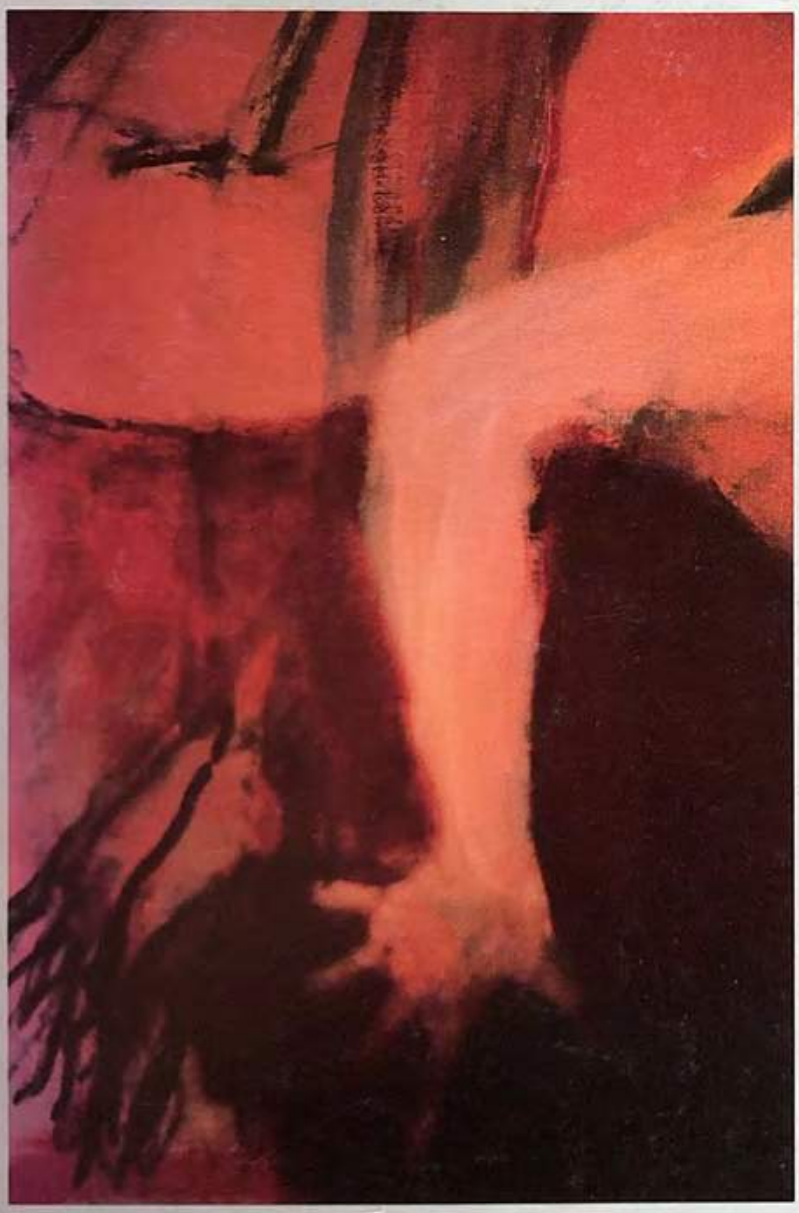
(tē•kün) To mend, repair and transform the world.

TIKKUN

TIKKUN CONFERENCE (II)

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A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY MAY/JUNE 1989 $5.00



SPECIAL FOCUS:

A DISTANCE FROM THE HOLOCAUST

**Chana Bloch, Francine Prose,
Miriam Akavia, Phillip Lopate,
Yehuda Bauer & Deborah Lipstadt**

Talking to the PLO
Nabil Shaath

Progress
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Dumping Koch
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Joseph Campbell's Myth
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Tom Hayden's Vision
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PLUS

Isa Aron on Jewish Education; Carlin Romano on Chomsky & the Press; Roger Friedland & Richard Hecht on the PLO's Haredi Connection; David Biale on Rosemary & Herman Ruether's Anti-Zionism; Casey Blake on Walzer's Social Criticism; Parables by Stephen Mitchell; Fiction by Marcie Hershman.

Psalm 1

"Blessed is the man" not born
in Lodz in the wrong decade,
"who walks not" in tree-lined shade
like my father's father in this photo, "nor
stands in the way of sinners" waiting for
his yellow star,
"nor sits," if he could sit, in their cattle car,

"but his delight is" being born
as I was, in Australia, far away,
"and on God's law he meditates night and
day."

"He is like a tree" that's granted
the land where it is planted,
"that yields its fruit" by reason
of sun and rain in season.

"The wicked are not so," they
burn their uniforms and walk away.

"Therefore the wicked" are like Cain
who offered fruit which God chose to disdain.

"And the way of the righteous" is Abel's, whose
slaughtered lambs God chose to choose
and who was murdered anyway.

—*David Curzon*

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A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY VOLUME 4 NUMBER 3

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Letters

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

HIGHBROW SOFTWARE

To the Editor:

As a philosophy professor who also studies meteorology and does weather forecasting, I am well aware that it is fashionable among people in the liberal arts to denigrate the applied sciences. But I wonder just how Jackson Lears would justify his assumption that a student reading a book labeled *PASCAL* could not be engaged "in the pursuit of truth" if the student is studying the computer language rather than the philosopher. (Review of Lawrence W. Levine's "Highbrow/Lowbrow," *Tikkun,* Jan./Feb. 1989.) How much does Jackson Lears know about computer languages, anyway?

Felicia Ackerman
Associate Professor of Philosophy,
Brown University

Jackson Lears responds:

I thought philosophers (and weather forecasters) were supposed to have a sense of the absurd. But since Professor Ackerman prefers literal-mindedness, I'll proceed in that spirit.

Of course there is a pursuit of truth involved in learning technical skills. No doubt these skills can even be taught in ways that raise ultimate questions of meaning and value. But my experience and observation in various universities has led me to conclude that in the teaching of the "applied sciences" substantive issues are smothered by the managerial ethos—by an implicit but pervasive set of assumptions that ensures that the knowledge in question is harnessed unquestioningly to the needs of corporate and bureaucratic power. The liberal arts are not immune to this process, as any reader of scholarly journals knows. But I still believe that the liberal arts contain a residue of "useless" tradition that renders them less easily assimilable to managerial imperatives. No one who has paid any attention to her students could equate the cultural significance of Pascal with that of PASCAL.

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West Bank Plea

To the Editor:

About one year ago a group of faculty members at Tel Aviv University formed an association called AD KAN (which means "Until Here!" or "No More!") as an immediate response to the *intifada*—the Palestinian uprising against the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Since its inception, AD KAN has been active in voicing our protest at current Israel policies in the occupied areas. Our activities include open symposia and meetings with Palestinian academics and public figures both in Israel and in the occupied territories, fact-finding visits to the West Bank and Gaza, petitions and protest demonstrations, and ongoing efforts on behalf of detainees arrested without trial.

We ask you to join us in our present campaign to reopen the universities of the West Bank and Gaza. Since January 8, 1988, all institutions of higher learning in the occupied territories have been shut by the military authorities. Some eighteen thousand Palestinian students and twenty-five hundred faculty members have been prevented from exercising their basic right to learn and to teach. As academics, we protest the harsh and unfair collective punishment of all students and lecturers in the West Bank and Gaza. We appeal to the Israeli government and the military authorities to reopen the universities immediately. We believe that promotion of higher education is essential for a constructive and intelligent dialogue, which will benefit both peoples—Israeli and Palestinian.

Please, send us your personal message of support by letter, telegram, or telex. Donations will be appreciated.

Thank you!

AD KAN
P.O. Box 39935
Tel Aviv 61397
Israel

Jackson and the Jews

To the Editor:

I found "Current Debate: Jackson and the Jews" (*Tikkun*, Jan./Feb. 1989) to be remarkably constricted in scope. Rather than a debate, Landauer and Berman's articles were really a sort of friendly dialogue about the best way for the Jewish left to withhold support from Jackson.

While criticizing Landauer for being disillusioned at finding anti-Semitism on the left in general, Berman states, "The left is vast; there are no membership requirements. Prejudices and blindnesses of every hue and persuasion come pouring through the door."

So, what's the deal here? Why should we expect to find anti-Semitism within the American left—which numbers in the hundreds of thousands—but not in an emerging American Rainbow, which numbers in the millions? Why does Berman say that we must fight anti-Semitism in the left *from within*, but that we should fight anti-Semitism in the Rainbow *from without*?

The central question cannot be whether anti-Semitism exists in the constituency of Reverend Jackson, or in the constituency of any other movement—because the answer will always be yes. The question must be whether anti-Semitism exists in the *program* of the Rainbow or the *platform* of the reverend. The answer to that question is no.

Similarly, the question is not whether there is any racism in the contributors to *Tikkun*—because the answer to that question has to be yes. The question is whether there is racism in the policies of *Tikkun*. The answer to that question is no.

We have a choice here. We can stand with the forces of change, or we can stand outside them. We can choose, as Jackson says, to turn to each other, not on each other.

There is nothing to be gained by withholding progressive Jewish support (critical if need be) from the man and the movement that has taken an agenda of justice and peace to the center stage of American politics. Nothing to be gained from withholding Jewish support from the electoral and activist movement that is the center for change in this period.

In the last five years, Jesse has begun the process of consolidating disparate forces into both a progressive national electoral movement and a progressive national organization. The coalition that developed around his candidacies arguably represents the most critical development in the realignment of political forces in recent United States history.

This is indeed, Mr. Berman and Mr. Landauer, a movement to "heal, repair and transform the world." It is also a movement that strives to heal and repair and transform itself. The Rainbow Coalition welcomes us. Jesse Jackson welcomes us. No one has "kicked us out." The door is open. The door has always been open. There is really no reason to stand outside.

Sabina Virgo
Chair, Jewish Voters for Jesse Jackson, 1984, 1988 Los Angeles
Member, National Board of Directors, Rainbow Coalition

To the Editor:

In a dialogue with Carl Landauer on the issues of Jews and Jesse Jackson, Paul Berman—a man who, as does Mr. Landauer, I have also regarded as a thoughtful and interesting writer on the left—has resorted to the kind of intellectual cheap shots and demagoguery hardly befitting a writer who seeks to defend nuances and complexities.

In trying to make the argument that an all-or-nothing attitude leads neoconservatives to countenance anti-Semitism, Mr. Berman writes—in a paragraph that reeks of left-wing neo-McCarthyism—that "*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. . . .)" Arguing that such neoconservatives are fleeing toward anti-Semitism, Berman asserts that "we on the left are going to have to rescue them from their own allies." As a writer who himself has been charged by those he has recently termed "Stalinist pigs" with being a defender of fascism, because he dared to tell the truth in the pages of the *Village Voice* about the dark side of the Lincoln Brigade, Berman should not be using that same kind of logic against those with whom he disagrees.

Thanks, Paul, but I don't need rescuing. Moreover, as you well know, I

ERRATUM

In "Criticism and Restitution" by Geoffrey Hartman (Vol. 4, No. 2) on page 30, bottom line, left column, "Wolfe" should have read "Woolf" (as in Virginia Woolf).

am not a neoconservative, but a social democrat. But perhaps you need to learn to read. After all, I did make clear in my article that the Western embargo against the Republic should have been lifted, and that "the main threat to the world in the thirties was that of ... aggressive Hitlerism." Indeed, as H. R. Trevor-Roper argued years ago, Hitler's chances of achieving victory might have been strengthened had a Spanish Republic controlled by Stalin won. Friendly to Hitler and hostile to the West, Stalin might have provided the Germans with the transit through Spain that Franco refused, allowing them to cut off Britain's vital access to the Mediterranean. The issues were not so simple, as Berman I think really knows. And those concerned with saving Jews might think twice about the result had Stalin won.

What I actually said in my now much-debated article ("But Today the Struggle: Spain and the Intellectuals," the *New Criterion,* October 1986) was not that Franco was the preferred victor, but that "by 1937, the Spanish 'Red' Republic had more in common with Franco's territories in Spain, or with the authoritarian regime after his victory, than it did with the libertarian revolt of 1936 that had been heralded by the much quoted George Orwell." I also cited Stanley G. Payne's considered judgment that there was little reason to assume that a Communist-dominated republic would have shown any tolerance for dissent; that "there was nothing in Franco's zone to equal the almost constant inner party murder that went on under the People's Republic." Indeed, Payne argues it was just this situation that led to the "final collapse of morale" within Republican ranks.

Does Berman really disagree with this? Or is his vulgarization of my argument just a way of showing that he is really of the left—and is fully capable of using the same kind of smear arguments favored by so many Old Leftists? Indeed, I suspect that had Berman lived in a successful Red-dominated Spain, he would not have been so happy. As Luis Araquistain, the intellectual adviser to Largo Caballero and an important left-wing Marxist, wrote to his daughter in January 1939, "Whether we win or lose this war, the independent socialists will have to emigrate, because we shall be assassinated [either] by Franco or the Communists." The Communist tactic was to control the Republican army, and, while pretending to be organizers of a Popular Front army, to take it over in order to make Spain into a Soviet-dominated Republic.

Does Paul Berman really want to argue that this was preferable to a Franco victory—because, after all, the Communists used the right rhetoric and claimed to be on the side of the people? I would have enjoyed seeing him tell the Red Army firing squad or torture brigade how he was on their side, and favored their victory. In a war in which both major parties (*not* the defeated anarcho-syndicalists and POUMists) were rotten moral equivalents, one can be saddened about the choices presented by historical reality. At least let us agree that the myths of the Stalinist left have been discredited by historical accounts. I think Paul Berman owes those of us who have raised these issues an apology, and that he should try to adhere to the high standards for which he is known—standards that do not usually involve trite vulgarization meant to score political points.

Ronald Radosh
New York, New York

Carl Landauer responds:

Ronald Radosh has addressed his remarks to Paul Berman, so I will limit my response to Sabina Virgo's letter. When I wrote my part of the debate with Berman, I was trying to say something about the left and its responsibilities, but I assumed that some readers would focus on the presupposition of my argument—that there is something objectionable to Jesse Jackson's insensitivity to American Jews. Sabina Virgo has done just that. She argues that although one cannot deny the presence of a certain amount of anti-Semitism in Jackson's constituency (on the theory that there is anti-Semitism everywhere), the program of the Rainbow Coalition is in no sense anti-Semitic. That, however, is not an entirely genuine response to my comments because it seems to avoid Jesse Jackson's own insensitivities. Her argument is part legerdemain, a quick slide from the matter-of-fact presence of anti-Semitism everywhere to the faultlessness of Jackson's platform. But where is Jackson himself? What are his responsibilities? I do want to emphasize, however, that the real point of my comments was to suggest that the left should follow its own values and insist that the welcome mat Ms. Virgo offers not be pulled out from under anyone's feet.

Paul Berman responds:

My reason for disagreeing with Sabina Virgo's perspective appeared in two articles on Jackson (*Tikkun,* July/Aug. 1988 and Jan./Feb. 1989). There is no point in rehearsing these arguments yet again.

Ronald Radosh objects that, in a two-sentence throwaway comment in the latter of these articles, I have mischaracterized his own views on the Spanish Civil War of fifty years ago, which is not exactly a relevant theme, but is always interesting to debate. Let Ron's lengthy letter stand, then, as a substitute for my two inadequate sentences.

May I confess, though, to a lingering difficulty in understanding his view? If Stalinists would have controlled a victorious Spanish Republic, and if Stalinist control would have bettered Hitler's chances of winning the Second World War, isn't Ron still saying that Franco's victory was to be preferred?

Ron's talk of "left-wing neo-McCarthyism" and "smear arguments" isn't nice. But he's correct in suggesting that if I myself had been in the Spanish Civil War, somebody somewhere would have lined me up against a wall. Something like that always seems to happen merely from mentioning that war fifty years later.

Addictions

To the Editor:

Michael Bader's article on models of "addiction" (*Tikkun,* Nov./Dec. 1988) is a thoughtful critique of the limitations of these popular psychological theories. Yet Bader's article repeats a fundamental mistake that has prevented the left intelligentsia from reaching large numbers of people. To put it simply, Bader fails to appreciate the power of these "addiction models," and fails to notice the dramatic social changes occurring that are positive. This is, of course, unfair criticism since Bader says that he is concerned mostly with the theories themselves and not with the uses to which they are put.

Yet Bader himself is unable to refrain from denigrating "addiction" models and associated treatments.

Bader's main concerns are that, one, these addiction models "block" the patient's investigation into the deep, subtle intrapsychic dynamics that carry childhood pain and conflict into adult life; and, two, these addiction models "block" an understanding of the sociohistorical conditions that create "dysfunctional families" (which then produce adults with various "addictions"). But could one say that Newtonian physics "blocked" the development of Einsteinian physics? Could we have arrived at Einsteinian physics without the theoretical and practical benefits of Newtonian physics? The first model is not, theoretically, a block to deeper understanding through the development of another theory. Similarly, can't patients come to the subtle and powerful insights of psychoanalytic theory after first doing the healing work offered by addiction models? On a practical level, if the Adult Child chooses not to go into psychotherapy, is it fair to say he or she is blocked? Perhaps it is more accurate to see that as a choice an individual makes about how to allocate scarce resources (time, money, emotional investment) to gain certain rewards (the insights of psychotherapy, or fun, or love, or accomplishment at work or at a hobby, and so on). And if, as Bader says, there is a block inside psychotherapy, a collusion of patient and therapist in avoiding the investigation of deep but painful insights through the use of the convenient shorthand of the addiction model, is that the fault of the model or of the therapist's lack of skill?

As Max Weber taught, theories can be thought of as constructs that are neither right nor wrong, but rather useful or not in highlighting important aspects of reality. The questions become, What aspect are we interested in looking at? Who's to do the looking? And for what purpose is one looking?

Bader says the addiction models mystify important elements of a person's past. For example, "dysfunctional family" is used as a cover to avoid explaining and confronting the roots of a mother's depression. Yet Bader does not realize that, for a victim of abuse, focusing attention on the causes of a mother's abuse may feel like another kind of abuse. The need of the patient is to move away from focusing on others in order to reorient the self and become empowered, to feel worthwhile, and to express and heal feelings of shame, fear, and anger. The "mystification" of addiction models is rather a deliberate turning away from certain phenomena not because these phenomena are irrelevant, but because for the wounded person it is more helpful during much of the healing process to focus elsewhere.

It is interesting to notice what the practice of psychotherapy often mystifies. Psychotherapists are not always eager to share with their clients an understanding of their theoretical framework. Professionals retain the power of "expert" in a fee-for-service relationship that is pursued in the isolation of a private dyad. In that relationship, psychotherapists often "mystify" their mistakes and inadequacies. At points when the patient's childlike demands for absolute love are frustrated, when a patient's sense of betrayal and suspicion is expressed, therapists often ignore their own failings in an eager attempt to focus the patient on his or her own feelings. Many therapeutic relationships do not weather these one-sided storms. What is the casualty rate among patients? How many patients—victims of various kinds of abuse in childhood—move from therapist to therapist, looking for but not finding the help they seek because that help is "mystified"? (Looking for help in all the wrong places....) On the one hand, addiction-model self-help groups operate on an open and accessible theoretical basis. While there are dropouts from groups as well, the group process encourages the development of what *Tikkun* has been calling for, the Three C's: compassion, community, and connection.

Bader has a good point—the addiction models do not lead to insightful (or any) sociohistorical analyses—and I have two responses. First, how many patients develop insightful social analyses in psychotherapeutic sessions? Second, are social theorists really "blocked" from understanding sociohistorical conditions by the addiction models? Aren't theorists able to use alternate theories, like psychoanalytic theory, to aid them? Can't we have a plethora of models, each used for particular ends, highlighting various important features of reality? Need we denigrate one model because it doesn't

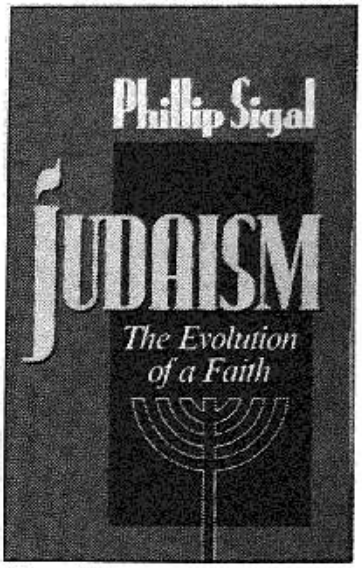
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help us in a particular direction? Having two kinds of screwdrivers allows a carpenter to approach many more projects than one screwdriver allows. The addiction model is, as Bader says, "inadequate"—but only for certain important purposes; for other important purposes it does seem sufficient.

Bader makes a good case for showing how addiction models are limited. But our intellectual instinct (or conditioned reflex?) lies all too often in showing how elements of popular culture are superficial and deficient. Let us approach popular culture with an attitude of compassion, concern, and interest. I think that such an attitude would lead us to realize that self-help groups—which is the form of treatment associated often with addiction models—represent one of the most serious and startling social/psychological movements in years. As feminists did years ago, large numbers of people are breaking through not only their own isolation, but also our culture's taboos on discussing painful personal problems (problems having to do with family, food, alcohol, self-abusive relations with lovers, and so on). There is a new level of sharing and acceptance going on, which counteracts society's strongest fortification of cultural oppression: silence. Individuals, through group support and often in the absence of a paid authority, are becoming empowered to reject abuse and internalized oppression.

Of course, it is easy to criticize the self-help movement's emphasis on personal change, its ignoring of wider systemic issues. But it should also be noted that there are openings being created for more directed social change. First of all, personal change is now going on in a group, therefore social, context. One barrier to collective action is individualism; this barrier gets broken down as people become accustomed to sharing and helping each other with pain and abuse. Furthermore, individual change is important and necessary; in some ways it may be the groundwork for later social change. For example, a woman who stands up to her screwed-up, sexist, abusive male partner may then find it easier to stand up to her screwed-up, sexist, abusive male employer. "Addiction" patterns extend beyond personal spheres and have effects in the social, economic, and political spheres of society as well. Personally empowered individuals are more likely to see the possibility and need for political empowerment than those caught up in old patterns of abuse and internalized oppression.

An understanding of the power of what is happening on the ground and an appreciation of the role of the addiction models allow us to move beyond a simple critique of the models' limitation. Remaining at that level of a simple critique leaves us intellectuals feeling aloof, superior, and detached from popular culture. From that point of isolation, we are unable to build bridges to popular culture and fulfill what we have always assumed to be our role: the vanguard leading the progressive struggle. It is this dynamic among left-wing intellectuals that helps account for our marginality in American politics (though there are other reasons). The left has been unable to challenge the Republican hold on the working class, achieved largely through the Republicans' symbolic appeals to flag and family. We must not only come up with better symbols, we must first change our attitudes. Ronald Reagan seems to really believe in the common person: do we?

Bader's article does help one focus on the limitations of the pop-psych models and self-help movements. Yet we should take stock of the limitations of popular culture not in the service of rejecting it (unless it is fascist and dangerous), but in the service of understanding it, forming a relation to it, looking for its progressive openings, and encouraging future movement through those openings. Bader's article, like much of left-wing intellectual analysis, does not help us move forward. And, eventually, one must ask why.

Perhaps we are unable to move forward, and perhaps we actually enjoy the comfort of our detachment. But perhaps we are acting out of our own internalized oppression as intellectuals. In America (Tocqueville's land of democracy and equality, where mass opinion dangerously threatens individual genius), there is a certain suspicion of intellectuals not found in all Western industrial societies. As children, many of us currently left-wing intellectuals may have been looked upon with resentment by other children. Were we socially marginalized, teased as the "brain" of the class? If so, it would make sense that we would internalize that oppression, coming to take a detached critical stand toward all that is popular and "superficial." Can we heal ourselves now of these childhoods of marginality and isolation, find a way to connect with popular culture (and popular people), and use our intelligence the way it was intended to operate, with compassion and hope?

Mark Feinberg
Boston, Massachusetts

To the Editor:

My quarrel with Michael Bader is this: the support/recovery groups are both more and less than Bader indicates. Yes, the groups and therapies aim to break the cycle of dysfunction. But nowhere is the blame placed on the "dysfunctional family." And nowhere is recovery predicated solely on "taking care of yourself first." Especially in the ACA groups, there are twelve steps to recovery which, when integrated into the person's life, will effect a "personality change sufficient to bring about recovery" (*Alcoholics Anonymous,* page 569, 2nd edition). Taking care of oneself first is just the beginning. The goal is to become a fuller functioning member of society.

These groups have never (and should never) claim to have the sole answer to the problems of their members. Their literature recommends conjunctive treatment and/or therapy for whomever needs that. They also never claim to discover the sociological etiology of the dysfunction/disease. That is not their purpose. Their purpose is to break the cycle. Only after that is achieved can healing begin. And it is only after healing that the underlying problems can be solved. To do otherwise is akin to taking an active alcoholic and attempting to solve his or her social problems without first achieving sobriety. The person may come to see why they drink, but all that will do is make them a smart drunk.

Rabbi Susan Stone
Cleveland, Ohio

Michael Bader responds:

Admitted, self-help groups help a lot of people and are sometimes more effective than psychotherapy in stopping self-abusive behavior. Having conceded this point for the second time (the first being in my original article) I think it would only be fair for Mark

Feinberg to admit that there is something sick about our individual and social tendency to reduce complex psychological and social processes to "addictions." By sick I mean that addiction theory offers our private and collective psyches a defensive escape from various painful forms of responsibility that might otherwise be confronted and transcended.

Of course, people also desire the connectedness found in twelve-step groups as an antidote to isolation. But just because therapy happens in a group doesn't mean that it automatically becomes an "opening" for political consciousness-raising. In this case, for instance, I believe that these groups can bring people relief precisely because they *close* openings for deeper insight into personal and social realities. And just because left intellectuals often prefer to be critics rather than practice what Feinberg dubs "the three *Tikkun* C's [compassion, community, connection]" doesn't mean that potentially retrograde movements in popular culture shouldn't be critically analyzed. The addiction movement has never been critiqued, from the right or the left. It is allied with a pseudoscientific movement to reduce mental illness to biology, to attribute causation to abstract processes like "compulsions." The left has mirrored the response of the popular culture rather than trying to understand it. Feinberg, for instance, imagines that these groups are much like feminist consciousness-raising groups were, empowering people to move outward and challenge other forms of abuse. Some people do, perhaps, much as some psychotherapy patients do. But the norm is more often a retreat from both the broader social world *and* the intrapsychic one. My essay was not intended to trash the movement but to look at how it functions ideologically, how it taps into the unconscious needs of people to make them feel better, even at the cost of a depth of thinking or an appreciation of reality.

I don't offer psychoanalysis as the alternative; I particularly don't propose that we substitute the kind of *bad* psychotherapy that Feinberg describes, even though bad psychotherapy frequently works to cure people of their symptoms. (Actually, I suppose that Mr. Feinberg ought not to critically

(Continued on p. 114)

WHO IS A JEW?

After more than thirty centuries, Jews continue to debate this question.

At stake is the integrity of millions of Jews who do not find their Jewish identity in religious beliefs or practices, but in the historic experience of the Jewish people.

Judaism, as a culture, is more than a theological commitment. The authority to define Who is a Jew? belongs to all the Jewish people and cannot be usurped by any part of it.

We affirm that a Jew is a person of Jewish descent or any person who declares himself or herself to be a Jew, and who identifies with the history, ethical values, culture, civilization, community, and fate of the Jewish people.

excerpt from resolution issued by the International Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews
Yehuda Bauer, President
Brussels, Belgium, October 1, 1988

If you agree with our position, we urge you to send a tax deductible contribution today. Your direct involvement will help counter the efforts of those intent upon stifling this most essential Jewish freedom. And it will help establish an Israel where all Jews can thrive.

Your moral support is highly valued. Your financial support enables us to take action.

Society for Humanistic Judaism
28611 West Twelve Mile Road
Farmington Hills, Michigan 48018

I fully support your convictions. Here is my contribution:

☐ $18 ☐ $36 ☐ $50 ☐ $100
☐ $500 ☐ $1000 ☐ Other

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Contributors will receive a copy of the resolution.

Publisher's Page

Nan Fink

Nothing *Tikkun* has done has provoked as much fury from the organized Jewish world as the op-ed articles we printed in the *New York Times* and in the *Jerusalem Post* this March. In these op-eds we pointed out that it is a mistake for people to think that the opinions of the leaders of the organized American Jewish world about the political situation in Israel represent those of the large numbers of Jews who do not belong to their organizations. Neither do these leaders' opinions necessarily represent those of their own members, since these organizations typically don't have democratic procedures for deciding positions on important issues.

We took on the organized Jewish leadership directly at this time because we thought that it is crucial for Americans and Israelis to know that large numbers of American Jews don't support Shamir's policies toward the Palestinians. We think that Shamir's intransigence is bogging down the peace process, and we want to create pressure on him to be open to negotiating with the PLO. One way to create this pressure is to publicize the fact that many American Jews, as shown by the polls, are unhappy with his leadership.

The two op-ed articles came out just as fifteen hundred Jews were gathering in Jerusalem for Shamir's Solidarity Conference. Although we knew that some delegates to this conference privately disagreed with Shamir, we also knew that the press and Shamir's stage managing would make it appear that the American Jewish world, as represented by these American Jewish leaders, strongly supports him.

We were also concerned that Shamir would sail through his April trip to the U.S. without it being made clear that many of us are in opposition to his policies. In March 1988 he was applauded by American Jewish leaders and went back to Israel with reports of strong American support. Although American opinion is obviously not the only determining factor in the Israeli government's decision-making process, American support, or the lack of it, can play an important role. For example, the Who-is-a-Jew issue provoked strong American response, which in turn was instrumental in the decision to form the current coalition government in Israel.

In a series of public and private responses to the op-ed articles, many people, among them the president of Hadassah and the chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, harshly attacked us for taking such an oppositional position. The criticism fell into two major categories.

First, some people thought that these op-eds reflect disloyalty to the Jewish people. They said that pointing out the diversity within the American Jewish world can only lead to trouble for Israeli and American Jews. One leader publicly stated that he saw his job as "stemming the tide of the Michael Lerners of America."

We weren't at all surprised by this response. Since we've been articulating our position about Israel and the Palestinians, we've received a great deal of criticism for speaking out. We strongly disagree with this criticism, because we think that Israel is in greater danger if it continues with its current policies toward the Palestinians than if American Jews are critical in public. We do not think the potential damage from speaking out comes close to the potential damage that comes from American Jews supporting an Israel that is acting immorally.

However, we were surprised by another kind of criticism that we heard—namely, that it is a mistake for *Tikkun* to call attention to the division in the Jewish world, because the American Jewish community has in fact become more open to debate about Israel in the last year. Even though there is still little criticism voiced publicly, what really counts is that people are thinking about the issues in different ways.

The problem with this second criticism is that it is contradicted by the first criticism. If the Jewish world is now so open, how come we are being attacked so intensely by the organized Jewish world? Why are they denouncing us as being anti-Israel and harmful to the Jewish people when we speak out against Shamir's policies? If, indeed, the Jewish world is now so open for debate, why tell us that we should work from within rather than publicly voice an alternative opinion to the one articulated by American Jewish leaders?

The truth is that, although perhaps more American Jews are starting to question what is happening in Israel, there is still overwhelming caution about publicly voicing this criticism. Several leaders of establishment organizations have told us that they are afraid to go public with their views. The personal risks are too great. So much for the alleged openness—in the name of which we are supposed to moderate our criticism. □

Editorials

Michael Lerner

The Destruction of the Planet

Experts in ecology are increasingly convinced that the survival of the human race, perhaps of all life on the planet, hangs in the balance. If we do not immediately and decisively shift our entire relationship to nature, there is good reason to believe that after another ten years have passed we will have done irrevocable damage to the life-support systems of the planet.

Piecemeal solutions are wildly inadequate—they serve more to soothe our frayed nerves than to seriously confront the issue. So the media select one of the innumerable ways that we are destroying our natural environment (the destruction of the ozone layer, for example), and eventually governmental figures acknowledge that there is a problem.

Yet even when one such issue gets attention, the solutions are too little, too late. Afraid to challenge existing methods of production and consumption, government regulators delay for years the target dates for addressing the problem, set unconscionably high "acceptable" levels of environmental damage (poisons on our apples and other foods, as well as poisons in the air, thus get defined as "safe"), and make exceptions that guarantee that even when the specific problem is being addressed it is *not* being solved. Meanwhile, we focus all of our energy on two or three explosive areas that have caught the media's attention *this* month, and the damage proceeds apace on dozens of other fronts.

The irrationality of our relationship to nature simply boggles the imagination. In the twenty-first century people will look back and picture this entire age as one of pure self-destructive frenzy, as though we had all become Neros fiddling while Rome burned. It's not as though we can claim that we don't know what's happening. Every night's television brings new information about toxic wastes for which there is no acceptable method of disposal, rain forests in the Northwest and in Central America that are being destroyed, animal species that are being wiped out (elephants, we are told now, may soon be gone—killed for the ivory in their tusks), waterways that are permanently polluted and oceans that are being stripped of all fish, food that can no longer be eaten because it is covered with poisonous chemical additives and preservatives, and air that is increasingly dangerous to every form of life that is exposed to it.

Nor are we much reassured by the minimal legislative efforts to combat the problem. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), allegedly created to institutionalize our concern about the environment, may serve more as one of the many ways that we pretend that somebody is doing something, that the alarmists must be wrong, that there's somebody in charge who knows what's happening and will eventually take care of business. So we are not totally shocked when somebody like Henry Waxman, an environmentally courageous congressman from Los Angeles, reveals in March 1989 that the amount of poisons being poured into the air wildly exceeds our worst fears, or when he charges the EPA with total failure to do its job adequately. Yet even Congressman Waxman gets restricted to very piecemeal solutions because he can't count on a social movement to raise larger questions and push for larger change.

The psychic numbing process by which we distance ourselves from the possible consequences of nuclear weapons, from the meaning of world hunger, and from the pain that is a consequence of the unfair distribution of the world's resources is manifested in our attitude toward the environmental crisis. Overwhelmed by the scope of the changes we might need to make in order to guarantee the earth's survival, each of us makes the choice to avoid thinking about the issue, to go about our lives as if there were someone else in charge. The media contribute to this mind-set by framing each particular story as though it had no relationship to all the other environmental horror stories. Not only do the media fail to give us any sense of the depth of the disaster we are facing, but their very inability to remember and include in this week's story what was happening last week colludes with our own desire to believe that last week's problem has been solved.

The environmental crisis is a crisis of moral leadership and is a direct result of the breakdown of a moral community. The breakdown of any larger community of shared meaning and purpose leaves each person to fend for him- or herself. The competitive marketplace

rewards us to the extent that we develop personalities that are adept at using and manipulating others. Absent a shared moral community, the person who puts time and energy into saving the planet seems a bit kooky or, even worse, a holdover from the sixties.

One part of the solution is obvious: we need an international system for rational planning of industrial production, farming, fishing, mining, energy resources, and the like. The human race *could* pull together, decide to prohibit all forms of interference with the natural environment that are destructive to the long-term survival of the human race, and enforce its decisions. But for this plan to work, we would need a moral revolution: a rejection of the self-interest ethics of capitalism. We would also need a powerfully decentralized democratic process so that we could all participate in the discussions and the decision-making processes, as well as a democratically elected and accountable body that could coordinate the various local decisions.

Rational planning sounds boring and unimaginative—it conjures up pictures of do-gooder bureaucrats making decisions for people with whom they have no contact. People have good reason to be suspicious of these kinds of bureaucracies—which is why a program to save the planet must be part of a larger program of democratization. Moreover, the energies mobilized in a massive struggle for democratic control over the environment provide the only basis for combating the incredible power of the second major obstacle to planning: the multinational corporations and those governments that think they can best serve their own people by providing a hospitable business climate for these multinationals.

Rational planning, however, runs counter to the ideology of the free marketplace and the logic of capitalism. Equally important, it runs against the interests of the richer and more powerful countries which can impose their will on economically and politically dependent nations.

But when production decisions are made on the basis of who can get rich, the collective costs to the planet are not factored into the equation. The consumer gets what he or she wants and the producer makes a profit; but nobody speaks for the interests of the human race. The continued adherence to the primacy of the "free marketplace" ensures that every environmental reform will be limited. The fear of challenging the sanctity of the marketplace, the deep belief that any larger system of planning must necessarily undermine human freedom, guarantees that any attempt to protect the environment through centralized planning will be dismissed as communism—or at least ridiculed as utopian or messianic.

Ironically, this is the very moment in history when the cheerleaders for the West are yipping it up about the triumph of capitalism and the demise of socialism throughout the world. The failure of the planned economies of Russia and Eastern Europe and the introduction of market elements in those regions are seen as proof that rational planning will necessarily be less efficient than free enterprise.

Tikkun has little sympathy for the Eastern European systems of government that are wrongly called socialist. Using the language of socialist visionaries who described a society in which working people, through their control of the means of production, would exercise power over all of society's institutions, the ruling elites of Eastern Europe have actually managed to impose bureaucratic dictatorships that organize the masses to serve the needs of the apparat. The demise of this system is welcomed by all democrats. Far from proving the failure of a system in which the working class controls the society, the erosion of the bureaucratic dictatorships puts genuine socialism on the Eastern European agenda for the first time in many decades. If the people of Eastern Europe choose capitalism instead, it will be a testimony not to the failure of democratic planning, but to their legitimate anger at decades of totalitarianism.

Overwhelmed by the scope of the changes we might need to make in order to guarantee the earth's survival, each of us makes the choice to avoid thinking about the issue.

Ecological planning will work only if it is done fairly, which requires substantively democratic procedures so that people can participate as part of a community debating and deciding how to use the world's natural resources. The people who must be stopped from cutting down rain forests (many of whom believe that they need to continue their work in order to survive economically) cannot be convinced by appeals from North Americans who are economically well off, any more than the workers at defense factories will vote for disarmament programs advocated by upper-middle-class suburbanites who would not have to face the economic dislocations that disarmament might engender. It is not unusual for people in these circumstances to say something like this: "You so-called rational people ask me to worry about the long-term consequences of what I'm doing; that's easy for you, because your short-term survival is ensured. But unless *I* can ensure my own short-term survival, I refuse to take seriously the long-term issues

you raise. Moreover, I can't take seriously your moral tone, which urges me to worry about the long-term consequences, when I know very well that you in the industrialized countries of Europe and North America have been responsible for creating most of the pollution and most of the raping of the resources of the world."

The major obstacle to rational planning is *not* Third World countries or the economically marginal, but rather the multinational corporations and the governments that serve their interests. The current environmental crisis requires that the common good take precedence over private interest and over the unrestricted freedom of corporations to make investment and production decisions. There's no way to be serious about saving the planet without facing this broader issue. And precisely for this reason it's important that we challenge the current belief that socialism has died and capitalism has triumphed. Of course, within the constraints of an internationally functioning economic plan, market mechanisms become the most efficient way to organize important sectors of economic life. But without these constraints, the free marketplace has led us, and will continue to lead us, to the brink of ecological disaster.

We must build a movement that does not force people to narrow their political frame of reference and accept minor victories. In fact, only by being visionary and holistic can such a movement energize the American people. When social movements have framed their goals in ways that awaken our collective yearning for a morally centered community, they have been most effective politically.

Yet there remains a major problem. Once we begin to talk about transforming the world, many people tune out. "It's too big for me to handle" is a typical response. "I have enough trouble keeping my own life together." Precisely for that reason, anyone who wishes to save the environment must empower people so that they can overcome their "surplus powerlessness." In the past we've argued that transcending the dynamics of self-blaming and building communities of compassion are essential to this process—and hence we've called for a new kind of liberal or progressive movement that would pay attention to the psychodynamics of daily life and that would speak to people's fundamental spiritual and ethical concerns.

You may not think we have time to create such a movement. In fact, nothing else will succeed without it. Until people feel empowered to address the big picture, they may commiserate about the terrible destruction of the environment, and be genuinely shocked at the changes in the climate and the frequency of cancer and the disappearance of forests and streams and animals; but they will still vote for candidates who advocate the most minimal and piecemeal changes, and still watch the demise of the planet with the same detachment that characterizes the rest of their lives. Therefore, building a new kind of political community—far different from the hollow shells that parade as the major political parties in America—is a major priority for anyone who wishes to save the planet.

Victimology

In an important article on the women's movement in the March/April 1989 issue of *Tikkun*, Jessica Benjamin describes the way various groups use their past and present suffering to try to legitimate their current aspirations and demands. "What we have learned," says Benjamin, "is that there is a tremendous moral capital in suffering, even if you aren't suffering any more." It's all too easy to have every political argument resolved by someone referring to their own or their group's suffering.

Of course, one of the reasons why, if forced to pick, we feel closer to the left (with all its problems) than to the right is that the left seems to care about the suffering of others. While the right celebrates the pursuit of self-interest, the left insists that we pay attention to the ways that poverty, oppression, and "underdevelopment"

Sabbatical Fellowship at Tikkun

We are seeking an outstanding intellectual who would spend his or her sabbatical year working with us at *Tikkun*. Tasks include reviewing manuscripts, dealing with authors, and editing articles—working at the *Tikkun* office a minimum of 25 hours a week, from Sept. 1, 1989 to June 30, 1990. The fellowship award is $12,000. Submit a long, detailed, and self-revealing personal letter describing your reactions to the magazine, ideas for what you'd like to see in *Tikkun*, your experience doing editorial work, and your intellectual/political/philosophical orientation; plus samples of your written work.

Paid Internship at Tikkun

The tasks: everything from reading submissions, proofreading, and editing, to writing letters of rejection, office work, and promoting the magazine. Minimum commitment: 25 hours/week, Sept. 1, 1989 to June 30, 1990. $500/month. Send self-revealing personal letter describing yourself and your ideas for *Tikkun*, and why you'd be good for us; samples of your writing; and letters of recommendation.

are the direct results of the unrestricted pursuit of self-interest by the rich and powerful.

