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

TIKKUN

Current Debates

Jackson & The Jews:
Carl Landauer, Paul Berman

Affirmative Action:
Michael Levin, Josh Henkin, Betty Mensch, Alan Freeman

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1989 $5.00

Surviving the Bush Presidency
Michael Lerner

Why Modernism Matters
Marshall Berman

Hungary
Todd Gitlin

England, Bloody England
Lesley Hazleton

Popular Culture
Jackson Lears

Literary Theory
Geoffrey Hartman

Mothering & Politics
Carol Gilligan

The State of Palestine
Jerome Segal



PLUS

Itzhak Galnoor on the Israeli Elections; Lawrence Fuchs on The Jewish Vote; Ruth Milkman on Work; Edward Zweiback Levenson on Sexegesis; Robert Cullen on Soviet Emigration; Howard Wachtel on the World Economy; Fiction by S.L. Wisenberg.

you ask
why here, in the high north
perched on peaks and slopes
open to the sky's full weight
of fringed clouds
and bombs, why here?
We stopped on our way to the sea
and stayed, I remember
no more but the stars
told stories, pointed
nowhere. We built homes
on stilts, terraced the hillside
and the mountain now wears rings
of red dirt paths round her,
wedded as we are.
We bathe in these mists,
our salt is of stone, and we carry
this sky on our shoulders, heavy
and warm. In winter, wrapped in shrouds
of white silence and space, there is
no escape, god follows, bears down
with the weight of a child
on your mind, in your arms.
Our youngest carried dreams
of a side unseen, climbed over
a barbed wire fence last spring
and in the valley stepped on a mine.
The soil is not fertile, too many rocks
and too many years are meagre
muscles ache and the heart
but we are mountain people,
we cannot live on flat land.

Rachel Tzvia Back

Rachel Tzvia Back is an Israeli poet living and writing in Beer Sheva.

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY VOLUME 4 NUMBER 1

2 Letters
6 Publisher's Page
7 Editorials: Inauguration, 1989; The Mideast Craziness Continues

Articles

11 Why Modernism Still Matters — *Marshall Berman*
15 Surviving a Bush Presidency — *Michael Lerner*
19 Notes from a Trip to Hungary (Summer 1988) — *Todd Gitlin*
24 England, Bloody England — *Lesley Hazleton*
29 Criticism and Restitution — *Geoffrey Hartman*
34 Soviet Jewish Emigration — *Robert Cullen*
37 There They Go Again — *Lawrence H. Fuchs*
38 The Israeli Elections — *Itzhak Galnoor*
41 The Meaning of the PNC in Algiers — *Jerome M. Segal*
44 Sexegesis: Miriam in the Desert — *Edward R. Zweiback Levenson*

Current Debate: Jackson and the Jews

47 Jackson, the Jews, and What's Left? — *Carl Landauer*
48 The Bad and the Worse — *Paul Berman*

Current Debate: Affirmative Action

50 Affirmative Action vs. Jewish Men — *Michael Levin*
53 The Meretriciousness of Merit: Or, Why Jewish Males Oughtn't Be So Smug — *Josh Henkin*
58 The Misplaced Self-Delusion of Some Jewish Males — *Alan Freeman and Betty Mensch*

Fiction

61 The Sweetheart Is In — *S. L. Wisenberg*

Poetry

33 My Last Chicken — *Sol Warkov*

Book Reviews

68 *The Electronic Sweatshop* by Barbara Garson; *In the Age of the Smart Machine* by Shoshana Zuboff — *Ruth Milkman*
70 *Highbrow/Lowbrow* by Lawrence W. Levine — *Jackson Lears*
74 *Restructuring the World Economy* by Joyce Kolko; *Trading Places* by Clyde V. Prestowitz, Jr. — *Howard M. Wachtel*

Film/Drama Reviews

77 *Speed-the-Plow* — *Bernard Weiner*
78 *A World Apart* — *Carol Gilligan*

Cover art: "French Restaurant" by Simon Gaon. Oil on canvas, 1986, 50 × 44 inches. Reproduced courtesy of Simon Gaon. The drawings in this issue are by Noga Wizansky.

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Letters

Tikkun reserves the right to select, edit, and shorten all submissions to the Letters section.

Disrupt Apartheid

To the Editor:

Michael Lerner is to be congratulated for his thoughtful proposals on the appropriate "next stage" to be taken with regard to South Africa ("Disrupt South African Apartheid," *Tikkun,* Sept./Oct. 1988). The installation of a new president of the United States provides a logical opportunity for signaling a major shift in U.S. policy, and, given that South Africa will be highly sensitive to any such signal, it is crucial that the signal be a strong one.

Mr. Lerner's suggestions of a full naval and air blockade, of military assistance to the democratic forces struggling against apartheid, and of an international conference (with Soviet participation) focusing on practical steps for eliminating apartheid are clearly the types of dramatic actions that the situation requires if South Africa is to be made to realize that our patience is at an end.

The first problem, of course, is for U.S. citizens opposed to apartheid to develop strategies to persuade the new administration to agree to send such a signal. The next few months should provide us with a clear indication of how this particular wind will be blowing.

Walter E. Fauntroy
Member of Congress
Washington, D.C.

To the Editor:

Michael Lerner's editorial "Divestment is Not Enough/Disrupt South African Apartheid" (*Tikkun,* Sept./Oct. 1988) makes a strong case for the U.S. government's taking decisive action against South Africa's system of legalized racism. Clearly it is time for the U.S. to move beyond token gestures and mild reprimands.

Lerner's suggestion of an international conference sponsored by the U.S. government to discuss how the participating governments can help end apartheid in ways that limit the total amount of violence would in many ways be a great step toward international peace and cooperation.

A commitment by the U.S. to provide assistance, both humanitarian and military, to the Frontline States has been sought for a long time by these nations themselves as well as by the Organization of African Unity. These seven nations have suffered over $5.9 billion in direct and indirect economic losses, over one hundred thousand deaths, and an untold number of injuries at

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

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Subscriptions can be placed by calling 1-800-825-0061. $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 orders in U.S. funds (including postal money orders) and with checks drawn from a U.S. bank only. Institutional subscriptions: $40 for 6 issues. Limited availability of back issues—inquire at editorial offices.
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Articles appearing in *Tikkun* have been indexed in *Political Science Abstract, Index to Jewish Periodicals, Religion Index One: Periodicals (RIO); Magazine Index, Magazine Index Plus, Academic Index,* and *Public Information,* all available from Information Access Co. (800) 227-8431; *The Left Index;* and book reviews appearing in *Tikkun* have been indexed in *Index to Book Reviews in Religion (IBBR).* 16 mm and 35 mm microfilm, 105 microfiche and article copies are available through UMI, 300 North Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Selected articles are also available via *Tikkun Online* in the Jewish conference on the WELL.

the hands of the South African Defense Forces since 1980.

Unfortunately the Reagan Administration has responded to the requests for assistance with stiff political conditions that, in many cases, would have left these nations completely vulnerable to their aggressive neighbor to the south....

Still, Lerner's editorial falls short in several ways. For example, Lerner describes divestment as only "a polite way of trying to get the message across to the South African government that the apartheid regime is morally unacceptable...." But Lerner should know that divestment has been simply one tactic among many used by the U.S. antiapartheid movement through the years to push for a total break in relations between the U.S. government and South Africa.

Divestment cannot be reduced to "simply" a polite hint about South Africa's "moral unacceptability." Money from U.S. trade and investment has provided South Africa's economy with a financial cushion. It has allowed South Africa to use most of its internally generated capital to finance a gargantuan and vicious war machine—passbooks, computer systems, urban warfare vehicles, mortars, bulldozers, and other equipment used against the disenfranchised black majority and neighboring states.

U.S. capital, along with the capital of a few other countries, has provided an economic lifeline for a country that, on its own, could not finance such a major militarization for long. U.S. divestment has the very real function of cutting off a vital supply of fresh investment and hard currency flow to the apartheid regime.

Furthermore, Lerner describes Jesse Jackson's call to have the incoming administration designate South Africa a "terrorist state" as "rather tame." But under the Reagan administration, the label "terrorist state" has taken on legal meaning and is not merely a "tame," toothless slogan. Nations officially identified by the U.S. government as "terrorist states" are legally liable, and the U.S. government can take economic action against them, including boycotts, blockades, and the freezing of their assets in U.S. institutions. Companies and individuals doing business with states deemed "terrorist" by the U.S. government may suffer retaliation. Diplomatic and military ties can be summarily cut, many categories of trade with these countries become illegal, and imports are embargoed. Libya, Nicaragua, and Iran are examples of nations legally labeled as "terrorist" by the Reagan administration....

Lerner also fails to mention Namibia, which has been occupied by South Africa in violation of UN mandate for twenty-two years. The U.S. government, in order to have any credibility as a force for peace in Southern Africa, must firmly support the UN demand for South Africa's unconditional withdrawal from Namibia and must support free elections there....

Firm policies must be enacted with respect to U.S. allies that continue to trade with and invest in South Africa, particularly with respect to the few nations that have historically helped South Africa evade international boycotts by providing third-party labels to South African goods and that serve as conduits for weapons and technology to the South African government. The U.S. has to be willing to take diplomatic and economic action against all countries that undermine international sanctions against South Africa.

Finally, Lerner comes perilously close to falling into a deep trap that represents one of the biggest threats to the effectiveness of the U.S. antiapartheid movement—hesitation to support the African National Congress (ANC). The Reagan administration, in an attempt to turn attention away from its support of the apartheid state, has repeatedly tried to cloud the real character of the ANC. The ANC is the oldest liberation movement on the African continent. Its leader, Nelson Mandela, is widely respected internationally and in South Africa and is generally expected to be the people's first choice for head of state in a democratic South Africa.

The ANC is a multiracial organization that includes South Africans of all races throughout its ranks. The organization used only nonviolent methods of protest for the first fifty years of its existence. The ANC continues to exercise great restraint and humanity in its conduct of guerrilla warfare—much more so than can be said of the South African government.

The ANC is also very public about its plans for South Africa's future. The Freedom Charter, which describes a vision for a free, nonracial, and democratic South Africa—"South Africa belongs to all who live in it!"—was adopted by the ANC as its program in 1957. This is the position that the ANC holds today, and it is the basis of the broad support that the seventy-seven-year-old organization has within the country. Because of its history, program, and multiracial membership, the ANC is the liberation movement *least likely* to impose repressive and nondemocratic policies after apartheid.

While it may be normal for us to wonder what will come next in a free South Africa, much as we might wonder whether our own elected leaders might reverse their preelection promises, the future is up to the South African people themselves. They must have the right to do as they see fit even if it does not suit U.S. geopolitical tastes....

While it is optimistic to estimate how long it will take apartheid to crumble, we have to remember that the ultimate defeat of apartheid depends on the actions of the South African people themselves, not on the "Great Savior" of the West riding in on tanks and helicopters.

Wilson Riles, Jr.
City Councilmember for
Oakland, California, and
Cochair of the
Oakland-Berkeley
Rainbow Coalition

Natalie Bayton
Former coordinator of the
Bay Area Free South Africa
Movement

To the Editor:

The editorial ("Disrupt South African Apartheid") published in the Sept./Oct. 1988 issue of *Tikkun*, written by Dr. Lerner, certainly is a strong and stimulating, if not provocative, outline of measures to be taken by the U.S. government. South African church leaders have recognized that we are now past the stage of the violence or nonviolence debate and into the question of what level of violence will be necessary. The proposal in the editorial for an international conference leading to a strategy of ever stronger steps against the apartheid regime is commendable to me. The possibility of a joint U.S./USSR naval blockade rather boggles the mind, and I am sure that's the last step in the chain, but if this were agreed upon I think you are right that

South Africans would realize we are very serious on this topic, a realization that they don't yet have evidence for....

We hope it [the editorial] will be part of the dialogue we are hoping to have on the issue with the Jewish Community here in Canada.

Jim Kirkwood
Africa Office
The United Church of Canada
Toronto, Ontario

To the Editor:

Dr. Lerner has offered two important suggestions on the subject of progress toward genuine peace in Southern Africa which have the fortunate effect of reinforcing similar ideas put forth previously. (See "Disrupt South African Apartheid," *Tikkun* Sept./Oct. 1988.) To begin with, the idea of military assistance to the Frontline States is a recommendation made by Rev. Jackson and myself as a result of his August 1985 tour of eight Southern African states. (See my "Beyond Sanctions: A Comprehensive U.S. Policy for Southern Africa," *World Policy Journal,* Winter 1986–87, pp. 91–110.) The logic of this position emerged from the evidence of devastation which the civil war, promoted by UNITA with the support of nearly $30 million in annual military assistance from the U.S. government, has wrought upon the people of Angola. From the covert sabotage operations and overt military incursions (sponsored by the South African government) to the disruption of railroad and transport capability, the mining of agricultural areas, and the slaughter of villagers, the carnage was visible to the casual observer all over the country. It was also the view of the government of Angola that the meager economic assistance which they receive from international sources is incapable of assisting in real economic and social development as long as huge outlays of government funding continue to be necessary for internal security.

There is a problem, analogous to that in Angola, in Mozambique, where the renegade group RENAMO has caused such serious internal damage to the infrastructure of the country that the government of Zimbabwe has had to provide troops for the security of the Biera Transport Corridor Development Project. In addition, Great Britain has provided some training for the woefully unprepared Mozambican army. And even though that aspect of Mozambique's security problem for which the South African military is the direct source may be abated somewhat by the recent bilateral discussions, both South African and American private sources continue to provide support for the rebels.

Both the Angolan and Mozambican situations bring into sharp relief the American policy of not providing military assistance to the countries of Southern Africa. Although this policy was formalized by Carter, it has been continued through the Reagan administration because of the administration's close ties to South Africa. This policy should be subject to legislative repeal.

With respect to the idea of an international conference to develop a strategy for escalating the war against apartheid within South Africa and in the region, this too has been the subject of recent discussions by leadership which is dealing with the apartheid issue within the framework of the UN. It has been suggested that such a meeting, which might actually take place in Southern Africa and thus directly involve the Frontline States, might be the place where many new initiatives can be put on the anti apartheid agenda.

Given the outcome of the U.S. elections, it is clear that such proposals will not elicit a favorable response from the new administration. For even though it is expected that Bush will not be as openly pro-South Africa as Reagan, nevertheless it is instructive that he has taken the same position (for example) on the Angolan issue. In the so-called settlement negotiations on Namibia, U.S. support of UNITA is not currently on the table; thus, support of UNITA may be expected to survive the transition in U.S. leadership.

Politics, then, is the vital ingredient in the success of such an approach of providing military assistance to the Frontline States, or perhaps even military support to the ANC, in a strategy of conflict escalation. We must clearly find sympathetic allies in the Congress for this approach, but more important, we must begin to build an adequate base of opinion in the nation at large.

Ronald Walters
Political Science Department
Howard University
Washington, D.C.

For the Record

To the Editor:

I made a mistake in my essay, "The Writing Life" (*Tikkun,* Nov./Dec. 1988). Wilhelm Blixen was Isak Dinesen's father-in-law, not her father.

Annie Dillard
Middletown, Connecticut

To the Editor:

Wilhelm Blixen was a Danish merchant, albeit wealthy, not a Swedish aristocrat. Annie Dillard points to a period in Blixen's life as an exemplary way to spend one's days in her essay "The Writing Life" (*Tikkun,* Nov./Dec. 1988). Not long after this period Blixen committed suicide, because of syphilis, by all accounts.

Hmm. Some enviable life.

Susana C. Darwin
Skokie, Illinois

To the Editor:

Peter Gay has brought to my attention the fact that I was wrong in my assertion that he did not discuss Otto Weininger in his life of Freud. I regret my mistake and apologize to Professor Gay.

Phyllis Grosskurth
Toronto, Canada

Left Out?

To the Editor:

Prof. David Plotke, who reviewed and criticized my book entitled *The Radical Renewal* (*Tikkun,* Nov./Dec. 1988), alternates between asserting commonplaces regarding the end of "liberalism" and intimating that only the most arcane of social science literature provides an adequate standard for judging human thought. These assertions remain, alas, commonplace; and the arcana—upon examination—tell us little. Perhaps I can proceed to some rather more specific points.

1. Reagan is hardly a fool, but he is a knave who has mobilized our nation's large reserves of stupid chauvinism, willful ignorance, and angry racism. He has called upon our society's losers to turn on those visibly more beaten than they—an appeal now echoed by Bush. Curiously, Professor Plotke's recital of

Reagan's supposed accomplishments overlooks the dark soul of the American right.

2. Plotke's argument bespeaks a "normal" sort of political and social analysis. "Normalcy," however, carries stringent, self-imposed limitations. The present boundaries of the market and the public sphere are deemed immutable. Our recent role in world politics is held as both necessary and positive. American racism, while regretted, is made both less problematic and, worse, less central. Those who do not adhere to these notions are depicted as either eccentric or utopian—and, in any event, as having put themselves in a position outside the consensus. That the consensus is carefully fabricated, and that it relegates entire traditions of American art and thought to a position outside what is vulgarly termed the "mainstream," are not data of analysis—and so the analysis becomes ideology.

3. Plotke's complaint that my book does not deal with ideas that are really new indicates a historical perspective composed in equal measure of undue impatience and anxious lack of detachment. New ideas do not come along very often. I discussed the disintegration of the imperial consensus that reigned from 1945 through 1965, argued that much of both the consensus and the (admirable and lively) opposition to it were in their own time not so new, and set the definite if limited achievements of recent decades in a history that did not begin in 1968 or 1980. Plotke's reproach—that I do not deal with systems theory or the analysis of social choice—misses the point: these may be instruments of historical analysis, but they cannot substitute for that analysis. I'm entirely unclear as to which of the many theories of system, or of social choice, he means: these systems are not only varied but often philosophically and politically contradictory.

4. Finally, I am sorry that what Plotke describes as my jibes rendered him so uncomfortable. I can only plead that at the age of sixty-two, and with tenure, I have no need to call intellectual vacuity and political servility by anything but their names.

Norman Birnbaum
Georgetown University
Law Center
Washington, D.C.

To the Editor:

I appreciate David Plotke's demand, in his review of the books by Norman Birnbaum and myself (*Tikkun*, Nov./Dec. 1988), that people on the left face "difficult realities." By this he means that we ought to focus on the challenge of Reaganism—as a popular movement and as an ideological framework—to the strategies and programs of the left. But the Reagan challenge is symptomatic of deeper dilemmas. The main theme of my book is that left activists must confront the reality that what they want of the people contradicts what the people want for themselves. This contradiction—between commitment to history and commitment to everyday life—is rooted in the organization of daily life and in perspectives central to American culture. It is more fundamental than the popular appeals of Reaganism, and it helps account for them.

In my book I argue against the view that the goal of the left is to achieve power or to win masses of adherents to its banner. The transformations we seek will not occur because masses convert to socialism or because our party takes power—even if either had any likelihood of happening. Our goal is not to get more people to "choose the political left," but to encourage people's capacities for self-organization. Even if there is ebb and flow in the opportunities for left-oriented activists to reform the "political," they can continually revitalize the "cultural." Moreover, as postsixties left activists learned, processes of political realignment and reform, even if largely blocked at the national level, can unfold at the level of neighborhood, community, and region.

Nevertheless, of course, right-wing control of national government severely limits the capacity of grass-roots collective action to protect or improve the material basis of daily life. Even though the majority does not accept the terms of the social contract Reagan has been trying to write, Reaganism has instilled in the majority a deep skepticism that government can be an instrument of beneficial change. As a result, resistance to government-led efforts to promote equality is high—and such resistance is powerfully structured by the enormous budget deficit. The Democratic party, historically the vehicle for national reform on behalf of equality, has, in this climate, lost the capacity to create a viable national administration.

In my book I try to sketch a new direction for the Democratic party left—and it is disappointing that Plotke does not discuss it. The revitalization of national reform, I argue, lies less in efforts to revive the welfare state than in envisioning and concretizing ways for the national government to promote processes of democratization. Instead of trying to recycle statist and corporatist reforms, we need to envision the state as the guarantor of rights and of voice, and as the source of capital and technical support for local initiative, community and worker ownership, human-scale development, regional planning, and other paths to societal decentralization.

The questions raised by David Plotke are central ones for left intellectuals and activists to discuss. But fruitful discussion requires good listening, rather than an effort to project one's own perspective.

Richard Flacks
Department of Sociology
University of California
Santa Barbara, California

To the Editor:

David Plotke thinks left intellectuals—including Norman Birnbaum and Richard Flacks, whose books he reviews—are out of touch with American politics. They refuse to recognize that the American public is disenchanted with government and reenchanted with the market as the path to economic well-being. Americans have presumably bought Reagan's ideas—thus his electoral success.

This is an astonishing assessment. After all, if Americans have "bought" Reaganism, then why do we have campaigns conducted with multimillion-dollar war chests; high-priced teams of advertising consultants; undercover operations manned by ex-CIA men who perform dirty tricks and steal campaign documents and who, in 1980, monitored Carter's negotiations with the Iranians and may even have rigged the election by delaying the hostage release? And if Reaganism had such strong popular support, then why did the administration conduct its foreign policy by means of covert operations carried out by the likes of Oliver North and his networks of arms dealers and mercenaries? And if Reaganism is a popular success, then why is Bush

(Continued on p. 79)

Publisher's Page

Nan Fink

Wherever I go in the American Jewish world these days people are upset about the potential power of the religious parties in Israel to change the definition of who is a Jew. Everyone is saying how terrible it would be if the religious right manages to amend the Law of Return.

Not only are individual Jews up in arms about this issue, but organized Jewish groups from all parts of the Jewish world are doing what they can to make it clear that they won't stand for an Israeli government that allows the religious parties to determine who is Jewish in Israel. Statements are being issued, delegations of influential leaders are being sent to Israel, and petition drives are being organized around the U.S. Such a show of American Jewish unity in opposition to something that is happening in Israel is remarkable.

It is especially remarkable when we remember that we're talking about only a handful of people who are affected by the Law of Return. The number of Diaspora converts with non-Orthodox conversions who want to make *aliya* (move to Israel) each year is very small. And, even though under an amended Law of Return they wouldn't be considered Jewish in Israel, they could still apply for citizenship as non-Jews. Or they could be reconverted by Orthodox rabbis—a lengthy process, but still possible—and then automatically become Israeli citizens.

As a first-generation Jew myself, I am taken aback by this show of concern about non-Orthodox converts. Since when have converts been worth fighting for? Most born-Jews have a mix of negative and positive feelings toward us: suspiciousness about our reasons for converting, uneasiness about our connections to another world, curiosity about who we are, and a certain degree of measured respect for us for taking the step of conversion. Although some people welcome us, others are standoffish and distrustful. Questions about our loyalty and commitment to the Jewish people often make our reception into the Jewish world difficult.

I understand the historical reasons why there are mixed feelings toward converts—certainly a people that has been so terribly besieged cannot be expected to open its ranks easily to outsiders. However, given that born-Jews feel as they do toward converts, it is certainly not simply concern about converts that has led the entire American Jewish world to put maximum pressure on Shamir to stay away from the religious right.

The American Jewish reaction has to do in part with turf issues: we American Jews, who are mostly non-Orthodox, already have our noses out of joint by the lack of acceptance within Israel of Reform and Conservative Judaism. "Who are you to tell us we aren't legitimate?" we ask the Israeli religious right. "How dare you refuse to accept our conversions." The turf is Judaism, and we are very unhappy that we have so little power to shape Judaism in Israel.

It doesn't work to say, "What does it matter what happens in Israel? Let them do it their way, and we American Jews will do it our way." We are uneasy because we are haunted by the image of the Diaspora being less than the homeland. We might not like how Judaism is evolving in Israel, but it is hard to shake off the idea that whatever happens in Israel somehow carries more weight than what we do here.

Another possible reason why American Jews are so upset about the who-is-a-Jew issue is that we are embarrassed by how it appears to the non-Jewish world. We live among American Christians who have trouble understanding how converted Jews can be told they aren't Jewish by the Israeli religious right. All it takes to be a Christian, after all, is to say that that's what one is; there is no external authority that determines one's religious status. It is hard to explain to people who don't know much about Judaism why this fight about who is Jewish exists—it takes us uncomfortably close to questions about inclusion and exclusion, and about religious authority and freedom.

I am pleased to see that the American Jewish community can speak out in no uncertain terms when it is deeply concerned about something that is happening in Israel. Perhaps some of the barriers of fear about criticizing Israel are coming down.

Now ... what about the situation with the Palestinians? It's amazing to me that the American Jewish community can make so much noise about the who-is-a-Jew issue but remain so silent about the oppression of the Palestinians. Not that I am ungrateful for the defense of those converts who want to become Israeli citizens. But if you compare the pain of a handful of unhappy converts to the pain of one and a half million Palestinians who won't stop protesting until they have secured the homeland they deserve, it is clear that the Palestinian issue is the most pressing issue of our day. □

Editorials

Michael Lerner

Inauguration, 1989

No, we are not all going to join the celebration. We deeply appreciate the fact that America is a citadel of freedom and that the peaceful transfer of power by democratic means is an accomplishment that has only recently become a norm in the world, still not practiced by many countries. Worrisome though it was to have one of the presidential candidates campaigning against liberalism and the ACLU, the fact is that the American commitment to civil liberties is more intense than that of any other society in the world. But although we continue to honor America's institutions, we have deep reservations about this inauguration.

It's not just that President Bush didn't earn our respect by the way he conducted his campaign; it's rather that we understand what four more years of the celebration of selfishness will do to the human spirit.

Let's start with one very simple fact. While the media will drown us in details about how reasonable and human Bush is, and while Bush is likely to come across as a moderate with some degree of sensitivity and caring—a "kinder and gentler" version of Reagan—our attention will remain fixed on Reaganism's victims. In these past years, hundreds of thousands have become millions of Americans who are homeless, undernourished, ill-clad—the people who will be shivering in the cold at the very moment that the rich will be gaily dancing in their celebratory inauguration balls in Washington.

The gaudy festivities of the rich and the self-satisfied as they celebrate four more years of public selfishness and callousness will likely be peppered with ritualistic references to "the needy," perhaps even to some wildly underfunded poverty initiatives that Bush will introduce. The rich and powerful have cleverly learned to hide from themselves the fact that the success of conservative programs in redistributing wealth from the poor to the wealthy is a major cause of the very poverty that these beneficiaries of the class system momentarily bemoan. Their bloated arms budget squanders the resources that rightfully could provide adequate health care for the sick, and jobs and hope for those wallowing in despair. The division between rich and poor will grow more acute in the Bush years, not only in the U.S. but throughout the world. Those people living in the richer countries will continue to refine their skill at closing their ears to the cries of the hungry, tens of millions of whom (yes, tens of millions) die of starvation each year.

It won't matter much to the victims of the massive inequality in the distribution of the world's wealth and resources that George Bush is likely to portray himself as more folksy, more a "man of the people," less tied to the extreme right of the Republican party, or even genuinely more caring than Reagan. What counts is this: that his programmatic choices will flow from the theory that the best way to help everyone is to promote the interests of the wealthy in the hope (already proved wrong in the Reagan years) that they will invest more and create more wealth.

So we will not join the celebration.

Nor can we celebrate when we know that the destruction of the life-support systems of the planet will continue apace in the next few years. There will likely be some minimal effort to deal with the destruction of the ozone layer, but there will be no systematic attempt to explore the many ways that private corporations throughout the industrialized world are pursuing profit without paying any serious attention to the cumulative effect of their activities on the survival of the earth. This is a crime against the future—and this crime will continue in the years ahead.

We will not join the celebration.

The problems that are likely to grow worse, we should add, might not have been solved by Dukakis either. Bush is not an evil man, and we wish we could be more hopeful. But the forces that will continue to run America will do so in a narrow and selfish way. And that spirit of self-interest will have a paralyzing psychological effect on many people. Rather than causing any specific political catastrophe, the Bush administration will probably undermine the growing optimism and the voices of mutual caring that were beginning to emerge among liberals and progressives during the waning years of the Reagan administration. Idealism will be forced back into the closet as privatism replaces public commitment.

From the standpoint of the elites of wealth and power, the greatest success of the Reagan years was the extent to which Reagan generated a new privatization

of life. The hidden but powerful message of the media-created Yuppie image was simply this: "Everyone else is out for themselves, so you are a fool if you are wasting your time on politics or social action; nobody will join you, and you will simply lose out on the pleasures of life that you could be getting for yourself."

In truth, millions of Americans remain committed to the same idealism that moved them in the 1960s and 1970s, and millions more have achieved social and political awareness in the 1980s. The problem is that there is no plausible organizational vehicle through which this moral sensitivity can find public expression, so most of these socially conscientious people remain invisible to one other. The most positive thing that a Democratic victory might have accomplished would have been the creation of a space for social activists to become more visible, and one of the great dangers of the Bush years is that more and more of us will give up on the possibility of achieving our dreams. Instead, we will become "realistic" by immersing ourselves in the same pursuit of self-interest that is vaunted as the highest achievement of our society.

So, no, we will not be joining the celebration.

The Mideast Craziness Continues

What a mess on every side! It's hard to believe that so many people could continue to make decisions that so work against their own best interests. Consider the religious groups in Israel. They may soon accomplish for Judaism what the Soviet Union managed to achieve for communism: identifying it with state coercion in such a way as to delegitimate it to the very people who might need it most. The deep truths of Judaism's prophetic tradition will be invisible to generations of Jews who associate Judaism with a small group of religious fanatics willing to use the power of the state to make people adhere to religious laws—laws that betray the fact that religious educators have failed to get people to embrace religion voluntarily. The healing power of the Sabbath disappears when it gets lost in a maze of state-imposed "thou shalt nots." Most Israelis, indeed most Jews, become so obsessed with the outrageous demands of the ultra-Orthodox that they quite understandably, though quite regrettably, reject their religious heritage. The religious parties in Israel have simply become a menace to Judaism.

The who-is-a-Jew legislation is only the most incendiary manifestation of this problem. We oppose it not only because of its attempt to use state power to settle religious disputes, but also because of its arrogant attempt to split the Jewish world into those whom the State of Israel sanctions as "legitimate" and those whom it does not.

Yet we are also disturbed by the misplaced priorities of the organized Jewish world, which has made this the one issue on which to unite to criticize and pressure Israel. The hypocrisy of establishment American Jewry is startling. When it came to Israel's occupation of the West Bank and its brutal suppression of the uprising, these same people insisted that it was morally wrong for those who live in the United States to criticize Israel. But when *their* ox was being gored, they suddenly began to speak out. Terrible and stupid as the who-is-a-Jew legislation would be, it pales in significance next to the damage done to the moral fiber of the Jewish people by our continued complicity in the occupation of one and a half million Palestinians. Those who really care about Israel should use their moral credibility and political power to pressure for an end to the occupation. The worst possible outcome would be a new coalition between Labor and Likud that allowed Likud to continue to prevent any serious negotiations while simultaneously preventing Labor from forming a serious opposition to the occupation. Shamir would probably agree to put forward some new peace initiative—almost certainly some variant of the kind of meaningless "autonomy" plan that the Palestinians have already rejected. A Shamir-led government would be unwilling to engage in *genuine* peace negotiations. Shamir repeats at every possible occasion his intention never to cede an inch of land no matter how attractive the peace that is offered. Enter the Labor party, to provide the needed fig leaf and to reassure us that "something will be happening behind the scenes." Shamir and the right get almost everything they need, and those who yearn for a settlement with the Palestinians get worse than nothing.

Terrible and stupid as the "Who Is a Jew" legislation would be, it pales in significance next to the damage done to the moral fiber of the Jewish people by its continued complicity in the occupation of one and a half million Palestinians.

If the Labor party becomes part of this charade, its popularity will probably decline in the next election. Instead of using these years to articulate a critique of Likud and to prepare the Israeli population for the inevitable—the need to satisfy legitimate Palestinian

needs by creating a fully demilitarized Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip—Labor will once again appear as the ineffectual handmaiden of the status quo. Why should anyone respect such a party?

Yet all this is happening at the very moment when the Palestinians have shown a new interest in negotiating for a two-state solution. The declaration of Palestinian statehood should have been greeted with hopefulness by those who love Israel. Rather than search for the ways in which the Palestine National Council (PNC)

The Committee for Judaism and Social Justice (CJSJ)

It's time liberal and progressive American Jews had a voice in Washington, D.C. The overwhelming response to *Tikkun*'s stance on Israel and on the range of domestic and foreign policy issues we address, plus the incredible response to the *Tikkun* conference, are important signs that the "silenced Jewish majority" is not willing to be silent any longer. Many people have asked us to create an organization that acts decisively to inject our kind of thinking into the public dialogue. Instead of the press' always quoting the Jewish establishment whenever any Israel- or Jewish-related issue emerges, let there be another voice.

Hence, we are creating the Committee for Judaism and Social Justice (CJSJ). As a Washington-based public affairs committee, CJSJ will provide an alternative to the voices of Jewish conservatism. It will work with the broad array of liberal and progressive Jewish organizations that are already doing important work in their respective areas (among others, the New Israel Fund, the Jewish Fund For Justice, Mazon, the Jewish World Service, and Friends of Peace Now) and will provide them with a way of reaching the Washington policy arena with their messages. Furthermore, CJSJ will see that *Tikkun*'s analyses are listened to in the corridors of power, both in Washington and in Jerusalem.

On Israel issues, CJSJ will provide a source of analysis that is an alternative to AIPAC and the Conference of Presidents of Major (*sic*) American Jewish Organizations. While these folks are giving blind loyalty to Shamir and opposing any moves by the U.S. to open a dialogue with the Palestinians, CJSJ will be informing Congress, the administration, the media, and the policy world that there is another sector of American Jewry—a sector that is very interested in doing whatever can be done to achieve serious negotiations aimed at promoting a solution that respects *both* Israeli security and the Palestinians' need for their own state.

But CJSJ will not restrict its focus to Israel-related issues. CJSJ will be a voice in Washington representing the full range of concerns of liberal and progressive Jews: peace, disarmament, and an end to the cold war; the struggle to end poverty and oppression at home and apartheid abroad; the opposition to sexism and heterosexism. CJSJ will work to counter the growth of fundamentalism and religious coercion both in the U.S. and in Israel, and will support dramatic changes in the economy, the world of work, and the way we approach education and child rearing so that we can begin to foster human beings capable of loving, cooperating, and living spiritually centered, ethically vital lives.

CJSJ will also develop strategies to decrease tension and hostility between blacks and Jews and to build alliances that enable us to work on shared concerns. It will encourage discussion within the liberal and progressive communities on how to fight anti-Semitism—and how to counter the internalized oppression that sometimes leads Jews in progressive movements to downplay the legitimacy of Jewish national self-determination. These dynamics are manifested in the attempt to force Jews to choose between Jewish particularism and a commitment to universalism and internationalism.

In addition, CJSJ will function as a think tank, developing policy papers not only on domestic and foreign policy issues, but also on ways to rebuild the liberal and progressive forces to make them more successful. In this project, CJSJ will focus on how to foster in American society the spirit of idealism and the sense of confidence in one another that are the prerequisites for progressive social change; how to address the fundamental ethical issues that underlie politics but that are often ignored by liberals; how to challenge a narrow technocratic and scientific approach to social problems and restore the awe and wonder evoked by the grandeur of the universe; how to build a Jewish world that draws on the insights of Jewish history and religion but is not dominated by the pains and fears of the past.

If you want to create this kind of alternative Jewish voice, it is up to you to make it happen. We need your help. We need several thousand people who will donate $100 a year and several hundred people who will donate $1000 or $500 a year. Please send contributions to CJSJ c/o *Tikkun,* 5100 Leona St., Oakland, CA, 94619. If you wish to volunteer time and organizing skills, let us know. But first and foremost, we need a firm financial base: we hope to open the Washington operation in the next few months. Join with us in this important task which is so necessary at this crucial historical moment.

did not fulfill all of the preconditions established by the U.S. and Israel, Israelis and American Jews should have focused on what is positive in the Palestinian adoption of UN resolutions 242 and 338.

Whatever the serious omissions in the PNC declarations—and there were some—it was clear to most observers of the meeting that the delegates thought they were taking a significant step toward a two-state solution. That's why there was a political struggle within the PNC—because many delegates thought they were giving up something (their fantasy of eliminating Israel) when they passed this resolution. Ditto, Hamas—the Islamic fundamentalist organization in the occupied territories—bitterly denounced the PNC for having taken this move: it too thought something real was at stake.

Of course, the PNC itself is partly at fault for the declaration's failure to receive greater support. The refusal to recognize Israel and to condemn terrorism against Israeli civilians, coupled with the continued prominence inside the PLO of people directly responsible for the murder of Jews around the world, muddies the political waters and makes it harder for those of us who seek peace to claim that the PNC was sending an unambiguous message. Will it take another five or ten years for the Palestinians to understand that they have to say in plain and unambiguous language that they accept the *right* of Israel to exist and that they unequivocally denounce all acts of terror directed against Israeli civilians? How long are the Palestinian leaders willing to allow the people they represent to languish in refugee camps? Pity a leadership as ineffective as this.

If it really is true that the Palestinians intend nothing more than a propaganda victory, why not put them to the test? Let Israel, on condition that the new Palestinian state publicly renounce all claims to the territory within pre-1967 Israel, offer the Palestinians a demilitarized Palestinian state—with a flag, membership in the UN, and so on—but on the condition that the Israeli army has the right to enforce demilitarization and to prevent the introduction of tanks, planes, or any other heavy military equipment. If the PLO, or the representatives of the Palestinian state, want to negotiate for such a state, would it really hurt Israel to sit down with them? If, as many people claim, the Palestinians would never settle for such terms, opening negotiations would only demonstrate Israel's reasonableness.

Our attitude to the PNC, then, differs both from the attitude of those people who see it as a marvelous act of generosity and clarity strangely ignored by right-wing intransigents in Israel, as well as from the attitude of those who see it as "nothing new." We see it as an opportunity to test Palestinian willingness for peace.

Yet instead of putting the Palestinians to the test, the U.S. and Israel seem hell-bent on giving them the moral credibility that the PNC's ambiguity might not have fully delivered. The United States' decision to deny Yasir Arafat a visa to visit the United Nations symbolically united the world behind him much more firmly than anything the PNC has done. The image of the powerful U.S. fearing to give Arafat a voice in the international forum conjures up all the worst images of colonial oppression from which many of the world's countries are still recovering. Israel, in turn, refuses to sit down and negotiate, which makes the rest of the world regard it as the principal obstacle to peace. No matter how much American Jews would like to pretend that the whole problem is that the world has always irrationally hated us, the fact remains that most of the countries now criticizing Israel never had Christian anti-Semitism as part of their heritage. Israel is isolating itself by refusing to see the real opportunities that history presents. And the leaders of the organized American Jewish world, instead of trying to talk sense to Israeli leaders, spend all their energy on "Who Is a Jew" while backing the rejectionist policies of Shamir which further isolate Israel. □

Why Modernism Still Matters

Marshall Berman

In 1968, when the students at my alma mater, Columbia University, rebelled and occupied the campus, a senior professor, the critic Lionel Trilling, described their actions as "modernism in the streets." I believed then, and I still believe, that he was right: in the troubles of those days, which at the same time tore up the streets of our cities and gave them new life, modernism was alive and well. This was the modern movement that I set out to explore and to chart in the book that eventually became *All That Is Solid Melts into Air.* Modern society, according to that book, is racked with pain and misery, yet it is also a place where men and women can become freer and more creative than men and women have ever been.

Modernists, as I portray them, are simultaneously at home in this world and at odds with it. They celebrate and identify with the triumphs of modern science, art, technology, communications, economics, politics—in short, with all the activities, techniques, and sensibilities that enable mankind to do what the Bible said only God could do—to "make all things new." At the same time, however, they oppose modernization's betrayal of its own human promise and potential. Modernists demand more profound and radical renewals: modern men and women must become the subjects as well as the objects of modernization; they must learn to change the world that is changing them and to make it their own. The modernist knows this is possible: the fact that the world has changed so much is proof that it can change still more. The modernist can, in Hegel's phrase, "look the negative in the face and live with it." The fact that "all that is solid melts into air" is a source not of despair, but of strength and affirmation. If everything must go, then let it go: modern people have the power to create a better world than the world they have lost.

Most of my book is about the past. It pays special attention to Marx, Baudelaire, and Dostoevsky—the great modernists of the generation of 1848. But my argument is pointed toward the present and the future. In the contemporary world, as I see it, the modernist paradigm is only just coming into its own. I wrote: "Going back can be a way to go forward.... Remembering the modernisms of the 19th century can help us gain the vision and courage to create the modernisms of the 21st."

When I began work on *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air,* in the early 1970s, it seemed to me that the project of modernism was in the foreground of American and European intellectual life. By the time the book came out in the early 1980s, however, modernism wasn't even in the background. If people spoke of it at all, they spoke of it as something from another century—if not, indeed, from another planet. Meanwhile, there was an endless flow of critical discourse, asserting that we were inexorably in the *postmodern* world. Had I really been asleep for so long? Or had the structures and dynamics of life, thought, and art changed so much and so fast?

I think modernism still illuminates and transforms the world we live in today, but, in order to make a convincing argument, I have to confront the specter of postmodernism and not merely conjure it away. I have to try to understand why many smart people have felt impelled to discard the paradigm of modernism—and why they are wrong. I will try to make my case in three stages. First, I will recapitulate some of the central themes of modernist art and thought as they unfolded in the period that is generally believed to be the classic age of modernism, from just before the revolutions of 1848 to the aftermath of the First World War. Second, I will suggest how the recent movements that call themselves postmodern have only reenacted, rather than overcome, the deepest troubles and impasses of modernism. Finally, I will discuss some of the ways in which modernism can still be creative in the present and the future.

* * *

Many of the abiding modern themes are unveiled with great flair in the first part of the *Communist Manifesto,* which appeared at the beginning of 1848. The bourgeoisie, Marx says, "has been the first to show what man's activity can bring about." Their obsessive and insatiable activism, which they have enforced on their own workers, and then on the whole world, "has created more massive and more colossal productive

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forces than have all the preceding generations put together." Marx presents a short list:

> Subjection of nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground—what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the womb of social labor?

A century later, we might lengthen the list to include the whole field of electronics (and an amazing array of electronic forms of communication), tremendous breakthroughs in public health, a more than doubling of the average human life span from Marx's time to our own, cybernetics and computerization of everyday life, the understanding and utilization of nuclear energy, knowledge of genetics and biotechnology, flight through the air and into outer space, and many more developments. What makes all of these changes distinctively modern is not the inventions themselves, but a process of incessant inquiry, discovery, and innovation, and a determination to transform theory into practice, to use all we know to change the world. Marx gives the bourgeoisie credit for starting this process; like every other modernist, however, he expects the process to go a lot farther than they would like, and indeed farther than they can even conceive.

Another great bourgeois achievement, which should also lead far beyond bourgeois horizons, is the internationalization of everyday life. "The need for a constantly expanding market for its products," Marx says, "chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, establish connections everywhere." Moreover, Marx notes, internationalization takes place not only with respect to economic matters, but also with respect to people's intimate inner lives:

> And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The spiritual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous local and national literatures there arises a world literature.

Thus the modern bourgeoisie, interested only in increasing its private property, inadvertently creates a world culture whose creations are public property. This is the culture of modernism itself. Although it embraces the world horizons of modern capital, it ends up subverting capitalism, not necessarily because it sets out to subvert (though it frequently does) but simply because, as a network of "spiritual creations," it cannot help but express values radically opposed to the profit-and-loss calculus of the bourgeois bottom line.

One of the central themes in modernist culture, starting in the 1840s, is the drive for free development. Goethe, in *Faust,* was probably the first to suggest the connection between the modern desire for self-development and the modern movement toward economic development. Marx conceptualizes this connection in the *Manifesto:*

> The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production. And thereby the relations of production, and with them all the relations of society.... Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social relations, everlasting uncertainty and agitation, distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man at last is forced to face his real conditions of life and his relations with his fellow men.

In short, under the pressure of the market, modern men and women are forced to grow in order to survive. But their growth is channeled and twisted into narrow—that is, marketable—directions. Still, Marx believes, the inner dynamism that capitalism creates in its subjects is bound to recoil against bourgeois rule. Sooner or later, modern men and women will inevitably feel that the boundaries of the capitalist bottom line are fencing them in; after a lifetime of forced and distorted development, they will begin to clamor for free development. This desire, more than any mere economic need, will propel the modern masses into movements for radical change. Indeed, when communism finally arrives, Marx says, its gift to humanity will be "an association in which the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all."

Free development is celebrated by Marx's whole generation of modernists. It is what a poem like Baudelaire's "Le Voyage" is about: "to drown in the abyss—heaven or hell, / who cares? Through the unknown, we'll find the *new.*" Free development is also what the hero of Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* has in mind when he says, "I want to live, in order to satisfy all my faculties for life.... " And it plays a crucial role even in the thought of so square a modernist thinker as John Stuart Mill, who declares that "not symmetry [of character] but bold, free expansion in all directions is demanded by the needs of modern life and the instincts of the modern mind."

More than a century later, the drive for free develop-

ment has spread all over the world and has energized a mass public, millions strong, to demand universal education, freedom of expression, and support for what Mill in *On Liberty* called "experiments in living." This public, remarkably open and responsive to any activity or creation that appears to be authentically new, has helped to keep many modes of modernism alive. It has encouraged generations of artists, scientists, and quite ordinary men and women to believe that, if they aren't constantly transcending themselves, they might as well be dead. (Ironically, this public has also become the audience for postmodernism, which it imagines as the newest modern movement in town.)

The ideal of free development, elaborated in the 1840s, soon brought about a powerful undertow. From then till now, this undertow has been a primary source of trouble in modern life. I will call this undertow the problem of *nihilism*. Nihilism is often considered to spring from the overheated and drugged imaginations of some of the "bad boys" of modernism: Baudelaire, Nietzsche, Rimbaud. In fact, it can be found in the most sober nineteenth-century accounts of everyday life in the modern world. Tocqueville, for instance, on his visit to the ultramodern United States, saw a pattern of incessant movement everywhere, tremendous expenditures of human energy in the pursuit of happiness. But he could not help but ask where all these people were going. What was their perpetual motion *for?* What did all their activities *mean?* What frightened him, when he thought about the human prospect ahead, was the clear possibility that it didn't mean anything at all.

Marx raises a similar problem from a different angle. One of his bitterest complaints against bourgeois society is that it has "resolved personal worth into exchange value"—destroyed all standards of valuation except the capitalist bottom line. In a society like this, anything becomes morally permissible if it is economically profitable. Thus, Marx indicts the modern bourgeoisie as the first nihilistic ruling class in history. He looks forward to a socialist revolution, and eventually to a communist society that will deliver modern men and women from the nihilism of the capitalist bottom line. But, one must ask, if free development for everyone is going to be the basic norm of the new society, won't this norm engender new modes of nihilism that are even broader and deeper than the mode they replace?

Modernists of the 1840s created a vocabulary that made it possible to raise such questions. They did not have answers then, but they had faith in the capacity of modern men and women, in the process of free development, to generate answers in the future. Hence they could accept modern nihilism, in Nietzsche's words, as "a great clearing away," "a simplification for the sake of life," "a pathological transitional state," a preface to the creation of new and better values.

Meanwhile, however, modernism's undertow was gathering force fast. The ruin of the revolutions of 1848 and the new despotism of Napoleon III made it impossible not to see its force. "The struggle seems to be settled," Marx wrote after Louis Bonaparte's coup d'état of December 1851, "in such a way that all classes, equally impotent and equally mute, fall on their knees before the rifle butt.... France, therefore, seems to have escaped the despotism of a class only to fall beneath the despotism of an individual, and, what is more, beneath the authority of an individual without authority." In short, there was a very large modern public—no one knew quite how large—that, far from yearning for a future of free development, fought to flee from a present in which it felt already much too free.

The public has encouraged generations of artists, scientists, and quite ordinary men and women to believe that, if they aren't transcending themselves, they might as well be dead.

For Marx, the collective desire to escape from freedom was a subject for comedy, though indeed a black comedy. (The genre of Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire* is actually much more typical of our time than of his own. It belongs on the same shelf as Lenny Bruce and *Catch-22*.) Thirty years later, Dostoevsky, in his "Parable of the Grand Inquisitor" (included in *The Brothers Karamazov*), brought out the tragic gravity of this theme. The parable is narrated and supposedly written by Ivan Karamazov, the one character in the book with a distinctively modernist sensibility. Ivan brings to life a modern and humanistic Jesus: the idea of freedom of conscience is central to his revelation. The Inquisitor's objection to this version of Jesus is that he is bestowing more freedom on human beings than they can handle. Thus, he visits Jesus in the cell in which he has imprisoned him and entreats him to fade away before the Inquisition burns him for heresy. Doesn't he understand that he is making life too hard? "I tell you," the Inquisitor says, "man is tormented by no greater anxiety than to find someone to whom he can hand over the gift of the freedom with which this ill-fated creature was born." Jesus lacks true charity and mercy: he fails to see "that man prefers peace, and even death, to freedom of choice in knowledge of good and evil. Nothing is more seductive for man

than his freedom of conscience, but nothing is a greater cause of suffering."

