occur.

At least as importantly, the therapist employing these methods from the viewpoint of the framework described here will be very concerned with the meaning of his or her interventions for the patient. At an unconscious level, the therapist's willingness to intervene in this more active way might be experienced by the patient as an attempt to boss and dominate; as a seduction; as an effort at ingratiation arising out of the therapist's weakness; as an act of caring in stark contrast to the patient's aloof and unhelpful parents; or in any of the variety of other ways of which the human imagination is capable. To some analysts, this is reason to refrain from using such methods. Committed to a sharply dichotomous conception of inner and outer realities, they believe that if the therapist is "really" doing something it will interfere with the patient's gaining understanding of his or her unconscious inclinations and achieving deep and lasting change. It is essential to recognize, however, that the patient's reaction is always

a function both of his or her previous experience and psychic organization and of what the analyst is actually doing, and that it is impossible for the analyst to do nothing. Refraining from intervening actively is no more neutral than agreeing to do so. Indeed, there are few more powerful and provocative social stimuli than remaining silent in response to highly charged pleas for help or expressions of feeling.

What makes feasible the integrative approach I am describing here is a different understanding of the warded-off feelings or impulses that become evident in the course of therapeutic exploration. Since the unconscious inclination is not regarded as a direct residue of the past, which the patient must come to understand by looking inward and backward, but as a consequence of the patient's ongoing way of interacting with others, directly intervening in that pattern is not a way of distracting attention from the true sources of the patient's difficulties. Rather, it is a reparative effort aimed directly at what is maintaining those difficulties now.

★ ★ ★

An influential line of psychologically oriented social commentators—represented, for example, by Herbert Marcuse, Russell Jacoby, and Christopher Lasch—tends to view alterations in the classical psychoanalytic model such as those offered here as socially regressive. In critiques of neo-Freudian theorists such as Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, and Harry Stack Sullivan—whose modifications of Freudian theory bear some resemblance to those I am suggesting—these writers argue that despite the neo-Freudian intent to engage in social criticism, the import of their effort was in fact to weaken our appreciation of the impact of society on the psyche. The neo-Freudian view, these critics aver, prevents us from fully appreciating the depth of inhumanity that characterizes the social order; moreover, by envisioning a greater possibility for easily improving one's life, it essentially encourages conformist adaptation to society as it is.

That Freud's theory gives little if any encouragement that changes in society will make more than minor differences in people's ability to achieve real fulfillment, that the logic of his biological emphasis and of his stress on the preponderant importance of the first few years of life provides little sustenance to those who would work for fundamental social change, seems scarcely to give these critics pause. What matters is, in Russell Jacoby's words, that he "takes so seriously the damage." What seems most essential for these authors is less any specific feature of Freud's thought than his staunch pessimism. For them, Freud shows how the depredations of our society have sunk into our very marrow, into our second nature. Although they recognize that Freud's theory points ineluctably toward the conclusion that the same frustrations and deprivations will occur in *any* society, their antagonism toward any theorists who attempt to rework Freud's gratuitously pessimistic formulations is unyielding. It matters little that following Freud's theory would deny us even the dimmest beacon toward a way out of our fix. He is valued for showing how bad things really are.

The stance of critics such as Marcuse or Jacoby seems to me to illustrate well what Michael Lerner has called "surplus powerlessness." Surplus powerlessness is a response to an oppressive reality that, in effect, goes reality one better and induces an inability to see or use even the little bit of leverage for change that might exist. Lerner describes its operation at every level of society, but the first observations which seemed to him to call for the concept involved an unwillingness or inability among his fellow activists in the sixties really to believe in the possibility of succeeding in changing society. This was not a conscious attitude but, indeed, often one that seemed to lay behind manifest attitudes that were quite the opposite, appearing to imply unusually strong militancy and commitment. Among its most important manifestations is the choice of rhetoric or action "guaranteed to estrange those who would potentially listen to them." The writings of the critics I am discussing here fit this picture well. They tend to be totalistic: The present society is not just badly in need of change; it is so utterly and thoroughly antithetical to all human needs that the possibility of any genuine fulfillment at all, indeed even of genuine personhood, is denied. Such rhetoric is bracing, but its consequence is that nowhere is there seen even a toehold for launching effective action. All that can be done is dialectical kvetching.