Yet there are many dangers to this focus on suffering. For one thing, victimology leads to destructive competition about who is most oppressed. From the standpoint of the suffering of group X, group Y's oppression is insignificant, and a focus on it is pure self-indulgence.

The most fundamental and pervasive pain derives from the frustration of our fundamental human capacities.

The fact is that there are many different kinds of pain and suffering generated by repressive societies—and each kind is important and legitimate. In our estimation, the most fundamental and pervasive pain derives from the frustration of our fundamental human capacities: for mutual recognition, intimacy, and love; for creativity; for community and solidarity; for a life that has ethical meaning and purpose and spiritual depth; for understanding and intellectual stimulation. While the specific way that these capacities get blocked varies in different historical periods, and is shaped by the impact of sexism, racism, anti-Semitism, and other organized forms of oppression, this sort of suffering is virtually universal.

One of the reasons that liberals and the left have been so ineffective in the past two decades is that in the course of acknowledging the suffering of Blacks, women, gays, and some Third World peoples they have seemed to deny the importance or legitimacy of the pain ordinary Americans who do not belong to these groups feel. The compassion that the left has for whoever gets identified as the primary victim is often too thin to spread around—so many people are left out and feel unrecognized in the process. The breakdown of family life, the feelings of isolation and despair, the sense that "nobody cares about anybody anymore," the stress and disrespect that many people feel at work, the sense of powerlessness that pervades so many people's lives, the difficulty in building friendships and relationships that will last, the fear that no one cares about values other than self-interest, the disrespectful way people treat each other—all these things dominate the daily life experience of many Americans. These problems may not seem significant in comparison to the sufferings of the homeless or the hungry, but many Americans feel terrible about their lives, and until their pain is acknowledged and dealt with they will be unwilling to listen to stories about the pain of others. Social movements stuck in victimology are unable to respond to the needs of average Americans, and therefore those movements don't get a serious hearing from people who might otherwise support them.

Victimology is also bad for the Jews. We have every right to demand that the world compensate us for the history of oppression we have suffered. When the Romans took Judea by force, renamed it Palestine, and expelled us they began a long process of Jewish pain and suffering. Just as we support the principle of affirmative action for Blacks and women, so too do we support Zionism—the national liberation struggle of the Jewish people—in its insistence on the right of the Jewish people to the same kind of national self-determination that is granted to every other people.

But past suffering can be used incorrectly—as a warrant for oppression toward others. Suffering and pain do not always make one noble: they often distort our perception of the world and the way we treat others. While the most oppressed may be the best authorities on what their oppression feels like, they are not necessarily the best judges of how to understand or overcome it. Liberals and progressives understand this point with respect to the Jews in Israel: it's easy to see that past suffering has generated a certain paranoia that now makes Israel unable to recognize opportunities for peace. The psychic legacy of past suffering may contribute to creating a present reality that will generate future suffering for our people. But the left finds it much harder to apply this same insight to the Palestinians—or to women, gays, or Blacks. One sometimes gets the sense that people on the left believe that critical thinking should be suspended when discussing currently oppressed groups. But this attitude is a disservice to the oppressed.

Pain and suffering are central to the psychological legacy of the human race. One of the most important things that we can do is to help create contexts in which people can "tell their stories," can understand that much of the pain they experience is not their own fault, and can see that the insensitivity of others is often a manifestation of their own pain. Political strategies that find effective ways to acknowledge and speak to the pains that dominate the daily life experience of many Americans—validating people's right to feel anger at the ways they have been oppressed, victimized, or kept from actualizing their human capacities while simultaneously showing them areas in which they can take the initiative to change their situation—may be the most effective way to overcome the passivity, random acts of violence, and self-destructive acts sometimes associated with a "victim consciousness." Suffering need not be a club that one group uses against another. It can be a vehicle for linking people through mutual compassion. In fact, developing this kind of mutual compassion based on a validation of each other's pain can be a powerful vehicle for overcoming surplus powerlessness and establishing political community.

Taking Note

• According to a poll conducted by Market Facts and released by researcher Steven Cohen, 58 percent of American Jews said Israel should be willing to talk with the Palestine Liberation Organization as long as it recognizes Israel and renounces terrorism (18 percent said no, and 24 percent were unsure). Forty-seven percent said they believe the Palestinians have a right to a homeland on the West Bank and Gaza as long as it does not threaten Israel (23 percent disagreed, and 30 percent said they were unsure). Thirty-five percent said they were "morally outraged" by some of Israel's actions. The poll data also indicated that the more active Jews are in Jewish organizational life, the more hawkish they tend to be.

• March's "Solidarity Conference" of Shamir's American Jewish loyalists, attended also by dozens of well-intentioned but politically naive community leaders, was appropriately staged on Purim. The contrast—between the biblical Queen Esther's willingness to risk her influence and power, perhaps even her life, in order to speak truth to power, and the fawning sycophants who call themselves Jewish leaders but cannot bring themselves to declare publicly to Shamir how destructive Israeli policies have become—had all the elements of an ironic "Purimspiel." Those who seemed most foolish were the dozens of American Jews who actually believed there would be space for a dialogue in which Shamir would be forced to hear and respond to their criticisms—and those who thought that making statements to the press would offset the larger impression conveyed by the mass media to the Israeli public that American Jews are willing to line up behind Shamir. Apparently oblivious to the way mass media function, some of these American Jews seemed unaware that they were being used to validate Shamir's refusal to change his West Bank rejectionism; this is only one of many reasons why these leaders couldn't win a democratic election for positions of leadership in the American Jewish community. Israeli peace movement activists helpfully provided props for the event: they handed out kits to the participants which included earplugs, mouth gags, and blinders—the perfect assortment of items for American Jews who didn't want to see that their very presence at this event helped prolong the agony of the occupation.

• Norman Podhoretz pulls the predictable heartstrings in his "Lament from the Future" (*Commentary,* March 1989). Writing from the perspective of the twenty-first century, Podhoretz states that the destruction of Israel was inevitable once peace activists had managed to push Israel into peace talks. Similarly, the *New Republic* in its April 10, 1989, issue presents Steven L. Spiegel arguing that a Palestinian state would be an insuperable military disaster. Yet no one can come up with a militarily plausible scenario for how a demilitarized state, whose demilitarization would be internationally supervised and backed up by the Israeli army, could constitute a serious security risk. The biggest military risks come from Syria, Libya, Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia; and these risks can be effectively countered only if Israel has access to the latest in U.S. military technology. Yet that access is threatened to the extent that Israeli intransigence begins to erode American political support. Israel would be far smarter to develop a plan that provides genuine self-determination to the Palestinians in exchange for a renunciation of all claims to the rest of "Palestine," supervised demilitarization, and ironclad military security guarantees (including a defense treaty with the U.S.).

Those Americans who advocate that Israel "hang tough" on the territories belong to the same school of thought (and are often the same people) that supported the war in Vietnam and that endorse aid to the contras. In each case, the one thing these people never factor in is the moral outrage of the American people at those who deny others the right to national self-determination. Thus, the "realpolitik" strategists who ignore these moral considerations are always astounded when their otherwise perfect plans for American foreign policy get rejected by the American people. These purveyors of hard-nosed realism, who fill the pages of the *New Republic* and *Commentary,* are actually crackpots whose schemes continually lead to defeat and disaster for the U.S. Israel can't afford the kinds of strategic miscalculations that these "realists" endorse. By ignoring the power and force of ethical appeals, these "realists" ignore reality. That's why Israel's only hope is to regain the moral high ground—by offering genuine Palestinian self-determination, but with conditions that are guaranteed to protect Israeli security.

Assistant Editor Position at *Tikkun*

Being an editor at *Tikkun* requires top notch editorial and language skills, a deep understanding and commitment to the editorial philosophy and perspective of the magazine, a sophisticated understanding of contemporary issues in American politics and culture, Judaism and Israel, plus a willingness to work endless hours editing, reading and responding to manuscripts, and promoting the magazine in public forums. Salary $22–$38,000 depending on experience. Send a self-revealing letter telling us in detail (1) why you're the person for this job (2) a few paragraphs on what you understand to be the central ideas that make *Tikkun* unique, and (3) your specific suggestions for articles, direction, or changes in the magazine. Send also a sample of your writing. Job will begin summer 1989.

Calling Shamir's Bluff

Our editorial in the last issue (March/April 1989), "Shamir: New Packaging, Old Intransigence," turned out to be too optimistic. Most of us who sat in the East Room of the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C., on April 6, 1989, listening to Shamir talk to an assemblage arranged by the American Enterprise Institute, realized that he had not even bothered to change the packaging. Feeling little pressure from the official representatives of American Jewry who had danced to his tune at his Solidarity Conference a few weeks earlier, facing no serious opposition from a Labor party whose capitulation to Likud's foreign policy demands had led to its own political demise in local elections in March, and greeted by a Bush Administration anxious to avoid any appearance of an open rift with Israel, Shamir had clear sailing.

Once again Shamir rejected the very concept of trading land for peace (he called it "deceptive"—his written speech called it "a hoax"), insisted that the Palestinian state already exists (Jordan), refused negotiations with the PLO, and suggested that the solution lies not in self-determination for the Palestinian people but in their being resettled as refugees in Arab lands.

The old packaging was the Camp David proposal of elections for a team of "interlocutors" who would negotiate an interim autonomy arrangement (stage one), after which these same representatives would participate with Israel in negotiations about the final status of the West Bank (stage two). But Shamir made clear that this second stage of negotiations could lead nowhere: while the Palestinians would be allowed to put anything they want on the table, Israel was committed to opposing any plan that involved the ceding of land to the Palestinian people. Presumably, such negotiations could go on for decades—Israel would be willing to send representatives to a talkathon, but would concede nothing. Shamir rejected any notion that the elections could be held under international supervision; and even if he were to agree to international "observers" the continued presence of Israeli occupying forces—with their censorship of newspapers, bans on public assembly, and arbitrary arrests—makes a mockery of "free elections." No Zionist would have accepted such an offer in the 1945-48 period had the British offered us municipal elections as an alternative to independence and self-rule.

Even though the PLO rejection of this insulting offer is perfectly reasonable and understandable (hundreds of Palestinians killed and thousands wounded or jailed did not make their sacrifices for the sake of municipal elections), we think that the Palestinians should call Shamir's bluff and accept this pathetic proposal. The majority of Israelis, despite recent changes in the PLO position, do not believe the PLO is sincerely committed to peace. Though the Palestinians are "within their rights" to point out that they have already taken some significant steps this past year, the issue isn't whether it's fair to ask them for more, but rather what will be most effective in achieving their rights. Without any serious pressure on Shamir from either Bush or Peres, the most effective thing Palestinians can do right now is to take further steps to undermine the demonization of the PLO in the consciousness of Israelis. The PLO should take the following steps: first, change the PNC Charter to eliminate the parts calling for the destruction of Israel; second, stop all offensive military actions against Israel—they are militarily ineffective and politically counterproductive; third, unequivocally announce that the PLO will accept a *demilitarized* state and will, as part of the treaty that sets up such a state, renounce all claims to the parts of Palestine outside the West Bank and Gaza; and fourth, accept Shamir's offer of elections—provided that Israeli troops are withdrawn from all West Bank population centers for at least three months prior to elections and for as long as the interim negotiations are taking place, provided that there is international supervision of elections, provided that there are no restraints on who can run for office, and provided that Israel allocates a fixed amount of time on every Israeli radio and TV news broadcast from the time of the elections until the time of the completion of the second stage of negotiations for the elected Palestinian representatives to present their perspective on the negotiations to the Israeli population.

Just as we have called on Israel to change its policies (see the inside back cover of this issue for the text of the advertisement that we placed in the *New York Times* the day before Shamir met with Bush), we call upon the PLO to take these steps which could greatly strengthen its own credibility and the power of the peace forces within Israel. Meanwhile, as our advertisement made clear, *Tikkun* is communicating to Shamir and to the American people that a substantial percentage of American Jews, still loyal Zionists, unequivocally reject Shamir's policies. □

A Conversation With the PLO

Nabil Shaath is chairman of the Political Committee of the Palestine National Council and a close adviser to Yasir Arafat. This conversation took place in the spring of 1989 while Shaath was visiting the United States.

Michael Lerner: The U.S. is now proposing a series of confidence-building measures for both the Israelis and the Palestinians. What is your reaction to this proposal?

Nabil Shaath: There is a methodological problem. You don't talk about confidence building between an occupied people and its occupier without simultaneously being willing to talk about what the future of the relationship is going to be between the two sides. There is no parity between the two sides: for twenty-one years there was no relief to the occupation by Israel. Now, finally, the Palestinian people have taken to the streets in their *intifada* (which is really the process of reconstituting the nation, one aspect of which has been the street demonstrations). So now the U.S. comes along and says that, in order to build confidence, the occupier will release some of the people imprisoned for their opposition to the occupation, in return for an end to the resistance itself. And all this is being asked without any reference to what would come next. Will the U.S. or Israel be willing to support the creation of a Palestinian state—or is the end of the resistance being asked so that we can then proceed to an "autonomy" plan? We want the U.S. to discuss a substantive vision of what overall solution it would support, and confidence building toward some specific goal then might be discussed.

Lerner: When you use the terms "occupied" and "occupier" they evoke imagery that in other contexts would make your position obviously reasonable. However, what is unique about this circumstance is that the occupier is *afraid* of the occupied and feels that the occupied is associated with a dozen other countries surrounding the occupier, and those other countries are much larger in their populations and have been dedicated to wiping out the occupiers [the State of Israel] long before they became occupiers! The occupied in this case [the Palestinian people] have as their representatives an organization, the PLO, that has a charter which says that they, the occupied, want to join with all other countries in the region to wipe out the State of Israel. So in this case "the occupier" is motivated not by a desire for economic exploitation or territorial expansion, but by fear for its own survival.

Shaath: There is a lot of economic exploitation in this situation. The occupier has taken 55 percent of the land and 94 percent of the water of the West Bank. What Israel takes in taxes alone from the West Bank is ten times what it returns in the way of services to the people. This is the only occupation in the world that is so lucrative for the occupier—whatever the security issues that are also involved. This economic exploitation is a very serious matter.

Lerner: But certainly you must share with me the belief that Israel would be willing to give up the territories if certain security concerns could be fully met.

Shaath: So far we have no indication of that. Mr. Shamir repeatedly vows that not one inch of territory will be given back, that he will *never* sit down to discuss the creation of a Palestinian state. On the other hand, the Palestinians have moved far ahead of Israel and have announced our willingness to accept a two-state solution in which we would share the land. We have unilaterally agreed to stop all attacks on civilians both inside and outside the State of Israel. We have unilaterally accepted 242 and 338—without anything in return.

Lerner: Still, from the standpoint of your own interests, why not give Israel an unequivocal olive branch? It would certainly help the forces within Israel seeking peace if the PLO were to be more unequivocal!

Shaath: When we came up with our peace plan at the Palestine National Council on November 15, 1988, we thought we were doing just that. Despite all the talk of not amending the charter, we thought we were being unequivocal by announcing that we were willing to accept a state in the West Bank and Gaza, and in our willingness to suspend attacks that might generate more fears in the Israeli public. We thought that this move should at least be reciprocated by Israel's recognizing our right to the smaller part of our land, which was occupied in 1967—a part that is 22 percent of the land that was Palestine before 1948. Having done that, we have gone to great lengths to indicate our desire to meet in direct dialogue with the Israelis, even to the

extent that we are meeting with nongovernmental Israelis to show that we want to talk.

Lerner: *Tikkun* has called for the creation of a *demilitarized* Palestinian state. Would the PLO accept a demilitarized state?

Shaath: We will accept a state that assures Israel of its security—so we will discuss all of the ramifications of this at an international conference. We want the assurance of security to be mutual—so that the independent Palestinian state is assured of *its* security needs, whatever the modality for doing that. In no way do we want a state that would perpetuate war in that part of the world. We have to create a new mode of life that will create a comprehensive and lasting peace.

Lerner: *Tikkun* has suggested that the borders of this state should be supervised by an international force that would protect the borders.

Shaath: We accept that principle, but we'd have to discuss its modalities in the international conference.

Lerner: One of the major fears of Israelis is that the intention of at least some segments of the PLO is to achieve a state in the West Bank and then use that as the first stage of a two-stage struggle, the second stage of which is to liquidate Israel and "liberate" all of Palestine.

Shaath: If we are discussing this from a rational point of view, then you must realize that only very small fringe groups within the PLO are saying anything like this after our decision of November 1988, when we took the final and irrevocable step of accepting a two-state solution. We are talking of a lasting peace, not a piecemeal, stage-by-stage approach. Now, if we are talking at the emotional level, there is no way we can reassure people just by swearing it.

Lerner: Well, there are important things you could do. You committed yourself to reducing the level of violence, yet we are seeing almost daily attempts by terrorists to come over the Lebanon border. So how are we to understand the continuation of terrorism?

Shaath: We *never* committed ourselves to stopping the *intifada* or to stopping the legitimate resistance to Israel's military presence in southern Lebanon, nor have we ever committed ourselves to stopping military actions against the Israeli military. The word "terrorism" cannot possibly be used to apply to military attacks against military forces. "Terrorism" can only be understood as attacks against enemy civilians or against uninvolved third parties. You can never say that commandoes fighting against Israeli military units occupying Lebanon are totally illegal, and in the same breath totally ignore the daily air raids conducted by the Israeli army against Palestinian refugee camps in the south of Lebanon, and also totally ignore Israeli military incursions in southern Lebanon—including the hijacking of civilian boats on the high seas that are headed toward south Lebanese ports. All these actions taken by Israel against civilians are totally ignored, and the center of attention is instead ambushes conducted by Israeli units deep inside Lebanese territory against armed commandoes—with the Israeli's *claiming* that by having killed these people, attacks have been avoided . . . on what targets, we don't know. This isn't like somebody hijacking a bus or killing school children—which *are* clear signs of terrorism (and which is what the Israeli army is in fact doing in the south of Lebanon). Once again the occupied is asked to promise nonresistance to an occupier who continues to do the same thing.

At the same time, even having made this point, we have made clear our willingness to have a negotiated cease-fire on the northern border of Israel and south of Lebanon. If Israel would agree to cease and desist from its attacks on our civilian population, we would be willing to cease even *military* operations. We did something similar in 1981 when Mr. Shamir mediated a cease-fire which we respected *to the letter* and the Israelis smashed it during the 1982 Sharon-led Israeli invasion of Lebanon. So, again, the issue of mutuality arises.

Lerner: Given the actual situation in Israel, this may be a distinction without a difference. Given that most of the Israeli population serves in the army, they feel personally attacked when you attack the army.

Shaath: But then if you eliminate this distinction many would draw the conclusion that it is legitimate for us to attack any Israeli civilian, since they will soon be in the army. But this is not my position—I think there is a distinction. You can't expect us to let Israel occupy southern Lebanon, make attacks on Palestinians inside Lebanon, and then say that once they return to Israeli territory they have a privileged sanctuary from which they are safe from all attack. Palestinians engaged in the military struggle have every right to continue to strike at *military* targets within the pre-1967 borders of Israel. Otherwise, you are giving one party a totally one-sided right to fight its battles, and the other side is given no right to fight back. Do you remember the recent hang-glider raid in northern Israel?

Lerner: I remember it very well, because my son was in a kibbutz only a mile away from where the hang glider

landed. I was very worried that if they hadn't gotten that glider terrorist, maybe my son would have been killed.

Shaath: Well, if your son had been in uniform serving in the army, he would have had to take responsibility for that and be prepared for this kind of attack. But if he was tilling the soil as a civilian, he should not have been attacked. But you must understand that most of the war being waged in southern Lebanon is being waged against civilians in the cities and refugee camps.

Lerner: You base much of what you say on the notion that we should accept that there has been a real change in the PLO policy since November 1988. Assuming there has really been such a change, why did it happen?

Shaath: That change has been the result of twenty years of rethinking our situation in which we've come to the conclusion that it may be worth giving up part of our country for our future and in order to preserve our children. We are a people who have struggled for so long, and have been betrayed for so long, by friend and foe alike—eventually we had to make a calculation, even about giving up some of our rights, if that is going to save the future. But the final thing that pushed us into this total change was the *intifada* itself. As the *intifada* took place, as we regained a sense of history, a sense of dignity, a sense of self-respect, as it helped our people unite together, we lost our fear of losing our sense of unity. We then began to practice making decisions democratically about the future, and that pushed us forward to adopting the *intifada,* which itself was very clear about a two-state solution. The *intifada* gave the final push to making the idea of partition finally ingrained, and the idea of a Palestinian state took its final shape.

Lerner: Just as *Tikkun* supports the Palestinians' right to a demilitarized state, so we have also supported Zionism, the national liberation struggle of the Jewish people. I wonder if there has been any change in the attitude of Palestinians toward the fundamental legitimacy of Zionism, or whether it's still seen as an illegitimate movement of European colonialists grabbing land for selfish purposes. Are you compromising with a legitimate force or are you compromising with the devil?

Shaath: One would not compromise with the devil. There is no reason to have any confidence in any agreement made with the devil. I think the way we must look at this is to think of two peoples. We have come around to realizing that there is an Israeli people. And this has changed our perspective fundamentally, without our having to adopt either Zionism or Arab nationalism. The key question here is how you politically view your opponent, rather than whether you have adopted his ideology or not.

Lerner: You say the Israeli people rather than the Jewish people.

Shaath: We don't have to make a political compromise with the entire Jewish people.

Lerner: But there have been attacks by Palestinian guerrilla groups against Jews around the world, not simply against Israelis. The mastermind of the *Achille Lauro* hijacking who was implicated in the killing of Leon Klinghoffer recently was a respected delegate of the November 1988 PNC conference to which you point with pride as a major turning point.

The word "terrorism" cannot possibly be used to apply to military attacks against military forces. "Terrorism" can only be understood as attacks against enemy civilians or against uninvolved third parties.

Shaath: The guy who was implicated in Sabra and Shatilla, Ariel Sharon, is now a respected member of the Israeli cabinet. The guy who perpetrated the murders at Deir Yassin is now the respected prime minister of the State of Israel. No "holier than thou" attitude can help you.

Lerner: The question remains about the acceptance of the legitimacy of Zionism.

Shaath: No, the question is whether we can have two people who are willing to respect each other and share a mutual quest for a better future—*not* whether we are going to accept each other's political ideologies of the past or present. Zionism has always appeared to us as the face of exclusion, the ideological face of the force that pushed us out of our country. Today we are meeting a different kind of Zionist, people like Nahum Goldman and Pierre Mendès-France and the people we met with at the *New Outlook* conference in New York, and these people don't want to exclude us. This is what changes minds, not ideological discussions.

Lerner: Fifty years ago it was our people, the Jewish people, who were living in camps, who were refugees, who were being mass-murdered in Europe, who were

the people who had no land. At that moment, when it was your people who had the power, you did what you could to keep us out.

Shaath: We had no power. We were not the perpetrators in Europe, nor were we in charge of our own land in Palestine.

Lerner: At that time, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, the Palestinian leaders were threatening the British with a massive uprising against their rule should the British allow Jews to escape from the mass murder of Europe and come to Palestine.

Shaath: That's what the Israelis are doing now—threatening every possible reprisal if the Palestinians would return. I mean, is it now justified for Israelis to talk about people holding their land and not wanting to be thrown out of it, but not justified for Palestinians, who were not responsible for what happened to the Jews in Europe in the first place?

Lerner: I don't accept Israel's current policy, and I see it as a wrong. But I don't accept the previous policy of the Palestinians toward Jews when it was Jews who were the minority, and it was Jews without a land and without anywhere to go, and the Jews were being murdered in the rest of the world. There was enough land here to share—because if there is enough land to share here in 1989 there had to be enough land to share in 1936.

Shaath: There was not enough land to share. The proof of the matter is that the land that the Israelis took, they threw the Palestinians out, they didn't share. That attitude persists till this moment: the Israelis *refuse* to share. Even the best thing being discussed is that Palestinians might get the 22 percent of the land, which was conquered in 1967. There is no willingness by Israelis to talk about sharing the whole land, in the form of a democratic Palestinian state that we offered twenty years ago. This idea was an idea for sharing Palestine. And it was *never* accepted by the Jews inside or outside Palestine, so we had to abandon that idea.

Lerner: In a Palestinian state, what will happen to the existing settlements? Can Jews live in the state you propose? Or is this suddenly to be *Judenrein,* a state in which Jews are not allowed to live?

Shaath: If Palestinians are allowed to return to Israel and live there, certainly Jews should be allowed to live in the Palestinian state. But the matter of the settlements is something entirely different. That land was expropriated illegally, in violation of international law. They have taken 94 percent of the water and 55 percent of the land; and they have done it illegitimately and illegally. So those settlements have no legitimate claim. But that does not prevent Israelis from moving into a Palestinian state in a legal way.

Lerner: Do you insist on the right of Palestinians to return both to the new Palestinian state *and* to Israel as well?

Shaath: In our negotiations we will have to work out a method which will involve repatriation for some and monetary compensation for others.

Lerner: But at least as many Jews fled from Arab states in the early years of the State of Israel as Arabs fled Palestine.

Shaath: We in the PLO absolutely support the right of Jews to return to the countries from which they fled, and we also believe that Jews do deserve monetary compensation for any property that was confiscated. This is something that has not been publicized in the West, but the PLO has been raising this issue with other Arab states for the past fifteen years.

Lerner: Well, talk about returning to Arab lands is foolish. Whereas Palestinians living inside pre-1967 borders of Israel have political rights and full ability to participate in Israeli elections—in the 1989 local elections over 80 percent of the Palestinians did in fact participate—Jews in Arab lands are persecuted, imprisoned, killed.

Shaath: I have no desire to defend those Arab states. They have not always been good to Palestinians either. I personally have protested against anti-Jewish policies. But I think it a mistake to exaggerate Palestinian rights inside the State of Israel. There are many areas in which inequalities exist, and the past expropriation of homes and land is certainly one important element in that picture.

Lerner: Some Israelis say, "Sure, you can find a few reasonable PLO people like Shaath to talk to now. But once a PLO state is set up, the extremists in the PLO will kill the moderates, and the extremist PLO types will then themselves be under attack from Hamas—the Arab fundamentalists who are receiving growing support (as manifested in their recent electoral victory in Uhm al Fahm, the large Palestinian city in the Galilee)."

Shaath: Israel has its fundamentalists and extremists too—in Kach, Tehiyah, and Moledet.

Lerner: Well, they don't kill other Israelis with whom they disagree. But in the PLO, people who have been seen as "moderate" have been killed by others.

Shaath: Well, I don't say that I have no worries about risking my life. I do. But I also believe that we in the PLO can handle this problem. This is, after all, a Palestinian problem and we will take care of it.

Lerner: But if there is a Palestinian state, it will be an Israeli problem. If a state emerges like the one in Lebanon, this will be bad for Israel.

The Israelis have been much tougher than the British were toward the Indians during Gandhi's demonstrations. The Israeli troops throw tear gas into people's homes.

Shaath: Well, first, if Israel doesn't intervene and take sides, we will be able to handle it ourselves. In fact, the Israelis played a major role in arming the Phalangists in Lebanon, and this was a major reason that we could not settle the problems there by ourselves. So if Israel doesn't intervene, things will be worked out. But as to danger to Israel—this is not true. Read Abba Eban's recent articles about the military balance (*Tikkun,* March/April 1989) and you will see that the Palestinian state could not be a serious threat to Israeli military security.

Lerner: Wouldn't the Palestinians be more successful in gaining mass support from the Israeli public, so that we could actually end this conflict instead of each side continuing to "prove" that it has exclusive right on *its* side, if you were to adopt a policy of nonviolence? You would win the confidence of a large section of the Israeli public which would move toward acceptance of a Palestinian state if you were to project a credible nonviolent policy and practice.

Shaath: This is the fundamental thrust of most of the demonstrations taking place during the *intifada.* When a group of young people gather to march with Palestinian flags, this is fundamentally nonviolent civil disobedience. But then the Israeli troops respond with violence: they throw tear gas, they shoot with rubber or plastic bullets, they beat up people. And then the teenagers respond by throwing rocks. But the people have tried to keep this *intifada* nonviolent—they have not used armed weapons, which would have been possible.

In addition, you must understand that the Israelis have been much tougher than the British were toward the Indians during Gandhi's demonstrations. The Israeli troops throw tear gas into people's homes—and this has caused the loss of over fifteen hundred pregnancies, and much pain. The British troops were more restrained.

Lerner: Well, I don't accept your characterization of the Israeli army, which I believe has acted in a more restrained way than many other armies might have acted, certainly more restrained than Syria or Iraq act toward their own populations, and almost certainly more restrained than the American police and national guards have acted when called in to put down domestic uprisings in the ghettos and barrios of America. I do not fault the IDF; I fault the political leadership of Israel that has chosen to perpetuate the occupation and ignore your pleas to begin negotiations toward a final peace settlement. And I still do believe that the Palestinian cause would be best served by a policy of nonviolence that is more fully developed and more categorical—including the cessation, at least for a specified period of time, of raids into Israel and attacks on the IDF. But I thank you for taking the time to explore these issues so fully with the American Jewish community. And though I regret that Israel will not allow you or other PLO leaders to enter Israel and present your ideas, and that it has made it illegal for Israeli citizens to have any direct contact with you, I hope that these policies will soon be reversed and a significant dialogue can begin. In that dialogue many of us may press you and the Palestinians to change your mind about some of the points you raised here, but I think that the dialogue must begin soon. And since we cannot be the representatives of the people of Israel, we can only hope that they will soon be allowed to speak to you directly and for themselves. □

Abbie Hoffman: In Memoriam

Tireless fighter for justice and peace, Abbie is remembered for his insistence that humor and joy are essential in the struggle to heal and transform the world. Never abandoning his "1960s" politics, Abbie became a powerful voice for ecological sanity in the 1980s. A proud and loyal Jew, a writer for *Tikkun,* and a signer of our recent "No, Mr. Shamir" ad in the *N.Y. Times,* Abbie frequently called us with his latest strategies to expose the injustice and immorality that undermine what he loved most in American and Jewish traditions. As irreverent toward the enforcers of "left-wing and Marxist orthodoxies" as toward the establishment, Abbie was a shining light who will be sorely missed.

Ed Koch and the End of the Liberal Jewish Community in New York

Jim Sleeper

Jews were an indispensable leavening in the rise of the city of New York and cannot walk away unscathed from its fall. What would it mean for Jews to let go of a city they struggled to transform into a crucible of progressive historical change? As historian Fred Siegel puts the question, what does the emergence of an apparently unredeemable underclass in New York imply for Jewish notions of secular redemption, of historical progress, of tikkun itself?

These dilemmas find no embodiment more stark than in the personal and political odyssey of the nation's most volubly Jewish elected official, New York's mayor of twelve years, Edward Irving Koch, who may well lose his bid for a fourth term this fall. While Koch tried valiantly to defend some basic premises behind the city's culture of progressive institutions—its Old Left emphasis on hard work and on economic redistribution that isn't engineered at the expense of those who work hard—he struck devil's bargains with powerful forces inimical to the survival of the city's progressive culture.

Koch's failure—ideological, political, and personal—is a lost opportunity of unimaginable dimensions for the Jewish community and for the vision of the city to which it was committed for many years. This is so because Koch touted his alliances with conservative and neoconservative elements of the Jewish community, from Menachem Begin to Norman Podhoretz, even while driving his Faustian bargains and lashing out at minorities, reformers, and insurgents of all races. In so doing, he managed to identify the Jewish community with his own mistakes at a time when Jews should have been passing the torch of leadership to those younger New Yorkers of color who will have to sustain the culture of progressive institutions in the years ahead.

Koch's first devil's bargain was ideological. He embraced the cold logic of municipal redemption emerging from the city's 1975 fiscal crisis—the "logic" of budgets balanced impeccably at the expense of progressive institutions. This retrenchment hastened a middle-class abandonment of the city's network of public hospitals, transit, and schools, isolating the poor and working people who need them most, and thereby deepening the city's social divisions. Any mayor would have had to accept this perverse, post-fiscal-crisis logic—there cannot be "socialism in one city"—but Koch became its avid cheerleader. Quite simply, like too many other Americans, he forgot that the working poor's aspirations to an urban sophistication rooted in social justice cannot be fulfilled without sophisticated, expensive public services.

Koch's ideological failure was not all a matter of public-sector retrenchment. By catering as enthusiastically as he did to the new corporate ethos and style, he overlooked what sociologist Daniel Bell identified years ago as the central contradiction of capitalism: its relentless promotion of consumerist license, selfishness, and greed undermines neighborhood, family, and class solidarities, and ultimately the work ethic itself. Much of New York's new service economy has been engaged in promoting precisely such an ethos. In supporting it, Koch strayed from the conservatism of his lower-middle-class Jewish supporters. But he found an unwitting ally in a "liberationist" left that disdained the conventional norms that poor and working-class people need simply to survive. Koch at least paid lip service to those norms, which is why he kept winning reelection.

The narrower, political dimension of Koch's failure has been treated exhaustively by the city's muckrakers: though personally an honest public servant, Koch struck another devil's bargain with the bosses and drones of parasitical Democratic party machines (many of them Jews, alas), handing them opportunities to corrupt his government in exchange for their votes. In so doing, Koch contributed to public disillusionment with electoral democracy and, to his own deep dismay, to the perception that Jewish politicians had become so cynical about New York's prospects that they were willing to plunder the city on its way down.

Finally, Koch's failure was personal—again, sadly, with a Jewish cultural twist. Though the mayor is not without guts and a healthy sense of dignity, something in this poor Bronx boy's avid subservience to white-shoe bankers, his almost gleeful flogging of minority insurgents, and, at the same time, his self-promotional em-

Jim Sleeper is deputy opinion editor of New York Newsday, *one of New York City's four daily newspapers, and was New York City Council President Carol Bellamy's speechwriter from 1979 to 1982, during part of Mayor Edward Koch's first term.*

brace of the city's most tawdry promises of celebrity and glitz, evoked for some of us the ancient insecurities that drove some Jews to collect taxes for the Polish king or to stage the pathetic excesses of *Goodbye, Columbus*.

That many of the city's minority insurgents demonstrated their own ancient insecurities and pathetic excesses is beside the point; after journalist Ken Auletta reported Koch's comment that most Blacks are "basically anti-Semitic," after Koch called Congressman Ron Dellums "a Watusi warrior," and after he warned Jews that they'd be "crazy" to vote for Jesse Jackson in New York's presidential primary last April, it wasn't surprising to hear embarrassed local Teamster President Barry Feinstein blurt out that the mayor had "driven a dagger into the heart of this city."

The depth of Koch's tragedy is clearer from the vantage point of Jewish history. Across eight decades and three generations, Jews stoked New York City's great institutional furnaces—its unions, universities, hospitals, philanthropies, theaters, publications, and infrastructure (from Moses to Robert Moses ...), creating a culture of progressive institutions, open to all. It provided, in the way a thousand scholarships to elite private schools could not, an integration of proletarian strength with professional achievement and high cultural excellence.

And Jews—three million strong, 36 percent of the city's population just after World War II—were the city's proletariat as well as the petty bourgeoisie and the professional middle classes. Even those Jews who lived like Episcopalians voted like Puerto Ricans, as Milton Himmelfarb has observed; and one might add that even those Jews who lived like conservative Italians and other white ethnics still voted like Jews. There remain three thousand Jewish police officers in New York City, more than 10 percent of the force. Now that's leavening for you.

Electing a Jewish mayor was almost an afterthought. The voters didn't get around to it until 1973, and by then, if anything, "our time" was already waning. For the Jews' vision of New York City depended ultimately upon a national commitment to a full-employment economy that meets basic human needs in health, education, and housing—something neither the classical free market nor the new corporate consolidation of the city could provide.

The tragedy is that as the city fell behind in meeting such needs, municipal government became as despised politically by hard-pressed taxpayers as it had been stymied economically by capital flight. In the voting booth and on the streets, the culture of progressive institutions became suspect as people tried to replace deteriorating mass transit, schools, and parks with the expensive alternatives of the private sector: subway riders became car drivers, and a new generation of middle-class New Yorkers abandoned the social bond of public schooling.

Many of those who couldn't step up their private consumption retreated to ethnic enclaves that gave dubious succor and balkanized the city into warring camps. By the late 1960s, the tumultuous wars between Black parents and the predominantly Jewish United Federation of Teachers over community control of the city's public schools had broken the spine of the civic culture. A backlash ensued with the 1973 boycotts of public schools by Jewish and Italian American families resisting the busing of Blacks into Brooklyn's Canarsie. That same year, with a mobilization by Jewish homeowners against the construction of low-income, predominantly minority public housing in Forest Hills, Queens, Ed Koch, a little-known liberal congressman from Greenwich Village, made his first foray into a mayoral campaign by marching with the most demagogic of those protesting homeowners at the project site.

Something in this poor Bronx boy's avid subservience to white-shoe bankers, his almost gleeful flogging of minority insurgents, evoked for some the ancient insecurities that drove some Jews to collect taxes for the Polish king.

People say Koch benefited from the left-liberal hubris of Mayor John Lindsay, who, according to the argument, so coddled poor Blacks and enraged working-class whites that he botched the last real opportunity to renegotiate the urban social compact. In a memorable 1970 *Commentary* profile of Lindsay, Roger Starr signaled the emergence of a Jewish neoconservative sensibility by observing that the mayor and his followers were comfortable with only two types of people, those who had so little money that they needed more of it just to survive, and those who had so much money that they needed to give it away. The broad, then-mostly-white mass in the middle, including Forest Hills homeowners, teachers terrified of community control, and hard hats who clubbed antiwar demonstrators on Wall Street, seemed grubby and uninspiring to many of Lindsay's followers.

Koch made himself that broad middle's avenger, but, unlike Philadelphia's Mayor Frank Rizzo or Boston

Representative Louise Day Hicks, he did not come roaring out of the bowels of Bunkerville. Yet he did have it hard, coming to liberal reform Jewish politics not as a trust-fund radical or suburban dreamer, but as a failed Bronx furrier's son. He had to sleep on a cot in the dining room of a cousin's Newark apartment where his family doubled up for several years, and had to share a desk in an overcrowded public school classroom with a boy who, as Koch would put it, happened to be Black. And that is a reasonably decent way for someone in his circumstances to have put it.

Koch participated in Mississippi Summer, 1964, not as an ideologue or idealist, but as a young lawyer struggling to make his way in reform Democratic politics. And when the social agenda shifted from civil rights to economic redistribution at the expense not of the Rockefellers but of white kids who had shared school desks with Black kids and who had since worked their way to modest prosperity, Koch wasn't alone in digging in his heels.

He rallied those Jews who lived like Italians but still voted like Jews—the teachers, low-level bureaucrats, and small-time entrepreneurs who had stuck by his ethic of upward mobility through hard work, the maintenance of strong family and ethnic ties, and the democratic practice of tolerance and fair play across class and racial lines. On the heels of the sixties, Koch restored moral legitimacy to these ordinary New Yorkers, who were sick and tired of phony, rhetorical militancy precisely because they had lived with and tolerated it for so long. Calling himself "a liberal with sanity," Koch began to speak for the beleaguered Jewish burghers of sociologist Jonathan Rieder's *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism.* As Rieder put it:

> Italians warned against the threat [of Black children being bused to Canarsie schools] with unembarrassed candor. They did not so often apologize for seeming mean and unenlightened. Puzzled by the tenacity of [their] Jewish [neighbors'] liberalism, the Italians railed against it from across a vast divide, as if liberalism were a strange poltergeist. For Jews it could not be so simple. They were wrestling with a buried part of their past that seemed to have turned against them, or with the live pressures of parents and rich relatives on the West Side of Manhattan, on the campuses, in the Great Neck suburbs. A simple coding of responses misses the caveats, the little hesitations, the tortuous reasoning in the Jewish search for an appropriate political idiom.

In Forest Hills a compromise between homeowners and low-income-housing advocates was engineered by a young lawyer appointed by Lindsay to mediate the dispute—one Mario Cuomo—and Koch's first mayoral campaign fizzled. But since under capitalism even modest liberal redistributive compromises like these are extracted unfairly from the struggling working and lower-middle classes, these "solutions" to social problems were little more effective than demagoguery. In 1977 Koch was back, marketing the death penalty to voters more burdened and frightened than before by declining property values and rising crime.

Still, Koch's ebullience about the city during his first term was contagious, his defense of parts of its liberal ethos bracing. Some of the truths Koch touted were actually commonplaces of the Old Left that the children of the sixties had forgotten: that going to work in the morning, even under the most oppressive conditions, is a moral and political necessity because it is the only conceivable basis for class consciousness and empowerment; that economic redistribution cannot be accomplished on the backs of the recently poor, of those white ethnics, that is, who in a generation or two managed to deposit their life savings and retirement hopes in the property values of small homes in ethnic enclaves like Canarsie.

Try to be a liberal within the constraints of capitalist urban development and you're led inexorably to Koch's conclusions. The dirty little secret on the left was that not a few minority New Yorkers embraced his paradigm, believing correctly that he held visions of opportunity out to all of them, regardless of race. By 1985, with just a few gestures borrowed from Ray Flynn, Boston's conciliatory mayor, Koch could have had more minority support than he wanted. He didn't bother, and he won anyway, with 38 percent of the Black and 62 percent of the Hispanic vote.

Koch's race against Cuomo for governor in 1982 reflected the fact that he didn't really like, and wanted to escape, the working white ethnics whose yearnings and fears he'd played to so well. But they made sure he stayed trapped with them in the city, an ethnic comedian, bored with his material but unable to transcend it. "Remember," he would warn them at community meetings in that shrill, pedantic singsong of his. "You can always vote me out. I'll get a better job, but you'll never get a better mayor."