The Inquisitor now steps out of his medieval setting and addresses Dostoevsky's modern audience: "Look," he says, "now, today, people are persuaded that they are freer than ever before, yet they have brought their freedom to us and laid it humbly at our feet." The masses rebel, but they "lack the courage to carry through their own rebellion." They are like schoolchildren who riot and drive the teacher out of the room, only to recoil in horror when they see that there is no one in charge but themselves. Then they will throw themselves on the mercy of "the three powers which alone are able to hold captive the conscience of these impotent rebels"—a modernist anti-Trinity of "miracle, mystery and authority"—rather than take responsibility for their own lives.

Dostoevsky's parable is frightfully prescient, a prophecy of twentieth-century fascist and totalitarian movements. He comes closest to home, not so much in his profile of the leadership of these movements (though his Inquisitor does uncannily prefigure the Ayatollah Khomeini), as in his vision of their followers: modern men and women who grow up in a state of partial freedom but who find this freedom so terrifying that they are willing to sacrifice everything, even their lives, to any leader or movement that will take this freedom away. The Grand Inquisitor can teach modernists that they are in a far more precarious and vulnerable position than they think. Marx and his whole generation canonized Prometheus as their primary culture hero. After the Grand Inquisitor, modernists may remember how many people out there are rooting for Zeus, how many would apologize to the gods and give back the fire if they could. From this point on, if modernism is to grow, it will have to learn to incorporate this potentially fatal undertow into its inner life and development.

Dostoevsky's parable has a remarkably contemporary ring, but in one important way it was anachronistic from the start. The primary source of "miracle, mystery and authority" in modern times is no longer the church, but the state. A powerful strain in modern thought, starting from the 1840s generation—Stirner and Proudhon, Tocqueville and Thoreau—focuses on deconstructing and denouncing this state. "The New Idol," Nietzsche scornfully called it, writing in 1883, in the heyday of the Bismarckian *Reich:*

> State is the name of the coldest of all monsters. Coldly it tells lies; and this lie crawls out of its mouth: "I, the state, am the people. . . ."
>
> Where there is still a people, it does not understand the state, and hates it as the evil eye and the sin against customs and rights. . . .
>
> It will give you everything if you'll adore it, this new idol: thus it buys the splendor of your virtues and the look of your proud eyes. It will use you as bait. . . .
>
> My brothers, do you want to suffocate? . . . Rather break the windows and leap to freedom.
>
> Escape from the bad smell! Escape from the steam of these human sacrifices. . . .

One needn't share Nietzsche's optimism about breaking the windows and leaping to freedom—where could one go, after all, except into another state's jurisdiction?—to get the critical point. Indeed, we could even argue, as Max Weber did, that the more indispensable the state is to all modern people and peoples, the more oppressive and dangerous it is bound to be. Nietzsche might well have agreed. His aim was not to promote any particular escape route. Rather it was to convince his readers that they didn't have to let themselves be absorbed by gigantic institutions—to strengthen these readers to the point where they could believe in their own inner strength. If institutions of social control grew strong, modern men and women could grow even stronger. If modern people found themselves devalued, they had the capacity to overcome and create new values. Here Nietzsche expressed, and deepened, the basic modernist faith.

Two of Nietzsche's images—the tragic image of human sacrifice to malevolent gods and the black-comic image of men used as bait, killed as promiscuously as flies—propel us into the World War I era, more particularly into the second half of the war. Images like Nietzsche's would not have rung a bell with many Europeans in August 1914, when immense crowds danced in the streets of every European capital, and masses of men jammed the recruiting offices. Modernists were among the dancers, and they marched off joyfully to the battlefront. This chauvinistic fervor—rare in the history of modernism, whose horizon has nearly always been international—needs some explanation. World War I broke out in the midst of one of the most creative periods, not merely in the history of modernism, but in the whole history of culture. Cubism, futurism, and the first great leaps into abstract art; the theories of relativity and indeterminacy in physics; psychoanalysis; poetry and literature that shattered all the old unities of space and time; automobiles and airplanes, skyscrapers and electrified cities; breakthroughs in cinema, radio, and sound recording; the emergence of a whole array of new mass media—it sounds like an understatement to call this a revolutionary age.

The modernists of 1914 were breathless in their ad-

(Continued on p. 81)

Surviving a Bush Presidency

Michael Lerner

Surviving a Bush presidency is going to be very hard for those people who have no coherent account of how the liberal and progressive forces got into this mess and how they can get out of it. For eight years many people have been telling themselves that it's just this one Reagan anomaly—a television star, with a personality like the father many Americans wished for, who legitimated a conservatism that would fade once his eight-year term was over. Thus many liberals and progressives, assuming the Democrats would regain power in 1988, spent the past eight years working on local organizing projects or single-issue struggles (nuclear disarmament, anticontra funding, antiapartheid, ecology, gay or women's issues). No matter how morally righteous or necessary are the changes that we want to see in the larger world, unless we have a plausible vision of how we might actually get the power to make these changes it's going to be hard to resist the pressures to put more energy into our personal lives and less into the struggles for peace and social justice. This essay presents a strategy for dramatically changing American politics. It is couched in terms of advice to the Democratic party, but its message is equally applicable to all people in this society who have been involved in attempting to achieve fundamental social change.

Of course, I'm as depressed as everyone else by the current political scene. Not just because the Democrats managed to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory once again in 1988, but also because now the people I like best in the Democratic party—left-liberals and progressives—are concluding that everything would have been fine had Dukakis simply made a vigorous defense of liberalism. They think the old-time religion just needs a better cheerleader—a Jesse Jackson, or someone else who can articulately and vigorously defend basic liberal principles.

They are sadly mistaken. Sure, a spirited defense of liberalism, particularly during the televised debates, would have greatly strengthened a Dukakis candidacy. And trying to clone the Republicans (Sam Nunn or Bill Bradley next time?) is a stupid strategy. But the liberal worldview is in crisis—not because it's wrong on what it *does* address, but because of what it misses.

The battles between the "moderate center" and the "liberal wing" of the Democratic party are discouraging because *both sides are wrong*. We may need a New Democratic Party—either a third party or a popular movement to take over the Democratic party from below—in order to escape the seemingly endless oscillation between two wings of the party, neither of which really understands the basis of the Republicans' appeal.

The "moderate center" won't acknowledge that Dukakis tried its strategy in 1988—from his attempts to portray himself as strong on defense, crime, and drugs, to his opposition to tax increases and to major new spending programs. Indeed, in the spring the Democrats led in the polls, when Jackson had pulled the entire discussion to the left; they began to lose support when Dukakis deadened everything with his claim that competence, not ideology, should be the center of the campaign. And Dukakis's campaign was revived in the last two weeks when Dukakis focused on class issues.

At the same time, the liberal/left won't acknowledge that Jackson was unable to win even within the Democratic party—much less within the electorate as a whole. And it's not because he was black or too radical, but because he wasn't talking to the most important crisis in the lives of most Americans. While there's no a priori reason why Jackson could not move beyond the old thinking that has dominated the liberal forces in the past, the coalition he has put together needs to adopt a new paradigm for politics before it can speak to the American majority.

Liberals are stuck in a politics that is an amalgam of what seemed to work for them in the thirties and sixties; they ignore the psychological, emotional, spiritual, and ethical issues that are central to contemporary American politics. From their success in the thirties the Democrats hold on to the notion that what *really* motivates people is economic insecurity; from the sixties they hold on to the notion that the critical moral issue is to extend political rights and economic benefits to those who were previously neglected or excluded.

It would be wrong to dismiss such concerns as having *no* audience today. Many Americans who ended up either voting against Dukakis or not voting at all in 1988, actually agree with the Democrats on these issues. Many would be happy to have a better student loan program, a higher minimum wage, greater governmental help in buying a first home, more comprehensive medical care; they would even support fairer treatment of blacks,

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women, gays, and others. The problem is that these traditional Democratic issues, extensions of the politics of the thirties and the sixties, are not their *main* concern.

The movements of the 1960s hit a nerve when they focused on the alienation and the sense of meaninglessness that most Americans experience even after achieving relative economic security. Having accepted the notion that in American society one can make it if one really tries, we often feel terrible about ourselves for having failed to achieve a life filled with greater ethical and spiritual coherence, more rewarding work, deeper friendships, and more genuinely caring and committed love and family relationships. The breakup of marriages, the difficulties parents have in transmitting values to their children, the lack of respect many Americans experience at their places of work and at home, the exploitative way people treat each other—all of these phenomena are experienced as reflections of personal, individual failures. Just as in the days before the women's movement popularized a feminist analysis, many women blamed themselves for not fully satisfying all the conflicting demands made by the men in their lives, so too do most people in America interpret the frustrations in their lives as reflections of their personal inadequacies.

No matter how simplistic their solutions, when the Republicans talk about the centrality of traditional values or about preserving the family, and when they place these issues at the center of their campaigns, they actually make people feel better about themselves. By insisting that Americans' personal issues require social and collective solutions, that these problems should not simply be left to individuals to work out on their own, the right wing actually provides temporary relief for the self-blaming that plagues Americans.

The Democrats achieved their greatest popularity in the 1930s when they were the party responsible for decreasing self-blaming among the American people. The New Deal's greatest success was *not* its ability to end the economic crisis of the depression; on those grounds it actually failed until preparations for World War II gave the economy the boost that New Deal programs never adequately delivered. The New Deal's power was that it helped people understand that meritocratic assumptions about the economy had to be shelved, that people were sharing a common problem from a common external source (even calling it "the depression" was critical in relieving personal psychological depression), and that the problem required a collective and communal solution.

The great failure of the Democrats in the post-World War II years has been their inability to continue to deliver a message of compassion to the majority of Americans. Because the Democrats understand only economic oppression and the denial of political rights, the Democrats are able to focus their attention only on groups that suffer in these particular ways. They can put together a coalition of the economically or politically oppressed, but these people do not comprise a majority coalition today. Consequently, while the Democrats can sometimes push through Congress minimal benefits for their constituency, they are not in a position to deliver programs that will fundamentally transform the condition of the most oppressed.

Meanwhile, the majority of Americans, while still feeling somewhat insecure about economic life, have achieved levels of material consumption far surpassing the dreams of their ancestors. But "the good life" has not brought personal satisfaction—and for good reason. Working people continue to experience relative powerlessness at their places of work as well as an inability to use their own human potential for creative or intelligent ends, or for cooperation with others. Although the resulting alienation, commonly described by the workers themselves as "stress," has had a profound impact on the physical and emotional health of most Americans, these Americans still believe that the marketplace is governed by meritocratic principles. Consequently, they think they have no right to feel angry at anybody but themselves for the stress in their lives. Even those who understand that the stress they are experiencing is a product of powerlessness and the thwarting of their human potential still blame themselves: "If I were more together, I wouldn't have this kind of job in the first place."

This self-blaming is not confined to those people who have traditionally oppressive jobs in manufacturing or clerical work. Jobs in universities, publishing firms, law firms, government, science, technology, health care, the media, social work, and teaching have all become increasingly bureaucratized. As a result, many professionals experience this same kind of stress, and they too blame themselves for not having more fulfilling work.

The impact of this double whammy—alienation plus self-blaming—is experienced most directly by people in their personal lives. Having spent most of their waking hours in jobs that are unfulfilling and frustrating, and having internalized their anger, Americans return home, hoping to find compensation for their unrewarding work through fulfilling personal relationships and activities. But our personal lives rarely provide this compensation—in part because the psychological effects of alienation and self-blaming at work have a profoundly distorting influence on our personal lives.

In fact, for many of us, personal life is dominated by a frantic attempt to forget our experiences at work:

either through traditional narcotics like television, alcohol, and drugs, or through activities, worthwhile in themselves, that we frenetically engage in as a way of forgetting our pain (for example, exercise, diet, eating, sex, politics, religion, community service, even writing articles for magazines). People who are deeply engaged in trying to repress the anger and self-blaming that they have brought home from work are often poor candidates for loving and intimate relationships which require openness and emotional accessibility. Moreover, the angers and frustrations of work are rarely totally repressed—and very often they get displaced onto family life, so that minor irritations or quarrels in a relationship "inexplicably" blow up into major sources of tension and upset.

As if all these problems were not enough, as we have moved away from manufacturing and toward a "service" economy, we are increasingly called upon to sell products or services by selling ourselves and our personalities in the process. The more we are able to manipulate and control others, the more we are able to mold ourselves according to the latest fashions and styles, the more successful we become in the competitive marketplace. The result: a narcissistic personality, unable to make loving commitments but able to make a good impression. The very personal qualities that produce success in the economy help to undermine the stability of friendships and loving relationships in personal life.

The ethos of "looking out for number one" and the dynamics of a society that glorifies individual selfishness have dramatic consequences for the lives of all Americans. Solidarity declines everywhere—not just in the world of work, but in friendships and family life as well. If people are out to maximize their own well-being, then they might decide at any moment that there are other people whom they would rather be friends with, lovers with, or married to. As a result, no relationship feels secure. Even family ties seem precarious: the elderly feel increasingly abandoned by their grown children, who no longer believe that being responsible for their parents should interfere with their pursuit of personal goals. Conversely, the bumper sticker that says "I'm spending my children's inheritance" suggests an indifference to others which is also demonstrated in the present generation's willingness to create massive budget deficits—and even more dramatically in our collective indifference to how we are allowing corporate self-interest to destroy the life-support systems of the planet. The spirit of disregard toward others' needs pervades and undermines most human relationships—leaving most people with the feeling that they are alone in a world that is indifferent if not hostile.

Most people, having accepted the meritocratic capitalist framework, blame themselves. If they were "more together," more attractive, more wonderful in some way, they would have the kinds of fulfilling relationships they fantasize that really successful people have in their lives. Just as they have not created a fulfilling life for themselves in the world of work, so, too, they believe they have failed themselves in personal life.

Liberals are stuck in a politics that is an amalgam of what seemed to work for them in the 30s and 60s, but they ignore the psychological, emotional, spiritual, and ethical issues that are central to contemporary American politics.

The political right, by creating a variety of scapegoats (the women's movement, gays, liberal permissiveness), has helped reduce the pain of self-blaming while simultaneously misleading people into supporting the very economic and social structures that have actually helped to generate the problem in the first place. The self-blame described here is only one part of the complex set of pains generated by a society unable to fulfill the basic psychological, spiritual, and ethical needs of its members. It is this failure to deliver the goods on these fundamental levels that creates a deep hunger for love, meaning, and purpose that is experienced by many Americans as even more pressing than their economic needs. This is the most central problem facing many Americans. This problem may be temporarily supplanted by an economic crisis in the Bush years—the result of the irresponsibility of Reaganomics—from which Democrats may reap temporary advantage. But once the economic crisis passes, it is this crisis in meaning that will once again be central to American politics.

The crisis in the meaning of life has to be the center of a Democratic agenda in the nineties. It would not be hard for liberals and progressives to make a convincing case that a culture of selfishness and "me-firstism," generated by the competitive economic system that the conservatives extol, is a major cause of the breakup of families. The materialism, egotism, and despiritualization of contemporary daily life are rooted in the marketplace. Therefore, a reconstructed liberalism would critique the competitive marketplace *not* just because its consequences are unfair to those at the bottom of the economic ladder, but because it promotes values that destroy love, solidarity, and community.

This reconstruction of liberalism would take a revolution in the liberals' way of thinking. For example,

some liberals have recently understood that "family" is a good issue. But they approach the family with the same old assumptions, looking to reduce the issue to specific legislative programs such as child care or parental leave. The program should of course be included in the Democratic agenda—but the crisis in families is too deep to be solved by this kind of legislation. A profamily program must push to emphasize the world of work and the economy itself, in ways that promote cooperation, loyalty, sharing, and commitment to others—fundamental values that strengthen family life. Indeed, far from adopting the conservative agenda, a liberal/left profamily agenda could be both radical and popular.

The key point is that we must stop thinking about programs and start thinking about values. The political pundits insist that this kind of thinking is "soft," and that what really wins elections is money in people's pockets. But George Bush got support from people who were hurting economically but whose spiritual hurts took precedence. They felt that the right cares about values that address these noneconomic hurts.

Because liberals have avoided dealing with these allegedly soft issues, the Republicans have been able to tout themselves as right-wing populists who care about ordinary folks while portraying the Democrats as elitists. This message appeals to many Americans who sense that their own real problems are ignored, belittled, even ridiculed by the liberals, whose compassion is reserved exclusively for the materially oppressed. Many Americans angrily remember that the counterculture and the social change movements of the sixties envisioned ordinary Americans as the *real* problem. And these Americans correctly perceive that some of those attitudes continue to flourish in the liberal world. They may not always understand the complex terminology, but they are experts at recognizing when they are not respected. They know it when they hear their votes for right-wing candidates being analyzed as a reflection of their alleged stupidity, racism, or manipulability by media-wise demons of the right.

The stigma of the sixties in today's mainstream politics is rooted in this reality. It is not the content of the liberal/left's programs in the sixties that has left such a bad aftertaste in mass consciousness. Most Americans support the antisexist and antiracist agendas that were so controversial when they were first introduced. Rather, it is the memory that many Americans have of being put down, of being treated as though they were stupid or evil, of being told that they couldn't be trusted because they were the wrong age, because they worked for a living, or because they didn't immediately buy every new idea that the left came up with.

Liberals and progressives were right to oppose the Vietnam war, and right to oppose racist and sexist practices. But we were wrong to treat people who disagreed with us in a disrespectful and sometimes even contemptuous manner. The American people need to hear the left saying this loud and clear; we need to apologize and recognize that Americans were right to reject our leadership as long as it was tied to that kind of elitist and dismissive attitude. At the same time, the generation of the sixties and seventies ought to come out of the closet and begin to take a role in national political leadership. Instead of allowing the centrists and the rightists to exclude from politics anyone who was politically active or radical in the sixties, we need to point out what was noble in the effort as well as what was misguided. In fact, it would be refreshing to hear people admit their errors and frailties and insist that it is precisely as people who are likely *not to be perfect* that they are entering politics. One part of the struggle against self-blaming on the mass level is for political leaders to insist that politicians should no longer be idealized father figures. By insisting that political office should not be reserved for an imaginary group of perfect people, we will encourage people to feel that they don't have to be perfect in order to be involved in politics.

A transformation of liberalism and of the Democratic party is possible. The following ideas provide an alternative way for liberals and progressives to tackle the tasks ahead and to escape their current isolation:

1. An organization should be formed whose goal is to educate the liberal and progressive forces to think in this new way about societal problems. Let's call it the New Democratic Party, because one of the plausible consequences of its success would be the takeover and transformation of the Democrats. Such an organization should keep open the possibility of at some point becoming an alternative third party if it proved unable to influence the Democrats. Still, given the difficulties of third-party ventures at this historical moment, its primary focus would be to shift the consciousness of the people who currently identify with the Democrats.

2. The New Democratic Party should have think tanks, magazines, and conferences, and it should produce movies, op-eds, videos, books, radio commentaries, newspaper columns, and monographs—all of which would encourage and popularize a new way of thinking about politics that places the crisis of meaning (and the accompanying psychological, ethical, and spiritual needs) at the center of America's thinking about politics and society. Every political issue, every social problem, needs to be rethought in these terms. Traditional liberal programs and concerns do not need to be abandoned, but

(Continued on p. 86)

Notes from a Trip to Hungary (Summer 1988)

Todd Gitlin

1.

The huge, domed Parliament building immediately strikes the Western eye as familiar: chocolate-colored spindles and spires stretching long and low along the commercial side of the river. But this is the Danube, not the Thames. Emperor Franz Josef of the Hapsburgs had his *faux* Gothic structure built at the fin de siècle, an elegant knockoff of London's Westminster, to adorn the second city of his Austro-Hungarian imperium during its doddering years.

A century later, Hungarians try to tunnel their way out from under another doddering empire and its collapsing verities. This time the emperor stands for reform—reform that will conserve his system's power, but reform nevertheless—and the outposts are reeling. In a part of the world that had seemed frozen for decades, politics is being reinvented. The mood is manic-depressive—one minute everything seems possible; the next, the future shuts down. Emperor and vassals alike are testing limits; their world is suddenly unscripted. The terrain confuses and dazzles foreign visitors as well as the protagonists themselves, who sense that unprecedented ways out might be not only necessary but possible. Everyone knows that abysses lie everywhere—economic disaster, Communist party lies, a resurgence of crude and nasty nationalism. Hope is always coated in Hungarian irony.

Still, thirty-two years after the Russian tanks rolled in, a Hungarian opposition has sprouted. In the last few months alone, thousands of people have marched to protest a dam that will devastate the Danube region near Budapest; the League of Young Democrats (FIDESZ), made up mainly of students, has held a convention of five hundred delegates; there are Greens and a Democratic Union of Scientific Workers (which includes professors and janitors alike); strikes of miners and factory workers (the first since 1956) are reported in the papers; a member of the Hungarian Politburo found it politic to meet with the leadership of several of the dissident groups. A society once pulverized by the state is springing back to life.

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2.

The camel-colored, smog-drenched sky brings forth a brilliant summer sunset. On a sweltering evening in late July 1988, a few blocks from Parliament, six men sit on a threadbare rug in a high-ceilinged apartment that is normally a legal aid office but is also used—space being hard to find—by the Inconnu group of graphic artists. On the door, Inconnu's insouciant sticker: "YOU ARE CONTROLLED." On one wall hangs a drawing: the portrait of a mustachioed middle-aged man with red spots staggered across his chest. Typed statements are taped to the walls. A poster is translated for us: "IS TRAVEL A CITIZEN'S RIGHT? WE WERE DEPRIVED OF PASSPORTS. WE PROTEST WITH A HUNGER STRIKE." The face on the wall is that of Imre Nagy, the martyred prime minister of 1956.

Three members of the Inconnu group are among the six men sitting on the rug, drinking mineral water and taking vitamins, having eaten nothing for four days. (A seventh man, a retired engineer, started on the hunger strike but left early because of a heart condition.) All have been refused passports and have not been told the reasons. But it seems clear that the reasons are twofold. Under a reform law promulgated on January 1, 1988, guaranteeing *almost* everyone a passport, passports may still be denied to persons deemed to have offended the state while previously abroad, and to persons with criminal records, not hard to come by.

Ferenc Kőszeg, the group's principal spokesman, has a salt-and-pepper beard, warm eyes, and a soft and weary voice. He is one of the editors of the underground journal *Beszélő,* which circulates three thousand copies quarterly. (The word has a double meaning: one who speaks out; also, the place in prison where prisoners meet visitors.) Now in his fifties, Kőszeg was an editor at a publishing house until he joined the opposition and helped start *Beszélő* in 1981; since then, he has taught German at two small private language schools—popular fallbacks for intellectual dissidents forced out of the official sector. (Private language schools have a metaphorical meaning too: intellectuals teach a language of opposition, but it is a language that's also private, elite-bound, sometimes inaccessible.) Through the power of the pen, Kőszeg found himself penned into Hungary.

During a visit to the United States in 1986, he published an op-ed piece in the *Wall Street Journal* that angered the regime. He also published two *samizdat* (unsanctioned publication) articles on the passport issue—taking care, he says with a laugh, to implicate the police. Yet other writers have published such articles without losing their passports; arbitrary and unpredictable discrimination is a time-honored tactic for circulating fear.

Kőszeg has computed that, by official figures alone, thirty-two hundred Hungarians have been deprived of the right to leave the country. Formal rights aren't everything, of course. Students I meet later note that even with passports in hand they have no money to make a go of it, or even to make much of a visit when they do leave, for the law permits them to take only twenty thousand *forints* (less than four hundred dollars) out of the country every three years.

But of course formal rights ought not be belittled by anyone who already enjoys them. The need to get out is a passion. Hungarians are landlocked not only geographically. Overall, Hungarians feel nerve-racked, as well as burdened by overwork, bad health (the highest death rate in Europe for men thirty-five to fifty-five), cramped quarters, and, some say, the traditional Central European culture of dark inwardness. Hungarians are famous for dismal irony, but you can suffocate on irony. You can live as if you were free, as Kőszeg and the hard-core oppositionists do, but then you forfeit state employment—amounting to forfeiting your right to practice your profession at all, in many cases—and your nerves also pay a price. The police no longer drag better-known activists off to jail—except at some demonstrations—but they still keep teachers from teaching and publishers from publishing, and they still recruit informers. Envelopes arrive crudely taped together, or don't arrive at all. On top of that, the new political possibilities do not make for composure: as choices and actions multiply, more responsibility falls upon the experienced and sophisticated, so, in times of gloom and hope alike, the oppositionists are afflicted by nervous stomachs, ulcers, bad backs, burnout. All the more reason to want to leave the country once in a while. Mainly, the opposition intellectuals want to live as if they already inhabited a single Europe (or world), as if they were already citizens of an international civil society where the air makes you feel free.

Intelligentsia all, the hunger strikers are otherwise a diverse lot. Dr. Gyula Erdei is a fortyish lawyer whose "offense," one can infer (the officials don't stipulate), is having once applied for asylum in Austria. He withdrew his application, but his passport was withdrawn nevertheless. When he wrote a private protest letter to the general prosecutor, he lost his job. After some months, he found a new job as a county counsel. When he wrote an open letter protesting that his earlier letter had been legal, according to a law that sanctions complaints, he was fired again. (No wonder young Hungarians appreciate *Catch-22.*) Reasonably enough, Erdei now fears for his current job at a state farm outside Budapest.

The oldest striker (or, as he insists, "protest faster"—he is also a defrocked lawyer), Dr. Tibor Pákh, looks the least exhausted, possibly because he is the most experienced. Pákh holds the record for Hungarian hunger strikes—four years, on and off, during an eleven-year prison term (out of a sixteen-year sentence) for unearthing information about how the Russians were looting Hungarian industry. The regime plucked him out of prison only to condemn him to a mental hospital where he was repeatedly subjected to electroshock and battered with powerful drugs. Now, banished from practicing law, he works as a translator. He has posted his own statement on the wall, referring to Hungary as "one of the enslaved nations," denouncing "the Moscow Empire" and its KGB methods. He presses upon my companion, Ruth Rosen, a carbon of a long, single-spaced brief (to the United Nations) methodically and meticulously demonstrating that the Soviet occupation flouts international law. At times, when Kőszeg is speaking to interviewers, Pákh interrupts to insist that the Russians, in particular the KGB, are behind the Hungarian state and all its works. When Kőszeg demurs, Pákh gracefully subsides. Of aristocratic origins, Pákh kisses Ruth's hand when we leave the apartment and presses into my palm a picture of Jesus—his substitute for a calling card, he says.

Kőszeg is a kind of social democrat, by Western standards—he signs statements against Pinochet and against U.S. support of the Nicaraguan contras, has good relations with Western peace and ecology groups, and does not believe Hungary will be rescued by American muscle, whether in the form of capital or in the form of tanks. In June 1987 he collaborated on a "social contract," published in *Beszélő,* advocating worker self-management along with an expanded private economy. The *Beszélő* group recognized that one-party rule is a given. But "in the middle of an economic crisis," Kőszeg has written, "society can force the power structure to make certain concessions." The "social contract" advocated constraints on central power, in the form of constitutional checks on party rule and on the Central Committee's powers; it also called for a sovereign national assembly, referenda, freedom of information, freedom of the press, freedom of association, various forms of legal protections, and so on. There are other oppositionists who think *Beszélő* is naive about what Communist power can be forced to concede. Kőszeg strikes me as the sort of realist who

strives to stretch the limits of the possible. He speaks respectfully of Tibor Pákh. There is no ideological means test for the intellectuals' opposition. There are few enough oppositionists, and political arguments go on incessantly, if inconclusively; but, when it comes to action, federation counts most of all. The Polish opposition is not only far bigger than the Hungarian one, but, I am told, far more disputatious, programmatic, and ideologically sophisticated.

3.

The Hungarians take us in stride. Protest and friendly Western busybodies are nothing new for them. While Kőszeg, Erdei, and Pákh are speaking with us, the other fasters go about their business; the phone rings constantly (friends, Western sympathizers, Radio Free Europe, the *Los Angeles Times*), the TV is on, and no one seems obsessed or terrified by the police camera hidden clumsily behind a curtain across the street. The scene reminds me of a SNCC freedom house or an SDS community organizing staff apartment in the sixties. The Hungarians are matter-of-fact pros.

The mood is manic-depressive—one minute everything seems possible; the next, the future shuts down.

But the eight Rumanian refugees who arrive to show solidarity with the hunger strikers seem to come from another world. They burn. They want to speak to the Americans. They compose themselves into a tableau, two rows, facing us. While two of them answer my questions—a woman in English, a man in German—the others search our faces with searing eyes. In the face of this urgency, I can't help thinking of the wide-eyed refugee in *Casablanca* ("Monsieur, I come from Bulgaria. Things are very bad there. The devil has the people by the throat.... "). Embarrassingly, I seem to need the reference point of a cultural icon of my own to assimilate the desperate note, the stripped-down language of freedom and rights, in what I'm hearing. Get off that crutch, I tell myself; this isn't 1941, there's nothing romantic about this, they're talking about dictatorship today, next door. Throughout this trip I'm learning that comparisons are a trap; they protect you from the testimony you need to see and hear.

Most of these Rumanians are ethnic Hungarians—Transylvanians whose territory was taken over by Rumania when the Hapsburg empire was dismantled after World War I. Recently, Rumanian dictator Nicolae Ceauşescu has set out "to increase agricultural output" by reducing between seven and eight thousand villages to rubble, many of them Hungarian-speaking villages—a cultural "liquidation," to use the Stalinist term, which (on top of terrible economic conditions and general repression) has sent tens of thousands of Transylvanians streaming into Hungary, mostly without papers, bribing their way, encouraged by the Hungarian regime (demagogically, some think), tolerated, granted nonpermanent permits to stay (and who knows for how long), given good press but less material help than they need. Though apparently some refugees want to stay in Hungary, these Transylvanians all fervently want to go West to what they call the "Free World" (a term I never heard a Hungarian use). They see no hope for Rumania—Ceauşescu's son, like Kim Il Sung's in North Korea, will inherit the People's Republic.

4.

Ferenc Kőszeg thinks strategically. The hunger strike is far from a desperate moral gesture; it has been timed to coincide with Prime Minister Károly Grósz's summer 1988 visit to the U.S.—a total of nine days. Grósz is all over the news; even the *International Herald Tribune* features a photo of Grósz beaming as he shakes hands with Mickey Mouse at Disneyland. The opposition loves the image. They aim to embarrass Grósz, as he hustles for American capital to rescue the sinking economy.

I am constantly aware, when I talk to people about the economy, of the pitfalls of parachute journalism. Rely on the evidence of your senses, and Budapest looks like a Western European capital—a shabby one, with slabs of stucco broken off the walls, but still very much a going concern. In the urban center, I see no slums, not one homeless person, not one beggar. Shops both rich and modest are full of goods and buyers; people look decently dressed; tourists abound (including students who can't afford Paris); hotels (Hilton, Inter-Continental, Hyatt, Ramada, and so on) are jammed for months in advance, especially around the time of the August auto races. The only line I see in the street is at an Adidas store—some exotic new item has just arrived from West Germany. Streets are clean. The trams whiz by along the waterfront in front of the air-conditioned hotels every two minutes. True, you notice plenty of inefficiency—the only woman working the change booth at the airport gabs on the phone while she swaps *forints* for dollars; the phone you call doesn't ring until the tenth or twelfth try. Questions arise: those unrepaired bullet holes in the facades of houses in good neighborhoods, are they meant to remind the population that the Russians booted the Nazis in 1945? Or the revolutionaries in 1956? Or is it simply that building supplies are scarce? I hear different stories.

But all in all, you think, this doesn't look bad. Hasn't Gorbachev said Hungary is his economic model?

If so, he'd better reconsider. The evidence of the senses doesn't speak for itself. The money changer is gabbing on the phone in her office because the waiting list for a home phone is ten or more years. (Fifty years ago, Hungary had one of the most advanced phone systems in the world.) The tram goes a couple of stops from the hotels and then stops—the track is being repaired; you have to switch to a bus. In conversations with activists or students, everyone always comes back to the topic of economic crisis. The newspapers dwell on it. The regime owes a tremendous amount of money to the West, especially to the World Bank—one of the highest per capita debts in the world. In total, the interest payments amount to almost the entire value of Hungarian exports. Western credits were injudiciously invested in shoring up obsolete, inefficient, and mismanaged industry. The bankrupt state has virtually ceased to build public housing, so the waiting list for a state apartment in Budapest is ten to fifteen years; consequently people are thrown into the private sector where—in Budapest though not everywhere—they end up paying enormous rents, and whole families often have to live in a single room. Inflation, officially 18 percent, is said to be actually running about 30 percent, and it's normal to hold two jobs. A Russian car costs more than three thousand dollars—a year and a half's salary for a tram driver or steelworker. I am told that the gypsy underclass lives in squalor, even hunger. (Its members are not seen in the city center.) The post-1956 Kádár "miracle" of consumer goods production that for twenty years kept the working class loyal, though grousing, has now worn thin, and workers are said to be simultaneously convinced that things have to change and that they can't.

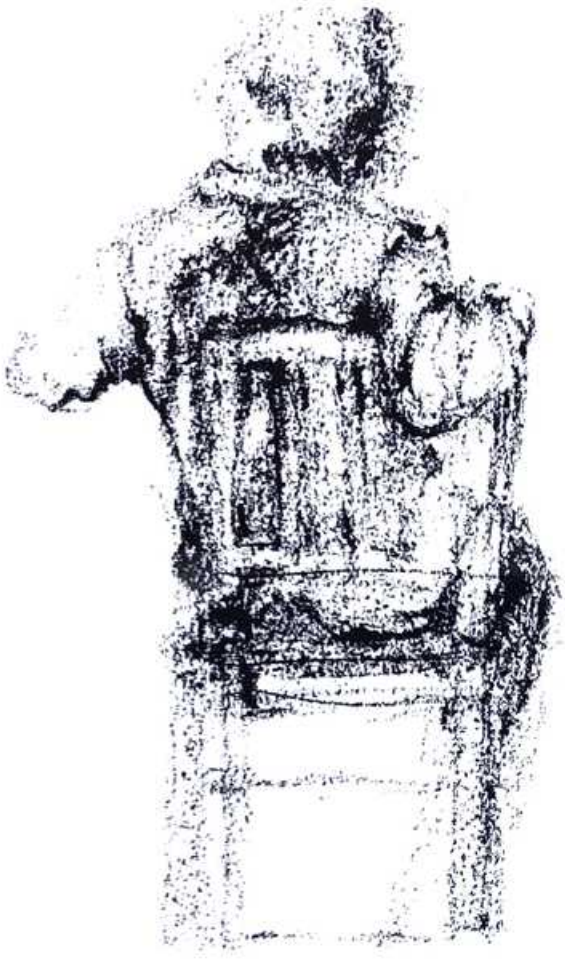
So Grósz, like any Third World strongman, is plying his way across America hoping to trade charm and freedom-loving rhetoric for dollars. Asked about the hunger strike on a plane to Sacramento, where he will try to sweet-talk California investors into joint ventures, Grósz tells the Hungarian press that "bygones should be bygones" when it comes to granting passports to those (like Pákh) convicted of political crimes stemming from 1956—although denial of passports "because of some recent conduct ... is quite another matter that is to be judged in concrete terms, in every case." More startling yet, Ferenc Kőszeg's extended statement welcoming this concession—while pointing out that the police will evidently retain their powers to discriminate during these case-by-case evaluations—is published unaltered in a Budapest daily; as the last word, in fact. The article matter-of-factly identifies Kőszeg as an editor of "the journal *Beszélő*"—no derogatories included.

From the high-ceilinged apartment, under a bare bulb, Kőszeg calls us a cab. The cab crosses the lovely, illuminated Chain Bridge—resurrected after the Nazis blew it up as they retreated in 1945—then gasps and lurches up the hill on the Buda side of the river, across from Parliament. The driver, a woman, apologizes. I wonder what it would take to federate her preoccupations with those of the intellectual opposition. Then I wonder if my question is built on anything more than a conceit: the romance of revolutionary traditions. Most opposition intellectuals have little contact with workers; they tell random anecdotes, as American intellectuals do. But they know, in the words of the *Beszélő* "social contract," that "the power structure will enter into a dialogue only if it finds that the intellectuals are not the only ones with whom it has to negotiate."

5.

The day after our first visit to the hunger strike, we are noshing on brunch in the comfortable apartment of Miklós Haraszti and Antonia Szenthe. The apartment contains wicker furniture, shelves of audiotapes, and books in Hungarian and English—it could pass for a young writer's small loft (without air-conditioning) in New York or London. Haraszti, who is forty-three and another founder and editor of *Beszélő,* is widely known in the West as the author of *The Velvet Prison: Artists under State Socialism,* a relentlessly sardonic account of how artists and intellectuals censor themselves. The book was published in the U.S. in 1987, and already, he thinks, it has been superseded by the relaxation of censorship.

The wiry, keen-eyed, boyish Haraszti slides with ease from glee to gloom, sobriety back to glee. These days, however, he leans to the more chipper side. He says that the party's problem in "post-totalitarian" (his term) Hungary is how to maintain national cohesion when ideology is dead. No one believes. Grósz, even more than party members in general, is a rank opportunist—he changed lines three times in 1956. Since Gorbachev flashed the go signal, a Stalinist restoration is no longer imaginable. "In ten years," he says, "there will be no more Communists. Already they are an endangered species." A professor at a Budapest university cautions against revolutionary expectations. Most of his students are a- or antipolitical. One of them typically concludes, "Hungary is a mistake." The buoyant Haraszti retorts that this kind of antipolitics is really "embarrassed self-mutilation." Those who sound antipolitical "know the reason they are inactive is because of fear. So they discount politics." Still, Haraszti says, reforms from above are responses to pressures from below, and the pressures are mounting. When Prime Minister Kádár



was eased upstairs in May 1988, almost all his allies went with him. After years of stagnation, things are breaking open so fast that Haraszti hopes for a democratic, as opposed to merely a liberalizing, future. Consider Parliament, opened in 1981 in an attempt to forestall Solidarity à la Poland. At first, three abstentions were what passed for intellectual independence. Now, there have at times been as many as 122 negative votes. The momentum of reforms rolls on. On the other hand, Parliament meets for only eight days a year.

Light looks especially strong to a man who's been sealed in a dark room. Haraszti was born in Jerusalem in 1945 where his Jewish Communist parents, one a skilled worker and the other a schoolteacher, had fled from the Nazis. When the Russians were installed in Budapest, his parents returned with him to the homeland. As a student he became more orthodox than the orthodox, campaigned on behalf of the Vietnamese revolution (but in a manner too "antirevisionist" for the police), and was thrown out of university for his pains. The pure communism he hurled against the regime was Maoism, which he embraced until the Sofia Youth Festival of 1968; there, amid all the lockstep delegations, he saw the Czechs of Prague Spring marching along out of step, five distinct groups carrying five different banners, and decided that this loose style was the style for him. He looked to the Western New Left, devoured American underground comics, published a satirical poem called "Che's Errors." Unable to work as the sociologist he had trained to be, twice arrested (once he resorted to a hunger strike for twenty-five days and was force-fed), he went to work in a tractor factory, and as a result of that experience he wrote a vivid, scathing book denouncing the piecework system (later published in English as *A Worker in a Worker's State*). He was promptly tried for "grave incitement" for circulating his manuscript and trying to publish it, sentenced to eight months (suspended) in prison, and forced to pay an enormous fine. He was not yet thirty.

6.

As we talk in the heat, a washing machine groans incessantly; Antonia leaves the living room/dining room/kitchen to tend to the washing machine, for in addition to her work as a brain scientist she dyes clothes for a boutique. Miklós, barred from teaching or publishing, can earn nothing but Western royalties. Antonia tells Ruth, my companion, that many Hungarian women not only work but schlepp the children by bus to child care in the morning and do the shopping after work. But (or therefore) few women are visible in the opposition; there is no feminist movement. Abortions are illegal until a woman has had three children; the only birth control available is the pill—whence the high rate of strokes among women.

7.

The phone rings. (It rings every few minutes, in fact: friends, Western intellectuals, peaceniks, visiting journalists, and so on—Haraszti is nothing if not quotable.) Somebody says to turn on the radio, since a report on the hunger strike is about to begin. The apartment fills up with excitement. There, on the "168 Hours" program, Hungary's weekend equivalent of "60 Minutes," is a big piece from the scene of the strike headquarters—another first for Kőszeg, his first substantial time on a Hungarian broadcast. Haraszti does a running translation and commentary. The reporter starts out snide, establishing his statist credentials. "This is not a real 'hunger strike,'" the reporter says, using the English words. "It's a hunger strike Hungarian style. I see very healthy people. You have cigarettes, juice [for visitors], cups of coffee . . . a picnic atmosphere. . . . You are not going through to the end. Isn't this a bit tricky?" Kőszeg says, "We don't want to ruin ourselves. It's a limited action." (Many Ghandians, of course, have short hunger strikes too.)

(Continued on p. 87)

England, Bloody England

Lesley Hazleton

Reading is the kind of town that is famous for small things. Set in the Thames Valley, halfway between London and Oxford, it was a good place to grow up—and a good place to leave. It has two major claims to fame, for anyone of a mildly literary bent. The first is that T. E. Lawrence—Lawrence of Arabia—left the entire manuscript of *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* on a bench in Reading station while the train was stopped between London and Oxford. The manuscript disappeared, and he wrote the whole book again, from scratch. This is the prototypical Reading story: the town as transit stop, the incidental location, a footnote to greatness.

Its second claim to fame is as a jail town: Oscar Wilde was imprisoned there after he was convicted for homosexuality, and that's where he wrote "The Ballad of Reading Gaol." This fact was never mentioned in Reading when I was growing up.

But Reading has a third and far older claim to fame, though it is not literary and belongs more rightly in the category of infamy. In the late thirteenth century, a certain Dominican friar named Robert of Reading delved too far into the texts in his search for truth. Not content with the Latin Bible, he studied Greek and then Hebrew, determined to go as far back as he could to the very source of his faith. From the Hebrew Bible, he graduated, it seems, to the Talmud, and then to the Kabbala, the mystical teachings of Judaism. There is no record of what kind of man he was, or what his brother friars thought of his intellectual journeys, or even where he found all these source materials. What *is* recorded is that he renounced Christianity, embraced Judaism, changed his name to Hagai, and married a Jewish wife.

It is true that Hagai of Reading does not have quite the same ring as Robert of Reading, but nevertheless that name rang loud and clear all over England at the time. So loud, in fact, that some chroniclers maintain that his conversion was the main trigger for the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290—an expulsion that would last close to four hundred years.

Other chroniclers were not so eager to sanitize history. England, after all, was the home of the blood libel. Robert of Reading's seduction into infamy merely added a minor name to a far more glorious roster—the list of boy martyrs, such as Hugh of Lincoln and William of Norwich, famed and adored for their murders by "the wicked Jewes."

The medieval imagination can never be accused of having been lacking in gory detail. The boys had been forcibly circumcised in order to become purified, their throats had been cut by a ritual slaughterer, they had been strung up by their heels and the slaughterer had held out a silver bowl to collect their blood, and then, as all good Christians of the time knew, that blood was used to make the matzos that the Jews ate for Passover. The boys had pleaded for mercy, calling on Christ to save them, and the wicked Jews had laughed at their pleas. Just as the Jews had murdered Christ, so too did they murder His saints.

The Jews, of course, were foreign. That is, they had lived in England for only a couple of hundred years. They had come following the Norman Conquest of 1066 and were part of the new European influence in this primitive isle. By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when the blood libels gathered momentum, they were double- and triple-taxed, their homes were attacked and burned, and their lives were under constant threat. Londoners celebrated Richard I's coronation in 1189 by massacring Jews. In 1278, a total of 278 Jews were hanged for clipping coin—giving short weight. Christians guilty of the same offense were merely fined. City after city expelled the Jews. When the national expulsion decree came—get out of England by All Saints' Day of the year 1290 or be killed—it must have been almost a relief.

With that decree, England distinguished itself by becoming the first European country to expel the Jews. France followed suit soon after, and, two hundred years later, so did Spain, thus putting an end to a golden age of Jewish and Moslem culture centered in the south and introducing a new dimension of darkness with the Inquisition.

None of this was common knowledge in the twentieth-century England in which I was raised. It was in none of the history books we studied at school. It was a separate history, one never covered in any books except

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Jewish ones, and then only in the most academic. Nobody ever mentioned it, Jew or non-Jew. It had a kind of underground existence that was entirely at odds with England's post–World War II idea of itself as waving the brave banner against despotism and dictatorship. When I, a precocious Jewish twelve-year-old, reading too widely for my age, discovered it, it made the ground beneath my feet seem suddenly insubstantial. The Victorian Gothic red brick of Reading's town library became abruptly cold and threatening. What had seemed solid and secure—my existence in England—became more like a shaky rope bridge over an unknown chasm.

Being the only Jew in a convent school was an education in independent thinking.

Not that the idea of expulsion was new to me. After all, people were always getting banished in history and fairy tales, though it's true that they were usually lords and knights. Legends grew around them, romantic legends of bravery and love, longing and derring-do. To be banished was in itself an honorable distinction. But expelled? The very word had none of the soft, lingering effect of banishment. You could be expelled from school—one girl in our class had been expelled for stealing—and that was the end for you. You were branded, shamed, forced out of the secure world into a world where no good school would want you.

And to expel a whole group of people not for what they'd done, but for who they were? I sat there, in the library, at a table by the history section, and stared around me at all the English faces. No, of course they wouldn't want to expel me for being Jewish, not them. That had been long ago—another time. But not another country. If I'd been born eight centuries before, I would have been expelled, simply because I was born to a Jewish mother and a Jewish father.... And the very awareness that because of my birth—something I had no control over—I could be either elevated or expelled, was stunning.

I know now that England is a country where people have always been determined by birth. That is the essence of the class system. Anti-Semitism creates an extra, outsider class, which is useful for deflecting attention from the system itself. But I didn't make the connection then; I couldn't, not at that age, not while I was still trying to be English. Besides, when you grow up in a society with an undercurrent of anti-Semitism, you take it for granted. You do your best not to notice it. It seems natural, nothing worth distinguishing. You learn, in other words, to ignore it.

Except for that one time in the library, I spent twenty years ignoring it.

Of course, the expulsion was hundreds of years ago. Ancient history, for some. So what about today? After all, there are well over a quarter of a million Jews in England today. Some of them even have knighthoods and life peerages. Things have obviously changed.

Or become more subtle.

Like the time a new English acquaintance found out that I was Jewish. "Isn't that odd," she said. "I never realized that. You don't seem at all Jewish. In fact, I've only really known one other Jew." Or when a woman in her fifties began to talk about a friend at school. They were friends for three years, until the other girl's family moved to a different town. "It was only after she'd left that I found out she was Jewish," the woman said. "Honestly, I was never aware of it. I never knew there was anything wrong with her."

As she herself would hasten to note, her words were said with the best intentions. She said them to indicate that while others might think there was something wrong with her friend—"quite a nice girl, considering"—she did not. But then, of course, she didn't *know*. And if she had?

When I was still properly English—or as proper as I ever managed to be—I would have taken her remark in good faith. You become very good at ignoring things if you're Jewish in England. "After all, why make such a *fuss* about it?" as the English say. As though millions of Jews hadn't been killed in Europe in the six years before I was born.

To "make a fuss about it" betrays, of course, a lack of class. As one of England's top literary critics, A. Alvarez, once put it: "Being Jewish in England is not quite polite. It's rather like dropping your *h*'s when you speak."

And English Jews internalize the notion. While American Jews speak out, act out, revel in, and even flaunt their Jewishness, English Jews tend to close in, retreat, as though they were living in a constant state of repressed anxiety about it. In that sense, they are being very English—trapped in passivity, unwilling to react, rock the boat, make a *fuss*.

After all, it's only four hundred years since they were allowed back into England.

So Jews play English and remain silent. Perhaps it took an American to see this phenomenon and give voice to it. And perhaps it was inevitable that this American be Philip Roth, the master of problematic Jewishness. Whatever—the closing section of his prize-winning novel *The Counterlife* is not fiction, but superb reportage. To read it was to remember all the things I

had heard, and yet not heard, during all the years that I lived in England.

Being Jewish, says Zuckerman's English wife in the novel, "is something they ought to have dropped because it's very boring, their being so Jewish about it." She adds: "It is common parlance—and not necessarily anti-Semitic—for people to say 'Oh, such-and-such is frightfully Jewish...'"

I was Zuckerman and Zuckerman's wife at the same time. Deceived by my blond hair and Anglicized name, the English sometimes invited me into the general assumption: "They do get up your nose, though, don't they? They're so bloody sensitive about it...." And on discovering that I too am Jewish, they inevitably fall back on the old saw: "I once had a very close friend who was a Jew, you know..."

Yes, I want to reply, and I once had a pet white rabbit. But I don't say it—not in England. After all, one doesn't want to be rude. That wouldn't be playing the game.