It is an error to equate being more radical with how totally opposed one is to the given order. Commitment to lines of analysis that have a chance of changing things is more to the point. If we are serious about change, as therapists or as social critics, we have to be able to see not only what is wrong but what there is to build on. This includes being able to recognize every possible factor maintaining the status quo that might be subject to our intervention. Shifting our conception of the influences responsible for our present situation away from the nursery and from our DNA points us to the office, the factory, the union hall, the corner bar, the shopping center, and the family huddled around the television set. The picture of causality offered by the present analysis is not one of simple cause and effect. Social and interpersonal influences don't impact on passive individuals. The emphasis on circularity in the analysis presented here leads us to ask how we each

participate in the institutions and in the interpersonal patterns in which we are trapped.

Such an analysis presents us with more responsibility—and more opportunity. Self-blame and a feeling of complete impotence are two sides of the same coin; they both follow from looking at only one direction of the causal chain. Social and interpersonal forces both impinge upon us and are the product of our collective action, as we all constantly shape each other's world. Alone each of us is indeed helpless to change very much about our lives. In the practice of psychotherapy much harm has resulted from the efforts of therapists to help their patients achieve "autonomy." Being able to stand alone is the false ideal of the culture of Ronald Reagan. Patients who benefit from psychotherapy are those who learn the lesson of mutuality, who move beyond both helpless dependency and the false ideal of independence. Mutuality and interdependence are the lessons we must learn on a social level as well. Our fates lie in each other. □

(Continued from p. 31)

REASON AND THE MOB

At this point, it seems that we have a good hold on the meaning of the text. We are asked to reject the mob in favor of the intellect just as we must reject our passions in favor of our reason. In either sphere, the failure to regulate the emotional with the rational would in a sense be giving in to our animal urges, opening up the possibility of regression and the end of civilization.

But just as soon as we begin to feel that we have gotten a hold on this determinate meaning of Scott's argument, we also feel it begin to slip away. If the "reason" for subordinating the mob to the intellectuals is the threat of the mob to coerce with its passion, then it strikes us as initially dissonant that the intellectuals are asked to "quell" the mob. The very ability of the intellect to "quell" suggests that in some way the intellectuals are like the mob, possessing coercive power. Yet it was the potential for the mob to coerce that justified its regulation by the intellectuals.

This power of the intellect to "quell" introduces the possibility that reason is actually a means of discipline, a coercive technology for the social regulation of passion and emotion. At both the individual and the social levels, reason plays the role of standing in the place of desire and deferring it to another time or place. Accordingly, we imagine reason at the individual level deferring desire until the "right" place, e. g., in our social mores, reason defers passion to the privacy of the home, or perhaps to the marital relation. At the social level, the intellectuals defer the passion of the mob into the courtroom or other "appropriate" places.

But once we see reason as the regulator of passion, as a technology, we also realize that reason is constructed out of social power. The notion of reason regulating desire to "appropriate" times and places exposes the ways that reason embodies social choices about what is appropriate or inappropriate. With respect to sexuality, for example, regulation might occur according to the Victorian notions of propriety or according to "our" modern permissiveness. Reason itself yields no determinate basis that would allow us to choose between the alternatives. Reason does not tell us whether to prefer the nuclear family over the alternatives, nor whether the present segregation of reason and desire according to public or private realms is reasonable. Any choice of this or that mode of regulation seems to reflect merely a preference, a desire. Short of some "natural" embodiment of the relationship between reason and desire, any choice looks political, willed, a reflection of desire itself.

By this strange twist, reason can only "quell" desire on an individual level by the means of desire itself, by becoming the desire to defer desire, and reason can only control desire on a social scale by becoming social desire—the mob. Thus reason is only desire that has become institutionalized as good sense, that has achieved social conventionality, that is no longer recognizable as a mob because it no longer bears the signs of its emotion, the rage that marked the historic efforts to repress the passion of the other, the infidel and the heretic. Reason appears as desire that has been frozen in its "appropriate" place, and, having achieved its goal, reason can appear free of the violence that is its history. Like the mob, reason promises a coerced social order based on a particular social desire. In contrast to the sharp, qualitative distinction we began with, here reason and passion appear simply as different points on a spectrum; neither concept refers to anything positive and substantial. Reason appears as a social choice about how to regulate passion, but as such it only has meaning as the flip side of passion, as a deferment of passion that is ruled by passion itself. Reason is simply what is not passion, but only social choices tell us in any particular instance which is which.