As the void left by the public sector's decay was filled by a divisive and predatory politics, and as white flight and the hemorrhaging of the city's older manufacturing base continued, a very different sort of change was occurring in another tier of the local economy. OPEC and the negative national balance of trade brought huge foreign investment to New York and, with it, a boom in finance, insurance, tourism, entertainment, advertising, data processing, and, of

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New Age Mythology: A Jewish Response to Joseph Campbell

Tamar Frankiel

In 1988, Bill Moyers and PBS offered viewers a special video event: a series of videotaped conversations with Joseph Campbell, the well-known scholar of mythology and popularizer of comparative religion. Completed a few months before Campbell died, the tapes are a summary and retrospective of Campbell's decades of writing and thinking about comparative religion. The repeated showings have generated much appreciative discussion among those interested in modern religious thought and those involved in spiritual practices. The book based on the tape transcripts, entitled *The Power of Myth,* has been selling with enormous success.

The popularity of this material should have come as no surprise: for years Campbell's works have provided many students with an introduction to the field of comparative religion, and he is popular among people in certain other fields as well—notably among psychologists with a Jungian bent. Although he was sometimes regarded by other scholars as too much a generalist and popularizer, overriding the data with his interpretations, his impact was considerable. He both reflected and contributed to the post-1960s movement of young Americans and Europeans toward a more universalistic, nature-oriented spirituality (a mythology for the whole planet, as he said), and he offered his scholarly reputation to give this movement a solid foundation.

For a Jew interested in the spiritual direction of contemporary life, however, watching the tapes is unsettling. In the panorama of spirituality that Campbell presents, and in the vision he offers of a spiritually unified planet, we do not glimpse a role for Judaism. Of Judaism as a living tradition, no discussion occurs; and of our ancient biblical heritage, there is almost nothing but negative references. If Campbell is a scholarly representative of a significant trend in modern spirituality, as he surely is, where does this leave the Jew in the religious future of the planet? Listening to him, one would conclude that Judaism doesn't speak to today's concerns about higher consciousness and planetary unity. Better to turn to Hinduism, Buddhism, or a tribal shaman. Indeed, many young Jews have done just that—some undoubtedly under the influence of Campbell's writings.

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The End of the In-Group

A person with some knowledge of Western intellectual traditions might be even more concerned. For intellectual inspiration, Campbell refers us to the tradition of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in philosophy and Adolf Bastian in anthropology. These thinkers contributed to the creation of secularized German romanticism, from which National Socialism later drew. Campbell would, with good reason, disavow any connection with nazism that was based only on similar intellectual traditions. Indeed, one of the foundations of his normative philosophy of religion is that no religion or philosophy based on the notion of an "in-group," no "sociologically oriented mythology," can be a foundation for modern spirituality. The Nazis would of course be discredited under this criterion.

But so would Judaism. Insofar as group boundaries are an inherent and necessary part of the structure of Judaism, it would no longer be a viable religion in our age. While Campbell voices respect for differences among religions (on the model of the federal government's respect for states' rights), one wonders how deep this concern runs, at least in the case of Judaism. For while he appreciates the mythologies and sacred scriptures of many traditions, he views most of our foundational literature, the "mythologies" of the Hebrew Bible, as deeply flawed in their basic orientation.

Let us look at some illustrations. According to Campbell, the "Yahweh cult" illustrated in the Book of Kings was the "imperialistic thrust of a certain in-group culture." As a result, Western culture has inherited a view of the universe from the first millennium B.C.E. that "does not accord with our concept either of the universe or of the dignity of man." Our heritage teaches us to condemn nature, declare it corrupt, and dominate it.

Moreover, the Bible teaches negative views of other peoples. Referring to the story of Jacob's sons' destroying Shekhem, Campbell observes that the ancient Hebrews

were basically killers:

> The semite invaders were herders of goats and sheep, the Indo-Europeans of cattle. Both were formerly hunters, and so the cultures are essentially animal-oriented. When you have hunters, you have killers. And when you have herders, you have killers, because they're always in movement, nomadic, coming into conflict with other people and conquering the areas into which they move. And these invasions bring in warrior gods, thunderbolt hurlers, like Zeus, or Yahweh.

A careful reader might be surprised at this description. Earlier, in discussing religions of primitive hunting peoples, Campbell sympathetically described these people as involved in the continual round of sacrifice by which death gives rise to life: "Killing is not simply slaughter, it's a ritual act, as eating is when you say grace before meals . . . a recognition . . . that this is in accord with the way of nature." Later, however, Semite hunters are simply "killers." Of course, one might also wonder at the logical leap from the culture of hunters to that of herders: because the herders are nomadic and animal-oriented, are they also killers who initiate conflict? The argument is questionable, to say the least.

The Hebrews, Campbell goes on to say, were a more negative spiritual force than the Indo-Europeans, because the Hebrews refused to preserve the great goddesses. Even worse, however, was the way the ancient Hebrews treated those around them. Discussing the Deuteronomic instructions concerning the capturing of a city (to kill the men but take the women captive), Campbell comments: "The Hebrews were absolutely ruthless with respect to their neighbors. But this passage is an extreme statement of something that is inherent in most sociologically oriented mythologies. That is to say, love and compassion are reserved for the in-group, and aggression and abuse are projected outward on others."

It is startling, given what we know of modern biblical scholarship (not to mention Jewish commentaries, which Campbell might regard as biased), to find statements so out of context. Campbell is not entirely honest to the text: he does not acknowledge, for example, that in the Shekhem story itself Jacob objects to what his sons did to Shekhem. Moreover, the claim that the ancient Israelites were extremely violent compared to other groups with similar mythologies simply is not supported by evidence. Campbell also does not mention that, given the standards of warfare of the time (including those of the supposed nature-lovers who worshiped goddesses), Deuteronomy's laws were quite humane: they insisted, for example, that a city be offered the chance to make peace before being attacked and that a woman taken captive be given an entire month to mourn her loved ones.

What are we to make of Campbell's criticisms? Undoubtedly he did not intend them to be slurs against Jewish tradition. He used such allusions, along with some material from Roman Catholicism, to make ideological points about the outmoded worldview we have inherited and about the need for a different social and spiritual perspective. Nevertheless, while his comments about Christianity are more evenhanded—he expresses appreciation for Jesus' sayings, the medieval cathedrals, and the cult of the Virgin—he offers no positive words about Jewish tradition that would counterbalance his negative comments about the Old Testament. Intentionally or not, Campbell perpetuates negative stereotypes about Jewish tradition.

It is easy for a Jewish scholar to be oversensitive to such slights. The field of comparative religion has inherited a Christian bias, which had led scholars frequently to contrast "the religion of the law" (that's us) with "the religion of love" (you know who). The real question is not whether Campbell raises our hackles, or even whether he may make mistakes in interpreting Jewish sources—though that is more serious—but whether the basic philosophy he advocates has validity. Is it based on a sound treatment of comparative religion? Is it internally consistent? Can it be purged of its perhaps unintentional stereotypes and offered to Jews and non-Jews alike as a foundation for the spirituality of the future? To answer this question, we must look more closely at Campbell's fundamental interpretation of religion.

Myth, Psychology, and the Religious Path

Campbell's view of religion is essentially psychological. All the basic features of religion—personifications of gods, myths, and religious rites—are points of entry into the deeper layers of our own psyches. In this respect Campbell's ideas are closely aligned with those of Carl Jung, who held that myths present us with "archetypes," the basic forms through which we experience and interpret our existence. Campbell agrees: myths reveal us to ourselves; in particular they reveal, in patterned form, the essential nature of the life experiences we have and the dilemmas we face as we seek to grow to maturity.

Stories about heroes who slay dragons and heroines who refuse their suitors express the archetypal conflicts we have to face to fulfill our destiny. Rituals of sacrifice remind us of the need to give up our egos for something higher, while recurrent symbols such as immersion in

water, the circle, and the well represent basic psychological facts of life. The gods themselves are actors on this symbolic stage, representing in intense form the energies we ourselves bring into play.

The purpose of all religious symbols and acts, Campbell argues, is to bring us to a deeper consciousness, a greater awareness of ourselves and of life as a whole. They do not present us with a meaning so much as with a possibility for deeper experience. Campbell explains:

> People say that what we're all seeking is a meaning for life. I don't think that's what we're really seeking. I think that what we're seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances within our own innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive.

Myths increase our awareness, our consciousness, and thus—since "consciousness and energy are the same thing somehow"—they make available to us a freer flow of life energy. We can hold the examples of myths and gods in our minds, bringing that deeper reality and that sense of greater vitality into our daily lives.

The path to that higher level of living is an individual one, carved out by each person according to his or her own sense of what is good, deep, and true. Campbell's constant advice to people seeking a better quality of life is "Follow your bliss." For a model of this path in life, Campbell turns to the medieval troubadours who sang of devotion to their loved ones. In Campbell's view, the troubadours expressed the unique contribution of Western tradition. They were determined to be "the author and means of their own self-fulfillment, ... and they were going to take their wisdom from their own experience and not from dogma, politics, or any current concepts of social good."

Campbell offers a philosophy of self-fulfillment in a rich and sophisticated format; he tells stories of personal transformation from all over the globe. Besides being colorful, this philosophy is highly congruent with the way our culture has absorbed other perspectives from such varied sources as depth psychology, the human potential movement, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism. And it is attractive—promising enlargement of the arena of consciousness, extending from personal psychological growth into spiritual domains where one can achieve a different perspective on all of being.

Metaphysically, Campbell's ideas have their foundation in a viewpoint that is probably closest to that of classical Hinduism, to which he often refers. Life energy has a continuity and a resonance through all domains. This impersonal life energy, which is the ground of being, manifests itself in one's own psyche and takes form in the collective imagination through mythology and personifications of gods. This energy is also cyclical, and the multitudinous forms it takes recur over and over. Even the person on his or her own unique quest follows a familiar pattern:

> All these different mythologies give us the same essential quest. You leave the world that you're in and go into a depth or into a distance or up to a height. There you come to what was missing in your consciousness in the world you formerly inhabited. Then comes the problem of either staying with that, and letting the world drop off, or returning with that boon and trying to hold on to it as you move back into your social world again.

The gradual expansion of consciousness leads to the ultimate aim of the spiritual quest: to recognize the unity behind this multiplicity of forms and experience, and thereby to let the heart experience oneness with other individuals, with humankind, with the planet, and with the principles of life behind all things.

Authority has been confused with authoritarianism, discipline with rigidity.

Note that the ultimate experience is not of God as a transcendent source or initial creator, as in the West, but of God as an impersonal ground of being that is reflected in all particular beings. Following Schopenhauer, Campbell conceives of the world as we experience it as "features of the one great dream of a single dreamer in which all the dream characters dream, too; so that everything links to everything else, moved by the one will to life which is the universal will in nature." The basic religious desire is to experience oneness with all being, to experience the ultimate ground of being, but without form. In union with one's god,

> duality is transcended and forms disappear. There is nobody there, no god, no you. Your mind, going past all concepts, has dissolved in identification with the ground of your being, because that to which the metaphorical image of your god refers is the ultimate mystery of your own being, which is the mystery of the being of the world as well.

Campbell is offering here an expansive spiritual vista, which extends to a unity with "ultimate" being but is founded on our basic human nature and our interdependence with the rest of nature. Indeed, he claims that spirituality is grounded in the energy of our own bodies and that the Jungian archetypes are biologically



grounded. From this natural energy come the works of the mythic imagination. By connecting with this energy, the individual can transform his or her consciousness and achieve creativity and contentment with life. This profound faith in a person's ability to connect with deeper sources of being is founded on a "mystery," but it is not a supernatural faith; the secrets are hidden within life itself.

Nature and Authority

It is not immediately clear why Campbell ignores the many examples he could draw from Judaism concerning this dimension of spirituality. Judaism has its ancient cycles connected to nature, its hero stories (he does mention Moses briefly), its renewal through the feminine aspect of the divine, its deeds of compassion and sacrifice, its seers and prophets, its mystical philosophy that speaks of going beyond the world of multiplicity, beyond the "images" of God. On the face of the matter, it seems that Campbell, on the basis of a certain reading of the biblical stories, has set up Judaism—or the "Hebrew" tradition—as the negative example of in-group religion which is now to be surpassed as we move to a "planetary" future. "The crucial question" for the future, Campbell says, "is simply: With what society, what social group, do you identify yourself? Is it going to be with all the people of the planet, or is it going to be with your own particular in-group?"

In fact, this is not the real issue—for Campbell or for modern spirituality. His conception of spirituality is convincing and attractive in its simplicity: espousing universalist, nature-oriented, planetary religion makes one a spiritual hero of the new age, and anyone who voices a reservation becomes a potential enemy. If you're an advocate for a particular group, you must be against planetary unity. But the simplicity is deceptive. Like the slogan "Zionism is Racism," Campbell's portrayal of (unnamed) groups as guilty of being devoted to their heritage masks a different and more fundamental difficulty that he does not face.

The problem is not group identity versus universality. Rather it is a matter of integrating structure and discipline into spirituality. We can see this problem in the way Campbell speaks out against ethics. (His stance is something of an ironic twist against modern Judaism: many Jews for 150 years have been declaring that rituals are obsolete and that, to keep up with the times, we must preserve Judaism as an ethical system. Now Campbell, extolling the role of archaic ritual, launches a critique of ethics!) Ethical laws, he says, "the laws of life as it should be in the good society," dominate Western mythology and are now out of date—"[a]ll of Yahweh's pages and pages and pages of what kind of clothes to wear, how to behave to each other, and so forth, in the first millennium B.C." Campbell inappropriately lumps together "in-group" rules with ethical laws under the rubric of "sociologically oriented mythology." He seems to assume that instructions about how to live are necessarily culture-bound (whereas some philosophies, such as the ninth-century B.C.E. Hindu ideas quoted earlier, apparently are not). Campbell therefore connects ethical laws to the in-group theory of the "chosen people" that infects Western religions.

In Campbell's view, ethics do have a place as instruction for the immature person. Following Nietzsche, he says that the "thou shalts" are necessary to convert the human animal into a civilized being, but when they inhibit self-fulfillment they must be broken up. Ultimately, he argues, they are inferior to spiritual realization. In response to Moyers's direct questions about the role of ethics, Campbell replied as follows:

> We spoke of the metaphysical experience in which you realize that you and the other are one. Ethics is a way of teaching you how to live as though you were one with the other. You don't have to have the experience because the doctrine of the religion gives you molds of actions that imply a compassionate relationship with the other.

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Progress: The Last Superstition

Christopher Lasch

Neither liberalism nor Marxism, its principal competitor, seems to hold out much hope for solutions to the mounting problems that threaten to overwhelm us. Hence the search for some third position, as evidenced by recent interest in civic humanism, communitarianism, and other submerged traditions of social criticism that have been overshadowed by the dominant traditions deriving from the Enlightenment. The search for a third way, neither Marxist nor liberal, reflects a growing fear that people are no longer in control of their lives.

Whether it is possible to imagine a convincing alternative to the ideologies that have shaped the modern world and what such an alternative would look like depend on our understanding of just where the old ideologies went wrong. My own view is that the roots of the difficulty lay in their common commitment to the idea of progress—which is why I am so deeply opposed to an attempt to stake out a new position that continues to define itself as "progressive." That way, nothing but confusion lies.

The first thing we need to understand is that hope does not demand a belief in progress. It demands a belief in justice: the conviction that the wicked will suffer, that wrongs will be made right, that the underlying order of things is not flouted with impunity. Hope implies a deep-seated trust in life, which appears absurd to those who lack it. But hope serves us better, in steering troubled waters ahead, than a belief in progress. Not that it prevents us from expecting the worst. On the contrary, the worst is always what the hopeful are prepared for. Their trust in life would not be worth much if it had not survived disappointments in the past, while their knowledge that the future holds further disappointments demonstrates the continuing need for hope. Believers in progress, on the other hand, though they like to think of themselves as the party of hope, actually have little need for it, since they have history on their side. Still, their lack of hope incapacitates them for intelligent action. Improvidence, a blind faith that things will somehow work out for the best, serves as a poor substitute for the disposition to see things through even when they don't.

This fatalistic optimism, this confident assumption that history works on the side of enlightenment, equality, and individual freedom, was the source of Marxism's notorious indifference to the morality of means and ends—the issue that troubled those who believed that progress was a mixed blessing at best. For Marxists, the choice of means was simple: whatever hastened the proletarian revolution. The "natural laws of capitalism," Marx said, worked "with iron necessity towards inevitable results." This did not mean that every nation had to go through a bourgeois phase on the way to socialism. When the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia, they could cite Marx's statement that Russia might be able to "obtain the fruits with which capitalist production has enriched humanity without passing through the capitalist regime." Without a bourgeois revolution, however, the socialist regime would itself have to do the work of capitalism, beginning with the expropriation of the peasantry; eventually this logic became the rationale for Stalinism in the Soviet Union. The upshot of the Marxian scheme of history was that certain things had to happen in sequence, whether they happened under bourgeois or "proletarian" auspices: the destruction of the old landed aristocracy; the rise of a new ruling class in its place; the "annihilation" of small-scale production; the transformation of peasants and artisans into wage workers; the replacement of communal, patriarchal, and "idyllic" arrangements by contractual arrangements; the rise of a new individualism in personal life; the collapse of religion and the spread of scientific habits of thought; the demystification of authority. Some such series of developments had to take place whether anyone wanted them to or not, and no matter what groups happened to be in charge of the state at any given time. Marx's theory of history, political philosopher Jon Elster writes, was "strangely disembodied." By "working backward from the end result to preconditions," it "could dispense with actors and their intentions." Because it dispensed with actors, we should add, it could also dispense with questions of politics and morality.

According to Marx, socialism would reconcile the individual and society. It represented a "higher synthesis" between individualism and "organic unity." Elster, a sympathetic critic, finds the "indiscriminate solidarity"

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envisioned by Marx and Engels both unconvincing and a little ominous. People need a "narrower focus of loyalty and solidarity than the international community of workers," Elster argues. Altruism flourishes in "small, stable groups" and "declines as the circle of individuals expands." "Free-floating benevolence" is incompatible with "personal integrity and strength of character." But Marx could not have acknowledged the value of small, stable groups without sacrificing his unilinear theory of progress, according to which history moves inexorably in the direction of more and more inclusive forms of solidarity.

The liberal theory of progress, on the other hand, is less rigid and therefore more easily reconciled, it seems, with evidence that history does not always move in a single direction. It was not the secularization of the Christian belief in Providence that gave rise to the eighteenth-century idea of progress, as is so often alleged, but the more specific assumption that people's appetites, formerly condemned as a source of social instability and personal unhappiness, could drive the economic machine—just as people's insatiable curiosity drove the scientific project—and thus insure a never-ending expansion of productive forces. The moral rehabilitation of desire generated a new sense of possibility, which announced itself most characteristically not in the vague utopianism of the French Enlightenment but in the hardheaded new science of political economy. For Adam Smith, it was the self-generating character of rising expectations, newly acquired needs and tastes, and new standards of personal comfort that broke the old cycle of social growth and decay and gave rise to a form of society capable of indefinite expansion.

The decisive break with older ways of thinking came when human needs began to be seen not as natural but as historical and constantly changing, hence insatiable. As the supply of material comforts increased, standards of comfort increased as well, and the category of necessities came to include many goods formerly regarded as luxuries. For Smith, the "uniform, constant, and uninterrupted effort of every man to better his condition" became the "principle from which public and national, as well as private opulence is originally derived." Smith's defense of high wages, unusual for its time, rested on the premise that "a person who can acquire no property can have no other interest but to eat as much, and to labor as little as possible." The hope of improving his condition, on the other hand, would encourage Smith's working man to spend his income on "things more durable" than the "hospitality" and "festivals" preferred by the wealthy; and the accumulated effects of this kind of expenditure, even though they might reflect a "base and selfish disposition," would maintain a whole nation of industrious workers.

The history of liberalism, for our present purposes, can be seen as the periodic attenuation and abandonment of these ideas, on the one hand, and the periodic rediscovery of them, on the other, by a long line of thinkers, culminating with the proponents of Keynesian economics, who made the most refined attempts to link social progress to the indefinite expansion of consumer demand. The concept of progress, as the most astute liberal theorists have understood, can be defended against intelligent criticism only by postulating a never-ending expansion of desires, a steady rise in the general standard of comfort, and (most important of all) the continual incorporation of new groups into the culture of consumption. It is only in this form that the idea of progress has survived the calamities of the twentieth century. More extravagant versions of the progressive faith, premised on the perfectibility of human nature—on the unrealized power of reason or love—collapsed a long time ago, but the liberal version has proved surprisingly resistant to the shocks to easy optimism administered in rapid succession by twentieth-century events.

Liberalism was never utopian, unless the democratization of consumption is itself a utopian ideal. It made no difficult demands on human nature. It presupposed nothing more strenuous in the way of motivation than intelligent self-interest. It assumed that almost everyone had a stake in increased productivity, higher wages, shorter hours of work, and a more creative use of leisure. Capitalism, said Horace Kallen, the political philosopher of consumption, had "... raised the general standard of living, ... transformed scarcity into abundance, awakening wants where none had been before, multiplying few into many, bringing more and more varied goods to more people at lower prices, so that what had been formerly, if at all, available only to a few ... was now in reach of many of those who had produced much and consumed little." It remained only to complete the capitalist revolution by making the "blessings of leisure" available to all. No improvement in mental capacity was required in order for the desirability of this goal to be generally recognized; nor did the realization of the goal require altruism and self-sacrifice—only a willingness to subordinate short-term pleasure to long-term peace and prosperity.

Even this modest level of discipline, however, has proved difficult to sustain in societies propelled by the imperatives of mass consumption. In American politics, the kind of intelligent conservatism that reconciled the business classes to the need for social justice is clearly on the wane, perhaps because demands for reform voiced from below have grown increasingly faint. During the age of reform, imaginative statesmen like Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin D. Roosevelt

could cite the radical pressures mounted by Populists, socialists, and militant labor unions as an incentive to implement more modest reforms. For a variety of reasons, however, it has become more and more difficult for popular demands to get a hearing. Third parties are weaker than they used to be; the consolidation of the press into a handful of giant chains eliminates small papers and narrows the range of political debate; the dominance of television further encourages this homogenization of opinion; the growth of the executive branch of government at the expense of the legislature makes officials less directly responsible to a popular constituency, while the courts, the least accountable branch of government, have assumed an increasingly important role in policy-making; and the system of direct primaries, instituted in the hope of bringing government closer to the people, has had the opposite effect, increasing the financial resources necessary to mount a successful campaign and transferring the selection of candidates from party managers to the mass media more than to the voters. The effect of these changes in making government appear remote and inaccessible to ordinary people is evident in the decline of voting, in widespread political apathy, and in the distrust of Washington on which the New Right has played so effectively.

From the beginning, liberalism placed less emphasis on the duties of citizenship than on the right to enjoy the good things of life. The function of the state was to guarantee those rights, not to provide citizens with a political education or to interfere in any way with the pursuit of private advantage. Democracy (insofar as it was identified with liberalism at all) thus came to be identified with an equitable distribution of goods rather than with the widest possible participation in public life. A general improvement in the standard of living seemed to justify the choice of distributive democracy over participatory democracy. Recent experience, however, suggests that it may be impossible, in the long run, to achieve one without the other. The favored few cannot be trusted to consult the needs of the many, even when, as Keynes and Kallen pointed out, it is manifestly in their long-term interest to raise the general level of consumption. If the many now enjoy comforts formerly restricted to the few, it is because they have won them through their own political initiative, not because the wealthy have voluntarily surrendered some of their privileges or because the market automatically assures abundance for all. The decline of popular initiative in politics, together with the decline of intelligent conservatism, therefore wears a menacing look; a steady progress toward equality, to put it mildly, can no longer be taken for granted.

Liberalism ultimately presupposes the creation of a global market that embraces populations formerly excluded from any reasonable expectation of affluence. But the prediction that "sooner or later we will all be affluent," uttered so confidently only a few years ago, no longer carries much conviction. The global circulation of commodities, information, and populations, far from making everyone affluent, has widened the gap between rich and poor nations and has generated a massive migration to the West, where the newcomers swell the vast army of the homeless, unemployed, illiterate, drug-ridden, derelict, and effectively disenfranchised. Their presence strains existing resources to the breaking point. Medical and educational facilities, law-enforcement agencies, and the job supply—not to mention the supply of racial tolerance and goodwill, never abundant to begin with—all appear inadequate to the enormous task of assimilating what is essentially a surplus or "redundant" population, in the cruelly expressive British phrase. The poisonous effects of poverty and racial discrimination cannot be ghettoized; they too circulate on a global scale. "Like the effects of industrial pollution and the new system of global financial markets," Susan Sontag writes, "the AIDS crisis is evidence of a world ... in which everything that can circulate does"—goods, images, garbage, disease. It is not surprising that "the look into the future, which was once tied to a vision of linear progress," has turned into a "vision of disaster," in Sontag's words, and that "anything ... that can be described as changing steadily can be seen as heading toward catastrophe."

Hope does not demand a belief in progress. It demands a belief in justice.

The gist of my argument up to this point is that the consumerist program cannot succeed without popular participation in government and without a heightened sense of civic commitment, both of which, however, tend to be eroded by the consumerist emphasis on private satisfactions (and by many other features of consumerist culture as well). To this we can add a second point: that consumerism requires a global market and a continuation of the trend toward political centralization, whereas civic participation is far more effective in small communities where people feel directly responsible for their actions. I see no way out of this dilemma except to choose one of its two horns, either equality or economic growth, either citizenship or consumerism. We can't have both, and there is no point in pretending that

we can somehow combine "community" with large-scale organization or civic revival with a continuing commitment to a more and more affluent standard of living.

My conviction that our progressive society is approaching the end of the road and that we will have to face hard choices in the near future is strengthened by another consideration, namely, the mounting evidence that the earth's finite resources will not support an indefinite expansion of industrial civilization along its present lines. While the attempt to maintain the existing standard of living enjoyed by industrial nations without sharing it with the rest of the world would be unconscionable, the attempt to export Western standards would eventually mean the exhaustion of nonrenewable resources, the irreversible pollution of the earth's atmosphere, the drastic alteration of its climate, and the destruction, in short, of the ecological system on which human life depends. Rudolph Bahro, a leading spokesman for the West German Greens, writes:

> Let us imagine what it would mean if the raw material and energy consumption of our society were extended to the four and a half billion people living today, or to the ten to fifteen billion there will probably be tomorrow. It is readily apparent that the planet can only support such volumes of production ... for a short time to come.

If Bahro is right, we have only two choices: to make the West more than ever an island of prosperity in a poverty-stricken world, barricading ourselves against our neighbors; or to accept a general reduction of our own standard of living. Neither alternative, it hardly needs to be pointed out, is consistent with the ideology of progress.

If there is any merit in the sketchy arguments outlined here, they suggest a final point: the need to clarify the communitarian critique of liberalism and to face its social, political, and cultural implications without flinching. Communitarianism, if that is what we want to call it, does not imply a return to the New Deal, the revival of the progressive tradition in American politics. It implies a repudiation of that tradition. It implies small-scale production, workers' control of industry, and community control of education. It also implies, I think, a willingness to undergo the risks of public controversy about morality and religion. The exclusion of moral and religious issues from politics has been one of the hallmarks of liberalism and one of the preconditions, in all likelihood, of economic progress. It was only when the separation of church and state put an end to the wars of religion that the West was able to devote itself wholeheartedly to the all-engaging task of increasing productivity. Once the state ceased to be the guardian of religious orthodoxy, it could assume what has since come to be recognized as its primary function—that of keeping the economy in good working order.

The price of this policy, however, has been a certain trivialization of public debate. One of the reasons people take so little interest in politics today, aside from the inaccessibility of the bureaucratic structures that dominate political life, is that politics fails to address issues of overriding moral importance. It won't do, therefore, for communitarians to call for a revival of civic spirit while deploring the right's attempt to put divisive moral and religious issues on the political agenda. Liberals can consistently argue that such issues are matters of private choice and therefore do not belong in public, but communitarians don't enjoy that luxury. If they are serious, they will have to engage the religious right on its own terms, recognizing that a community is constituted by vigorous public debate about the issues that really matter, not by universal agreement about those issues. Orestes Brownson once said, "I always hold that to be important truth, wherein I differ from others." One of the more farsighted of nineteenth-century social critics, Brownson pointed out that the separation of politics and religion actually led not so much to the exclusion of religion from public life but to a bland, nondenominational civil religion that helped to enforce the socioeconomic status quo. When he criticized the separation of religion and politics, he meant that questions concerning the "destiny of man" ought to become questions for public debate, not that a new religious establishment should provide authoritative answers. "Peace is a good thing, but justice is better.... Give us the noise and contention of life, rather than the peace and silence of the charnel-house." Communitarians would be well advised to take these words to heart. □

Five Parables

Stephen Mitchell

Brief Theodicy

Of all human comestibles, the lemon is most nearly allied to the sun. Therefore we can deduce that the god of lemons is bright, slow-moving, and thorough. He delights in the primary, the elliptical. He is not overly concerned with sweetness.

Thus, lemon juice is the traditional cure for scurvy and optimism.

Jonah

After the first few hours he came to feel quite at ease inside the belly of the whale. He found himself a dry, mildly fluorescent corner near one of the ribs, and settled down there on some huge organ (it was springy as a waterbed). Everything—the warmth, the darkness, the odor of the sea—stirred in him memories of an earlier comfort. His mother's womb? Or was it even before that, at the beginning of the circle which death would, perhaps soon, complete? He had known of God's mercy, but he had never suspected God's sense of humor. With nothing to do now until the next installment, he leaned back against the rib and let his mind rock back and forth. And often, for hours on end, during which he would lose track of Nineveh and Tarshish, his mission, his plight, himself, resonating through the vault: the strange, gurgling, long-breathed-out, beautiful song.

Left Hand

He is the awkward one, the fool, the younger brother. Can't manage sword or scissors. Bungles it when he tries to use a pen. He is good only for joint projects with his accomplished partner, and menial tasks, like lifting a cup or opening a book.

But he doesn't mind. He accepts his limitations, sees nothing sinister in the fact that grace is reserved for someone else. Perhaps that is why he has been chosen to wear the golden circle, promise of all fulfillment: the marriage ring.

Through the Eye of the Needle

The camel catches his breath, wipes the sweat from his brow. It was a tight squeeze, but he made it.

Lying back on the unbelievably lush grass, he remembers: all those years (how excruciating they were!) of fasting and one-pointed concentration, until finally he was thin enough: thaumaturgically thin, thread-thin, almost unrecognizable in his camelness: until the moment in front of the unblinking eye, when he put his front hooves together. Took one long last breath. Aimed. Dived.

The exception may prove the rule, but what proves the exception? "It is not that such things are possible," the camel thinks, smiling. "But such things are possible for *me*."

Kingdom of Heaven

"Ooh, make it a sad story," the children said. "Make it a sad, sad story." They were sitting on the fence in the late February sunlight. They had all been changed into birds.

"Once there was a needle," I began, "and every time it pierced the lips . . ."

"Oh," cried the children, "we know about *that* kind of sorrow. Tell us about the other."

I must admit that I was reluctant to continue. The sunlight in the yard was so poignant after a day of rain. I could hear their little claws skittering along the fence.

"All right," I said. "Once there was a needle, and every time it pierced the eyes . . ." □

Stephen Mitchell's books include The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke *(Random House, 1982),* Rilke's The Sonnets to Orpheus *(Simon and Schuster, 1985),* The Book of Job *(North Point, 1987), and the* Tao Te Ching *(Harper & Row, 1988). The parables printed here are selected from* Parables and Portraits, *to be published by Harper & Row in 1990.*

The Malaise of Jewish Education

Isa Aron

Nowhere has the combined power of emancipation and Enlightenment been felt more keenly than in the American Jewish community. In America the fabric of Jewish life, so tightly woven in premodern times, has become unraveled and frayed. While Judaism has remained an all-encompassing way of life for a small minority of American Jews, for most it has rather quickly been reduced to the status of a leisure-time activity, a separate compartment of a largely secular lifestyle.

American Jews, on the whole, engage in relatively few activities that are specifically Jewish: donations to the Jewish Welfare Fund, twice-yearly synagogue attendance, celebration of a few holidays and life-cycle events, and largely unexamined emotions stirred by the Holocaust and the State of Israel constitute the Jewishness of three-quarters of the American Jewish community.

One additional item belongs on this list of residual Jewish activities—attending, or sending one's children to, a Jewish supplementary school. Sociologists estimate that 80 percent of American Jews have, at one point in their childhood, been exposed to some form of Jewish schooling; for the vast majority of them, this means Sunday or Hebrew school. For many American Jews the number of hours spent in supplementary school as children may equal or exceed the number of hours they will spend on all other Jewish activities as adults.

One of the great anomalies of American Jewish life, therefore, is the lack of attention paid to the Jewish supplementary school. Clearly, supplementary schools could play a critical role in forming the identity of American Jews, but thus far no one—parents, former students, or leaders in the Jewish community—has recognized the importance of these schools. Though some schools do serve as focal points for rich Jewish lives, most have trouble or, at best, are irrelevant. Many are plagued by low attendance, discipline problems, and an unclear purpose. For at least half of the students, their time spent in "religious school" is simply part of the price of having a bar or bat mitzvah; predictably, this half drops out shortly after this rite of passage.

Teachers in supplementary schools, more than any other Jewish adults, have the opportunity to represent the Jewish tradition to students in an appealing and accessible way. But good teachers are in short supply, which is not surprising, given their low pay and status. The education directors of supplementary schools, while generally better paid, are still low on the totem pole of Jewish professionals. For all that federations and other Jewish organizations pay lip service to Jewish education (through ads and campaign slogans), they have failed, by and large, to face squarely the needs and problems of the Jewish supplementary school.

Since the "modernization" of Jewish education (begun in the early decades of the twentieth century by Samson Benderly and others), Jewish supplementary schools have modeled themselves after public schools: children are divided, according to age or ability, into separate classes. Each class is assigned a teacher, who is responsible for teaching a particular subject, using a textbook, work sheets, or other materials. This setting is so familiar to us that schooling is often used as a synonym for education. Education is a much broader concept, however, which encompasses a variety of ways in which the adult population transmits its traditions to its youth. The type of education exemplified by the public schools is more appropriately termed "instruction," which is defined in dictionaries as the act of furnishing someone with knowledge, usually by means of a systematic method.

To equate education with instruction is to assume that knowledge, skills, and even attitudes and practices are objects that can be handed down from one person to another. It is to assume, further, that these objects can be collected, codified, segmented, and packaged in textbooks, filmstrips, or other learning materials. The school, according to this view, is a "delivery system," in which teachers, administrators, and a variety of specialists work together to transmit these objects to their students as efficiently as possible.

An alternative paradigm has been suggested by John Westerhoff in his *Will Our Children Have Faith?* (Seabury Press, 1976)—the paradigm of "enculturation." This paradigm takes as its model the situation of a young child, or a visitor to a foreign country, as he or she

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absorbs a new language, new customs and values, and large amounts of information. The newcomer's learning is not planned or measured; there is no "proper" order by which to learn, and no way of segmenting into measured portions the knowledge he or she acquires. Learning in such a situation is both more holistic and more serendipitous; it is also more enduring.

Successful instruction is usually founded on a base of successful enculturation, which provides the student with both the motivation to learn and opportunities to consolidate that learning. In secular schools, for example, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations come into play. In all but the most impoverished and illiterate of environments, basic skills such as reading and mathematics are valued and utilized by nearly everyone—a powerful intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, achievement in secular education is linked, at least partially, to entry into high-status occupations—hence the extrinsic motivation. These motivating factors create an atmosphere in which instruction is viable. By contrast, students who do not come to school already motivated in these ways are often called "culturally deprived."

The long-term effects of instruction are also dependent upon enculturation. How much algebra, geometry, or trigonometry do most people remember? What of the foreign languages that students study for four years but have no opportunity to use? Knowledge, skills, and even values and attitudes will only remain in an individual's active memory when that person's culture affords him or her the opportunity to exercise them.

The Jewish child in a supplementary Jewish school is not unlike the "culturally deprived" child in a public school. The curricula of most supplementary schools focus primarily on Hebrew, Bible, holiday celebrations, and synagogue skills. But a recent study conducted by the New York Board of Jewish Education found that less than 20 percent of the parents of supplementary school students attend synagogue regularly—that is, other than on the High Holidays. In only 16 percent of the students' homes are Shabbat candles lit every week; in 45 percent of the homes someone lights Shabbat candles "occasionally." Though there are no statistics to bear out this hunch, it would be safe to assume that few American Jews speak Hebrew or read the Bible very often.

In his 1979 dissertation "Ethnic Survival in America," an ethnographic study of a Conservative supplementary school, David Schoem recounts the following scene:

> In what was a typical classroom lesson, a seventh grade teacher asked the students to describe in what ways the Sabbath differed from other days of the week. In response to a student's answer that "on the Sabbath we pray," one teacher said, "But you pray every day." In this case not only was the teacher's response completely detached from reality, but the student who answered was also speaking in theoretical terms. Many of the students in the class had not been to a prayer service on the Sabbath for up to six months or more. When the teacher, who managed a restaurant on Friday evenings, then began to speak about "why don't we work on the Sabbath," students giggled incredulously because of the question's absurdity. Clearly, this lesson that was being discussed in first person terms was, in the students' minds, about a people that was far removed from their own reality.

Instruction that is not founded upon enculturation seems doomed to failure. When information is transmitted in the absence of its rich cultural context, actions and concepts that once were integral to the culture lose their significance. Children go through the motions of attending religious school and becoming bar or bat mitzvah, but they see no meaning or purpose in these actions and drop out of supplementary school shortly thereafter.

Why do schools persist in seeing their mission as primarily one of instruction? One reason is that instruction is far easier to define, plan, monitor, and evaluate than enculturation. In instruction, the goals are relatively simple, such as knowing a piece of information or achieving a certain level of proficiency. Enculturation, by contrast, requires a different sort of planning and evaluation. The goal of making students feel more Jewishly committed or more religiously observant eludes easy definition and simple assessment.

A second reason schools adhere to the instructional paradigm is that their leaders look to public schools as their primary educational model. Intent on creating "real" schools, they attempt to replicate the mode of organization currently in vogue in secular schools.

Enculturation, however, must be the priority of the supplementary school, for the simple reason that it is a prerequisite for valuing and retaining the contents of instruction. Instruction and enculturation are not incompatible goals; in the best of all worlds one would try to pursue both. But given time constraints, a supplementary school may have to give one educational approach priority over the other. In making this choice, supplementary schools must never lose sight of the fact that instruction without enculturation is hollow and superficial.

The supplementary school wishing to adopt enculturation as its primary goal will find many of its current institutional arrangements ill-suited for that purpose.

The typical supplementary school follows the public school in grouping children by age and assigning each age group to an individual teacher. It aspires to a sequential, segmented curriculum, even if it does not actually adhere to one. Bureaus of Jewish Education and other agencies that service these schools concern themselves with licensing, accountability, and other bureaucratic details of the instructional paradigm. When enculturation, rather than instruction, is the primary goal, however, all these features may be counterproductive. Why should students be segregated by age? Why should they have only one teacher at a time? Are the teacher's qualifications on paper his or her most important characteristic?

I believe that the difficult can be accomplished, for I have seen supplementary schools that seem to be succeeding at both enculturating and instructing. And certain guiding principles unite these schools.

First, the educators running them have devoted considerable energy to analyzing and articulating the culture into which they wish to bring their students. This is rarely an easy task, and always controversial. It means that a school must clarify which beliefs and practices it will deliberately foster, which it will tolerate, and which it will consider beyond the range of acceptability. It further requires that the school make sure that its highest values are embedded in the structure of the school itself, at every level. For example, if the school values learning, are opportunities for learning available to teachers, secretaries, and parents, as well as to the rabbi and administration? Is the value of *tzedakah* (justice, or charity) manifest not only in the collection of money, but in the relationships among the people who work and study at the institution?

A second characteristic of schools whose goal is enculturation is their concern with the authenticity of the subject matter. The instructional paradigm tends to favor textbooks, workbooks, and other learning materials that simplify and segment the subject matter. Enculturation, on the other hand, depends upon authentic encounters with a culture in all its richness and complexity. Studying *about* the Torah is not the same as studying Torah; learning prayers is not the same as praying. Thinking about how to transmit a tradition authentically to students for whom Judaism is an alien culture is a challenge indeed. In the supplementary school setting, adherence to the principle of enculturation probably requires a willingness to forgo breadth in favor of depth. It also requires hiring teachers who feel authentically connected to the material (for example, teachers who regularly pray instead of merely knowing how to pray). This may seem like an impossible dream. Yet I have seen Torah and Talmud taught in English to novices, and I have participated in services in which a small number of prayers were *davened* (prayed) with great *kavana* (devotion) in both Hebrew and English.

A third guiding principle concerns general criteria for teacher selection. In a perfect world each school community would have teachers who were knowledgeable in Judaica, highly skilled in pedagogy, and thus deserving of certification from the National Board of License. But in this imperfect world we must often compromise on one or more of these desiderata. Schools that see their goal as instruction tend to compromise on community membership; they hire the most qualified teacher they can find, even someone who would never identify with the synagogue community. If, on the other hand, the goal of enculturation is taken seriously, enthusiastic participation in the synagogue community ought to be the highest priority. There exist today a number of outstanding examples of synagogue schools that have recruited active community members and trained them as teachers.

A fourth point to keep in mind is that schools that succeed at enculturation typically pay close attention to the informal dimension of their activities. Planned activities, such as retreats and outings, as well as unplanned ones, such as the interaction between students and teachers during recess, are viewed not as supplementary enrichment, but as essential. For example, in one school I observed, a teacher and a student had an ongoing game of chess during class breaks. Chess is certainly not part of the school's formal curriculum, but this informal activity, valued by both student and teacher, contributed much to the warm and collegial atmosphere of the class and to the school's genuine sense of community.

A fifth and final principle of enculturation is that schools must find ways to reach parents as well as children. Much has been written in the past decade about the importance of family education in the Jewish supplementary school. I would only add that if enculturation is the goal, parents must be active in and integral to the school; they must be valued for their contribution as decision makers and shouldn't be conceived of merely as assistants.