In *The Counterlife,* Nathan Zuckerman, as is his habit, puts his finger on the matter. Under assault from open Jew-baiters in a restaurant, and from his more insidious Jew-baiting in-laws, he sees "a deep, insidious Establishment anti-Semitism that is latent and pervasive but that, among the mild, well-brought-up, generally self-concealing English, only the occasional misfit actually comes out with." Which is what makes it so difficult to counter.

"How enraging," thinks Zuckerman, "to blunder smilingly into people who want no part of you."

This type of elusive, slippery, insidious anti-Semitism makes you long, ironically, for the plain old outspoken rabid sort, which one could easily identify and counter-attack. Sometimes British anti-Semitism manifests itself in the one revealing statement slipping out of a well-bred, sophisticated intellectual. Other times it's what Roth calls "the peculiarly immoderate, un-Englishmanlike Israel-loathing" that comes out at a dinner party at the mention of the conflict in the Middle East. Most of the time it's just a slight sneer, a curl of the lip, as otherwise innocuous words take on a twist and a snap....

If you pay attention to it, it can drive you quite mad with frustration and rage. Which is why most English Jews don't.

* * *

The powers of denial are rich and wondrous. I was the only Jew in a convent school, and, so far as I remember, I experienced no anti-Semitism there. Yes, of course the Jews killed Christ, but it was made clear that I was not held responsible. People in school were very generous about my being Jewish, as though I were being forgiven for it. Since I was being as English as I knew how at the time, I took this attitude in good faith. I was "the, uh ... the *Hebrew* girl" to the nuns, who did their best to convert me until my parents got wind of it and put a stop to that.

You have to be English to understand why I, a Jew, was sent to a convent school. Reading was a small town, still beyond the commuting periphery of London at that time. It had two "good" schools for girls at a time when all "good" education in England was still sex-segregated. One was the Abbey, which took only Church of England pupils. No Catholics, no Jews. The other was the Convent, which took a considerable number of Anglican pupils so that it could get supplementary government funding, and which was happy to take a Jew. There was always the chance of converting me.

Being the only Jew in a convent school was an education in independent thinking. That is, an education in outsiderness. I was the one who stood while all the others knelt twice a day in prayer assembly. The one who came to school with strange and exotic foods during Passover. The one who got Jewish holidays off, as well as Catholic ones. The one who was different.

For lack of a better option, I learned to dramatize this difference, using it to my advantage. I asked awkward questions in religion classes, to everyone's delight except that of the teacher. I resolved religious disputes between other pupils since I, the outsider, was clearly more objective. I used my being an outsider and at the same time I covered it up, trying to be "one of the girls" and wondering why I never quite fit.

If there were any discussions in school of Fagin or Shylock, I don't remember them. I do remember concentrating on "Do we not bleed" to the exclusion of the rest of Shylock's role in *The Merchant of Venice,* and I skipped over *Oliver Twist,* looking for other, less unsettling Dickens novels. In this, I was being very English, practicing the art of selective attention. It never occurred to me that there was no English Bernard Malamud, no Philip Roth, no Saul Bellow or Chaim Potok, no Jews who wrote about Jewish life. If there had been, I wouldn't have wanted to know. Being Jewish was something to be played down, not written about. There was enough about Jews already in English literature.

It was left to George Orwell, writing in 1945, the year I was born, to point out "a perceptible anti-Semitic strain in English literature from Chaucer onwards." In fact, he said, anti-Semitism in England "has always been pretty widespread." Beyond the obvious Jew-baiting of Ezra Pound, Hilaire Belloc, and Gilbert Chesterton (for whom Jews "tended to be" either traitors or tyrants), Orwell also fingered Shakespeare, William Thackeray, G. B. Shaw, H. G. Wells, T. S. Eliot, and Aldous Huxley. Since Orwell was not Jewish, nobody could

accuse him of being "oversensitive." Instead, his essay on English anti-Semitism was simply ignored. Again, that fine art of selective attention.

* * *

I made no fuss the time I was nearly expelled from school. When I raised my hand to ask Sister Dymphna why we couldn't study the reproductive system of the rabbit, was I trying for escape even then?

Escape from boredom, certainly. My rabbit was splayed obscenely open in front of me, legs pegged to the four corners of a tray. It was a sorry symphony of grey and white.

Sister Dymphna, the biology teacher, loomed massively over all of us. She had, I now realize, a severe thyroid problem, which meant that, already tall, she was also huge, with triple chins that shook when she spoke, hairs sprouting at odd angles from her face, and a smell very much like that of peas run to seed and sprouted. And, for the fourth week running, she had assigned us the alimentary canal of the rabbit.

I knew all I ever wanted to know about the alimentary canal of the rabbit. I could trace the progress of food from mouth to esophagus, down the gullet to the stomach, past the biological stations of the cross—pancreas, liver, kidneys, small intestine, large intestine, rectum, and ... out. The word "anus" was not used in the convent.

The other girls had neatly picked their cadavers apart, with each detail laid along the side of the tray and labeled for inspection. They were making their rabbits into diagrams. I had made mine into a mass of slush. I raised my hand and asked my question.

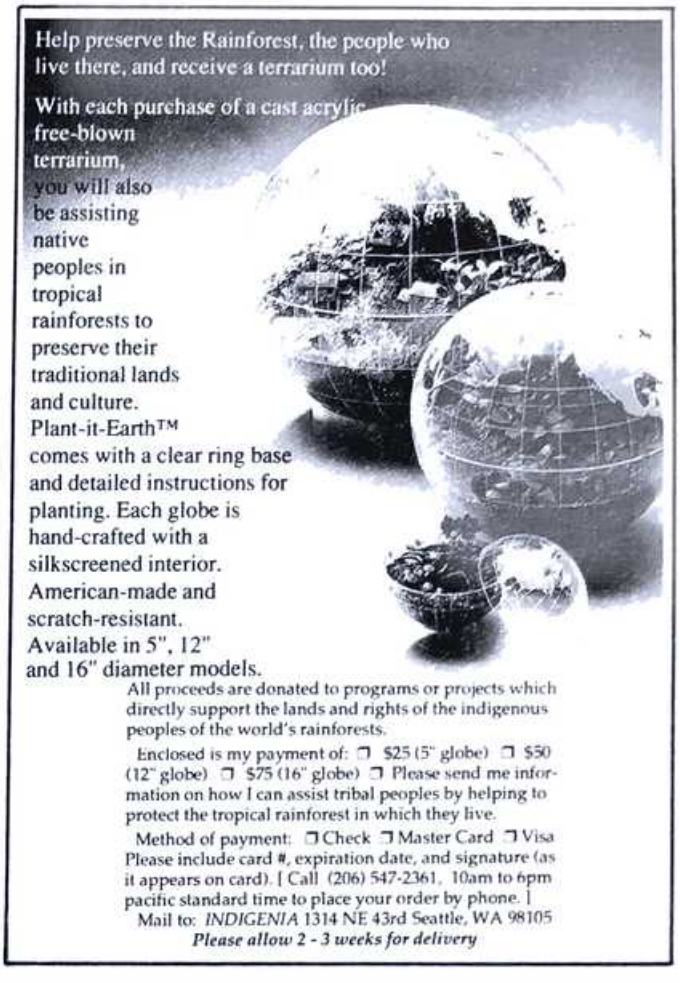
There was silence. A long silence. In it, I had time to wonder where that question had come from. I hadn't prepared it. It had just come out. At fourteen, I cared as little about the reproduction of the rabbit as I did about its digestion.

"Stand up, girl."

The accused must stand in the dock for sentencing. The mannish voice trembled under the weight of this awful circumstance.

"You are an evil girl," said Dymphna, voice heavy with portentousness. "An evil girl." She paused, waiting for the full impact of those words to take effect. "You know that this is a convent and that we cannot teach such things here. Come up to the front of the class."

I walked up to the spot she indicated with her finger, just in front of her. She towered over me. And, as I stood there, she seemed to expand, like a hot-air balloon. The bigger she got, the redder her face became, until it seemed as though she would explode from the force of it and die in a burst of spontaneous combustion like



Mr. Krook in Dickens's *Bleak House,* leaving only an evil-smelling viscous ooze spread over the floor.

My knees shook, just as books said they do when someone is terrified. Dymphna took one more deep breath, became as big and as red as it seemed she could possibly become without exploding, and uttered her judgment:

"Until this day, I considered you a poor unfortunate pagan, one whose soul might yet be saved, one of those unfortunate millions bound for the emptiness of Limbo unless they could see the light. But now I know the truth. You have had a chance to see the light. You have had ample chance. We have done all we could for you in this school. And still you have rejected it. You have knowingly rejected it. If it were out of ignorance, you would go to Limbo, along with all those other unfortunate souls. But in your case, it is Evil that has led you to reject the light. And this means that you are condemned to Eternal Hell. Yes, for this you will go to Hell."

To hell? To fires and pitchforks and tortures? To the eternally damned and hopeless? In that case, I reasoned, there was nothing more to lose. And, knowing that, though I was still cowed by the sheer immensity of her, I suddenly found the courage of the insulted.

I stood straighter, looked into that beet-red face, and, even as I said the words, I was amazed at the very



fact that I was saying them:

"If I go to Hell, Sister, then I will meet you there."

There was a faint gasp of shock from the class behind me. A look of stunned amazement on Dymphna's face. A moment when everything seemed frozen, as though she and I were about to be transported in a flash to her Hell, there to continue our confrontation. I saw us surrounded by flames. Red and orange and gold and purple flickered over our faces as our ears filled with the screams of the damned. And I was content. So long as she was there too, I was content.

A huge hand reached out and grabbed me by the back of my collar, practically lifting me off my feet. I was dragged out of the classroom, feet scrambling to keep more or less upright. I'd never realized how strong she was. She dragged me up the wooden stairs from the biology lab, along the green linoleum of the narrow upstairs corridor, down the wooden stairs by the assembly hall, along the green linoleum of another narrow corridor, up another flight of wooden stairs, and along the final wide corridor leading to the Holy of Holies at the end: the headmistress's study.

I fought and scrambled and struggled and kicked. I scratched and clawed. I would have bitten were the idea of biting into that mass of flesh not so revolting. But Dymphna kept her hold on me and burst straight through the door.

The headmistress bolted upright from her desk, her face even whiter than usual. How could anyone—anyone at all—burst into her room like this, without knocking? She surveyed the scene—Dymphna swollen and red with anger, myself disheveled and out of breath—with obvious distaste.

"And what is the meaning of this?" the headmistress said, all dignity in the face of emotion run riot. "Sister Dymphna, kindly release that girl. Stand up straight, girl. Tidy yourself. Now, an explanation, if you please."

Dymphna poured out her tale of woe. I barely took in what she was saying. I'd been in this room only once before, when the headmistress had smilingly assured my parents that the convent would not only do its utmost to give me the best of educations, but would also of course respect children from other faiths. The smile had seemed false then, the woman grim and unyielding behind the smile. She looked far grimmer now. "I presume you understand that there is no possibility of your remaining in this school after this shameful display. Never, in all my years of teaching, have I heard of such disrespect. I will not even consider the larger issues of heresy and evil. There is no need. You will be expelled from this school."

No way. I wanted revenge, and, to achieve revenge, I had to stay. I wanted, above all, to be justified.

"In that case, Sister, I shall have to tell my parents exactly what Sister Dymphna said to me."

A stunned silence. I pressed my advantage: "I'm sure they would tell a lot of other people. And soon the whole town would know that a nun in this convent told a Jewish girl that she was a pagan and was going to hell."

Dymphna's black mass shook as she sputtered, groping for words that were beyond her. The headmistress flushed; it was quick, a faint tinge of pink in the cheeks and on the forehead, but enough. She took a deep breath and turned, looking out the window at the redbrick building that housed the laboratory. Her hands were clasped tightly behind her back, knuckles white with tension.

Dymphna was sent back to the class. I was asked to sit down. Of course I understood that Sister Dymphna was under tremendous pressure. That teaching was a very demanding profession. That we all say things we don't mean on occasion. That of course there was no question of my leaving the school. So long as I wished to stay, they would be delighted. A good student like myself....

I played the game and accepted her terms, knowing as I did so that this was a Pyrrhic victory. I'd heard that victory was sweet, but this one wasn't. It couldn't be. Even the largest victories over prejudice never are, let alone the ones so small that they have to be won by children. □

Criticism and Restitution

Geoffrey Hartman

For most people literary criticism is something of a mystery. They hear of the latest turbulence in those skies: that deconstruction, for example, is shaking things up, and has been claimed by a faction in the law schools or by an eccentric group of architects. Or, a new battle of the books makes it into the Sunday *New York Times Magazine,* after conferences at Yale and Princeton on the "canon" and a big curriculum fight at Stanford. What it adds up to is not easy to explain.

Critics face, on the one hand, a simple, down-to-earth task: books must be reviewed, courses must be taught. At a time when shelves are filling up, when a greater and greater number of subjects are competing for prestige and attention, decisions have to be made not only about what to study, but about what every educated person, irrespective of profession or specialization, should know. Can we prescribe a "core" list that might contain, at least talismanically, what should be read by all? Are there books that could be shared by everyone, when even the Bible, today, is no longer the passion or obligation of every person?

On the other hand, the issues debated by literary critics are far from down-to-earth, because they involve not particular books but *how to read them.* The point is made that it was less the Bible as such, or the Classics as such, that inspired or oppressed, than did a certain kind of reading, an enforced mode of interpretation sanctioned by a religious, cultural, or political elite. This elite not only chose the books to be read, but limited the way they could be understood. Once we shift the emphasis from books to the mode of their interpretation, however, we cross into an uncertain and disputatious country.

The distinction between a canon of books and modes of reading is not absolute. New books have the power to change habits of reading; they not only follow but create methods of study. Our ideas about artistic greatness, and certainly about the English language, are influenced by Shakespeare. And, obversely, a hermeneutic discovery like Freud's can stimulate a new type of representation: psychoanalysis gradually changes the way we depict character, describe what goes on, and record what we dream. Hitchcock's *Psycho* can serve as a popular emblem of that change. That there is an interaction between reading and representation simply increases the difficulty of identifying the one reading list everyone should consult.

Not that literary criticism—the formal study of books *and* methods of interpretation—can bring order out of chaos. Criticism is often part of the problem rather than the solution. Indeed, skeptics say that whatever the pretension of critics who promote new readings or renew older ones, critics remain in the service of a dominant ideology, even if it is as uncomplicated as consumerism. From this perspective, literary criticism is not an independent science or field of study, but a by-product of the culture—surplus verbal and cerebral energy that leaks from the art of the period and has to be blotted like excess ink.

A more flattering view is that literary study, as it reviews and sometimes creates methods of reading, enters the cultural scene as an authoritative voice rather than as a dubious by-product. Books, films, and paintings require an interpretive field to sustain themselves, and then to become traditionary: to survive beyond a "generation," "decade," or "movement." Art does not have its axis of influence only in itself; a certain type of reading may have contributed to its formation, and certain habits of interpretation facilitate its reception. Culture depends on this interaction of the "primary" text (scripture or artifact) with the "secondary" text (the work of reading that edits, interprets, mediates).

In the last hundred years there has been an accelerated historical shift from art to sophisticated theories of art, sometimes even abetted by the artists themselves. Mallarmé's poetics are couched in a prose as subtle as the diction of his poems: at once self-advertisements and adventures, his pronouncements have their own curious and in-wrought integrity. Authors begin to market their very nonconformity: they take back what they feel was alienated from them by theorists and critics. The aesthetic imperative of a Mallarmé, Proust, Rilke, or Stevens

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acknowledges that a prosaic world, a tide of opinion and theory, is threatening to overwhelm or dilute art; and these writers seek to preempt or transform that world with their own, highly self-conscious practice.

The astute critic does not automatically take the side of art against the tide of conversation, gossip, or commentary elevated into theory. The reason is twofold. First, the fetishized artwork may be as damaging to cultural life as overelaborated criticism. Second, for culture to be participatory, artworks must circulate, not only by passing from private houses to public museums, but also by being widely thought about, talked about. There may be a greatness *not* in being monumental but in disappearing into the stream of life, the stream of language. I don't quite believe that myself: the real harm, I think, is done not by monumentalism, or haunting ideas of greatness, but by a hierarchical prejudice that holds that creativeness can be achieved only in certain genres, to which other genres are subordinate. In theocracies or totalitarian regimes, both art and criticism serve; in the epoch often called modernism, criticism serves art. A dichotomy reestablishes itself in modernism, with great art idolized despite, or perhaps because of, the skepticism of the age.

I am often identified with a position that urges a "creative criticism," but that position does not entail a confusion of art and critical essay, or a reversal of values. Rather, I just don't think we can restrict the locus of creativity. A critical essay, a legal opinion, an interpretation of scripture, or a biography can be as inspiring and nurturing as a poem, story, or painting. The prejudice that separates the creative from the interpretive is a reaction to the fear that the creative impulse in culture is being swamped by institutional or commercial forces. The wildest paradox in this attitude is that criticism, though placed on the side of institutionalization, often allies itself with the new or the popular: both criticism and innovation are outsiders, and usually a wave of art, sophisticated or demotic, breaks in together with upstart critical ideas.

Yet can that anxiety about an atrophying creative genius be dispelled? Some such fear runs deep in every age. Today it fixes on criticism, because criticism really is a force to contend with. A culture of criticism is developing—one that inspires as well as depresses, one that breaks down media and genres in favor of "discourses." Yet our problem is not, I think, hypercriticism or commercialism, or even the burden of the past in the form of institutionalized Western classics. It is a strange inertia in our progressive thinking.

The heroes of a previous generation, modernists such as Flaubert, Proust, Mann, Henry James, Joyce, Wolfe, Yeats, and Lorca, fostered an art-ideology. They attacked bourgeois values rather than the concept of the Great Book or Masterpiece. The work of art became, if anything, more of a sacrificial idol. Have we really jettisoned the modernist art-ideology? Doesn't it keep sticking to us, even in this "postmodern" era?

The problem I discern is the spread of that diluted modernist ideology to every text used as a wedge to "open the canon." Though postmodernism seems to assert the opposite by deprivileging the acknowledged work of art, it may simply be privileging the yet-unacknowledged work. The very notion of criticism is threatened by a proliferation of "significant" or "representative" works, not just by a proliferation of theories. Critical judgment, which had been austere and exclusive—in theory, if not always in fact—is asked to be compensatory and restitutive. The vitality, but also the confusion, of literary studies reflects this double burden: multiplying theories of reading, multiplying works that claim a share of greatness.

To confess "where one is coming from" is no longer a form of modesty but a required affirmation.

To question, as I have done, the prejudice that keeps criticism out of the literary system does not help either the canonizers (the art-ideologists) or the decanonizers. It presents, rather, a conundrum, and it challenges an inside-outside or hierarchical way of thinking. Criticism has its own strength; even commentary, as French anthropologist Dan Sperber points out, does not disappear into the code or scripture it interprets, but must itself be interpreted. A salient example of this is the Jewish Oral Law, the Talmud, and adjacent compilations called midrash. They cannot be reduced to a purely exegetical function. They extend or reenvision the original, the "primary" text.

Midrash, in fact, has always been exemplary for me. I am intrigued by its liberty and autonomy as well as by its strict adherence to prooftexts. My interest did not start in the 1980s: I tried to develop a secular parallel in earlier essays. In *Beyond Formalism* I wrote:

> Great exegetes . . . have always, at some point, swerved from the literal sense of the text. This text, like the world, was a prison for Rabbinic, Patristic, or Neoplatonic interpreters, yet by their hermeneutic act the prison opened into a palace and the extremes of man's dependence and of his capacity for vision came simultaneously into view. I feel the poverty of our textual imaginations compared to theirs. The very idea of interpretation seems to have shrunk.

Anthropologists, more skilled in the devious relation of code (which can be a corpus of stories) to interpretation, especially in oral cultures, may have some sympathy with what I am saying.

I do not argue that there has been no advance, but that with advance comes loss or disregard. We live among restitutions, yet the rabbinic mode of reading (or religious exegesis in general) is still disregarded by most secular critics. My plea is not for midrash as such, but for an enrichment or even a reconstitution of the literary-critical field. If there is a symbiosis between a discipline and what it seeks to recover, it might be said that criticism today is engaged in a project of *self-restitution:* that midrash is more important for literary criticism than the latter is for midrash. By including midrash, criticism would exercise its power to revalue an alienated practice, and it would enlarge itself at the same time.

When we look across the entire expanse of literary history, we find many moments of revaluation and recovery. The greatest of these may have been the Renaissance. Despite the fact that Europe remained Christian, it brought back a repressed heritage, the pagan classics. By an artistic amalgamation that we are still trying to fathom, religiously alien forms blossomed again, fusing with a Christian content. A Jewish medieval tradition, similarly, is only now being retrieved for the nonorthodox world. We have something to learn from a religious culture in which the creative energies went almost totally into commentary and the same basic method of reading was used for law (halakha) and lore (aggada). But while a lost masterpiece, once recovered, is like an *objet trouvé,* a neglected tradition requires decades of research and absorption. In an era of restitution, midrash still needs finding: as a cultural achievement, as a work of the social imagination, and as a distinctive mode of reading.

What is all this talk about midrash? You're supposed to be a deconstructionist! Well, there was life before, and there is life after, Derrida. The foolishness of labeling aside (about which deconstruction has things to say), the problem facing us is that this age of restitution is also an age of resentment. There is no end to the demand for "identity," as something available to groups or individuals yet denied them by the social order. The new emphasis on identity is like a rash left by movements that have rigorously questioned it in philosophy, fiction, and social thought. We seem to be passing from exquisite scruples about the "question of the subject" to a creedal insistence on the "subject position." To confess "where one is coming from" is no longer a form of modesty but a required affirmation.

Something about this flight *to* identity is visionary:

> All Human Forms identified, even Tree Metal Earth and Stone, all
> Human forms identified, living going forth and returning wearied,
> Into the Planetary lives of Years Months Days and Hours, reposing
> And then Awakening into his Bosom in the Life of Immortality
>
> William Blake, *Jerusalem*

Restitutive criticism has absorbed this type of liberation theology. Its secular career began with historicism's "resurrection of the past." The massive research inspired by historicism showed how little we knew of other cultures and how much in our own culture had been marginalized and suppressed. When J. G. Herder, a German philosopher only somewhat older than Blake, characterized the neglected poetry of ancient peoples as "voices," the metaphor was just: it indicated an oral source that was effaced by print culture, and it pointed to something that *cried out* to be heard.

Yet this Philomela project (the restoration of voice to mute classes of people) has had a strange result. Retrieval of the past has produced a conspicuous increase of guilt-feelings about culture as such. This guilt operates both at the level of intellectual consciousness, as we become aware of how much overhead (Nietzsche called it culture-debt) we must carry along, and at the level of moral consciousness, because history is no longer seen as the story of liberty, of progressive emancipation, but rather of denial, censorship, repression. What can be said for a civilization that exploits its poor, prosecutes bloody wars, and invents genocide? The philosophy of history—the attempt to find a meaningful, progressive pattern in the passing of time—is a dying discipline because a quickened sense of social justice does not allow us to forget realities discounted by previous generations. History, it appears, was always written from the perspective of the conquerors. ("What were the conquerors but the great butchers of mankind?" Locke observed.) Contemporary historical research has become, especially in literary circles, a sort of protest against history: the use of the past to incriminate both past and present.

Walter Benjamin saw that the Renaissance model of restitution was flawed: it merely joined Roman triumphalism to Christianity. Though we are moved by the sheer magnificence of the monuments this combination produced, Benjamin was right to charge that such achievements may be tainted by barbarity. Are they not built on the blood and sweat of anonymous masses, on victims whose history is ignored? The New Historicism wishes to recover that history (primarily the story of everyday life), and in the process to restore the "material

base" of art. It too, however, faces the problem that the material base has largely vanished, and that the process of restitution (of righting wrongs) seems endless.

The task remains visionary insofar as a voice must be given to the anonymous, even if there is no voice. We can retrieve, for instance, only a portion of women's experience; the rest has disappeared, or lost its gender-specific aspect. The black experience too can be reanimated only in part. The archives yield something, in the form of letters, unpublished efforts, legal depositions. Great novels or dramas also yield something, when imbued with the vernacular energy of a Rabelais, Cervantes, or Shakespeare—or their modern equivalents. Yet historians or critics must often construct a legal fiction—invent, that is, a persona for absent presences.

What, finally, of deconstruction in relation to this protest criticism with its visionary program? Though deconstruction seems negative rather than affirmative in its posture—compared to a curricular politics that *represents* minority interests against the canon—it did set in motion a close questioning of concepts of privilege. Nourished by sources in philosophy and semiotics, it dismantled such essentialist values as origin (genealogy), intent (original intent), and identity (nature) through a study of the temporal aspect of human existence (how our truths remain contingent, how we are never present or transparent to ourselves) and a method of reading that showed an irresolvable doubleness in language. There is the drive of language toward unmediated expression or sheer transparency of thought, which could make words superconductive. (Think of merging telepathy and telecommunications, or of a universal sign-system to overcome the babel of tongues.) But there is also the historical and analytic fact that every language is a system of differences, one that defers even while it anticipates meaning—"Success in circuit lies" (Emily Dickinson). In deconstruction the emphasis on difference rather than identity is not essentialized. The challenge becomes how to support Third World writing, say, or the "minor" literatures, without counteridentifying them so strongly that we reinstate once again the contested notion of privilege as well as essentialist—and at worst, racialist—slogans that have bedeviled an era of catastrophic nationalism.

Perhaps only one thing is certain after such movements as deconstruction or the Frankfurt School ("Critical Theory"). Essentialists are instrumentalists in disguise—that is, they present practical or culture-bound ends as universals—and instrumentalized reading has been the norm. Yes, we hunger to engage literature, morally and politically; we want to escape Georg Lúkacs's contempt for the Western intellectual's "permanent carnival of fetishized interiority." But this goal can't be achieved by turning up the volume of moralistic pronouncements through affirmations (denunciations) that act as the equivalent of loyalty tests. Today the entire landscape of moral philosophy is in motion, shaken by events that hardly seem related to questions of language but that are not separable from an inveterate pattern of verbal abuse that has come to light.

Contemporary historical research has become, especially in literary circles, a sort of protest against history: the use of the past to incriminate both past and present.

Restitutive criticism is an important development and needs serious debate. It is something old rather than new, and it is still a sharp turn on society's path toward the recognition of collective as well as individual rights and talents. The classic analysis of recognition in a situation of social inequality is by Hegel: a famous section of his *Phenomenology of Mind* traces the arousal of consciousness between master and bondsman as they grow aware of their interdependence. Recognition is the key rather than restitution, though restitution is often the acknowledgment of an achieved recognition. The end is not righting wrongs as such (there may be several rights in conflict), nor is it a reversal (which serves a retributive rather than a restitutive end); it is a new sense of respect that is spiritually as well as politically effective.

Turning from political philosophy to literature, we ought to recall the recent emergence of oral history. Popular traditions challenge as well as inspire high culture; they question the confusion of art with ideas of order and unity by revealing the heterogeneous and often folkloric elements of canonized books such as Homer and the Bible. Literature grows from traditions rather than tradition, as the ballad collectors knew, and literary criticism is restitutive by helping to honor such sources. The Philomela project might even rediscover the Oral Law and bring it into the mainstream of our culture, because the Talmud, which comes out of the formative period of rabbinic Judaism, is a vernacular encyclopedia despite its legal and patriarchal orientation. It is imaginative, diversified, many-voiced, and totally unembarrassed about the everyday life it seeks to encompass. □

My Last Chicken

Sol Warkov

Yesterday I bought a whole chicken
Not the package of pieces I always buy
A fresh whole chicken with everything there
except head and feathers.
When I washed it under the tap
It looked like a baby bathing on its back
Knees joggling against belly
Chuckling from tickles under its wingpits.
I felt like handing it over to its mother.

It was too late for that
I didn't want to eat it but I had to.

I figure I've eaten from the bodies of 4,131 chickens.

Chickens are born one by one.
They yearn for the caring of their mother
who would like to care for them perfectly.
They walk with difficulty at first.
Later, they try to fly but cannot.
They want a good meal and a good night's sleep.
Gather among others like themselves.
Want to be on top of the heap.
Must take a specialized job.
Take medicine.
Go crazy under too much strain.
Produce or die.
If their language were English instead of Chicken
I guess they'd tell us they wish their world
could be different
That they too have an unclear spiritual life
And hope for a peaceful death.
They probably don't care what happens to their body
after they die.

I know I don't.
If someone wants to cut off my head and pluck
the hairs from my chest
They have my blessing.

If you want to drag my organs out through
my butt, throw some to the dogs
wrap the rest in wax-paper and
stick that back in

Go right ahead.
If you wash me under the tap
And bake me at 350 degrees for eight or nine hours
That's fine with me. Garlic is nice.
Eat me all at once or piece by piece over a few days
More power to you.
Crack my bones and suck out my marrow
O.K.
Toss out the remains
O.K.

But just don't even dream of saying
It never knew the difference anyway
Between good times and bad times.
Just don't say
Its life was not its gift
And its treasure.

I figure I've eaten from the bodies of 4,131 of them.
I'll probably eat dead bodies again
Because that's how it goes.
When I do I'll probably
When I remember
Say a prayer for both of us:

God of gods
I am grateful for this sacrifice
Guide my use of this power.

God of gods
I am frightened by this sacrifice
Guide my use of this power.

God of gods
I take this sacrifice with a joyful heart
Guide my use of this power.

Sol Warkov is a poet and certified rolfer who lives in Minneapolis.

Soviet Jewish Emigration: Time for a New American Policy?

Robert Cullen

George Bush may believe his campaign statement that the Iron Curtain still stands, just a bit rusted. But the figures from this autumn say otherwise. In September, 2,051 Soviet Jews, 4,941 Soviet Germans, and 1,512 Soviet Armenians received permission to emigrate—which continued the steady upward trend in Soviet emigration that began in 1987. Thousands more received visas to visit relatives and friends in the West. The Soviets claim that more than 98 percent of all emigration applications are being approved; the State Department's estimate, a little more conservative, is 95 percent. There are still, to be sure, refuseniks. People wishing to travel abroad must still obtain a reference from their local party committee. But the number of refuseniks has declined from eleven thousand in 1986 to perhaps two to three thousand today. Moreover, the Soviets are preparing a new emigration law that, they promise, will codify the standards for denial of an emigration visa. The Soviet Union still does not comply with the simple standard of the UN Declaration on Human Rights by permitting Soviet citizens to enter and leave their country at will, but it is closer to that ideal than it has ever been before.

How should the United States respond? More to the point, how should American Jews respond? The questions are nearly identical. The Reagan administration long ago tacitly let American Jewish organizations ensure the linkage of Soviet emigration policy to American-Soviet trade policy. The Bush administration is likely to do the same thing. Since early 1988 the State Department's Soviet affairs experts have generally felt that the improvement in Soviet emigration performance warranted some kind of positive American gesture on trade. But in private they are blunt, saying that they will not "get out [in] front of the Jewish community." If the State Department were to take the lead in advocating such a positive gesture, only to be beaten by the combined reaction of American Jewry and the right wing, it would just enhance its undeserved reputation for being wimpy with the communists and would damage its credibility both in Moscow and Washington. Therefore, nothing will happen until and unless the American Jewish community decides that it should.

For fifteen years the organized Jewish community and the American right have made common cause in defending the complex of barriers to Soviet-American trade that was erected in the 1970s—particularly the Jackson-Vanik Amendment of 1974. (Jackson-Vanik denies normal tariff rates to the Soviets unless they allow free emigration.) Organized Jewry and the right defend these barriers for different reasons, however.

The right argues that trade with the United States will only help the Soviets escape the consequences of their own economic stupidity. Either under Mikhail Gorbachev or under some future leader, trade will make the Soviets a more technologically sophisticated and dangerous adversary, the rightists argue. These rightists used to like to quote Lenin's statement that "the capitalists will sell us the rope we will use to hang them," until it became clear that Lenin never said that.

It is impossible to refute this argument with absolute certainty because it is impossible to predict with absolute certainty what the Soviet Union will be like twenty years from now. But it is possible to make some judgments based on the past and present. Soviet politics, for sixty-odd years, has been dominated by a debate between two tendencies within the Communist party. Most of the time, Stalinism has dominated this struggle. Stalinists tend to have a suspicious, deeply ideological view of the world. Some are Slavic chauvinists. They gobble up small countries on the Soviet periphery, they regard emigration as tantamount to treason, and they brutally suppress the other tendency—represented today by Gorbachev's inchoate democratic socialism. The Gorbachev tendency, by contrast, favors opening up the country to the West. Some exemplars of this tendency, like Andrei Sakharov, speak of eventually combining the economic equality of socialism and the political liberties of Western capitalism. Advocates of this tendency see political dissent, freedom of movement, and respect for human rights as prerequisites of a modern society. The American right's argument against trade implies that there might be a

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third tendency—that if Gorbachev's groping toward democratic socialism fails, the Soviets will throw up their hands, abandon communism, and apply for membership in the Common Market. But history suggests that the only alternative to Gorbachev is Stalinism. If trade with the West helps Gorbachev succeed, that's a strong argument for trade.

Advocates of Soviet Jewry defend the trade barriers on another ground. They argue that if the Soviets get what they want in terms of trade, they will lose their incentive to permit emigration. The record suggests otherwise. The Jackson-Vanik Amendment, like most trade sanctions, was most successful as a threat, before it was enacted. Immediately after it became law, Jewish emigration fell. Since that time emigration has risen when Soviet-American relations are generally positive and fallen when they are not. In fact, the record suggests that the first priority of the Soviet Jewry movement ought to be the advocacy of arms control agreements. Every period of high Jewish emigration has coincided with a period of progress toward arms control treaties. As far as economic incentives are concerned, there is no doubt that the Soviets would like the Jackson-Vanik Amendment repealed. Gorbachev said as much to President Reagan at their summit meeting in Moscow. But there is no evidence that the Soviets will jump through the hoop that the amendment requires: giving Washington explicit assurances that they will do America's bidding on emigration in return for lower U.S. tariffs. On the contrary, the evidence suggests that the Soviets respond best to more subtle incentives. West Germany always raises the human rights issue in its meetings with the Soviets, but the Germans never link credits or trade with the emigration rate of the Soviets' German-speaking minority. This is the strategy that Henry Kissinger wanted to use at the dawn of détente in the 1970s, but, because of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, he never could. Not coincidentally, the rate of German emigration is presently about twice that of Jewish emigration.

Of course, the Soviets will ultimately determine their emigration policy on the basis of mostly internal factors. From their own statements and writings, there appear to be two arguments against freedom of emigration and one in favor of it. Stalinists see emigration as tantamount to treason, and Stalinists and non-Stalinists alike agree that emigration threatens the Soviet Union with a serious brain-drain problem: those most likely to emigrate are the ones with special skills that in the West could earn them many times their Soviet salaries.

The counterargument in favor of emigration was stated recently by Fyodor Burlatsky, one of the intellectual leaders of the *glasnost* era. "We can't afford to be an isolated society anymore," he said. If the Soviets want to keep up with modern technology, they are going to have to let their people out into the world and let the world into their country. Only after these internal factors are weighed will the Soviets consider how their emigration policy helps achieve what they seek in terms of trade and political relationships with the West. Thus, American policy cannot determine Soviet policy. But a wise American policy can probably be marginally helpful in persuading the Soviets to open their gates wide and keep them open. What is a wise policy?

America should end the presumption that anyone who can get out of the Soviet Union is, ipso facto, entitled to immediate admission to the U.S. as a political refugee.

For starters, a wise policy assures the Soviets that if their emigration performance meets certain standards, they will reap the promised trade benefits. A wise policy fights against efforts like the McClure Amendment, which was adopted by the Senate earlier this year and then killed in a conference committee, and which would have placed additional demands upon the Soviets before they could attain normal tariffs. A wise policy, where possible, tries to address real Soviet concerns, like the brain drain. The goal of a wise policy is not to vilify the Soviets or isolate them economically. Such a policy seeks only the most effective means to prod them toward a normal emigration procedure.

A wise policy also recognizes that the Soviets have made great strides in human rights over the past two years, and it responds to that progress. The first American response should be to end the presumption that anyone who can get out of the Soviet Union is, ipso facto, entitled to immediate admission to the United States as a political refugee. Only citizens of the Soviet Union and a few of its communist allies enjoy this presumption. Before people from El Salvador, Cambodia, South Africa, and other benighted countries are accorded refugee admission, they must prove that their personal history gives them a reasonable basis to fear persecution if the United States refuses to take them in. Soviets need only show their red passport. That presumption was valid in Stalin's day, when mere contact with the West might subject a Soviet citizen to Siberian exile or death. But in an age when hundreds of thousands of Soviet citizens demonstrate with impunity against their government's policies, this presumption has become a relic of the

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cold war and deserves an immediate burial. The State Department has recently begun to go through the motions of considering each Soviet applicant for refugee status on an individual basis. So far, however, the results have in practice been the same: virtually everyone gets in.

If the United States were to begin to truly consider Soviet requests for admission on a case-by-case basis, the dissident leaders who are still subject to harassment and persecution would still qualify for immediate admission. The apolitical computer programmers who simply want to work for IBM, however, would have to stand on the same long line for entry that faces computer programmers in Ireland, Thailand, or Ghana. The Kremlin would be assured that opening the doors to emigration would not lead to a sudden, massive hemorrhage of talented people.

Coincidentally, Israel might again become the prime destination of emigrating Soviet Jews. Ninety percent of them, at present, opt for refugee admission to the United States. Under a case-by-case American policy, Israel would offer them immediate, assured admission, while the United States might require a long wait. This change would disturb many Americans, particularly Jews who are eager to offer their Soviet brethren the same opportunity in America that Russian Jewish emigrants received generations ago. But this country has long since determined that it cannot be a haven for all of the world's oppressed people. It tells refugees from Southeast Asia and Central America to wait or go elsewhere. Why should it make a special, discriminatory exception for Soviet Jews, particularly when Israel exists precisely to offer them a home?

Changing the refugee policy would help pave the way for a series of American steps that could be taken, one every six months or so, as long as the Soviets maintain their present rate of emigration. First, Congress could repeal the Stevenson Amendment, also enacted in 1974, which sharply limits the Export-Import Bank credit available to Moscow. Next, the administration could waive the Jackson-Vanik Amendment for a year. Finally, Congress could repeal Jackson-Vanik entirely, putting U.S.-Soviet trade relations on a more stable footing and denying right-wing congressmen the chance to use an annual review as an occasion for introducing new demands. This policy would still leave plenty of trade leverage in American hands. The United States could, for instance, let the Soviets know that their access to Western high technology, or to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), would depend in part on satisfactory emigration performance.

But the United States and the Soviet Union would be dealing with each other, on both trade and human rights issues, as one civilized nation to another. And that should be the object of the exercise. □

There They Go Again

Lawrence H. Fuchs

They did it again! Apart from blacks and Puerto Ricans, American Jews were more loyal to Michael Dukakis than was any other voting group, giving him anywhere from 64 to 77 percent of their vote, depending on which poll one believes. The Jewish intellectuals on the right are shaking their heads in dismay once again over what Irving Kristol calls "cognitive dissonance" (*Commentary,* October 1988). Their reasoning goes something like this: with money to invest, Jewish voters should have welcomed Bush's plans to cut capital gains taxes. Concerned for the security of Israel, they should have rewarded Bush for Reagan's steadfast support of Israel. Sympathetic to imprisoned brethren in the Soviet Union, they should have been grateful for the recent progress made in Jewish emigration as a result of Schultz's prodding. With rising anti-Semitism among blacks and Jesse Jackson's reflexive insensitivity to Jews, they should have been afraid of the Democrats.

It is nonsense to say that Jews voting for Dukakis suffered from cognitive dissonance. The fact that every major national survey shows that Jews support liberal positions and prefer liberal candidates does not make them irrational. Jewish values translate into Jewish interests, which is why Jews endorse candidates with a strong commitment to First Amendment and social justice issues. More than any other group, Jews are sensitive to civic culture issues: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and the separation of church and state. They did not applaud George Bush's attack on the ACLU. They disagreed with his commitment to a Constitutional amendment that would allow for a moment of prayer in the schools. And they were underwhelmed by his absurd, demagogic promise to appoint judges who would care more for the victims of crime than for its perpetrators. They probably saw in Bush's rhetoric an attack on those important American political values and institutions that have allowed them to flourish as Jews.

The premium Jews place on civic culture issues is not hard to understand. But why do they persist in their concern for social justice issues? The answer to that question is not much different from the one that I gave in *The Political Behavior of American Jews* (Macmillan) back in 1956. Many secularized Jews have given up the ritual commandments of Torah but still cling to a Jewish consciousness that emphasizes ethical commandments, the most important of which is to do *tzedaka* (justice).

The fact that Jews support liberal positions and prefer liberal candidates does not make them irrational.

These Passover-and-High-Holidays-only Jews may not know which prophet (Isaiah) enjoins Jews to "seek justice, oppose oppression, defend the orphan, and plead for the widow," or in what book (Deuteronomy) they are repeatedly commanded to "execute justice for the fatherless and widow and love the stranger. . . ." But they sense that to be faithless to those values is to repudiate their Jewishness, their highest Jewish interest.

In a 1988 national survey of 1,250 Jews, conducted by Steven M. Cohen and supported by the American Jewish Committee, 68 percent of those polled said they believed Jewish values shaped their political views, and 61 percent said that these views were shaped by Jewish interests. Other answers revealed that Jews consider their ethical values to be congruent with their highest interest: the nurturance of an American civilization built on freedom and justice. In voting for Dukakis, a substantial portion of Jews showed that they undoubtedly felt this way. □

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The Israeli Elections: The Flight from Freedom and Responsibility

Itzhak Galnoor

On the morning after the Israeli elections, my neighbor, a member of the Likud party, was very upset. "Those ultra-Orthodox are going to destroy our country," he said, and then added in a conciliatory tone: "You and I are together in this; we should establish a joint front against theocracy." I immediately agreed but suggested a division of labor—I should help him fight religious fanaticism, and he should help me in my struggle against nationalist fanaticism. My Likudnik friend declined. He did not like my PAP (peace and pluralism) strategy. Coercion of Jews made him angry; coercion of Palestinians left him indifferent. Indeed, he was quite surprised by my response, which seemed to him completely irrelevant to the crisis that we, "the secular Jews of Israel," are facing now.

This is the Catch-88 produced by the results of the elections. We woke up on November 2 to find that our crucial national agenda—what to do with the occupied territories—was eclipsed by the concerns of the 11 percent of the voters who supported the ultra-Orthodox parties. In the ensuing weeks, the struggle to prevent the ultra-Orthodox from having their religious program written into law has dominated Israeli politics.

Ultimately, these elections were about the *intifida,* despite the strong denial of that fact by most voters; and if they were indeed the first serious round of battle over the soil (and soul) of Israel, then the outcome is a devastating stalemate. With the exception of the vote for the ultra-Orthodox parties, which cannot be viewed as a vote for territorial expansionism, the voters were divided almost equally between the two blocs. The Likud, together with the three other right-wing parties, obtained 42 percent. The Labor party, with the other six left-wing parties, obtained 45 percent. Therefore there is no mandate for annexation of the territories or even for Likud's vague proposal of granting personal "autonomy" to the Palestinian inhabitants of the occupied territories. Similarly, there is no mandate for parting with the territories or even for Labor's vague proposal of "security boundaries" and "territorial compromise."

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This profound stalemate is more than a political impasse; it is a freezing of the collective will. The stalemate is a product of our inability to come to grips with the normalization of our existence and the abandonment of our obsolete dreams. These dreams are not about the size of Israel's territory alone, but also about the dying hope that the rest of the Jewish people will eventually immigrate to Israel and that Israel will be much more than just another nation among nations. These unfounded hopes were stirred by the seemingly miraculous victory in the Six Day War of 1967, so much so that we Israelis have acquired a messianic outlook. Unfortunately, it seems that we will continue to run away from making any serious decision until we are forced to choose unambiguously between brutal Kahanism (now represented by the new Moledet party) and the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Hence, the most plausible explanation of the election results is that Labor failed because of the *intifada.* It lost to the left because of Rabin's iron fist, and it lost to the religious parties because it had nothing to offer religious voters. It is also possible that Labor lost many voters to Likud, which in turn lost voters to the religious parties. During the campaign, Labor openly attacked Likud's settlement policy and proposed a "security plan"—which implied evacuation of the territories, with the Jordan River as the security boundary. Still, in the opinion of many voters, these proposals were "not enough" or "not clear enough."

As might be expected, certain voices within the Labor party have attributed Labor's loss to the fact that Peres went too far to the left and alienated the hawkish "floating voters." This argument is not very convincing because, if the last four elections are any guide, Labor has never succeeded in winning over the right-wing voters from Likud, despite all its efforts. Most Israeli voters know that at the end of Labor's unfortunate campaign slogan, "The way to open the way," one finds the PLO. In retrospect it seems plausible that if the Labor party had openly and candidly called for negotiations with the PLO, it would not have lost additional votes and might even have won quite a few.

The Labor party was never able to discuss the need to work directly with the Palestinians, and thus it was

unable to begin to address the fears that so many Israelis have about a Palestinian state. To prove his toughness as well as his closeness to the political center, Peres spent years attacking the Palestinians and rejecting all possible routes to direct negotiations with them. Even after the election, he took the lead in denouncing the PLO's declaration of statehood—more concerned with proving his own credentials as a potential ally in a Shamir-led coalition than with helping Israelis begin to rethink their options and prepare themselves for a compromise with the Palestinians. There is growing evidence that, in order to win, Labor must let go of its right-wing faction (Rabin included), reject the assumption that the Likud definition of the conflict is intuitively more appealing to Israelis, and proceed to present a clear-cut and less apologetic alternative.

Likud, too, sensed the public yearning for a way out of Israel's crisis, so it moved considerably to the left. It did not mention the "Greater Land of Israel" even once in its TV campaign, and, instead of emphasizing annexation of the territories, it focused on the Camp David autonomy plan, which most of its Knesset members rejected in 1978. Still, this moderation did not help Likud. Its devoted voters understood the campaign slogan "Only the Likud can . . . " to end not with "make peace" but with "take care of the Arabs." Thus, Likud's lack of clarity did not help it win many hesitant voters, and its support shrank to its pre-1977 size.

The Religious Vote

The nearly 50 percent increase (from thirteen to eighteen seats) in religious party representation in Knesset was the main surprise of this election. Israeli political culture tends to encourage relative passivity during elections—while 80 percent of the electorate voted, very few Israelis volunteered time or money. The most extensive person-to-person campaigning was done by the ultra-Orthodox parties.

The Brooklyn-Bnei Brak-Jerusalem "Bermuda Triangle" of ultra-Orthodox forces in Israeli politics shows that Ashkenazi religious extremists have won over many moderate, traditional Oriental Jews. These Oriental Jews voted for Shas—the Sephardic imitation of Agudat Israel—or even for the Ashkenazi parties themselves. For instance, in the towns of Hatzor and Kiryat Malachi, Shas gained about 10 percent and Agudat Israel, which was endorsed by the Lubavitcher rebbe, between 20 and 30 percent.

Nevertheless, there is no evidence that the ultra-Orthodox parties will continue to gain seats in the future. The flight from responsibility and decision could be an ephemeral phenomenon. The ultra-Orthodox are only one-tenth of the Israeli population, and, given a different political division of power between the parties, their bargaining power could be greatly diminished.

Meimad

The religious camp, as we knew it in the prestate period and up to the Six Day War, is no more. Nothing testifies more to this assertion than does the painful failure of Meimad, the new moderate religious party headed by Rabbi Yehuda Amital. Meimad received less than sixteen thousand votes (about 0.7 percent)—not enough to obtain a seat in Knesset. Meimad tried to reach out to observant and traditional Jews who resent the stigma of extremism branded on them by both Gush Emunim and Habad. Meimad was willing to think about territorial compromise, and it emphasized Jewish education rather than coercive religious legislation. But moderate religion has been on the decline in Israel since 1967. Moreover, since Meimad is a new party, many potential voters refrained from supporting it because they were afraid that it wouldn't reach the 1 percent threshold necessary for a seat in Knesset. Their prophecy proved self-fulfilling.

The stalemate is a product of our inability to come to grips with the normalization of our existence and the abandonment of our obsolete dreams.

Nevertheless, Meimad itself bears some responsibility for its own failure. The party tried too hard to be centrist, and as a result it obscured its peace message. Its television campaign emphasized moderation on all issues and was effective in portraying a nonfanatic version of Orthodox Judaism. Yet its advertisements supported settlements in the occupied territories, and Meimad was too careful to dissociate itself from religious peace groups such as Netivot Shalom and Oz V'Shalom. It is conceivable, therefore, that religious peace-seeking people did not find Meimad's message courageous enough and voted instead for one of the left-wing parties. Meimad also did not attract as many nonobservant voters as it had hoped to do, and it made a mistake by not announcing before the election that it would refuse to join a coalition headed by the Likud.