Moreover, this indeterminacy with respect to the relation between reason and passion, the intellectuals and the mob, extends to what we think of as the "mob." Our earlier model of the irrational, threatening mob was a lynch mob. But when we look again at the ways that social history has been constructed, we find a multitude of contexts where there was an attempt to identify a lustful, emotional mob unworthy of power and in need of discipline. The mob of immigrants through Ellis Island, the mob at the Bastille, the mob at wildcat factory strikes, the mob at the sweatshop sewing machines, the mob in the housing projects and

the Polish ghettos, the mob in the March on Washington.

What seems to connect the meanings of "the mob" in these contexts is a consistent pattern of dominant groups justifying their privileged status by associating the "other" with base, animal urges—a pattern extending from Nazi caricatures of Jews, to white racist caricatures of Blacks, to the middle-class vision of the poor, to male visions of femininity, to factory owners' visions of workers, to skyscraper office images of the people on subways. In each class relation, the dominant group projects the other as emotional and primitive, ruled by irrational passion. In this interpretation, the language of the distinction between reason and passion seems to be simply the language by which the powerful and dominant justify their own power on the basis that they are more civilized and human—and as such, the very categories of reason and passion, far from giving us a vantage point from which to distinguish politics from truth, seem to be merely one form of the rhetoric of social power. The text's reference to the "mob" is indeterminate. The choice between which group to call "the mob" is a political choice, one which "reason" can't decide.

Moreover, this indeterminacy about the text's meaning is not even limited by what we earlier assumed was the paradigm of bad group action, the lynch mob. We initially understood the text by identifying the lynch mob with the coercive threat of civilization disintegrating to an animal state. The lynch mob acts irrationally, in a prejudiced fashion against the Black person being lynched, out of passion rather than reason.

But when we look inside the language of the lynch mob itself, we find the same terms used to justify the lynching. What made Blacks threatening and "other," in need of the discipline of the lynch mob, was, from the lynch mob's point of view, the passionate, lustful, sexual nature of Blacks. It was precisely the white group's view of black lust that made Blacks represent for the lynch mob the threat of the insurgency of a primitive, animalistic nature that threatened the civilized social order.

Here the interpretation seems to be at a crossroads with no sure way to determine how we are to understand Scott's argument. If it is lust and passion, the animal side, that must be regulated and quelled, then the lynch mob's self understanding of what it was doing is consistent with Scott's claims. Surely Scott doesn't mean that—that's not the point here. Rather, what is called into question is the notion that something called "reason" can neutrally and dispassionately dictate how we are to distinguish the bad mobs from the good. What started out as the paradigm of the mob threat to overcome reason with emotion can, from a different point in history and a different place in social life, become the identification of the mob with reason.

Reason and passion can both be associated with the mob; the association of passion with particular groups, and the association of reason with other groups, is a political act that can't be determined by reason itself. In this interpretation, reason can't be the *source* of the intellectual's legitimacy in Scott's text since the content of reason is simply an *effect* of a particular group being in power and therefore able to categorize others as irrational. Accordingly, in Scott's own terms, reason is actually nothing more than some mob having the social power to define its coercive force as what is necessary to quell the passion of the other.

At this point, Scott's text seems to be at war with itself. Scott seems to suggest that the intellectual is to be favored over the mob because the intellectual would be rational, objective, and neutral, while the mob is passionate, biased, and coercive. But the language of the distinction between reason and passion is indeterminate. Nothing in the concepts or the words determines what is being referred to; determinacy is achieved through a contingent social choice, that is, through politics. Rather than point away from politics and toward reason, the text simply advocates a particular politics, a particular disciplinary discourse of social order; the text's invocation of a place outside of politics and passion, a social space outside the mob, seems to be simply one form that the social struggle between groups takes.

★ ★ ★

This interpretation of Scott's text is an example of one of the many ways that a deconstructive reading might proceed. At the risk of reductionism, we can at this point articulate some aspects of the approach to Scott's argument that are often present in deconstructive readings. First, we were able to show that Scott's text yielded no stable, authoritative meaning; to the contrary, Scott's argument could be read in one way as advocating the elevation of reason over passion; yet, we were also able to use the text's own terms of analysis to reverse this meaning, to find that there is no qualitative distinction between reason and passion and that reason is simply a particular form of passion. Second, the reading also demonstrated the active participation of the interpreter in constructing meaning; the interpretation was not neutral and passive, but rather depended on the sense that the reader brought to the text, on the conceptual language that the reader already possessed. Finally, we identified a critical opposition in the text, the contrast between the intellectual and the

mob, and showed how the text itself could be read to subvert the good sense of the contrast upon which the argument is built. By reversing the relationship between reason and passion, and thereby showing how reason might be seen as simply the effect of passion rather than its regulator, this critical interpretation showed how the rational, determinate sense of the argument actually depended on an initial, arational association between reason and particular cultural and political visions of social life.