Clearly many issues and questions remain: Does the typical synagogue have a sufficient number of adult members whose own cultural background is rich enough to make them contributors to this process? If not, how can adult members themselves become enculturated? How will potential agents of enculturation be identified, prepared, and deployed? What will motivate them to give of their time? What types of professionals are required to orchestrate such a process? What organizational structures will best facilitate it? Those who are convinced of the importance of enculturation will, I hope, take up these questions as their next step. □

The Two Banks of Jerusalem

Roger Friedland and Richard Hecht

Only a few hundred meters separate two Jerusalem banks. Located near the center of Mea She'arim, the residential epicenter of the ultra-Orthodox community of Jerusalem, both naturally are Jewish establishments. But the services they offer differ markedly.

The first has a name—Bank Discount. Its branch office, located in a modern office building, is part of a multinational operation linked to the major capital flows that finance investment in Israel. The second has no name, and its location in an old stone building can be found only by word of mouth. Both, however, do a brisk business.

At the first bank, the lines move slowly as the tellers fill out their forms by hand in triplicate; at the second, the lines move at a rapid clip—more like buying movie tickets than making financial transactions. The exchange rate is also superior at the second bank. At the first bank, you need a passport to make currency exchanges; at the second, no identification is required. At the first bank, clearing a personal check from abroad can take a month. At the second, a foreign check can be cashed immediately; only a local telephone number may be requested. At the first bank, the tellers won't even look at two-party checks; at the second, such checks pose no difficulties.

By all indications, services at the second, nameless bank are superior to the first.

But there is one other service we neglected to mention. Banks like these also launder money for the Palestine Liberation Organization. For a percentage—some say ten, others fifteen—these Orthodox Jewish bankers take dollar deposits from the PLO and their bankers in Zürich and Geneva, and disperse them through Jerusalem.

Black Markets

These pious ultra-Orthodox Jews call themselves *haredim*, literally "those who fear God's wrath." They are the descendants of the old Yishuv, the pre-Zionist Jews who came to live in the holy cities of the Land of Israel—Jerusalem, Safed, and Hebron—out of sacred obligation rather than patriotic duty. They do not simply put the demands of the Torah above the Jewish state; they see the secular nationalist state as blasphemous, with potentially disastrous consequences for the Jewish people. Over the decades they have resisted incorporation into the Israeli body politic in every way possible.

The *haredim* are fragmented among the followers of rival rabbis and rebbes. Many of these communities run their own unofficial, private banks, which perform services for their members and allow them to go about their business with a minimum of contact with Zionist institutions. In one of these small offices a door opened for a few seconds, and we saw what appeared to be at least a quarter of a million dollars stacked on a table in the back room. These separate retail operations, according to one investigative reporter, are connected to a network of major black-market money dealers who control the larger flow of currencies brought in and out of Israel by runners.

The several *haredi* communities of Mea She'arim and its surrounding neighborhoods constitute a hermetically sealed social world each with its own schools, system of transport, system of housing finance, food supplies, and newspapers. When their natural hostility to the profane Zionist world that surrounds them is combined with each subcommunity's distinctive dress, speech, and even gait, it makes police surveillance, let alone penetration, extraordinarily difficult. Indeed it has proved considerably easier for the Israeli police and military to infiltrate Palestinian terror networks than to find informants among the insular communities of the *haredim*. Mea She'arim has thus long provided a natural habitat in which to conduct black-market operations in merchandise and currency, to import and export without paying taxes, to circumvent the complex regulations of a slow Israeli state bureaucracy.

Not all *haredi* community financial institutions launder money for the PLO. This particular bank, its "tellers" wearing their characteristic white knitted *kippot*, is run by members of the Hungarian Hasidic community, which is centered around their rebbe, the Reb Arieleh. Reb Arieleh's community has been one of those most hostile to Zionism, seeing in it a profane preemption of the messianic function. God, not people, they believe, must return Jewish sovereignty to Jerusalem.

This is a community at war with the world around it, and particularly with the authority of the State of Israel.

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Young members of anti-Zionist *haredi* communities like these have repeatedly defaced the graves of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, the founder of contemporary Hebrew, and of Theodor Herzl, the intellectual father, and David Ben-Gurion, the political father, of the Jewish state. Sometimes even swastikas have been sprayed on the stone slabs marking these sacred nationalist graves. In these communities, Yiddish is the language of daily life. Hebrew is reserved strictly for prayer and study. The members of this community have been militant participants in the struggle to protect the sanctity of Jerusalem from the contemporary Zionist "Hellenizers" who have brought mixed-sex swimming pools, football stadiums, cinema on Shabbat, bathing-suit advertisements on bus shelters, and the archaeological disturbance of ancient Jewish graves.

In *haredi* communities like these, there is no love lost for the Zionist state. Moreover, the *haredim* of this community are hostile to the ways in which religious parties like Agudat Yisrael, Shas, and now Degel ha Torah have enticed their non-Zionist Orthodox brethren through the material blandishments of the Israeli state which funds the ever-growing number of young men who study Talmud rather than serve in the Israeli army. More and more, these non-Zionist Orthodox Jews are being drawn into the electoral politics of the Zionist city and state because they want to get their hands, as one *haredi* contemptuously put it, "on the big cake." It is not surprising that an enterprise run by one of the bastions of the Eda Haredit, the grouping of *haredim* that, unlike the Agudat Yisrael and its offshoots, has refused to have anything to do with Israel, is not averse, if the price is right, to helping the PLO funnel money to support the *intifada*.

A highly placed military source confirmed that this community and others like it were involved in laundering PLO money. "Money has a very interesting nature," the Israeli officer told us. "It doesn't have any smell, nor any color." While the *haredim* who play this role don't have a strong political aversion to it, they are not politically motivated to do it either. "All these people are involved," the Israeli officer continued, "because they want to make money. They don't care about Palestinians. If you come to them, or Muhammad from Nablus comes to them, they give you the same price."

Why don't the Israelis shut operations like these down? Several years ago, there *was* a raid on a private *haredi* bank. The banker's wife ran to the window with thousands of dollars in bills, which she threw down to the street below. *Haredi* women scrambled to pick up the notes and scurry home with them, while their men blocked the police's way below. But such raids are unusual. Although a runner has been arrested here or there, not one of the major *haredi* financial operations has ever been shut down. The fact is that the black market for currency performs an important function in the Israeli economy. The Israelis concede that they cannot tamper selectively with this market without endangering the entire flow of *haredi* cash into the country. This flow of "innocent" money, as they call it, is critically important to a stagnant economy whose foreign currency reserves are often dangerously low.

The Divided Capital

After more than a year of the Palestinian *intifada*, Jerusalem is a city starkly divided between Jewish and Arab territories. The myth of a united city has been shattered by regular stoning and firebombing of Israeli buses traveling between the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus and the Israeli downtown. Unlike the previous city election in 1983, this year only a few thousand Palestinians dared to vote, and most who did so came to the polls after dark. Tour buses no longer visit the site where King David first unified the twelve tribes of Israel because it lies in Silwan, a Palestinian neighborhood where disturbances are routine. Israelis used to swarm through the twisted alleyways of the Old City looking for better *hummus* and Palestinian needlework. Now, with the daily afternoon strikes, the hostile stares and the stabbings, the Old City, even its Jewish Quarter, is relatively empty. Traffic is so light that the city has stopped charging money to park in the huge lots adjoining the Jaffa Gate. For most Israelis, Jerusalem has become what it was before 1967—the end of the line.

But the East European black-coated Jewish *haredi* money changers on the western side of the city and their more typically western-suited Palestinian counterparts on the east, who have cooperated for a very long time, have not broken off their relationship. One can still hear a *haredi* money changer having a phone conversation in fluent Arabic. In fact, the *intifada* has intensified this long-standing cooperative relationship.

For several decades, Israelis' demand for dollars has tended to be greater than the supply, as indicated by the greater number of shekels one could get in exchange for dollars from money changers than from the large institutional Israeli banks. On the western side of the city, the primary market was the exchange of Israeli shekels for dollars that came into the city from the tourist trade. Israelis bought dollars as a hedge against inflation and the recurrent devaluation of their currency, and also because the dollar was the currency of choice for capital flight. On the eastern side, the Palestinian money changers exchanged Jordanian dinars for American dollars and Israeli shekels. Many Palestinians needed shekels to do business with the Israelis, and they also wanted dollars as a way to get their capital out

to European, as opposed to Jordanian, banks. The Jews of Jerusalem had more shekels than they wanted while the Arabs had too few. Because of the large flow of dollars that made its way into Amman from the Gulf oil economies, the dollar was relatively cheap in Jordan. The Arabs of Jerusalem had more dollars coming over the bridges to Jerusalem than they knew what to do with, while the Israelis had too few. Therefore, cooperation between *haredi* and Palestinian money changers was only natural.

There was one problem, however: those darn dinars. The Jews were uninterested in exchanging their shekels or their dollars for Jordanian dinars, even though at that time the dinar was a relatively stable and strong currency. The Palestinian money changers of Jerusalem needed to convert their Jordanian dinars into dollars in order to be able to trade with their Israeli counterparts and work the shekel trade that their local customers demanded. While Palestinian conversion of dinars into dollars took place in Amman, the *haredi* bankers also helped. The need for that help grew over time. In the early 1980s the Gulf oil economies faltered and the Jordanians began to make it more difficult for Palestinians in the West Bank to work abroad and thereby bring monies back over the bridges that cross the Jordan River. The flow of dollars to the Palestinian money changers in Jerusalem began to slow.

The Economics of the *Intifada*

But in the year since the *intifada* broke in December 1987, the shortage of dollars, and of money generally, has reached crisis proportions on the Palestinian side. The flow of dollars into the Palestinian economy of the West Bank and then into Jerusalem has been hit from three sides: from Jordan, from the West Bank, and from Israel.

The *intifada* caught Jordan's King Hussein by surprise. Initially, some of the king's supporters in Jerusalem went privately to the Israelis to complain that insufficient force was being used to put down a revolt that threatened Jordanian influence as much as it threatened the Israelis. But after nine months of nationalist uprising, Hussein formally renounced his claims to the West Bank, over which Jordan had long asserted its political authority, even though it had assured its Arab brothers that it held the West Bank as a "trustee." Jordan stopped paying the salaries of over twenty thousand of its West Bank employees. More important, it radically reduced the volume of West Bank Palestinian agricultural produce allowed across the bridges, which had fed the Jordanian population or had been shipped to other Arab markets. As more and more pro-Hashemite figures slipped into the shadows or allied themselves with the unified leadership of the *intifada,* Hussein also stopped paying patronage designed to maintain his own network of clients, supporters, and informants. These moves all reduced the movement of dinars and dollars into the West Bank.

Hussein moved for political reasons—to pressure the PLO to provide responsible leadership, to show the West Bank Palestinians and the PLO that Jordan would have to be a player in any eventual negotiations, and to prevent the upsurge of domestic Palestinian nationalism from engulfing his own predominantly Palestinian state. Demonstrations in Jordan in support of the *intifada* were ruthlessly suppressed. Over and over again, Hussein's troops swept through Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, picking them clean of stones. West Bank Palestinian nationalists now frequently receive rougher handling on the Jordanian side of the bridges than they do on the Israeli side. Hussein also moved for fear that in its desperation the Israeli right might topple the Hashemite monarchy and impose its own Palestinian solution on Jordan, itself a British colonial construction awarded to Hussein's grandfather for his loyalty to the British during World War I.

But the aging Hashemite monarch did not properly anticipate the economic whirlwind his political maneuver would bring in its wake. Jordan is no longer a "frontline" state and is thus no longer deemed eligible for the millions of dollars in Arab, particularly Saudi Arabian, aid it previously enjoyed. The PLO countered Hussein's gambit by taking its own enormous holdings out of Jordanian banks. The value of the Jordanian dinar plummeted to nearly one-half its former value in less than a year, again reducing the flow of dollars into the West Bank. As the dinar depreciated, Hussein forced the predominantly Palestinian money changers in Amman, who are tightly connected to their confreres in Jerusalem, to close down. That also cut into the dinar–dollar flow across the Jordan. Uncertain about the value of the dinar and the security of assets held in Jordan, West Bank Palestinians, who are now no longer Jordanian citizens, are willing to pay a heavy premium to get their hands on dollars. But those dollars no longer come across the Jordan River.

If this weren't pressure enough, the Palestinian uprising has intentionally made things worse. The *intifada* is designed to make Israel pay dearly for the occupation, to force Israelis to learn to live without the West Bank and Gaza, and to persuade the Palestinians to live independently of the Israeli economy. It is a tall order in which the uprisers have only partially succeeded. Ever since the PLO was founded, local political activists have contemplated the possibility of getting Palestinians to stop working for Israeli employers. But neither Israel, Jordan, nor the PLO had any interest in the buildup of

Palestinian-owned enterprises—which could provide domestically controlled capital investment and employment—because of the political autonomy it might engender. Without such autonomous Palestinian enterprises, Israel could use the West Bank as a pool of cheap labor and a captive labor market, whose rapidly rising educational levels and limited employment opportunities would propel a continuous stream of emigration across the bridges. And proud Palestinian nationalists watched as their cousins literally built even the roads and the settlements that honeycombed the lands they hoped might one day constitute the core of a Palestinian state.

The *intifada* was intended at last to break the flow of Palestinian labor to Israeli employers. The roadblocks marking off "liberated" zones were designed just as much to keep the Palestinian workers in as the Israeli troops out. But Palestinian workers continued to migrate large distances to work in Israel. If the *intifada* could not control the movement of Palestinian workers in space, it managed to do so in time. Strike days were and are very successful. Palestinian buses, trucks, and taxis do not move; Palestinian shops—except for pharmacies, physicians' offices, newspaper stands, and bakeries—are everywhere shut; and the flow of Palestinian workers to Israel is reduced to a trickle. The frequency and duration of strikes have gradually increased. Israeli distributors of car parts and washing machines are afraid to vend their wares in what they now consider "Indian" territory. And in February, with the issuing of leaflet #35 by the unified Palestinian leadership, the Palestinians took yet another step toward disengagement. Palestinian shopkeepers had one month to remove all Israeli products from their shops or face the threat of having their shops gutted. All of this has reduced the flow of shekels into the West Bank economy, already battered by its own restricted schedule of daily afternoon strikes. It is difficult to be very productive if you work only in the morning.

Now add the Israeli response, and you have the makings of a veritable cash crunch. The Israelis have repeatedly swept through the West Bank, impounding cash and tangible assets like television sets and automobiles. The Israelis have also radically restricted the flow of money from Jordan into the territories across the bridges. A limit of approximately $400 per family per trip has been imposed. The Israelis have also restricted the flow across Egyptian and Lebanese borders.

At the same time, the PLO's need to move money into the West Bank has steadily become more critical since the War in Lebanon. The PLO is not just a nationalist movement whose members wait patiently for the liberation of Palestine; it is also a fabulously wealthy multinational corporation with holdings that stretch around the world. Ironically, it was Ariel Sharon's war in Lebanon, the very war designed to crush the PLO, that made the PLO the most important organizational force and hence paymaster in the West Bank. The PLO was twice pushed out of Lebanon, first from Beirut by Israel and then from Tripoli by Syria. The Arab states did nothing. Indeed, it was "those good Arabs, the Greeks," Mahdi Abdul-Hadi, a Palestinian intellectual, wryly told us, who provided the ships for the PLO evacuation from Beirut. The only effective opposition to Israeli policies in Lebanon came from the domestic population of Israel itself. There was one front-line left and one constituency loyal to Arafat: the Palestinians of the West Bank. Spearheaded by Khalil Wazir, otherwise known by his *nom de guerre,* Abu-Jihad, Arafat-led Fatah began to rebuild the grass-roots organization of the PLO on the West Bank. All kinds of community organizations and professional and labor associations were created. Once the *intifada* started, this network became its organizational mechanism. And it was in a desperate bid to stop the *intifada* that the Israelis assassinated Abu-Jihad in Tunis in April 1988. But it was of no use.

With such a strong Palestinian demand for dollars and such a shortfall of supply, the invisible hands of the money market have done their work. Palestinians from Jerusalem cannot smuggle in money because, when they come into Israel from abroad, they have their luggage taken apart piece by piece and are routinely strip searched. The Jewish money changers in Mea She'arim have naturally picked up the slack. As an Israeli reporter told us, "They can't close Lod, can they? And there's the weak link." For a price, the largest *haredi* money changers bring dollars into Israel for the Palestinians—for their Palestinian counterparts on the other side of the city, for cash-starved Palestinians who can't get money in across the bridges, and some—just some—for the networks of individuals and associations that form the organizational infrastructure of the *intifada.* Israel remains an open society where large amounts of capital can move across international borders almost instantaneously. International organizations, friendly nations, and sympathetic foreigners and Israelis—Jew and Arab alike—have picked up some of the slack out of moral and political concern. But for some of the *haredim,* bringing dollars from Switzerland for PLO front-groups is just the logical extension of a business relationship that has long been in the making. □

The Uses of Laughter

Enid Dame

1.
The army is closing vegetable markets.
Chickens scatter. A boy bites a sandwich.
It looks like falafel and pita bread.
A soldier knocks it
out of his hand
as if it were dangerous.

They are kicking in doors, they are tearing
up olive trees.
That man was struck down in front of his family.
That girl was shot dead by her bodyguard.
Meanwhile, the children throw stones.

Terrible things are done in our name—
my name, and yours, which means "heart"
in their language.
Hearts can be dangerous things
for boys in New York to carry
through schoolyards and streets. But you learned
how to joke your way out of violence,
how to make people laugh
with words aimed precisely as spitballs.

This is an ancient skill
our tribe perfected
in dark European ghettoes.
We were
a nation of stand-up comics,
lawyers, negotiators,
people who said words mattered.

Now we're like everyone else
what do we do with history?
How do we learn to forget?
Smash all our windows and mirrors?
Seal off the door to the cellar
where memories scrabble like mice,
where words knit like bones?

2.
What does my enemy look like?
Is he that child
hurling rocks on the Evening News?
Is she that child throwing taunts
at the back of our demonstration?
We scream, "Peace now!" They scream, "Not one inch!"
I inch back to look in her face.
It is a mirror. Behind barricades,
the daughter I chose not to have
calls me traitor.

3.
On the way home
you and I stop to buy vegetables.
Our part of Brooklyn's called Little Odessa
after your grandfather's hometown.
He wore your name, played the fiddle,
was jumped by a gang of children.
They killed him for being himself—
a Jew in the wrong place.

Now we finger onions and yellow squash.
I say, "Let's boycott Israeli tomatoes."
You say, "The wrong strategy!
Better tomatoes than bullets
or, for that matter, stones."

And I picture children heaving tomatoes
at soldiers who aim water pistols
filled with tomato juice.
The floors of the world grow slick
and messy. The air turns sodden.
At some point, everyone laughs.

It's a scene from an old-time movie
the kind you played hookey to watch
when you were a funny kid
in a less dangerous time
learning the uses of laughter.

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Slouching Toward Pressology

Carlin Romano

Hemingway famously defined courage as "grace under pressure." Change the definition to "*lack* of grace under pressure" and you get a rough idea of what substitutes for the C-word among press critics. Like most members of well-educated professional groups, the working Lieblings face constant incentives to temper their self-critical thoughts, to go along for the ride, to wink at their hypocritical peers. The "Isn't it outrageous?" indignation of past giants, such as George Seldes, gets replaced by the "Isn't it something?" complacency of the boys and girls on the bus.

Among contemporary writers on the American press, no analysts so completely avoid the inbred media solidarity of most journalistic press critics as do Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman. In *The Political Economy of Human Rights* (1979), and in many books authored separately, both thinkers force business-as-usual reporters and readers to confront the puffed-up, self-congratulatory posture of the press that turns so many ordinary Americans against it—courageous watchdog of bad government, fair-minded champion of the public weal, quotidian conscience of America.

Both men predictably suffer for their boldness. *Mother Jones* titled its recent profile of Chomsky "Noam is an Island"; the article, written by Jay Parini, detailed, with only slight exaggeration, how "his work is no longer reviewed—as it once was—in the mainstream press," how the *New York Review of Books*, once his largest forum, "quietly dropped him from its list of contributors" in the midseventies. For defending the freedom of expression of Robert Faurisson, the French writer who claimed Nazi gas chambers didn't exist, Chomsky, who teaches at MIT, lost many die-hard supporters. Noting this decline of support, the mainstream press increasingly feels comfortable labeling him a kook: Glenn Frankel, Jerusalem correspondent of the *Washington Post*, and a generally sober-minded reporter, recently described a Chomsky essay on the Middle East as a "breathlessly deranged 51-page diatribe." Meanwhile, Herman, while teaching (like Chomsky) in one of the citadels of American corporate capitalism—the Wharton School—exerts little pedagogic influence on his institution or professional colleagues.

Yet a unique feature of their public reputation remains the chill Chomsky and Herman get from fellow leftists. Parini, a sympathizer and admirer, casually refers to Chomsky as a "sober fanatic." Todd Gitlin, another sympathizer, likens Chomsky's books on politics and the press to "a crazy patchwork quilt of quotations from journals and newspapers.... He never goes directly to the source."

Past readers of Chomsky/Herman know the style and tone. One imagines the work spewing forth from a disciplined, yet impassioned graduate student, sitting in the midst of a vast library, the spools of *Times* microfilm piled high on the carrel shelves. The student enters citations deftly, pushes the offending coverage into impressive bulldozer piles, adds an intermittent sarcastic remark, but largely keeps to clerkish packaging of the printed material. The eeriness of the style grows from the absence of other voices—let alone the din of the newsroom—that can mix with or respond to the Chomsky/Herman loudspeaker. This clip-job approach to press criticism—virtually total reliance on library material, and a refusal to quote journalists on why they report what they do—contributes to the mainstream dismissal of Chomsky's and Herman's books as puritanical screeds. Newspaper people hear an endless drum solo—"Unfairness: The Cambridge Concert"—and turn elsewhere.

Chomsky tends to respond, as Parini notes, "that he is not a journalist. He is a critic of U.S. foreign policy, and as such he goes to the proper sources: newspapers, National Security Council documents, and other historical records." Chomsky believes that "pressology"—the study of journalism as a full-blown social institution—can be a social science about reportage that doesn't have to *report*—it can merely *cite*. One reaction by establishment book review media to this methodology has been to marginalize Chomsky and Herman. The old tactic called for muffling them with the sounds of silence. The new one, intended to avoid the charge of blacklisting, relegates them to inside back pages and cramped space, where a reviewer's countercitation can discredit them. Neither solution acknowledges their importance.

The Chomsky/Herman frame of mind—the sheer

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nerve to attempt systematic analysis and to articulate unpopular thought with regard to the press—is more precious than the journalism junkie's widely valued devotion to facts and anecdotes, offering the best soul around which to build a living discipline. Press critics too often mirror their subjects' reluctance to analyze rather than collect—they ignore the structures of power that transcend the running news story, the terrorist incident, and the diplomatic initiative of the moment. Chomsky and Herman, to their credit, never lose sight of the ideologies implied in the script.

Yet the Chomsky/Herman methodology—selectivity in choice of data, dogmatism about basic principles, contempt for the historical conditions of social practices, and Frankfurt School pessimism about improving the media—is like a pistol trained constantly on its proponents' feet. Those who share the authors' moral aims, but part company on their methods, need to do more than wonder aloud about why the cart has such a bad methodological horse in front of it. They need to put the nag to sleep.

And a nag it is, disguised as a thoroughbred named "Spectacular Bid." Much as he denies the connection, Chomsky (whose influence must be seen as the operative one here, over Herman's) approaches journalism as he approached language—as a phenomenon with a core of universal and innate processes unaffected by day-to-day practice. At the same time—perhaps because the amorphous state of pressology differs profoundly from the regimentation of linguistics when he produced his groundbreaking work—Chomsky has coasted on the matters that make or break an intellectual discipline: assumptions and first principles about concepts (for example, the notion of propaganda, or the role of the press in the state), and messy facts on the ground. The trick for sympathizers is to get Chomsky and Herman into the press box and out of the microfilm room. Other recent books in the area, such as Mark Hertsgaard's *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency* (1988), a draw-the-lines-between-the-interviews attack on press obeisance to the perceived Great Communicator, and Mitchell Stephens's syncretic *A History of News* (1988), can help push both authors past clip-file limitations. But first the weakness of the Chomsky/Herman manufacturing process, and of its raw materials, needs setting out.

In keeping with their past media analysis, Chomsky and Herman argue in *Manufacturing Consent* (1988) that U.S. mass media conform to a propaganda model whose "societal purpose" is "to inculcate and defend the economic, social and political agenda of privileged groups that dominate the domestic society and the state. The media serve this purpose in many ways: through the selection of topics, distribution of concerns, framing of issues, filtering of information, emphasis and tone." Rejecting the "standard conception of the media as cantankerous, obstinate and ubiquitous in their search for truth and their independence of authority," Chomsky/Herman see them rather as "effective and powerful ideological institutions that carry out a system-supportive propaganda function by reliance on market forces, internalized assumptions, and self-censorship, and without significant overt coercion." They concede that the U.S. media "do not function in the manner of the propaganda system of a totalitarian state. Rather, they permit—indeed, encourage—spirited debate, criticism and dissent, as long as these remain faithfully within the system of presuppositions and principles that constitute an elite consensus, a system so powerful as to be internalized largely without awareness."

In chapters titled "Worthy and Unworthy Victims," "Legitimizing Versus Meaningless Third-World Elections: El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua," "The KGB-Bulgarian Plot to Kill the Pope: Free Market Disinformation as 'News,'" and "The Indochina Wars in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia," *Manufacturing Consent* seeks to prove these overarching theses by examining major media coverage. Briefly, the book argues that the propaganda system dictates weak coverage of victims of U.S. client states but strong play for victims of U.S. enemies. Similarly, the press criteria for successful democratic elections in client states are less stringent than those for enemy states, such as Nicaragua; and both sets of criteria tend to reflect State Department policy. The press's willingness to adopt Clare Sterling's analysis of John Paul II's near assassination as a leftist rather than rightist plot, despite numerous holes in her story, again demonstrates the press's subservience to capitalist and imperialist U.S. state policy. So does its selective account of the U.S. role in Indochina's war, despite its self-anointed role as "adversary" of the U.S. government in later years.

Many of Chomsky and Herman's views on particular patterns of coverage hit home: that characterizations of El Salvador's regime as centrist and reformist mislead, that the Sterling theory of the Bulgarian connection looks like Swiss cheese, that reporters depend too much on official statements, that media accounts of the Cambodian tragedy tend to excuse the U.S. for its massive bombing before the Khmer took over. Chomsky and Herman's account of how the U.S. media tend to shift the criteria of a "legitimizing" election according to the ideology of the country involved, convinces, and their insistence on focusing attention on U.S. policy toward Indonesia during the massacres of its people fills a disgraceful gap in press coverage. As press critics, they make sense. As press theorists, they founder. A sample

of their exegetical style shows why.

A key assumption of Chomsky/Herman interpretation is that American government officials and *Times* reporters rarely experience a decent impulse in formulating or reporting foreign policy. Because the authors always take blackhearted motives for granted, they avoid using qualifiers. Thus, words like "suppress" and "support" do yeoman duty.

Times reporter Joseph Treaster's story on the funeral of Archbishop Romero of El Salvador doesn't mention a mimeographed statement by twenty-two Church leaders on the mayhem that took place, so the account plainly "was suppressed by Treaster." Did Treaster get the mimeograph in time to use it? Did he question it? Did an editor cut a reference to it? Who knows? Not Chomsky and Herman. But that doesn't brake their accusation. Such assumptions pervade the whole book. Any piece of information that should have appeared in a paper but didn't was "suppressed." Any government with which the United States maintained relations, and to whom the United States provided aid of some form, is one the U.S. "supported." Sometimes Chomsky and Herman stretch. American officials "cheerfully supplied and supported" Indonesia's generals in their massacre of their countrymen in the 1960s. Did the authors put a smile meter on these officials? If they were reporters on a serious newspaper, Chomsky and Herman would get booted in a day.

A second rule of Chomsky/Herman hermeneutics is to ignore particular personal and journalistic data that might interfere with their desire for systemic, rather than individual, explanations. Consider the authors' long discussion of why the murder of Polish priest Jerzy Popielusko, a victim "worthy" of reportage on the Chomsky/Herman model, received extensive media attention while priests murdered in the U.S. "client states" (and thus "unworthy" victims) got little.

The authors complain that

> the *New York Times* featured the Popielusko case on its front page on ten different occasions. By contrast, the public would not have seen mention of the names of Father Augusto Ramirez Monastiero, father superior of the Franciscan order in Guatemala, murdered in November 1983, or Father Miguel Angel Montufar, a Guatemalan priest who disappeared in the same month that Popielusko was killed in Poland, or literally dozens of other religious murder victims in the American provinces.

They further complain that *Times* stories about murders of "unworthy victims" in Latin America, such as those about the American nuns, "lacked any details or dramatic quality that might evoke sympathetic emotion," while the paper reported the circumstances of Popielusko's death in grisly detail. Chomsky and Herman talk of "the suppression of the degrading and degraded use of the nuns' underwear."

For the authors, media submission to U.S. imperialism explains the coverage. It doesn't matter that the executive editor of the *Times,* Abe Rosenthal, was a former *Times* correspondent in Poland, won his Pulitzer there, and took great interest in the country. It doesn't matter that reporting panties stuffed into a corpse's mouth might not get past the taste hurdles of the *Times'* copy desk. It doesn't matter that, apart from the issue of political systems, Polish affairs have traditionally been considered of greater interest to the *Times'* readership than have Guatemalan affairs, because of ethnic and European cultural links.

According to Chomsky and Herman, the claim is sometimes made that unworthy victims are so treated by the U.S. mass media because they are killed at a great distance and are so unlike ourselves that they are easy to disregard. Poland, however, "is farther away than Central America, and its cultural and business links with the United States are not so great as those of Latin American countries in general."

Unfortunately, the judgments that Guatemala's traditional cultural links with the U.S. are greater than those of Poland, and that strict geographical distance determines a newspaper's coverage policy, play into the hands of Chomsky/Herman enemies by strengthening the sense that Chomsky and Herman are off-key academics, unfamiliar with newspapers except as readers, who don't understand journalistic decision making. At times, Chomsky and Herman seem almost eager to methodologically undermine themselves. For instance, while they insist on the irrelevance of individual intentions behind the stories they cite, they repeatedly and numbingly employ psychological vocabulary to fault their targets. *Time* is guilty of "amazing dishonesty and hypocrisy." The media are "deceitful," "cynical," "docile," "unthinking," "overcome by jingoist passion," accustomed to "servility" and "subservience," "loyal agents of terrorism." If the media are intentionally as corrupt and slavish as Chomsky and Herman claim, one wonders why the two of them bother with such moralistic criticism. Isn't it a waste of time to write books like these, just as it would be to rebuke Stalin for being a pill?

Here is where Chomsky's methodological pedigree suggests a surprising answer in the negative. It is not a waste of time if you view journalism the way Chomsky views language—and journalism. Recall the outlines of Chomskean linguistics. The "transformational grammar" revolution that Chomsky initiated in 1957 with *Syntactic Structures* came within the part of the field, already dominant in the U.S. profession at that time, called

autonomous linguistics—the part holding that language can be studied as if it were a purely physical phenomenon, apart from history or the beliefs and intentions of its speakers. Chomsky's breakthrough involved positing people's innate linguistic endowment—the existence of a "universal grammar" with deep and surface structures, of rules that generate possible sentences, and of transformational rules that govern the passage from one level to another. But all of this research took place within the part of language held to be isolable from present or historical practice. In Ferdinand de Saussure's classical distinction, language can be divided into *langue,* the structural relationships intrinsic to all language, and *parole,* the speech of particular speakers. In Saussure's famous musical analogy, *langue* constitutes the score, *parole* the performance. Chomsky introduced the terms "competence" and "performance" to express a related distinction, but the basic belief remained unshaken—that the crucial process of language, falling under competence, could be analyzed and understood largely apart from empirical instances of performance. In fact, much of Chomsky's early work in linguistics stood in opposition to the field's earlier obsession with collecting and concentrating on raw empirical data.

The fatal flaw of Chomsky's pressology is that he transfers his frame of mind from linguistics to the press: he isolates *langue* and competence (the press as universal institution, mechanically manufacturing its ideological product) from *parole* and performance (the countless living agents of the press, conditioned by their histories and values, making snap judgments and an occasional reflective decision). Just as the idiosyncrasies of a particular informant can't undermine Chomsky's linguistic theories under the rules of that game, so the rules of the propaganda model bar the explanations of a particular journalist for why he or she covered something. The drum solo that newspaper people hear as "unfairness" undoubtedly sounds different to the formalist behind the snare and cymbals. Chomsky probably hears something like Schönberg's logarithmic "Verklarte Nacht" arranged in the key of "My Way."

Moreover, Chomsky's tendency in linguistics to adopt rather than scrutinize fundamental philosophical concepts—however much he weds innovative techniques of transformational grammar to them—surfaces in his pressology as well. His absorption in linguistics of such notions as "innate idea" or "mind" is mirrored by the free ride he and Herman give to the charged buzzword, "propaganda."

The title of their book, *Manufacturing Consent,* plays off the well-known article by Edward Bernays, "The Engineering of Consent," which continued Bernays's lifelong attempt (largely successful) to establish public relations and calculated persuasion as a legitimate and valuable process of democracy. Indeed, the issue of propaganda's relation to democracy, posed repeatedly in this century by Bernays and Harold Lasswell, requires subtle assessment. As Peter Kenez points out in *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917–1929* (1985), "propaganda" dates back to 1622, when Pope Gregory XV established a College of Cardinals to supervise the spread of the

Chomsky approaches journalism as he approached language—as a phenomenon with a core of universal and innate processes unaffected by day-to-day practice.

faith overseas. Called the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* (Congregation for the Propagation of Faith), it simply delivered a point of view, albeit a powerful one.

Kenez writes that

> propaganda became a pejorative word only when man accepted as inevitable that human beings would disagree as to the proper organization of society. Under these circumstances, we suspect that our enemies achieve their successes by underhanded methods of persuasion, that is, by propaganda. An unqualified hostility to propaganda, nevertheless, is not warranted. . . . Propaganda is nothing more than the attempt to transmit social and political values in the hope of affecting people's thinking, emotions, and thereby behavior. The intent of influencing others is hardly objectionable. When we think we disapprove of propaganda, it usually turns out that we really object to its goals or methods.

He adds,

> We human beings have difficulty accepting that others see the world differently than we do and that they dismiss as nonsense the notions that seem eternal verities to us. Here the concept of propaganda helps us out. It is consoling to believe that others disagree with us because they have been misled by self-interested, sinister and wicked agitators.

Serious press criticism needs to address such a view, not evade it with an end run. But Chomsky and Herman demonize the word. To be sure, they're not alone in taking traditional political concepts for granted when they write about the press. For all the vaunted revival of political philosophy in the past twenty years, the role of the press

(Continued on p. 120)

This special focus on the Holocaust is a continuation of an ongoing discussion in Tikkun *about how we can think about one of the great outrages of human history. Although in other discussions in the magazine about the Holocaust we have focused more on the experience of survivors, this time we give primary focus to writers who experienced the event from a geographical and historical distance. We imagine that just as "being there" created painful familiarity with the Holocaust reality, as well as distortion in perception, distance likewise creates both clarity and distortion.*

From our perspective, the Holocaust raises three issues that will continue to be a focus for discussion in the magazine in the coming years:

1. *What made it possible for fascism and anti-Semitism to triumph in Europe to the extent that it did? We refuse to address this as an abstract question about "the triumph of evil"—such discussion usually leads to worried talk about human nature that takes everybody off the hook by making it appear that a concrete reality is really an inevitable product of the structure of the universe. It is more useful to assume that the German people, or many of those who ended up supporting fascism in Europe, were not 100 percent evil; and then to ask ourselves what, if anything, might have been done to speak to these people in ways that might have averted the growth of Nazi support.*

2. *What are the theological implications of the Holocaust? Although* Tikkun *has argued for a version of Judaism that sees God as having given human beings the possibility of moral insight (Torah) and the freedom to make their own errors and sin their own sins (even at the cost of allowing a Holocaust to take place), many other theological visions assume a greater involvement of God in history. But if God is involved, what made the Holocaust possible—or what changes in the conception of God are necessitated by it?*

3. *What are the political implications of the Holocaust for the Jewish people? On the one hand,* Tikkun *has argued that the complicity of the nations of the world in the Holocaust gives them a special obligation toward the Jewish people to insure that Jews have the same protection (based on land and national self-determination) that most other peoples have secured. On the other hand, we have rejected those people who try to use the Holocaust as special warrant to ignore the ethical standards of the Jewish tradition. Here a special sensitivity is necessary. We do not presume to sit in judgment of those people who survived the crematoria and gas chambers of Europe. But neither do we accept those who think that our suffering as a people provides legitimacy for our causing needless suffering to other peoples.*

Visiting the Burnt House

Chana Bloch

On a visit to Eastern Europe last summer, I was asked, "But what are you planning to visit in the area of Cracow?" I was about to say "Auschwitz" but caught myself: that would have sounded too accusing. The Polish woman who inquired had been very gracious to my husband and me. Why offend her? "The *museum* at Auschwitz," I said, soft-pedaling.

The word "museum" came from a pamphlet put out by Orbis, the Polish Tourist Information Center. Under "Half-Day Excursions from Cracow"—along with the Wieliczka salt mine, "a unique, world-famous monument," and Tyniec, "a picturesquely located Benedictine Abbey in Romanesque style"—Auschwitz is listed as a "State Museum of Martyrology." Auschwitz has come to be a synonym for hell, so the word "museum" sounds evasively euphemistic. "Martyrology" is worse than that: offensive, even dangerous, because it distorts the truth. A martyr is someone who chooses to suffer or die for his or her faith.

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The sign at the entrance to Auschwitz makes clear what the tourist pamphlet only hints at: "The State Museum in Oswiecim-Brzezinka is a monument to the martyrdom and struggle of the Polish and other nations. The ashes of about four million victims of Hitler's genocides are buried in the area of the former extermination camp." Only one people was singled out by the Nazis for total extermination, but at the museum in Auschwitz you wouldn't know that. The Jews are only one out of many—and just barely that. The sign at the entrance is in a dozen languages, but Yiddish and Hebrew are not among them. Thrift, thrift. Speakers of Hebrew usually know some other language, and there aren't enough speakers of Yiddish left to trouble a sign painter.

Auschwitz has become a tourist attraction. In the main building a steamy cafeteria serves schnitzel and boiled potatoes. There's a youth hostel; a post office; huge marble bathrooms, the most imposing I saw in Poland. There's a souvenir shop where you can buy little dolls in folk costume, toy pistols, sunglasses, triangular banners with the insignia of the town of Oswiecim. After the war, the city fathers had to sit down and ponder the question: how should a place like Auschwitz present itself to the world? I try to imagine their discussion. At Dachau a sign welcomes visitors to "the 1200-year-old artists' center with its castle and surrounding park offering a splendid view over the country." It's a problem, of course. If you lived in Dachau or Auschwitz, what sign would you hang out?

* * *

My husband, Ariel, was born in Germany. Since 1829 his family had owned a department store in the central square of Mosbach, a small town near Heidelberg. He was born in 1933, just after the boycott started. Some thugs painted "*Kauft nicht bei Juden!*" (Don't buy from Jews) on the store windows; Herr Pfister, a neighbor, helped scrape off the paint. Customers came after hours to the back door and continued buying; Frau Schäfer stood behind her lace curtains and wrote down their names. Ariel's parents left Mosbach for Palestine in 1937. They settled in Nahariya, north of Haifa, and became chicken farmers. Like many German Jews, they went on speaking German, the language of culture; in the evening, tired from a long day's work, they fell asleep in Hebrew class. If you asked them what is beautiful, they would answer: the snow-covered trees of the Schwarzwald. They lived like strangers in their new lives. But the cousins they left behind died in the camps.

Ariel told me stories about the good Germans who had helped his family. I had been brought up to believe that there were none. It took me a long time to understand the complexity of his family's attitude toward Germany: a pained disbelief shot through with love and yearning. Hate is simpler. "But what about Erwin?" he would say, naming a German Christian employee who had convinced his parents to leave. "What about Annele? Erna?" Goering is reported to have said, "Don't come and tell me, 'Herr Cohen or Herr Levy is such a nice man.' The whole race is rotten." Ariel was brought up by his parents not to say nasty things like that about the Germans.

Everywhere we traveled in Eastern Europe, the ghosts of the past accosted us. They fastened upon us with a prophetic intensity, spoke their piece, and often vanished without even saying their names.

Yet his parents, like many European Jews, half-believed what the Nazis had to say about them: "All they know is buying and selling"; and "If a Jew has an Iron Cross, he must have gotten it by cheating." As it happened, Ariel's father had been awarded an Iron Cross for valor in World War I, and his uncle Karl fell at Verdun, fighting "for the Fatherland." That apparently wasn't enough to assuage their self-doubt. One day in 1954, when Ariel came home from his Israeli officer's course in uniform, his parents contemplated him with something more complicated than parental pride. "Now *that* would have been a slap in Hitler's face!" his father said. Here, at last: an answer to history! We talk about "the six million," meaning the Jews killed by the Nazis. Almost fifty million people—not only Jews—died in the war. How many millions more had their psyches permanently deformed?