Very much like Israel's nonobservant Jews, Meimad supporters did not anticipate what was brewing in the ultra-Orthodox communities. Meimad remained basically a Jerusalem party (2.3 percent support in that city); its support in Tel Aviv and Haifa was less than its

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national average. There is no longer a centrist position on the issue of the occupation, and Meimad fell victim to the illusion that it could play both sides. Nevertheless, Meimad represents the only alternative to religious fanaticism. It must continue its activities also because it provides the sole bridge to moderate observant Jews outside Israel.

THE VOTE OF THE ISRAELI ARABS

Israeli Arab voters have the potential to control about 14 percent of the votes; thus, they have almost as much power as do the Jewish religious voters. In reality, however, the Arab vote was not decisive in the 1988 elections (the Arab parties retained their six seats) because the rate of participation by Arabs was lower than that of the Jewish population. Moreover, since Israeli Arabs are unable to play the game of negotiating with both the right and the left, their political clout diminishes considerably.

Arab political power is further reduced by the Israeli political anomaly that the non-Zionist ultra-Orthodox parties are considered legitimate participants in the government coalition while the Arab parties are not. The reason given is that Hadash (the Communist party), and the Progressive party are receiving their orders from Israel's enemies—the Soviet Union and the PLO. No one has yet had to confront this ridiculous argument because the Labor party was unable to gain the majority necessary to form a government in 1984 or in 1988, even with the full support of all the Arab parties.

THE UPHILL AGENDA

The 1988 elections illustrate a dangerous polarization in Israel. Israeli society has moved closer to developing a total rift—with hawks, Oriental Jews, and observant Jews on one side, and doves, Western Jews, nonobservant Jews, and Israeli Arabs on the other. This rift, if it develops, is bound to affect not only Israelis but Diaspora Jews as well.

The future of Israel as well as of the Israel-Diaspora relationship does not depend on whether the Law of Return is amended. That question is only one part of a much broader question about extremism, and it would be a mistake to focus on the Law of Return alone. The real problem in Israel is the *combination* of religious and nationalistic fanaticism, the joining of the Lubavitcher rebbe with the new member of knesset, Rehav'am Ze'evi, who advocates the "transfer" of Arabs from the territories. The meeting point—the seeming middle ground between these two types of fanaticism—is the Likud and the National Religious Party, where members of Knesset such as Ariel Sharon and Avner Shaki could easily strike a deal between halakha and racism.

Meimad tried too hard to be centrist, and as a result it obscured its peace message.

In a cabinet headed by the Likud, such bargains would include a new settlement in the territories in return for a new yeshiva, an agreement to ban the Reform and Conservative movements from Israel in return for permission to expel the Arabs, and a free hand for the extreme right in the territories in return for a free hand for the extreme Orthodox within Israel proper. Likud's moderate faction would not be able to withstand the pressure of competition between the various parties concerning who is more faithful to the ideology of extremism. At the end of such a process we may wind up with a nondemocratic state of Israel: a theocracy fighting to retain the annexed territories, a theocracy that has been ostracized by the liberal family of nations. The possibility of such a nightmare situation should guide our actions now, precisely because we are not yet there and such a dire end can be prevented.

We must fight not against religion or against ultra-Orthodoxy per se, but against fanaticism in its different forms. In order to engage in such a struggle we need a PAP—peace and pluralism—strategy. To paraphrase Ben Gurion's famous strategy against the British: we must fight religious fanaticism as if there were no occupied territories and fight nationalist fanaticism as if there were no ultra-Orthodoxy. In particular, we should stand against the combination of these two fanaticisms, since the flight from freedom and responsibility has never lacked appeal. □

The Meaning of the PNC in Algiers

Jerome M. Segal

There are two perspectives from which to view what happened at the nineteenth meeting of the Palestine National Council (PNC), held in Algiers in November 1988. The meeting can be viewed from the broad historical perspective of Palestinian nationalism, and it can be viewed from the short-term political perspective of what was needed for an immediate breakthrough toward peace negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

These two perspectives coincide with the two very different documents that emerged from the meetings—the Palestinian Declaration of Independence and the political resolutions of the nineteenth PNC. I will argue:

- From the historical perspective, the meetings were revolutionary, giving a new definition to Palestinian nationalism.
- From the political perspective, the meetings were positive but somewhat disappointing, given the high expectations that some people had.
- The compromises on the political level were what made the breakthroughs possible on the historical level.
- The historical breakthroughs set the stage for further advances on the political level in the near future.

Historical Dimension

On November 15, 1988, at roughly 1:45 in the morning, the State of Palestine was proclaimed. The two-state solution, that bit of common sense endorsed by the non-Arab world in 1947, was not only being affirmed; it was being enacted.

From the Palestinian point of view, there is now a Palestinian state, and before too long most of the nations of the world will share that perspective. If there is to be peace in the Middle East, this peace will have to be made between the two states. Any other option implies the destruction of one state or the other.

What the Palestinians did in Algiers was to extend to the diplomatic level exactly what they had been doing for the eleven months of the *intifada*. The *intifada* is the process of Palestinian empowerment; it is the exercise of their self-determination, whether Israeli authorities like it or not. Specifically, the *intifada* is the process through which the Palestinian state was created. What occurred in Algiers was the formalization of that process.

This point can best be understood if we reflect on the struggle over who sets commercial regulations—the war of the shops. Time and again Israeli soldiers have clipped locks and forced stores to be reopened, and time and again the Palestinians have obeyed the regulations set by the underground command. Essentially, they have told the Israelis: "You do not govern the territories. We have transferred the role of governance to new authorities." To do this is essentially to create a new state.

November 15, 1988 will be remembered in history for a second event in addition to the creation of the State of Palestine. It is the date on which the Palestinian people reversed a position that they had held for one hundred years. In Algiers the Palestinian people, in essence, redefined the cause of Palestinian nationalism. In the postindependence world, a Palestinian triumph does not require the destruction of the Jewish state.

The vehicle for this change is the Palestinian Declaration of Independence. In formal terms this document is different from the political resolutions. The political resolutions are the decisions of the nineteenth PNC. As such, they are the current, but transitory, articulation of the PLO's stand on a series of key issues. They replace somewhat similar resolutions passed by the eighteenth PNC in 1987. And they themselves will be modified either by a twentieth PNC or by policies articulated by the government of the State of Palestine when it is formed.

The Declaration of Independence, on the other hand, is the first fundamental document to be adopted by the Palestinian nationalist movement since the Palestinian Covenant. Unlike the Covenant, however, it cannot be amended. A declaration of independence is forever.

In the middle of the Declaration there is the proclamation itself: "The Palestine National Council, in the name of God, and in the name of the Palestine Arab people, hereby proclaims the establishment of the State of Palestine...." This is the first and last mention of the Palestine National Council in the Declaration. From

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this point on, the Declaration reads: "The State of Palestine declares," "The State of Palestine affirms," "The State of Palestine proclaims." Thus the Declaration is the transitional vehicle through which an authoritative agent of the Palestinian national cause has been brought into being: the State of Palestine.

The exact relationship between the PLO and the State of Palestine remains to be defined. Full authority for the state will not be achieved until Israeli troops withdraw. But the stage has been set for a new era. The Declaration of Independence stands in relation to the State of Palestine as the Covenant stands in relation to the PLO.

The Covenant, which has not been amended since 1968 and which has been eroded and contradicted by successive PNC political resolutions, represented one definition of Palestinian nationalism. It was grounded in the claim that there was no Jewish right to a state in Palestine. It was dedicated to the liberation of the whole of Palestine. And it proclaimed that armed struggle was the only way to liberate Palestine.

The PNC neither amended nor discarded the Covenant. It chose to deal with it by sweeping it under the carpet, by creating a state based on the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration makes no mention whatsoever of the Covenant. It represents a new beginning. The Declaration makes no mention of liberating the whole of Palestine. And it makes no mention of armed struggle.

Those people who doubt the change that the PLO has undergone ought to dust off the Covenant and place it side by side with the Declaration. And they should read it not merely for substance, but for voice and attitude as well.

The Declaration has some strong substantive points that should be noted. These points are not airtight. They were not the result of negotiations. They were not scrutinized and made rigorous by the kind of give-and-take that can occur only at the negotiating table. Rather, they are a broad effort to communicate intentions and attitude.

On the Partition Resolution (181)

In 1947 the Arab nations walked out of the UN General Assembly when the partition resolution was passed. The PLO Covenant explicitly states that the partition resolution is null and void. In Algiers this position was reversed. The Declaration reads:

> Despite the historical injustice inflicted on the Palestinian Arab people resulting in their dispersion and depriving them of their right to self-determination, following upon UN General Assembly Resolution 181 (1947), which partitioned Palestine into two states, one Arab, one Jewish, yet it is this Resolution that still provides those conditions of international legitimacy that ensure the right of the Palestinian Arab people to sovereignty and national independence.

The paragraph falls short of explicitly stating that under international law Israel has a right to exist. But it is a historical reversal of the Palestinian position on Resolution 181 (which was also cited in the Israeli Declaration of Independence).

There are two things of special significance in this paragraph. First, the Declaration notes that Resolution 181 provided for a *Jewish* state. It is surprising that it would specifically call attention to the fact that 181 not only provided for Israel's existence, but its existence as a Jewish state. This point is immediately followed by the statement that the resolution "still provides" a basis in international legitimacy (international law) for the Palestinian state that was never created. To make this point is to say that the resolution was and remains international law.

Thus, while the Palestinians do not explicitly draw the conclusion that Israel has a right to exist as a Jewish state under international law, they support, in their declaration, the two premises from which such a conclusion can be drawn: (1) Resolution 181 was and is valid international law; and (2) Resolution 181 provides for a Jewish state.

In short, the Palestinians have set the stage for the State of Palestine to offer an exchange of ambassadors with Israel, something that was unthinkable under the terms of the Covenant.

On Peace, Armed Struggle, and Terrorism

As noted above, the Declaration says nothing about armed struggle. In fact, it goes out of its way to extend the olive branch with both hands. The Declaration reads: "The State of Palestine ... further announces itself to be a peace-loving State, in adherence to the principles of peaceful co-existence. It will join with all states and peoples in order to assure a permanent peace based upon justice...." The idea of "peaceful co-existence" steers the new state toward adopting a peace treaty with Israel. Similarly, the phrase "permanent peace" is the antithesis of the so-called doctrine of stages, which viewed any settlement with Israel as merely a stepping-stone from which to continue the struggle.

The Declaration has this to say on violence and terrorism:

> The State of Palestine herewith declares that it believes in the settlement of regional and international disputes by peaceful means, in accordance

with the UN Charter and resolutions. Without prejudice to its natural right to defend its territorial integrity and independence, it therefore rejects the threat or use of force, violence and *terrorism* against its territorial integrity, or political independence, *as it also rejects their use against the territorial integrity of other states* [emphasis added].

On Boundaries

The Declaration does not define the borders of the State of Palestine. In this sense it is similar to the Israeli Declaration of Independence. When the Palestinian Declaration affirms the partition resolution, it says that it "still provides those conditions of international legitimacy that ensure the right of the Palestinian Arab people to sovereignty and national independence." The Declaration is deliberately silent as to whether the partition resolution still provides the right to the territory that the Palestinian people were offered in 1947. Thus, it is consistent with public statements by Abu Iyad, the second most powerful member of Fatah (behind Arafat), to the effect that the Palestinians would settle for a state defined by the pre-1967 borders (that is, the West Bank and Gaza).

This position is reinforced by the PNC resolution on 242, which, despite its inadequacies, commits the PLO to negotiations based on peace in exchange for Israeli withdrawal from territories gained in the 1967 war (as opposed to those gained in the 1948 war).

Finally, for the lawyers, there is one other pregnant phrase. The new state calls upon the United Nations to "help it terminate Israel's occupation of *the* Palestinian territories." Scholars of Resolution 242 may remember all the ink that has been spilled over whether 242 requires Israel to withdraw from "territories occupied" in 1967 or from "the territories" occupied in 1967—the difference being between some or all. Given this history, it is quite remarkable that the Palestinian Declaration should refer to ending Israel's occupation of "the" Palestinian territories—the implication being that the West Bank and Gaza are "the Palestinian territories." And of course, the sentence does use the I-word, referring to "Israel's" occupation of Palestinian territory rather than to the occupation by the "Zionist entity"—a phrase that does not appear at any point. Thus, in spirit and substance, the State of Palestine rests upon a new definition of the Palestinian national cause.

The Political Perspective

Following the Israeli elections, we are in a uniquely dangerous situation in the Middle East. Prime Minister Shamir has no intention whatsoever of exchanging land for peace. He is dedicated to the destruction of the State of Palestine—an entity that he will neither recognize nor concede has a right to exist. His "peace program" essentially is to crush the *intifada*. The odds are very high that we will soon see an escalation of Israeli violence, and that at some point Palestinian discipline will break down. The rule against using guns and knives on Israeli settlers and soldiers will give way to a new sentiment: "If I am going to die, I will take some of them with me."

From the Palestinian point of view, there is now a Palestinian state, and before too long most of the nations of the world will share that perspective.

Once Palestinian teenagers take this turn, there will be a spiral of violence that will not be controllable. As Israeli deaths start to mount, the stage will be set for internal transfer and mass expulsion. This process will involve massacre and ultimately renewed warfare between Israel and the Arab states.

The political dimension of the PNC can be defined in terms of the actions needed in the short run to help prevent events from flowing in this direction. In order to stop this flow we must achieve a breakthrough in U.S.-PLO relations, leading to the convening of an international conference and thus to the involvement of all parties in the transforming process of face-to-face negotiations.

The U.S. government knows that it must move in this direction. Nevertheless, it considers itself stuck with its various "preconditions" for dealing with the PLO. The entire strategy of preconditions has been a major error in U.S. policy. Henry Kissinger led us into this quagmire on the urging of the Israelis, whose objective was to keep the PLO, and thus the Palestinians, out of the negotiation process. Instead they relied on the Jordanian option.

Today the Jordanian option is dead. Peace requires a Palestinian option. To understand the foolishness of the very notion of preconditions, we might try to apply the idea to any other conflict. Consider the Iran-Iraq war. Is it even imaginable that any sane person would have said that before the U.S. should attempt to mediate a cease-fire, the Iraqis had to renounce the use of chemical weapons or admit that they started the conflict? With a million dead, and further horror on the horizon, the imperative was a cease-fire and a process leading toward some form of resolution. Only those with their heads in the sand fail to understand that the stakes in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are equally high.

(Continued on p. 92)

Sexegesis: Miriam in the Desert

Edward R. Zweiback Levenson

Numbers 12 and its context, which, according to modern Bible critics, contain some of the oldest narrative material in the Pentateuch, are an important source for the study of gender politics and attitudes toward women in ancient Israelite society. Depicting Miriam's (and Aaron's) sin—"talking about" Moses' marrying a Cushite woman—as well as God's punishment of her with a skin disease necessitating a seven-day quarantine, it portrays the foremost female leader of the Exodus generation as a malicious gossiper and a somewhat refractory associate of Moses at a time when he was having difficulties as the leader of the emerging Israelite nation. Whereas Miriam was a genuine role model for women (Exodus 15:20–21) and in fact was, according to a later tradition (Micah 6:4), a leader with the same stature as Moses and Aaron, this episode in Numbers casts her in a negative light.

Her sin in itself appears not to have been as serious as the sins of either Moses, in striking the rock, or Aaron, in constructing the Golden Calf; and yet her punishment, according to the biblical understanding of it, was more severe than the short-term punishments that her brothers suffered. God Himself points to her shamefulness when He decrees that she be shut up outside of camp, as a father would publicly humiliate a wayward daughter and spit in her face (Numbers 12:14). From the information available in Numbers, this incident reflects a complete termination of her effectiveness as a leader. After her cure and return to camp, we read only of her subsequent death and burial—and it was an unceremonious death indeed, in pointed contrast to the account, at the end of the same chapter, of Aaron's death, which features Aaron's ascent to the summit of Mount Hor, Moses' anointing of Aaron's son Elazar as high priest, and the thirty-day public mourning for Aaron by the community of Israel.

My interest in recent attempts (by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Judith Plaskow, and Phyllis Trible) to "articulate a feminist paradigm" and to apply the "hermeneutics of remembrance" in biblical textual study has led me to examine, in the details of Numbers 12 and related texts, the dynamics of the sexism in the Israelite tradition vis-à-vis our foremother Miriam. Diminishing the stature of the Israelite first female national leader has a specific function: it supports the subordinate status that the society ordains for women in general. As Miriam is reduced in status, so are all women reduced, and their leadership ambitions are thwarted.

An inquiry into the linguistic nuances and the implicit logic of the sequence of sentences, however, reveals a more complicated and interesting story than the literal text relates. Central to this exposition is the insight that Numbers 12 and its context are replete with sexual allusions, which demand proper consideration and a more cogent explanation than has thus far been given in either traditional or historical-critical commentary. Moreover, a great deal of unusual and striking rabbinic literature supports this reading—so much so that it is possible that this literature represents vestiges of suppressed ancient historical traditions.

It was nothing less than human sexuality itself for which women in the ancient Near East were often blamed. Few transgressions involving women were punished more severely in traditional Oriental societies than those considered illicit sexual offenses—an indication of the great power and danger associated with women's sexual activity in general. The sexual imagery of Ecclesiastes 7:26 ("I find woman more bitter than death; she is all traps, her hands are fetters and her heart is snares") is but the most extreme representation of biblical misogyny. That Miriam's offense, accordingly, was related to a sexual deed and not simply to her talking about Moses is suggested by Numbers 12:14, where Miriam is compared to the young woman who is publicly humiliated by her father and has to "bear her shame for seven days" (*tikkalem shiv'at yamim*). Compare this verse to Jeremiah 3:3 and Ezekiel 16:27, 52, 54, and 63, where the passive of the root *KLM* and the noun form *kelimah* denote shame for a sexual offense.

A reference to Miriam's skin disease in Deuteronomy 24:8–9, in connection with a warning that the Israelites must follow the instructions of the Levitical priests concerning how to tend to such afflictions, offers addi-

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tional support for this hypothesis: "In cases of a skin affection be most careful to do exactly as the Levitical priests instruct you. Take care to do as I have commanded them. Remember what the Lord your God did to Miriam on the journey after you left Egypt." This mention of Miriam's punishment follows four separate legal sections that have sexual ramifications:

- A man who divorces a woman because of a "sexually obnoxious deed" (*ervat davar*) is prohibited from remarrying this woman after her second husband either divorces her or dies (Deuteronomy 24:1–4).
- A man must be exempt from military service during his first year of marriage so that he can "give happiness to the woman he has married" (24:5).

The Israelites in the desert were guided by a deeper dynamic than hunger, the more intense human passion that has stirred humanity from time immemorial: sex.

- "A handmill [*rekhayim*] or an upper millstone shall not be taken in pawn, for that would be taking someone's life in pawn" (24:6). The word *rekhayim,* which means a handmill—a pair of stones with holes in their centers—may well be derived from a metaphorical usage because of the resemblance of each stone to a woman's vagina; *rekhayim* may be considered as the dual form of *rekhem* (vagina) in the sense of "the two-holed implement." In light of this context, which deals with human sexual activities, I read in *rekhayim* an off-color colloquialism referring to a human being with a sexual function, a female concubine or a child-bearing slave, just as "grinding" in Job 31:10 is a sexual metaphor, and just as the rabbis quip that a man's wife is a "millstone around his neck" (Kiddushin 29b).
- If a man kidnaps and enslaves (*vehit'amer bo*) or sells a fellow Israelite, he must receive the death penalty (Deuteronomy 24:7). The reflexive tense (*hitpa'el*) of *AMR,* as is clear from an analogous usage in the case of the captured foreign woman (21:13), can involve sexual possession and domination.

Why is the admonition to heed the Levitical priests and "remember what God did to Miriam" juxtaposed to these four laws? The answer seems to be that Miriam's "sin" involved a sexual act just as violations of the preceding commandments were sexual in nature. If this assumption is correct, Miriam's "punishment" may well have been a case of a particular skin disease resulting naturally from sex—namely, venereal disease, a case of "clap." Skin eruptions (*tsara'at*) are associated, in Leviticus 22:4, Numbers 5:2, and 2 Samuel 3:29, with venereal discharges; and the strong possibility thus exists that Miriam's skin disease mentioned in Numbers and Deuteronomy was an embarrassing ailment left unspecified for reasons of modesty.

Mention of Miriam's affliction follows the well-known account in Numbers 11 in which the rabble that left Egypt with the Israelites "lusted a lust" and influenced the Israelites to weary of the divine gift of manna and to desire meat as well as other gustatory delights of Egypt, several of which are known from an ancient Egyptian parallel to represent fertility symbols—fish, melons, leeks, and onions. Though the patience of God was severely tested, He imparted His spirit to seventy male elders who would help Moses in his leadership tasks, and He sent a month's supply of quails to feed the gluttonous people. A heavy plague broke out, however, in which many people perished; and the Israelite encampment was called, accordingly, Kivrot Hata'avah (the Graves of the Craving). Psychological and behavioral insight leads one to search for a deeper dynamic in the desert than hunger; the word "meat," *basar,* may have the double meaning that still applies in sexist vernacular usage (contrast the phallic usage of the word in Ezekiel 16:26 and 23:20). Granted, the people may have desired a heavier and tastier food than the sap of the tamarisk shrub, which an Arab tradition holds manna to have been, but it appears plausible that the lust referred to also indicates the more intense human passion that has stirred humanity from time immemorial: sex.

The immediate aftermath of the Exodus from Egypt was most certainly a time of "peak experience" for our foremothers and forefathers. A people experiencing the joy of freedom for the first time after generations of servitude and degradation, and after witnessing the humiliation of its oppressors, must have been emotionally charged and bursting with a zest for living. Such a zest for living would have given rise to an active sexual urge. There must have been many individuals—spiritually strong and independent, happy and courageous—who, at the beginning of the journey eastward to the Promised Land, radiated an aura of attractiveness in the best sense of the term. Moses and Aaron, as well as Miriam—individuals of consummate leadership ability—must have been very dear to the Israelite people and probably were sexually appealing human beings.

I read this naturalistic meaning of sex appeal and potency in the accounts of the miracles of the rods and the snakes, in Exodus 4:1–5 and 7:8–12, when Moses' and Aaron's "rods" become "snakes" and vice versa. A rod and a snake, to be sure, are time-honored phallic symbols in literature; and here they appropriately alter-

nate, representing sexual symbolism for the two phases of the male organ in its active and quiescent states. In the sequel, when Aaron performs the rod miracle, Pharaoh's sorcerers perform the same deed, but Aaron's rod (7:12) swallows up the sorcerers' rods. Though it would be more logical to refer to the rod in its snake metamorphosis, the text may wish to emphasize its power in an erect and hard condition and thus speaks of the rod's, and not the snake's, doing the swallowing. If the text here preserves a subliminal sexual meaning—the root *BLA* (to swallow) suggests *BAL* (to have sex) by metathesis—then the author wished to indicate the Egyptians' wonderment: behold the phenomenon! Moses and Aaron, these two pretenders to leadership of the Hebrew slaves, are more vigorous, inspired, courageous, and charismatic, as visualized in their raw sexual power and attractiveness, than are "hard-hearted" Pharaoh and all of his advisers combined (7:13). Moses can be admired as a veritable former-day Charlton Heston to whom Pharaoh could not hope to compare in manly beauty.

Descriptions of the divine food, manna—in Exodus 16 and in Numbers 11—appear to me to contain a double meaning as well, in the way that wine, honey, and milk function in the Bible as metaphors for the delights of sex and procreation (compare Song of Songs 1:1; 4:11; 5:1). Many of the words and phrases used in the descriptions of the manna itself and of the gathering of the manna have associations of lovemaking:

- Manna is first described in Exodus 16:13–14 as appearing in a "layer of dew" (*shikhvat tal*), a very suggestive phrase inasmuch as the word *shikhvah,* in every other case in which it is used in the Bible, means a "seminal emission."
- The dew "going up" from the manna in Exodus 16:14 complements the manna "going down" on the dew in Numbers 11:9.
- Manna in Numbers 11:7 is said to resemble *z'ra gad,* commonly translated as "coriander seed"; in Exodus 16:31 *z'ra gad* is specifically described as being white.
- Pairing the first words of *shikhvat tal* and *z'ra gad* yields *shikhvat zera,* which explicitly means "seminal emission." *Tal* itself can mean *zera* (seed), as in Song of Songs 5:2–4, and the word *gad* may allude to the word *gid* (penis).
- In Exodus 16:31 the taste of manna is said to resemble *tsapikhit bid'vash* (wafers in honey). I would revocalize the phrase however, reading it *tsapakhat d'vash* (a flask of honey). The traditional understanding of *tsapikhit bid'vash* as the ultimate, gustatory pleasure thus takes on a more clearly understood basis in the text.
- In Numbers 11:8, "The people would go about [*shatu ha'am*] and gather the manna [*v'laktu*], grind it between millstones [*v'takhanu barekhayim*] or pound it in a mortar [*dakhu bam'dokhah*], boil it in a pot, and make it into cakes [*ugot*]. It tasted like rich cream [*l'shad hashamen*]." Many words in this sentence are very suggestive. *Shatu,* from *SHWT,* meaning "rove" or "row in water," may have here the association of "cruising" to look for a sexual partner. *LKT* is found in the erotic context of "gathering rosebuds" (Song of Songs 6:2). *Ugot* means "circular round cakes," as in a metaphor for adulterous Ephraim in Hosea 7:8. The rare word *leshed* in *l'shad hashamen,* translated as "cream," evokes the erotic association of *shad, shadayim* (breast, breasts), just as the phrase *ish l'fetakh oholo* (each man at the opening of his tent) in Numbers 11:10 suggests entering the female genital orifice.

The Rabbis of the Talmud, discussing at length the interpretation of the manna accounts in Yoma 74b-76a, seem to have a grasp of many of the above-mentioned sexual allusions, and additional ones as well:

- *Tal*—"Rabbi Yose son of Rabbi Hanina said, 'Dew above and dew below, and it appears as if it is lying in a box.'"
- *Z'ra gad lavan*—"Rabbi Asi said, 'Round as a *gid* and white as a pearl.'"
- *Veyatsa ha'am velaktu* (Exodus 16:4); *shatu ha'am velaktu* (Numbers 11:8)—Manna "descended on the entrance of the homes of the righteous; the average people went out and gathered, [and] the wicked cruised and gathered."
- *Dakhu bam'dokhah*—"Rabbi Judah in the name of Rav, or some say Rabbi Hama son of Hanina: 'This teaches that jewelry of women descended with the manna for Israel, something that is pounded in a mortar.'"
- *L'shad hashamen*—"Rabbi Abbuha said, 'Do not read *l'shad,* but *shad* [breast]. Just as the infant finds very many a flavor in the breast, so also did Israel find many a taste in the manna as long as they were eating it.'"
- *Dak m'khuspas,* "a fine and flaky substance" (Exodus 16:14)—"Rabbi Yohanan said: 'Something dissolved in the 248 limbs of the body.'" The discussion about these words in Yoma 75b includes the numerological understanding of an equation between the "248 limbs," a standard term, and *m'khuspas,* the five consonants of which total 248 in Hebrew numerology. Interestingly, the numerical value of *rekhem* is also 248. It is the idea of *rekhem,* I think, that is suggested in the subsequent discussion in the Talmud of the words *lekhem evarim* (food for the limbs), on the basis of the prooftext in Psalm 78:25—both sexually suggestive terms in rabbinic literature.
- *Ha'am bokheh l'mishp'khotav,* "the people weeping, every clan apart" (Numbers 11:10)—Yoma 75a interprets *l'mishp'khotav* as "for their families," that is, "because

(Continued on p. 94)

Current Debate: Jackson and the Jews

Jackson, the Jews, and What's Left?

Carl Landauer

In the July/August issue of *Tikkun*, Paul Berman, who is justifiably considered one of the most thoughtful and interesting writers on the left, wrote what seemed to be a sensitive and subtle article about Jesse Jackson and the Jews. Berman agonized over the impossibility, in the final analysis, of supporting a Jackson who has not entirely overcome his problematic attitudes and behavior toward the Jews. For Berman, Jackson represents a true radical alternative in American politics; he is an individual who is willing to raise issues that other candidates simply have not broached. But unfortunately the Jackson of Berman's essay sometimes falters in his attempt to distance himself from his ill-advised remarks of 1984. Berman and others like him thus face "an awkward and rather lonely problem." Supporting Jesse Jackson in 1988 was ultimately impossible, and this reality left Berman and other wounded Jews essentially on the sidelines.

There is, however, something extremely disturbing about Berman's essay: it implies that had Jackson been on his best behavior during this year's primary campaign, the remarks of 1984 could be relegated to the distant past. "When his advisers counsel him," Berman writes, "when he has the chance to write a speech in advance, to think through his words, he will make a good statement. Let us hope his advisers get to him more often. But, in another setting, in a high-pressure interview, old fallacies suddenly reappear." Although Berman feels that "Jackson has abandoned any out-and-out effort at trying to lead Americans in an anti-Semitic direction," he is clearly troubled by Jackson's carelessness in the tough interview.

But what if Jackson's advisers had gotten to him more often? What if Jackson had been able to maintain his poise on the Jewish question throughout the 1988 campaign season? Should a year or two of saying the right things, when it is manifestly in one's interest to say the right things, mean all that much? Jackson's inclinations have been unmistakable, and no overnight, road-to-Damascus conversion can convincingly demonstrate his sincerity. Only a sustained record would demonstrate that his recent denunciations of anti-Semitism represent more than an artificial gesture.

The real problem with Berman's tortured position—wanting to support Jackson but finally being unable to do so—is his apologetic voice. He feels that he has to explain himself to the left at large, that he has to give excuses for his absence from the Jackson camp. The onus is clearly on him. If only he were not himself Jewish and so damn sensitive to Jackson's inability to deal sympathetically with the Jews. But the problem should not be one that Berman and other left-of-center Jews are required to face in isolation; it should be recognized rather as a problem with a left that allows insensitivity, and at times tolerates intolerance, toward Jews. The issue forces us to go beyond the well-publicized tensions between blacks and Jews over affirmative action and urban politics and to ask forthright questions about the left and about anti-Semitism on the left.

In the popular imagination, anti-Semitism has been and always will be the preserve of the right—of the Nazis and the turn-of-the-century Völkisch movements in Germany, of the anti-Dreyfusard rioters in France, of the Ku Klux Klan and the John Birch Society in America. No one questions that anti-Semitism has been an essential component of almost all right-wing movements in Europe and America, but the left also has a history of fostering anti-Semitism. A few decades back, American historian Richard Hofstadter convincingly established the place of anti-Semitism in early twentieth-century populism. Turn-of-the-century social democratic newspapers, especially in Austria, added the "rich Jew" to their demonology. The anti-Semitism of the Soviet Union's purges in the 1930s, and of Czechoslovakia's purges in the 1950s, is unambiguous. And can one claim that the synagogue that was burned down in Sandinista Nicaragua several years ago had nothing to do with anti-Semitism? One may endlessly debate the extent to which anti-Zionism is a convenient code for anti-Semitism, but there already is enough explicit anti-Semitism on the left to go around without our entering into the already endless debate about the link between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. The all-too-present anti-Semitism on the left has been one of the factors that has made some Jews in recent years turn to neoconservatism, to the ranks of *Commentary*'s Norman Podhoretz and Midge Decter.

Jackson's success in the presidential campaign marked a historic change in the openness of Democratic primary voters to considering a black candidate for president. And it demonstrated an openness to the issues he raised and the ideas he articulated. Unfortunately, however, his very success also demonstrated an openness to what Berman calls Jackson's "underlying animosity." One of the results was that left-of-center Jews like Paul Berman found themselves on the outside, assuming as their personal burden Jackson's attitudes toward the Jews. But it is not and should not be their personal burden. Jackson's problem is that his attitudes toward the Jews simply do not mesh with his program. How could they not prove problematic for his egalitarianism? How could they not conflict with his calls for fairness in American life?

Moreover, Jackson's insensitivity presents a problem for the left in America.

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Paul Berman's apologetic essay, with its tortured tone and its expression of loneliness, poses an important question: why have Jews been so often alone in their complaint? Should not the left as a whole, blacks and whites alike, have the strength to repudiate insensitivity and prejudice no matter who is the object? In his final paragraph, Berman insists that "we can't expect that arguments against anti-Semitism will of themselves stride to the microphone and make convincing speeches." I always thought that such expectations were the essence of the left. □

The Bad and the Worse

Paul Berman

Carl Landauer faults the American left for tolerating the kind of animosity toward Jews that has existed in the Jesse Jackson movement. He proposes a very sharp protest against such tolerance. He thinks that to refrain from supporting Jackson requires no apology from us to friends on the left. He thinks that we have been wronged. He wants a crystal-clear position. He is right, right, right. But is there such a thing as being so right you're wrong?

Let us recall why it was that many admirable people supported Jackson in '88. They saw his campaign as a logical extension of the civil rights movement. They liked his egalitarianism, his commitment to the poor, his habit of marching on union picket lines. They saw in him the kind of "class war" Democratic politics that even Michael Dukakis had to adopt in the final days of the presidential campaign. They applauded Jackson's sympathy for Third World aspirations and his kindhearted view of the Third World debt. Doubtless they worried that Jackson's talent for making enemies might damage overall Democratic chances, but they considered that his points of strength offered a long-range chance for Democratic recuperation. Besides, these people noticed that God didn't seem to be finished with Jackson, in the reverend's own phrase. Jackson was no longer resorting to anti-Semitism as he did in 1984. He offered excellent statements on Jewish issues.

He also offered not-so-excellent statements, which, as Landauer and I agree, might have alerted people to a need for God's continuing labors. The seriousness of the issue was shown after the primary season was over, during the Cokely affair in Chicago—the case of the city official who received significant political support after saying that AIDS is a Jewish Doctors' Plot. A stupid phrase like "Hymietown," after all, was never Jackson's central problem. The problem has always been the existence within his constituency of anti-Semitism that goes beyond occasional stupid phrases to larger, virulent obsessions—sometimes in a Christian vein, sometimes in a Muslim vein, sometimes in the style of Third Worldism.

Racial and religious bigotry was once a tiny, almost insignificant element of black nationalist fringe politics. But the tiny has grown—not only in regard to Jews but also in regard to Asian-American and Arab-American shopkeepers, who in several black communities have become objects of attack along classically anti-Semitic lines. And there's reason to worry that Jackson's success advances the cause of these reactionary elements quite as much as it advances the cause of elements that are wonderfully progressive. The candidate's defense of Louis Farrakhan during his *New York Times* primary election interview (quoted in my article) showed the reactionary potential. So did his vastly disappointing role in the Cokely affair (he took the occasion to belabor Mayor Ed Koch). Likewise the sight of appalling bigots making their way to the Democratic convention and to party posts on Jacksonian coattails.

We shouldn't deceive ourselves about Jackson and his campaign. His movement does not emerge from the A. Philip Randolph tradition of Harlem socialism or from the heritage of black liberalism. Jackson's crusade has a religious, demagogic base, flexibly left-wing or right-wing according to circumstance. It is a movement in the old tradition of Southern or Western populism, with certain novelties of the Northern ghettos thrown in. And those elements of the democratic left that declined to endorse the resulting mix—there were quite a few of us in that corner—have reason enough to feel we did the right thing.

But can't we withhold our support without getting on a high horse about it? Anti-Semitism is not exactly new to the American political scene. The Republican party turns out to have an Iron Guard wing. George Bush's White House chief of staff, John Sununu, may believe that the mere concept of Jewish statehood—Zionism, in a word—is racist. The press has begun to rehabilitate Richard Nixon, though Nixon's fondness for Jews stands in inverse relation to his enthusiasm for burglary. Jerry Falwell has recently returned to anti-Semitic fundamentals in response to something as insignificant as Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ*. An excitable person might tear his or her hair out, dwelling on these things. What are opponents of anti-Semitism to do, though? Confine ourselves to supporting solidly Jewish politicians? Alas, that leaves us with Mayor Koch!

There is a kind of naiveté that we had better do without, in which foolish expectations of a world without anti-Semitism are followed by panicky discoveries that the sky is falling in. Am I wrong to detect something of that in Landauer's indignation? His last sentence expresses a rueful "expectation" that, among leftists, there ought to have been no need to argue against anti-Semitism. Who could seriously expect such a thing? The left is vast; there are no membership requirements; prejudices and blindnesses of every

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hue and persuasion come pouring through the door. Of course we're going to have to argue against anti-Semitism. But having begun with an expectation that we shouldn't have to, Landauer can't help arriving, in another part of his argument, at an alarming sense of disillusionment. He discovers that anti-Semitism is "all too present" on the left and always has been, from the Austrian socialists denounced by August Babel all the way to the Sandinistas. Yet even his thumbnail sketch of the history of left-wing anti-Semitism could use a little balance, since talk of Sandinista anti-Semitism derives far more from cynical White House manipulation of panicky American Jewish opinion than it does from Nicaraguan reality (which is bad enough without bringing in nonissues).

An all-or-nothing attitude will get us nowhere, or somewhere even worse than that, namely to neoconservatism. Landauer doesn't endorse that all-or-nothing logic, but, having sketched an unbalanced picture of left-wing sins, he has no alternative but to acknowledge its force. He says: "The all-too-present anti-Semitism on the left has been one of the factors that has made some Jews in recent years turn ... to the ranks of *Commentary*'s Norman Podhoretz and Midge Decter." But he doesn't say what happens next. For how, in reality, does neoconservatism view the fight against anti-Semitism? Expediently. It is *Commentary* that manages to defend Richard Nixon not just as a wily maniac but as a great man, anti-Semitism notwithstanding. *Commentary* somehow advises American Jews to ally with fundamentalist preachers whose bigotry is declared to be a thing of the past. *Commentary* writers sided against the valiant Jacobo Timmerman during his struggle against Argentine nazism.

Commentary's sister magazine *New Criterion* has brought the neoconservative view to a crazy extreme by publishing a Jewish historian who picks Hitler's allies as the preferred victors in the Spanish Civil War. (True, the Axis had its flaws, but it was fighting communism....) These neoconservatives aren't fleeing from anti-Semitism. They are fleeing toward it. Someday we on the left are going to have to rescue them from their own allies.

Forgive the orotund phrasing, but the struggle against anti-Semitism has only one sound basis. That basis is the tradition of Enlightenment leftism—that is, what normally goes by the name of democratic socialism in Europe, though, in our country, where the S-word is verboten, we generally use the L-word. Enlightenment leftism opposes bigotry of all sorts because it opposes irrationality everywhere. It proclaims the equal rights of all because it opposes the feudal idea that people should be judged by ancestry or religion. It opposes discrimination, favors equality, relies on reason. That is the leftism that we support, not merely because we oppose anti-Semitism. If whole regions of the self-styled left reject these ideas, we criticize them from a perspective that is itself left-wing. With regard to doing something about anti-Semitism, there's no other way. If we condemn bigotry merely out of self-interest, why should anyone support us? Our politics must rest on principle, and the principle is anti-bigotry across the board, combined with a commitment to a just society.

Now, in America, the greatest bigotry of all, the bigotry of bigotries, has been and always will be the hatred that even today leads to violent assaults on random black men on the streets of New York. Turn how you will, there's no avoiding that fact. A thousand other grievances may call for redress in this country; a thousand possible campaigns can be made. But if we mean to be at all serious about advancing a broad concept of rights for everyone, there's no alternative but to keep a perspective on what is the grandest of grievances and what are merely hair-raising dangers. All of American history obliges us to take part in the struggle for black rights. Not that for anyone with a sense of social protest, it's so unpleasant to take part. On the contrary.

But all right, sometimes it *is* unpleasant. The speaker's platform is sometimes filled with leaders who are definitely not Martin Luther King. The movement may take bad turns. Twenty years ago, young black activists in SNCC kicked white liberals and radicals out of the movement ranks, which was a turn that helped produce the harvest of ultrarightist ideas that are currently in bloom among some blacks. Yet from the perspective of our own principles, none of that ultimately matters. In the profoundest sense, we will never be kicked out. We won't go. We will champion black rights from the sidelines, if need be. We will do it because the struggle for black rights and equality lies at the heart of the struggle for the rights of all—even if the black world contains leaders and followers who present their own cause otherwise.

That is why our opposition to Jesse Jackson must always be a little mixed. If Jackson were an anti-Semite and nothing else, a Farrakhan and not a legitimate champion of the oppressed, the case would be different. His movement would not in any serious way be a movement for rights. But Jackson is, in fact, a civil rights leader and a champion of social justice—who is, at the same time, other things too. He is a leader who undermines his own principles. He is an advance and a setback wrapped in one. He is a walking "but." Perhaps he has become the black William Jennings Bryan, that grand turn-of-the-century populist, friend of the masses, foe of "the interests"—and foe, also, of Darwinism, science, modernity, and reason. Our political attitude has to be big enough to take in contradictions on a Bryanesque scale. We fiercely (yes) condemn some of what Jackson represents; we can hardly propose him as president; we cannot accept such a man as leader of the left. But our own purposes and ideals prevent us from breaking with the forces for civil rights and social justice that do accept him.

Anti-Semitism as an heir to the civil rights campaigns of the last generation—what an absurdity! It's like discovering that the leader of the ACLU has become a tool of the FBI. But then, the leader of the ACLU did at one time (during the McCarthy era) become a tool of the FBI—without causing the democratic left to abandon civil liberties. These days we're not abandoning the idea of a rainbow insurgency. Bolting rightward has no appeal to us. We are criticizing and we are waiting. And if meanwhile that leaves us in an awkward spot, if for the moment we look a little indecisive, if there are critics on the left who find us disloyal and critics on the right who deplore our commitment to left principles, well... welcome to the 1980s. Today is the age of the bad and the worse. □

Current Debate: Affirmative Action

Recent Supreme Court decisions, coupled with the prospects of new right-wing justices appointed by President Bush, make it likely that we will face a full-scale assault on affirmative action in the coming years. Tikkun's *belief that the liberal and progressive forces do best when they understand and confront their opponents' arguments has led us to run this debate, which includes an argument with which we vehemently disagree.*

Affirmative Action vs. Jewish Men

Michael Levin

As this article is being written, the Supreme Court is in the midst of reviewing its position on affirmative action. The *New York Times* has noted that the Rehnquist Court is already less inclined to support affirmative action than the Burger Court was. Moreover, since liberal justices William Brennan and Thurgood Marshall are in their eighties, there is every reason to believe that President Bush will have the chance to appoint Supreme Court justices who are strongly opposed to affirmative action.

Since controversy about affirmative action is unlikely to subside in the near future, now is a good time to re-present the argument against affirmative action. In so doing, I will emphasize the consequences of quotas for Jewish males, a group not often mentioned in the debate. A showing of injustice to Jewish males should, one imagines, make Jewish defenders of quotas extremely uncomfortable. I do not use the Jewish male here merely as a stalking-horse; since Jewish males have contributed so much to America, gratuitous harm to Jewish males injures all of the society that has welcomed Jews more openly than has any other. Like all forms of ingratitude, Jewish rejection of meritocratic democracy is self-defeating.

As the reader will notice, I use *quota* and *affirmative action* (and *goal*) interchangeably. These ideas are commonly said to differ in that quotas categorically reserve a certain number of positions for women and nonwhite males, while numerical goals are "flexible" and need only be pursued in good faith.

Such a distinction cannot logically be defended, however. Both policies disadvantage white males on the basis of race and sex. If it is discriminatory to deny a white male a job just because he is a white male, then it is discriminatory to reduce his chances for a job or ask him to meet more stringent standards just because he is a white male.

Moreover, in certain cases it is impossible to distinguish between quotas and goals. Consider an employer of nineteen white male engineers and four female or nonwhite male engineers who has adopted the goal of having 25 percent of his engineering staff not be white males. When two new positions open, his goal commits him to seeking at least one woman or nonwhite male to fill them. Suppose he hires a white male for the first position after a merit-based competition among all applicants, and the best-qualified applicant for the remaining position is a Jewish male. What should the employer do? His goal creates a presumption against hiring the Jewish male that would not exist against hiring an identically qualified black female and also would not exist had the first position gone to a black female. In essence, the employer's goal has collapsed into a quota, since he will be unable to fulfill his goal unless he gives the last position to a nonwhite male or a woman. Anyone professing to grasp the distinction between goals and quotas must explain what the employer is to do in cases such as these.

In practice, of course, the dilemma is invariably resolved by grasping the quota horn. The National Science Foundation offers minority graduate fellowships restricted to "American Indian, Black, Hispanic, Native Alaskan, or Native Pacific Islander" applicants. The General Motors endowed scholarship is limited to "Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native American, or female students." The City University of New York offers Helena Rubenstein tuition grants for "women Ph.D. students." Princeton offers graduate fellowships for minorities and women. Innumerable other examples of the explicit denial of both private and public resources to white males, hence to Jewish males, can be found.

Such quotas are often said to differ from traditional Jim Crow discrimination in that they intend to "include" a specific population (women and nonwhite males) rather than to "exclude" anybody. Yet these same quota advocates would surely still reject Jim Crow laws even if they were articulated as an attempt to include white males. The fact remains that the human race is partitioned into two sexes and many ethnicities. Increase the representation of women and nonwhite males, and you automatically decrease the representation of white males. In law, people are presumed to intend the easily foreseeable consequences of their actions, and, by that standard, quota advocates must be presumed to intend the discrimination against white males. Those who find use for the concept of *structural discriminatory effects* must at least recognize the structural anti-Semitic effects of affirmative action.

Candid supporters of affirmative action admit that it discriminates but characteristically cite three arguments to justify it anyway. I cannot prove that every possible argument for quotas is a version of one of these three, but the failure of quota advocates to produce any other justifications in two decades of discussion suggests that no

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such further argument exists. To be sure, many quota supporters seek to evade the need for argument altogether by simply asserting the desirability of more blacks and women in various positions without indicating why such an increase is either desirable or justified. Such bald assertions beg the question; sooner or later an argument is needed. Therefore, I now turn to the three main arguments.

1. **Role Models: "Role models" in unusual jobs will inspire blacks and women to pursue options beyond those implicit in current stereotypes. A self-sustaining influx of blacks and women into nontraditional fields will be triggered once a sufficent (but never specified) number are in place.**

The problem with this argument is that the goal purportedly served by creating role models is not the removal of external barriers to the pursuit by individual blacks and women of what they wish to do—equality of opportunity in the sense used to justify civil rights measures—but the removal of internal psychological barriers to the *formation* of job preferences that are thought desirable for them to have. This latter goal is not at all the provision of equal opportunity. A person who does not compete for a job because he or she does not want it has not been impeded in any way—unless people's actual preferences are somehow conceived of as obstructions alien to their possessors.

Furthermore, the role-model argument ignores the damage done by abandoning the ideal of merit. Affirmative action entails paperwork costs exceeding $7 billion annually. Moreover, since blacks and women are, on average, less productive than white males (as even economists who support affirmative action, such as Jonathan Leonard, concede), the more affirmative action "succeeds" in placing women and nonwhite males where white males otherwise would have been, the more it downgrades productivity. Thus the federal government's internal affirmative action program alone, which affects fewer than 4 percent of the work force covered by affirmative action, costs $16 billion annually in forgone productivity.

Nonmonetary costs are harder to measure, but consider that in 1979 medical schools admitted 14.8 percent of blacks who scored between one and four out of a possible seven on their Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT), while *no* white applicant scoring in that range was admitted. Some people argue that standardized tests are biased against blacks so that mediocre black performance on such tests underpredicts black performance in universities. In fact, MCATs, LSATs, and SATs *overpredict* black performance, a circumstance reflected in the high black dropout rate from professional schools. Not only may affirmative action be presumed to be wasting medical resources; it is surely—given the external and self-generated pressures on medical schools to graduate black doctors in acceptable numbers—lowering the quality of medical practice in the United States.

Yet, even if the role-model effect were positive and incurred tolerable collateral damage, the role-model argument faces the powerful objection that it is *unfair* to bypass white males (always including Jewish males) who are not themselves responsible for the plight of blacks and women. A randomly selected Jewish male applying to medical school has done nothing to damage the psyches of blacks and women. He is, ironically, likely to be more egalitarian in outlook than the average person. Why reduce his chances of admission so that others may be inspired by the sight of black and female doctors?

2. **Prevention: Discrimination is too subtle, pervasive, and vicious to be treated ex post facto on a case-by-case basis. It must be stopped in advance by guaranteeing the outcomes that could be expected if discrimination did not exist.**

This argument assumes that distribution of jobs in a nondiscriminatory world would more accurately reflect the proportion of blacks and women in the population at large. In practice, virtual numerical equality is the benchmark assumed by the judiciary, the Justice Department, and the Labor Department. A hiring criterion is deemed discriminatory if the pass rate for women and nonwhite males falls below 80 percent of the pass rate for white males. This assumption, then, attributes to discrimination virtually all discrepancies in occupationally relevant variables between white males and nonwhite males or women.

Even if this claim were true, it still would not follow that it is the government's prerogative to impose parity. Governments are usually accorded the right to prevent emergencies but are otherwise expected to keep away until some wrong has actually been done. It would be impermissible to reduce the aggregate murder rate by incarcerating all eighteen-year-old males, because such a sweep would punish individuals who had never done, and never would do, any harm. Since discrimination is patently less serious than murder, reducing the discrimination rate does not warrant preventive measures if reducing the murder rate does not.