The point of this kind of reading is not that Scott was somehow insufficiently rigorous in constructing his argument, that, had he been more careful, he could have articulated his position in a way that would have made it immune to the kind of interpretation I have pursued. Any text can be read in this manner. Meaning does not somehow reside in a text, to be discovered by an innocent, unbiased reader; and language is not a self-executing, static reference to objects in the world. Meaning is always constructed, and always subject to being constructed differently. The attribution of meaning to texts and events is a political process that cannot be determined by the authority of reason. So it is not that something is bad about Scott's argument because it can be shown to depend on a particular ideology, on a particular language for attributing likeness and difference in the world. The point, rather, is that there is no way to flee from the politics of interpretation to the purity of reason.

I believe that Scott has correctly identified the political nature of the challenge that deconstruction represents to the traditions and institutions he defends. Deconstruction, in Scott's view, poses the threat of the mob coming to power, because deconstruction subverts the legitimacy of the discourse with which authority commonly justifies social hierarchies such as the superiority of the "intellectuals" over the "mob." The position and prestige of the intellectual depends, in Scott's view, on laying claim to being rational and apolitical. Reason is not itself supposed to be power, but the way that power is tamed to ensure that it is legitimate and appropriate. But if the category of reason is itself a social construct, and if the mantle of social legitimacy depends on being called reason, then the question of what to call reason is a political question about a contingent exercise of the social power of marginalization and exclusion.

The deconstructive approach works to politicize the boundaries between knowledge and superstition, truth and myth, reason and passion, fact and opinion. In doing so, it helps to expose the ways that these distinctions are not simply natural and necessary ways to divide up the world, but rather form the language for a particular discourse of authority and power. As such, the point of demonstrating that, say, Scott's commitment to reason against the mob actually rests on a particular ideology about the world is not to fault his analysis for being partial or political. The goal is not simply to reverse the hierarchies and thus to favor passion over reason, the mob over the intellectuals, superstition over knowledge, but to see that these very ways of thinking and talking about social life already embody a particular discourse of power that seeks to legitimize social hierarchy by claiming to have escaped politics, superstition, and the mere conventionality of language.

And that is why, I think, so much controversy has arisen over the deconstructive project. By exposing the dependence of supposedly rational or scientific interpretations of the world on language and textuality, on the contingent ways that the thick texture of the world might be carved up, the deconstructive practice subverts the claim of the Enlightenment tradition to have transcended time and space, to have found through reason or science a place outside of historical struggle and beyond the partiality of a particular place in the terrain of social geography. Thus, we can recognize in Scott's argument about reason a particular language for interpreting the world—a language within which it seems natural rather than controversial to divide up the world according to the categories of reason and desire, the elite intellectual and the popular mob, knowledge and superstition, principles, and politics. But these categories are not, in fact, natural or necessary. They are, rather, social constructions that can be deconstructed to reveal their history, to reveal the excluded voices that have been diminished as "primitive" or "passionate" or "emotional" in the march of "enlightenment" and "progress." And this language can be deconstructed to reveal its place in the current social geography—in the claims of the powerful that their power is justified by their superior reason or education, or by their civilized nature in sublimating their passion and desire according to middle-class notions of propriety. Or in the more general cultural tradition marked by fear of passion and sexuality, fear of emotion, keeping proper public appearances.

We can also see in the analysis of Scott's text a particular way that such a language or ideology works to, in a sense, cover its tracks, to suppress the constructed nature of its categories. For the coherence of Scott's approach depends on believing not only that his categories for interpreting the social world are natural and necessary, but also that they can be applied apolitically because they are not merely words or ideas but refer to something real in the world, something out there somewhere prior to the mere convention of lan-

guage which the distinction between reason and desire reflects. The point of showing that reason is simply what is not desire and vice versa is to demonstrate that there is no escape from the contigencies of language. There is nothing in the words or concepts of "reason" and "desire" that dictates that they be associated with particular experiences; the two concepts exist only as they are socially constructed and constrasted within language.