Where I come from, we were luckier. Not one member of my immediate family died in the Holocaust—only relatives of relatives, friends of friends. I was born in New York in 1940. In the middle of the war I stood on the sidewalk, dressed in a white crocheted nurse's outfit with gloves to match, and smiled for the camera. What I knew of war was a radio speaking from its shelf and a bedtime ritual: "Pray for Uncle Isaac; he's a soldier." Then relief, and celebration. The Veteran's Day parades down the Grand Concourse in the Bronx were brisk and cheerful: soldiers in uniform with red poppies in their buttonholes. We had won the war. If the end of the story wasn't all marching bands, the sorrows hovered at a distance. The little men with gold teeth who married my mother's cousins went to live in another city. They were *refugees*, a word always spoken in italics. From

what had they taken refuge? "Not in front of the children." I first heard stories of the war at the summer camp where, on Tisha b'Av, a fast day commemorating the destruction of the Temple, a new litany was read in the auditorium—*Auschwitz, Maidanek, Treblinka*—and high-minded campers gave up ice cream for the day. Many visitors to Auschwitz bear a burden of personal suffering. I came without such a history.

But why visit Auschwitz? Why travel so many thousands of miles to honor the dead, when I haven't been to my own father's grave in years? What did I want, borrowed pain? There's enough pain back home, thank you, even in a life lived under the banner of safety. Nor was it "survivor's guilt" that moved me. When I think of the dead, I feel horror, not reverence—they were victims, they weren't saints—and guilt has no part in it. Hardly knowing what I wanted, I was drawn to this place by an urge amounting to a compulsion: I had to see it for myself. As a mother, a teacher, a poet. As a comfortable middle-class American who has learned about evil mostly from books. As a Jew who wants to live a Jewish life, having no clear sense of what that entails. *Go stand there; you may find out a thing or two,* said a voice I recognized. *Go violate your precious innocence. You need to know.*

Three rows of brick barracks still stand at Auschwitz, each building a monument to a different division of suffering. The general exhibits deal with Extermination, Material Evidence of Crimes, Everyday Life of the Prisoner, Living and Sanitary Conditions, the Death Block. Among the "National Exhibitions," set out like pavilions at a European fair—Poland, USSR, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and the rest—one building is devoted to the "Suffering and Struggle of the Jews." Of course, there are bits of the Jews scattered among those other buildings. Piles of human hair. Braids tied with faded ribbon. Gray cloth, a little coarse, made of this hair. Hairbrushes, toothbrushes, shaving brushes. Crutches. Cooking pots. Piles of suitcases with addresses stenciled in white ink. Shoes, boots, wooden clogs.

One huge room is full of shoes. On either side of a center aisle, the shoes of the dead are piled up behind thick glass almost to the ceiling. A dump, a junk heap. You can't see the bottom of the pile. The shoes look very worn—were the newer ones shipped off to Germany? I discovered with a little jolt that they had no shoelaces. No, they wouldn't have. The shoes were caked with the mud of Auschwitz, the same mud that was on our shoes.

What is one to do with those shoes? At the State Jewish Theater in Warsaw, Ariel and I had seen an improvisation in pantomime about European history: the characters started out in togas and ended in miniskirts. In one tableau, there were the shoes, center stage, a great pyramid of them, and a violin scraping away in the wings. Such a big pile, and no place to put it. In the next scene, the whole cast gathered to sweep the shoes offstage, and the music changed to "Rock Around the Clock."

That image of sweeping the shoes out of sight came back to me at Auschwitz—surprisingly, even in the Jewish pavilion. One of the main themes in this building is Polish-Jewish cooperation during the war. There are lists of names, photos of Poles who died helping Jews, evidence of extensive cooperation between Polish and Jewish partisans. I know about those brave Poles; at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, many trees have been planted in their honor. The name of every Pole who helped should be recorded at Auschwitz too. There especially. But I am disturbed by the way a minor subplot was made to seem like the whole story. And the questions started coming fast, faster than I could sort them out: Can the whole story be told here? Who put together the exhibit in this building? Perhaps Jews who chose to remain in Poland and had to conclude a separate peace? Did they keep silent out of fear? Or out of delicacy, as we did with our hosts in Warsaw?

* * *

In Warsaw we stayed for a few days with a Polish family, friends of a colleague in Berkeley. Krystyna, the younger daughter, an archaeologist born in 1948, showed us around the city, taking us from palace to reconstructed palace. An archaeologist makes a good guide to a past so dead. In the tower of the Royal Palace, in the central square, there is a stopped clock where a bomb hit on September 17, 1939, the day the Nazis invaded Warsaw. The clock says 11:15. What does it mean to live in the shadow of that stopped clock?

At Krystyna's house, we sat in the kitchen and talked about the war. Krystyna brought out cheese, herring, and bread, and she prepared an omelette with sausage and fresh tomatoes. Her father, Jan, chief engineer in the reconstruction of Warsaw, poured little glasses of vodka. Her mother, Halina, told us how she had been separated from her older daughter for a few months during the Polish uprising in 1944. She wanted us to know this. With Krystyna to translate, we compared sufferings. It was a lopsided affair: I was just a stand-in, after all, in my little crocheted nurse's outfit. That dialogue in the kitchen had an almost audible subtext. Our faces said: *We are Jews; look how pleasant and charming we are; how could anyone not love us?* Their faces answered:

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A Distance from the Holocaust

Protecting the Dead

Francine Prose

Whenever I write a sentence of this I feel the dead enter the room. I feel them crowding behind me to peer over my shoulder, to read what I have written, to grumble and complain. The theme of the dead's conversation is that I know nothing about it. There is no argument about this—certainly not from me.

I write a few more sentences, each intended to keep the dead from misinterpreting the last, and then I write more, explicating these, and my essay branches endlessly like some fantastic fairy-tale tree on which, as the dead watch without particular interest, I am quite free to hang myself. I rush immediately to explain to the dead that I mean only figuratively. Every metaphor confronts me with my ignorance of the fact.

But isn't that what we hope for from the dead—that we no longer have to explain? We'd like to believe that they understand or at least no longer care. But not these dead, not these. These dead are ours to take care of, and oh, the protectiveness! We imagine that we can cause them further injustice and pain; the prospect is humbling and frightening. We believe we owe it to these dead to keep them in living memory; we feel this is important, although their death is painful to write about and is never greeted by anyone as welcome news. Worst are the moments we even doubt the purpose of this record keeping, this witness bearing; we wonder if memory has any sway over how anyone acts.

The numbers of the dead are what's hardest to imagine. My office could hold thirty at most, standing, rush-hour style. That would leave 5,999,970 to wait out on the stairs and through the hall and out the door through the yard to the road. If the dead stood single file along the side of the road, I could go down and get in my car and drive slowly past them forever. If the dead were massed in the fields, how much land would they cover? I think of crowds I've been part of, crowds I've seen filmed from above, waves of people coming and coming—nothing close to six million. Nor do I *want* to imagine: the actual faces, the children.

Two nights after I write these words, I am watching TV. My husband flips through the channels and stops at a documentary about a group of now-elderly Hungarian concentration camp survivors who return to the camps as tourists.

On the screen a woman says, "My mother and father and sister died here." She is a little homely, she wears eyeglasses and a scarf, she says this as if it were a simple fact. Then she says something I don't quite catch about finding her parents' shoes.

I say to my husband, "I don't want to see this."

"You're writing about it," he says.

The room is dark, it is warm in my bed. It is late; I am half asleep. "I don't want to see it," I say.

All I know firsthand about the Holocaust is how I learned to perceive it—how I envisioned it as a child, and how my sense of it changed and later changed again. My personal idea of the Holocaust is, it goes without saying, an infinitely small corner of the subject, hardly worth exploring, a contribution to the literature not worth making except in the hope of its touching on something slightly larger. When I think about the Holocaust, of how my view of it has shifted, I recognize something about how we apprehend suffering; how the suffering of others becomes part of our consciousness, part of how we perceive the world; how the pain of others is alternately an object of curiosity, indifference, envy, titillation; and how this pain may finally become real to us, almost as real as our own pain. I am interested in the growth of our senses of empathy and of evil, of history, possibility, memory, and obligation.

I am watching another film, again on TV—a documentary about (among other things) how the legacy of the Holocaust affects young Germans today. The filmmaker, the daughter of a Dachau survivor, asks the granddaughter of a Dachau Kommandant how it is possible that her grandfather—by all accounts a good man, a loving man, kind to his family—could pat his

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grandchildren on the head and go off to his daily work.

Waiting for the granddaughter's reply, I find I am holding my breath. For this is the central question, the question that all my thoughts about the Holocaust keep running into like a wall: the question of how it could happen. At issue here is nothing less than the mystery of evil, the genesis of morality, of empathy, the civilizing power of knowledge and of love. To consider this question is to fear that all my concern with moral education and the ability to apprehend and empathize with others' suffering is finally beside the point.

The granddaughter has been crying; her nose and eyes are red. She says she does not understand, though she has tried and tried. She says: could two souls inhabit one body, maybe something, something like that?

For a long time the Holocaust had for me an aura of the voluptuous. It seems perhaps incredible and certainly perverse to say that about an unspeakable horror. Part of this feeling was simply the product of childish misapprehension, the synesthetic blurring that causes children to confuse what they hear with the circumstances in which they hear it. I learned about the Holocaust as children hear of a storm when their own house is unthreatened. They hear: it is windy and unsafe outside. They hear: we are fortunate—inside it is warm. Like many American Jewish children, I felt that had I been born in another place at another time, I too would have been killed, and this astonishing idea—that there existed people who would kill me just for being me—gave me a sense of vulnerability and especially of evil.

But the knowledge that one might be dead if some alternate self had lived in another place is not useful information to the child, first because the child has quite a concrete sense of self, and also because the self finally balks when asked to imagine not being itself. This idea of lucky, narrow escape and its concomitant terrors meant less to me than what I sensed intuitively when my mother and father spoke of the Holocaust: that this was something dark, mysterious, forbidden, tragic—at once terrible and exciting.

And so, for me, the Holocaust became invested with an air of the romantic. It was terrible and glamorous, dark-toned and nostalgic, a black-and-white or sepia film in which it was always raining. I knew that it was serious (my parents made that clear), a subject for adult discussion that ended suddenly with warning looks over the children's heads. It was emotionally high-charged but historically abstract. I was born in Brooklyn, two years after the war. No one in our family—not one person we knew—had been killed.

There was a building not far from our house in which war refugees lived—the poorest apartment house on the poorest block, on the ragged, Flatbush Avenue edge of prosperous Ditmas Park. For me, the entire block was charged with mystery and fascination. Walking past, I used to stare into the hallways, at the tile floors and landlord-green walls; to look was to stand on the edge of a pit I could jump into if I wanted. In summers the refugees sat on the stoop and in folding chairs. A kid named Armand lived there; he was in our third grade. We all knew he was different from us, but I can't now remember how. I refused to connect these people with the Holocaust I imagined, the Romeo and Juliet Holocaust of *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

I cannot remember how old I was when I first read Anne Frank's diary. Perhaps I was nine or ten. I read it from cover to cover and went back and read it again. For years I reread it every few months till I knew my favorite parts by heart. These were not the passages other people cherished, those expressions of strength and courage and unwarranted faith in humanity. Rather, they were the sections that dealt with Anne's romance with Peter Van Daan. For me the book was the story of a girl who had a love affair and a girl who died, and in retrospect I am not sure I knew the difference; it is never so easy to confuse sex and death as when we are young and have had no experience of either. For me the unfolding drama of Anne's infatuation with Peter was inextricably connected with what I knew of her subsequent fate, and something in me saw this confluence as extremely attractive. I think that I would have been willing to suffer the death if I could have had the romance.

There is much that is pornographic about photographs of disastrous death—some connection beyond their obvious power to fascinate and shock.

This is what I mean by voluptuousness, this connection of tragedy with pleasure and abandon, at an age when what we secretly feel about suffering is that we don't have enough, when whether a life is tragic or comic means less than that it is dramatic. This longing to drown in some warm ocean of (imagined) suffering is part of childhood and adolescence.

Late childhood, adolescence—one way to know you were alive was to stick yourself with a pin. The Holocaust was and still is an extremely sharp pin, with which even adults can stick themselves, although for different reasons. I was glad that no one in our family had died in the Holocaust, but, having no real experience of a

family member's dying, I also felt slightly cheated; to have suffered even a minor loss would have made my connection with history much more firsthand and authentic.

At that age I resembled the famous photograph of Anne Frank, and I would stare at her picture for hours till I felt it was my own. It gave me a kind of half-scary, half-pleasurable chill, and, as I look at it now, I can recapture some of that sensation: that peculiar, heady mix of melancholy and exaltation. I knew something about the Holocaust and about why the Franks and the Van Daans were forced to hide in that attic. I knew the number (six million), knew of the camps and the images: the barbed wire, the striped suits, the shaved skulls, the sunken eyes.

I can't remember precisely how I first heard about the Holocaust, but I somehow suspect that my earliest knowledge was connected to an early form of sexuality, to being shown snapshots of my father as a handsome, young soldier in the Philippines, and being told the reasons why he'd risked his life in the war. My father was brave; he did what he had to. Hitler was killing the Jews. It took only childish logic to make history come full circle: my father had joined the army to save Anne Frank.

The lesson I was meant to learn was that we were fortunate, but that we must never take our good fortune for granted, because this could happen to us. Another Holocaust could happen anywhere—even here, where you might least expect it. This was the history of the Jews.

I have referred to the Holocaust as a pin with which to stick yourself, and it functioned this way, I think, for my parents, who saw themselves very much as Jewish, although they'd left their immigrant parents' neighborhoods, stopped keeping kosher and going to shul. They were in many ways religious people, though—both doctors—they considered themselves modern and scientific, and thought it quaint and a little absurd to imagine a God in a heaven. But when they felt in danger of assimilating too much, they'd stick themselves with that pin of the Holocaust and, punctured, fall back on the comfort (comfort born, characteristically, of uneasiness) of their Jewish identity.

I don't mean to imply that the idea of the Holocaust was for them—as it was for me, as a child—an instrument of sensation. They were too wise, too experienced for that, and could no more view it that way than I can at my age now. Both were gifted with great reservoirs of compassion; both found it painful that anyone should suffer pain. In telling us about the Holocaust, they were saying what fortunate children need to hear: the fact that they are lucky, that fortune should bring a sense of responsibility toward those less fortunate, that elsewhere and at other times there is and has been



great injustice, and finally that this reality should be imminent to us all.

Also, I suppose, they were offering the Holocaust to me as a pin to use as they did, to remind ourselves of our Jewishness. But children, by nature, reject those pins—that is, when the pins come from their parents. The things that parents worry about, and want us to worry about! I didn't believe it could happen in this country, that storm troopers would ever march into our house in Brooklyn. I thought my parents slightly backward for thinking so, just as they'd thought their parents backward for their Old World ideas. Children want to distance themselves from disaster, to disassociate themselves from the embarrassment and the shame of death.

Not only didn't I believe that it could happen here, but I believed you could outsmart death if you were clever enough. I took (and I think my father did, too) a certain pride in the fact that my great-grandparents brought their families from Russia after the 1905 pogroms. They saw what was coming—saw it and got out. The victims of the Holocaust could have been our brothers, our aunts, and cousins, or, in the case of Anne Frank, our sister, our double. But ultimately they were not our family, not our dead; they were, in some crucial way, entirely different from us.

This perception of difference was confirmed when I met my first *real* Holocaust survivors, that is, the first whose lives seemed to match the romance I had in mind. These were friends of my parents, a married couple—like my parents, both doctors. I met them about the same time I was compulsively rereading Anne Frank. European, sophisticated, multilingual, extremely handsome (Ingrid Bergman, Charles Boyer), they were the living embodiments of the Holocaust I'd envisioned. My parents told us their story, with respect and a certain pride, because they recognized it as a story with so much narrative power that some might even rub off and cling like glitter to the teller. It is ennobling just to know people whose lives have been touched and narrowly saved by history and great drama.

So we learned how they were hidden by Polish peasants, how her mother had been lost in the camps and found after the war, how he had wanted to be a concert pianist—afterward he never played. This may not have been their story at all—but it's what I remember hearing. And mostly what I remember was how glamorous it sounded; how romantic, dramatic—how much like the Holocaust movie I had dreamed up in my head.

I was, as they say, a sensitive child: compassionate, easily hurt, neither stupid nor unfeeling. What I want to make clear is that I was never unaware that all this involved real suffering, suffering on a scale that I found nearly impossible to imagine—and still do. But the knowledge was abstract for me, distanced; only much later did it become what I would call "real."

What interests me now is what such knowledge means, the complex epistemology of how a protected American child comes to apprehend it: how the knowledge of the Holocaust—and of suffering in general—is romanticized, sentimentalized, glamorized, personalized, abstracted, denied, internalized, and finally—if not understood—then seen, insofar as possible, without the blinders of sentiment and confusion.

The other side of voluptuousness is curiosity and indifference—the ways in which the self steps back and watches itself and the world. Distance is what allows us to look at the photographs, to confront the violation, the nakedness of the dead. There is much that is pornographic about photographs of disastrous death—some connection beyond their obvious power to fascinate and shock. Something private and secret is happening here—but we are allowed to look. In order to look at death, one has to stand back, to distance oneself; it is easier than imagining that this could happen to us.

Some years ago in a library, in a city far from my home, I found a stack of magazines from India; this was just after Bhopal and the bloody Sikh–Hindu riots. I remember staring, hypnotized, at the legions of the dead, the dead of Bhopal laid out in rows, the Sikhs left strewn about. What made me keep looking was partly horrific interest, partly the recognition that I was free to look; I remember fearing that someone would come in and catch me. It might as well have been conventional pornography.

I'm sure that this mixture of distance, horror, pity, curiosity, and titillation is how I first saw pictures of the Holocaust dead. I remember seeing them in *Life* magazine—though this is a vague memory and may not be true. But I do recall that pull of fascination, of seduction, that fear I might keep looking and never be able to stop. Only still photographs exert this power; in film the editing does the turning away for you—the moving eye of the camera intercedes and breaks the spell.

In college I went with my boyfriend to see the movie *Night and Fog*. I remember that it left me feeling heavyhearted, slightly queasy, and also irritated with my boyfriend, who was not Jewish and could not have experienced it as I did. But how did I experience it? I was able to watch it through, to detach myself on some level that is no longer available to me.

One summer, when I was in high school, I went fishing for the first time. I drove with a friend to the North Shore of Long Island, and there, from a bridge, we caught blowfish. That day they were so plentiful that we just had to lower our hooks in the bay. Blowfish are remarkably sweet-tasting, but their most unusual quality reveals itself in death. Taken from the water, they puff up like bladders and bounce like balls on the ground.

I watched this happen again and again with interest and indifference as, heady with our own success and a kind of primal acquisitiveness, we went on catching fish. We caught a bucketful, then another, and continued fishing until we had caught more than I and my friend and our families could possibly eat. I can't remember what our mothers did with what was left over. My point is not that we went fishing but that we took more than we needed, and it never occurred to us that what we were taking was life.

It was in every other way an uneventful day, one I had wholly forgotten until, in preparation for this essay, I began thinking about the ways, the stages, in which suffering comes to seem real. I was trying to think if I had ever knowingly caused real suffering, or known of suffering and done nothing to stop it. Except for romantic suffering, and the torments I visited on my brother as a child, my conscience was mostly clear—except for that one day, fishing.

Clearly no meaningful analogy can be drawn between killing a few dozen fish and causing the deaths of millions of people. It is absurd to even distantly connect irresponsible fishing with being a Dachau Kommandant. Yet what struck me was that, even for a day, I had been able to suppress my awareness that I was causing death and pain. And I know I could not do that now. It is hard for me to believe that the person I know as myself could have spent a day watching living creatures die for no reason. But it happened twenty-five years ago, whoever that person was.

Now, when the TV channels flip by and land on the documentary about the elderly survivors, it is so difficult for me to watch that, even though it relates to what I am writing, I refuse to see it. I know that afterwards I will not be able to sleep.

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A Distance from the Holocaust

Nelly

Miriam Akavia
Translated by Jeanette Goldman

Nelly was the queen of the barrack. There was no one like her in this barrack where six hundred women lived together side by side. From where I lay, I spent every spare moment gazing upward with longing at Nelly and her kingdom.

The barrack in which we lived could perhaps be compared to an enormous long warehouse with three tiers of wooden planks along its walls—and in the center, row upon row of planks with two narrow passages between them. And on these planks the "merchandise" was displayed horizontally and vertically, body next to body.

I was lucky: I was on the middle tier, between my mother and my sister. Here, in this spot, where my right side touched my mother's body and my left side my sister's, here was "my home." My heart filled with love and gratitude toward my mother and my sister for placing me between them. A small bundle of personal possessions served as a pillow for each of us. Our coats were our blankets. Beyond my mother's right side and my sister's left side, across their bodies, was reality: terrifying, bizarre, insane. But I was not part of it. I was between them.

In addition to the endless rows of bunks running the length of the barrack, there was one short row arranged across it. On these bunks lived "privileged" women: The Blockälteste (woman in charge of the block) and her helpers lived on the bottom and middle tier. Above them, on the top tier, lived Nelly. There was nothing above her save the ceiling, which she had decorated with whatever came to hand. Nelly's quick, graceful body; her smooth, shiny skin; her reddish, soft hair; held me enthralled. As nimble as a rabbit, she would scramble up and down, carrying pots of clean water to her "apartment" and bringing down the refuse. Along her walls hung a rope with a few pairs of underpants, still bearing some resemblance to clean laundry. Her reddish curls danced as she climbed up and down energetically, so that, at least in my eyes, her beautiful head resembled the sun. I marveled at the difference between Nelly's hair and that of the other women. Their hair was faded, lifeless, and oily from the constant use of kerosene, the only preparation available to us in our hopeless war against lice.

Nelly did not live alone. During the safe hours, when we were reasonably sure that our barrack would not be visited by the Germans, three small heads, those of her sons, would peek out. During all the weeks I observed Nelly and her family, I never once saw the children leave their bunk. Nelly looked after their every need, like a mother bird who takes care of her fledglings. She had three half-empty sacks ready in case of an emergency. Whenever she was warned of approaching danger, she would hurriedly stuff each child into a sack half-filled with rags. She would then arrange the sacks next to her in the shape of an adult body and cover them with a blanket, as though another woman were lying beside her with her blanket over her head. When the danger passed, she quickly pulled the children out, fondling them to compensate them for the suffering they had endured. The children had biblical names: Samson, Noah, and David. "Samson the hero," she would turn to her oldest son; little David earned the nickname "David my king"; and to Noah, the middle son, she would often say: "Noah, you are truly *nach,* a comfort, like your name." Nelly had a burner on her bunk on which she cooked potatoes for her children. Sometimes she would prepare porridge or corn. While the food was cooking, Nelly and her children sat beside the burner, cross-legged, observing the cooking process, becoming intoxicated with the aroma, savoring the anticipation of their feast. Nelly would then divide the food equally, lest she deprive one of her children.

In the evening, when men visited the Blockälteste and her assistants, Nelly had a visitor too. He belonged to the Jewish militia, which was in charge of order and discipline in the camp. He would bring Nelly potatoes and bread, sometimes even a piece of soap. She was happy to see him and gave him a place of honor on her bunk. She would finish taking care of the children, empty the pots, kiss the three children good night, making sure that they lay with their faces to the wall, with their backs to her and her friend. The children never turned to spy on their mother.

Miriam Akavia, born in Poland, lives and writes in Tel Aviv. Her novel, My Vineyard, *will be published in 1990 in Poland and Switzerland. "Nelly" appears in* The Price, *published in Hebrew by Sifriat Poalim.*

Who was this Nelly? How had she succeeded in bringing her three children here, into a barrack full of women, each one either a bereaved mother or an orphaned daughter?

Sometimes, when calm settled on the barrack and the women felt tranquil, they would ask her: Nelly, how did you do it? How did you manage it? And Nelly, smiling with satisfaction, would answer willingly. In simple, straightforward words, without lowering her voice, she would tell her story with pride. My attentive ears caught only fragments of her amazing story. I put things together, until I knew the story of her life.

When general mobilization began in Poland, in the summer of 1939, Grisha, Nelly's husband, concealed his wound from the Spanish Civil War during which he fought on the side of the Communists and enlisted in the Polish Army. Grisha was born in a beautiful resort town in the Tatar mountains, and there, among the mountains and gullies, among the forests and streams, he spent his youth. He infected Nelly with a love of nature whose beauty was capable of arousing people to heights of creativity and joy. Nelly was very happy with Grisha. Her marriage to him put an end to her many romantic and passionate involvements with both Jewish and non-Jewish men.

Soon Grisha became disenchanted with the communism of his youth, and, in light of the open anti-Semitism in Poland, Nelly and he planned to go to Israel. They were simply waiting for their young children to grow a little older.

"I'll be back soon," Grisha said to Nelly before he left for the army. "As soon as we have defeated the Germans, we shall take the children and leave. Till then, you must be strong, Nelly. Take care of the children and yourself."

Grisha left. The Germans entered the city, and in less than a month occupied the whole of Poland. The deportations began. Thousands of homes were abandoned in haste, the ovens still warm, the pots left standing on the stoves. Thousands tried to hide in remote villages, but with no success. The birds of prey caught them everywhere. The people were torn from every wretched house, every barn, every attic and cellar, and they were concentrated in the cities, in ghettos surrounded by walls. Nelly's brother escaped into the woods to join the partisans hiding in caves.

Nelly's parents were deported, and Nelly was filled with gratitude that she had resisted her brother's insistence that she go with them and leave the children with her parents. She would never leave the children, she decided. She would save them, come what may. The ghetto in the city seemed to her the lesser of the two evils. There, among the Jews, she would manage somehow.

At first the overcrowding and the confusion in the ghetto prevented her from thinking clearly. She felt alone and helpless. She made inquiries about a family with whom she had lived while attending high school. When this family's son, Kuba, her former admirer, heard that Nelly and her children were in the ghetto, he came to see them. Nelly was shocked to see him in the uniform of the Jewish militia.

When the luckless ghetto would be transformed into an inferno, when babies would be flung from windows—her children would lie quietly in Bolek's cellar, chewing on a slice of bread.

"Have you lost your mind, Kuba? You? What possessed you to join that riffraff, those collaborators?"

Kuba explained to her briefly that he had done it to save his parents. He simply did not see any other way.

"If it wasn't for the fact that I know what is going on," explained Kuba, "my parents would have been deported long ago. I also know something no one else knows yet," he added bitterly. "I know where they are taking the transports and what happens there." Then, pointing to his shiny uniform, he added, "All this is only to confuse the enemy. Believe me, I can help more this way."

Nelly did not have the strength to delve too deeply into the significance of his words. Her children were weak and desperately tired. Kuba's eyes rested on Nelly and he said: "You are still as beautiful as ever, Nelly."

She smiled at him, a little embarrassed, but with a provocative look in her tired eyes. He took her and her children to the room he shared with his parents. It was a small room, but, given the conditions of the ghetto, a room for only three people was considered a great luxury. Twelve or thirteen people were crowded into other rooms. Kuba's parents received Nelly and her children kindly. They immediately set about rearranging the room so that a third of it was allotted to Kuba's parents, a third to Nelly's children, and a third to them, the two of them.

Kuba took good care of all the occupants of the room. He was able to obtain food unavailable in the ghetto. In the morning he would leave for his unspecified duties while Nelly went with her three children to the orphanage, a few houses away from their room. Here, working hard among the many abandoned children, she would silence her guilty conscience about Kuba and his connections with the Germans and about herself and her relationship with him.

Because of his position, Kuba knew in advance that the liquidation of the ghetto was fast approaching. All members of the militia knew perfectly well what was about to happen. They were requested to spread false rumors in order to avoid panic. According to the real plan, all men and women over the age of fifty (that is, all those considered unfit for forced labor) and all children below the age of fourteen would be liquidated. They would be collected into enormous groups and machine-gunned to death. Kuba knew this. Other members of the Jewish militia knew it also, for they had been requested to cooperate. The Germans also demanded the cooperation of the leader of the Jewish community, a well-known lawyer. They demanded that he help organize matters in such a manner so that all would go smoothly, without excessive panic. He refused. "Why do you refuse?" he was asked. "You shouldn't refuse," they said. "If you do what you are told, you and your family will fare better. You will be able to save a few old people and a few children, those particularly important to you."

But he refused, and, together with his wife and his two daughters, he went out to join those still left in the ghetto.

Not so with Kuba. On the appointed day he hid his parents in a bunker in the hope that as a reward for his zealousness and obedience he would be allowed to transfer them into the camp, where the fit were taken for work. Unfortunately, his friend, another militiaman, found the bunker, and in fluent Yiddish, in a friendly, calm voice, told the frightened old people to come out because "there was no longer any danger." They came out and were shot on the spot.

When Nelly heard from Kuba what was about to happen, she decided to act on her own to try to save her children. With Kuba's help she slipped out of the ghetto and walked about the city, like an escaped murderer, terrified that one of her former acquaintances would recognize her.

Toward evening she managed to slip a note to Boleslav, the Pole, who had also been one of her admirers in high school. He came, looking around suspiciously. In a strangled voice, he asked her: "Why did you come, Nelly? You know that it's terribly dangerous for you—and for me too."

Nelly looked at him in despair. Her lips stammered a few disconnected phrases. From these sentences Bolek understood her desperate cry for help. Her words awakened his compassion, as well as the dormant feelings of a man toward the woman he had once loved.

They entered a dark boulevard, and Nelly told him briefly about what was happening in the ghetto and about her three children. "You must help me, Bolek. I beseech you." Drops of perspiration covered Bolek's forehead despite the chill of the evening. He heard her words: "You told me once that you loved me, that you wanted me; well . . . here I am . . . only you must help my children."

He was shocked at the humiliation she was forced to undergo. "Do you think me such a cad?"

"It is I who am begging you," she said, wishing to make it easier for him. "Take me and my children."

Bolek sat tense and dazed. Then, quietly, he began to tell her about his life, his anti-Semitic wife who jeered at him because he was incapable of stealing from abandoned Jewish apartments. "My life isn't easy either."

Again they sat in silence. Time passed quickly, but neither of them could think of a suitable plan. From time to time they heard footsteps. From time to time they saw the shadows of passersby hurrying on their way. The ticking of Bolek's watch shattered the peacefulness of the evening. The loud hammering of their hearts disturbed the silence.

"Nelly," Bolek said finally, "if you will stay with me, I'll leave my wife and my work; we'll run away to some village. We'll make a new start."

"What about my children?" she asked.

Bolek fell silent. They moved stealthily in the direction of a coal cellar, an airless, dark place, dank and filthy. Their eyes became accustomed to the darkness, and with their hands they cleared a small space by moving some blocks of wood and lumps of coal.

"Tomorrow, when my wife is out of the house, I'll take some blankets and a little food and water and bring them here," Bolek said.

"And tomorrow I shall bring my children here." She clung to him. "I always knew that you were a good man," she said. He stroked her hair and with his lips tasted her salty tears. She drew him toward her, tender and quivering.

The next day Nelly brought her children there one by one. Three times she left the ghetto for the cellar, each time taking a different route, each time hiding one of her children against her body, beneath the large peasant scarf wrapped around her. Kuba helped her take the children out of the ghetto. Bolek helped her bring them into the cellar. When at last she had accomplished the mission she had set for herself, her exhausted legs would no longer carry her and her tortured body was on the verge of collapse. But what did all this matter compared to the wonderful feeling of knowing that her children were safe? Tomorrow, when the luckless ghetto would be transformed into an inferno, when babies would be flung from windows, when mothers would be whipped systematically, when bodies would be trampled in pools of blood—her children would lie quietly in Bolek's cellar, chewing on a slice of bread.

(Continued on p. 127)

A Distance from the Holocaust

Resistance to the Holocaust

Phillip Lopate

When I was small, a few years after World War II had ended, my mother would drag me around Brooklyn to visit some of the newly arrived refugees; they were a novelty. We would sit in somebody's kitchen, and she would talk with these women for hours (usually in Yiddish, which I didn't understand) to find out what it was like. After we left, she would say in a hushed voice, "Did you see the number on her arm? She was in a concentration camp!" I didn't understand why my mother was so thrilled, almost erotically excited, when she spoke these words, but her melodramatic demand that I be impressed started to annoy me. I had only to hear about those lurid arm numbers to experience an obstinately neutral reaction and begin digging in my heels. Maybe I was picking up some of her own ambivalence; beneath my mother's sympathetic sighs, I sensed a little distaste for these victims. Years later, she confessed that when the camp survivors first started coming into her candy store, they were the most difficult customers to please; they had—and here she paused, realizing how insensitive her appraisal might sound, given their tragic backgrounds—a "chip on their shoulders."

Actually, I was touched by her honesty. Just because someone has suffered a lot doesn't mean you have to like them—that has always been my motto. I used to go into a neighborhood hardware store run by a concentration camp survivor with thick wire-framed glasses whom I did like but whose superior bitterness gave all transactions an air of mistrust. Once I heard this proprietor say, after he had thrown a customer out of his store: "What can he do, kill me? I already died in Auschwitz." This advantage of the living dead over the rest of us seemed unfair.

But I am getting ahead of myself. I want to return to that moment when my mother and I were leaving some poor woman's kitchen and I froze up at the demand for my compassionate awe. Let me try to explain by way of anecdote. I once heard of a very liberal Jewish couple whose child would scream whenever she saw a Black person. The parents were distressed that their little girl might be learning racist attitudes from somewhere, so they went to a child therapist and asked his advice. After questioning the little girl alone and learning nothing, the doctor suggested that he go on an outing with the family so that he might observe them in an everyday setting. As they were walking along the street, he noticed that, whenever a Black person approached, the mother would unconsciously tighten the grip on her daughter's hand and the girl would, naturally, cry out. In my case, whenever my mother uttered those magic words, "She was in a concentration camp!" the music on our emotional soundtrack got turned up so loud that I went resolutely numb. Maybe this is the seed of that puzzling resistance I have felt toward the Holocaust all my life.

Before I give the wrong impression, let me interject that I am not one of those revisionist nuts who denies that the Nazis systematically exterminated millions of Jews. On the contrary, I'm convinced that they committed an enormous and unforgivable evil. I don't know what more I can say about it other than that I am deeply sorry it happened. I would feel presumptuous adding my two cents of literary grief, or working myself into an empathic lather through the mechanics of writerly imagination. I was not there; I am not the one who should be listened to in this matter; I cannot bear witness. It is not my intent to speak at all about the atrocities of the Nazi era, only about the rhetorical, cultural, political, and religious uses to which the disaster has been put since then. Of these, at least, I do have some experience.

When I was growing up, we never spoke of a Holocaust; we said "concentration camps" or "gas chambers," "six million Jews," "what the Nazis did." It might seem an improvement over these awkward phrases to use a single, streamlined term. And yet putting a label on that phenomenal range of suffering serves to restrict, to conventionalize, to tame. As soon as the term "the Holocaust" entered common circulation, around the midsixties, it made me uncomfortable. It had a self-important, strutting air, a vulgarly neologistic ring combined with a self-conscious archaic sound, straining as

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it did for a Miltonic biblical solemnity that brought to mind such quaint cousins as Armageddon, Behemoth, and Leviathan.

Then, too, one instantly saw that the term was part of a polemic and that it sounded more comfortable in certain speakers' mouths than in others; the Holocaustians used it like a club to smash back their opponents. Historian Lucy S. Davidowicz states, "The Holocaust is the term that Jews themselves have chosen to describe their fate during World War II." I would amend that to say "some Jews" or "official Jewry"; in any case, it is one of those public relations substitutions, like African-American for Black or *intifada* for the Palestinian uprising, which one ethnic group tries to compel the rest of the world to use as a token of political respect. In my own mind I continue to distinguish, ever so slightly, between the disaster visited on the Jews and "the Holocaust." Sometimes it almost seems that "the Holocaust" is a corporation headed by Elie Wiesel, who defends his patents with articles in the Arts and Leisure section of the Sunday *Times*.

The Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem is like a Disneyland park devoted to Jewish suffering.

"Shoah" has the same problems as "Holocaust," only in Hebrew. Both "Shoah" and "the Holocaust" share the same self-dramatizing theological ambition to portray the historic suffering of the Jews during World War II as a sort of cosmic storm rending the heavens. What disturbs me finally is the exclusivity of the singular usage, *the* Holocaust, which seems to cut the event off from all others, and to diminish, if not demean, the mass slaughters of other peoples—or, for that matter, previous tragedies in Jewish history. But more on these topics later.

We need to consider first the struggle for control of the Holocaust analogy. All my life, the *reductio ad Hitler* argument has been applied to almost every controversy, to the detriment of serious discussion. If it is not always clear what constitutes moral action, it is certain that advocates of each controversial path can be accused of starting a slide that will lead straight to Hitler. Euthanasia? Smacks of the Third Reich. Abortion? Federal payments make it "possible for genocidal programs as were practiced in Nazi Germany," according to Senator Orrin Hatch. Letting the Ku Klux Klan march? An invitation to Weimar chaos. Forbidding the march? Censorship; as bad as Goebbels. The Devil can quote scripture and the Holocaust, it would appear. We see in the Middle East today how both Israelis and Palestinians compare the other side to Nazis. The Hitler/Holocaust analogy dead-ends all intelligent discourse by intruding a stridently shrill note that forces the mind to withdraw. To challenge that demagogic minefield of pure self-righteousness from an ironic distance almost ensures being misunderstood. The image of the Holocaust is too overbearing, too hot to tolerate subtle distinctions. In its life as a rhetorical figure, the Holocaust is a bully.

The Holocaust analogy has the curious double property of being both amazingly plastic—able to be applied to almost any issue—and fantastically rigid, since we are constantly being told that the Holocaust is incomparable, in a class by itself, sui generis, not to be mixed up with other human problems or diluted by foreign substances.

When President Jimmy Carter made a speech commemorating all those liquidated by the Nazis, which he put at a figure of eleven million, the eminent Holocaust scholar Yehuda Bauer accused Carter and his adviser Simon Wiesenthal of trying to "de-Judaize" the Holocaust. "The Wiesenthal-Carter definition appears to reflect a certain paradoxical 'envy' on the part of non-Jewish groups directed at the Jewish experience of the Holocaust. This itself would appear to be an unconscious reflection of anti-Semitic attitudes," warned Bauer. In other words, the Holocaust must be seen as "Jew-killing," pure and simple. We Jews own the Holocaust; all others get your cotton-picking hands off.

"How dare they equate our using napalm in Vietnam or even dropping the bomb on Hiroshima with the Holocaust?" one often hears. The underlying sense is: "How dare they equate anything with the Holocaust?" The Holocaust is a jealous God; thou shalt draw no parallels to it.

The problem is that drawing parallels and analogies is an incorrigibly natural human activity. I too find it deeply offensive and distasteful when flippant comparisons to Nazi genocide are made; but, on the other hand, it does not seem unreasonable to regard the Holocaust as the outer limit of a continuum of state-sanctioned cruelty, other points along whose spectrum might include the French torture of Algerians, Idi Amin's liquidations, My Lai and other Vietnam massacres, the slaughter of the Armenians, Pol Pot.... I realize I may be appearing to blur important distinctions among a genocide, a massacre, and other horrors; but I am not asserting that any of these atrocities was as *bad* as the Holocaust (whatever *that* means)—only that the human stuff, the decisions and brutal enactments that followed, may have had much in common. I find it curious for people to speak of the murder of six million Jews as a "mystery" and the murder of several million Cambodians as perhaps a more run-of-the-mill, open-and-shut affair.

The truth is, unfortunately, that there are few things less mysterious and unique in the history of the world than genocide.

It is true that the Holocaust was singular in its hideous anti-Semitism, which made the mere fact of being a Jew grounds for death. But as the historian Irving Louis Horowitz argues in his essay "The Exclusivity of Collective Death":

> To emphasize distinctions between peoples by arguing for the uniqueness of anti-Semitism is a profound mistake; it reduces any possibility of a unified political and human posture on the meaning of genocide or the Holocaust.... Insistence upon separatism, that the crime was Jewish existence and that this makes the Jewish situation different from any other slaughter, whatever its roots, contains a dangerous element of mystification.

A good deal of suspicion and touchiness reside around this issue of maintaining the Holocaust's privileged status in the pantheon of genocides. It is not enough that the Holocaust was dreadful; it must be seen as *uniquely* dreadful. Indeed, the catastrophe of the Jews under Hitler is sometimes spoken of as an event so special as to break the back of history in two. "Holocaust stands alone in time as an aberration within history," states Menachem Rosensaft. And Elie Wiesel writes that "the universe of concentration camps, by its design, lies outside if not beyond history. Its vocabulary belongs to it alone." What surprises me is the degree to which such an apocalyptic, religious-mythological reading of historical events has come to be accepted by the culture at large—unless people are just paying lip service to the charms of an intimidating rhetoric.

In attempting, for instance, to resolve the recent "historian's dispute" in Germany, President Richard von Weizsäcker declared: "Auschwitz remains unique. It was perpetrated by Germans in the name of Germany. This truth is immutable and will not be forgotten." The *New York Times'* reporter, Serge Schmemann, goes on to note (October 22, 1988):

> Speaking to a congress of West German historians in Bamberg, Mr. von Weizsäcker rejected the attempts by some historians to compare the systematic murder of Jews in Nazi Germany to mass killings elsewhere—like those in Cambodia under Pol Pot or in Stalin's purges—or to seek external explanations for it. Such approaches have been assailed by other historians as attempts to frame the German crime in 'relative' terms.

Mr. von Weizsäcker has been rightly praised for his integrity and statesmanship in this matter. And yet I can't help thinking that he has also engaged in a certain amount of magically placating incantatory language: unique, immutable, antirelative, never to be forgotten. I would have thought that placing a historical occurrence, criminal or not, in a relative perspective was the job of competent historians. Not that history-writing itself is ever value-free or objective; but attempting to situate an era in a larger context still seems closer to normal historical methods than expecting historians to believe there is such a thing as an absolute historical event or an absolute evil. There seems to be a fear that if we admit there are similarities between the Nazis' war against the Jews and other genocidal atrocities, we will be letting the Germans off the hook. On the contrary, we will be placing them on the same hook with other heinous criminals. And we will be asserting that the forces in history and human nature that brought about the death camps are not necessarily a fluke, so be on guard.