To meet skepticism about the existence of discrimination too subtle to be detected, quota advocates posit unintended "structural" discrimination built into society's institutions. Let us try to construe this idea in terms of a structural advantage enjoyed by Jewish males over blacks. A Jewish male is more likely than a black to be raised in a milieu that rewards academic skills and prepares him for professions for which academic skills are essential. He eventually joins one of these professions, thereby reinforcing its association with academic achievement, verbal aptitude, confidence in argument, and other traits salient among Jews. This reinforced association favors continued Jewish entry into these fields while further serving to exclude blacks.

What is wrong with this type of "exclusion"? That the traits perceived as necessary for a job simply reflect the traits of its entrenched practitioners is mere dogma. Jews are successful in academically oriented fields because they display great aptitude in these areas. Black qualifications and expectations may be conditioned by the cast of society, but *all* qualifications and expectations are conditioned by factors beyond individual control.

Because quotas keep foundering on the question of justice, quota advocates make their strongest case when they insist that quotas are not merely consistent with justice, but demanded by it. President Johnson made such a claim when he introduced affirmative action in 1965. Which leads to the final argument:

3. **Compensation: Quotas give today's women and nonwhite males the jobs they would have gotten had**

there been no discrimination. By neutralizing the present competitive disadvantage caused by past injuries, quotas compensate women and nonwhite males for the competitive abilities they would have possessed had their ancestors been treated justly. Better-qualified white males, who would not have been better qualified if discrimination did not exist, should not be allowed to profit from the wrongdoing of others.

The major premise of this argument is correct: people deserve what they have wrongfully lost. Much more than this premise is needed to establish a compensation claim, however. Injury must be shown; the injured party, the tort-feasor, and the immediate beneficiaries of the injury identified; the cost of the injury established; and the proposed remedy proven feasible. Blacks were injured by slavery, segregation, and the lynch mob, but it is impossible to measure how grave the remaining impact of such factors is on any individual contemporary black. Therefore it is impossible to say whether in a nondiscriminatory world a particular black man would have been more qualified than the particular white who is hired instead of him. Common sense indicates that slavery and lynchings in Alabama have not benefited a Jewish male whose grandparents relocated from Minsk to Hester Street in 1904. There is no evidence that a single Jewish male medical school applicant passed over in favor of blacks with lower MCAT scores would have scored below *those particular blacks* in a world that had not witnessed slavery and lynching.

Questions of gender injury must be treated separately because white women as a group have suffered no injuries remotely comparable to those that have been suffered by blacks as a group. When called upon to specify the type of oppression women have undergone that is serious enough to warrant compensation, serious advocates of gender quotas rely on sex stereotyping. I find something deeply offensive, racist even, in equating the suffering of women with the suffering of blacks.

Moreover, it ought to be noted that women are psychologically healthier than men—an odd trait for an oppressed group. Women commit suicide one-third as frequently as men do, and they commit one-twentieth the felonies; drug addiction, alcoholism, and homicide are virtual male monopolies. Psychological studies have shown that little girls who accept sex stereotypes possess as much ego strength as do little boys and are just as confident as are little boys that they belong to the superior sex.

The most serious failure of the analogy between blacks and women, however, is that women marry men while blacks don't necessarily marry whites. The transmission of injury across generations makes some sense in the case of ethnic minorities because these minorities tend to form a reproductive subgroup within the general population. Women, whose ancestors include everybody, do not. Blacks do not have a white parent for every black parent, but every woman has a male parent as well as a female parent—so any disadvantage the average woman inherits from her mother's supposed handicaps is balanced by her father's supposedly ill-gotten gains. And because most men marry and give their wives effective use of the family assets, gender quotas harm a woman for every woman they assist. Whenever a woman is preferred to a man because he is a man, his wife loses whatever the quota beneficiary gained. It is a curious form of group compensation that "makes whole" one member of a group by depriving another. Racial quotas would surely be discarded at once if they injured a black for every black they helped.

I have heard it argued that Jews must embrace the logic of the compensation argument because the same logic justified the creation of Israel. If that were true, then Israel should not have been created. No Palestinians displaced by the creation of Israel were responsible for the sufferings of world Jewry, and therefore they ought not have been made to pay for what they did not do. Happily, it is possible to justify Israel's existence in other ways, which entail no support for compensatory quotas. For one thing, many of the Palestinians who left did so voluntarily. Second, given the emergency situation created by World War II, it was obvious that something extraordinary had to be done for the remaining Jews. This something may have exacted a price from other populations, but justifying an emergency measure on humane and utilitarian grounds is not to justify it as compensation. What is more, support for the *continued* existence of Israel implies no commitment to affirmative action even if Israel was *created* for dubious reasons of compensation. Several generations have passed since Israel's creation, whatever the grounds for it might have been, and few of its present citizens played any part in its founding. Too many innocent people would suffer if Israel were now eradicated.

Indeed, questions of feasibility return us to the issue of quotas. In general, compensation for a lost ability is reckoned monetarily rather than in kind. A dancer crippled by a careless piano mover does not ask to be hired to perform *Swan Lake;* he asks the piano mover to pay him what he would have earned from dancing had his toe not been mangled and his ability to dance taken from him. Yet quota advocates demand unsuitable jobs instead of reparations.

Many quota advocates have recently exchanged the compensation argument for the view that no one (including best-qualified white males) has a right against discrimination and that the government may permit and enforce racial and gender preference when the goal is the good of society as a whole. This is an astonishing position coming from people who see quotas as a continuation of the struggle for individual rights. In any case, proponents of such a generalized utilitarian defense of affirmative action do not seem to realize the thinness of the ice on which they are skating. Consider, for example, the fact that some authorities argue that rearing by mothers is better for children than rearing by babysitters. Does it follow, therefore, that men ought to be favored in the workplace and that governmental measures ought to be instituted to keep women at home? Once one starts using such broad-based utilitarian reasoning, one will find just as many reasons to discriminate against women and nonwhite males as reasons to discriminate against white males.

In short, discrimination is such a serious matter that justifying it would require indisputable evidence of overwhelming benefit. No such showing has ever been made. In any case, even if white males have no right not to be discriminated against by employers, their rights certainly are violated by

governmental enforcement of racial and gender preference (through court orders and Labor Department regulations) and by inducements for such preference (in the form of set-asides). Injustice enters when the government uses its coercive power to disadvantage one group and not another on the basis of race and color. If there is no injustice in an employer's discriminating against Jewish males, then there is no injustice in an employer's discriminating against blacks, women, or anyone else he pleases. The government must permit both or permit neither.

Treating Jewish males as paradigmatic innocent victims focuses attention on the injustice of quotas. But it is also appropriate to take the broader view and consider the Jewish male in his own right. Of the 675,000 lawyers in the U.S., between 70,000 and 100,000 are Jewish; of these, 80 percent are male. No comparable statistics exist in the medical or academic professions, but a similar high proportion of Jewish males most likely exists among the 450,000 doctors in the U.S. and among the 400,000 college and university professors. While they make up only 1.25 percent of the general population, Jewish men comprise about 15 percent of the academic, legal, and medical professions—"overrepresentation" by a factor of twelve. Jewish males are similarly disproportionately represented in engineering, in the entertainment world, and, more recently, in corporate management. As they have done throughout history, Jewish men have excelled in the most demanding, prestigious, and remunerative fields when given no more and no less than the same chance given to everyone else.

Unfortunately, these fields are precisely those in which the pressure for quotas is greatest. No organization satisfies Labor Department requirements by hiring another female secretary or another black security guard, but it gets many points indeed for hiring a black or female engineer. Because of the prominence of Jewish men in the professions, anything remotely approaching numerical proportionality therein would in effect be a move against Jewish men.

Assume, for instance, that 25 percent (or 380,000) of the 1,525,000 positions in the professions were seriously "targeted" for blacks and Hispanics. Fifty-five thousand Jewish men—that is, 15 percent of the targeted positions, which would go to Jewish men under merit competition—would be denied jobs. If 50 percent of the remaining positions were "targeted" for women—and under current government rules a female member of a racial minority does not count twice toward the satisfaction of a quota—the jobs of another 112,000 Jewish men would be lost. Since there are only 1,800,000 adult Jewish males in the U.S., we are speaking of discrimination-in-effect against 10 percent of the adult Jewish male population. Add to this number the fact that many Orthodox Jewish men enter small, family-run businesses and that the foregoing calculations are limited to the three most saliently "Jewish" professions, and quotas end up discriminating against perhaps a majority of Jewish men seeking employment in the general work force.

A final point must be raised in this context, despite its tendency to embarrass some Jews. This is the matter of Jewish genius. The list of Nobel laureates over the last forty years in the sciences, or of winners of the Field Medal in mathematics, displays a startling number of Jewish men. The importance of some of these contributions—Jonas Salk's cure for polio, for instance—further emphasizes the importance of these Jewish men. It cannot be assumed that these breakthroughs would have occurred had the quota system been in effect in this country throughout the twentieth century or that such breakthroughs will continue once quotas are entrenched. It is unwise to take the achievements of Jewish men as givens and heedlessly attack the foundations on which these achievements have historically rested. □

The Meretriciousness of Merit: Or, Why Jewish Males Oughtn't Be So Smug

Josh Henkin

Would that Michael Levin spoke only for himself and not for a growing number of Americans. Though few people share his unbridled hostility toward blacks and women, many claim, as he does, that affirmative action somehow represents an injustice to the "best and the brightest"—those who, "on merit," deserve to be admitted to the top graduate schools and given the most lucrative and prestigious jobs. I know they say this, because I hear them speaking this way all the time. Young people in particular. Young Jewish men especially.

On one level, this attitude toward affirmative action reflects a new reality. Economic stagnation means that, for the first time, many young Americans face the prospect of living out their adulthood in relatively less prosperity than they did their childhood. As a result, the fight to secure a spot in medical school, law school, business school, or whatever other school it is that's supposed to guarantee one's share in the American dream has become particularly bitter.

Moreover, Jews have often been at best ambivalent about affirmative action. The three major Jewish organizations—the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, and the Anti-Defamation League—all came out in opposition to the affirmative action program of the Medical School of the University of California, Davis, in the famous Bakke case, and affirmative action has long been a bone of contention

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between blacks and Jews. Even some Jews who call themselves liberal have trouble accepting affirmative action.

The reasons for this opposition go well beyond the fact that many more people want to go to medical school than can. Jews are particularly sensitive to distinctions based on race or religion because such distinctions have always been used to their detriment. People like Levin see modern "meritocratic" capitalism as a boon because it allows Jews to achieve success in ways that were impossible in feudal society. Nobility is replaced by neutrality, status by standardized tests, and Jews are given a piece of the pie. Thus, any return to admissions and employment decisions based on race or religion reminds Jews of their previously precarious position in society, and specifically of the quotas that limited the number of Jews admitted to universities during the earlier parts of this century.

The problem with this argument is that the American ideal of meritocracy is a sham. Granted, a modicum of social mobility exists in America—certainly more than in feudal societies. But it is absurd to argue, as Levin does, that those people who achieve academic and career success do so by winning the meritocratic race. The starting line is radically different for different people, and these divergent starting lines all too often reflect racial and sexual divisions. We needn't be great social scientists to realize that we're not likely to find a Kennedy on the unemployment line or a poor black from Harlem in a Harvard classroom, but, given the strength of America's belief in meritocracy, some numbers are called for.

U.S. government statistics show that, compared to a person whose father is a college graduate, someone whose father has only "some college" is 50 percent more likely to drop out of high school. A person whose father didn't go to college at all is 100 percent more likely to drop out, and someone whose father dropped out of high school himself is 250 percent more likely. Dropout rates increase similarly with respect to the mother's education. In short, education levels, and therefore income levels, are maintained across generations.

Furthermore, according to recent studies, the second most common way that Americans find employment is through the help of a friend or relative. Add to that other types of connections—job applicants who went to the same college, or belong to the same country club, as their employer—and it becomes apparent how helpful the old boys' network is. More important, the old boys' network is just that—a network of boys. White boys. Which helps explain why this intricate system of connections perpetuates white male power.

The old boys' network is just that—a network of boys. White boys.

Of course, the fact that women and blacks start the meritocratic race behind white men is only part of the problem. The running conditions that they face are also significantly more hazardous, as sexism and racism get in the way of their success. In fact, sexism and racism go a long way toward explaining why women still earn less than seventy cents on the male dollar, why a black man with more than an elementary school education earns 30 percent less than a white man with the same education, and why the black poverty rate is nearly three times as high as the overall poverty rate and (unlike the overall poverty rate) is on the rise.

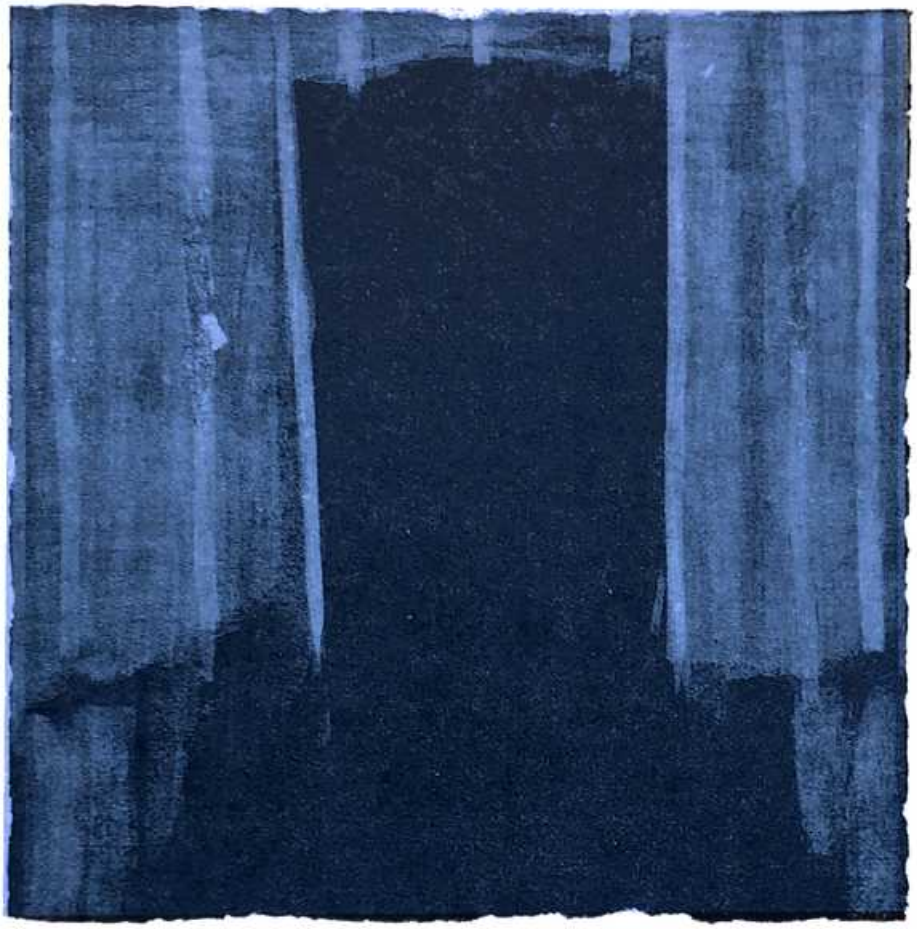
Levin claims that sexism and racism are nonissues—which, I must admit, leaves me at a loss. I would just note briefly that the recent proliferation of *overt* racist incidents—most notably, the rise of racist attacks on campuses, and former Los Angeles Dodger General Manager Al Campanis's "Nightline" statement that blacks don't have what it takes to be baseball managers—suggests how profound the problem of prejudice remains.

Despite all the evidence, the illusion of meritocracy dies hard, in part because our educational system is geared to perpetuate it. Nowhere is this fact more evident than in the proliferation and increasing importance of standardized tests. These tests tend to be composed of multiple-choice questions with right or wrong answers, and this format, along with the fact that the tests arrive at the testing centers with No. 2 pencils and with bubble-in computer sheets that are shipped off to be graded by machine, lends them an aura of objectivity.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Levin tries to argue that high standardized test scores are an indication of merit and ought to play a large role in admissions decisions. He complains that blacks are admitted to medical school with lower standardized test scores than are whites, and that this fact is responsible for many blacks' failure to graduate. Those who do graduate, Levin adds, end up "lowering the quality of medical practice in the United States."

Levin dismisses the problems of standardized tests much too quickly. One has to wonder why a test like the SAT, for example, which is supposed to measure "aptitude," produces scores that increase proportionally with students' wealth. The average SAT score for a student whose family has an annual income under $6,000 is 771, and the scores go up steadily until they reach 998 for students whose family income is over $50,000. Furthermore, coaching has proved successful in significantly increasing test scores, giving a tremendous advantage to those students who can afford the hefty prices. Finally, study after study indicates that standardized tests are culturally biased, Levin's protests to the contrary notwithstanding. On a recent SAT, for example, students were asked to give the appropriate multiple-choice answer for an analogy to the word pair "runner : marathon." Fifty-three percent of whites got the correct answer, "oarsman : regatta," while only 22 percent of blacks did. Do black students have lower "aptitude" than whites, or is it possible that the public schools on Chicago's South Side forgot to announce crew team tryouts that year?

Levin's argument that standardized tests are fairly accurate measures of medical school performance simply begs the question of whether medical schools are teaching and testing the right things. One would expect that those students who excel at rote learning, and consequently perform well on the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT), would be likely to do well in medical school, which emphasizes precisely those types of skills. But one ought to be worried about the kind of doctors these "successful" applicants end up becoming.



In fact, many people *are* worried. Melvin Konner, writing in the highly acclaimed *Becoming A Doctor* (Viking, 1987) about the tremendous problems with medical school education and with the practice of medicine in America, notes that successful medical students are usually "ones who have great memories but lack much else," and the dean of the Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons has said that it would be nice if this country had medical school students who knew "how to deal with the patient, the patient's family and his whole life, rather than 'the third bed on the left with a coronary.'"

Despite all the problems with standardized tests, they remain incredibly important methods of evaluation. The market reinforces their power, since colleges attempt to attract prospective students by boasting of high test score averages, and test score results help determine federal funding and accreditation for American schools. This emphasis on standardized testing reaches its logical conclusion as law schools brag about their pass rate on the bar exam and many law schools gear their curriculum toward helping students pass the bar. A standardized test is administered so that students can go to school in order to take a standardized test—which ought to help us conclude that people who test well tend to test well.

* * *

The question of how to determine what makes a good medical student, law school student, or any other kind of student or job applicant leads us to an even more damning indictment of the meritocratic assumptions that underlie Levin's arguments. For by admitting that the relevant question is what makes a good student, we also admit that the question of who "merits" or "deserves" to be admitted makes no sense.

Thus, suppose, for example, the absurd: that we didn't smell a rat in this meritocratic race; that we lived in a society of genuine equal opportunity, a society where universities were capable of evaluating applicants in ways that were not influenced by unfair social advantages, a society where everyone started the race at the same point and faced the same racing conditions. It still would not follow that the winner of the race ought to gain admission. In other words, there is no good reason to conceive of admission to graduate school as a medal for achievement. Medical schools exist to train good doctors, not to confer rewards upon the meritorious. Thus, if we woke up tomorrow to find all disease cured and doctors superfluous, Levin would be hard-pressed to argue that his "clever" Jewish men were being deprived of their right to go to medical school. Their ability to memorize chemical equations would simply no longer be useful, much in the same way that it wouldn't be useful had they been born into a hunter-gatherer society. Woody Allen makes precisely this point in *Stardust Memories:* "We live in a society that puts a big value on jokes, you know.... If I had been an Apache Indian, those guys didn't need comedians at all, right? So I'd be out of work."

The problems with meritocratic arguments run deeper still. Not only is it a matter of luck that the rest of society is willing to pay us for our talents; it's also a matter of luck that we are endowed with these talents in the first place. Thus, an appropriate graduate school admissions letter might read something like the following, offered by Professor Michael Sandel in *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge University Press, 1982):

> Dear (Successful) Applicant,
>
> We are pleased to inform you that your application for admission has been accepted. Through no doing of your own, it turns out that you happen to have the traits that society needs at the moment, so we propose to exploit your assets for society's advantage by admitting you to the study of medicine/law.
>
> No praise is intended or to be inferred from this decision, as your having the relevant qualities is arbitrary from a moral point of view. You are to be congratulated ... only in the sense that a winner of a lottery is to be congratulated.... For this, you may properly celebrate.
>
> You ... may be tempted to celebrate in the further sense that you take this admission to reflect favorably, if not on your native endowments, at least on the conscientious effort you have made.... But the assumption that you de-

serve even the superior character necessary to your effort is equally problematic, for your character also depends on fortunate circumstances of various kinds for which you can claim no credit. The notion of desert seems not to apply in your case.

We look forward nonetheless to seeing you in the fall.

Sincerely yours....

In short, no one—even in a hypothetically meritocratic society—has a right to be judged on merit, because admission to graduate school is not a reward for the meritorious. It is—or ought to be—a method of selecting students who will do the most good for the population at large, who will help bring about a society that is just, that is more genuinely equal. That is why Levin's analogy to the crippled dancer who is allowed to perform in *Swan Lake* is rather outrageous. The issue is not reparations to the crippled dancer—or, in this case, to the black or female applicant. Blacks and women don't deserve to get into law school any more—or any less—than white men do. Proponents of affirmative action simply demand that we reevaluate our criteria for admissions and employment, that we recognize that the current standards are not the ones that benefit society most. Instead, these standards favor the privileged and thus perpetuate inequality. Minority quotas, by contrast, help bring about a more equal society by enabling minorities to achieve success and to become role models for others—both black and white. In truth, the Jewish male with high MCAT scores may be the crippled dancer, and the black woman with the lower scores the graceful ballerina.

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Of course, the fact that no one merits admission to university doesn't mean that absolutely anything goes when it comes to admissions decisions. The former university policies of denying admission to blacks and establishing Jewish quotas clearly were discriminatory. But what made such policies unfair was not that blacks and Jews were not admitted per se, but that denying them admission was the *purpose* or *aim* of these policies—an end in its own right. Affirmative action programs, by contrast, do not *aim* to deny Jewish men admission or employment. That is simply the unfortunate but necessary consequence of accepting blacks and women, given the relatively small number of spots available.

This distinction, which has come to be known as the principle of *double effect,* is hardly trivial. It reflects our moral intuitions and has in fact become one of the fundamental principles of Western morality. An example of this principle's use in the moral decision making of warfare may help to illuminate it.

No one—even in a hypothetically meritocratic society—has a right to be judged on merit, because admission to graduate school is not a reward for the meritorious.

According to just-war theory, a just war may be waged even though a certain number of civilians will inevitably be killed. Soldiers must do their best to avoid killing the civilians; in fact, they are expected to put themselves at risk in order to minimize civilian deaths. Nevertheless, these deaths are often an inevitable consequence of war. By contrast, people who kill civilians intentionally, whose *purpose* or *aim* is to kill innocent people, are guilty of terrorism. The moral distinction has nothing to do with the civilians' dying, per se. In fact, many more civilians die during a war than during a terrorist attack. Instead, the distinction has to do with intention—with whether the civilian deaths are the *goal itself* or whether they are simply the unfortunate but necessary consequence of fighting for a just cause.

In this light, Levin's notion of *discrimination-in-effect* is as nonsensical as the notion of *murder-in-effect.* Murder isn't the effect; death is. What makes "murder" murder is the fact that the act is perpetrated by someone who intends to perform it. If that weren't the case, we would see no reason to hold the murderer responsible. We would regard his or her act as merely an unfortunate occurrence, like an earthquake. So, too, discrimination is not an effect—though it surely does have one. It is an intentional or reckless policy.

Levin anticipates this double-effect distinction and tries to make light of it by claiming that affirmative action advocates would surely oppose Jim Crow laws even if such laws were supported by the argument that they were attempts to "include" whites as opposed to attempts to "exclude" blacks.

The sheer silliness of this example illustrates the weakness of Levin's position. Calling Jim Crow laws attempts to include whites obviously doesn't make them so. Whites were hardly in need of inclusion since they represented—and still represent—America's majority culture. By the same token, it would be absurd for an all-white student organization to argue that it was not discriminating against blacks, that it was attempting simply to include whites. Black student organizations and women's support groups, on the other hand, which are now common on college campuses and which, for most intents and purposes, end up excluding whites and men respectively, are not discriminatory. Their purpose is not to exclude whites and men, but to give blacks and women the opportunity to congregate without feeling the normal pressures of being an oppressed minority in a white-male majority culture.

Moreover, in light of the insidious types of subtle racism and sexism that plague our society, we are predisposed to have stricter or more lenient conceptions of intent depending on whether majority or minority group members are being excluded. As Levin notes, government hiring policies are considered discriminatory "if the pass rate for women and nonwhite males falls below 80 percent of the pass rate for white males." Given the pervasiveness of prejudice in America, the mere fact that blacks and women are being hired at incredibly low rates suggests that discrimination is involved. In other words, the results themselves automatically indicate intent to exclude—if not individual intent on the part of the employer, then a more subtle sort of structural societal intent or reckless disregard. When members of majority groups, on the other hand, are denied jobs, we have no a priori reason to assume that there has been any intent

to exclude them—that they have suffered discrimination.

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Levin's central arguments focus on the question of whether affirmative action discriminates against white men. Nevertheless, he also claims that, discriminatory or not, affirmative action is unwise—that it has bad consequences. In Levin's mind, one of the great tragedies of affirmative action is its economic cost—billions of dollars in "forgone productivity," in particular.

It's hard to take this argument seriously, but I'll try. If women and blacks are less "productive," as Levin puts it, maybe he should try affirmative action. Giving them greater access to the pockets of power would only increase their "productivity." It would be an investment in GNP—to put it in terms that Levin might warm to.

Of course, that's hardly the main point. Much more relevant is Levin's—and far too many other people's—obsession with GNP in the first place. Levin supports maximum economic "productivity," I suppose, because it translates into more disposable income. Leaving aside the question of whose wallets end up holding this added income, one might ask why economic growth is the be-all and end-all—the definition of the word *productive*. Levin is so consumed by his GNP fetish that it never occurs to him that the utterly mindless and demeaning work that people endure in order to make the economy grow simply isn't worth it. If it *had* occurred to him, he might have noticed the contradictions in trumpeting the "productivity" of men while at the same time admitting that women are emotionally healthier than men—that "drug addiction, alcoholism, and homicide are virtual male monopolies" and that women commit suicide one-third as frequently as men do. Instead, he simply mouths the dominant ideology that as long as society provides us with forty-three brands of toothpaste to choose from, all is hunky-dory.

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Finally, as a Jewish male I was in many ways most interested by Levin's statistics about Jewish male achievement—about the disproportionate number of Jewish male doctors, lawyers, businessmen, Nobel laureates, and so on. Intrigued, I decided to figure out what else Jewish males were good at. So I scrounged up an old copy of the *Village Voice*, which featured New York's ten worst landlords—sleazy businessmen, many of whom have already been indicted or convicted for hundreds of violations, including (among other things) burning down their buildings in order to collect insurance, denying heat and utilities to tenants, and physically attacking tenants. What do you know? At least four of the ten were Jewish males. One was the former president of a synagogue. Pretty impressive statistics, I thought. Even for a place with as many Jewish men as New York. Then I looked at the runners-up—those in the "dishonorable mention" category. Even better: five out of seven were Jewish males, with names like Israel Blum and Elazar Reichman heading the list.

Then I looked through old newspapers, finding the names of people involved in the insider-trading scandals. From Boesky on down, the names read like a synagogue membership list. Hmm ... I thought. International monetary conspiracy.

One gets the point. The same types of statistical arguments that Levin uses to prove Jewish male superiority can be—and have been—used to show that Jewish men are corrupt. Unfortunately, the sort of argument that Levin makes ultimately leads us to take the wrong approach when analyzing social problems. We hear Levin arguing that Jews are superior because they are disproportionately represented in positions of power, or other people arguing that Jews are greedy thieves because they are disproportionately involved in certain economic scandals, or still others arguing that blacks are immoral because of their disproportionately high crime rate—and we get scared and insist that the only way to address social problems is to treat people as individuals, not as members of groups. But that is the wrong approach because people *are* members of groups—racial, religious, economic, and so on—and the groups' values invariably help shape the values of their individual members. People who are trying to change society have a great deal to learn from information about groups, but the trick is to use this information properly. When the Michael Levins of the world use it to glorify one group of people and denigrate another, they make everyone else's task much more difficult.

The same types of statistical arguments that Levin uses to prove Jewish male superiority can be—and have been—used to show that Jewish men are greedy thieves.

* * *

In Deuteronomy, it is written that God warned the Children of Israel not to say to themselves: "My power and the strength of my hands are responsible for my success." For, in fact, God is responsible. Today, when most people no longer believe that God actively shapes events on earth—that God is responsible for our successes and our failures—this biblical message is no less important. Jewish men need not pray to Lady Luck to recognize how fortunate they are—to realize that they have as little right as the Children of Israel to be haughty. Michael Levin is right to be proud that American society "has welcomed Jews more openly than has any other." But he is wrong to claim that Jewish support for affirmative action is therefore a form of "ingratitude." On the contrary, the same commitment to equality that enabled Jews to rise to power in American society also underlies affirmative action. Gratitude, not ingratitude, ought to make Jewish men, of all people, most supportive of it. □

The Misplaced Self-Delusion of Some Jewish Males

Alan Freeman and Betty Mensch

Michael Levin's essay is an anguished cry of indignation. Levin is indignant that affirmative action programs discriminate against a victim group of Jewish males, Jewish males who would otherwise reap the much-deserved rewards to which their natural talent and hard work entitle them. His claim, therefore, is one of injustice: affirmative action programs are immoral because they violate the fixed and neutral norms of equality of opportunity.

To evaluate Levin's charge of injustice, one must look to the underlying moral claims that supposedly legitimate the game of equal opportunity. Proponents and critics of affirmative action alike (Henkin and Levin included) often blur or overlook the fact that equal-opportunity theory is rooted in both of our two (ultimately irreconcilable) traditions of moral philosophy—utilitarianism and Kantianism. Each tradition offers a distinct set of arguments, with the utilitarian emphasis on social welfare and the Kantian one on individual liberty. Thus, to evaluate Levin's charge of injustice, one must look in turn to each of these modes of moral discourse.

Utilitarians see equality of opportunity as offering a setting in which individuals will seek to maximize their own contribution to society in the form of socially useful production, in return for which they will receive rewards in proportion to their contribution. The end result is individuals striving to maximize their own quantity of private welfare, which, when aggregated, is by definition maximum social welfare as well. Levin implicitly draws on this tradition when he asserts that conventional selection criteria (for example, standardized tests) operate to choose, in rank order, those who will make the most productive social contribution to their respective professional fields. Thus, Levin charges, reliance on substitute criteria (for example, race) will reduce productivity and therefore reduce net social welfare.

As Henkin points out, however, and as most educators concede, there is no necessary correlation between test scores and "productivity" in the professions. Test scores are good at predicting future test scores. They do not predict other qualities, like negotiation skills in law, contextual diagnostic skills in medicine, or empathic concern for others, which is of central importance in both fields. In addition, Levin assumes (as most careful utilitarians would not) that aggregate social welfare can be objectified and reduced to some quantifiable measure of productivity. The very effort to establish standards of productivity, however, is problematic and inevitably contingent, for "social welfare" presupposes a definition of welfare's content and value.

Compare, for example, two gynecologists. One is white, male, always a star on standardized tests, and a computer whiz. With a brisk, efficient manner he is able to "process" more patients per hour than can most of his colleagues. A scientist at heart, he regards the women he sees as presenting more or less interesting opportunities for satisfying his scientific curiosity, and upon occasion he has contributed articles on techniques of gynecological surgery to medical journals. The other gynecologist, a woman, had average grades in medical school, having been admitted in part because of her eloquent personal statement challenging the medical profession to increase the number of female gynecologists. Although her computer literacy is not at the level of her male counterpart's, she has turned out to be an excellent diagnostician, who offers a careful, holistic assessment of her patients, focusing on lifestyle, environment, and especially the health-related impact of being a woman in a male-dominated culture. She has offered nothing new to her field in the form of surgical technique, but her patients, especially those seeing a female gynecologist for the first time, report great satisfaction in being dealt with as women, not just as bodies. If, by any conventional measure, the patients of both doctors are equally healthy, which doctor is more productive?

That these questions obviously cannot be answered underscores the fact that our decision to maximize productivity by providing individuals with the opportunity to deploy talent and ability requires a prior social decision as to which talents and abilities we wish to promote. If the goal is productivity, *what* do we wish to produce? How shall we define the social welfare? The usual utilitarian answer is "Let the market decide," since there is no other way to measure aggregate subjective preference. Levin, however, is not really suggesting admission to medical school based on a willingness to pay the highest price, but rather admission based on other, objective criteria of merit. The problem lies with that assumed objectivity, for to the extent that equal opportunity rests on utilitarianism, there is nothing immoral or illogical about assigning greater social value to some alternative measure of social welfare, some different type of productivity or competing social goal. Representing the underprivileged, offering role models for aspiring youth, redressing past social wrongs, or making an egalitarian redistribution are all legitimate social goals that, in a utilitarian analysis, could legitimately compete with a commitment to preservation of the status quo.

Levin's moral indignation is not animated by purely utilitarian concerns, however. His basic case rests on the charge of "unfair" treatment—the punishment (by way of denial of entitlement) of worthy individuals who have done no wrong. This complaint is rooted in an atomistic, asocial,

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individualistic view of the world, a view in which social problems like racism, for example, are reduced to the particular actions of isolated bad actors. The issue is framed in terms of fault. Henkin falls into this trap as well when he suggests that affirmative action programs intended to benefit minorities or women cannot be characterized as discriminating against white males because these programs do not constitute a purposeful attempt to harm white males. This lack of bad intent, for Henkin, distinguishes the "discrimination" that Levin assails from the historical "bad" discrimination of the sort traditionally experienced by blacks, or, for that matter, Jews.

Henkin's answer is a nonanswer, for Levin's point is that a fairly earned and deserved entitlement is being arbitrarily taken away. Regardless of purpose, Levin says, this amounts to punishment, and we (here he resorts to the fault principle) should punish only those people who are themselves blameworthy; we should not punish innocent persons. Levin's basic cry is the familiar childhood one of "It's not my fault." The real question, then, is the validity of the "punishment" characterization.

In this context it is impossible to talk about punishment without looking to the moral basis upon which the supposed entitlement rests. This moral basis is the Kantian version of equality of opportunity theory: individual liberty includes the right to realize the full extent of one's natural talents and abilities in a fair contest with others also seeking to advance themselves. To change the rules for some is to betray the universality of formal equality and to undermine the neutral ground rules that protect individual liberty.

Notably, even before the days of affirmative action, admissions committees rarely viewed themselves as distributors of rewards based on some purified, formally announced conception of merit. Their approach has always been implicitly utilitarian—to put together a group of students with a desirable diversity of background, skills, interests, and so on. Inevitably, they have always faced hard decisions—how much to stress geographical distribution, nonacademic pursuits, family ties to the school, and other factors. Even universities that like to "go by the numbers" have had to decide whether to count grades more than test scores, whether to favor excellence in a particular subject over more general competence in all areas, and whether to give weight to secondary schools with a good reputation. It is troubling that only race and gender issues have suddenly raised the cry of "punishment."

One cannot begin to ask whether individuals have been denied their moral entitlement unless one can affirm the integrity of the process that distributes the rewards. At this critical juncture, equal opportunity, at least in our culture, fails dramatically, both in practice and in theory. Under current conditions of distribution the competition for scarce entitlements is anything but fair. As Henkin's statistics illustrate so graphically, the dice are loaded in favor of those with preexisting wealth and privilege. Dan Quayle's meteoric success is unfortunately not a caricature but simply a more-than-usually publicized testament to who gets ahead and why. If your Daddy owns the state, opportunity knocks. The abundant advantages of privilege are secured for succeeding generations through inherited wealth, through differential educational structures that culminate in dynastic Ivy League admissions policies favoring kin of alumni, and, most of all, through the elaborate tapestry of social connection that marks the boundaries of access to positions of hierarchical advantage.

Levin might at this point claim that the above examples indicate that equal opportunity is sometimes, regrettably, flawed in practice, but still theoretically sound when objective criteria of selection are actually employed. He would point, we suspect, to those standardized tests on which his Jewish males seem to score so well, thereby revealing, through purity of process, these individuals' objective superiority. Henkin has already suggested, in response, that these tests are biased against students who are not part of the dominant white male culture. The very notion of "bias," however, still holds as "normal" what really amounts to the cultural extension of class-based privilege. The reality of tests (and other measures of ability, like grades) that purport to quantify aptitude, intelligence, and diligence is that they serve best to report a preexisting truth—one's class background. The habits and style of upper-class white males, through the pretense of universality, become the single yardstick by which everyone else is evaluated and found more or less "deserving."

Marxists have traditionally been concerned with a ruling class that owns capital—the means of production. It seems more likely, however, that intergenerational class domination is perpetuated through ownership of what might be called *cultural capital.* Given their disproportionate control over the process by which knowledge is defined and the boundaries of appropriate discourse are established, the dominant class is provided by the educational system with what French anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu calls a "theodicy of its own privilege." The essence of cultural capital is the transmission, from generation to generation, of habits of conceptualization, analysis, discourse, and taste—in other words, the transmission of a particular culture. Outsiders who prove adept in displaying at least some of the requisite cultural forms are invited to share small pieces of the pie. This is the reality of Levin's supposedly objective criteria upon which his claim of merit is based: rooted in a particular culture of privilege, these criteria inevitably serve not to facilitate mobility (although some limited mobility does occur) but to rationalize and stabilize hierarchy.

Notably, money itself is not an absolute requirement of the successful transmission of cultural capital. All too many immigrant success stories focus exclusively on economic poverty, neglecting advantages that often derived from an earlier European history of class privilege. From within Levin's group of supposedly fungible Jewish males one can still perceive the disproportionate wealth and power of German Jews, many of whose immigrant families brought with them a large stock of cultural capital.

In that sense, the real meaning of equality of opportunity is found in the story of George Bush, not of Dan Quayle. Our immediate inclination is to dismiss Quayle as the obvious beneficiary of a system biased in favor of the rich, yet to concede that Bush, whatever his advantages, did after all "earn" top grades at Yale and therefore "deserve" the success that comes from real achievement. Our point is that, however diligent and skilled Bush was

in college, he was doing no more than performing according to the norms of a culture that was available to him and unavailable to many others. Our social decision to privilege the forms and accomplishments of that culture is also a decision to perpetuate class power at the expense of other cultures that have their own values and accomplishments and that are also part of American life. Thus the moral basis for the individualistic claim of entitlement is basically no better, in ethical terms, than the moral claim to reap the benefits of a hereditary aristocracy.

Dan Quayle's meteoric success is simply a more-than-usually publicized testament to who gets ahead and why. If your Daddy owns the state, opportunity knocks.

The continuing reality behind even affirmative action programs is, in fact, a *refusal* to acknowledge the class dimension to success. Our insistent orthodoxy is that America has no class structure and therefore can have no class victims (a point that Bush made part of his campaign as the election neared and Dukakis finally started to run as a populist). Very tentatively, we have at last begun, through affirmative action programs, to acknowledge the particular historic exclusions associated with gender and race, and we have authorized timid corrective measures that do not really threaten the basic structure of cultural capital. The discomfort experienced by lower-class white males (a group that Levin seems to ignore, given his preoccupation with those striving for professional success) is that they too are victimized by the fraud of equality of opportunity, yet they are required to pretend that the *only* real victims are minorities and women. Their response is often to turn against those groups rather than to affirm the similarity of their own experience.

Thus affirmative action is merely a minimal attempt to mitigate the insidious workings of "equal" opportunity in practice, particularly with respect to those who historically have not only been disabled because of class background, but have also been stereotyped and disempowered by a pervasive culture of racism and sexism, with its attendant exclusionary practices. Nobody, after all, seriously suggests that affirmative action programs will overturn the whole structure of professional standards. A future Jonas Salk will no doubt find his way into medical school, and rightly so; and medical schools will make certain that students who graduate will be competent to treat patients. The only goal is to broaden what we mean by competence. Regarded in this light, affirmative action might be at least a first step toward developing a broadly based politics of inclusion that seeks to empower the powerless and reveal the true workings of our "meritocracy." Such a politics would be multicultural and multiracial, rooted in a deep and abiding faith both in the cohesion of solidarity and in a respect for difference and diversity—in short, the best version of pluralism.

At this point, one begins to feel the sense of despair elicited by Levin's essay. For if such a politics comes into being, which side will Jews be on? The problem with Levin is not just his fallacious reasoning, but the virulence of the consciousness he represents—a consciousness that is all too prevalent in contemporary Jewish experience. Instead of playing their historically progressive role, far too many Jews ally themselves with the powerful, vote for Ronald Reagan, celebrate the right-wing takeover of the Supreme Court, and are callously indifferent to the plight of the poor and powerless. Instead of questing for a new *tikkun,* they selfishly and complacently wallow in their material indicia of success.

At bottom, this attitude is just another version of the assimilationist ploy that has been all too fateful for Jews in the past. Jews can offer a cultural and political alternative to our hegemonic culture of acquisitive and selfish materialism. Jews can celebrate their diversity and their tradition without being hysterical apologists for the existing order. We need not all follow the lead of those like Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, the paradigm of assimilationist success, who, according to H. Hirsch, was grateful to Harvard for liberating him from the burden of his "*father* and his face"; who promoted anti-Semitic government hiring limits; and who so celebrated his patriotic assimilationism that he could vote to uphold the compulsory saluting of the American flag as applied to religious dissidents seeking to comply with the biblical injunction not to bow down before graven images.

Frankfurter serves well as both an example of and a metaphor for the assimilationist mode. Intolerance, complacency, and self-loathing are ultimately characteristic of this mode. Levin's version, to be sure, goes a step further. His celebration of meritocracy becomes a celebration for him of obvious Jewish superiority, as revealed through a game whose objectivity and fairness he takes for granted. Apart from the inherent dangers of playing the numbers game (as Henkin illustrates so well with his negative examples), Levin, in his self-celebration, forgets that it is really someone else's game.

For if Levin's numbers make a case for inherent Jewish superiority, then the rich WASPs who gain the biggest share of meritocratic success must have a near-monopoly on superstardom. Levin's argument becomes a case for the natural superiority of the real ruling class. Simone de Beauvoir once characterized upper-class women as "bourgeois by proxy." The relationship of "successful" Jews to those who have had and continue to have the real power is similar. Money may purchase favors and some privileges, but it cannot buy very much power. And those who control the greatest share of cultural capital ensure that the meritocracy operates in their own image. Levin's position is inherently assimilationist, since the success he celebrates is the capacity of Jews to deploy their *own* cultural capital in aping the behavior of the WASPs, whose own cultural heritage is the only real criterion of "objective" talent.

Perhaps it seems safe to trust that George Bush and the other members of his class will leave enough spaces open to reward worthy Jews. But one should not have any illusions about who is really in control. The vice of assimilationism (as we write, we are witnessing a surge in both anti-Semitic and racist behavior across the country) is that it is always superficial and always fragile. Wouldn't it be better to abandon such a foolish enterprise, to give up on false security in order to recover dignity and self-respect? □

FICTION

The Sweetheart Is In

S. L. Wisenberg

WHAT THE BOYS WERE LIKE

They were all over Ceci Rubin's house, swarming like bees around her sister Ellen. Though her sister was not the kind of flower you might think. Even though Ellen was Sweetheart of the Senesch boys' group, she was a Nice Girl. She needed to be met two-thirds of the way in order to flirt. Had to be coached. Did not bat her eyes with frequency or naturalness. Did not laugh with the requisite ease; it was always a nervous giggle, an internal clattering of the throat muscles.

But this is about Ceci. And the boys. The boys did not swarm to the play room, lean over the pool table, twist the handles controlling the little men on the Foosball game, in order to see Ceci Rubin. She was another accoutrement of the house, like the play room itself. For them, finding a perky extra girl in the home of their Sweetheart was like any other pleasant surprise—like finding someone has a wonderful dog so friendly and shaggy it bridges all conversations, or a mother who listens to problems and sings bawdy songs (only an example; no mother like that existed in Houston in 1970, in that neighborhood at least), or a father who gives advice about something useful—not as personal as sex, but, for instance, about car insurance, or avoiding the draft. Ceci's father was in the bubble-bath business, and handed out samples to all the boys, each time they came over. He'd shake their hands first.

The boys fascinated Ceci. They leaned and lounged like cats, and were just as mysterious to her and to Ellen, who had always had as pets beagles and sea monkeys, nothing in between. The boys would sprawl on the love seats (everything had a name—there was not simply furniture in that house, but buffets, davenports, credenzas and islands), talk one moment about the rubbers in their wallets, the next about ways to avoid the draft—both suggesting realms that were equally strange to Ceci. Ricky Bogen was 17½ and was already thinking of joining the Coast Guard. He'd called the office once for brochures. Rob Chazin was thinking of the seminary, even at this early date. Dan Cook knew a guy who'd drunk ten cups of coffee in two days, swallowing five tablets of No-Doz with each, and been so jittery and nervous and produced such contaminated piss that they got him out of there fast, almost calling an ambulance, and speaking of piss, Sam Frederick's older brother had bought some from a diabetic hanging out in front of the recruitment center, and Joe Amos was reading everything from Maimonides to St. Augustine (even though Peter Griswold said Augustine was irrelevant to Jews) in order to fill out conscientious objector forms. He'd already had an appointment with his rabbi. Who'd Been in Korea, so that didn't help much.

Ceci, listening as she looked for some string in the drawers of the nearby built-in buffet, didn't quite understand this Being in Korea, thought maybe it was a metaphor, as she'd learned in English, maybe for venereal disease? She tested it on her tongue, and in a few minutes, said to Sam: Korea like in the Korean War? Yeah Babe, he'd said, and that Babe was enough to give her tingles up until the time she brushed her teeth and fell asleep.

HOW THE BOYS SOUNDED

The boys were noisy in their machines, no matter what the machine was. Even if it was a bicycle. They scraped the kickstands against the cement of the driveway, scraped it up to the front door (bikes, even European ten-speeds, were not allowed indoors on the highly polished and buffed terrazzo). And cars—the cars. They zoomed in doing something with the exhaust or the muffler, Ceci wasn't sure what it was called, to make their presence known. Then the honks. Each boys' group had a certain honk pattern which the members pounded out while passing by the home of a member or a Sweetheart. The one for Senesch was Come-out-come-out-you-son-of-a-bitch, but for the sake of appearances and parents, it was Come-out-come-out-wherever-you-are. The cars were crucial. In Ellen's scrapbook was a photograph of an unidentified odometer showing 1803.00 miles, which was the Senesch chapter number. Ceci was unsure how the chapters were assigned these numbers; this whole boys' club business, she was apt to say, is beyond me. Ceci had elements of an old lady to her.

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She stopped just short of being fussy. She was serious and studious and fancied herself deep, but laughed often, mostly to herself. But since the boys had been coming around, she was beginning to laugh more in public. With the boys, she didn't have to play dumb, which she'd been doing since fourth grade. The boys of Senesch really wanted to know what she thought. They saw her as some artifact, encouraged her to be devil's advocate, praised her when she asked, If I killed my sister—or you—while you were standing right here, it would be wrong, so how could any war be justified? Someone left behind a copy of St. Augustine's just-war theory, and she read it in one night. Sam mentioned Thomas Merton, and she went to the Meyer Branch Library to check out his books.

They encouraged her, called her St. Cecilia, and Joe sang the Simon and Garfunkel song to her: Cecilia, you're breakin' my heart, you're shaking my confidence daily.... Other times he would call her Dorothy Parker and require a pun before they could have a normal conversation.

I am truly changed, Ceci would think to herself. I am no longer shy. But Ellen still called her The Pain. When Ellen wanted Ceci to leave the room, she would say, Ceci, go breathe.

What This Breathing Business Was

It began when Ceci was born and she was taken right away into a special room called I See You—this is how she had heard the story, ever since she was a little girl.

She was in ICU for two days, deprived of mother's milk and mother's love though the nurses were quite attentive and one even sang songs to her. Christmas songs, it turned out, but the family was not that particular, no worry about imprinting. Just as long as she was kept company by another warm human voice, they said. They prided themselves on their rationality. Though Ceci's parents kept kosher and went to shul whenever they knew the family of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. They were modern Jews, followed the mitzvot that made sense. Though there was behind everything—so faint you could barely feel it—a strong belief in God the primitive goat-bearded deity of the Old Testament. He hovered. He took note of their Sh'mas they said every night before going to sleep.

As she grew older, Ceci's lungs cleared, but they never really cleared up. She would breathe fine then it would start up—never an attack, she hated that word, but more like an advancing case of the flu. She couldn't run very hard or jump rope, because that would bring on the wheezing. In her childhood, as she said, she stayed inside, read, painted at the easel in her room. Mixed colors again and again, watched them swirl in the blue enamel pot of water. Like cream disappearing into coffee, changing it to cream and coffee. Coffee with cream.