The notion that there is no escape from language and politics, no way to represent the social world free of ideology, is not meant simply to correct some intellectual mistake that academics have made in the process of interpreting the world. Rather, it is to oppose the authority of official knowledge on its own terms, to demonstrate that if the justification for certain people being marginalized and excluded from social power is that they view the world through the lenses of myth and superstition, so, too, do the so-called rational and civilized. The significance of the deconstructive practice is not simply to reveal the constructed nature of what gets taken as fact, knowledge and truth as opposed to opinion, superstition and myth. It is an important practice because, in our social world, these claims to truth have played powerful political roles in the construction of our social relations—in the ways that those in power have justified their power and those out of power have been made to feel that their powerlessness is their own fault and inadequacy.

Moreover, the deconstructive practice is significant to the extent that it works to demystify the ideology of necessity and naturalness not only in intellectual life, but also in social experience. The notion that we are always perceiving and communicating about the world through language, through socially created and contingent ways of articulating the social space, is relevant not only to "texts" in the sense of written documents, but also to the "text" of our social relations themselves. One aspect of the textuality of experience is reflected in the language of social roles. We approach each other in large part through a social matrix for distributing meaning that influences how the other will be perceived and how we perceive ourselves. Accordingly, social power, represented in the language of social roles, influences every social relation. For example, the relations between men and women proceed largely on the basis of what it means to be a man or a woman within the particular language of social roles. As recent feminist work has powerfully articulated, there is no basis outside social power for the way that these roles have been constructed. The language of gender roles does not reflect some objective, natural reality. It is a construct with a particular history and place in the social field.

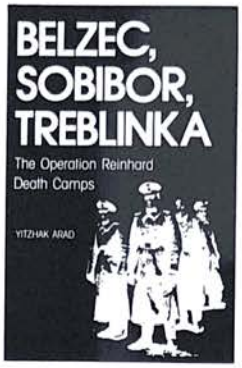
But so long as this language of social roles is taken to reflect something positive and substantial, something that pre-exists language and is merely reflected by language, so long as it appears that gender relations are conducted in a certain way because that's the way men and women "are," the social construction of gender rules is suppressed and gender rules assume a place outside of politics, outside of history, and beyond the possibilities of social change.

The Enlightenment tradition of opposing knowledge to ignorance, truth to mythology, and reason to passion beckoned us toward a place of universality where we would meet outside the play of politics and passion, free from the hold of mythology and the particularities of our history. But the most successful form of social power is one that presents itself not as power, but as reason, truth and objectivity. Rather than continue the quest to find a place that is outside politics and independent of social struggle, it is time to look at all the ways that social power is at stake across the social space, in what gets called "politics" as well as what gets called "reason," in what gets called "private" choice as well as what is recognized as public power. Rather than compulsively search for a vantage point of neutrality, we should recognize as acts of political power the exclusions of those who are marginalized as merely ideological or superstitious in the Enlightenment mythology of truth.

The deconstruction of the dominant forms of knowledge is only the first step of a committed critical practice. We then are faced with the task of taking a stand, or asserting what the world means, of constructing new meanings and new understandings of what is happening in our social lives. Having debunked the dominant form of knowledge because it suppresses its socially created character, we are thrown into the task of creating meaning socially, the task of politics itself.

To some, like Scott, the assertion that there is no neutral, authoritative, and apolitical interpretation of social life available sounds like a message of hopelessness and nihilism. I think this reaction is rooted in a conviction that the only kind of knowledge worth having is a kind of knowledge that can be elevated above social life and social history, that can be immunized from bias or change. For me, the message of social construction and social contingency is one of hope. It is hopeful because it also suggests that there is no objective necessity or rational principle to justify the way things are, to legitimate the hierarchies and status quo distribution of wealth, power, prestige, and freedom. Because our social relations are social products, there is no "reason" why they cannot be remade by us, working and struggling and dreaming together. □

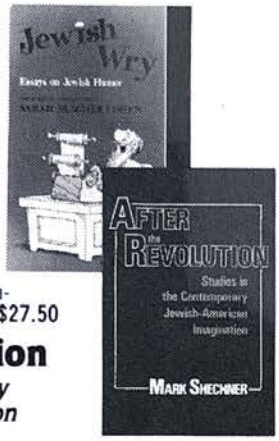
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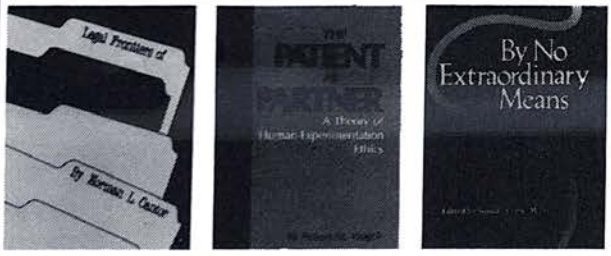


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