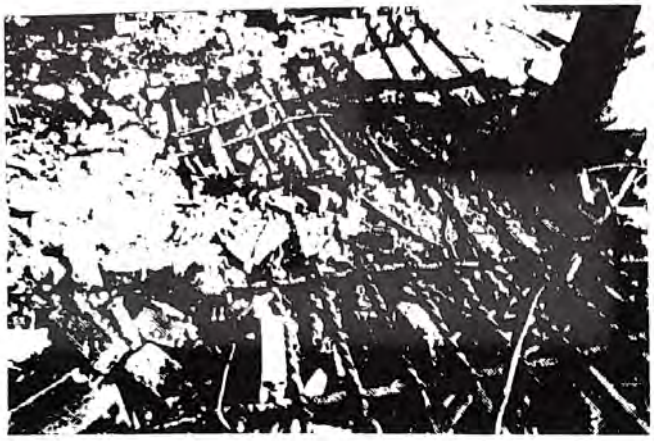
Yehuda Bauer has astutely observed that

> [i]f what happened to the Jews was unique, then it took place outside of history, it becomes a mysterious event, an upside down miracle, so to speak, an event of religious significance in the sense that it is not man-made as that term is normally understood.... If what happens to the Jews is unique, then by definition it doesn't concern us, beyond our pity and commiseration for the victims. If the Holocaust is not a universal problem, then why should a public school system in Philadelphia, New York or Timbuktu teach it? Well, the answer is that there is no uniqueness, not even of a unique event. Anything that happens once, can happen again: not quite in the same way, perhaps, but in an equivalent form.

Let us look at some of the cold figures on genocide in this century. According to Roger W. Smith, in *Genocide and the Modern Age,*

> Turkey destroyed the lives of a million or more Armenians; Nazi Germany destroyed 6 million Jews, but it is often forgotten that it went on to murder other groups as well, so that a reasonable estimate for the total number of victims, apart from war deaths, is 16 million; Pakistan slaughtered 3 million Bengalis; Cambodia brought about the death of 3 million persons; and the Soviet Union first destroyed 20 million peasants in the 1930s and then went on to take hundreds of thousands of other lives in the 1940s with its assaults on various nationality groups suspected of disloyalty.

These numbers may be somewhat high. Barbara Harff, who provides both lower and upper estimates in the same book, rounds out the picture with other twentieth-century genocides: Nigeria's extermination of two to three million Ibos; the Indonesian slaughter of supposed



Communists, 200,000–500,000; the Indonesian action in East Timor, 60,000–100,000; Idi Amin's murder of fellow Ugandans, 500,000; the Tutsis' massacre of Hutus in Burundi, 100,000–200,000; the Sudanese against the Southern Sudanese, 500,000; and so on.

The position that the Jewish Holocaust was unique tends to rest on the following arguments: (1) scale—the largest number of deaths extracted from one single group; (2) technology—the mechanization of death factories; (3) bureaucracy—the involvement of the state apparatus at previously unheard-of levels; (4) intent—the express purpose being to annihilate every last Jew. Thus it is argued that although Hitler killed many, many Poles, he still intended to use the majority of Poles as slave laborers. Many scholars counter that it was Hitler's goal also to eliminate the entire Gypsy population; others dispute this claim. The fact that one's group was not targeted for extermination in toto is a serious distinction but hardly much consolation to the Gypsies, homosexuals, radicals, Poles, Slavs, and others whom the Nazis did wipe out.

Alan Rosenberg asserts that the uniqueness of the Holocaust lies above all in "the Nazi abuse of science and technology, the application of bureaucratic techniques, principles of managerial efficiency and 'cost-benefit' analysis." This assessment, with its obvious implications for the present, dovetails with Theodor Adorno's and Max Horkheimer's philosophical argument that the systematic, orderly, "Germanic," if you will, manner in which the killings were carried out shows the ultimately debased heritage of Western Enlightenment reason. Certainly much of our abiding fascination with the Holocaust rests on its dystopian, nightmarish use of rational, mechanized procedures. But I wonder how much of the importance we ascribe to these factors represents the narcissistic preoccupations of our Western technological society. Does it really matter so much if millions are gassed according to Eichmann's timetables, rather than slowly, crudely starved to death, as in Stalin's regime, or marched around by ragged teenage Khmer Rouge soldiers and then beheaded or clubbed? Does the family mourning the loved one hacked to pieces by a spontaneous mob of Indonesian vigilantes care that much about abuses of science and technology? Does neatness count, finally, so damn much?

It is hard to escape the conclusion that, to us in North America, those piles of other victims are not as significant as Jewish corpses. Is it simply because they are Third World people—black, brown, yellow-skinned? Or if white, then not Western European, therefore too "marginal" to elicit our empathy? How much is social class itself a factor? In so many books and movies about the Holocaust, I sense that I am being asked to feel a particular pathos in the rounding up of gentle, scholarly, middle-class, *civilized* people who are then packed into cattle cars, as though the liquidation of illiterate peasants would not be as poignant. The now-familiar newsreel shot of Asian populations fleeing a slaughter with their meager possessions in handcarts still reads to us as a catastrophe involving "masses," while the images of Jews lined up in their fedoras and overcoats tug at our hearts precisely because we see them as a line of individuals. And our very notion of individuality is historically connected with the middle class; on top of that, Jews have often stood for individuality in modern culture, by virtue of their outsider status and commitment to mind and artistic cultivation. I am by no means saying that all the Jews who died in the camps were bourgeois; but I am suggesting that, since the bulk of the narratives focus on middle-class victims swept up in the slaughter, the murder of European Jews plays on our sympathies so much more profoundly than does the annihilation of Bengalis, East Timorese, or Ibos.

"What's wrong with you?" I hear certain Jewish readers ask. "Are you not closer to your own dead than to those others? It's understandable for Blacks to care more about slavery than the Holocaust, or Armenians to mourn their massacred more than ours. But why do you, a Jew, insist on speaking as if these others mattered the same as our own flesh and blood killed in the gas chambers?" I don't know; I must be lacking in tribal feeling. When it comes to mass murder, I can see no difference between their casualties and ours.

That we must continue to come to terms with the Holocaust is obvious. The question is: What form will these commemorations take? And addressed to whom? And who will be allowed to speak? And what is the permissible range of discourse?

There exists at present the urgent sense that we must keep up the pressure of commemorating the Holocaust to counteract the poisons of the extremist "revisionist" historians, such as Robert Faurisson. To be truthful, I don't believe that the Faurissons and their ilk, who

deny that a mass extermination of Jews ever took place, threaten the world's perception of history. They are the lunatic fringe, which we will always have with us. It makes sense to be vigilant about them, but not so paranoid as to exaggerate their real persuasional powers.

As for the more moderate revisionist historians, such as Andreas Hillgruber, who has tried to link the collapse of the eastern front with the death camps' greater activity, or to propose that many German soldiers were heroically doing their duty, their views may set our teeth on edge with their insensitive tone, or alarm us with their usefulness to the far right; but the greater threat they pose to the purity of our outrage is that some of what they say could hold a grain of truth.

Is it reasonable to deny that some German soldiers in World War II may have been decent men victimized by the situation? Are we to divide the guilt by battalions—determine, as many are wont to do, that an ordinary German foot soldier may not have been entirely vicious, but that anyone in the SS was a sadistic criminal? I can well imagine a kid who didn't know better getting swept up in the mood of the day and joining the SS out of idealism. (One may scoff at the seeming oxymoron, Nazi idealist, yet every political movement generates its youthful idealists.)

I know of no event in recent years that has so united educated people in incredulous disgust as President Reagan's visit to the military cemetery in Bitburg, Germany. At the time, glad to heap scorn on a president I despised, I heartily joined the chorus, though with a slight inner uneasiness that I was too cowardly to express. Now, thinking it over, I would say that it may not have been such a dastardly thing for the visiting president of a victorious nation to lay a wreath on the tomb of his defeated enemy's soldiers. The gesture contains a certain old-fashioned Homeric nobility. *But don't you understand? There were SS troops buried in that cemetery! Reagan was "signaling" to the neo-Fascists that all is forgiven.* Yes, yes, I remember that argument. To be fair to Reagan, he has also made tributes to the Holocaust. So what was really being objected to was appearances. We could not allow any reconciliation to appear to cloud the distinction between radical good and radical evil, even if it was perfectly obvious to all of us that Reagan was not condoning nazism. The Holocaust has become a public issue around which we Jews must Save Face, must spot anti-Semitism and decry it even when we know that the substance underneath is rather different.

A similar reaction occurred recently when the speaker of the West German parliament, Philipp Jenninger, made a speech in which he tried to show how the Germans were taken in by Hitler. He attempted to recreate the psychology of the typical German fascinated by Hitler's air of success, but his irony was misunderstood—in some cases intentionally so by his political opponents—and he was forced to resign. Jenninger, a longtime supporter of Israel, was taken to task for saying honest things at the wrong time, and specifically for quoting from Nazi speeches and reports without systematic and repudiating interruption. Yet how is it possible to understand this complex historical phenomenon without reexamining the Nazi point of view? What sort of intellectual grasp can we get on a historical situation if it is presented only from the standpoint of the victims?

The role of chief victim affords us an edge, a sort of privileged nation status in the moral honor roll, such as the one that Native American Indians have enjoyed for some time.

The "sensitivity" quotient operating around the Holocaust has begun to preclude any public discourse that goes beyond expressions of mourning and remorse. And even within this constricted discourse, how greedily we watch for signs of imbalance. Will the pope single out sufficiently the tragedy of the Jews in his remarks about World War II? If not, the Jewish organizations are quick to get on his case. There is something so testy, so vain, so diva-like about this insistence that we always get top billing in any rite of mourning. Must every official statement that does not mention the Jews first among the dead be treated as an ominous sign of forgetting? Even if it were true that a certain resentment against the Jews, an incipient form of anti-Semitism, were lurking behind these official wordings or omissions, all our monitoring and suspicious rebuttal only leaves the impression of a Jewish lobby seeking to control, like a puppeteer, the language of politicians and popes.

Whenever I see in the newspaper a story about the opening of yet another memorial or museum dedicated to the Holocaust, complete with photograph of distinguished backers surrounding a cornerstone or architectural model, my stomach gets nervous. What I need to separate out for myself is how much of this discomfit derives from legitimate doubts and how much of it is simply the old fear of making ourselves too visible, drawing too much attention to Jewish things in a world that will never be anything but anti-Semitic. I would like to think, naturally, that there is more to it than cowardice. All right, then, what could possibly be wrong with a Holocaust memorial?

Let me start with an obtuse response: I just don't get why both New York and Washington, D.C., should have

to have Holocaust memorial museums. Or why every major city in the United States seems to be commemorating this European tragedy in some way or another.

An Israeli poet on a reading tour through the States was taken into the basement of a synagogue in Ohio and proudly shown the congregation's memorial to the six million dead: a torch meant to remain eternally lit. The poet muttered under his breath: "*Shoah flambé.*" In Israel they can joke about these matters. Holocaust monuments seem to me primarily a sign of ethnic muscle flexing, a sign that this or that Jewish community in, say, St. Louis or Seattle has the financial or political clout to erect such a tribute.

In the past, monuments commemorated victories and glory; they were a striving for immortality in the eyes of the *polis*. But with the very survival of the planet in doubt, and in light of our disenchantment with the whole ideal of glory after Vietnam and Watergate, a patriotic equestrian monument raised at this moment would seem embarrassing. Myself, I can easily live without more cannons and generals on pedestals. On the other hand, the dethroning of glory has brought about a tendency to erect monuments to shame and historical nightmare. These monuments have the tendency to make the visitor feel bad, while at the same time retaining a decorously remote and abstract air—all the more so when they are removed geographically from the ground of pain. Auschwitz is one thing: the historical preservation of the death camps *in situ* makes perfect sense. But it is quite another to allocate the bottom part of a new luxury apartment tower in Lower Manhattan for a Holocaust museum, for which the developer will receive the usual tax abatement.

Snobbish as this may sound, I view museums primarily as places for the exhibition and contemplation of interesting objects. Institutions like Yad Vashem (the Holocaust Heroes and Martyrs Museum) and the Museum of the Diaspora in Israel—which have few artifacts, consisting mainly of slide shows, blown-up photographs, and accompanying wall texts—are, in my view, essentially propaganda factories, designed to manipulate the visitor through a precise emotional experience. They are like the Tunnel of Horrors or a Disneyland park devoted to Jewish suffering. The success of the exhibit depends entirely on entering the museum in a properly preprogrammed state and allowing one's buttons to be pushed.

A woman I know, the child of camp survivors, had grown up with tales of Hitler and Buchenwald at every meal. Finally she got to visit Yad Vashem. She was so bursting with presold emotion, so ready to be wiped out by the experience, that, shortly after entering, she saw a lampshade and thought, "Oh my God, that could be my Uncle Morty!" and ran in tears from the museum. Her companion caught up with her to try to calm her down. "But Hilda," he said, "those lampshades are part of the exhibit showing a typical Jewish scholar's study before the Holocaust even began."

In my own visit to Yad Vashem I was part of a group of Jewish American academics who thought it so "heavy" that I didn't dare open my mouth. Some of the exhibits were undeniably interesting, but it was not an overwhelming experience for me. Rather, I was disturbed by what seemed a theatrically partisan misuse of historical methods. I also found it hard to summon to mind the six million dead in the face of such ennobling strain. The grounds were a sort of monument park filled with sentimental-expressionist statuary. Our tour guide explained that the steel pillar symbolized a smokestack as well as a ladder of transcendence. All this artistic-symbolism talk reminded me of the remark of an Israeli friend: "If bad sculpture could be turned into food, then Israel could feed the world."

Yad Vashem's memorial hall did have a bleak architectural elegance of stone and concrete; but the fire (another "eternal flame") was upstaged by an ugly black organic relief, symbolizing charred bones, I suppose. Someone in my group produced a mimeographed poem, which we read aloud:

> In the presence of eyes
> which witnessed the slaughter,
> which saw the oppression
> the heart could not bear ...
> I have taken an oath: to remember it all,
> to remember, not once to forget!
>
> In the presence of the flame
> a symbol of the slaughter ...
> in the presence of the flame
> a symbol of eternal memory ...
> in the presence of the flame
> which we kindle in our souls ...
> we join our sanctified six million.

Why did the poem have to be so bad? It is at this level of kitsch doggerel that I start to rebel.

Will the above seem the ravings of a finicky aesthete? I apologize. But remember that it *is* an aesthetic problem we are talking about, this attempt to make an effective presentation of a massive event. The dead of Auschwitz are not buried in Yad Vashem; believe me, I am not insulting their memories. Yad Vashem is the product of us the living, and as such it is subject to our dispassionate scrutiny and criticism. To project religious awe onto this recently built tourist attraction is idolatry, pure and simple.

In a brilliant essay called "The Kitsch of Israel,"

which appeared in the *New York Review of Books*, Avishai Margalit wrote:

> Israel's shrine of kitsch is not, as may have been expected, the Wailing Wall, but a place that should have been furthest away from any trace of kitsch: Yad Vashem, the memorial for the Holocaust. A "children's room" has been dedicated there recently, a pitch-dark room with tape-recorded voices of children crying out in Yiddish, "*Mama, Tate.*" . . .
>
> The real significance of this room is not in its commemoration of the single most horrible event in the history of mankind—the systematic murder of two million children, Jewish and Gypsies, for being what they were and not for anything they had done. The children's room, rather, is meant to deliver a message to the visiting foreign statesman, who is rushed to Yad Vashem even before he has had time to leave off his luggage at his hotel, that all of us here in Israel are these children and that Hitler-Arafat is after us. This is the message for internal consumption as well. Talking of the PLO in the same tone as one talks of Auschwitz is an important element in turning the Holocaust into kitsch.

Another method of Holocaust remembrance takes the form of educational instruction in grade school. The pedagogic problem I have with these Holocaust study units is that they are usually parachuted into the classroom with very little connection to anything else in the curriculum. As someone who worked in elementary and secondary schools for twelve years, I've had many occasions to see how the latest concession to each ethnic lobbying group—be it Puerto Rican Week, Black History Month, or Holocaust Week—is greeted by the students as a gimmick, not to be taken seriously. I remember the day that the local Holocaust curriculum specialist came into a fourth-grade classroom at P.S. 75 and in her sweet, solemn voice began describing the horrors of a concentration camp. The children listened with resentful politeness, distracted not necessarily because the subject matter was unsuitable for their age group, but because any subject matter introduced in so artificial a manner, with so little relation to their other studies, would be treated as an intrusion.

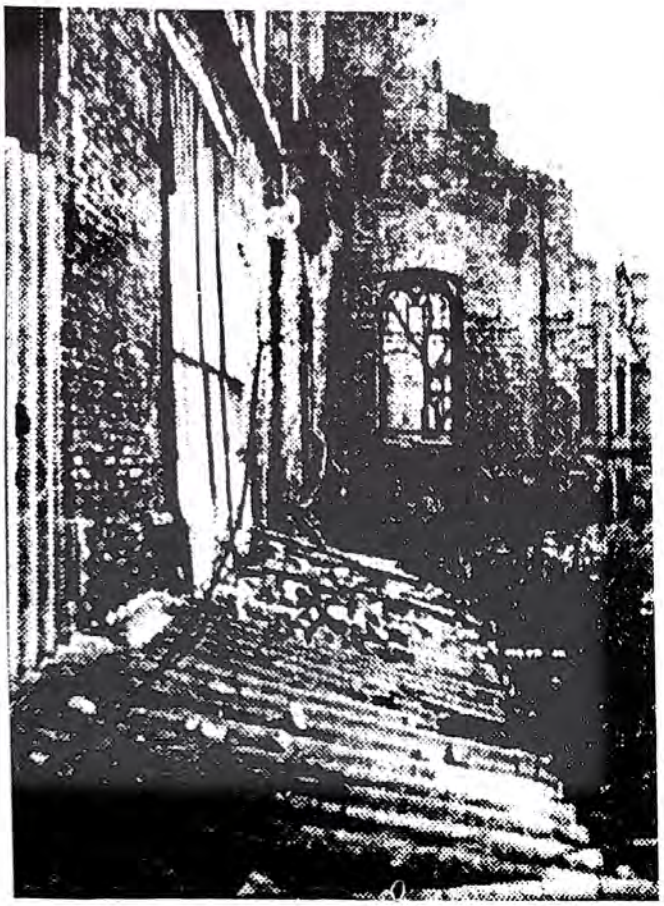
I realize it may be asking a lot, but we should be attempting to teach the Holocaust within a broader context, as part of an invigorated, general strengthening of historical studies. Why isolate Hitler completely from Bismarck, Kaiser Wilhelm, Adenauer, Stalin? Why teach children about Buchenwald and not other genocides? The Holocaust becomes their first, sometimes their exclusive, official school instruction on death and evil. Of course, kids daily see war and gore on the six o'clock news; but in school we seem to want them to encounter the horrors of mass killing solely through presentations about the fate of the Jews. It is almost as if we Jews wanted to monopolize suffering, to appropriate death as our own. But, as Irving Louis Horowitz points out, while Judaism as a way of life is special, there is no "special nature of Jewish dying. Dying is a universal property of many peoples, cultures, and nations."

I cannot help but see this extermination pride as another variant of the Covenant: this time the Chosen People have been chosen for extraordinary suffering. As such the Holocaust seems simply another opportunity for Jewish chauvinism. "Secularization," Hannah Arendt has written,

> . . . engendered a very real Jewish chauvinism, if by chauvinism we understand the perverted nationalism in which (in the words of Chesterton) "the individual himself is the thing to be worshipped; the individual is his own ideal and even his own idol." From now on, the old concept of chosenness was no longer the essence of Judaism; it was instead the essence of Jewishness.

There are other reasons besides chauvinism why Jews might be loath to surrender the role of chief victim. It affords us an edge, a sort of privileged nation status in the moral honor roll, such as the one that Native American Indians have enjoyed for some time. Following Hitler's defeat, we Jews had a short grace period in world opinion, pitied as we were and valued as an endangered species. Given the world's tendency to distort and demonize Jews in the past, it would almost seem as though there were no middle ground: either continue to fight for persecuted, good-victim status, or else watch the pendulum swing the opposite way to where we would be regarded as exceptionally wicked. But in my opinion there must be a middle ground, and it is worth fighting for. In the meantime, is it not possible for us to have a little more compassion for the other victimized peoples of this century and not insist quite so much that our wounds bleed more fiercely?

Theodor Adorno once made an intentionally provocative statement to the effect that one can't have poetry after Auschwitz. Much as I respect Adorno's writing, I have to ask: Why not? Are we to infer, regarding all the beautiful poetry that has been written since 1945, that these postwar poets were insensitive to some higher tact? Alexander Kluge, the German filmmaker, has explained what Adorno really meant by this remark: any art from now on that does not take Auschwitz into account will not be worthy as art. This is one of those large, intimidating pronouncements to which one gives assent in public while secretly thinking: huh? Art is a vast arena; must it all and



always come to terms with the death camps, important as they are? How hoggish, this Holocaust, to insist on putting its stamp on all creative activity.

On the other hand, reams have been written arguing that you can't make art out of the Holocaust. Elie Wiesel once declared: "Art and Auschwitz are antithetical." Many people nod their heads gravely at this, but is it true either? Perhaps they would like to believe that there is some preserve, some domain that ought to be protected from the artist's greedy hands. Actually, a whole body of splendid art about the tragedy of the Jews under the Nazis has been made. One thinks right away of Primo Levi's books, the poems of Paul Celan and Nelly Sachs, Tadeusz Kantor's theatrical pieces, films like Resnais's *Night and Fog,* Ophuls's *The Sorrow and the Pity* and *Hotel Terminus,* Losey's *Mister Klein,* Corti's trilogy *Where To And Back....* Maybe not a lot, true, but then not much great art came out of the debacle of World War I. We should not forget that 99 percent of all art-making attempts are failures, regardless of subject matter.

It has also been argued that the enormity of the Nazis' crimes against the Jews calls for an aesthetic approach of an entirely different order than the traditional mimetic response. This seems to me nothing more than a polemic in favor of certain avant-garde or antinaturalist techniques, hitched arbitrarily to the Holocaust. Yes, Paul Celan's cryptic, abstract poems are powerful approaches to the concentration camps, but so are Primo Levi's direct, lucid accounts. I would not like to think that every stage piece about the Holocaust must perforce follow the stripped, ritualized strategies of Grotowski's or Kantor's theatrical works—effective as these may be by themselves—out of some deluded idea that a straight naturalistic approach would desecrate the six million dead.

Art has its own laws, and even so devastating an event as the Holocaust may not significantly change them. For all its virtues, Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*'s longueurs, repetitions, and lack of sympathy are not exonerated, no matter what its apologists may argue, by the seriousness of the subject matter, as though an audience must be put through over eight hours of an exhaustingly uneven movie to convince it of the reality of the Holocaust. A tighter film would have accomplished the same and been a stronger work of art. Lanzmann might reply that he is indifferent to the claims of art compared to the claims of the Holocaust. Unfortunately you can't play and not play the game of art at the same time.

What is usually meant by the statement that the Holocaust is unsuitable for artistic treatment is that it is too vast and terrible to be used merely as a metaphor or backdrop. Certainly I understand the impatience of serious people with the parade of shallow movie melodramas and television docudramas that invoke the milieu of Nazi Germany as a sort of narrative frisson. Indeed, where would the contemporary European art film be without the Holocaust? As a plot device it is second only to infidelity. For the fractured European film market, the trauma of World War II is perhaps the only unifying historical experience to which narratives can appeal commercially. Yet the mediocrity of such "prestige" movies as Truffaut's *The Last Metro,* Visconti's *The Damned,* Zanussi's *Somewhere in the Night,* Malle's *Lacombe, Lucien,* De Sica's *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis,* Szabo's *Hanussen,* among others, illustrates the degree to which—even for talented directors—the Nazi terror has ossified into a stale genre, a ritualized parade of costumes and sentimental conventions, utterly lacking in the authentic texture of personally observed detail. Now we have the Third Reich as dress-up: all those red flags with swastikas, those jeeps and jackboots suddenly flashing in key-lit night scenes, the tinkle of broken glass—accoutrements that seem considerably less menacing in technicolor than they used to in black and white. We have endless variations of the *Cabaret* plot, as characters flounder in frivolous, "decadent" sexual confusion before the evil Nazis announce themselves at midpoint and restore order and narrative suspense in one blow. The Gestapo represents the principle of Fate rescuing the story from its aimlessness—a screenwriter's best friend. The Jewish protagonists at first are

pulled unknowingly into that funnel of history, and then gradually learn that there is something larger than their personal discontents. Meanwhile, the Christian characters sort themselves into betrayers and noble selfless neighbors, thanks to the litmus test of the Holocaust plot, and the audience readies itself for that last purgative scene, the lineup before the trains....

Still, to enumerate the clichés is not to agree with the viewpoint that no art can be made about the Holocaust. Quite the contrary: it is only to demand that the artist go beyond a sentimental, generic approach to the subject and find a more complex, detailed, personal, and original path.

I have an ex-student, Bella, whose father was always trying to get her to see Resnais's *Night and Fog,* an admittedly fine film about the death camps. Her father believed that we must all deal in one way or another with the Holocaust, and his way, as befit an educated man, was to read as many books and see as many films on the subject as possible. This approach he urged on his daughter. But Bella did not want to see *Night and Fog.* As a child she had had many phobias, and, even after she had outgrown them, there was something about the way her father talked up the film that made her leery. He would try to get her to meet him at the movie theater where it was showing. He kept saying, "But you owe it to *them* to see it." Them: the ghosts, the six million.

Bella refused. Since that time she has moved to Israel and is leading, in her own way, a good Jewish life.

What are our obligations to *them?* Whatever they may be, no living person can tell us.

While I read books and see movies about the Holocaust, I do it more out of a sense of curiosity and desire to learn about history than out of a religious debt to the victims. I am not convinced that learning history means trying to put oneself emotionally through the experience—or blaming oneself if one is not feeling enough.

I am trying to put my finger on a problem regarding empathy. A Jewish educator recently wrote that we must find a way to make our young people "feel more anguishingly the memory of our dead." But the effort to project oneself into the Holocaust past, to "undergo" for a few minutes what others have suffered in the transport trains and the camps, to take that anguish into oneself, seems, except in rare cases, foredoomed. That way generally lies tourism and self-pity. It is hard enough in psychoanalysis to retrieve affectively one's *own* past, one's actual memories; to expect to relive invented memories with emotion seems overly demanding or gimmicky, like those Black history courses that made the students crawl along the floor "chained" to each other to give them an existential feel for conditions in the hold of a slave ship.

False knowledge. Borrowed mysticism. By blackmailing ourselves into thinking that we must put ourselves through a taste of Auschwitz, we are imitating unconsciously the Christian mystics who tried to experience in their own flesh the torments of Christ on the cross. But this has never been part of the Jewish religion, this gluttony for empathic suffering. Though Jewish rabbis and sages have been killed for their faith, and their deaths recorded and passed down, Judaism has fought shy in the past of establishing a hagiography based on martyrdom. Why are we doing it now?

Does it really matter if millions are gassed by Eichmann rather than marched around by Khmer Rouge soldiers and then beheaded? Does neatness count so damn much?

In certain ways, the Jewish American sacramentalizing of the Holocaust seems an unconscious borrowing of Christian theology. That one tragic event should be viewed as standing outside, above history, and that its uniqueness must be defended and proclaimed, seems very much like the Passion of Christ. Indeed, in a recent book, *The Crucifixion of the Jews,* the Christian theologian Franklin H. Littell has argued that the true Crucifixion *was* the Holocaust, not the death of Jesus on the cross, and that the subsequent establishment of the State of Israel was the resurrection. Littell asks: "Was Jesus a false Messiah? ... Is the Jewish people, after all and in spite of two millennia of Christian calumny, the true Suffering Servant promised in Isaiah?" And John Cardinal O'Connor of New York writes: "To say to the Jews, 'Forget the Holocaust,' is to say to Christians, 'Forget the Crucifixion.' There is a sacramentality about the Holocaust for Jews all around the world. It constitutes a mystery, by definition beyond their understanding—and ours." Complimentary as all this may sound, it worries me because it shows how easily Judaism can be Christianized—or at least co-opted into a Christian vocabulary—by mythologizing the Holocaust experience.

The theological uses to which the Holocaust has been put by an assimilated Jewish American community are so diverse that the Holocaust has begun to replace the Bible as the new text that we must interpret. There is the danger that the "glamor" of the Holocaust will

eclipse traditional religious practice in the eyes of American Jewry—that, in effect, the Holocaust will swallow up Judaism. In the vacuum where God used to be, we are putting the Holocaust.

I first began to notice the usurpation of the traditional Passover service by Holocaust worship at a large communal seder in Houston, about 1982. Though rewritings of the Haggadah were nothing new to me (in the late sixties, the Vietcong were compared to the Jews in Egypt trying to throw off their oppressors), the introduction of references to the Holocaust in every second or third prayer seemed to have a different function. For many of the people at that seder in Texas, the Holocaust *was* the heart of their faith; it was what touched them most deeply about being Jewish. The religion itself—the prayers, the commentaries, the rituals, the centuries of accumulated wisdom and tradition—had shriveled to a sort of marginally necessary preamble for this negative miracle. The table conversation turned to accounts of pilgrimages to Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz, package tours organized by United Jewish Appeal. The ancient Jewish religion was all but forgotten beside the lure of the concentration camp universe.

The importance of the Holocaust for such assimilated Jews must be considered within the broader framework of the erosion of Jewish group memory in the modern period. By group or "collective" memory, I mean simply all the customs, rituals, ceremonies, folkways, *Yiddishkeit,* cuisine, historical events, and so on that used to be the common inheritance of every Jew. The desperation to hold onto the Holocaust is informed by this larger decay. Underneath these anxious injunctions never to forget, what I hear is: "We must never forget the Holocaust because we're rapidly forgetting everything else."

At first glance it seemed to me a paradox that Jews, ostensibly the historically minded people par excellence, should be so resistant to placing the Holocaust in a comparative historical context. But then I came across an illuminating little book by the historian Yosef Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory,* which argues that antihistorical currents are nothing new within Jewry. The oft-repeated injunction to "remember" is not the same as urging a historical perspective. "Not only is Israel under no obligation whatever to remember the entire past," Yerushalmi writes, "but its principle of selection is unique unto itself. It is above all God's acts of intervention in history, and man's responses to them, be they positive or negative, that must be recalled."

Yerushalmi points out that for nearly fifteen centuries after the death of Josephus, during that talmudic period so fertile for commentary about the patterns and meaning of the Bible, there were no Jewish historians. The rabbis felt it unnecessary and perhaps even impious to keep contemporary historical records (except for sketchy rabbinic genealogies) precisely because the Bible was already "sacred history." A brief flurry of Jewish history-writing occurred in the sixteenth century, touched off in part by the need to understand the catastrophic expulsion of Jews from Spain and Portugal. But these chronicles were not as scientific as Christian histories of the same era; they had elements of messianism and followed a somewhat apocalyptic approach, examining the past for signs and prophecies of a coming redemption. Even this limited historical activity was submerged at the end of the sixteenth century by the greater appeal of Lurianic Kabbala, which offered Jews, in Yerushalmi's words,

> a unique interpretation of history that lay beyond history . . . an awesome metahistorical myth of a pronounced gnostic character. That myth declared that all evil, including the historical evil that is Jewish exile, had its roots before history began, before the Garden of Eden was planted, before our world existed, in a primal tragic flaw that occurred at the very creation of the cosmos itself.

In the modern era, of course, a plethora of Jewish histories and historians came into being; but the new objective methods of analysis have been on a collision course with providential history. "To the degree that this historiography is indeed 'modern' and deserves to be taken seriously," Yerushalmi writes, "it must at least functionally repudiate" two cardinal assumptions of traditional Judaism: "the belief that divine providence is not only an ultimate but an active causal factor in Jewish history, and the related belief in the uniqueness of Jewish history itself."

Forgive this digression; it actually has a point. Our response to the Holocaust must be seen within this broader framework of the ancient Jewish ambivalence toward a historical outlook, which threatens the religious one. The hostility toward anything that questions the uniqueness of the Holocaust can now be seen as part of a deeper tendency to view all of Jewish history as unique, to read that history selectively and use it only insofar as it promotes a redemptive script. Thus, the Holocaust's "mystery" must be asserted over and over, in the same way as was the "mystery" of Jewish survival through the ages, in order to yield the single explanation that God "wants" the Jewish people to live and is protecting them. Being a secular, fallen Jew with a taste for rationalism and history, I cannot help but regard such providential interpretations as mumbo jumbo. Against them I would place the cool, cautionary wisdom of Spinoza about his own people: "As for their continuance so long after dispersion and the loss of

empire, there is nothing marvelous in it."

Sometimes I see the Jewish preoccupation with the Holocaust, to the exclusion of all other human disasters, as uncharitable, self-absorbed, self-righteous, and, well, pushy. On the other hand, it makes no sense to counsel putting it aside for a while. How can we be expected to get over so enormous a tragedy in only forty or fifty years? It takes time, centuries. It took over a thousand years for the Jews as a people to get over the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and we may still not have recovered from that. My problem is not that the grief is taking too long, but that the orchestration of that grief in the public realm sometimes seems coercive and misguided.

Jewish history is filled with disasters, from which some redemptive meaning has ultimately been extracted. The Holocaust is proving to be a large bone to swallow; it does not turn "redeemable" so easily, and when we try to hurry up that process with mechanical prescriptions and ersatz rituals, compelling governments and churches to pay verbal tribute to our losses in narrowly defined terms and browbeating our young people to feel more anguishingly the memory of our dead, something false, packaged, and sentimentally aggressive begins to enter the picture. Perhaps the problem is that for many alienated, secularized Jews who experience themselves as inauthentic in a thousand other ways, the Holocaust has become the last proof of their own authenticity. If so, they should realize that even this proof is perishable stuff; the further one gets away from personal experience, the harder it is to take the spilled blood of history into one's veins. □

A Critique of Phillip Lopate

Don't Resist

Yehuda Bauer

Phillip Lopate would quite clearly be much happier if we did not concentrate on the Holocaust so much. It is ironic, then, that he spends an inordinate amount of time, space, and effort in doing precisely that. The problem will not, contrary to what he says, go away sooner or later, as our generation passes on. In fact, he himself shows why it is unlikely to go away; he agonizes over the problem—it bothers him greatly. He both hopes that other things will take its place and argues for a more sensible treatment of the topic in the future. But not a year passes nowadays without an ever-larger amount of Holocaust material of all kinds—historical, sociological, philosophical, theological, literary, and so on—being produced. Some of it Lopate approves of; most of it he does not. A third of the Jewish people were murdered; that will not disappear or be forgotten.

Let me first explain where I agree with Lopate's complaints. I do agree that the Holocaust has been misused, especially, but not solely, by the Israeli political establishment—especially, but by no means only, by the right. I agree that much of the literature, and especially the media treatment, has resulted in a trivialization of the event, which is little short of catastrophic. I agree that the Holocaust has been misused especially to promote types of Jewish chauvinism, leading many people to ignore the sufferings of others. I agree that no questions should be barred and that comparisons with other events are perfectly in order. I also agree that a tendency exists, especially in the United States, to turn the Holocaust into a "civil religion," to substitute it for identification with the Jewish heritage (however that may be interpreted). And I agree that this tendency is dangerous. Beyond that, I have some rather large bones to pick with Lopate.

Lopate feels uncomfortable with being singled out, as a Jew, for special treatment, historically speaking. I cannot help that. Facts are facts: anti-Jewishness is the oldest group-hatred we know of, older than racial prejudice. It stems from some rather basic cultural differences between the Jews and the people surrounding them in ancient times—Jews' monotheism and its implied support of the equality of all peoples, the Jewish statement in principle against slavery, the statement about the supreme value of human life, the statement about equality before the law ("eye for an eye"), and other provisions. Not that similar ideas cannot be found in ancient civilizations

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preceding the Jewish one, but the mix is certainly unique. The Jews carried this culture with them as they began dispersing in the wake of political disasters, and thus they could become the target of attack when their host societies entered periods of crisis. Could, but did not necessarily have to—that depended on local conditions. Anti-Semitism then is not just a prejudice; it is a cultural attitude of great historical depth. And it became a tremendous force with the developing differentiation between Christianity and Judaism.

Nazism saw the Jews as a satanic element that endangered the human species and therefore had to be eliminated. Hence the notion that the Holocaust is unique: not because of the number of victims, or because of the methods of murder, or indeed because of the attendant sadism and brutality (parallel manifestations of sadism and brutality can be found throughout human history); but because of the unprecedented totality of the plans and because of their intended global validity. "Uniqueness" is understood here as "without exact precedent," not as "incomparable." Indeed, the universal implication of the Holocaust lies, dialectically, precisely in its uniqueness: it is the fact that the Holocaust happened to a particular people at a particular time for reasons that are due partly to a very long history and partly to modern situations and developments. The Holocaust happened; therefore it can happen again, not necessarily to Jews, not necessarily by Germans, but anywhere by anyone to anyone. The precedent that the Holocaust sets is one of the more disturbing facts about it. That

Lopate throws into the pot distinct cases of diverse peoples, as though all these cases were parallels to the Holocaust.

Lopate is a Jew, that his people have for many years been subjected to tremendous oppression, that the Holocaust is a crucially important event in human history and thereby pushes an unwilling Lopate as part of an unwilling Jewish people into the eye of the storm—all this I cannot help. Lopate will have to live with it, uncomfortably but inevitably.

When we ask about comparisons with the Romanies (Gypsies), Armenians, Cambodians, Hutus, or any other group, we find some parallels as well as some quite central differences. The crucial distinction is the Nazis' quasi-religious, universal decision to engage in a total annihilation campaign. Such a campaign did not take place with either the Romanies or the Slavs or the Armenians—though there was a decision in principle to murder all Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Recently, Romany intellectuals and historians have raised questions about whether such a campaign of annihilation was waged against the Romanies. If evidence were to be introduced that showed that the racialist attitude toward them resulted in the same kind of policy, there would be every reason to extend to them as well the term "Holocaust," which is the (etymologically inappropriate) term for the total planned physical annihilation of a single people. Lopate's problem is that he demands—rightly—to make comparisons and then does not compare at all. He simply throws into the pot distinct cases of diverse peoples in different circumstances, as though all these cases were parallels to the Holocaust. They are not.

There is of course no contradiction at all between stating that anti-Semitism is a phenomenon that is larger or deeper than what we usually call "prejudice," or that the Holocaust is unique in the sense described above, and identifying with "other" victims as well. Quite the contrary: the study of the Holocaust, when it is done in a controlled and serious way, can and does lead to a greater awareness of the process of victimization, and may help us establish what Holocaust scholar Franklin H. Littell has called an "early warning system" against future repetition of genocide and holocaust.

The point is, however, that while cancer and coronary disease are both very dangerous, one does not treat them in the same way. The autogenocide of the Cambodians is of the same "genus" as the Holocaust, but it is also unique: we are not aware of another mass murder on this scale by the authorities of a state against its own ethnic group. One can compare the Holocaust with the destruction of the aborigine Tasmanians or the Armenians and the Romanies much more easily than with the self-destruction of the Cambodians. In any case, the Holocaust is probably the most extreme form of genocide to date, because of the quasi-religious, universal, and total motivation of the perpetrators. By analyzing the most extreme form, one can learn more about the psychological, political, and ideological mechanisms that help bring about less extreme forms of the same sickness.

Lopate emphasizes what he calls the "continuum of state-sanctioned cruelty," and he speaks of the French torture of Algerians, the My Lai massacre, the destruction of the Armenians, and Pol Pot's murders as points along that spectrum. But Lopate's approach is marred by muddled thinking. What happened in Algeria was not genocide but an anticolonialist struggle and the attempt to suppress it. What happened at My Lai was not sanctioned by the State Department but was a battlefield decision to execute mass murder of enemies—

again no intention of genocide can be shown. The Armenian case is a case of genocide, very near to what I define as a Holocaust situation. The Holocaust itself was not state-sponsored; it was executed by an ideological organization, the NSDAP, which intended to emasculate the German state because it saw in it one of its main enemies. The equation of nazism with the state bureaucracy is correct only insofar as the bureaucracy executed the wishes of a supralegal, ideologically oriented party mechanism. If there is a continuum, it is not one of state-sponsored cruelty, which stretches from a policeman in Los Angeles beating up a drunk to mass murder, but one that goes from mass murder to genocide to Holocaust, as defined above.

What I object to very strongly is Lopate's attempt to look at the Holocaust "from an ironic distance." You can do that with a lot of things, but please not with the mass murder of your or any other people. This is not an academic exercise in literary criticism; this is mass murder. It is this unfortunate "irony" that seems to have led Lopate to attack my article opposing the Wiesenthal definition of the Holocaust as being the destruction of six million Jews and five million non-Jews. He argues that since I see the Holocaust as killing Jews, "pure and simple," we Jews own the Holocaust and "all others get your cotton-picking hands off." Let me be "pure and simple": the Jews were picked out for total destruction, unlike any other people. They would have much preferred not to be picked out, in which case they would not "own" the Holocaust. As it is, they unfortunately do "own" it.

Wiesenthal's definition is demonstrably false. The total number of non-Jewish concentration camp victims is about half a million—which is half a million too many, but it is not five million. On the other hand, the total number of dead in World War II has been estimated at thirty-five million. Deduct the nearly six million Jews, and you have many more than Wiesenthal's five million. Yet there was no premeditated plan to murder all these people—all the members of any group. If you were a Polish peasant or city-dweller and you avoided resistance and other types of opposition, you would have suffered, no doubt, but you would not have been targeted for murder. To call what happened to the non-Jewish victims "the Holocaust" is "simply" false. Wiesenthal, as he admitted to me in private, invented the figure in order to create sympathy for the Jews—in order to make the non-Jews feel like they are part of us. A nice sentiment, maybe, but ultimately totally counterproductive, not to mention false.