When Ceci was eleven, two years before Ellen was made Sweetheart, she'd had pneumonia so bad she'd had to spend four days in the hospital. She came home with a breathing machine the size of an old-fashioned radio. She filled it with distilled water and liquid bronchodilators morning and night, breathing in the mist for twenty minutes, as she said, at a stretch. It made what she'd just heard called white noise. Drowned everything out.

With hand-held sprays and pills and the machine, though, everything was A-OK, under control. Next semester, said her doctor, she could take gym for the first time in two years. Partly she dreaded this because she'd never properly learned the games the teachers expected her to know: softball, volleyball, and badminton. She'd never quite got the hang of team lines.

In the meantime, no one could tell anything was wrong. Couldn't (usually) hear her wheezing. Under control. Like anybody else.

What Ceci Did with the Boys

Once one of them stayed even after Ceci told him at the door that Ellen wasn't in. They played a round of pool and he won handily. He taught her wrist action in Foosball. He told her about his application for Harvard, the grueling half-day of SAT testing, told her that he thought he might become a conscientious objector. Oh, I know about that, she said, CO. She'd read about Quakers being CO in World War One. Nowadays you had to get a draft board to approve it. She knew some people up North had poured their blood over the draft board file folders. But not in Houston.

The boy's name was Jerry Schwartz. His brother was at Stanford, living in a coed dormitory and being part of the Movement. Ceci imagined him there among palm trees, studying, shouting, learning about Europe.

When Jerry left that afternoon, he said, Fair Lady, I doff my hat to you (though he wasn't wearing one), and shook her hand, lingering over it so long she thought he was about to take it to his lips. But he didn't.

What the Parents Thought of This Sweetheart Business

They were proud but befuddled. They'd always said it was important for their girls to have friends in the Jewish community. But they were not quite used to these long, loud boys. The Rubins didn't have norms for boys. Their directives boiled down to geography. The boys couldn't smoke in the house. The backyard was OK, as long as they put out the butts in the

ashtrays of their own cars. They weren't supposed to step one foot into Ellen's bedroom. Though they did troop there sometimes, in a group. It was there that Ellen kept the large brown spotted stuffed salamander that the boys of Senesch had special-ordered for her. There was another salamander, made of plywood, which stood in the windowsill in the den and faced the circle driveway. It stood on its tail and wore a sly grin. On its stomach were the words: The Sweetheart Is. A hook was screwed into its joined front paws which held a cardboard square. On one side the square said In; and on the other, Out.

Ellen always forgot to change it. Ceci thought of making it say In all the time so the boys would come to her. Hadn't she read in Little Women that Mozart or Shakespeare had tried for one sister, and gotten the other one? There was also Jacob in the Bible, wasn't there? She remembered something about a wedding, and Jacob (or Isaac) hadn't been allowed to lift up the heavy veil and see who was under there until after the rabbi had already pronounced the words. And then it was too late.

How Ellen Was Crowned and Chosen

It was at the Sweetheart Dance. It was a surprise but Ceci and her parents had been alerted and stood there in the back, sneakily, hiding in shadow. The name was announced and Ellen fainted. Ceci, hardy in all parts of her body except the lungs, envied Ellen her ability to faint at crucial moments, a coda to underscore the specialness of events. After the dance, Ellen and the boys and their dates went to the IHOP (Ceci heard later) and ordered breakfast to go, drove to Galveston, and ate soggy pancakes on the beach. Someone brought a bedspread to sit on.

At dinner the next Friday night, Ceci's grandmother said she did not like this at all. For twenty years she'd been a guest in that house for the Sabbath meal. She could not imagine anyone finding the sunrise something to go to, like a movie or symphony. She told Ceci's mother: A waste, a waste it sounds to me. Ceci's mother worried but found it impolite to worry in front of other people, and her mother-in-law was still other people. Of course the thing that no one said but everyone thought about was the impropriety of boys and girls of a certain age traveling unsupervised to another town, another county, the untamed ocean overnight. The overnight part. That's what they're doing now, Ceci's father said mildly. He was modern and trusted the mores of the age and therefore individuals because he could not conceive of them violating the norms. After all, this wasn't Chicago or New York and these boys and girls Ellen was friendly with were honors students, not hippies or zippies or whatever. Ceci's mother didn't trust anything but convention. And not even that. But she was afraid to say so.

What Ceci Knew

In writing, in cold hard facts in Ellen's diary, Ceci had read that Ellen's best friend Naomi had swum naked with not one but three boys. The diary was kept locked, but easily opened, in an oversized photo album on a bookshelf. Ceci wondered if, like the character in the book 1984, Ellen kept a hair or something equally minute between the pages, to determine whether the diary had been tampered with. But it was Ceci's firm belief that Ellen secretly wanted her to read it—even if only for the challenge of catching Ceci give herself away by releasing a bit of information in conversation that could have been obtained from the diary alone.

Ellen was rather reserved in what she revealed about herself in the diary—as taciturn as she was in person. Once Ceci had asked her if she'd ever French kissed, and Ellen, embarrassed, an edge of incredulity to her voice, responded: Yeess! She would not elucidate.

This sex business was something Ceci didn't think about concretely, except figured it was something like New York City—big and confusing and exciting. The mystery at hand was smaller and closer—periods. There were tantalizing light blue boxes under the sink in her parents' bathroom and pink ones in the bathroom she shared with Ellen. Ceci had not yet begun. She waited for it, mistaking stomach cramps for those kind. She would see Ellen's sanitary belt hanging on the towel rack and twice in the school bathroom she had unwrapped the cotton and blood jelly rolls in the steel basket attached to the wall and had smelled the rust iron personal foreign blood.

At night, Ceci had her own more than dimly related secret habit. She rocked quietly in bed, thumb against that ridge of flesh, until she felt a turn-around unwinding feeling. She'd been doing this for years and thought it was something little girls did, something like holding on to your baby blanket too long. Next time, she'd think, I'll stop.

What Ceci Worried About

She was afraid that she wouldn't do the exciting things life owed her. Afraid a boy wouldn't love her and kiss her. Afraid she'd be too tall all her life. Afraid she wouldn't be famous. Afraid her feet would never stop growing. Afraid she'd be ugly forever. (She didn't believe her mother when she called her beautiful.) She was confident she'd get into a good college up North. She did well on standardized tests. She hadn't told Jerry Schwartz that, he with his reports of grueling APs and SATs.

She was afraid her best friend Sheryl Lefkowitz didn't

really like her as much as she liked another girl, Annie Kaplan, who went to another junior high. She was afraid of being abandoned. She anticipated and feared returning to gym classes. She had imagined that her return would mark an opening in her life—she would pick up everything she had missed and forge unbreakable bonds. Because surely it was in the locker room that these alliances were formed: the invitations to walk home after school, to go shopping for shoes and purses at Palais Royal, to go get haircuts, to look up Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex ... at the Meyer Library, to spend the night.

She felt older and younger than her friends. Sheryl Lefkowitz, for example, was already ahead of Ceci in some departments. She had let a boy feel her breasts. She told Ceci about a girl giving what was called a hand job. Ceci wondered how these girls knew what to do. She would have no idea. She'd heard that once you started they wouldn't let you stop until the sperm came out of there and some of them made you drink it.

How Ceci Was with the Boys After a While

Ceci began to feel adopted by them. They took her bowling and one night got her drunk on André Cold Duck at Joe Felts's house (his parents gone) and she sang songs with them, making up the words. Ellen got mad. Ceci didn't care. The boys were very careful with her. They did not, for example, have her sit on anybody's lap, the way they had girls their own age do. They made a joke: Sit on my lap and we'll see what comes up. She didn't get it, but knew it was not something her mother would want her to laugh at. Just like jokes they made about the pool table balls.

She helped Jerry Schwartz make up the creative services for Senesch Sabbath Morning with Herzl girls' group. They chose works, as Jerry called them, by Eugene O'Neill and Leonard Cohen and the Beatles. This excited Ceci. She had not known that Jews could pray by reciting, Blackbird singing in the dead of night. He showed her a poem by W. H. Auden: But poetry makes nothing happen. He explained to her that people have to do things in the world. He talked about the Chicago 7; all she remembered about it was a TV screen full of hippies with long dark hair making peace signs. He explained the difference between hippies and Yippies. (No such thing as zippies, he said.) He told her about his underground paper at St. Marks, a private school in River Oaks. His family lived just outside River Oaks, near Rice University. He told her how Jews couldn't even live in River Oaks unless they were very, very rich. He brought her a copy of his paper with reports about Vietnam and protests and editorials with cusswords. The typing was poor and so was the reproduction. He told her she could keep a copy. The mimeographing ink came off in her hands.

How Ellen Felt About All These Developments

She was mad, said the same thing she'd said when she was six and Ceci was three: Maa, tell Ceci to play with her own friends.

How Ceci Entertained Another Boy

Tom Hessler rang the bell even though the brown spotted plywood salamander in the window said Out, and he and Ceci made Tollhouse mint brownies even though her mother had told her not to do any baking because she needed the kitchen at five. Her mother was mad but only for five minutes. Tom took half of the batch home (that had always been the house rule—share with the guest baker), wrapped in foil, pecans sprinkled on top.

Late that night he fed it into his girlfriend's mouth, lightly flicking the dark crumbs from the corners of her lips. The girlfriend said Mmmm, mmm, my favorite, chocolate! And he said, Oh, you, you're mi señorita favorita.

Tom didn't tell this part to Ceci when he played Foosball with her a week later. All he said was that his girlfriend would only eat one brownie because of her dy-et. Ellen was standing next to him as he was saying this, and he turned to put his arm around her lazily. For some reason he was thinking of Bogart at this moment and turned to Ceci and said, Game's over, get lost, Kid. The next time Ceci saw him he put his arm around her that same way. She tried to bite his hand and she was embarrassed at how desperate it seemed, not at all playful.

How Ellen the Nice Girl Got to Be Sweetheart in the First Place

Ellen was not a tart. When she was just a civilian, back in tenth grade, she'd had one good friend who was a boy; he'd moved to town from Dallas at the end of the semester, and she'd been nice to him because she was nice to everyone, especially new boys in her homeroom. He was popular and persuasive with other males. He joined Senesch that summer. The other boys in Senesch wanted to elect one of two girls who were Class A Number One flirts, supreme gigglers and hair-tossers. Ellen was the dark horse, the spoiler, the one who upset the established powermongers. She won the election. She was pretty so it didn't matter. She was like a sleeper movie. By the time people have seen it, they feel bad that but for a quirk, they might have missed it. And so they feel doubly grateful.

What Ellen's Manner Was

She would say, Hello how are you, making a reference, as the girl-gets-boy guidebooks suggest, to something the boy had mentioned the day before. She began to read the sports pages, talked about the Astros' chances for the pennant. The boys were nonplussed. They'd never heard of girls who knew about sports. They'd say, like indignant fathers, Now what do we have here? Secretly they were pleased. They congratulated themselves on their choice. They began to say, Hay as in horses, we sure know how to pick 'em.

Ellen was the supreme democrat. No one boy got more attention than the other. She regulated her inflections. She became all things to everyone. A queen. Dabbing the foreheads of the dying teeming poor camped at her gates. Unwashed. Each time she descended she became more and more aloof. And therefore more and more disinterested. Which is not the same as uninterested. And thus more and more fair.

What Ellen Did to Herself

She took hair from the top of her head and rolled it around two empty orange juice cans, wrapped the rest with oversized bobby pins and oversized clips, sat under the drier for two hours (so adept at this, folded this into her life, that she could hold telephone conversations while under the hood with other girls similarly encumbered), she shaved her armpit hairs and leg hairs, plucked her eyebrows, curled her lashes, applied a silver or blue-silver or gold Yardley face mask once a week, and applied all manner of potions and astringents and Henna hair lighteners and straighteners at various intervals.

Ceci tried to emulate, hoping for her leg and armpit hairs to darken and lengthen so she could rid herself of them. She bought her own Clearasil tube (cherishing that pasty smell) awaiting pimples, was elated when Ellen showed her the hiding place of blackheads: the crease between lip and chin.

What Ceci Learned from Ellen and Others

The Surfer Stomp. That she was supposed to be afraid of boys. That you didn't go to second base until the fourth or fifth date at the earliest. That you were always supposed to say No at least twice to new ventures of the flesh. That no one wore tampons.

Also: Don't call boys (her mother said). Boys don't like to be chased. Study their interests. Plan your makeup color scheme to coincide with and complement your clothing scheme, which means planning ahead on these little charts provided by the teen magazines.

What Happened When Mr. and Mrs. Rubin Went Away for a Marketing Convention

The boys were like an occupying army. They ate Granny Smith apples from the drawer in the refrigerator and picked tangelos from the backyard and poured themselves mixed drinks. They tracked in mud and seemed to have no homes of their own. They were dark and alive and loud.

Sam Frederickson and Joe Amos left behind on the antique davenport a tape cassette from their Mythical Sam and Joe I Won't Go Show. Ellen left with them to go to a meeting. Joe said as they were shutting the door, Don't wait up for her. They all three laughed. Ceci made herself a tuna melt, loaded the dishwasher. Her homework was finished. She had no one to call. Her hair wasn't dirty enough to wash. She took her parents' old copy of The Group (She can read anything she wants, her father would say. If she doesn't understand it, it won't hurt her.) and leafed through it while she breathed on her machine. She wanted to be with people. She wanted talking.

Don't wait up for her, Joe had said. Ceci took the boys' tape and rewound it to the beginning and brought it to the bathroom. She turned on the bath water.

Sam and Joe were singing the antiwar song they'd made up: Ain't no use to wonder why, I think I'm gonna die—and it's five-six-seven, open up the pearly gates. . . . Then they trailed off to advertise an upcoming interview with the Ass-tit Jewish-American Indian princess who showed off her wares for the poor boys in boot camp in Butt Butte, Wyoming. The field of Ceci's mind was an expanse of far-reaching cities and villages, but she had not thought of that. Ass-tit, Butt Butte, had not been in her vocabulary. Though she had had those kind of images, while she was in her bed, rubbing with her thumb. Or in the tub.

She ran more warm water over a handful of Barnston's bubble powder and imagined the Ass-tit Princess, greeted by the cheering invading army of Salamanders, touching her nutbrown breasts shed of their loincloth just for them, large nutbrown maiden, the eye of her tit warmed in someone's eyeless hand. Someone's brown cheek and lips, and she was the princess and the hand and the hands.

Ellen had never mentioned to Ceci any nutbrown maidens or princesses or other fruits of her own do-it-yourself thumb projects. Ellen wouldn't, Ceci thought. She was the Sweetheart and she was three and a half years older. Besides, she hadn't mentioned it in her diary.

The juiciest thing Ceci had read in Ellen's diary was about Ellen's friend Naomi. Ceci thought of Naomi, naked, water streaming through her over her shoulders

and swishing her pubic hair. Like seaweed. Mermaids. She wondered if Ellen did that too. That overnight in Galveston with the boys and pancakes....

(Always the baby, the one it doesn't matter if she's wearing her robe and two orange juice cans on her head, she's the baby the one who doesn't count, the one too young to go out with. You Ceci, go and get the door and tell them I'm almost ready, Ellen would say. Entertain them. But not too much. Make them laugh once.)

Ceci in her tub filled with bubble bath from her father's factory imagined a dancehall hostess knocking and not noticing Ceci, and lying on top of her, still not feeling her, then a man coming in the door and soaping the lady on top of Ceci. Ceci would stay so so quiet because she finally would learn something—here was her chance. She began to hum. Quick—she thought she heard Ellen unlock the back door and Ceci reached over and stopped the tape (thinking: Thomas Merton was electrocuted in his bathtub) and jumped out to turn on the radio real loud, KPRC, news and talk.

What Ceci Knew About the War

That it was wrong. The Government was wrong but mostly only the Jews and Northerners and Catholics and students in California knew it. Jerry's underground paper was against it from the word Go, and it also editorialized about, as he called it, concerns of its constituency. It editorialized against the uniforms they had to wear in his private school. One day he organized almost everyone not to wear their ties. They won. Now every Friday they could leave the ties at home. It was a great victory. But he said he felt uneasy about it. The principal had given in too easily.

How the News Came to Ceci's Class

There was some sort of murmuring, the sort of buzz that precedes a big announcement. The history teacher, Mrs. Barnes, was late to class. She said there would not be a quiz but to prepare for a discussion on the League of Nations. Then she left. While she was gone Joel Arner and Jimmy Buxbaum covered the entire two boards with tic-tac-toe graphs. Mrs. Barnes returned and said All right class. There will be a pop quiz. Then she whispered and looked furtive. She told them: Four students in Ohio were killed in a protest against the war. They were wild, she said. They burned down a building.

Did they have weapons? asked Joey.

I think so, she said. Yes definitely. They attacked officers of the National Guard.

Ceci wondered if that was what Ricky Bogen was going to join. She imagined him lying dead. But those weren't the ones who died. The ones who died were college students. Up North.

She imagined herself, a college girl, lots of dates, boys carrying her books, boys running fingers through her hair, which had somehow changed to blond and straight (you could accomplish great transformation in college), laughing, maybe a little lipstick, long lash-building mascara with those little hairs in it, blue eye shadow, laughing and talking about philosophy. My philosophy of life, the college Ceci would be saying, is helping people. Get to know everyone. She would be walking on a campus green, old-fashioned Old English buildings. And then the boy on her right, call him, for the sake of argument, Barry or Jerry, would be shot. Blood on his lumberjack shirt. Jerry Schwartz, blood on his salamander t-shirt, blood coming out of the salamander's foot.

The reports I heard in the teachers' lounge, said Mrs. Barnes, is there were two boys and two girls.

A college girl, Ceci thought, putting her hand to her heart, and could almost feel the wet blood trickling. She wondered if she would have her period by then. Of course of course. By then it would be old hat. She thought of the Xs she would make on a wall calendar. But for nothing. Blood all over her nutbrown maiden, down her seaweed hairs. She, Ceci, fallen on the grass in front of three-story stone college buildings that looked like Steak and Ales.

It wasn't my fault, she said to herself. It wasn't the students' fault, she said in a whisper. They didn't do anything wrong, she said loudly and evenly, loud as a boy.

Then she ducked her head and wrote her name, shakily, on the looseleaf sheet and Pop Quiz #5.

What Happened at Home

The phone was ringing. Right off the hook, Ceci thought to herself. Jerry Schwartz said Hello, did you hear? She said, This is Ceci, this is me, not Ellen. He said, I know. Did you hear? Did you hear?

Yes, she said, yes, the college students. Ellen's not here.

He said, I have the car. I can come by....

Out of some instinct, some sense of propriety, she said, I'll meet you at the JCC.

She knew it took ten minutes to walk there. It would take him at least that long to drive. Walk slowly and carry a big stick, she thought. Walk slowly and your lungs will be friends with you forever. No flare-ups.

How They Were at the JCC and in the Car

He was on the steps waiting. Eyes kind of red. You need Murine, she thought. Once at Bruce Gottschalk's house, Bill Somebody had splashed Murine up and

down his face, turned off the lights, and shined a black light on his face. The Murine tracks were purple. Everyone said, Psy-cho-del-ic.

At the JCC Jerry said, I'll take you to my house.

Some alarm started to go off in a far reach of her mind but Ceci had not been properly trained. No boys in her bedroom. But could she be in a boy's living room?

Maybe the front steps.

The car radio was full of music and bulletins, and Open up the pearly gates.... That's Sam and Joe's song, Ceci said. How did that get on the radio? Jerry laughed, not turning to her. That's Country Joe McDonald. He sang that at Woodstock. You thought those two clowns wrote it? They couldn't write their way out of a paper bag.

She absorbed this.

How They Were at His House

The TV was on, and the radio, on KILT, old music—Dead Man's Curve. It was dark, the glow of the TV on a braided or brocaded couch. Kleenex in a wad. Tennis shoes in a corner. Newspapers awry. I wanted to tell you this, he said. He sat her down on the sofa. His finger brushed past her ear. She felt it, felt it more right afterwards. One two three four seconds later. Still. Two four six eight. Why don't we defoliate. Like a shadow touch. Look at this, she thought, he's angry about the students at Kent State but tears in his eyes. She was afraid he was going to sob. He took an envelope from his back pocket. He was wearing jeans. Must have changed from his school clothes, she thought. She'd never seen him in his St. Mark's High School private uniform. She saw some dark material bunched in a corner. Maybe the uniform. Ceci wondered if this was one of the days they wore ties. Every day, but one. Which? Friday? He was saying something about a moratorium. Sounded like natatorium. Auditorium. Black armbands, he said. The TV was saying, Allison said she wanted peace; she said this to her mother on the phone yesterday. Tears on faces. Weeping. Gasps. Tear gas said a man.

She wondered what the burn of tear gas was like. Pneumonia was a cold, rattly feeling. Did tear gas burn your bronchial tubes forever, down to the alveoli, something no machine could fix? Would it give you emphysema? She took a deep breath to remind herself that she was in good shape. I'm in good shape, she said to herself. My lungs are my friends. She listened to her breath. She felt the little bruise of pain at the end of each long breath, as always.

Look, he said, unfolding a letter from the envelope. Harvard wrote me and said Fuck off.

For a moment she believed him and wondered at this disregard. Didn't they expect parents to read it? He unfolded the letter and read: Dear Mr. Schwartz, Unfortunately we cannot accept you for admission into Harvard. We had many qualified candidates and we regret that we could not accept all of them. Our waiting list is full also, but we wish you success and achievement in your academic life and in the world beyond.

There's nothing I can do, he said. Nothing. He was down now, head on her shoulder, like a baby, like a puppy. She touched his hair. She had never touched a boy's hair. Her father's hair was thinning, wet with Vitalis. This was poodle hair, like her own. She massaged his head, and with her other hand, rubbed her own scalp, to feel what it felt like.

A kind of tickle. More exciting when it's two.

But not the kind of tickle that made her feel like laughing.

Then he was rocking his body against hers. My ribs, she thought. His ribs. Tackling. I'm a football player. My lungs are strong and fine. Maybe I will outgrow this asthma business after all. He held her in a bear hug. She had danced the bear hug three times at two different dances at the JCC and at Westwood Country Club. She pressed her lips against his face. Her mouth. Little scratchiness: he shaves! She wondered if he'd been crying, inched out her tongue. Salt.

He tongued her ear.

She tongued his. More like dirt than wax.

He cupped her chin.

Sweet nutbrown Indian maiden.

She clamped her thighs. For no reason. And again. Again. She could feel his fingers all up and down her back almost like a massage. Or how she'd imagined a massage.

She clamped her thighs.

He moved his hands back to her face, made circles on her cheeks with his hands.

She rocked and rocked, the nutbrown Indian maiden. He was a puppy and so was she. Boys weren't like cats at all. I am not thinking, she was thinking. This is what it is like not to be thinking. Though if she was thinking this, she must be....

Puppy hair puppy tail, knobs, elbows, salt. The boys didn't want to go, Allison said, the people were telling the microphone on TV. The boys didn't want to go. Poor poor thing, she was thinking. Poor thing, poor little puppyface, poor boy but so old he can drive, two-four-six-eight, don't give a damn, next stop....

My poor poor little beagle, she thought. Ceci, he whispered. Ceci honey, he whispered.

Ceci honey, she thought. I'm a honey. I'm Ceci honey. God please, she was praying rocking crying too, please God don't let him call me sweetheart. □

Book Review

Smart Machines, Troubled Workers

Ruth Milkman

The Electronic Sweatshop: How Computers Are Transforming the Office of the Future into the Factory of the Past by Barbara Garson. Simon and Schuster, 1988, 288 pp.

In the Age of the Smart Machine: The Future of Work and Power by Shoshana Zuboff. Basic Books, 1988, 468 pp.

It has been almost fifteen years since the publication of Harry Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital,* easily the most influential study of workers and the workplace to appear in the postwar era. Braverman argued that the systematic removal of skill from the labor process through scientific management, or Taylorism (named for its premier theorist, Frederick Taylor), was the key force shaping work experience in the twentieth century. Braverman maintained that, as shop-floor planning and "brainwork" progressively moved upstairs, workers were relegated to more and more routinized tasks. Deprived of access to knowledge about their work, they also lost the power and control such knowledge conferred. Skills once held by workers were now found in increasingly complex technology.

Although the computerization of the workplace was only in its infancy when Braverman was writing, he explored it in fascinating detail. For him, the computer was merely the latest in a long series of technological innovations that management used to expropriate knowledge from and enhance control over workers. He compared the automation of office work to the historic transition from craft to mass production in manufacturing, and predicted that office workers in the computer age would be de-skilled in the same way that factory workers had been earlier. Braverman's critics, however, argue that, unlike other forms of automation, computerization actually increases the level of skill required.

Barbara Garson is an unreconstructed Bravermanite. Her readable, witty book explicitly dismisses as a fantasy of "professional futurists" the widespread view that computerization "would eliminate the routine, monotonous jobs" and transform everyone into "knowledge workers." She presents snapshots of a wide variety of recently computerized service-sector workplaces—a McDonald's restaurant, a local welfare office in Boston, and Merrill Lynch and Shearson Lehman brokerage offices, among others. In each case, she contends, the unstated purpose of the new technology is to tighten management's control over the labor process and to transfer skill and initiative from the worker to the computer. "A combination of twentieth-century technology and nineteenth-century scientific management is turning the Office of the Future into the factory of the past," she writes. "At first this affected clerks and switchboard operators, then secretaries, bank tellers, and service workers. The primary targets now are professionals and managers."

Garson conducted extensive interviews with workers—and she is a gifted interviewer, as readers who know her earlier book, *All the Livelong Day* (which focused on blue-collar work), will remember. She relied on informal inquiries and her own personal networks to gain access to the various workplaces she analyzes. In each one, Garson found people who were articulate and open about the impact of new technology on their jobs.

Her story begins with McDonald's, which uses tiny microprocessors to regulate both its fast-food production lines and its service to customers. The teenagers who work there don't have to know anything about cooking hamburgers or fries. "You follow the beepers, you follow the buzzers," one told Garson. "To work at McDonald's you don't need a face, you don't need a brain. You need to have two hands and two legs and move 'em as fast as you can. That's the whole system." Since the cash registers have buttons marked "med coke," "big mac," and so on, the cashiers don't even need to know the prices of the items they sell. It's a textbook example of Taylorist de-skilling, neatly coupled with a cheap, expendable workforce. "Because no one's going to stay around very long," Garson notes, "the company designs a system with little to learn."

That makes sense at McDonald's, which is a lot like a factory anyway. But what about more complex operations, which aren't as easily standardized as Big Macs? Garson pursues this question in a journey up the occupational ladder, looking at a wide variety of computerized white-collar and service jobs, many of them better paid and historically more skilled than assembling and selling fast food.

Take, for example, an American Airlines reservation office. In the pre-computer age, reservation agents had to know all the fares, routes, and policies, but that information is now inside the computer—and agents' pay levels have plummeted accordingly. This case shows how, in addition to de-skilling and cheapening labor, computers can use electronic monitoring to enhance managerial control. At American, computers track agents' productivity, recording how much time they spend on each call and what percentage of the calls that they take lead to bookings. Since raises and promotions are tied to performance, this monitoring ability gives management a powerful tool.

Even well-paid professionals can be subjected to such methods. Stockbrokers suffer from the same sort of de-skilling through the introduction

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of "expert systems." These systems are developed by knowledge engineers, who observe and interview human experts for a long period, gradually deducing the rules of thumb the experts routinely use. These rules are then transformed into a computer program, incorporating the expert knowledge into technology that can later be used by anyone. Thus, Garson points out, "the time-and-motion study has become a time-and-thought study."

While the development of these systems is just beginning, and (not surprisingly) is meeting resistance from many professionals, Garson sees the triumph of standardization as virtually inevitable:

> After all, Merrill Lynch doesn't want to hire 10,000 investment experts, each of whom does business his own way and has his own loyal clients. Most employers would prefer to distribute their products through cheap, easily trainable, and easily replaceable employees. Perhaps even more important, they want to control what their hired professionals are saying and doing.

Middle managers are also on the list of computerization's victims. While Garson doesn't really explore the issue of the overall impact of the new technology on employment levels (concentrating rather on its effects on the *quality* of work experience), she does point out that electronic monitoring is eliminating the need for large numbers of relatively well-paid supervisory and middle management jobs. Consequently, an expert she quotes suggests, "The employment chart of the future would move from the pyramid shape to the Mae West." As middle management shrinks and lower-level workers are de-skilled, decision making, power, and control are increasingly centralized at the top—which is one of the main reasons that computerization is attractive to top management in the first place.

Garson concludes her book with a short chapter entitled "It Could Be Different (But It Probably Won't Be)." She points out that any technology can be used in a variety of ways; there's nothing inherent in computerization that determines its application according to the logic of Taylorism. But she doesn't really explore the issue, leaving one with a deep pessimism about the prospect of *any* alternative to "the electronic sweatshop."

Shoshana Zuboff's study of new technology begins just where Garson's ends: with the hope that computers will be used to enrich rather than degrade the experience of work. While she recognizes Garson's grim scenario as a possibility, Zuboff insists that it's a completely irrational way to use the new technology. Her book, which seems to have been written for an audience of managers (she teaches at the Harvard Business School), is a plea for an alternative set of choices that would lead to "informating" the workplace—upgrading workers' skills through computerization—instead of the de-skilling historically associated with *automating* work processes.

For Zuboff (unlike Braverman or Garson), computer technology is fundamentally different from previous waves of innovation. This is so because "information technology ... not only imposes information (in the form of programmed instructions) but also produces information." Whereas, according to Garson, "informating" simply made computer technology a more powerful tool of management domination, Zuboff insists that it can also generate a new form of work, one that is more intellectually demanding than what it replaces. Rather than de-skilling, the logic of information technology demands workers who possess "intellective skills," that is, "the ability to manipulate symbolic, electronically presented data" in both the factory and the office. "It seems to me that our work has really changed," an operator at a computerized pulp-and-paper mill told the author. "Our work is now a lot of sitting, and watching, and thinking.... Your mind never leaves the information."

Zuboff probes deeply into the internal logic of computer technology, considering not only its actual applications in the workplace but also its multifaceted potential. After carefully reviewing the history of Taylorism, she argues that information technology offers the possibility of a radical break with that long tradition:

> For the first time, technology returns to workers what it once took away—but with a crucial difference. The worker's knowledge had been implicit in action. The informating process makes that knowledge explicit: it holds a mirror up to the worker, reflecting what was known but now in a precise and detailed form. In order to reappropriate that reflection, the worker must be able to grapple with a kind of knowledge that now stands outside the self, externalized and public.

The rational use of information technology requires an organizational structure in which learning is encouraged and rewarded. Computerization, for Zuboff, promises no less than a total reversal of the historic transformation from craft to mass production: a movement toward more skilled and rewarding work and toward the elimination of the routinized jobs that were the product of the de-skilling process in an earlier era.

But can traditionally authoritarian businesses learn to encourage autonomy and intellectual development among workers? Zuboff acknowledges that "sharing information and maximizing opportunities for all ... to become more knowledgeable is felt [by managers] to be a kind of treason." But she argues that the costs of this failure to capture the opportunities that the new technology provides are simply prohibitive. She implores managers desperate to restore American business to a competitive international position to let go of their obsession with control and to use the new technology rationally—informating rather than merely automating workplaces.

Zuboff makes a convincing case that, in some instances, computer technology does lead to re-skilling. But the bulk of the evidence from her five years of rich field research points to the same conclusion as does Garson's more casual anthropology. Again and again, Zuboff's own case studies indicate that the informating potential of the new technology tends to be suppressed rather than encouraged by managers, who are fearful of losing their traditional monopoly of knowledge and power. In one pulp-and-paper plant, for example, workers filed grievances demanding increased pay commensurate with their new skills and responsibilities. The demand was immediately rejected by management, and the resulting sense of injustice and

resentment led workers to simply ignore some of the tasks they were expected to perform. At this plant, computerization only widened the "commitment gap," which is a major source of our nation's loss of competitiveness.

Zuboff's plea that managers allow rationality to triumph over their fear of losing power and control is appealing to anyone concerned about the welfare of workers. But she may be underestimating the powerful inertia of the authority structures within firms, which her own work so deftly exposes. The logic of information technology and the organizational logic of capitalist firms seem to be on a collision course. To be sure, Japanese-style "quality circles" and other worker participation schemes are all the rage in enlightened corporate circles these days—a context into which Zuboff's ideas about empowering workers could fit nicely. It's not new technology, but rather the decline of the U.S. economy internationally that has stimulated this interest in organizational reform—much of which takes the form of aping the Japanese.

Moreover, American corporations are finding it difficult to instill the spirit of enlightenment through their multilayered management structures. While some small firms have successfully implemented workplace reforms, in most giant corporations there's a huge gap between the rhetoric of participation and the reality of the factory or office floor. Typically, the new ideas are discussed intensively at the top of the organization but then are implemented in a superficial, mechanical fashion. By the time they trickle down to low-level supervisors and the individual worker, there's not much substance left. Managers who have no job security, and are accustomed to the old yes-man regime where independent thinking is punished, balk at suddenly shifting course and offering their own subordinates freedom and power. At the same time, corporations responding to the crisis of competitiveness are firing large numbers of middle managers—which doesn't exactly promote a willingness to take risks. And workers themselves, after enduring wage cuts and demands for concessions throughout the 1980s, are often skeptical about management's true motives when confronted with the latest organizational innovations. Given these conditions, Zuboff's vision of the workplace as a learning institution where traditional power relations are muted seems like a utopian fantasy. In the end, Garson's simpler inquiry, though it doesn't do justice to the complexity of the choices facing management in the computer age, may turn out to be more prescient. □

Book Review

Who Killed High Culture?

Jackson Lears

Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America by Lawrence W. Levine. Harvard University Press, 1988, 306 pp.

Nearly twenty years ago, in Jules Feiffer's *Little Murders,* Elliot Gould played a photographer who several times stared into space intensely and asked, "Where the hell are standards?" In an otherwise forgettable film, the question stood out. It implied that the quest for artistic novelty was dissolving in a puddle of nihilism. As things turned out, artists had barely begun to dip a toe in those murky waters. These days—when artistic values are so often reduced to surface glitter and flashy technique, when television advertising is celebrated as the hippest "postmodern" art form, and when cultural criticism from any perspective is dismissed as "elitist"—there are grey moments when I find myself asking questions similar to Gould's. Where the hell *are* standards?

To pose the question is to risk sounding like every right-thinking leftist's bête noire, Allan Bloom. And that is a serious risk, for Bloom has done more to cloud cultural debate than any public figure since Spiro Agnew. The charges against Bloom are familiar, and accurate—that he is a misogynist, a Eurocentric snob, a self-proclaimed defender of the past whose historical memory stops in 1968. The last is perhaps Bloom's most insidious failing. Instead of giving a genuine historical explanation for the cultural disintegration he sees all about him, Bloom can provide only a hysterical account of the caperings of campus radicals. For Bloom, as for so many contributors to contemporary public discourse, the diagnosis of current problems begins and ends with "the sixties." Yet for all his myopia and malice, Bloom is right to ask fundamental questions about cultural meaning and value, and how they can survive in a relativist atmosphere. The problem is that the controversy he has initiated is uninformed historically, and the shrill exchanges only confirm the combatants' caricatured views of each other.

That is one reason Lawrence Levine's fine book is so welcome: it provides depth and complexity to a debate that has degenerated into stale polemics. By unearthing a wealth of fascinating details about American culture in the middle and later nineteenth century, Levine shows us how much changed en route to the twentieth. In particular, he reveals how recently the categories of "high" and "low" culture came into being, and how thoroughly they were shaped by class prejudice and ethnocentric anxiety. My only complaint is that Levine is insufficiently attuned to the institutional changes that have shaped both the production and con-

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sumption of culture in the twentieth century. *Highbrow/Lowbrow* is absorbing and provocative, clearly a product of humane judgment and mature reflection, and a pleasure to read.

Once upon a time, Levine makes clear, Americans mingled in theaters and concert halls much as they do at sporting events today. The atmosphere in places of amusement was raucous and participatory. The audience felt no more compunction about hurling rotten fruit at the pretentious Shakespearean actor William Macready than the Baltimore Orioles' fans did about pelting Reggie Jackson with garbage after the varlet had fled their fair city in pursuit of George Steinbrenner's millions. Nor were the forms of entertainment uniformly uplifting. People expected to see *Macbeth* with an entr'acte of dancing bears, *La Traviata* followed by jugglers and hootchy-kootchy girls. Shakespeare's plays were not sacred texts in an unchanging canon but part of a genuinely popular culture—as vulnerable to parody as were minstrel shows or sentimental novels. Actors thought nothing of reciting Hamlet's lines in Irish brogue or Negro dialect, or of telling Ophelia: "Get thee to a brewery!" Even toward the end of the century, advertisers were claiming Libby's corned beef could fatten the lean and hungry Cassius, and Ivory soap could wash Duncan's blood from Lady Macbeth's hand. The assumption was that potential customers knew Shakespeare well enough to get the point. And what was true of Shakespeare held true for operatic music as well. The Swedish soprano Jenny Lind excited mass adulation on her visit to the United States; Italian libretti were frequently translated or travestied, to the amusement of multitudes; conductors felt free (or forced by the crowd) to precede *Il Trovatore* with *Yankee Doodle*. In music as in theater, what we now think of as "classic" works were not enshrined in a temple of taste but integrated into a rough-and-ready democracy.

By the early twentieth century, all that had changed. The now familiar boundaries between high and low culture had fallen into place. Theatrical producers began to think of Shakespeare as difficult and unpopular, a bad bet for big bookings. Opera was no longer translated but performed "correctly," before coteries rather than crowds. Theater and concert audiences, as well as museum visitors, were increasingly policed into polite passivity. The Great Tradition was effectively cordoned off from ordinary folk.

How had this happened? With respect to Shakespeare, Levine acknowledges a variety of possibilities: the decline of oratory, oral tradition, and "romantic idealism" in a more prosaic age with more naturalistic tastes; the influx of non-English-speaking immigrants; the rise of rival visual entertainments like baseball, boxing, vaudeville, and movies. But, in his view, none of these changes is adequate to explain the broader shift away from a heterogenous, democratic culture and toward a segmented, hierarchical one. Unfortunately, Levine's own argument about this transition is curiously narrow. He focuses on the whining WASP elites of the late nineteenth century, who fancied they had been jostled aside by immigrants and plutocrats—every would-be patrician from Henry Adams and Henry James to Henry Lee Higginson, the founder and virtual dictator of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Desperate for order amid a chaotic new social universe, such men embraced a sacralized vision of culture as a sanctum of sanity undefiled by the vandals at the gates. They were assisted by the likes of Frederick Law Olmsted, who imposed rigorous rules for decorum on his own Central Park, and the conductor Theodore Thomas, who required audience passivity on a scale his predecessors could have only imagined. In general, these new standards meant that culture could become a more effective emblem of upper-class solidarity; conformity to these standards could become a precondition for admission to elite status, a way of screening out the unworthy among the nouveaux riches and unattached professionals as well as the vulgar hordes. As Levine writes, "The cloak of culture—approved, sanctified, conspicuous culture—promised to become a carapace impervious to assault from above or below."

This is an effective argument, up to a point—a deft demonstration that cultural standards presumed to be timeless have originated in the foul rag-and-bone shop of the upper-class heart. But, in the end, it is too easy and neat. It oversimplifies the motives of the elites: certainly the more thoughtful among them were sacralizing culture

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from religious as well as social motives, from a sense that their own liberal Protestant tradition was played out and that they needed a more compelling source of transcendence. Jewish and Catholic immigrants, not to mention more theologically conservative Protestants, may have had less need for a sacralized culture; they had synagogues and churches (or—sometimes—the utopian promise of radical politics).

A more serious problem with Levine's interpretation is that he rounds up the usual suspects: the twelfth-generation old-monied WASP-types that every good progressive loves to hate. His argument tells us what we want to hear. It makes us think that contemporary cultural problems can be traced to the machinations of a few snobs at the turn of the century. It overlooks the complexities of the relationships between cultural elites and the institutional forces for change.

Perhaps the most compelling of those forces was the intertwined power of corporate capital and technocratic expertise. Levine gestures toward these connections from time to time. He notes that during the years around the turn of the century "American entertainment was shaped by many of the same forces of consolidation and centralization that molded other businesses." He mentions the rise of theatrical syndication, the growing need of symphony orchestras to seek corporate sponsorship, the tendency for audiences to become passive spectators at movie theaters and political campaigns as well as at concert halls, the spread of deference to experts "in a wide range of activities that had been relatively open during the nineteenth century and that were being professionalized and codified at its close." While hinting at a more ambitious interpretation of "the emergence of cultural hierarchy in America," Levine never fully integrates these faint suggestions into his own argument. Along the way, he misses a number of opportunities to connect cultural with institutional change.

Consider, for example, the history of avant-garde art. Certainly the avant-garde had been one of the key forces widening the gap between elite and popular culture in the twentieth century, yet it is mentioned nowhere in this book. What really set the twentieth century apart, José Ortega y Gasset wrote in 1925, was the "de-humanization of art"—the turn away from recognizable representations of everyday life. Clement Greenberg transformed this development into a positive virtue in his essay "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939), arguing that modern artists rejected familiar subject matter (indeed rejected *any* subject matter) in order to paint paintings about painting and write poems about poetry. Whatever did not self-reflexively call attention to its own technique, Greenberg consigned to the dustbin of kitsch, the sentimental trash that Hitler had resurrected as the pure expression of the Nazi folk. (Hitler's war on the "decadent art" of Weimar preceded by twenty years the American Congress's opéra bouffe version of the same struggle: the House Un-American Activities Committee's investigation of Abstract Expressionism.) In counterposing avant-garde and kitsch, Greenberg raised a host of political questions (though he resolutely avoided them in his own formalist criticism). We know that modernism could ally itself with fascism, but it is also important to remember that popular art could be just as firmly rooted in sinister soil. It could define itself as the simple and familiar in opposition to the difficult and strange, the wholesome and patriotic in opposition to the subversive and un-American, or simply the manly in opposition to the effeminate. (The nineteenth-century audiences' assaults on the effeminacy of English actors reminded me of the American Scene painter Thomas Hart Benton's tirades against the "third sex," which he claimed had taken over the art world in the 1940s.) Popular art, in other words, could also be a bearer of virulent intolerance.

Yet the resentment behind popular art could also stem from an understandable provocation. What many ordinary people found so enraging about avant-garde art was its willful obscurity—the impression that its meaning could be decoded only by a priesthood of expert interpreters. By the middle of the twentieth century those experts had assembled in the humanities departments of major universities and had begun to assimilate the modernist "classics," creating a new canon even less accessible to the man and woman on the street than Shakespeare and Goethe had been. Upon completing *Finnegan's Wake,* James Joyce reportedly said: "That should keep the professors busy for a hundred years." He succinctly summed up the symbiotic relationship between avant-garde art and the cult of expertise in the university. Surely that connection is relevant to "the emergence of cultural hierarchy in America."

What is even more relevant is the consolidation of corporate power. Levine alludes to the subject but misses its significance. Rejecting hierarchy, he nevertheless stays inside the perceptual universe of people like Henry James, who viewed skyscrapers as emblems of "the huge democratic broom" that was sweeping away the traditions he cherished. James was a smart man, but he didn't know much about skyscrapers. They were citadels of the new power of finance capitalism; they embodied the eclipse of democracy, not its triumph. Far above the thronging sidewalks, they elevated the men who controlled much of the capital that lubricated the workings of organized cultural enterprises—publishing companies, film studios, theatrical syndicates, symphony orchestras. Culture, as Levine points out, was becoming increasingly organized during the early twentieth century. And the model for efficient organization was the hierarchical, bureaucratic corporation.

Levine neglects this powerful institutional thrust toward cultural hierarchy, I think, because he views class conflict as essentially a matter of taste and style. The audience's hostility to the hapless Macready throughout the 1840s is, for Levine, simply a case of American democracy *versus* English aristocracy. But a great deal of the criticism focused on Macready's effete mannerisms. He resembled innumerable Horatio Alger villains: scorned for his mincing effeminacy but not his wealth. The problem with this "democratic" fixation on foppishness is that a representative of elite interests can easily overcome the difficulty merely by demonstrating that he's not a "wimp"—Theodore Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, and even (most recently) George Bush come to mind.

Levine's redefinition of class as cultural style and his inattention to consolidated power allow him conceptual space for an upbeat conclusion. Surveying the "cultural diet" proffered by

the *New York Times* in 1985 ("American Ballet Theatre, Norman Mailer, Cannes Film Festival, Kiss, New York Shakespeare Festival, ... Santa Fe Light Opera, *The Big Chill,* Warren Beatty, ... Diane Arbus ..."), Levine decides that "evidence of what appears to be a growing cultural eclecticism and flexibility is everywhere at hand." Having properly debunked Bloom's notion of a timeless Great Tradition, Levine slips into the characteristic left-liberal response to neoconservative cultural criticism—a celebration of a countermyth of American pluralism. Somehow the centralization of financial power, the spread of bureaucratic hierarchies in education and the workplace, the growing deference to experts (which even Levine acknowledges) have all left our arts and letters untouched. Somehow Levine can see a revival of nineteenth-century egalitarianism in a symphony orchestra president's determination to "get to the Yuppies pretty fast" or in Andy Warhol's monotonous celebrations of mass-produced kitsch. I fear Levine has been taken in by the propaganda of postmodernism. This may be because, in the face of all the evidence, Levine believes in the democratizing impact of "the market." When high-culture forms were "subject to free exchange," he writes, they "remained shared culture," and "the manner of their presentation and reception was determined in part by the market, that is, by the demands of the heterogenous audience." That may have been true for some times and some places during the nineteenth century, but to carry the same assumption forward into our own time is absurd.

Market exchange is simply not a benign, unproblematic form of mediation between artist and audience. The most vital art forms often survive *in spite* of market forces, not because of them. The big-time cultural marketplace has become oligopolistic and bureaucratic; even the most resourceful and innovative filmmakers or museum curators require sizable grants from corporations or government agencies, the sort of funding sources that tend to promote a bland, safe product. The audience has next to nothing to say about the matter. The cultural marketplace is also segmented; particular audiences and particular products are packaged for each other. And, within these segments, the processes of selection and dissemination are often grotesquely caste-bound. Thus, a minor novelist like John Updike can become a critical and commercial success, a Serious Writer, automatically featured on the front page of the *New York Times Book Review* every time he commits another nuisance in print. Why? Because his work resonates with the world of private school educations and summer homes on Martha's Vineyard; because it captures the *New Yorker* subscriber's condescending fantasies about the fatuities of life in all those boring suburban tract houses. This is democratic?

Finally, in some fundamental sense, market exchange has a destructive as well as an antidemocratic impact on culture—most obviously if we think of the built environment as part of our culture. How many times has any of us seen irreplaceable cultural artifacts sacrificed to commercial "development"? The familiar sight of bulldozers crashing through graceful nineteenth-century farmhouses causes me to question Levine's formulation of "the real debate": between those "who perceive culture to be something finite and fragile, which needs to be conserved and protected from the incessant Philistinism that threatens it, and those on the other side who, possessing no map and little liking for fixed and unmovable fences and boundaries ... conceive of culture as neither finite nor fixed but dynamic and expansive...." Does one really have to be an Allan Bloom to distrust the notion that cultural values (like real estate values?) can be infinitely "dynamic and expansive"? Does one have to turn in one's left credentials to believe that certain cultural traditions do need to be "conserved and protected" from the merciless inanities of the managerial ethos?

The university is one obvious place to carry on that conservationist struggle. A serious left critique of contemporary culture would recognize the reality of the educational disarray that Bloom describes—the aimlessness of many students as they bump from one requirement to another and the absence of any zeal for truth beyond the next midterm—without accepting his explanation for it. The problems of contemporary universities can be traced not to democracy but to technocracy: the triumph of a managerial ethos, an

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instrumentalist stress on technique rather than purpose. This technocratic emphasis drew strength from the Prussian model of a university imported during the late nineteenth century. The idea that the university would train civil servants to staff the bureaucratic nation-state was Americanized to include service to the modern corporation, but the preoccupation with hierarchy, efficiency, and expertise persisted. Only the liberal arts tradition retarded the full development of this utilitarian nightmare. But during the post-World War II era, when the university was fully assimilated to the needs of the national security state, many a campus began to approximate what Clark Kerr approvingly described as his "knowledge factory" at Berkeley.

What happened at Berkeley and countless other less-publicized campuses across the country in the 1960s was a rejection of the technocratic or managerial conception of the university, a resurgence of the traditional faith that universities constituted a site where students could question and formulate ultimate meanings and purposes. Forget the fulminations of Bloom and others: the 1960s were a great time to study (and probably also to teach) the humanities. The study of great literature, if not a religious surrogate, was nevertheless an exalted pursuit. Students—I was one of them—pored over the writers we all assumed were "major": Faulkner, Melville, Shakespeare. They helped us understand what we were up against: the proud man's contumely, the insolence of office. They helped us challenge that pride, that insolence. Poetry, contrary to Auden, made something happen. Tradition proved it had a radical edge.

Now that edge is considerably duller, worn away by the Big Lies of Bloom & Co. Humanities enrollments are down: who wants to study a collection of stodgy unchanging masterpieces preserved in amber? Granted, for those who trouble to investigate it, the humanities tradition is now broader, more capacious, more vital because of its inclusion of nonwhite, nonmale, and non-Western texts. But, on most campuses, the consumer demand is elsewhere. A couple of years ago, I was in the University of Missouri library on a lovely May afternoon when I spotted a young man reading a book labelled *PASCAL*. Ah, I thought, youth in the pursuit of truth, even on a Friday in spring. Then I moved a little closer and discovered he was studying a computer "language." So much for philosophy. This is what we are up against, in the fight to preserve and vivify our culture: not a handful of old "elitists" but an army of young managers who don't know a bard from a bare bodkin. □

BOOK REVIEW

All the Money in the World

Howard M. Wachtel

Restructuring the World Economy by Joyce Kolko. Pantheon Books, 1988, 390 pp.

Trading Places: How We Allowed Japan to Take the Lead by Clyde V. Prestowitz, Jr. Basic Books, 1988, 365 pp.

Why doesn't America work the way it used to? The answer to this question depends, like a Rorschach test, on one's angle of vision. To some businessmen, it means that workers are not as productive as they used to be. To some workers, it means that American enterprise and government policy have failed to protect high-paid unionized manufacturing jobs from foreign competition. To believers in the free market, it means that Americans have finally understood that government has no place in regulating the economy.

According to Clyde Prestowitz, a former official in the Reagan administration's Department of Commerce, where he was custodian of the Japan portfolio, the answer is to "Japanize" the United States. In his aptly named book, *Trading Places,* Prestowitz identifies the principal difference between Japan and the United States in terms of definitions of national security. To the U.S., national security means military strategy; to the Japanese, it means economic strategy. By trading places we would become more like Japan and Japan more like us.

In what is an otherwise important how-to book for those in the new administration who will be negotiating with Japan, Prestowitz ends up defending the very corporate system that has failed to compete effectively in the new global economic environment it plays a part in creating. If trade unionism, or environmental regulation, or anything else gets in the way of Japanizing the American economy, rethink these social policies, argues Prestowitz. If tax policy does not provide the maximum incentive for export promotion, lower the taxes.

Such imitative behavior, however, does not address the roots of the problem. Many of the changes in the world economy that have precipitated the present soul-searching about our future are the result of a new deregulated global economy that began to take shape in the mid-1970s. Its origins can be traced back to the early seventies when the world abandoned the postwar Bretton Woods system, which had provided for a regulated international

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market, and replaced it with the first experiment in deregulation—a strategy that became commonplace later in the decade.

The Bretton Woods system was carved out of the rubble of what remained of the world economy after the Second World War. Meeting in New Hampshire in 1944 at a turn-of-the-century Edwardian resort hotel (chosen partly because it was open to Jews who would have been excluded from other meeting sites under consideration), about forty countries agreed to a series of proposals that had been brewing since a week after Pearl Harbor. Key to this undertaking was the agreement to regulate the world price of money—exchange rates between various currencies—and keep those exchange rates within very narrow and stable bounds.

The agreement was abandoned after 1973. World money was deregulated, and, from that point on, the price of one country's currency in terms of another's was free to float and find its "free-market" value. The epoch-making changes that this one change would produce were not known at the time. Not only was world money deregulated and the free market introduced as an ideological as well as a policy tool; the adoption of floating exchange rates also hastened the maturation of a privatized global money system organized around Eurodollars—dollars held by banks outside of the geographic boundaries of the United States and not subject to any of the rules and regulations that govern dollars held by banks inside this country.

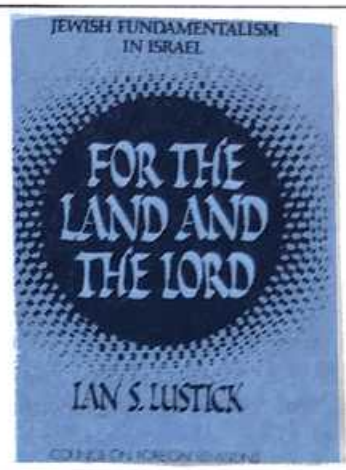
At the same time, OPEC raised the price of crude oil almost fourfold between 1973 and 1974. Moreover, the OPEC countries acquired some $375 billion in surplus earnings between 1973 and 1980—receipts from their oil sales in excess of what they spent in the rest of the world—and crude oil prices tripled after the fall of the Shah of Iran in 1979, leading to even larger surpluses. All these dollars were deposited in Eurodollar accounts, many of them held offshore by U.S. banks in convenient places like the Cayman Islands, Panama, and Taiwan, which neither taxed nor regulated the banks. Starting from a base of about $50 billion in 1973, the "stateless" unregulated Eurodollar system grew to nearly one trillion dollars by 1980, about as large as the domestic monetary system of the United States.

Armed with a newfound treasury, the money center banks—Bank of America, Chase Manhattan, Manufacturers Hanover, and about a dozen others—began to create their own rules of the game outside of the reach of governments, whose regulatory cover they no longer needed or wanted. Called expatriate or stateless banking, the Eurodollar system permitted an escape from government financial regulation of all sorts, including interest rates and the expansion of liquidity (but not from a taxpayer-financed bailout when mismanagement rendered a bank insolvent). It was as if we had been transported in a time machine back to a nineteenth-century regime of private bank money. But now we live in a period of globalized finance, facilitated by new technologies of satellite communication and computerized information processing.

Joyce Kolko's *Restructuring the World Economy* is, in part, about this transformation. In contrast to Prestowitz's look at what the restructured world economy of the past fifteen years means for those on the top of the economic heap, Kolko attempts to explain what it means for those on the bottom. Her method is to state the outcome—that capital will benefit at the expense of labor—describe the economic restructuring of the past decade, and then report on the weakened position of labor vis-à-vis capital. Missing from this analysis is what happens in between.

Searching for a solution, I come back to the initial transformation of the financial system after the demise of Bretton Woods. A global supranational financial system emerged, capable of circumventing the policy and regulatory boundaries of nation-states. Government was relegated to the role of a shovel brigade, as former Treasury Secretary Donald Regan said in another context: cleaning up the mess after the parade passed its reviewing stand.

As a consequence, the tension was heightened between the unbounded economic geography of private commercial and financial enterprises and the bounded political geography of nation-states. The public and its policy arm were hurt by this development while private markets were elevated in influence. It was only a short step from governments' loss of control over



FOR THE LAND AND THE LORD

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Ian S. Lustick
Dartmouth College

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the world price of money to their loss of influence over interest rates—the domestic price of money. President Carter discovered this fact in September 1979. When confronted by international pressure, Paul Volcker, Carter's newly appointed head of the Federal Reserve, engineered the shift to free-market monetarism. Domestic interest rates became at least as sensitive to worldwide rate fluctuations as they were to any internal policies of governments. The interest rate one pays on a car loan or mortgage is thus held hostage to the mysterious machinations of global money mavens.

Stateless Eurodollars have a transnational effect on national economic policies, seeking the lowest common regulatory denominator while traveling around the globe in search of the best rate of return. The globalized financial system allows money center banks to leverage their influence to promote the same deregulated and privatized environment within the United States that they have been able to create for themselves supranationally. Since October 1981, for example, the Federal Reserve has permitted banking "enterprise zones" in the United States, moving offshore banking onshore and reproducing the unregulated and untaxed financial sanctuary of the Cayman Islands in cities such as New York and Washington. Within twenty-one months of their inauguration, these international banking facilities had nearly $200 billion in Eurodollar deposits.

Some answers to questions about political changes in the mature industrial countries now begin to fall into place—particularly the triumph of the neoconservative restoration around 1980 in the United States, Great Britain, and West Germany. Once unregulated markets succeeded in creating a global financial system that was immunized from social democratic and liberal public policies, the stage was set for a restatement of conventional free-enterprise ideology in political campaigns. Government's role was to reinforce trends in the deregulated global economy by making its national economy compatible with the new supranational economy. This approach required a frontal assault on the mid-twentieth-century experiment with liberalism and social democracy.

The one exception to the triumph of free-market ideology was Japan, which did not relinquish political and policy control of its economy. This is the real lesson taught by Japan in the 1980s. It is, therefore, ironic that Prestowitz, a representative of the most successful experiment in free-market restoration, would extol the virtues of the Japanese, who deliberately opted out of the supranational order of deregulated markets. What remains to be seen in the 1990s is whether Japan can remain outside this system as it begins to globalize its production and becomes a major player in world finance.

For the other industrial countries—the United States included—the challenge is to find new strategies for implementing policies of economic growth and security in a regime of globalized markets. Neither Prestowitz, who sees the problem in terms of inadequate public support for American business, nor Kolko, who finds little space for progressive economic strategies, helps us navigate through the sea of changes that have occurred in the past fifteen years.

In the 1970s there was a slogan: Think globally, act locally. Today it must be: Think locally but act globally. The new president will be confronted with the need to put a public policy frame around the restructured American and global economy that Kolko describes: renewing our educational system, targeting strategic industries for research and development, fashioning a modern training program for midcareer displaced workers, and developing for the first time a trade policy that recognizes that the U.S. economy cannot be the buyer of last resort for every low-wage country that either denies worker rights or uses the American economy as a dumping ground for its subsidized products.

The economic instability of the 1980s has been driven by financial upheaval. While the deregulation and globalization of the financial system were the hallmark of the 1980s, the 1990s will be consumed with worries about financial solvency, as the several forms of debt—public, corporate, consumer, Third World, and bank—will have to be repaid. The key to easing all these debt burdens is lower interest rates.

They can be achieved only through policy coordination among the United States, West Germany, and Japan. Such coordination, started by the Reagan administration, will succeed, however, only if governments are prepared to attack the sources of destabilizing financial speculation in the unregulated Eurodollar system that produces the wild swings in exchange rates that ratchet up interest rates. It is time to update—not dismantle—the New Deal banking regulations and place the new global activities of American banks under the same regulatory umbrella that governs their domestic operations.

Lower interest rates can provide the space needed to develop a better strategy toward Third World debt so that growth and development have a chance to proceed. Of the many proposals concerning this problem that are now circulating, the most promising one would create a public authority to buy the banks' bad debts at their present market value—in most cases, about sixty-five to seventy-five cents on the dollar. This authority would then renegotiate the terms of the debt, stretching it out to more reasonable payback periods.

I would add two conditions. First, the banks must understand that this is the only game in town; they must no longer be allowed to appeal for any taxpayer bailouts either directly from the U.S. government or indirectly laundered through the International Monetary Fund. Second, the debtor countries must agree to take steps to stop funds from leaving their borders—capital flight between 1974 and 1987 is estimated at about $200 billion—and end the corruption that has enabled some people to get rich off debt while the large majority of people suffer the pain of austerity in order to pay it back.

This June, President Bush will make his first scheduled appearance on the world stage at the annual international economic summit of industrial countries. He should be prepared to present proposals for a vision of the global economy that recognizes the technological and institutional realities of the late twentieth century, restores production to its central place in the economy, and relegates money and finance to the task of lubricating the economy rather than dominating it. However, such bold initiatives are not in Bush's character—either personally or politically. □

Whoring in Hollywood

Bernard Weiner

David Mamet's article (*Tikkun*, Nov./Dec. 1988), which focuses on the arguments Mamet had with the Reform Judaism of his youth, throws a whole new light on his brilliant play *Speed-the-Plow*, which continues to be a popular hit on Broadway and soon will open in London.

Mamet writes in *Tikkun* about an embarrassing "atmosphere of shame" that permeated the Reform Judaism of his upbringing; his play, which centers on the wheeling and dealing of two Jewish movie producers in Hollywood, reveals and excoriates the shameful moral philosophy that rests at the heart of the American business ethic.

"Our religion was nothing other than a corporate creed," Mamet writes in *Tikkun*, "and our corporate creed was an evasion." The "corporate creed" and "evasion" of which he writes refers to an aping of Christian concerns and practices. In *Speed-the-Plow* the corporate creed is corporate (and personal) greed, the kind that totally eschews Judeo-Christian morality.

Speed-the-Plow's two Jewish movie producers bear a striking resemblance to those figures from Mamet's Reform past who, because they shied away from their Jewish ethics and heritage (aside from a Yiddishism or two), were terrified beings. In their desperation to "belong," to conquer their angst, to "make it" in Christian American society, they abandoned all that made them potentially holy.

Mamet writes in *Tikkun* that the "lesson of my Reform Temple was that metaphysics is just superstition—that there is no God.... We celebrated our autonomy from God..." And because of that abandonment of a direct link to God, Mamet says, and the separation from Jewish roots, "of course we were afraid." In *Speed-the-Plow*, Mamet—making a major leap in his playwriting, in both form and content—shows us the terrible personal and social consequences of that moral autonomy. (As he has demonstrated in such blockbusters as his Pulitzer Prize–winning *Glengarry Glen Ross*, as well as in *American Buffalo* and other plays, Mamet is a master of staccato realism. But in *Speed-the-Plow*, he has chosen to introduce nonrealistic, even spiritual, elements—a daring move for a popular playwright.)

The plot centers around two Hollywood *machers* (big shots). Bobby Gould (Joe Mantegna, who originated the role) is a self-confessed, give-'em-what-they-want "Hollywood whore" who has been named head of production for a major movie studio. Tongue planted firmly in cheek, Bobby says early on that he "prays for purity" in making his multi-million-dollar decisions. Toward the end of Act 1 his "prayer" is answered, in the form of an angelic temporary secretary who sees all, understands all.

Karen (Madonna, in her first major stage role) certainly understands Bobby's moral vacuum, the painful loss of his soul, and she provides the vehicle for his salvation: an "art film" based on a dense novel called *The Bridge*, which is about nuclear radiation at the end of the world and how a frightened humanity can find its way out of the abyss by acknowledging God. (In the *Tikkun* article, Mamet writes that he now has "a growing sense of the reality of God.")

Because of Karen, Bobby is forced to confront his moral prostitution in Hollywood. He opens himself to her love and to the new life of purity and hope that she offers him. But he sinks back into the pit of greed at the last moment, when his rickety ego can't handle her confession that she wouldn't have slept with him had he not been open to changing himself significantly.

If Karen is the angelic personification of Good, Charlie Fox (Ron Silver) is the personification of Evil, a lizardlike producer/agent who is pushing his old friend Bobby to make yet another piece of violent big-screen trash. Bobby is hot for this prison-break movie—which he knows will make them both "great big shitloads of money"—until Karen helps him recognize the truth about himself.

What makes *Speed-the-Plow* such a brilliant play is not only Mamet's stunning use of language but also his dive deep into the insecure world of men of industry, which shows how these men's harsh macho exteriors do not provide them with inner satisfaction. To achieve full self-realization, they must also have more gentle, feminine sides. Charlie, who is pure macho exterior, denounces Karen in the most offensive, sexist ways ("a tight pussy wrapped in ambition"), and assaults Bobby in much the same way ("You squat to pee!") in order to convince Bobby to side once again with him.

Still, one aspect of *Speed-the-Plow* continues to confuse and disturb me. The two Jewish movie producers, Bobby Gould and Charlie Fox, are stereotypically presented as money-hungry manipulators. Karen, the angel of salvation, is not just offering hope and change through a nondenominational spiritual force but is definitely a Christian—apparently born-again. Is the Jewish/Christian dichotomy pure coincidence? I doubt it, since everything else in the script seems carefully plotted.

Is Mamet, the former Reform Jew yearning for total assimilation, showing us what happens when Jews, who should know better and who have a moral tradition that calls on them to pursue higher things, mirror the worst traits of yuppie goyim? Or could he possibly be suggesting that Jewish souls are lost to God unless they open their hearts to Jesus? One can surmise, given Mamet's public identification

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with Judaism ("I am very proud of being a Jew," he writes in *Tikkun*) that he did not intend to take the latter approach. But the script does leave itself open for this interpretation, and Mamet might want to reconsider this aspect of the play in future productions. □

FILM REVIEW

Judging Mothers

Carol Gilligan

Chris Menges's beautiful and disturbing film about South Africa, *A World Apart,* has been widely discussed as a story about the conflict between good politics and good mothering. The film recounts a true story, taken from the life of Ruth First, a white journalist who was involved with the African National Congress and who was arrested and held in prison twice in 1963 under the Ninety-Day Detention Act. Diana Roth, the character in the film who is based on First, is not a bad mother, critics say, but she is a distracted mother, which amounts to the same thing—one who has more time and emotional energy for suffering blacks than for her daughters. In the end, Pauline Kael writes, "she's willing to return to prison and shatter her family."

Roth's dilemma is the one Sartre posed in the context of the Nazi occupation: should a young man join the Resistance or stay with his mother? Roth in essence abandons her daughters—at least once the South African government passes the Detention Act. A chorus of reviewers concludes with Kael that Roth is "a woman who loves humanity so much that she has only a small corner of her heart left for her children." A brave freedom fighter, perhaps, but at her daughters' expense.

And yet, the film itself—written by First's daughter, Shawn Slovo, and told through the eyes of thirteen-year-old Molly (a fictionalized representation of herself)—presents a more complicated story about motherhood. Molly's sadness is overwhelming when her mother is taken away to jail, and her anger at being shut out of the emotional center of her mother's life is unquestionable. But Molly's observations of other women undercut the reviewers' judgments about good versus bad mothering and instead raise the question: what does it mean to be a good mother in a corrupt society?

This point is made from the beginning. In the opening scene of the film, Molly and her friend Yvonne are driven home from their Spanish dancing lesson by Yvonne's mother, and they witness a black man knocked off his bicycle by a white hit-and-run driver. When Molly suggests that they take the bleeding man to be hospital, Yvonne's mother says that she does not want to get involved. When Molly's mother is arrested and detained, Molly is shunned by the girls at school; again mothers drive off, leaving Molly standing alone. The imprisonment of women in the higher echelons of South African society is captured most visually in a scene where Molly, overwhelmed by her loss, runs to Yvonne's house and sees Yvonne and her new friends swimming in the pool. On the fence surrounding the house is a sign with an attack dog crossed by a diagonal red bar. As Molly, shut out, tries to be let in, Yvonne's father arrives home and turns on her in a frenzy—shouting at her to leave and then chasing after her in his car while Yvonne and her mother, summoned by the commotion, stand by helplessly watching from behind the fence. Is this, the film asks implicitly, an example of good mothering? Only for a moment is Yvonne's mother distracted from her daughter by the political situation. Or, to put it differently, isn't this daughter also shut out (or shut in) from what is going on in the world which she as an adult woman will enter?

In the recent book *Mothers in the Fatherland,* Claudia Koonz observes that the word *Lebensraum*—literally, living room or space for living—was initially the call of German feminist movement members, symbolizing their wish (presumably in the name of motherhood) not to become involved in the corrupting world of politics, power, and men. This policy contributed to women's paradoxical willingness to vote for the openly misogynistic Nazi party. But it also contributed, perhaps more insidiously, to the patina of normal family life which women provided for Nazi husbands and fathers, so that systematic murder could be integrated with happy families.

It is a tribute to Shawn Slovo, and perhaps to her mother, that she resists the kind of judgments which are made so readily about mothers in our contemporary psychologically minded culture, the easy statements about good and bad mothers which abound in clinical case conferences and case histories, as well as in the media. In *A World Apart* an adult woman revisits the thirteenth year of her life, when her mother was imprisoned, to ask a different question: what does it mean to be a good mother to an adolescent daughter coming of age in South African society, and what can women teach girls about resistance and courage and love in the face of violence? We would need to see South Africa and mothers through the eyes of Yvonne and the other students who turn on Molly before we evaluate Molly's mother or the consequences of Molly's childhood sadness. But then, instead of judging the goodness and badness of mothers, we might question more generally whether a life without sadness is possible in contemporary South Africa and whether women—as mothers or teachers—can stay with their daughters without joining the resistance, especially once the daughters are able to see beyond their enclosure. □

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LETTERS

(Continued from p. 5)

embracing all of the programs Reagan attacked, including social security, education, health care, day care, and environmental policy?

When Plotke defines Reaganism as an expression of popular will, he reveals the peculiar love-hate relationship that left intellectuals have always had with a Main Street America to which they have few organic connections. This ambivalence regularly produces sharp shifts in mood among intellectuals, as well as some distorted judgments. In one mood, ordinary Americans are depicted as the rank and file of an imagined movement of socialist transformation. In another mood, and with equal fervor and overstatement, they are portrayed as ignorant and menacing fundamentalists, the storm troopers for an American fascism.

Of course, Reaganism must be explained. Ronald Reagan was elected and reelected, and Bush was elected too. And while the notion of a broad and democratic sea change in American political ideology is surely wrong, neither were these elections entirely rigged. Instead, the Reagan/Bush successes confirm that popular beliefs regarding the responsibility of government to maintain economic well-being, formed during the New Deal period, continue to determine national elections. Through a combination of luck and successful state interventions in the economy, the Republicans have more or less measured up by that criterion.

As all the exit polls showed, people voted Carter out because he failed to bring down unemployment levels despite high inflation (and because they blamed him for the sense of national helplessness created by the Iranian hostage drama). In turn, Reagan's popular support has been based precisely on his ability to deliver economic well-being through government—mainly through big military budgets and deficit spending. In other words, Reagan's popular support is the result not of an ideological revolution favoring the market, but of the familiar interventionist ideology of the New Deal. The key to Reagan's political success was simply that he restored prosperity to the better-off half of the American public that is overrepresented in the electorate. Those who put Reagan in office were not voting either for or against the icons of the Market and the State (both of which Americans seem to distrust), but for economic policies that appeared to be working.

That said, it should be added that there *is* a profound change in the American reality, and that change *is* weakening confidence in the efficacy of state interventions. The penetration of the American economy by the international market is raising large questions about whether government any longer has the capacity to shape economic development. This new skepticism does not reflect a growing ideological preference for the market over the state. If anything, survey data suggest that Americans are somewhat more favorably disposed to government intervention than they have been in the past. But there is widespread uncertainty whether the state can make a difference, and whether the market can restore economic growth either, given the overarching influence of global economic forces.

Plotke scolds the left in general, and the authors he reviews in particular, for failing to engage in "substantive or even strategic rethinking of positions" so as to contend with Reaganism. But the problem of substantive and strategic rethinking is larger than Reaganism and left intellectuals alike. The fact is that history has overtaken intellectuals of the left, and of the right, both here and elsewhere in the West. If, in the context of a new global industrial order, the American left is not yet able to define persuasive programs to ensure growth, equity, and, we would add, environmental integrity, neither is the European left able to do so. Right intellectuals are not doing much better, the short-term successes of the Reagan administration notwithstanding (unless busting unions, opposing minimum-wage increase, and otherwise forcing the living standards of many Americans down toward Third World levels to make the U.S. economy competitive counts as a political program). No one quite knows what to propose, as the vacuous Bush/Dukakis campaign so painfully demonstrated. Simply put, we live in a time of global flux, and it may well take time for coherent ideologies and credible strategies to emerge.

Indeed, it could even be the case that the traditional paradigm of American politics based on the promise of material affluence—durable until now—may have to be jettisoned. We may be entering a period of long-term decline, and Reagan may be remembered as the leader who dimly sensed the future and proceeded to reshape government policies so that the rich could grab what they could while they could. In the meantime, it hardly helps the left to mystify recent American elections by depicting them as mass ideological conversions.

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David Plotke responds:

Both Richard Flacks and Norman Birnbaum seem perturbed that I used my review to argue politics rather than to reiterate their analyses in their own terms. But their books should be taken seriously—which means making a political response. If, as Birnbaum suggests, we treat Reaganism mainly as an amalgam of "stupid chauvinism, willful ignorance, and angry racism," we will simply deepen our own political isolation. We will be able to feel superior to the majority allegedly afflicted by these political ailments, but to what end?

We—the left, broadly defined—were unable to prevent the ascension of Reaganism and its endurance beyond the departure of its leading figure. How should we respond to this failure? Two bad responses are to emulate Reaganism or to insist that our positions are virtuous but misunderstood. Birnbaum's reasonable aversion to anything that looks like the former response impels him toward the latter, which leads him to misread basically friendly criticism as a brief for "normal" political analysis, whatever that is.

We should be more aware of the limits of current "radical" formulations than Birnbaum suggests. If there is no privileged center of radical discourse now, we need to be more open to what "mainstream" theories can contribute than Birnbaum seems to be. Birnbaum's book too readily treats substantive disagreement as political servility, which makes it easy to dismiss political op-

ponents and hard to criticize their ideas effectively.

Reshaping current public debate requires a risky, ruthless critique not only of our adversaries but of the limits of our own efforts. We should be impatient with analyses that simply denounce Reaganism's moral and intellectual failings to the already convinced.

Regarding Richard Flacks's response, I don't think I misread his book. While Flacks objects to my claim that he advocates a social democratic reform program, his book says: "I am both arguing for and predicting the revitalization of what in Europe would be called the 'social democratic' Left—i.e., that expression of the Left tradition that concentrated on building up the support of a popular majority, in order to advance social justice and win workers effective representation in the capitalist state"(p.266). I agree that this would be a good thing, though I am less sure it will happen. I also agree that we ought to avoid recycling statist reforms.

A major problem both with the book and with Flacks's response is that Flacks's new course for the left corresponds to the course that has been widely pursued for the last fifteen years, after the breakup of the organized New Left. He proposes social democratic reforms at the national level, community-based efforts at democratization, and pacifist activism. This combination is vastly better than some alternatives Flacks spends time criticizing (such as neo-Leninism). But his book and his response suffer from not recognizing that much of his argument has already been won (partly due to his own prior efforts), and that winning it did not achieve as much as we might have hoped.

My criticisms of Flacks's analysis are not calls to return to the strategies he properly rejects. Rather, we should realize that the onset of Reaganism and its enduring power require us to rethink what the popular left has been doing. Whether the deficiencies are programmatic, ideological, or both is uncertain, but the last decade provides ample evidence of the vulnerability of all the lefts to a conservative antistatism.

What of Flacks's account of the tensions between "making history" and "making life"? The success of Reaganism suggests that if people are disinclined to use their own lives to "make history" on a grand scale, they are still interested in choosing among the histories that might be made. Bush's projected history was preferred to the others proposed in 1988, and part of its appeal was its explicit articulation of ideological themes. Flacks tends to understate the perceived importance of national politics for how individuals understand the lives they want to make, especially compared with the importance attached to local political questions.

Richard Cloward and Frances Fox Piven are astonished that I think there has been a shift to the right in American politics and public opinion. By a shift to the right, Cloward and Piven seem to mean "mass ideological conversions" — explicit, enthusiastic support for the social and economic views of Reagan's more conservative advisers. If Cloward and Piven want to point out that such changes have not been the norm, I have no objection.

Yet using this criterion makes it hard to talk about the actual shifts that have happened. Three successive Republican victories have occurred in the election that matters most to those people eligible to vote. In each case, the winner has campaigned vigorously against liberalism (partly by linking it to radicalism). Each winning campaign has argued that a conservative direction is desirable. I don't find much political consolation in the absence of a full-scale ultraconservative explosion that would make Patrick Buchanan a centrist.

Does the state of the economy provide an adequate alternative explanation for Bush's election? There is no question that he benefited from it—had there been a severe recession in 1987–88, his prospects would have been much worse. But how should we read the relation between economic performance and electoral outcomes? If individuals simply vote their pocketbook—that is, supporting the party in power when their individual situation has improved and against it otherwise—one would expect the Republicans to have done much less well than they did among regions and groups that have not fared very well economically in the 1980s. For example, Bush gained about 56 percent of the vote among those whose family income is between twenty-five and thirty-five thousand dollars; this large portion of the electorate (20 percent) lies below the median family income, not among the "better-off half of the American public" that Cloward and Piven posit as Bush's support.

Pocketbook voting in a narrow sense surely occurs, but it is intertwined with another kind of economic voting in which voters judge the government's overall contribution to economic well-being. Thus, we have to return to politics, in the sense that defining what counts as a good economic record is a political matter. Here Piven and Cloward claim that voters' support for Reagan and Bush has little if any ideological significance because, all in all, the Republicans have remained faithful to government intervention and the New Deal.

This argument misdefines the issue. Cloward and Piven deny a shift to the right by portraying contemporary politics in terms of the conflicts of the 1930s, so that Reaganite conservatives are viewed as 1930s liberals with an antistatist rhetoric that voters can safely ignore.

The extent of recent conservative success is ironically registered in Cloward and Piven's willingness to claim liberal and left victories of fifty years ago as a sign of contemporary strength. When conservative politicians in the U.S., Canada, and elsewhere praise the market and denounce government spending today, they do not mean to reject government responsibility for securing minimal levels of social security, or for macroeconomic policies aimed at avoiding severe recessions. Nor are they perceived to be doing so.

Debate in recent decades has been reshaped by a contemporary conservatism that mainly accepts those earlier victories but rejects state policies aimed at a substantial redistribution of income and services. It rejects explicit, ambitious government industrial policies, especially if their sectoral and regional aims have a major egalitarian dimension. It generally opposes social policies aimed at expanding rights (especially social and economic entitlements) for subordinate groups. And it ceaselessly tries to counterpose its advocacy of social discipline to an alleged liberal/left toleration of social disorder, notably with respect to the crime issue in the U.S.

On some of these issues, liberals and the left have been defeated so badly that they forget the course of recent political debate and imagine that voting

for someone who doesn't want to gut Social Security can't really be a conservative vote. Yet in presidential voting in the 1980s, large sections of the electorate have responded positively to what they understand to be conservative stances, and they increasingly attach a negative meaning to liberalism as a political category. Voters reject arguments that seem to signal a general increase in federal, social, and economic regulation, not to mention direct planning.

When analysts as perceptive as Cloward and Piven use such overheated rhetoric to deny the reality of a popular conservative political shift in the U.S., my guess is that they fear that to identify such a shift is to ratify it or at least to conceive of it as fixed into the indefinite future.

But recognizing real shifts and rethinking political choices are essential to creating new political realities. Political views are not as tightly linked to immediate socioeconomic patterns as Cloward and Piven suggest, and political argument is more important than they seem to allow. We should recognize a substantial shift to the right in American politics, try to understand its sources both in popular experience and elite advocacy, and consider how another political dynamic might be set in motion.

TIKKUN Discussion Groups

As *Tikkun* becomes one of the most widely read intellectual/political magazines in America, groups of people meet regularly throughout North America to discuss specific articles or editorials. Coming together once every two weeks or once a month, *Tikkun* discussion groups provide a way for people to connect with others who share their interests.

If you'd like to be in a discussion group, the following people have volunteered to be contact people. If there is no one in your area who is organizing a group, and you would like to be a contact person, write us at 5100 Leona Street, Oakland, California, 94619. We will be happy to help you figure out how to get connected to other *Tikkun* readers.

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MODERNISM

(Continued from p. 14)

miration for these new breakthroughs; the critical perspective that had always marked modernist art and thought shattered like the planes in a cubist painting. The modernists identified with speed, bursts of light, and explosive firepower; they named their magazines *Bomb* and *Blast!*, and they looked forward to seeing modernism put into practice on a spectacular scale. French cubists and German expressionists used all their talents to create elaborate camouflage, proud to help their respective soldiers kill each other. Proust's Baron Charlus stood on Paris roofs during air raids, singing Wagner arias and saluting a spectacle that was at once high tech and primeval.

By early 1917, however, the modernists who were still alive (many of the most creative were dead) had come to see the horror of the war: far from being an expression of heightened creativity, the war had reduced humankind to the most helpless and alienated sort of passivity. "Neither race had won, nor could win, the War," said the poet Edmund Blunden after surviving the disastrous Battle of the Somme. "The War had won, and would go on winning."

Thus, if the Italian futurists of 1914 to 1916 typified the modernism of the war's start, the Central European

dadaists of 1917 to 1920 best expressed the modernism of the war's end. Their outrages and provocations were meant to shock people into reflecting on what had been done to them and what they might do in return. Although this movement didn't last long, it still helped to expand people's minds—often against their will—to the point where the people pulled down several predatory empires and struggled, for awhile at least, to create modern society anew.

One of the great works of modernist self-education, written in the midst of the war, was Freud's 1915 essay, "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death." Freud tried to understand what forces had erupted within modern men and women that led them to press all their energy and creativity into the service of mutual assured destruction. He guessed that the scientific, artistic, and organizational triumphs of modern civilization had imposed unreasonably high ethical demands upon humanity, which eventually extracted devastating psychic costs. In the respectable world of the prewar middle class, men and women were forced to repress their strongest and deepest feelings—not only sexual feelings, but, at least as important, feelings of terror and violent anger—and therefore "to live psychologically beyond their means." In August 1914 the respectable facades had finally cracked. The war made it clear, Freud said, that "the state forbids wrongdoing and violence, not, however, in order to abolish it, but in order to monopolize it." The modern state enlisted people who were seething with repressed rage—rage against parents, children, siblings, authorities—and mobilized them to displace their unresolved private enmity onto socially sanctioned public enemies. Freud's clinical work had taught him how many people there were in modern society whose psyches were like bombs ready to explode; the war taught him how willing and able the modern state was to supply detonators and targets. In uniform, normally peaceful and decent men could perpetrate unthinkable atrocities and not only avoid criminal arrest, but win medals and praise in the daytime—and, because the state assumed responsibility for their actions, sleep well at night.

Freud's insight into the dynamics of patriotic gore is developed and deepened in his most important late work, *Civilization and Its Discontents*. The book reaches a climax with what may be the definitive vision of the contradictions of modern life:

> Men have gained control of the forces of nature to such an extent that, by using their powers, they would have no difficulty in exterminating one another to the last man. They know this, and hence comes a large part of their current unrest, their unhappiness, and their mood of anxiety.

Modern men and women are in desperate need of self-knowledge if we are going to gain the power to protect ourselves from our own might.

But it is not enough merely to defuse ourselves; we moderns must find a way to live. After summarizing the profound destructive forces around and within us, Freud adds—and ends the book this way: "And now we may hope that the other of the two primal forces, eternal Eros, will put forth his strength so as to maintain himself alongside his immortal adversary." Thus, the drive for self-knowledge that forces us to see through our world and our place in it, and brings us face to face with our heart of darkness, will bind us together in a new and more viable life. The dreaded negative powers of modernism turn out to be driven by the power of love. Freud's lifelong critical quarrel with the modern world ends with a dialectical hope.

* * *

Having laid out the paradigms of modern society and modernist culture, I will now briefly characterize several attempts to establish "postmodern" culture over the last twenty years or so; then I will focus briefly on several roughly contemporary works, works that I think are doing what modernism has always done and that show how, in spite of many obituaries, modernism is alive and kicking.

The first postmodernism emerged in the bohemian enclaves of American cities about 1960. It sprang from the people who invented happenings, assemblages, environments, and the art that would later be called pop art—people who, without knowing it, were inventing the 1960s. For the most part, they were too busy to worry about labels. But they were at least intermittently willing to answer to a postmodern label because they all despised the cultural orthodoxy that seemed to preempt the label of modernism in the 1950s. This orthodoxy, hard to recapture today, was narrow, solemn, and hieratic. Its high priest was T. S. Eliot, not the revolutionary poet who wrote "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "The Wasteland," but the grey eminence "Mr. Eliot," a clerical personage who presided over culture as over a sepulcher and demanded that art be treated with the hushed reverence due to the dead.

The worldview of this orthodox culture is characterized aptly by Norman O. Brown (in *Life Against Death*, a book that helped to shatter it) as "the politics of sin, cynicism and despair." Its overseers were ever vigilant in warding off threats to "high art" from "mass culture," as if art were a delicate antique that could be shattered

by any loud noise or strong vibration. Moreover, these overseers demanded that practitioners of each art form should forsake all others and should concern themselves only with the essence of their particular discipline. Thus, the only legitimate subject of painting was the nature of painting, all poetry had to be about poetry, and so on.

Nothing would have appalled the 1950s trustees of culture more than the idea that serious art could be fun. The new wave of artists in the early 1960s, by contrast, struggled to make art fun. They mixed media, styles, and genres, incorporated in their work motifs from the mass media and from large chunks of the industrial world, and brought art out of the studios and into the streets. The critic Leslie Fiedler's formula for this new wave was "Cross the border, close the gap." "I am for an art that tells you the time of day," said Claes Oldenburg, "an art that helps old ladies across the street." These artists opened culture to the immense variety and richness of materials, images, and ideas that the exploding "global village" of the great postwar boom was bringing forth. The new faces of the sixties were more active politically, and far more radical in their hopes, than were the modernists of the cold war years. At the same time, they were in love with the world they wanted to change. The spirit of those times still lives in Allen Ginsberg's poem "America," in James Rosenquists's mural "F-111," and in Bob Dylan's song "Desolation Row." It is all there in a wonderful phrase from Jean-Luc Godard: "the children of Marx and Coca-Cola." This generation often thought of itself as postmodern, and, compared with the modernist patriarchs of the 1950s, it was. But the children of Marx and Coca-Cola have a far better claim than do their predecessors to the spirit and honor of modernism: they engaged the contradictions of their times, struggling to make the teeming and boiling society of the sixties their own.

If the first wave of postmoderns was composed of the people who invented the 1960s, the second (and still current) wave is a strange combination of people who were born too early to participate actively in the sixties and people who were born too late and therefore missed the sixties. This postmodernism was created by Parisian academics who spent their whole lives as members of the enviably privileged French mandarin class. For two minutes in May 1968, their lives were transfigured—a terrible beauty was born; in two minutes more, all their hopes were dead. The postmodernisms of the past twenty years grew out of this trauma, and also out of a refusal to confront it.

Instead, the Left Bank exploded with all the feverish rhetoric and sectarian fanaticism that typify radical politics at its worst, combined with a total abdication of concern for political issues in the grubby real world. (Indeed, it was typical of Parisian postmodernism to insist that there was no such thing as a real world: as Jacques Derrida said, there is "nothing outside the text.") Derrida, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard, and their legions of followers appropriated the whole modernist language of radical breakthrough, wrenched it out of its moral and political context, and transformed it into a purely aesthetic language game. Eroticism, revolution, terrorism, diabolical possession, and apocalypse were now simply ways of playing with words and signifiers and texts. As such, they could be experienced and enjoyed—*jouir* and *jouissance,* Roland Barthes's favorite words—without engaging in any action, taking any risks, or paying any human costs. If modernism found both fulfillment and defeat in the streets, postmodernism saved its believers the trouble of having to go out at all. One could be ultraradical without ever leaving one's desk. If this is nihilism (and these postmoderns are constantly invoking Nietzsche and Heidegger to show that it is), it is a radically new form of nihilism—nihilism without tears. The first time it was tragedy; the second time it's farce.

When this production crossed the Atlantic amidst great fanfare and played to full houses of people who bowed their heads in awe instead of laughing, I was mystified for awhile. Then I noticed that the most devoted followers of French postmodernism were rather younger than I was, and, in fact, were people who were too young for the 1960s. Coming of age in the 1970s, they inherited all the bitterness of the sixties left and the Vietnam War generation without any of our experience of protracted struggle leading to limited but significant changes in the world. This generation appropriated and deepened all our radical negations but ignored our radical hopes. The most impressive achievement of this 1970s generation, it seems to me, is punk rock: a medium that dramatizes, in the most compelling way, a state of radical negation without radical hope, and yet manages to create some sort of hope out of its overflow of energy and honesty and the communal solidarity it ignites in its audience.

I have recently been reading Jean Baudrillard, the most recent postmodern pretender and the object of cultic adulation in downtown art scenes all over America today. Here is a bit of Baudrillard, just enough to convey the flavor:

> The end of labor. The end of production. The end of political economy.
>
> The end of the dialectic signifier/signified, which permitted an accumulation of knowledge and meaning.... The end of ... capital accumulation and

social production. The end of linear discourse. The end of the classic era of the sign. The end of the era of production....

Power is no longer present except to conceal the fact that there is none.... Illusion is no longer possible because reality is no longer possible....

Having read these words, I began thinking to myself, Where have I heard all this before? Then I remembered. I turned to my record collection. It was the Fugs' "January nothing, February nothing, March and April nothing.... Capital and labor, still more nothing, Agribusiness nothing." It was the Sex Pistols' "No Future" shouted all night till the band members dropped. It was Flipper's "Not to believe what you believe, Nothing. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing." It was the Minutemen's "No heart/soul, no working at that goal.... Not living/dying, life just means surviving.... No world/no fair, lost hope, I no longer care."

We can feel the metaphysical affinities here, yet they speak in such different voices! The punks put themselves on the line; the desolation of their world fills them with dread; they open up their inner wounds, in the vein of Rousseau and Baudelaire, Artaud and Billie Holiday, Jackson Pollock and Sylvia Plath; in their musical and emotional contortions they are trying (as Nietzsche urged us all to try) to break the windows and leap to freedom. Their spirit moves in the orbit of modernism, whether they know it or not.

The voice of the postmodern mandarins, by contrast, seems to emanate from a very different and distant space. They don't say "lost hope/I no longer care,"—maybe because the supposed death of the subject precludes it—but they manage to sound like they mean it. They announce The End of All Things in tones of serene aplomb, proclaim incoherence in elegant neoclassical antitheses, and assert with dogmatic self-assurance the impossibility of truth and the death of the self. It sounds as if, after the failure of their one great leap into actuality, back in 1968, they collectively decided never to go out again—to seal up the windows and convince themselves that there is nothing out there. Like the pharaohs, they have built themselves a grand, luxurious tomb; it's a splendid setting for a postlife, a fine place to stay cool. But is the postsixties generation really ready to join this kingdom of shades, to collectively die without ever having lived? Let me appeal to them—no doubt, to some of you—with a 1960s slogan: Hell no, don't go!

* * *

Finally, I want to address some of the ways in which modernism is continuing to evolve. The artists I will mention—Laurie Anderson, Maya Lin, and Les Levine—are all concerned with creating some sort of public space or common wavelength in a radically privatized and fragmented world.

Laurie Anderson's world often seems to bear some of the hallmarks of the postmodern worldview: landscapes as cold and lifeless as outer space (often they are outer space, courtesy of NASA), with cold and darkness enveloping us all; people engaging in arguments with their shadows, mirror images, magnifications, or computer clones; hypnotic trance music, electronically made; photographs, shadows, drawings, simulations, and montages layered or blended with real things and people; communication that seems cryptic and erratic at best—the theater we're in feels like a high-tech version of Plato's cave. But Anderson's stance toward this weird world is radically different from the postmodern perspective. When she brings her *United States* to life, she is always there, at or near the center of the stage, gliding or rushing about from microphone to synclavier, from vocoder to electric violin: she is the subject of everything that is said or sung, played or portrayed—incestuous families, missile silos in farmers' barns, mothers who blend with oil wells and bombs, tigers breaking into family picnics (and becoming part of the family), amorous encounters with President Carter, flights from stranglers on the Hollywood Freeway, Indians confessing to anthropologists that they really never knew their tribal chants, travelers in search of towns that are purely hypothetical, and more.

So she goes, propelled by an amazingly rich imagination: *United States* is the sort of thing James Joyce might have created if he had had cybernetics to work with. The enormous world that rotates around her looks like an update of Chaplin's *Modern Times*—only this time the human controls the machines. "There are ten million stories in the Naked City," she says, as skyscrapers flash on the screen, "but no one can remember which is theirs." She is determined to find out, both for herself and for us all. *United States* ends with Anderson onstage alone in darkness, looking toward us, with fog lights shining from her eyes.

Maya Lin's Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington, dedicated in 1982, shows how the idioms of the modernist movement in architecture, so often criticized for supposed indifference to the historical, may be uniquely qualified to tell the truth about contemporary history. The memorial's design is distinguished in its purity of form, its open and gently flowing space; it displays an austere honesty in its use of materials and in the directness and simplicity of its gestures. Furthermore, the memorial is as remarkable for what it leaves out as for what it says. It leaves out all the grandiloquence, pomposity, and vainglory that have poisoned so many monuments—and, indeed, so many wars—through the

ages. This memorial's rejection of historic associations enables it to create a protected space—we might say, a fortress without walls—where everything is honest and clean. It brings us back to Hemingway's insight, in *A Farewell to Arms,* that, for the men who were under fire in the Great War, "abstract words such as glory, honor, courage or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the date." The memorial gives us virtually nothing but the names, and it reminds us how, in design as in writing, the sparest and most reductive modes of modernism can be immensely liberating: they can set us free from lies and give us space to make a fresh start so that we can construct personal and public lives of which we won't have to be ashamed.

We move down a gentle slope in the landscape, drawn forward by the giant extended wings that form the memorial's walls. As we get closer to the thousands of names, we see ourselves reflected in the black granite with amazing vividness: we may never have seen ourselves so clearly till now. Everybody who goes through this experience cries. We all cry here, no matter how we felt, or what we did, about the war. The Vietnam Veteran's Memorial shows how modernism can help us look the negative in the face and live with it; it shows us how to open up our wounds together so that we can begin to heal them. It is not a bad way to start to be a community.

I've focused on modernism's capacity to heal. But this emphasis shouldn't lead us to think that it has lost its flair for making trouble. The New York conceptual artist Les Levine made plenty of that in 1985, when he was invited to create a series of giant billboards over all the streets of London. Levine, a Jew from Dublin, went up to Derry in Northern Ireland, where he took a series of photos of Catholics and Protestants threatening each other and flaunting their banners and guns. He turned the photos into enormous paintings, in strong industrial colors, with a tonality that is aggressively flat and crude. He made these people dreadful to look at, in ways that remind us of the post-World War I caricatures of George Grosz. But the captions, in huge block letters, are even more disturbing: all the words, in different but inescapable ways, accuse and implicate God. Thus, overlaid on a grim and worn old lady and an undernourished boy, Levine inscribed a command to STARVE GOD. Over a huddled squad of British soldiers in battle fatigues, ATTACK GOD. Over Loyalist patriots waving their flags (one has actually turned herself into a flag) and grimacing at the camera, PARADE GOD. Over a squad of border guards beaming lights at us through barbed wire, BLOCK GOD. Over a soldier prodding a blanketed corpse with his gun, while an old man in shock turns his face away from us and toward the ground, KILL GOD. Over an urban ruin, BOMB GOD. And so it goes.

Mounted together in an art gallery and displayed as paintings, these works are devastating, in the vein of Leon Golub's Mercenaries and Interrogations paintings. Displayed as billboards along the London streets (as they were in September 1985), incorporated into the mass media, sandwiched in between advertisements for tires, cigarettes, and *Rambo,* they had an even more explosive impact. The Institute of Contemporary Arts in London has reproduced some of the many letters and editorials that express unmediated hysterical panic. The posters seem to have forced a large assortment of people to think quickly and intensely, not only about their relationship to the troubles in Ireland, but about the meaning of history and human life itself. And thinking in this way seems to be too difficult for many people to bear. They have not been consoled by the hopes expressed in some of the posters—hopes that they, or people like them, might have (or could gain) the capacity to PROTECT GOD and even to CREATE GOD. Les Levine seems to have spoken more truth than he thought he knew, just as he has penetrated deeper into people's inner lives than he meant to go. Works like these should make it clear to us what modernism is for: to force modern men and women to come to terms with themselves and their world, to pour the heaviest and deepest meanings in modern life out on the street.

* * *

Thus we have returned to where we began: modernism in the streets. It may be that the most exciting modernist work of the 1980s will turn out to be the people of Manila's collective creation. In January 1986 they spilled out into the streets and onto the boulevards, waved homemade signs proclaiming "People Power," looked into the eyes of the soldiers who were sent out to shoot them, placed flowers in the rifle barrels and around the bayonets, and somehow, amazingly, got the soldiers to lay down their arms. These crowds don't seem to have been very well-organized (and they are not much better organized today). They don't seem to have had a very clear idea of what they were fighting for—though they did know exactly what they were fighting against. Their "People Power" was both naive and ambiguous; yet, like so much innovative modernist art, it was open-ended, reaching toward a future in which its meaning could be worked out.

There was something absurd about their whole enterprise, and even they seem to have grasped the absurdity. Still, they showed us that modern men and women do not have to live out their lives as passive objects or

martyred victims, that they can seize the day and make a real difference. I wouldn't be surprised if we were to see more days like those in Manila in the years to come. Indeed, people may today be learning to recognize each other, and recognize themselves, on city streets all over the world. So long as they do, I think we can say modernism is alive and well. □

SURVIVING A BUSH PRESIDENCY

(Continued from p. 18)

they do need to be reconceptualized within this broader framework. This kind of transformation will take money, organizers, individuals willing to dedicate their time to promoting these ideas, and most of all, people with the courage to rethink basic political and social assumptions without giving up their fundamental commitment to equality, peace, freedom, and human dignity.

The transformation will also take a new spirit—a spirit more like that of the sixties than that of the eighties. While politics cannot always be fun, it can be full of humor, innovation, excitement, and creativity. The energy of the sixties can energize the New Democratic Party.