Lopate would like the Holocaust to disappear—wouldn't we all! Unfortunately, one third of our people disappeared into the abyss, and we have to know more about it, not less. Rather than deal with the Holocaust with "ironic distance," which is little short of scandalous, let us deal with it—including its aberrations, trivializations, and vulgarizations—in a concerned and involved manner. It will not go away, but at least then we can face it. □

A Critique of Phillip Lopate

What is the Meaning of This to *You*?

Deborah E. Lipstadt

For the past ten years, virtually since the explosion of interest in the Holocaust, scholars and teachers have had serious reservations about the way in which the Holocaust has been used and abused to support an entire gamut of political and social objectives. The Holocaust has been invoked as a means of encouraging Jews to study Torah, give to Jewish charities, support political causes—both liberal and conservative—and observe traditional Jewish rituals.

Similar concerns have been expressed about the rash of Holocaust memorials being erected in so many cities in America. The amount of money being expended on what are often artworks of questionable value could, if used differently, have a significant impact on other areas of Jewish life.

Educators have struggled to find a way to teach about the Holocaust so that students, particularly Jewish students, do not come to conceive of the Jewish experience as a sequence of painful experiences, and of Jews as

Deborah E. Lipstadt is the author of Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933–1945 *(Free Press, 1986) and is currently conducting a study of Holocaust Revisionism.*



the perennial victims. Certainly there have been heavy-handed attempts to teach about the Holocaust, such as the one described by Phillip Lopate; but there are many quite effective ones as well. Of these, and of much else, Lopate seems unaware.

Lopate's article—at times it is more of a diatribe than anything else—takes no account of this struggle. His real concerns have little to do with the Holocaust itself, more to do with the aesthetics of commemoration.

Lopate seems confused regarding the Historikerstreit, the historians' struggle in Germany. First of all, it was not a Jew or a Jewish institution but President Richard von Weizsäcker (son of an official who played a prominent role in the Nazi foreign office) who rejected the attempts by historians in Germany to compare the Holocaust to Stalin's purges or to equate the destruction of the Jews with the defeat of the German army, as some of these historians, including Ernst Nolte and Andreas Hillgruber, have done. Weizsäcker realized that when these historians argue that the Nazis and the Bolsheviks were equivalent, they are not merely seeking an intellectual framework for historical analysis of the Holocaust; they are trying to normalize their country's past. No one denies that there might have been decent soldiers within the Wehrmacht. But these German historians are not intent on resurrecting an individual soldier; they are intent on rewriting German history. This is not simply an intellectual endeavor, but a political and national one; and it is the same thing that the newly victorious right-wing German parties are trying to do.

When Jenninger made his unfortunate speech, most commentators in this country—both within the Jewish community and outside of it—came to his defense. He was removed from his position by his fellow Germans less for what he said than for how he said it.

The attempt to reformulate German history has its roots in Reagan's visit to Bitburg, for which Lopate seems to have developed a newfound sympathy. The visit had nothing to do with "old-fashioned Homeric nobility." Lopate's conviction that Reagan's tributes over the years to the Holocaust legitimized his visit is indicative of—at best—a certain confusion about the deeper implications of the visit. (Moreover, it is a strange correlation. It is as if someone who had long pronounced his antipathy toward sexism and anti-Semitism could use this antipathy as a justification for joining a private club that discriminated against women and Jews.)

Chancellor Kohl's invitation to Reagan was issued as a means, as historian Charles Maier has observed, of linking "slayer and slain in a dialectic of victimhood." After having been snubbed by the Allies' Normandy commemoration, the German leader wanted Reagan at his side as a means of indicating to the world that postwar Germany no longer carried the moral burden of the Holocaust. The object of the visit to the cemetery in which members of the Waffen SS are buried was to obliterate the distinction between victims and perpetrators. Both the Germans and the Jews became victims because both had been tyrannized by one man, Adolf Hitler, and both had been subjected to the same ultimate fate. Reagan's visit to Bergen-Belsen furthered this blurring of differences in that it was an attempt to give equal time to both sets of "victims."

Lopate's complaint about the use of pictures of "gentle, scholarly, middle-class, *civilized* people [emphasis in original]," which he claims indicates that "the liquidation of illiterate peasants would not be as poignant," also misses the mark. First of all, virtually none of the Jews killed were "illiterate peasants." More important, the use of these pictures, in contrast to those of concentration camp inmates—skeletal human beings dressed in stripped rags—is far more effective from a pedagogical perspective. Early films, books, and exhibits relied, for the most part, on pictures of inmates. Such pictures are certainly more macabre, sensational, and horrifying. But they do not depict people with whom most viewers will identify. It is easy to dismiss camp inmates as "other" and to say, "This could not be me or my people;

this is another universe." But the picture of a victim who dresses as I might dress brings home the point that "there but for fortune go you or I."

Lopate has had the sorry experience of being subjected to a heavy Holocaust program complete with substandard verse. Most such programs are pedestrian at best and would certainly upset a "finicky aesthete." In many such cases, silence would be a more fitting tribute. But that does not obliterate the need for a Yad Vashem, a site where those who feel the need to mourn can do so. Lopate is correct: one does find there a certain religious awe, the same awe one finds at Arlington, the Vietnam Memorial, and Plotzensee—the German memorial to those who resisted Hitler in 1944. And, when events in Southeast Asia are tranquil once again, Cambodians and others, one hopes, will erect a memorial to their victims.

The young woman, a child of survivors, who ran out of Yad Vashem after seeing a lampshade was certainly overwrought and out of control. But was she bursting with what Lopate derisively dismisses as "presold emotion"? Or was she overwhelmed by pain, pain that came from loss of family, pain transmitted by parents who witnessed and experienced unspeakable horrors, pain from unresolved fear and anger? There are reams of scholarly work by psychologists, social workers, sociologists, and others about children of survivors. There are also many self-portraits. These works make repeated reference to the difficulties and pain that the children of survivors endured as children and, in many cases, continue to endure as adults. Should we condemn this young woman for breaking down at the wrong lampshade?

One cannot build a Jewish identity on suffering alone. The challenge is to maintain a strong and vibrant Jewish identity, despite that suffering.

Lopate's inability to relate to this woman is probably the most revealing aspect of his article. Like Lopate's mother, we need not care for someone just because they have suffered a lot; but we should be able to understand their emotions. Lopate seems to have lost that sense of kinship. It is not his criticisms that are so bothersome; it is his lack of kinship.

Rabbis, teachers, scholars, and others have long recognized that one cannot build a Jewish identity on suffering alone. No person should be taught that he or she must be a Jew because of Jewish suffering. The challenge is to be a Jew, to maintain a strong and vibrant Jewish identity, *despite* that suffering. That identity must be built on knowledge and love of the multifaceted aspects of Jewish culture, values, history, and tradition. One does not necessarily have to agree with all aspects of that culture and tradition. But even as one argues and disagrees, one must feel a sense of kinship. There are dissenters in the Jewish community whose dissent is fueled by their passion for Jews and Jewish culture, and there are dissenters whose passion is fueled by the desire to dissent.

The second son in the Passover Haggadah asks, "What is the meaning of this service to *you?*" The Haggadah instructs that he be told that had he been in Egypt he would not have been redeemed—because he said to "you" and not to "us." Why does a grammatical choice evoke such a harsh verdict? Because by his use of "you" he "denies a basic principle of our faith"; because he has separated himself from the community. In his article Lopate does the same. And it is this separation that is at the heart of his resistance to the Holocaust. □

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C O R N E L L

Phillip Lopate Responds to Bauer and Lipstadt

I have such deep respect for Yehuda Bauer that it is a privilege, if not entirely a pleasure, to be excoriated by him. Given the lifetime he has spent reflecting on the Holocaust, the distinctions he draws about matters of mass murder certainly carry more weight than my own; my only excuse for muddying these waters was to make a point, which he seems to think worthless, about the continuum of cruelty. I confess that some of his objections strike me as nit-picking: for instance, if the Nazis controlled the government apparatus, whatever their hostility to the state might have been, their murdering of Jews still seems to me an instance of state-sponsored violence. But let that stand.

More to the point, Bauer seems fundamentally out of sympathy with my essayistic approach to these matters. He does not see why I worry at such "inordinate length" about a problem that makes me uncomfortable. I would say this is standard practice for a personal essayist; I have often taken as a starting point something that disturbs me or makes me uneasy, and then circled it from as many vantage points as possible until I have gotten to the bottom of my feelings. While this method may seem to some readers wildly self-indulgent when applied to such a dark, special subject, it is precisely because I am not an expert on the Holocaust that I hoped my airing of these private resistances would help clear the air and give heart to others with similar "unkosher" doubts. Bauer clearly has little patience with this enterprise of sifting through ambivalent feelings without necessarily resolving them, which may be why he tends to caricature my views. When he portrays me as someone "who would like the Holocaust to disappear," or who wrongly thinks "the problem will ... go away sooner or later," he is inventing someone who bears no relation to me. Quite the contrary: my essay specifically states that "we must continue to come to terms with the Holocaust" and that it will not go away. When Bauer says, "Lopate will have to live with it, uncomfortably but inevitably," he should know that I have never asked for anything but.

Bauer shows considerable distaste for what he refers to as my scandalous "ironic distance" toward the murder of one-third of our people. I was puzzled by this charge, enough to seek out the offending passage he seemed to be quoting. What I found I actually wrote was this:

> The Hitler/Holocaust analogy dead-ends all intelligent discourse by intruding a stridently shrill note that forces the mind to withdraw. To challenge that demagogic minefield of pure self-righteousness from an ironic distance almost ensures being misunderstood.

This is all part of my discussion of the rhetorical uses to which the Holocaust has been put. It isn't the tragedy itself I ever want to treat with ironic distance, but the loaded analogies and the rhetorical figure of the Holocaust today—a distinction I tried to make very clear in the essay. With all due respect, I think Bauer has confused the two, making me out to be more of a monster than I actually am.

Bauer's and Lipstadt's responses prove my point that discussion of the Holocaust often polarizes and obliterates subtle distinctions.

If anything, Yehuda Bauer's and Deborah Lipstadt's responses prove my point that discussion of the Holocaust often polarizes and obliterates subtle distinctions. Once Lipstadt's hackles are raised, she sees me as "confused" and "unaware" every time my emphasis on events differs from hers. There seems to be a real mismatch of temperaments between Lipstadt's and mine. I don't mind her taking me to task for failing to mention effective Holocaust curricula, or her lecturing me humorlessly about Reagan at Bitburg (it was probably a mistake to have indulged my unfortunate taste for intellectual perversity here). But I think it's a bit much when she drums me out of the Jewish community on the basis of completely misunderstanding the incident about the woman who mistook a lampshade for her Uncle Morty. The fact is that the woman who told me this anecdote did so in a self-mocking, comic manner; and I was citing the story in that wry spirit. Not only did I not intend to "condemn this woman" (whom I happen to like very much), but I thought it went without saying that her pain as a child of survivors formed the background of the joke, as pain often does with Jewish humor. The fact that I might smile at someone's acting out of "presold emotion" and still feel sympathy and kinship with her seems not to have been credited to my account. For Lipstadt to tell me, as a consequence of my alleged hard-heartedness, that I feel no sense of kinship with Jews, when the very opposite is the case, seems a bit presumptuous. Is she so much the spokesperson for the Jewish community that she is able to determine piously who has or has not separated himself from it? I have not separated myself from the Jewish community, and indeed have no intention of doing so in the near future. □

In this special section we are pleased to present several selected addresses and papers from the Tikkun *Conference, which was held in New York City December 18–20, 1988. In the March/April 1989 issue and in the forthcoming July/August 1989 issue additional papers can be found. We regret that we cannot print all the material from the conference; there are many other interesting and important papers we would like to include, but space is a problem.*

BANQUET ADDRESS

American Jews and Israel

Irving Howe

Has there ever, these past two centuries, been a time when the word "crisis" was not invoked in talking about the Jewish condition? Call that descriptive a cliché, declare yourself weary with the extreme and unnerving language favored by Jewish publicists—and still: we know that in the modern era Jewish life has lurched from crisis to crisis. Of the prolonged security and cultural ease that has been the lot of other peoples, we have known very little. So I will perhaps be forgiven if I say that once again the Jews are in deep trouble, experiencing a dual crisis, one in Israel, bloody and marked by moral laceration, and the other in the United States, bloodless and marked by moral evasion. The two crises interlock, quite as the two Jewish communities interlock.

Jewish life, insofar as it is sustained by a historical—that is, a modern—Jewish consciousness, is a life malformed. Not only because of the two thousand years of exile, though the exile has done its damage; nor because of some gentile passion for murdering Jews, though there has been plenty of murder too. Something hard to locate, and harder still to name, has been at work. Amid all the achievements of recent Jewish life there is a paradox, perhaps less so in Israel than elsewhere, but, insofar as the Israeli Jews are marked by historical consciousness, also in Israel. Jewish life requires, as a commandment, that the Holocaust sear our memories, but precisely this memory determines that we be malformed. Doves and hawks, left and right, at ease in Zion or easier still in the Diaspora: all malformed.

Whether the notion of making Jewish life "normal" was ever more than a dream of our dreamers, I cannot say; but I believe the talk of a "normal" Jewish life in the late twentieth century is an absurdity. Individuals may live a "normal" life, but Jewish life as such cannot be "normal." As an extreme instance, I would cite the opening chapter of David Grossman's novel *See Under: Love,* which depicts very powerfully the trauma of Holocaust survivors in Israel—those nightmares of memory that, in far less terrible and sometimes even suppressed forms, afflict all Jews insofar as they remain Jews, even the toughest of sabras, even the most philistine and bourgeoisified of American Jews. To live as a conscious Jew means to live with a malformed consciousness. This can be seen in the notions of some North American Jewish writers who, perhaps by way of compensation, want the Jews to become *shtarke,* want them to create a new breed of Hebrew samurai. It can be seen in the confusions of American Jews who feel themselves simultaneously secure and endangered, strong and weak, at home and homeless, liberated from yet also burdened with the Jewish past. And it can be seen in the wisecrack of the late Israeli prime minister, Levi Eshkol, who once remarked that Israeli Jews saw themselves, or were seen by others, as *Shimshon der Nebekhdiger,* Samson the pitiful, Samson the feeble.

What lies at the root of such feelings is not just the memory of Nazi murders. The crucial fact is that the Nazis systematically *humiliated* the Jews, that they stamped upon the Jews their marks of sadism and superiority, that they made the Jews grovel and hop, that, with at least some success, they cunningly undermined the humanity of the Jews; and surely this must have shaken Jewish self-understanding and self-regard. Perhaps such a realization lies behind the refusal of the great Yiddish poet Abraham Sutzkever, a survivor of the Vilna ghetto, to speak about his memories of the Holocaust years—memories about Jewish conduct.

Irving Howe is the author of World of Our Fathers *(Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976) and coeditor of* Dissent.

Perhaps, at the other end of the spectrum, such a realization led Boris Pasternak to ask whether the endless suffering of Jews might be too high a price to pay for Jewish survival. And perhaps some such realization made the Canaanite movement in Israel propose to wipe out Diaspora history, in the strange belief that a national identity could be forged by disinheriting a shared past. The half-buried, aching memory of humiliation recurs in every precinct of Jewish life; not many Jewish politicians, in Israel or elsewhere, can refrain from exploiting it. Nor is there any escaping. Perhaps our common fate consists in not escaping.

For us in America, such feelings are vicarious and therefore often politicized, melodramatic, and inauthentic; but that does not make them any the less painful. Every American Jew, whether he blusters, in the comfort of ignorance, that he is "proud to be a Jew" or, in the shame of denial, tries to bleach himself into universality, knows—somewhere, in the last little pocket of the heart's truth—that he too is implicated in this historical situation. Notable as are our worldly successes, so too are the costs. Success, it seems, can generate nothing better than ... success. Traumatized by large disasters, American Jews choose to be dulled by local victories. *Shimshon der Nebekhdiger* is reincarnated as *Shimshon der Balabus,* honored signer of checks, yet when he takes off his tuxedo and puts on his pajamas, he is once again *der Nebekhdiger.*

The American Jews constitute a drained community, drained of its animating passions and energies, of its faith that it possesses a self-subsistent ground for being. In these past seventy-five years American Jews have experienced too much, have taken too many blows, so that, even while landing on their feet, they have lost their bearings. The minority of organized Jews is trapped in a maze of activity that serves to avoid self-scrutiny. Behind the buildings, the temples, the committees, the organizations, behind even the awesome phalanx of Jewish presidents, there is mostly a hollowness, a vacuum of meaning and value; and this routine has for its end, if not its purpose, the dulling of doubt, the postponement of self-awareness. For in those Jews with a flicker of awareness—and we have some, of course—there burns a fear that if they dare look inward they might find little or nothing.

Communities, like individuals, go through phases of creative energy and then a drab sterility. American Jews have known some high, even exalted, moments—the innovations of Reform Judaism, the strivings of the immigrant years, the flowering of Yiddish literature, the livelier phases of Zionism, the flare, brief and ambiguous, of the Jewish left; all these far more than the doings of a marginal intelligentsia, all shared by masses of ordinary Jews, and all putting forth versions of traditional idealism while still ending in loss, disillusion, dispersion. The yoking of notable achievement and disheartening failure is something that young American Jews may find hard to understand, especially if they share our native indifference to historical memory—they find hard to understand the caution, the weariness, the persuasion of "lateness" that courses through the Jewish community.

The one thing that has worked for American Jews is ... America. No small matter; in fact a good deal. But not everything. America has allowed the Jews to live and many of them to thrive; and in appreciation of this fact many Jews have tempered their inherited liberalism, allowing it to shade into a moderate skepticism. If, however, being a Jew in America means that you can live, it also means that you know less and less why you should live as a Jew. The very word that many American Jews, often including ourselves, use for self-definition—"Jewishness" (not Judaism)—is notable for its puffy vagueness. "Jewishness" suggests a duty of remembrance, a tremor in response to the proddings of nostalgia. And "Jewishness" may, I suspect, serve as a station in the retreat of people on the left.

Much of our life has lost its sweep of conviction, has in good measure declined into a kindly philistinism without much faith or knowledge. As for the older animating beliefs of Jewish life, little remains. Authentic religion is the privilege of a small minority, often self-sequestered socially and culturally; the faith of most synagogue and temple adherents (as the more serious rabbis tell one in the privacy of their studies) is thin, lukewarm. The secularism of American Jews is open to precisely the same charge, and the ease with which it nestles in the temples provides sufficient evidence. The memory of Jewish socialism fades. Yiddish survives as archaeology and sentiment. Zionism, shrunk to a shapeless benevolence, cannot oblige its adherents to risk a one-way ticket to Israel. The remnant of Jewish liberalism has lost its assertiveness, declining into votes and regrets.

In saying these unpleasant things, I do not mean to deny that there have been some admirable developments within the American Jewish community; but these, like *havurot,* tend to be marginal or, like the recent growth of Jewish feminism and Jewish studies in the universities, at some distance from organized Jewish life. And in saying these things I do not mean to question anyone's goodwill: we are all floundering together. Few of us in America can claim to be more than partial Jews, that is, Jews in but part of our lives; few can claim the assurance or coherence of unbroken tradition. Nor is this anyone's fault. We live in a world we did not make.

These are the circumstances that led many American

Jews of my generation, secular but also religious, to feel a sense that we came late, or too late, in the experience of American Jews. Listening to participants in this conference, I sometimes had a sense that, beneath the assertiveness of language, there was an even stronger feeling of "lateness" than that felt by my own generation, which at least knew some impress from the immigrant streets and some fragments of Yiddish. And from lateness to lostness is only a short distance.

The American Jewish community finds its main purposes in philanthropy—still one of its major strengths—and in politics. Its organized segment has become politicized in a very narrow way—as a lobby for Israeli policies. There is something sterile about such a role, and not very dignified either; it makes for feelings of inadequacy among American Jews and for a barely suppressed contempt among Israelis. It is a role that can hardly promote a community of spiritual resource and intellectual energy. A mood of inhibition, at moments slipping into repressiveness, dominates organized American Jewish life. With all its wealth and influence, it still trembles nervously if a few young dissidents break from the official "line." It still deludes itself that there are things the *goyim* must not be allowed to hear—as if we were living in a confined East European ghetto rather than in the transparency of modern communications where the deeds of a Shamir, or the Rabin who does Shamir's dirty work, flash across the continents.

Israel, it's become the fashion to say, is the "religion" of American Jews; but a "religion" focused on a state must risk idolatry. We should realize that this condition is historically mandated and not likely to change soon. In the view of many American Jews, almost everything to which they or their elders were once pledged has failed—a judgment with a good portion of truth. For them Israel represents *the last Jewish hope,* which is one reason they respond more to the idea or image of Israel than to its complex reality, and why they cannot bear much criticism of Israel, especially from Jews. American Jews also know that if Israel were secure and prosperous, and therefore no longer in need of its immobile brothers across the Atlantic, they, the American Jews, would be left empty-handed and might have no option but to ask: Why do we exist? What makes us Jews? Of what significance is all this to us? And Israelis, once secure and prosperous, might say (as many of them, including our dovish friends, have been itching to say): "Look here, *chaverim,* come live with us or stop calling yourselves Zionists; and if you choose not to come, then good-bye and good luck." What then would American Jews say? What would we say?

The bulk of ordinary Jews, who may belong to a temple but are neither religious nor organizationally involved, sense that insofar as they remain Jews it is mostly Israel that provides a rationale for collective existence. If not the deepest reason, then the readiest rationale. It is this that makes the American Jewish institutions, despite an occasional mutter or rasp, dependent upon the Israelis. And that is why it seems unlikely that any large number of American Jews will become openly critical of Israeli policies: *they simply could not bear it; they would feel there is nothing left.*

But what about the protest regarding Who-is-a-Jew? Didn't the lamb become a lion? Well, the lamb, being a shrewd lamb, understood that to survive as a lamb it had to roar like a lion. The American Jewish leadership spoke up against Shamir's surrender to the religious right when its symbolic authority and institutional base were threatened. Actually, this issue is far less important than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is the latter that now forms the main touchstone of Jewish behavior, and it is the chosen failure of the major Israeli forces to advance a policy of conciliation that is our central burden.

To live as a conscious Jew means to live with a malformed consciousness.

Of course, the American Jewish community, having discovered the sweet taste of just a little independence vis-à-vis Israel, may want a little more. It may find the courage to speak forthrightly, openly on the central question. But I wonder. If an Israeli government were to make some noises about "autonomy" for the West Bank—too little, too late—even those American Jews that have ventured a bit of criticism might well be glad to fall back into line.

Well, things may change. Perhaps the historical traumas that have overdetermined American Jewish behavior have begun to fade, and we may witness greater independence in the organized Jewish community. Recent events give no clear sign. True, the Jewish community showed it could keep some distance from Israel once the American government started conversations with the PLO, but then the Jewish community succumbed, rather shamefacedly, into conformity with the American government. To keep a modest distance from both governments seems beyond its capacities. On its own, the American Jewish community would never have proposed or endorsed talking with the PLO. The American Jewish organizations are trying to waffle and finesse, and how long they can do that is a question. If the positions of the dominant Israeli parties on the Middle East crisis remain unchanged and, in consequence, there is a deepening split between Israel and America, then the organized American Jews will face a painful choice.

A minority will hold fast to the hawkish, a smaller minority to the dovish, position; but most American Jews will be both unwilling to attack head-on the American government's stand and unable to criticize openly the Israeli stand. That's not a happy prospect.

The one conclusion I'm reasonably sure of is that the coming few years will be difficult for those of us who support the Israeli doves and not so easy for those of us who wish to advance liberal or democratic-left opinions. So, a few concluding thoughts:

There is no unquestionable sanction in Jewish tradition or thought for political liberalism. There has been a strand within Jewish life inclining us to liberal and socialist ideas. Insofar as we want to advance such ideas in America, we must do so on intrinsic and universalistic grounds. But to claim that a liberal politics is somehow sanctioned by Judaism leads to parochial sentimentality or ethnic vanity. Our Jewish experience may have prompted some of us to a certain kind of politics, but our argument on its behalf cannot simply rely upon that experience; it must transcend it even as it draws from it.

Now, there may be a certain discontinuity, a ruptured narrative, in what I've been saying. I began by describing the deepening crisis of Jewish identity in America, and then turned to Jewish politics, or, more precisely, to Israeli policies. So let me make clear that I do not see our involvement on the dovish side as necessarily contributing to a solution of the identity crisis of American Jews. For the irony is that those of us who deplore the excessive politicization of American Jewish life must now, unhappily, contribute to it. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is of such overriding importance that we have to give it our major attention. The political battle to which we are obligated to turn will probably obscure efforts to find a solution to the American Jewish crisis of identity—if, as I doubt, there is a solution.

In the next few years there is probably going to be a "war among the Jews"—an intellectual, political "war"—concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Recent events point not to an end but to a beginning of that "war." It will be heated and nasty. Some American Jewish intellectuals may feel tempted simply to pull out. Blessed by geography, we have choices. The temptation to withdraw is only human, and all of us feel it now and again. To keep fighting over this issue, the central issue of Jewish life today, means to win little gratitude at home and some abuse abroad. It means to forgo the moral elevation of an Elie Wiesel, who speaks eloquently about all injustices except those closest to Jewish life.

But we should persist. Why? To stand in solidarity with our friends in Israel—Peace Now and other such groups. To show that from our particularist vantage point we still hold firm to universalist values. And in the hope that Israel as a democratic state will finally agree, with all due precautions, to accept the same national rights for the Palestinians that it fought to gain for itself.

That seems to me the ordering of our crises and our efforts. Unto each day the burdens thereof. □

Banquet Address

Now and Then

Grace Paley

I want to read this piece to you first and then I want to say a few things. This is called "A Midrash on Happiness." I don't think this is really a midrash, but I called it that.

* * *

What she meant by happiness, she said, was the following: she meant having (or having had) (or continuing to have) everything. By everything, she meant, first, the children, then a dear person to live with, preferably a man, but not necessarily (by live with, she meant for a long time but not necessarily). Along with and not in preferential order, she required three or four best women friends to whom she could tell every personal fact and then discuss on the widest deepest and most hopeless level, the economy, the constant, unbeatable, cruel war economy, the slavery of the American worker to the

Grace Paley is a writer. Her books include The Little Disturbances of Man *(Penguin),* Enormous Changes at the Last Minute *(Farrar, Straus & Giroux),* Later the Same Day *(Penguin), and* Leaning Forward *(Granite Press).*

idea of that economy, the complicity of male people in the whole structure, the dumbness of men (including her preferred man) on this subject. By dumbness, she meant everything dumbness has always meant: silence and stupidity. By silence she meant refusal to speak; by stupidity she meant refusal to hear. For happiness she required women to walk with. To walk in the city arm in arm with a woman friend (as her mother had with aunts and cousins so many years ago) was just plain essential. Oh! those long walks and intimate talks, better than standing alone on the most admirable mountain or in the handsomest forest or hay-blown field (all of which were certainly splendid occupations for the wind-starved soul). More important even (though maybe less sweet because of age) than the old walks with boys she'd walked with as a girl, that nice bunch of worried left-wing boys who flew (always slightly handicapped by that idealistic wing) into a dream of paid-up mortgages with a small room for opinion and solitude in the corner of home. Oh do you remember those fellows, Ruthy?

Remember? Well, I'm married to one.

But she had, Faith continued, democratically tried walking in the beloved city with a man, but the effort had failed since from about that age—twenty-seven or eight—he had felt an obligation, if a young woman passed, to turn abstractedly away, in the middle of the most personal conversation or even to say confidentially, wasn't she something?—or clasping his plaid shirt, at the heart's level, oh my god! The purpose of this: perhaps to work a nice quiet appreciation into thunderous heartbeat as he had been taught on pain of sexual death. For happiness, she also required work to do in this world and bread on the table. By work to do she included the important work of raising children righteously up. By righteously she meant that along with being useful and speaking truth to the community, they must do no harm. By harm she meant not only personal injury to the friend the lover the co-worker the parent (the city the nation) but also the stranger; she meant particularly the stranger in all her or his difference, who, because we were strangers in Egypt, deserves special goodness for life or at least until the end of strangeness. By bread on the table, she meant no metaphor but truly bread as her father had ended every single meal with a hunk of bread. By hunk, she was describing one of the attributes of good bread.

Suddenly she felt she had left out a couple of things: Love. Oh yes, she said, for she was talking, talking all this time, to patient Ruth and they were walking for some reason in a neighborhood where she didn't know the children, the pizza places or the vegetable markets. It was early evening and she could see lovers walking along Riverside Park with their arms around one another, turning away from the sun which now sets among the new apartment houses of New Jersey, to kiss. Oh I forgot, she said, now that I notice, Ruthy I think I would die without love. By love she probably meant she would die without being *in* love. By *in* love she meant the acuteness of the heart at the sudden sight of a particular person or the way over a couple of years of interested friendship one is suddenly stunned by the lungs' longing for more and more breath in the presence of that friend, or nearly drowned to the knees by the salty spring that seems to beat for years on our vaginal shores. Not to omit all sorts of imaginings which assure great spiritual energy for months and when luck follows truth, years.

Oh sure, love. I think so too, sometimes, said Ruth, willing to hear Faith out since she had been watching the kissers too, but I'm really not so sure. Nowadays it seems like pride, I mean overweening pride, when you look at the children and think we don't have time to do much (by time Ruth meant both her personal time and the planet's time). When I read the papers and hear all this boom boom bellicosity, the guys out-daring each other, I see we have to change it all—the world—without killing it absolutely—without killing it, that'll be the trick the kids'll have to figure out. Until that begins, I don't understand happiness—what you mean by it.

Then Faith was ashamed to have wanted so much and so little all at the same time—to be so easily and personally satisfied in this terrible place, when everywhere vast public suffering rose in reeling waves from the round earth's nation-states—hung in the satellite-watched air and settled in no time at all into TV sets and newsrooms. It was all there. Look up and the news of halfway round the planet is falling on us all. So for all these conscientious and technical reasons, Faith was ashamed. It was clear that happiness could not be worthwhile, with so much conversation and so little revolutionary change. Of course, Faith said, I know all that. I do, but sometimes walking with a friend I forget the world. [This story first appeared in the *Triquarterly Review* and was reprinted in the War Resisters League *Peace Calendar 1989.*]

* * *

I would really rather read stories, but I felt that I should say something. And first, I want to thank you all for thinking of me in this connection. It means a lot to me.

One of the things I did want to say something about is the moment at which in one's youth, or one's childhood even, one develops a kind of a fidelity, or one is so struck by some event that one is changed by it. I think of this particularly when we talk of the Holocaust and its meaning to us all.

We seem to forget that our people really lived before the Holocaust and that they were also in a lot of hot water even before that. And I understood this first in a way that has never left me. This happened when I was about, well—what I remember is the size of the kitchen table. The table was at about my eye level. My mother was reading the newspaper, and she turned to my father—my father's name was Zenya; my parents were Russian Jews, like a lot of people—she turned to my father and said, "Zenya, it's coming again."

To be like all the other nations seems to me to be a waste of nationhood, a waste of statehood, a waste of energy, and a waste of life.

Now they had come to America in about 1905, and she said "it's coming again." That's all I remember her saying. But I must have heard a lot of other conversations at the time. Because that was in the very beginning of the thirties, and what she was talking about, of course, was the coming of Hitler. And she said "it's coming *again*."

I think Marge [Piercy] has a poem about sleeping with your shoes under your pillow. Well, from that time on, in the middle of an extraordinarily happy childhood in a perfectly wonderful Jewish neighborhood with thousands of children and a first-class family quite friendly to my interests, and despite all the goodness, that incident at the kitchen table was so powerful in my mind that when I began to write I thought, should I really write in English? But since I didn't know any other language, there was really no choice.

The general feeling I had was that I might be forced to live somewhere else; and, as a matter of fact, when my parents came to the U.S., a lot of my mother's friends went to Argentina, and to Palestine, and to Brazil. So they had become Spanish or Portuguese speakers. It didn't seem strange to me that I might live out my life in another country, and I think a lot of us must feel that way sometimes.

That moment at the kitchen table was one of the most striking events in my life. And who knows how I might have felt about things if that hadn't happened, because actually my family was a rather typical socialist Jewish family. My father refused to go anywhere near a synagogue, although he allowed me to take my grandmother on holidays. On the other hand, we were very Jewish, so there we were. I don't know in what direction my Judaism could have gone were it not for that moment.

I move from that to tell another story, or midrash, which I have talked about on various occasions. Growing up within that family there was, I suppose, a certain amount of feeling about being Jewish. I had a lot of vanity about being Jewish. I thought it was really a great thing, and I thought this without any religious education. But I also really felt that to be Jewish was to be a socialist. I mean that was my idea as a kid—that's what it meant to be Jewish. I got over that at a certain point, and so did many of my family members who were my age. But all this brought me to the story that I think of again and again. I don't understand why this story isn't told more often, especially in Israel. Or maybe it should be thrown out.

The story I'm referring to is about Samuel (I think it's in Samuel I). Samuel goes to speak to God and he says that the people want a king.

God says, "No, no, that's wrong, it will be terrible for them if they have a king. They'll have this king, and they'll have to give up their vineyards and their concubines. They'll have a lot of trouble with this king, and they'll lose a great deal more than they'll gain."

So Samuel goes back, and he talks to the people. He tells them what God has said. But the people say, "No, we already told you what we want. We want a king."

So Samuel goes back to God and he says, "You know they really want a king, but I think it's partly because they don't like me."

And God says, "No, that's not true; it's *me* they don't like."

Well, Samuel goes back to the people and tells them again that they really don't want a king. This time the people say, "Look, we want to tell you something. This is what we want. Listen, we want to be like all the other nations and have a king."

God hears this, and he understands they really mean it and he sends Samuel on his way to look for Saul. So that's who they get; they get Saul.

I think of those lines again and again: "We want to be like all the other nations and have a king." And I think: we want to be like all the other nations and have great armies; we want to be like all the other nations and have nuclear bombs. I've told this story to other people, and asked them what does that mean? We want to be like all the other nations and have these things—what does that mean? They say, "Why should Jews be better?"

I keep going back again to an idea, and it's a somewhat sentimental idea, but I'm stuck with it. And I'm entitled to be sentimental since I'm already old, which you can tell because I'm up here. I have this idea that Jews were supposed to be better. I'm not saying they were, but they were *supposed* to be; and it seemed to me on my block that they often were. I don't see any reason in being in this world actually if you can't in some way repair it

somehow, and I think most of the people here feel something like that. So to be like all the other nations seems to me to be a waste of nationhood, a waste of statehood, a waste of energy, and a waste of life.

I want to say just two more things. First, I want to describe an experience I had in Israel about a year and a half ago. We visited a kibbutz and we stayed for a couple of nights with people there. All the members of this kibbutz were South African. They had come to this very kibbutz about thirty years ago. But we found them very interesting because they had come from South Africa. At one point I was talking with our host about what was happening in Israel, and this was a year and a half ago, not last week. Having lived on this kibbutz all these years, having raised their children there—their daughter now in the working world, their son in the army—this man said to me: "I think we should talk to the PLO, and I really think we should get out of the territories."

I said, "Oh?" (I'm in another person's country, after all.)

And he said, "I never would have said anything like this two years ago, but I say it now because I don't like what's happening to my son and his friends. That's the main thing. Not just that they're in danger, but I don't like *what's happening* to them."

Well, we spoke a little further and I was saying to him, you're in danger, Israel is in great danger, maybe the Diaspora was a kind of a back-up for Jews, and so forth. And he looked at me and he said: "Ah, but who said that the Jews have to continue?"

Well, I was hit, so stunned by that remark. And I was brought back to that day in my childhood when my mother spoke to my father at the kitchen table. Although it was a totally different sentence, it was one that I would never forget. He said to me, "Who says we have to continue?" And such a possibility had never occurred to me.

So I said to this man in Israel, this Israeli, and I spoke from the Diaspora, I said: "We *have* to."

Now I just want to end with a short poem which is about generations:

People In My Family

In my family
people who are 82 are very different
from people who are 92

The 82-year-old people grew up
The year was 1914
This is what they knew World War I
War World War War
That's why when they speak to the grandchild
they say poor little one

The 92-year-old people grew up
The year was 1905
  They went to prison
  They went into exile
  They said ah soon
That's why when they speak to the grandchild
they say first there will be revolution
then there will be revolution then once more
then the earth itself will turn and turn
and cry out Oh I have been made sick
  then you my little bud
  will flower and save it. □

Banquet Address

The Cry for Justice

Alfred Kazin

I grew up between two competing religions—my mother was Orthodox and my father was an orthodox socialist. Even when I was a boy, my sympathy with Jews was stronger than my belief in their beliefs; it took me a long time to realize that father and mother were really in agreement on one thing: the idea of eternal justice. The Creator, Blessed be He, with whom the Jews had a covenant, had a design for the universe, with the Jews right at the center of His design. This Creator, in the goodness of time, would justify the tribulations of the Jews because of their sinfulness, yet work everything out so that, in the Land of Israel, the

Alfred Kazin's most recent book is A Writer's America: Landscape in Literature *(Knopf, 1988). His next book,* Our New York, *written with David Finn, will be published by Harper & Row in September 1989.*

Jews would be restored to their destined status as the favorites of God, their light bestowed on the gentiles, and the world made right by justice and mercy everywhere.

The socialists, especially if they thought of themselves as Marxists—this made them "scientific thinkers"—knew that the eventual conflict with capitalism would be the "final conflict." All history, as the history of successive class struggles, led up to the necessary and inevitable victory of the working class, which, though it would rule by eliminating all previously competing and exploiting classes, would itself become the human race, annul all existing class relations, and thus project the first truly human society. Whence, in the blessed words of the prophet Karl Marx, all relationships would follow from the formula "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs."

I spent the first twenty years of my life in a Brownsville tenement. The tribulations of the immigrant working class, especially during the Depression, when whole families were every day thrown out on the street with all their worldly goods, and one would see them clinging together while compassionate neighbors dropped coins into a cup, certainly made the dream of an earthly paradise urgent to me. Jewish activism was before me in the example of my mother, who led a pack of women in defiance of the city marshals to restore a family to its home. And the more I read of Jews in the Middle Ages slain by the Crusaders on their way to the Holy Land to rout the other infidels—the Moslems—the more I felt wedded to the struggles of this people, proud of its obdurate faith, its willingness to face death for the *kiddush ha'shem,* the sanctification of the Holy Name.

When, as a young writer, I first entered into middle-class and gentile society, I was always amazed to meet Jews who regarded being Jewish as a stigma, who had changed names, fixed their noses. It seemed to me, for better or worse (usually for worse, since this was the 1930s and Hitler was as much a presence in our lives as unemployment), that there was no belonging on the face of the earth like Jewish belonging. Although I was for the Jewish rebels against the Establishment; for the Jewish Jesus, Yehoshua ben Joseph, against Caiaphas the Head Priest; for Baruch Spinoza against the elders in the Amsterdam Synagogue who pronounced anathema against him; their very struggles *within* the Jewish community made me think of them—and of so many other rebel Jews—as sons of the people.

When Isaac Bashevis Singer—so bitterly criticized by provincial and jealous mediocrities for daring to write about sex as if Jews were as human as anyone else—raised his voice in the Great Hall in Stockholm in 1978, he identified himself as "the son of the people who received the worst blows that human madness can inflict." Reading his Nobel lecture I thought, "There it is again, the unbeatable touch of Jewish love and attachment." What a family in history we make up! Or, as the Irish writer Arland Ussher wrote, "A magic people." Pascal was right when he wrote in the *Pensées,* #619, "Advantages of the Jewish people.... I first see that they are a people wholly composed of brethren ... and being thus all one flesh, and members one of another, they constitute a powerful state of one family. This is unique."

Alas, the God of Israel, the godly purpose supposed to be present in history, could not keep the Jews from being slaughtered by Hitler. And with the Jews again conspicuous among the victims, so-called scientific socialism in Russia came to create the most unrelenting despotism. I am perfectly sure that without Lenin, the greatest political influence on our century, fascism would not have attained its fiendish sense of history as the creation of a sacred political party.

I had stopped believing in eternal justice and what follows from it—the justification of terror as supposedly transitional—long before Stalinism and then the Holocaust dominated the middle of the century. In 1933, with the first persecutions of the Jews, I heard a famous rabbi explain that the Jews were being punished for their sins. And even in America, there were enough people, among them writers and intellectuals, who could explain, explain away, the Moscow Trials, the Nazi-Soviet pact, and much else during and after the war.

For all these people, life had a certain miraculous quality. They felt supported by a logic, either of the Divine Will or of Purposeful History, that took care of them. But when the logic was clearly untenable, when, as the Bible says, the veils were stripped away, many of these people became intellectually "pragmatic," grimly realistic by the standards of the Reagan era, justifying this time not a hidden purpose to our existence but their own greed, selfishness, and some primitive animal need to stay uninvolved.

What remains when there disappears something so profound as the belief in eternal justice? After all, it was never the idea of *justice* itself that one challenged; only the supposed providence and timelessness of it, the idea of some ultimate consummation that in the imagination of the true believer would drive away every human tear. And more than an idea, justice was a claim on other human beings—not abstractions called God and History—that expressed itself from the very depths of life as a *cry*: the cry of people thrown out on the streets, of the Jew in 1938 Vienna forced by storm troopers onto his hands and feet to clean the street, of the Blacks in America's eternal race war, lynched before a carnival crowd—women carrying babies; people eating, drinking, and laughing at the sight of a body torched after its neck has been broken.

I don't think I am better than other people because I can say, in my experiences as a New Yorker, that the amount of suffering, destitution, and disease I live with on the streets of New York makes me ashamed. I am perfectly aware that things go out of control when there are just too many people to take care of at once, that many humane and public-spirited people are doing their best, that many of the people they are trying to help are so drugged, ill, crazed, and generally unresponsive that caring for them is like caring for the wounded under the worst battle conditions. And the city *is* in a state of war.