3. The New Democratic Party should foster a nationwide discussion of social and ethical values. Television advertisements should dramatize the ways that the present organization of American society destroys loving relationships, undermines families, and encourages children to develop selfish and self-destructive values. Public forums, teach-ins, community meetings sponsored by the New Democrats should insist on the primacy of values. Elected officials at the city, state, and national levels should hold public hearings about the problems in family life, the world of work, and education—and should engage in a vigorous values debate with the right. Their goal should be to encourage people at every level of society to begin to think of the kinds of societal changes that are necessary to produce people who both treasure individual freedom and are able to be giving, loving, caring, spiritually sensitive, and ethically responsible.

In the national discussion of values, we should reject a society that sees the individual as the center of existence. We must insist that human beings are fundamentally in relationship with others, in need of one another, and that interdependence is ontologically prior to individual autonomy. While fiercely resisting the right-wing attempt to undermine human freedom or to establish coercive norms that prevent individual self-realization, we should simultaneously insist that the fully healthy human being is one who is involved in a network of loving relationships. The healthy human being, we should insist, is not the person who has learned to stand alone and cope, but the person who can acknowledge his/her neediness and can simultaneously experience the neediness of others not as a threat or a stifling demand but as an opportunity for mutuality and shared compassion.

This is a very different basis for politics than the politics of "let everybody do their own thing." Our highest goal is not to leave everybody alone, but to eliminate the external social, economic, political, and psychological barriers that undermine our ability to love and care for one another. Our critique of a competitive market society is not *just* that it is unfair, but that it creates human beings who are morally insensitive, spiritually deadened, and psychologically crippled.

4. The New Democratic Party should foster a nationwide movement of study groups and consciousness-raising groups that focuses on the relationship between personal life and external economic and social structures, and that aims both at reducing self-blaming and empowering people to engage in social change activities. The success of the Institute for Labor and Mental Health in attracting hundreds of rank-and-file working people to its occupational stress groups illustrates the appeal that such groups might have. The institute was formed in California twelve years ago with the goal of creating a mass psychology of empowerment for the average American. What the institute experience revealed was this: many working people are hungry to talk about their lives, but they also believe that doing so involves confronting the aspects of their lives about which they are most ashamed. So we face a circular task: in order for people to engage in discussions that would enable them to reduce their self-blaming, they first need to overcome the self-blaming enough to feel that it's "OK to have personal problems."

The solution involves the following steps:

• The leaders of the consciousness-raising groups must clearly indicate that these groups are not "therapy groups," but "training groups" that teach people to

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understand the relationship between personal pain and external social reality. Not quite study groups, because there is some expectation that people will talk about their own lives, but not therapy groups either, these consciousness-raising groups will provide a way for people in the same neighborhood or workplace to connect with others without requiring them to disclose more information about themselves than they feel comfortable doing. The teaching aspect of these groups helps to destigmatize them and makes it possible for people to read articles and discuss ideas together and then apply these ideas to their personal lives. The New Democratic Party should provide reading material, manuals, videotapes, and other aids in order to stimulate these discussions.

• We need to start with a vanguard group—people who feel good enough about themselves that they would be willing to engage in this kind of activity on a sustained basis. What they learn from their own experience in creating and sustaining these kinds of groups will provide invaluable experience for others. Such people helped build the consciousness-raising groups of the women's movement, and they will also eventually provide the leadership to build these groups throughout American society.

• We need to be prepared for the inevitable resistance and delegitimation that these activities will engender at first—similar in many ways to the delegitimation that faced the feminists in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Ideas that deeply touch people's inner feelings inevitably produce considerable resistance. But just as feminism was able to overcome substantial portions of this resistance because it offered a way of understanding previously confusing aspects of personal life, so too a campaign aimed at helping people understand and deal with the social dimensions of personal life will eventually win adherents from sectors of the population previously unreachable by the old Democrats. As such, this strategy will create a New Democratic Party that transcends the normal boundaries between left and right.

5. While the New Democratic Party cannot associate itself with any particular religious tradition, and while it should publicly endorse the work of the ACLU and People for the American Way, it should also seek to validate the existence of people's deep and legitimate spiritual needs. In place of the empty rhetorical and manipulative appropriation of religious symbols and language by both Democrats and Republicans, the New Democratic Party should articulate the need for a society that can validate our sense of reverence, awe, and radical amazement at the universe. We need a non-utilitarian relationship to the physical universe, manifested in economic policies that are ecologically sound. The willingness of forces on the left to raise these issues, and to talk about a spiritually rooted orientation to the world, would open many doors for us that have previously been closed.

* * *

This is enough of a beginning to show what it would be like to live through the Bush years with a sense of hopefulness grounded in a vision of how the liberal and progressive forces can eventually transform the political arena. Without some such vision, the years ahead will be grim indeed. □

HUNGARY

(Continued from p. 23)

His credentials in order, the reporter concludes: "They have the right to know on what grounds they have been denied passports."

Haraszti, all nervous energy and impish smile, is delighted. The interviewer has in effect endorsed not the hunger strike but its limited goal—the right to information. Haraszti, a close student of the stifled language of intellectuals-in-waiting, cheerfully explains that the reporter had a choice of, say, ten possible digs at Kószeg and chose the mildest. "A clear victory," he says. Antonia is not so impressed—she thinks this sudden exercise of *glasnost* is designed strictly to impress the U.S. ambassador and will end as soon as Grósz returns from the U.S., dollars in hand. In the past, the intellectuals have seen repression lighten, then clench again. Still, no one thinks a rollback is feasible now.

For one thing, the degree of *glasnost* is dazzling. Milan Kundera's *The Joke* has been translated and published, as have Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita;* George Orwell's *1984* is due out soon. The film of Boris Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago,* in Hungarian, is playing in the countryside (drawing crowds) and in Budapest (no crowds that I could see), while Pasternak's book stands in the front window of every bookstore, along with—of all things—Norman Mailer's *Armies of the Night,* featuring an incendiary cover of a crowd bearing banners and pressing forward. In one of the official newspapers, a leading literary critic calls for the publication of the complete works of Arthur Koestler, who is, after all, "a great Hungarian." ("*Darkness at Noon* has already been published," Antonia insists, "in *samizdat.*") The novels of George Konrád, the extraordinary writer closely identified with the opposition, will finally be published in his home country. Of course, not everything flowing through the sluice gates is of exalted standards: courtesy of West German capital, newsstands are featuring *Sexpress,* Hungary's first girlie magazine, the slick cover a slightly

off-color (in the technical sense) topless shot of the British porn star Samantha Fox.

8.

A few days later, I meet someone even more optimistic than Haraszti: György Kozma, cartoonist, Jew, mystic, and gay—a marginal man if ever there was one. Kozma, in his early thirties, is writing a comic book about the dancer Nijinsky. He maintains that Nijinsky was driven mad by his grandparents, who inflicted a golem on him. Making his living writing movie dialogue and teaching languages, Kozma also writes a column on the avant-garde scene—music, graffiti, whatever—for a weekly literary magazine, and he has been censored only twice: once when he reported that party headquarters in one district had been graffitied with the word "Pravda." True, as the lid comes off ugly things crawl out from beneath the rocks: skinheads, heavy metal ("protofascist," he calls them; "Heavy Metal Is King," I read on a tram seat), anti-Semitic and—even more so—antigypsy sentiments. Still, gay bars have opened without harassment in Budapest in the past three months, he says. You can get anonymous AIDS tests. Kozma is convinced that the cultural opening is irreversible. "It would take someone like Hitler or Stalin to repeal these changes," he insists. No one likes or respects Grósz, he says, but numbers are also on the side of *glasnost:* with the year 2000 looming, no one will want to go into the next millennium carrying a reputation for dictatorship.

9.

At the Jewish Museum, the *heymish* guide is one person who likes Grósz, likes the fact that he's visiting Reagan in order to land American capital. Things are great for Jews, he says—ministers of the government are Jews, as are doctors, lawyers. There's no anti-Semitism in the press, not an ill word on the radio, he adds. I make allowances for the fact that he has a plum of a position, a veritable ambassadorship to tourists. Then it's all the more interesting when he adds that of course among themselves the goyim speak anti-Semitism and one doesn't go around loudly proclaiming that one is a Jew.

The museum is full of sumptuous objects collected by the Nazis. My host's favorite object is a menorah topped by a bust of Napoleon—a hero to the Jews of Eastern Europe, whom he emancipated on his way to Moscow (whence my grandmother grew up in Lithuania singing the "Marseillaise" as a freedom song). Is this menorah, I wonder, in the guide's mind an allegory for the liberating West?

In any event, since my visit a university program in Jewish studies, the first in Eastern Europe, has been established in Budapest.

10.

Back at Haraszti's apartment, a few days later, at a dinner welcoming Ferenc Kőszeg off his fast, the mood remains festive, though shadowed by dark tones—a Hungarian specialty. Since May 1988, when the party booted Kádár upstairs, virtually every week has brought pleasant surprises for the intellectual opposition. The question for its members is, What follows from the freeing of speech? The right to assembly is still contested, fragile. Limits are still in place, although not always where you expect them. In May 1987 a few hundred people gathered at an unpublicized (except by the opposition) ceremony to unveil a monument to the great Swedish diplomat and rescuer of Jews, Raoul Wallenberg—a statue of Wallenberg as an old man, though the Russians claim he died in their custody while still in his thirties. You can demonstrate peacefully on behalf of the ethnic Hungarians in Rumania (as perhaps a hundred thousand did in June), a cause the regime has co-opted. You can demonstrate peacefully against the ecologically disastrous dam on the Danube (as forty thousand people in Budapest did in September 1988, and as six hundred women did at the river site nearby—the first women's action since 1956). The year 1956 is officially "tragic," but oppositional manifestations that go further are risky: this past June a demonstration of several hundred people, which was consecrated to the memory of Imre Nagy on the anniversary of his execution, was set upon by policemen wielding clubs that spray Mace from their tips—manufactured in the U.S. (America may have lost its technological edge in VCRs but it still excels in the tools of violence.)

Now that hardly anyone believes the official jabber about socialism, party factions jockey for rationales to justify power. Where they used to prate about socialism, now they prate about democracy. The opposition talks with party higher-ups who maneuver for a reformist reputation and the power base that would go with it. During the summer of 1988, the name that came up frequently was Imre Poszgay, a populist-nationalist government minister who has astutely played the nationalist card, forcing Grósz to follow. Poszgay has said publicly that a one-party system is not an eternal good. He maintains friendly relations with the opposition, although his clout as a politician is limited. In a party where control of secretaries is a measure of one's power, he has only one. Wishfully, some intellectuals have looked to him as Hungary's Gorbachev, hoping he'll supplant Grósz. (The cartoonist György Kozma thinks this will happen within two years.)

But the opposition knows that lying is a way of official life. The watchword is, Watch what they do, not what they say. Already by October, Poszgay's reputation had

slipped. He invited representatives of five opposition groups to meet with him, and, although he was friendly and took notes, the results were not stellar. (He offered legitimation to FIDESZ, but the youth organization wasn't interested in any more legislation, thank you; the Constitution already guaranteed it the right to exist.) When Parliament voted overwhelmingly for the hated Danube dam, Poszgay voted with the majority party machine, whereupon his reputation with the opposition plunged.

11.

To celebrate the end of the hunger strike, Miklós and Antonia have Kőszeg and his wife, along with Ruth and me, over for dinner. Miklós regales us with a story. The party has editorialized daily on behalf of the hunger strikers, but it has also quoted a police official who said that the strikers had been refused passports because they had violated Hungarian law. Ah, the wonders of paper law! It seems that Hungarian law also provides that if a newspaper prints a falsehood, an injured party has the right to demand rectification—of the same size as the original. If the paper doesn't accede within eight days, the injured party has the right to sue. Miklós went down to the newspaper office, introduced himself as Kőszeg's representative, and demanded to see the editor. Yes, sir, very well, sir—one of the best-known oppositionists in the country was treated as a VIP and ushered ceremoniously into the editor's office, where he presented an appeal on behalf of Kőszeg, Erdei, and two others. Miklós Haraszti, professional agitator, principled pragmatist, chortles.

Two months later, in October, the upshot: at first, rectification was refused. On appeal, Erdei won. (The job retaliation he feared has also not been forthcoming.) In the case of the other three people, the court found that the police had merely been expressing an opinion.

12.

At another gathering, I ask a bright graduate student (I shall call him Péter) what he expects to be doing in five years. "Is this a joke?" he bridles. An erudite student of law and philosophy, Péter has just learned to build bookshelves; bookshelves are in short supply, and the ones that are available are shoddy. What faces him otherwise is a job teaching secondary school in the provinces at a worker's salary. Like many other students, he is eager to get to the U.S.—to find theoretical sophistication, the right to study subjects that have gone underdeveloped in Hungary (psychology is an example), even the chance to practice a profession that in Hungary belongs—so it is said—to a "mafia," a closed circle.

We meet four men at this gathering—Péter, two professors, and an American graduate student—and they are all astounded to hear that the activists feel optimistic. Perhaps, Péter suggests, it is because they themselves feel closer to power. These four are not full-time oppositionists, although they share oppositional views. They are weighed down with a weariness and cynicism so sweeping and corrosive that my own feels perfunctory. They think the economic crisis is so profound and pervasive that the new political and cultural openings don't matter much. I sense that what they are feeling is more than gloom about personal prospects. The professors' prospects, in fact, look, on their face, rather good.

One man (whom I shall call Istvan), a dapper man in his forties, of aristocratic origins, has taught in the States. Some of his work on Western writers has been mangled, sentences added without his knowledge. He does his part to protect activists, but the following piece of irony illustrates the dilemma facing those on the inside who try to do the right thing: several years ago, he was told to flunk students who were involved in the unofficial peace movement. In protest, he quit the students' examination committees—which angered the students, who wanted his help, not his moral gesture. As a result, he has changed his tactics: he sits on the committees and certifies absurdly that Ph.D. candidates are "good Marxists," which they must be to get the degree—and which he thinks hardly anyone in the university is.

Our host says that Miklós Haraszti lives like a free man; for everyone else, compromise is a way of life. The best recent Hungarian art is nonrepresentational—especially some very good op art: no representations, no trouble. We talk into the night about Hungarian politics. Istvan is hopeful (or is it just curious?) about the Democratic Forum, a monthly meeting where party and ex-party dissidents debate political issues before hundreds of people, by invitation only, in a private hall. (By November, the Forum claims seven thousand members.) Istvan and Péter have both attended; Péter dismisses it as "a debating society." As we talk about this matter, and about Kádár, Poszgay, Imre Nagy, and so on, Istvan periodically points at vases and inserts a peculiar refrain: "I'm not saying whether I agree or not." I'm slow to catch on, but Ruth explains it to me later: he knows the apartment is bugged. He is supposed to leave in three weeks for a year of teaching abroad—that is, if his exit visa arrives; but he is confident.

From a balcony in the Buda hills, we can see the construction—condos for the new entrepreneurs. That's what's being built. Good apartments can sell for hundreds of thousands of dollars. Vast sums of money are being poured into conspicuous consumption—new Mercedes and Volvo cars, country houses. Fortunes are

being made in import-export businesses, retail trade, the professions, even auto repairs. Construction workers, in the private sector, are also doing well. None of this profit making can occur without the connivance, indeed the corruption, of the party.

Two months later, Parliament passed a new economic law that will extend the privileges of the privileged still further. As of January 1, 1989, corporations can be formed, foreign investors can buy Hungarian companies, stocks can be bought and sold, many legal restrictions on foreign capital are off, Hungarian companies can employ five hundred workers (not the present thirty), and foreign companies can employ unlimited numbers. The green light is flashing for Western capital. The whole society, so far as I can tell, is hungry for this infusion from outside (and not only from the West: the Japanese are being courted, and a South Korean trade mission was ensconced in a Budapest hotel even before the prospect of diplomatic relations came into public view in the fall of 1988). The intellectuals hope to use foreign investment against the regime on behalf of civil liberties. Given the economic catastrophe, they downplay the dangers of foreign investment—not the least of which is the transfer of ecological damage. Take the impending Danube dam. It is going to be built in Hungary because Austrians considered it too dangerous for Austria. Austrian Greens blocked the proposal for a dam on the Austrian segment of the Danube. Now Austria finances a water-damaging dam on *Hungarian* territory—in exchange for twenty years' worth of hydroelectric power. Hungary is the dumping ground, as western Africa is for Italian toxic wastes.

When Péter drops Istvan off in the neighborhood where party leaders live, the mansions remind me of the posh parts of Los Angeles. I wonder, thinking back, whether the party hard-liners who oppose the new capitalism law—in the name of equality!—live here.

13.

Since August the party's internal jockeying has continued. Their current style is to accommodate to pressure but to delay implementation. So, for example, in September 1988 the party published a draft law on assembly and association, and invited neighborhood gatherings to debate and comment. Thousands of people took part, rejecting the new law as more retrograde than the old. As a result, the draft has apparently been liberalized. Another example: in November the Politburo promised to propose a new law freeing anyone to start a newspaper. Assuming Parliament agrees (and it has never said no to the Politburo), the law will take effect at the end of 1989. Many decisions—including the question of whether new parties will be permitted—are being delayed pending a new constitution, supposed to be forthcoming in 1990. Fitfully, the party adapts, hems and haws, concedes and co-opts and stalls—all the time waiting to see what shapes up economically and internationally. The contingencies are enormous: Will Gorbachev last? What will the West demand in exchange for capital? What effect will be felt from the economic unification of Western Europe in 1992?

Rumors fly, moods swing. It is said that time is on the opposition's side, then that time is against them. It is said that freedom of association won't mean that the party will legalize groups that don't accept "the leading role of the party," whatever the law may say. It is said that a new election law might, or might not, legalize independent candidacies for Parliament. It is said that a new union law will guarantee the right to strike only to official unions; it is said that independent unions will be given that right too. Meanwhile, official journals are publishing reform documents alongside official responses. Hard-liners are organizing too: among the myriad of new groups is the Ferenc Műnnich Society, named for a Hungarian ally of the 1956 Soviet invasion. (The passport hunger strikers were meeting on Ferenc Műnnich Street.)

Still, Parliament's overwhelming vote in September 1988 for the Danube dam (only eighteen members opposed) was a blow to any illusions about the party's responsiveness to the new social movements. "A very symbolic issue," says the sociologist Ferenc Miszlivetz. "It showed the weakness and emptiness of the top-down reform ideology. Some of the members of Parliament even acknowledged that the dam was wrong, but so much money had already been spent [that] they said they had to go ahead. They speak of civil society, but they continue to do what is horrible." Oppositionists were furious. Some promptly began campaigning for a recall campaign against Parliament members who voted for the dam.

As is the case with the bargain Gorbachev has struck in the USSR, the party dangles political rights before intellectuals in order to win their support for efficiency-minded free-market reforms. Since intellectuals have only tenuous relations with workers, and many workers harbor class resentment against intellectuals, oppositional or not, the party can play divide-and-conquer. The intellectuals' apocalyptic mood—their anticipation that a major upheaval is in the works—may be tantamount to saying that they're not responsible for assisting the workers in the spirit of KOR, the Polish Committee for the Support of Workers—which, according to most accounts, played a considerable part in starting Solidarity. Apparently Hungarian intellectuals do not make many overtures to workers. The reasons are complicated. Possibly they fear getting the workers into trouble if

they stray from strictly economic demands. Possibly they fear breaking their own hearts if they rekindle the radical hopes of 1956. Miszlivetz, Kőszeg, and a few other intellectuals are exceptional; most other opposition intellectuals do not worry too much about their strategic isolation. After years without the formal means of public expression, they are clamoring for elementary legal and political rights—which is why the concept of civil society, in which intellectual discourse and political democracy are central, looms so large in their thinking.

Heartened by the changes of the last eighteen months, the opposition hastens to keep ahead of the party. Organizations are mushrooming. Last fall Kőszeg and others in his network drafted a program for a national convention—which on November 13, 1988, gathered a thousand people, set up an organizational structure, and took the name Alliance of Free Democrats. They know they need to organize local groups and found a newspaper if they are even to think what was unthinkable six months ago—becoming a party. Their founding document is, in Kőszeg's words, "more radical" than their "social contract" of 1987.

While the "social contract" acknowledged that the party was supreme on the political front, the new program calls for a multiparty system as a precondition for economic development. The new program, while rejecting departure from the Warsaw Pact (according to most accounts, Imre Nagy's announcement of Hungary's "secession" led directly to the Soviet invasion of 1956), calls for the withdrawal of Soviet troops—a possibility that Grósz himself has teasingly toyed with. Kőszeg calls the new program a merger of three traditions: nineteenth-century liberalism, twentieth-century social democracy, and the worker self-management that is, arguably, one legacy of 1956. Already the "social contract" was willing to accept greater inequality as the price paid for increased investment in a mixed economy—as long as there is a rise in all incomes, a floor under the poorest people, and a progressive tax on the rich. In this view, entrepreneurial freedom from the state is the means to accumulate investment capital; worker self-management is the hedge against capitalist power.

Does this amount to socialism? On its face, hardly. Democracy, independence, society versus the state—these are the bywords of the democratic opposition. The opposition thinks that the spirit of socialism is dead, killed by the party and the state and the USSR. Indeed, cynicism about socialism—in the popular sense, namely, central management by the state—abounds. One day Haraszti, Antonia, Ruth, and I walk into a boat-restaurant floating on the Danube. Not only does it smell greasy, but there are no seats, and unpleasant waiters. As we leave, Haraszti snorts: "Socialism! The state's in charge, there's no competition, so they don't have to treat you decently." Enough already, I say, and invite him to accompany me to any one of a myriad restaurants in the States where there's plenty of competition and you can still be treated indecently. "Of course, of course," he says, "I was only kidding." Haraszti's irony could burn holes through walls. I get the sense he likes to tease innocent Western socialists and peaceniks.

There is plenty of reason why the Western left looks innocent from the Eastern side of Europe. Likewise, there is good reason why socialism is saddled with a bad name: it is the official ideology of a one-party state imposed by an occupying power that offers neither equality nor an acceptable life. Where the institutions of socialism are not only oppressive but inefficient, and where its very language has been corrupted by Orwellian abuse, the stench hanging over even the ideals of socialism is hard to dispel. Likewise, capitalism smells greener when you watch its products—its utopian expression—on Western television. Still, while the intellectual opposition is scarcely enamored of state socialism, it wants workers unions to be represented in planning—both in individual enterprise and nationally. My sense is that the socialist spirit of equality and fraternity is not necessarily dead—rather, perhaps, dormant. Experience with the depredations of the unbridled market may resurrect it.

14.

In October, on the phone, I asked Ferenc Kőszeg whether he was optimistic. No, not so simply, he said. (Instantly I felt naive—American, in fact—for speaking the word.) "The party has lost the power to control events. The situation is partly very good, partly very dangerous," he said. Why dangerous? In the absence of structural reforms, demands for change can backfire. For example, unions demand higher wages. The government, in spite of austerity, makes promises. But it is not willing to reform the economic leadership. Therefore higher wages lead to inflation, which leads to more discontent. "Grósz would like to be Thatcher," Kőszeg says, "but he doesn't have the power." One possibility, over the long haul—he believes—is a democratic transformation. The other is endless stagnation, leading to vast public unrest, even the possibility of a military takeover.

Meanwhile, the government has backed down on the right to travel. After the summer, the hunger strikers got their passports. □

Significant documents about the Hungarian opposition are available in Across Frontiers, *P. O. Box 2382, Berkeley, CA, 94702 ($10/year) and* RoundTable *(Digest of the Independent Hungarian Press), c/o Ferenc Kőszeg, Felszabadulás tér 4, Budapest, H-1053, Hungary.*

THE PNC

(Continued from p. 43)

Alas, our political leadership is simply irresponsible. The State Department should admit that the policy of preconditons was an error and open a dialogue with the PLO. State Department spokesmen say that they are bound by the commitment to Israel (though technically this extends only to negotiations and recognition, not to dialogue and contact), but the basic issue is domestic politics. The State Department simply is not prepared to engage in an all-out fight with the organized Jewish community and its supporters in Congress.

Thus, the U.S. sticks to its conditions, and it is up to the PLO to overcome the inadequacies of leadership in Washington and Jerusalem by meeting the American conditions. It is this fact that constitutes the political dimension of the PNC meeting.

Over the last several months I have been engaged in moderately intensive efforts to try to find acceptable formulas to deal with each of the conditions, and I have met top PLO officials on several occasions.

Inside the PLO I focused on the Fatah faction, meeting with Arafat and other leaders. On each of the three conditions—242 and 338, Israel's right to exist, and the renunciation of terrorism—I found reason to believe that Fatah was prepared to take truly decisive steps. The PNC, however, is not Fatah. And in the end, what the PNC did with respect to each of the conditions was not as powerful as it might have done. In each area the PNC made progress, and if time were abundant we could be quite optimistic. Unfortunately, however, time is running out.

On 242 and 338

During the PNC meeting, three positions were articulated with respect to 242 and 338. The first was held by George Habash, who objected to any positive reference to 242. Habash wanted an international conference based on "international legitimacy."

The second position was that of came from Nayef Hawatmeh of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. He wanted a conference based on "all United Nations resolutions including 242 and 338." His position was that since many of these resolutions are positive from the perspective of the PLO, the PNC should draw on the strength of these resolutions. From the Jewish point of view, the mere existence of the "Zionism is racism" resolution has always made this position unacceptable.

The third position, which was Arafat's, called for a conference based on 242, 338, and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, the first of which is the right to self-determination. The U.S. has already come very close to Arafat's position. We recognize that 242 and 338 are not a sufficient basis since they do not address Palestinian rights. We have offered the phrase "legitimate rights of the Palestinian people," and recently Secretary of State Shultz spoke of the "political rights" of the Palestinians.

The U.S. refuses to accept "self-determination" on the grounds that it is a code word for a Palestinian state, and support for a Palestinian state would prejudge the outcome of the negotiations. Given that the Palestinians have spoken of a confederation with Jordan, and that some Israelis (Moshe Amirav, for example) are talking of a three-way confederation of Jordan, Israel, and Palestine, this reasoning is not compelling. Further, we could simply say that we accept self-determination in principle and that the challenge of the negotiations is to see if a way can be found to implement it in ways consitent with Israel's security. We would not be prejudging the outcome, merely stating the challenge.

Alas, our State Department.

In the end, the PNC threw in the kitchen sink. The final PNC resolution on 242 and 338 affirmed the two UN resolutions by name as part of the basis for the international conference, but the PNC also insisted that the basis include self-determination and "the UN resolutions relevant to the Palestinian question." This last phrase is of course different from "all UN resolutions" and does permit the U.S. to say that the PNC resolution excludes "Zionism is racism," but politically it is dead meat.

Israel's Right to Exist

Prior to the PNC, some top Fatah leaders were prepared to accept a simple statement affirming Resolution 181 and saying that it provides a basis in international law for the existence of both the State of Israel and the State of Palestine. The closest the PNC came to adopting this position was in the section of the Declaration of Independence discussed above.

On Terrorism

Here, too, Fatah leaders were prepared to accept something better than what emerged. Specifically, they were prepared to say that they opposed all attacks on ordinary civilians and that this opposition applied to all geographical regions. Again, unfortunately, the PNC did not adopt this position.

The PNC dealt with terrorism in two places. First, in the Declaration of Independence, where there is a relatively clear rejection of terrorism but no effort to make clear that a specific category of acts (attacks on civilians, for example) is ruled out. And second, the PNC .

dealt with terrorism in a political resolution that does say that the PNC "reject[s] terrorism in all its forms" but then goes on to reaffirm the Cairo Declaration, which is unfortunately ambiguous.

The most positive interpretation of the PNC's overall position is that the PNC implicitly recognized Israel's right to exist (in the Declaration), that it accepted 242 and 338 as part of the basis for negotiations, and that in the Declaration it explicitly rejected terrorism.

Palestinians in the PLO and in the new country of Palestine accurately argue that "if the United States government wanted to take all this as a 'yes' to the American conditions, it could do so." They are wrong, however, to conclude—as some of them have—that the United States' failure to take yes for an answer proves that nothing that they do will ever prove acceptable.

Arafat may himself be disappointed with the political resolutions, though this is the first time that the PNC has ever *affirmed* 242 and 338. At the eighteenth PNC, the PLO said that it continued to *reject* 242 on the grounds that it was an insufficient basis for a peace settlement. The acceptance of 242 and 338 is not exactly an earth-shattering transformation. The PLO was right to say that 242 is an insufficient basis (at the eighteenth PNC), and they were right to say that it is appropriately part of the basis (at the nineteenth PNC). Indeed, the same point was being made in two different ways. The real problem was the way that the PNC characterized the other components of a basis for a settlement.

If all this sounds like idiocy, it is no accident. But, to be fair to the PLO, we must remember who is the source of the idiocy. The laurels go to Dr. Kissinger.

The PLO long ago bowed to the fact that the U.S. writes the rules. For some time the PLO has tried to play the 242 game, to find a way of adding something to 242 that would prove acceptable both to Washington and to the various factions under the PLO umbrella. It is a fool's game—on all sides—and, despite heroic efforts by PLO lawyers as well as Arafat's talents as a politician, Arafat had to be content to get the PNC simply to affirm 242 and 338.

In the end, Arafat had to keep his eye on the ball. What was critical to him was to legitimize the Declaration of Independence, and this he did by being willing to compromise sufficiently to keep the more militant factions (the DFLP and the PFLP) at the PNC. Now that they have participated, all significant Palestinian groups (with the exception of the Islamic fundamentalists) have committed themselves to a new institutional reality. They have a state, and they will soon have a government. Now even the hard-liners must be loyal opponents.

And indeed, this is the role that they have accepted. George Habash participated in the vote and lost, but he stated that the PFLP would remain in the PLO, in the PNC, and in the Executive Committee. The fact that he did so reflects some possible moderation even among the extremists; more important, it reflects the power of statehood. Once the State of Palestine is created, no Palestinian political group can afford to be on the outside. Given the fact that there is some reality to the claims of democratic rule under the PLO umbrella, it is likely that power will continue to flow toward the more moderate majority.

Furthermore, we must be careful when we make a pat dichotomy between moderate and radical Palestinians in the first place. It may well be that the difference between an Arafat who is willing to be explicit about living in peace with Israel and a Habash who refuses to give a direct answer to such questions lies more in how they experience the questions than in the substance of their opinions.

Consider the following exchange, which occurred at Habash's press conference following the PNC:

> **Segal:** Dr. Habash, as you know, inside of Israel today there are many who claim that when the Palestinian leadership talks of peace, it is a trick. And you are cited as a Palestinian leader who under no circumstances would be willing to be faithful to a permanent treaty of peace with Israel.
>
> If the State of Israel were to offer you a Palestinian state consisting of the West Bank and Gaza, with Jerusalem the capital of both states, and a practical resolution of the right to return with the actual physical return of some Palestinians and monetary compensation for the others, would you be prepared to be faithful to a permanent treaty of peace with Israel?
>
> **Habash:** I have a deep feeling of responsibility. I am now over sixty and I have children. And I know what life means and what it is to have children. And I well know that now in Palestine there are more than three million Jews and there are about two million Palestinians as well as another two to three million Palestinians outside Palestine.
>
> I say, come let us sit at the international peace conference so that we can discuss the subject of our children and your children from all aspects. I believe it is my full right to say my point of view on what solution will be good for future generations of Palestinians and for the Jews. I believe very very truly that we should think very seriously about the formation of a democratic state in which all can live in real peace and real brotherhood.

Following this exchange I pressed Habash for an answer, but he retorted that I have no right to ask such a question until the Israelis have recognized that the Palestinian people have a right to self-determination.

The Israeli leadership, insofar as it is represented by Peres and Shamir, feels content to stand back, arms folded, and pronounce its judgments on the shortcomings of PLO statements. Shamir sticks to his unique interpretation of 242 as having been satisfied when Israel withdrew from the Sinai, and therefore his stance on the PLO is predictable. A moderate PLO is his nightmare since it will weaken his grip on the West Bank.

But Peres's similar stance on the PLO is pure politics. Just as in the campaign, he takes everyone to his left for granted and plays for votes from the center. Such games would amount to little more than commonplace political maneuvering if the costs were not so high. Unfortunately, by retarding U.S. moves toward the PLO and by slowing down the pace of the PLO's moderation process, Peres plays Russian roulette with Israel's future.

In the end, American Jews must finally decide to think and speak for themselves. It is absurd to look to Israel's leadership for guidance, and it is equally absurd to allow AIPAC or the Conference of Presidents to present themselves as the spokespeople for the Jewish community. American policy is our responsibility.

We must do more than place ads in the *New York Times*; we must do more than attend protests and demonstrations. We must create an alternative organized Jewish lobby in Washington and around the country. It is a disgrace that we have waited so long. □

SEXEGESIS

(Continued from p. 46)

of the families with whom they were forbidden to have intercourse."

Numbers 11:10, depicting the people weeping in family groups at their tent entrances, reflects a shift: the mood has turned ugly. The Lord became angry, and Moses grew very distressed. Doesn't this change of mood allude to the onset of disgust, discontent, and depression from overstimulated sexual appetites because the experience of sweet sex has turned bad after excessive lovemaking and profligacy? Vivid metaphors expressive of this loathsome feeling are the worms, *tola,* and the stench of the manna left until morning, in Exodus 16:20, and the exhaustion, *t'la'ah,* mentioned in Exodus 18:8 and Numbers 20:14.

Furthermore, the narrative seems to indicate that the Israelite community faced great problems in caring for large numbers of babies and children. When Moses complains loudly to God about the burdens of leadership—"Did I conceive all this people, did I bear them, that you should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries an infant,' to the land that You have promised on oath to their fathers?" (Numbers 11:12)—his words are pregnant with explicit female references. Moses seems to be painfully conscious of difficult child-related problems facing the young nation in the desert. Notably, his language appears to reflect hostility to women and to women's functions of giving birth and nursing. He does not imply here a unique theological view of God as having female attributes, as some commentators claim, but on the contrary he blames God, and the women, for these biological functions with which he is trying to cope. It is reasonable to assume that Moses is upset not only about the problems of hunger and thirst, but also about the problems facing the male parent and the especially difficult child-care responsibilities during a population boom.

In expressing his frustrations, Moses twice emphasizes his concern to find favor, *khen,* in God's eyes (Numbers 11:11, 15; compare Exodus 33:13, 16; 34:9). This term is clearly suggestive of sexual attractiveness, appeal, and strength (Genesis 39:4; Esther 2:15, 17). He seems to know that to lead the people effectively he needs to have the reputation and qualities of a man who is potent in many ways. He speaks of bearing a heavy burden, *massa kol ha'am* (Numbers 11:11) and *laset et kol ha'am* (Numbers 11:14); and, while Numbers 11:12 (quoted above) plays on the root *NSA* with respect to the image of carrying a young child, the text later (14:33) uses this root in connection with the explicit word for sexual unfaithfulness: "Your children will roam the desert for forty years, suffering for your faithlessness [*venas'u et z'nuteykhem*]."

After God's appointing of seventy male elders to assist Moses in his leadership functions, and the subsequent aberrant prophesying of Eldad and Medad, the narrative in Numbers indicates that God sent a flock of quails on a divine wind in order to appease the people's lust for meat. The "quails" (*s'lav*) may also have an erotic significance in the sense of fat little "love birds"—*s'lav* evoking the root *SHLH,* "be content," as in the nominal uses of *shalev* and *shalvah* in Job 20:20, Jeremiah 22:21, and Daniel 11:21 and 11:24 (compare 11:37), which are suggestive of "sexual contentment." Rabbi Hanina, in Yoma 75b, may have intended this very meaning in his own association of these two roots: "It is written *shlav* and we read *slav.*" Rabbi Hanina said, "The righteous eat it at ease [*b'shalvah*], whereas when the wicked eat it, it is unto them like thorns [*k'silvin*]." While in Exodus 16:13 the appearance of the quails is mentioned very briefly before the appearance of *shikhvat hatal* and the description of the manna, Numbers 11:31–34 relates that the quails arrived after the manna, thus expanding on the particular lust for the quails and God's punishment for this lust. It is said in verse 11:32 that the people spread the quails (*vayisht'khu lahem shatoakh*) throughout the whole camp.

and that the people who gathered the least got ten *khomarim* measures. Transposing the letters of *khomarim* yields an idea found in Ezekiel 26:5 and 26:14, the "spreading out of nets" (*mishtakh kharamim*) of the exposed city of Tyre, personified as a woman. *Kharamim* is a sexual term par excellence, used in the sense of "snare" in the well-known line from Ecclesiastes 7:26, to which I referred earlier. It is suggestive as well of a plural of *rekhem* (compare Judges 5:30 and Deuteronomy 13:18, where the same root play occurs).

* * *

I posit that, surrounded by rampant sexual activity in the desert, Miriam was becoming disgruntled. Her name, in fact, may be considered symbolic of, if not etymologically related to, the root for "bitterness," *MRR,* as is indicated in the midrash. Her bitterness, which would have originated during Egyptian captivity, may well have intensified as she witnessed the depredation of her sisters and as her female leadership capacities were not recognized or rewarded by the emergent male power structure of the Israelite nation. The Bible itself twice juxtaposes Miriam with bitterness and frustration. Immediately after Miriam leads the women in song, there follows (Exodus 15:22–26) the account of the Waters of Bitterness (Marah). And immediately after Miriam's death in Numbers 20:1, the Bible relates the account of Moses' sin at the Waters of Contention, in which the key sentence is his utterance projecting faithlessness onto the people (20:10): "Listen you rebels [*morim*], is it from this rock that we shall extract water?" The close proximity of the name Miriam to descriptions of untrustingness or bitterness on the part of either the people or Moses, featuring nouns from the same or related roots, indicates the biblical author's mental association of Miriam with behavior of a similar quality.

The midrash, moreover, hints that Miriam strongly identified with women in their different situations. It notes that when Pharaoh issued his decree that the Hebrew male children be drowned in the Nile—and Amram, Miriam's father and a leader of the generation, despaired of the people's chances of survival and ordered all husbands to divorce their wives—Miriam challenged Amram, arguing that whereas Pharaoh's decree pertained to the males, Amram's decree unnecessarily harmed females as well. She thus defended the interests of both the wives who were to be haplessly divorced and the girl children whose births would be prevented. Furthermore, the midrash states that when Aaron died all the people of Israel wept for him, because of his fairness in arbitrating cases of marital discord, whereas when Moses died only the men wept. The midrash thus implies that Moses, despite his greatness, was guilty of male chauvinism.

Returning to the text, we find that according to Numbers 12:1, Miriam and Aaron "spoke about" or "spoke against" Moses in Haserot. Though Sifre indicates that the root *DBR* with preposition *bet* denotes "harsh language," this need not always be the case (compare Psalm 122:8). Perhaps here Miriam and Aaron were simply discussing the facts as they saw them. In the context of the unrestrained and problematic sexual activity for which Moses had been disproportionately blaming the women, Miriam was defending them against Moses' charge by noting that Moses himself was guilty of the double standard. Not immune to the erotic urge, he himself was carrying on with a Cushite woman. Indeed, the description of him (Numbers 12:3) as the man who was the world's greatest *anav* (humble person) may be a pun, with the second meaning alluding to his sex appeal. The word generally connotes responsiveness, in addition to its denotation of humility, and the specific usages of the cognates in Hosea 2:23–24 and in Exodus 21:10 involve sexual responsiveness.

The text itself preserves a clue that the sexual aspect of the relationship between Moses and the Cushite woman was of particular interest and concern to Miriam and Aaron. The word *odot,* in the phrase *al odot haishah hacushit* (because of the Cushite woman; 12:1), has a strong sexual connotation. A case can be made that a sexual matter, and an improper sexual matter at that, is involved in many situations in which the word *odot* is used in the Bible. Examples include 2 Samuel 13:16, on the rape and humiliation of David's daughter Tamar by his son Amnon; Jeremiah 3:8, on the adultery of rebel Israel; Genesis 21:11, on the wanton playing of Ishmael; and Genesis 21:35 and 26:32, where the word appears in connection with the usurpation of the wells of Abraham and Isaac, respectively, by the servants of Avimelekh, king of the Philistines. Since both Sarah and Rebecca had been taken by Avimelekh at different times (20:1–18; 26:7–11), verses 21:25 and 26:32 may reflect Abraham's and Isaac's concern about their wives as much as it reflects their concern about their wells.

The same word occurs in Exodus 18:8, in the account of Jethro's visit to Moses near Mount Sinai, where it is written: "Moses related to his father-in-law everything that God had done to Pharaoh and Egypt *al odot yisrael* and all the hardships that had befallen the Israelites on the way." Whereas the New Jewish Version of the Bible links *al odot yisrael* to the preceding "everything God had done to Pharaoh and Egypt," translating it "for Israel's sake," I would connect the phrase with the following "hardships," understanding it

as referring not to salvation for the Israelites but to an unmentionable tribulation. The word for "hardships" is *t'la'ah*. I surmised earlier, in connection with the word *tola* (worms) as a metaphor for loathsome sex, that the word may evoke the *t'la'ah*, "the exhaustion," mentioned both in Exodus 18:8 and Numbers 20:14. Here, in Exodus 18:8, the word *t'la'ah* follows the words *al odot yisrael* directly and thus may indicate a venereal epidemic.

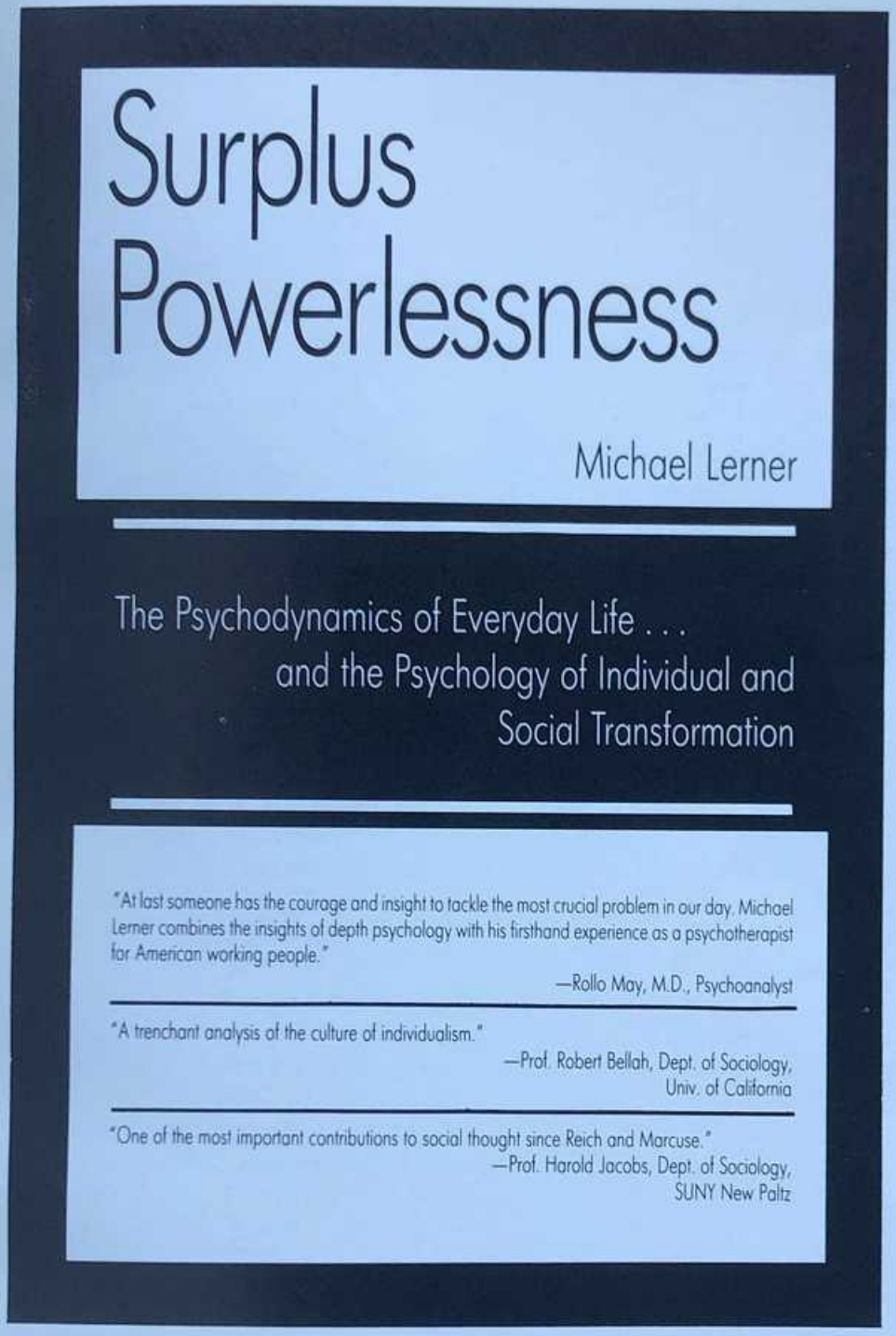
It stands to reason that many of the problems confronting the Israelites and their leaders in the aftermath of the Exodus concerned the area of physical health. The midrash mentions that many Israelites left Egypt full of blemishes. The diseases of Egypt (Exodus 15:26; Deuteronomy 7:15; 28:27) undoubtedly continued to afflict Israelites for a period of time after the Exodus. I submit that the age-old accusation—given prominence by the Egyptian historian Manetho, as described by Josephus Flavius in *Against Apion* (I, 228–287)—that Moses and the Israelites were driven out of Egypt because they had contracted leprosy en masse, has a grain of truth. The Hebrew slaves, who had lived in crowded unhygienic conditions in Egypt, must have been carriers of diseases, which they took out of Egypt with them. The Bible even mentions in a well-known, miracle-invested context (Exodus 4:6–8) that Moses himself suffered a flare-up of a skin disease on one occasion. Given the exhilaration of freedom after the Exodus, accompanied by the heightened sexual expressiveness I have assumed, it is plausible that the incidence of contagious "social disease" increased geometrically, a natural cause contributing to the plague eruptions mentioned in Numbers 11:33, 25:3, and 25:8–9. On a smaller scale, before the outbreak of actual epidemics there may have been incipient wearisome venereal sickness, as suggested in the word *t'la'ah*, which was beginning to sap the people's spiritual strength and the leaders' patience.

A final piece of evidence that Miriam's affliction had wider ramifications than the biblical text explicitly indicates is Aaron's plea to Moses on behalf of Miriam and himself in Numbers 12:11–12: "O my lord, account not to us the sin which we committed in our folly. Let her not be as one dead, who emerges from his mother's womb [*kamet asher b'tseto merekhem immo*] with half his flesh eaten away." Rabbinic sources openly acknowledge the euphemism in the latter verse. Though several rabbinic interpretations understand "half his flesh" to mean "half his flesh and blood"—referring to Miriam, (almost) half of father Amram's offspring—the masculine form of the word *met* (dead), and the masculine suffixes in the clause that modifies it, indicate that the text alludes to a problem afflicting men as much as it afflicts women. The correct understanding of the euphemism, I think, is that *rekhem immo*, "his mother's womb," refers to Miriam's sexual part, just as the female lover in Song of Songs 8:1 and 3:4, in referring to her mother's breasts or home, is really referring to parts of her own body. What Aaron is saying to Moses is that Miriam's condition is particularly troublesome because men coming in contact with her and with other diseased women would lose "half their flesh." (One recalls Jack Lemmon's line, "I'm only half a man," in *Irma La Douce*.)

Rabbinic sources, too, understand skin disease and sex as involving more than just Miriam. Interestingly, Rabbi Akiba, in Shabbat 97a, interprets Numbers 12:9 ("The Lord was incensed with them and departed") as meaning that God temporarily afflicted Aaron too with a skin disease. The discussion in the early rabbinic commentary *Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan* adds an account by Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai, Rabbi Akiba's student, who said that Miriam and Aaron had been gossiping in particular about the issue of Moses' abstinence from marital sex, in contrast with their nonabstinence. An earlier version of Talmud tractate Mo'ed Katan (18b), as noted by Rabbi Saul Lieberman, makes the shocking statement, on the other hand, that rumors circulated amongst the Israelites that Moses committed adultery.

In short, a major dynamic in ancient Israelite experience is involved in this biblical text. The text singles Miriam out as a victim of a skin disease, which, as I have tried to prove, was relatively widespread among both genders of the Israelite population after the Exodus. Moses' and Aaron's understanding of the skin disease as Miriam's divine punishment seems to have served the purposes of antifemale bias and discrimination. If in fact Miriam was an outspoken leader of her generation, then she may have been particularly annoyed by Moses' appointment of a large number of male leaders and his denial of equal leadership responsibility to her. Miriam and Aaron's words in Numbers 12:2—"Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?"—illustrate Miriam's claim to share prophetic preeminence with men, if not political preeminence as well. Her affliction and brief quarantine, after which she is not heard from again, appear to have provided an all-too-convenient opportunity for Moses to quash her legitimate public aspirations as a woman.

The male-oriented text is not sensitive to this dimension of Miriam's plight, but, between the lines, I find evidence for the hypothesis that she was indeed victimized. In sum, Miriam, I argue, was a woman who fought against encroachment on female rights, against the stereotyping of women as irresponsible sexual beings, and against the demotion of women from positions of social and political leadership. Numbers 12 thus epitomizes the patriarchal repression of women that characterized the early biblical period in the ancient Near East. □



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