I am also aware that for all Jews in our time, death and life are so mixed together that none of us can escape the shadow of the Holocaust; and, no matter how much we may dislike the current brutalities in Israel, there is good reason to be anxious about Israel's survival. Nevertheless, the emergence of Jews as a powerful force on the American stage offers scenes that make me laugh, just as I want to weep when I read an article in *Commentary* virtually defending Latvian Nazis in the service of Hitler because of their passionate anticommunism.

When President Bush appointed New Hampshire Governor John Sununu as his chief of staff, "Jewish leaders" met with Sununu, who is partly Lebanese, to make sure that his refusal as governor to condemn the UN's "Zionism is Racism" resolution (and he was the only governor who so refused) did not make him a dangerous fellow to have next to Bush in the White House.

There was a lunch at the Princeton Club, a smaller dinner the next night at the Sherry-Netherland Hotel. Jacob Stein, the leader of the Jewish group meeting with Sununu, was national co-chairman of the Jewish Bush for President Committee and past president of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations. This last is an honor that always makes me think of the colloquy back in 1948 between President Truman and President Chaim Weizmann of Israel. When Truman said that he was the president of over 200 million people, Weizmann did him one better by saying that he was the president of some six hundred thousand presidents.

"I came away with a feeling," announced Stein, "that we are going to be able to enjoy a continuing close relationship with the new chief of staff. We opened up a process of communication that will serve the interests of everyone." Abraham H. Foxman, the national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, said, "We put the past behind us." Theodore Ellenoff, president of the American Jewish Committee, announced: "His explanations satisfied the group. There was a reasonably higher comfort level achieved at the meeting." Among the organizations represented at the meeting were Hadassah, the American Jewish Congress, the National Council of Young Israel, the Synagogue Council of America, the Rabbinical Assembly, and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Imagine an American politician being disagreeable to all of *them*!

I was fascinated by the "reasonably higher comfort level" felt by the head of the American Jewish Committee. The American Jewish Committee publishes *Commentary,* whose editor worries that continued peace is a threat to manly honor. *Commentary* decries equal pay for women as the threat of coming socialism. Its offshoot, *Contentions* (sometimes known as *Conniptions*), regularly features attacks in a tone of exasperated irony on every and any magazine piece, review, observation that dares to express a view just a mite different from the Podhoretz family line on any subject whatsoever.

The amount of suffering, destitution, and disease I live with on the streets of New York makes me ashamed.

Commentary, Contentions—the extreme Jewish right long ago painted itself into a corner. As Santayana said, a fanatic redoubles his effort when he has forgotten his aim. It has been obvious for some time that the aim of *Commentary* and the like is to continue the cold war through eternity, no doubt in the hope that William F. Buckley, Jr., will yet become president and so make the war hot.

Anyway, a "reasonably higher comfort level achieved at the meeting" made me remember the prophet Amos:

> Woe to those who are at ease in Zion,
> And to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria
> the notable men of the first of the nations,
> to whom the house of Israel come!

It also made me remember what I saw at the Allenby Bridge after the great 1967 victory of Israel. The bridge had caved so neatly into the Jordan that the Palestinians, moving their worldly goods from one side to the other, could walk down one side and up the other. It was quite a thing to watch; the Palestinian women seemed to do all the work, carrying everything, but everything: refrigerators, furniture, what weren't they carrying!—down and up, up and down, while their families anxiously watched and waited for them to make the hazardous backbreaking trips.

Standing guard, an Israeli gunner, very fully equipped, was at a corner of the bluff overlooking the broken bridge. It was very hot. The women, though seemingly tireless, were beginning to totter under their loads. It was all quite a pitiful scene, and I suppose my face

showed what I felt—the pity of war. Without a word from me the Israeli gunner cried out: "Don't forget what *we* have gone through!"

Alas, I don't seem to forget or even overlook anything "we" go through—or what in my own country some of them have always made *me* go through. These are bonds that never break, that I have no wish ever to break. But it is precisely this refusal to forget that enables me to speak as I do even if—God forbid—I speak only for myself. □

PAPER

Women and *Tikkun*/tikkun

Judy Chicago

Nan Fink, publisher of *Tikkun* magazine, recently wrote a column discussing the problems the magazine was having finding women writers (*Tikkun,* Sept./Oct. 1988). At the time, I was working on an image from the Holocaust Project dealing with genocide in the twentieth century, linking it to the destruction of Eastern European Jews. I was doing a lot of reading on the subject of genocide and had noticed, rather sadly, that almost all the writing I was encountering was by men. It upset me that women weren't dealing with these issues because I believe we have a significant contribution to make about what it will take to repair and heal the world. Like Nan, I wondered where our voices were.

When Nan asked me to participate in the *Tikkun* conference, I suggested, and she agreed, that we do a panel entitled "Women and *Tikkun*," because I believed that the problem she had outlined reflected a much larger issue—that is, women's relationship to the overall problem of transforming the world into a more humane place. In preparation for the conference, I thought a lot about this issue and concluded that there are two basic problems, an internal one and an external one.

The first problem, the internal one, is what I would call female narcissism; by that I mean an overbearing obsession among women with the nature of our identities *as women.* I myself shared this obsession for many years and, in fact, made quite a lot of art out of it. But I came to a point in 1982 when I could no longer make images of women. I realized that women are everybody's love (or hate) object. Women paint women, men paint women—and when women's bodies are used, even by women, as the exclusive form through which certain human attributes are represented (such as vulnerability and sensuality), we implicitly reinforce the identification of femininity with a range of human feelings that supposedly remain outside the sphere of men. Hence, we perpetuate sexist attitudes, albeit unconsciously.

Why was I obsessed for more than a decade with the nature of female identity? Because the images that exist as part of the mainstream culture promote a concept of womanhood that is still unacceptable to any conscious, evolved woman—and I'm referring to cultural icons all the way from the most degrading pornography to the most exalted images of women found in all the museums of the world, images that do not reflect our own experience of ourselves as full human beings. It's not that other images of women don't exist, but that the alternative views forged by women artists and writers for the last two centuries are still *outside* the mainstream. Therefore, as part of one's self-development, and for one's own sanity, one is forced to provide—for oneself and one's peers—a healthier image of the female self than that which is prevalent.

This process occupies a lot of time and energy, which is one reason why there seem to be so few women dealing with "larger issues." The problem is that until our own images of ourselves as women vie equally with those of men's in the marketplace and the museums, a certain amount of female energy will continue to be lost in the endless reinventing of the self that is essential in a world that continues to deny female self-definition.

But what happens if and when one breaks out of this narcissism? I am a case in point. As threatening as it is for a woman to define herself outside of male definition, it is even more threatening for her to transcend self-definition as her focus and insist on her place in the larger world *as a woman with a woman's point of view.*

When I stopped painting women, I lost a lot of my

Judy Chicago is an artist and writer who is committed to the idea that art can contribute to changing consciousness while retaining its integrity and meaning as art. She is presently working on a major project about the Holocaust with her husband, photographer Donald Woodman.

female audience—most of whom still hunger, and understandably so, for images that affirm them. But the nature and definition of oppression lie in the fact that it prevents full individuation. The process of individuation is what leads one, as one moves forward in self-definition, to address the larger and broader social issues. It is not that I do not both understand and support women's need for collective action and group bonding as part of the process of self-development. It is, rather, that I want to be able to move beyond it and not suffer a loss of support from the female audience.

My own experience in this area leads me to argue that one reason it is hard to find women writing on global issues is that it is still difficult for us to individuate beyond our identities as women and be rewarded for it. This describes what I would call the internal answer to the question about why it is hard to find women who are addressing major intellectual issues.

Now for another, more external reason, one that I would refer to as pollution taboos—some of which are specifically connected to issues of being Jewish. Some time ago, I gave a print from the Birth Project (which deals with the subjects of birth and creation) to a young, modern Orthodox couple who'd just had a child. They called me up to say that they couldn't accept such an image because it violated the proscription about modesty (that is to say, some subjects are too "private" for public viewing, even in as transformed a form as one of my works of art). I, of course, took the print back because I didn't want my friends to be uncomfortable. But I tried to point out that all these so-called private subjects have to do with *women's* reality.

To show that these pollution taboos are not confined to the Jewish world, I want to tell a story about my effort to give an artwork from the Birth Project to a hospital—specifically, to the OB/GYN pavilion of a major Los Angeles hospital (which they were planning to rename the Woman's Pavilion because, they said, they wanted to "affirm" women). The head of the department was very encouraging and seemingly excited about the possibility of receiving a piece from the Birth Project. We discussed the details of the gift, its placement, and the opening ceremonies. But, later, it turned out that he was uncomfortable about the images. It seems that it is all right to look at the "crowning" of a baby every day, as long as one doesn't put an image of it on the wall.

What does this say about the continued social and political resistance to truly affirming women's experience? What isn't imaged doesn't exist as part of our social reality. The absence of images that validate and confirm women's experience reflects the reality of a world that does not incorporate our experience into its notion of what it means to be human.

Recently I was in Israel where, in the Old City of Jerusalem, I met a group of young, born-again American Jews. The first night, one young Hasid, an American, refused to shake my hand and averted his eyes while talking to me. Now I, who was brought up in a secular Jewish family which advocated equal rights for women, have had very little exposure to traditional Jewish pollution taboos regarding women. What does it mean to come from a culture which explicitly and implicitly reviles women and women's experience? And to what degree do long-standing pollution taboos continue to operate in both Jewish and non-Jewish cultures to make



THE BIRTH PROJECT © Judy Chicago, Earth Birth *1983, airbrush and quilting, 63 × 135 inches, quilted by Jacquelyn Moore, photo by Michele Maier.*

women feel uncomfortable about addressing the issues that are really fundamental to our lives?

"The personal is political" was one of the most significant axioms of the women's movement. But the personal can become political, and be seen in its universal dimension, only if one's personal experience is not considered polluted. Additionally, the degree to which women still operate in a world that considers certain issues "women's issues" is, I believe, a reflection of the fact that women's issues have been left out of the "human" or "global" dialogue, and are, in fact, still considered inappropriate for social and political discourse.

The problem is that if we truly bring our perspective as women to bear on the world, we will probably end up challenging men—particularly around their intellectual blindness to the way male values and patriarchal assumptions shape the framework and the methods of their problem solving.

Which leads me to ask, What are the "global" issues? What should we, as socially concerned women, be addressing, and are these the issues men include in their definition of important subject matter? Starvation, illiteracy, overpopulation, exploitation and destruction of the ecosystem, abuse of animals—all these spring to mind. And what is more global than the universal abuse of children? How can we really have a humane society with the level of male violence against women and children that exists?

This last point is important because men rarely recognize how gender conditioning affects behavior. Therefore, men are unable to see the connections among violence against women and children, the larger problems of the planet, and their own culpability *as men*. Moreover, the nature of the intellectual challenge, as it is posed by male thinking, is terribly narrow—it generally does not look at the overall conditions of the world but, rather, focuses on small, abstract issues. Nor does this dialogue generally connect our individual experiences with those of everyone else's on the planet. Perhaps if intellectual discourse were more connected to human experience, more women would participate.

How can we integrate what have been considered the concerns of women into the intellectual discourse, so that those concerns can be seen as *central* rather than peripheral to the process of transforming our planet from a place of suffering to a world of hope?

Of course, when we women manage to transcend female narcissism, overcome pollution taboos, and then bring our perspective as women to bear on issues, our ideas are often ignored by male thinkers. A case in point: I have been thinking a lot lately about the issue of uniqueness versus universality vis-à-vis the Holocaust. One of the people whom I admire on this subject is a man named Yehuda Bauer. In one of his articles, "The Place of the Holocaust in History," I came across the following line about the Nazi mentality: "It is interesting that the SS ... opposed, in theory at least, sadism and what they called 'heedless brutality' ... [and instead they promoted] *'Eiskalt'*—cold-blooded murder with no investment of emotive factors." He continues by saying, "*We still lack a proper analysis of this phenomenon, its use in real life, its meaning* [emphasis mine]." Earlier in the article, he referred to how the Hungarian Jews were unable to convert the information they had about the extermination of the Jews into knowledge, implying that it is *knowledge* that impels action.

I would argue in contrast to Bauer that we *do* have an analysis that allows us to comprehend the Nazi mentality. For a number of years, women have been examining male behavior. I myself did it in my recent series *Powerplay* (which, by the way, was the only work I've ever exhibited that was met by near total silence, both from men and from women).

For over a decade, I and other women have been analyzing the "cold-blooded, emotionless" value system of masculinity and its political program, patriarchy. We have provided an enormous amount of information that makes Nazi ideology completely understandable in terms of past and present patriarchal values. But this information has not been converted into knowledge by scholars (or in my case, viewers) because it conflicts with men's own images of themselves, and because men still require women to *support* rather than *challenge* their view of the world.

I am often asked if "we've come a long way, baby," a question I detest. We have come to a point where women can more easily participate in the world, but only *if we support men in their often distorted view of the world.*

The problem is that if we truly bring our perspective as women to bear on the world (which, I might posit, is one of our great gifts because our perspective has been shaped by our experiences as *victims* rather than victors, which makes it a mirror for many peoples who have been victimized by patriarchal values), we will probably end up challenging men—particularly around their intellectual blindness to the way male values and patriarchal assumptions shape the framework and the

methods of their problem solving.

This leads men to trivialize or disregard female thinking when it is *at its most profound*. This process can be seen as another version of pollution taboos—meaning the fear of being polluted (read castrated or weakened) by female perception. This is a rather infantile response to what could be interpreted as intellectual challenge at its finest.

Pollution taboos have invaded all our thinking—both the ways we see the problems confronting us and the ways we've chosen to express ourselves. For decades, women were able to acquire training as artists, yet, even now, most women do not express their own experience as women in their art. Why? Because we consider ourselves "polluted," meaning not worthy of public exposure. We've internalized a view of ourselves that continues today. And the fact that many men are still uncomfortable around powerful women can be seen as another example of pollution taboos. Women's power is to be restricted to the domestic sphere; her realities are not to be imaged; her power is not to be demonstrated in the public arena. To violate this rule is to become "unfeminine," even today.

The tradition of pollution taboos in Jewish culture is, of course, particularly relevant to the issue of women and tikkun. For there must be a complete redefinition of gender roles in Judaism if women are to seriously participate in transformation. How the magazine *Tikkun* can facilitate this transformation and also offer a more humanized dialogue seems to be implicitly connected to the answers to the questions raised in Nan Fink's column. □

PAPER: LESBIAN, GAY, AND PROGRESSIVE JEWS

Jewish Progressives and the Jewish Community

Irena Klepfisz

I do not accept the assumption that there exist two distinct Jewish worlds—progressive and mainstream (or traditional)—whose values and norms are always in conflict. My experience as a feminist and a lesbian is that the Jewish world we call progressive has often been as slow and reluctant to deal with feminist and gay issues as has the mainstream Jewish world. Some advances have been made, and many, though not all, Jewish progressives have reached the stage of paying obligatory lip service to and ensuring token representation at progressive events. But fighting sexism and homophobia and gaining full rights for gays have not evoked the same passion that the causes of other minorities evoke. Most Jewish feminists and gays that I know remain angry at and frustrated with Jewish progressives. Deeply committed to progressive causes, frequently in the vanguard of political action, Jewish feminists and gays find ourselves fighting for the rights of others without the secure knowledge that others will fight for us. Most of the time we fight sexist and heterosexist battles alone in both the mainstream and progressive Jewish worlds.

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And because my expectations of these two worlds are different, my reactions to advances in them vary as well. For me, the advances for feminists and gays in the mainstream Jewish community are more meaningful because they are the result of greater effort than the advances in the Jewish progressive community, where I always expect validation and support. Thus, I find greater satisfaction in the fact that a lesbian support group exists at the New York Section of the National Council of Jewish Women than in the fact that a lesbian and gay panel is scheduled at a progressive event—usually only after protests and at the last minute. In this instance, the National Council seems to have a higher consciousness and is acting more progressively than progressives themselves.

So the two Jewish worlds—progressive and mainstream—do not differ that greatly and require the same energy in fighting these specific battles. Perhaps that is the reason I attempt to avoid the "us" and "them" division and try to find common ground from which to launch various battles in both worlds.

The "us" and "them" division—"us" meaning progressives and "them" meaning the mainstream—is too simple and veils a more complex reality. It also smacks of smugness and self-righteousness, which I find alienating. It assumes that the progressive world has every-

thing to offer the mainstream and that the mainstream's principal activity is to unlearn its evil ways. This attitude is neither useful nor accurate. I am, for example, often pained by many Jewish progressives' ignorance of Jewish history, culture, and religion, and I wish we would have more contact with the mainstream community so that we could place our Jewishness on firmer ground. I am pained that we are frequently satisfied with so little, that we do not even think that our ignorance robs us of our Jewish identities, that we do not consider placing the struggle to evolve a solid religious or secular identity on our progressive agenda. I am as pained and frustrated with these progressive Jews as I am with Jews who refuse to grant the most basic rights to Palestinians.

The "us" and "them" division ultimately makes politics the defining element of the progressive community and Jewish content the defining element of the mainstream community. This is a dangerous division, one that needs to be struggled against, for it forces unnecessary choices upon us, each of which leaves us incomplete. Clearly there needs to be greater communication between Jewish progressives and the Jewish mainstream; there needs to be an exchange, a bartering, if you will. If such an exchange does not take place we will still be progressives, but not Jewish progressives.

Jewish feminists and gays find ourselves fighting for the rights of others without the secure knowledge that others will fight for us.

Let me give a brief example. At the National Women's Studies Association conference last June, an Israeli friend of mine took on the difficult task of explaining the *intifada* to American Jewish women, many of whom were quite hostile to her political position. Among those people participating was a woman rabbi who was definitely on the conservative end of this issue but who later thanked my Israeli friend for her contributions and for giving her the opportunity to learn. My Israeli friend ended up feeling glad that this woman rabbi had come to the event and had participated. The rabbi, in turn, invited my friend to come to the shabbat service she was conducting the next day. My friend, who is nonobservant, did not attend. Afterward she told me she felt she had been wrong not to go. If the woman rabbi had been willing to come to her event, to listen to the discussions, surely she, the Israeli woman, could have supported the woman rabbi in *her* struggles and interests, even though she did not fully share them.

I agree with my Israeli friend. We need to foster a greater sense of exchange between equals rather than a nonreciprocal, giver-and-receiver relationship. If this sense of mutual respect does not exist, then we progressives will forever be seen as outsiders. I think the mainstream Jewish community is correct in its accusation that we progressives do not care enough about what it considers the central Jewish issues: assimilation, identity, anti-Semitism, healing from the Holocaust. Certainly these are issues that should be of concern to us too, and they could help provide common ground for the two communities. Becoming more sensitive to these issues would also give Jewish progressives greater credibility in the mainstream community.

I know, of course, that not all progressives lack Jewish consciousness. But enough do that I think it is a real concern. As a feminist and lesbian, as a Yiddishist and a cultural Jew, I often feel alienated from Jewish progressives who do not share my cultural concerns, who do not worry about Jewish cultural survival. At those times, I feel closer to the mainstream community because I know I can turn to its members for sources and resources and they will always appreciate my efforts. I have found, in fact, that my concerns about Jewish identity and culture often form the bridge to the mainstream Jewish community and enable me to get progressive issues such as women's and gay and lesbian rights a more sympathetic ear.

I have never heard of a tradition among Jews that encourages us to support each other's differences. Quite the contrary. What I've always been taught is that Jews forever see each other as bitter enemies with irreconcilable disagreements. We have many jokes about this point—three Jews meet on a street corner and form five political parties, none of whose members speak to each other. This is comic, but it also has its tragic side, as in the Warsaw Ghetto where for a number of years the Communists, Zionists, and Socialists could not get together to fight a common enemy. We somehow must learn to take our tolerance for difference outside the Jewish community and develop it for each other. Many of us are far more tolerant of Christians and other ethnic cultures than we are of Jewish sects and traditions. I know many Jewish progressives who will join hands with Catholic priests but will not step into a synagogue. We applaud the struggles of Hispanic people for biculturalism, but we are often embarrassed by our Yiddish tradition and give it no support as it struggles to maintain a footing in contemporary Jewish life. The degree to which this intolerance of our own community is carried has been most evident in the incredible polarization in Israel in the last few years. We hate many of our own people, and they in turn hate us. And what we

see played out in the extreme in Israel is also true here in the United States; the separation between Jewish progressives and the Jewish mainstream is just one manifestation of this intolerance. This gap must be bridged.

And the initiators of such bridging must, of course, be the progressives and radicals. It is they who need to develop the foresight, need to set the example. By incorporating the best of radical politics and Jewish tradition, they can serve as a role model and also as a draw to Jews in the mainstream. We Jews are living in a strange historical period in which our sense of history is often quite warped. For many American Jews, the Holocaust and Israel have reduced Jewish history to the years 1939 to 1945 or 1948 to the present. This extremely limited view of Jewish history naturally narrows the concept of Jewish identity, and progressives ought to be countering this narrowness. Progressives and radicals should not only offer a critique, but again should serve as role models by showing how cultural identity can function in contemporary American society and how it can be intertwined with Jewish tradition and progressive ideals.

The sphere in which progressives have been most visible outside the political arena is the religious one. There is much being done now by feminists—women and men—to transform the liturgy and religious concepts, and to bring them in line with progressive ideals. But this movement does not touch most of us who remain intransigently secular and who need greater secular knowledge and a stronger connection to Jewish history and culture. This lack of emphasis on secular knowledge also plagues the mainstream community, and a greater concern for secular Jewish culture may serve as common ground for both progressive and mainstream Jews.

In the end, let us not take the attitude that because of our politics we must remain pure and not mix with the Jewish "rabble"—the mainstream. Let us be as willing to meet with Jews in small community centers in our neighborhoods as we are to meet with Palestinians. The work to be done at these centers and synagogues is as critical as the work needed to resolve the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis. The Jews at these centers and synagogues are our people, the people we need to reach and persuade. And they have valuable cultural and historical gifts to offer in exchange —in Yiddish, Hebrew, Ladino. In order to maintain our Jewish identity and our sense of peoplehood, we need to work together and be mutually supportive in our struggle to make a reality of our political ideals. □

PAPER: ANTI-SEMITISM ON THE LEFT

Anti-Semitism Parading as Anti-Zionism

Daniel Landes

Lovers of Zion who are critical of Israel's policy on the West Bank face a dilemma. They feel duty-bound by their Judaism and by their Zionism to continue the criticism—believing that it is in the best interests of Israel and the Jewish people that criticism be made. At the same time, they know that much of the worldwide uproar against Israel is not inspired by true concern for Israel's safe, secure, and morally correct future. It is important for us to become aware of the problematic nature of the growing anti-Israel forces.

Many people tend to dismiss the various hateful expressions against Israel that one frequently hears as only overheated rhetoric that will disappear as soon as the Palestinian crisis is resolved. But many of the anti-Israel sentiments being expressed today are not produced by the current situation nor will they disappear once the Palestinian issue has been resolved. Rather, many leftist anti-Israel sentiments must be understood for what they are—a structural extension of earlier forms of anti-Semitism.

To understand the contemporary anti-Israel stance of the left, one must first understand the specific forms that anti-Semitism has taken in the past. Let us start by considering the anti-Jewish hatred of the Greco-Roman world. The root cause of this hatred seems to be the prominence of Jewish "no's." The Jews in the classical world said "no" to a variety of appealing offers. They said "no" to intermarriage, the sharing of holidays, communal sacrifices, the perfect body (since Jews insisted on retaining the "mutilation" of circumcision), shared

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meals, and especially to the gods of the Empire. From the standpoint of the Empire, the Jews were guilty of racial pride, religious exclusiveness, and contempt for their neighbors. How could a Jew fail to become part of the great Roman self-celebration? How could a Jew reject the incredible accomplishments of Greek and then Roman culture? The Jews benefited from the scientific, technological, and eventually even the artistic and philosophical advances of the Empire—how could they reject the invitation to become a full, equal part?

Yet, from a Jewish worldview, Rome was the embodiment of evil. Rome had enslaved most of the civilized world. A society built on oppression and exploitation, a brutal military force as the core instrument that held the Empire together, gladiators and humans forced to fight bare-handed against animals in the Roman arenas, an ethos of power as the ultimate justification—this was the Rome that Jews saw behind the friendly invitations to "become like everybody else." The Jews saw the Empire as *Edom,* the spiritual descendant of the capricious and murderous hunter Esau—a social order that denigrated the human, both through the hedonistic and self-serving lifestyle of the ruling elite and through the cruel, demeaning, and destructive treatment of the powerless. The Jews thought of themselves as the keepers of the promise that humanity was created in the image of God—*tzelem elohim.* Their refusal to join the universal club of the classical world was based on their seeing through its superficial openness and their witnessing the moral bankruptcy at its core.

The Romans coined a term to express the Jewish rude refusal to join in the good and full citizenship of the *polis,* and for that matter of the *cosmos:* misanthropy.

Later, left anti-Semitism, emerging from the Enlightenment, was based on similar ideas. Jews were egotistical and dangerous because they wanted to continue their own existence and refused to merge with the larger mass of humanity. Marx, looking forward to the emergence of a universal class, talked of liberating Jews by having them abandon their Jewishness ("the social emancipation of the Jew is the emancipation of society from Judaism").

The ultimate rejection of the left's plan for universal revolution was the Jew's decision to return to the Jewish homeland, giving credibility to nationalism at the very moment when the left was calling for a new internationalism. No wonder that the left vented its rage on the Jews, now updating the ancient charges—converting the claim of "racial pride" into the charge of "racism," religious exclusiveness into theological fanaticism, and contempt for one's neighbors into persecution of the non-Jewish minority and refusal to make peace.

It is important to recognize that this way of thinking about Zionism predates the present crisis and even the establishment of the State of Israel. It is the source of the left's opposition to Zionism from its very beginning. This hostility to Zionism is anti-Semitism, and one recognizes it as such the moment one realizes that the left does not level similar criticism at any other ethnic or religious group, but rather lionizes and identifies with the national liberation struggle of virtually every other people but the Jews.

Moreover, no matter *what* Israel does—including its praiseworthy acts—its conduct is interpreted as something bad. Anything good must ultimately be judged as bad, precisely because the good props up and legitimates a deviant and anachronistic nationalism.

Zionism emerged out of two realizations made by modern Jews: that the world has no place for Jews to actualize their autonomous social vision, and that the world might simply have no place for Jews at all. The collapse of Western civilization upon the head of European Jewry in the years 1933 to 1945 tragically confirmed these two notions. The creation of the State of Israel is the final attempt on the part of Jews to establish a place where they can attempt to actualize their own vision and where they can physically survive.

Yet the left does not accept the legitimacy of these two concerns. Its active support of, or quiet acquiescence to, the United Nations' "Zionism is Racism" declaration is the legal manifestation of its charge that Zionism is really misanthropy. In effect, the left calls for the Jew to assimilate or perish. This is a classic manifestation of anti-Semitism.

Leftist anger at Zionism must be understood also in terms of the cultural legacy of the second major historical manifestation of wrath against the Jews: church anti-Judaism. Christians attacked Jews not for their failure to join in the social and cultural framework of the here and now, but rather for their refusal to accept the Kingdom of God beyond the dictates of Torah law. These Jews, children of Abraham, rooted in the Flesh, were unable to accept the Spirit and thereby lost their covenantal destiny. The Church presented itself as the Israel of the Spirit, thus the *verus Israel,* the true Israel. The Jews' continued focus on the need to transform *this* world, and their insistence that ethical action in *this* world is of fundamental importance, seemed to indicate a Jewish tilt toward the world of the Flesh as opposed to the otherworldly realm of the Spirit.

Indeed, it was this insistence on changing this world that made the various left-wing approaches to salvation feel like a continuation and culmination of Jewish ethics. The left's emphasis on liberating people resonated with a Jewish ethical impulse and the desire for *tikkun olam.* Jews who joined the left could feel that they were being true to the best ideals of their heritage and to the

lessons learned from their history of suffering. At the same time, the left, like the church, had no tolerance for those who should have known better but refused the Messiah anyway. So the left was angry at the Jewish people for refusing to be swallowed up by communism or socialism.

Though many Jews did join the left, there remained a continual tension between Judaism and the left, which manifested itself in three ways. First, the Jews found the program of the left to be too immanent and too material. Judaism and its adherents refused to sacrifice the transcendent and the spiritual. Jews rejected the shallow leftist reductionism that saw God as nothing but a projection of our fears, needs, weaknesses, or inadequacies. While social action is central to Judaism, there is more to Judaism than that. Second, Jews felt uncomfortable with the left's messianism, which has often led to serious "short-term" violations of Jewish ethical standards for the sake of some "long-term" good that would be accomplished through the triumph of the revolution. And third, Jews refused to relinquish the challenge of the chosen status of Israel—their claim to have a special set of obligations deriving from their historical encounter with God.

There really are Jews who have internalized the anti-Semitism of the societies in which they live, and who feel angry at the parts of themselves that are distinguishably Jewish.

I'm aware that many people think that the notion of being chosen automatically proves that the Jews claim to be better than other people; but this is not at all what is being claimed. The Jewish sense of being chosen is not meant to take away from anyone else's humanity or sense of vocation. Part of the Jewish messianic vision is that each nation need not abandon its own particular identity, its own insights developed over the course of history. For Jews, to be chosen means to play a certain role, to affirm a high ethic and a responsibility toward *tikkun olam.* And that responsibility requires Jews to engage in a critical dialogue with the rest of humanity.

The Zionist enterprise has been a necessary affirmation of Jewish particularism for the sake of self-protection. As part of this process, Jews have managed to create within the State of Israel some very wonderful things; and hopefully, as Israel's security increases, Israel will become a place where Judaism's more universal message can increasingly manifest itself. Unfortunately, sometimes these two goals are at odds with each other: security has required a withdrawal of energy from the higher task of articulating and embodying an ethical message. The more secure the Jewish people feel about their own physical safety, the less central the issue of survival will be to their daily consciousness. Consequently, Jews who remain true to a traditional Jewish conception of being chosen will have even more of their energy available for the task of *tikkun olam.*

The left's difficulty with the Jews is linked to its approach to the Holocaust. Unlike the Neo-Fascist right, which claims that Jews invented the Holocaust to hoodwink the world into granting them a state, the left takes the Holocaust very seriously and has misappropriated it in at least three ways. First, the USSR has misused the Holocaust by converting the graves of brutally murdered Jewish victims at Babi Yar into a memorial to the children of Mother Russia fallen in the valiant fight against fascism. While no one doubts that there were many non-Jewish victims of World War II, the self-described Communist countries of Eastern Europe have felt a need virtually to erase the memory of the specifically anti-Jewish campaign of mass extermination and thereby to bury all memory of the deep anti-Semitism that the invading Fascist armies appealed to during the war.

Second, in a related way the left has universalized the Holocaust, as though it had nothing to do with anti-Jewish racism specifically, but was rather merely a manifestation of some global potential for human destructiveness. It's as though the people who want to warn about the danger of nuclear war, the destruction of the ecosystem, and other potential global disasters are afraid that they can't make their case on its own terms, so they must appropriate the Holocaust in order to bolster the moral legitimacy of their position. In the process, the specific campaign of extermination against Jews gets obliterated, and we who insist on remembering that reality are seen as too parochial.

A third (and more sickening) abuse of the Holocaust by some leftists comes from those who equate Jewish Israelis with the Nazis, and Arab Palestinians with the persecuted Jews. This reversal uses the full force of a personal and national tragedy to make a polemical point and to relieve the left of its own guilt for its many failures during the Holocaust.

Leftist guilt is based on the following realities: (1) the Stalin-Hitler pact; (2) the failure of the left in the Soviet Union and in the United States to make opposition to the destruction of European Jewry a central part of their political and educational work during World War II; (3) the very real anti-Semitism inside Communist and Socialist parties that made many of their members un-

willing to provide substantial assistance to Jewish resistance efforts; (4) the failure of the leftist dream of proletarian solidarity, caused in part by the working classes of Europe allowing their anti-Semitism to take precedence over their class consciousness when they were faced with the rise of fascism. For all these reasons, the left feels that it can exonerate itself by equating Jewish Israelis with the Nazis. Rather than come to grips with the fact that, had it abandoned its early opposition to Zionism and encouraged people to go to Palestine in the 1930s, many hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives would have been saved, the left prefers to excuse itself by "discovering" that Zionism has transformed the Jews into little Hitlers and their state into a mini-Reich.

Tikkun magazine is living proof that one can be critical of Israel without being a self-hating Jew. Indeed, the term "self-hating Jew" has been thrown around as a way of suppressing all dissent, and hence many people think it is essentially meaningless. But it is not meaningless. There really are Jews who have internalized the anti-Semitism of the societies in which they live, and who feel angry at the parts of themselves that are distinguishably Jewish. The self-hating Jews have a quandary. On some level they identify as Jews, but they simultaneously deny an essential part of that definition: either peoplehood, religious culture, or the Jews' historical relationship to the land of Israel. The Israel/Nazi analogy relieves the self-hating Jews of this tension: they can be good prophetic Jews by opposing exclusivistic Jews, fanatical Judaism, and the "Fascist" Jewish state. The attack on the Jewish state thus gives them an explanation for why they are not involved in Jewish concerns and simultaneously allows them to claim that they are still connected to their Jewishness.

Leftists also try to delegitimate all references to the Holocaust in the context of assessments of contemporary political reality. Anyone who shows concern about the possible destruction of Israel and the Jewish community is accused of paranoia or "Holocaust obsession." The Holocaust, it is charged, has clouded these people's judgment. Leftists try to convince the Jewish people that drawing lessons from twentieth-century Jewish history is an inappropriate move and that Jews who do so are somehow stuck in the past.

As the Holocaust imagery is inverted upon the Jews, so once again do the Christian symbols of Jewish perfidy emerge from the substrata of the Western unconscious. Israel becomes Judas—betraying both humanistic values and the Jewish people. Israel is a hateful, suspicious people, interested only in grabbing land for itself. Israel is obdurate, stupidly refusing to realize where its salvation lies—in giving up its existence. And Israel, ultimately, is the crucifier of the innocent. All the ancient lies are now dressed up in contemporary garb by the left!

Now that Jews have abandoned a position that the left respects (a position of Jews as victims), the only other way to see Jews is as victimizers. The left has no neutral category, no way of imagining the Jews as simply another people wanting to live their own lives. For this reason, everyone who settles on the West Bank must be seen as evil, and the physical attacks on them are automatically regarded as legitimate. Every one of these people becomes a trigger-happy messianist ready to hurt anyone in his or her way. There is no room in leftist categories for people who moved to the West Bank settlements with the hope that Jews and Arabs might live together in peace. As a result, leftists end up supporting a *Judenrein* West Bank in which Jews would be prohibited from staying in the homes they have built for themselves—a policy of racial exclusion that these leftists would not support if aimed at any other racial, ethnic, or religious community in the world.

What I have tried to show here is how easily the attacks on Israel's policies turn into anti-Zionism, and how anti-Zionism becomes a contemporary manifestation of a long tradition of anti-Semitism. I have great respect for the integrity of many of the people who are now criticizing Israeli policy, but I do think that they are on a slippery slope. For that reason I find it particularly important for a Jewish left to examine itself carefully, to eliminate all self-hatred, and to combat all those who make the illegitimate move from criticism of Shamir to criticism of Zionism itself. *Tikkun* is on the right path in making these distinctions. But I think a Jewish left needs to remind itself over and over again that, without consciously and publicly facing up to these issues, it will have difficulty getting a respectful hearing from many others whom it hopes to influence in the Jewish world. □

Porno-Drive-In, Knoxville, TN

Willa Schneberg

As we watch a tanned tight-bodied man and woman make it in a
hot tub, we try to ignore the young rednecks in the '74 Ford
pick-up also parked away from the screen who cut moonshine
with beer and go one by one into the brush with a roll of toilet
paper, except when they press their faces against the window
on his side and yell, Black boy, got some white pussy for us?
Although we drive to the section of the lot farthest from them
we no longer feel safe. Your penis remains limp in my hand, my
vagina dry, no matter how much you rub my clitoris. We
straighten our clothes. You pick your afro. I switch on the car
light to put on lipstick and catch my face in the compact, my
white face, not the pink of the white boys, but the color inside
your palms. We squash ourselves into opposite sides of the car.

But soon we are sitting close. I nuzzle against your neck. We laugh about
the zebra-striped babies we would bring into the world if we weren't
careful and I retell the story of the Russian peasant who murdered my
great-grandmother, Rivka, hung her over the family clothesline and how I
wished we could have made it as if it never happened that you could have
carried her on your back, helping me to lower her gently in the narrow
bed and handed me gauze, until her wound was freckle-small and she
returned from the dead asking for a glass tea and a bissel challah. Then
you pull me again into the story of the house-slave, your
great-great-great-grandmother Adelaide forced to lie with the master and how you
wish we could have broken into her master's bedchamber, your hand over
mine, as we cut the bastard's throat, freeing her forever.

FICTION

Sworn Statements: The Guillotine

Marcie Hershman

You'd think we've been told everything about those twelve years, but that isn't so. History, like any lover, is selective in the facts it reveals about its beloved. And so, though the French Revolution's guillotine is always noted, the Third Reich's is not. The Third Reich, of course, had other points of discussion; but, as I say, it also had guillotines. Eleven of them. Hardworking, swift, sharp, silent. The blades sliced through the necks—not of innocent Jews or Gypsies or civilian homosexuals—but of those who were then called Aryans. Germans. Only Germans. In eleven different locations around the country, often in the basement of a district police station, men and women were put to death, one by one by one. Probably the guillotine brought no more solitary a death than did any other method; still it was horrible and even without a whisper campaign, lots of people knew that lives were being cut off in those basements, in that way. We didn't need to talk about it; we only needed to know it.

The authorities, such as they were, understood that.

"A little knowledge," Commander Terskan used to say, "is just enough." He was a swarthy, two-chinned but not unattractive man. He'd sit at the main desk and bring the blades of his scissors together. The sound of those blue-tinged shears crossing each other raised the small hairs at the back of my neck, as it did when I sat at the barber's.

Rolf Terskan understood that. It was his little joke in those first months when he knew that someone was scheduled, below. "Torgood, you need a trim. Even Gruber's night clerk doesn't look this lax. How did your wife let you out of the house like this? Doesn't she inspect you?"

"I stand a good head taller than she does, Com. Terskan. She can't get the necessary perspective."

"Yes, well, I'm the only inspector who matters anyway," he'd say as if I'd actually replied to his admonishment with anything approaching the truth. After all, Gerda did not see me only when we were standing. "Come here, day clerk Stella. Bend down."

Gently, his splay-fingered right hand would push my head forward. Then the shears' cool metal would seem to exhale—again that shiver down in my collar—and the brown hairs would fall like insects in a pile of itchy lines on the floor. Invariably, from below, one minute later or five, by which time I was already sweeping up, there would be a thump. Sometimes, preceding it, there would also be a shout. But the cry was always quickly cut off. I hated to be on my knees when anything happened below. I could always feel it right through my bones. To take in some poor soul's death through your kneecaps makes you want to beg for mercy yourself, because you know when you stand, it's in you. A small tremor you can't shake.

Only once did he nick me and draw blood. Was it a slip of the wrist or not? It was at a time when the town paper was filled with the usual uproars, but the columns seemed more densely packed. Even the letters looked ugly—thin and slanted, pressed into formation. You think because we lived in the middle of those twelve years that we didn't see hate anymore? Not so. We saw it but we pretended, with that little whisper of knowledge—the same rasp that told us about the guillotine at work under the police station floor—that such slight awareness was good. The hairsbreadth was what kept us safe. No more and no less. Any more awareness and we might be compelled into taking a dangerous stance; any less and we'd be screaming ourselves the very phrase that blackened the pages of what was simply a town newspaper.

Com. Terskan would brush the stray hairs off my shoulders. "Raise your head," he'd say. "Let me see my work." Then after a slight pause would come: "Yes, you're as good as new. When you go home tonight, see if your wife isn't thankful that I kept my hand steady."

* * *

But my face, those evenings, was no welcomed sight.

"No." And biting her lip, Gerda would turn away—to a table or stove or vase, seeking some task in which to bury her gaze.

I'd enter the door left open behind her. Because I still wanted the embrace we usually shared, I'd follow her back into the house. "It happened again, Gerda." I'd speak quickly. "Two of them. A man and a woman."

She paused at the hall table. Her hand went for

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the geraniums in the clay planter. "Com. Terskan told you that?"

"He didn't. But it was quiet and I heard."

"So you didn't see them." She examined the underside of the leaves for mites.

"Of course not. They were downstairs. I told you, that's where it happens."

"And you have no part in any of it?"

I came and stood next to her. "Gerda, I'm the clerk. Surely you realize what little that means."

She plucked a dead bloom off a geranium plant. She looked like she was going to cry.

"Rolf Terskan kept me busy upstairs. You can see that well enough! Here's the proof." I leaned in toward her.

"I saw. You have one of those haircuts. It's a terrible job, too short at your ears."

"But it proves I was upstairs the entire time. That nothing else happened to me. If you think of it that way, it's not terrible, is it? I'm sure that's why he does it."

"But—" her voice wavered. "Your ears, they're, oh, I don't know. It hurts to see you like this."

She looked up. Her face was so sweet, a nineteen-year-old's that so earnestly wanted to believe in our innocence, in what was so obviously the case, and *yet*—yet she was not the nineteen she could have been. But I wasn't the twenty-six I could have been either.

"Better to see me like this than not at all." I moved to put my arms around her.

"Go wash," she said, her voice harsh. "Wash up. The cuttings are still on you. They get in our bed, too. I hate it, how they can be that tiny and still jab and prick."

"No one likes it," I replied. "And I was going to clean up; you don't need to prod me."

In our bedroom, I stripped to the waist, undershirt off, too. The whiteness of the porcelain washbowl seemed a relief. When the water was dripping off my nose and chin, I opened my eyes: her face was in front of me, caught in the small shaving mirror tacked to the wall.

"Gerda?" A little water trickled into my mouth.

"I'm sorry," she said from behind me. "I'm glad for how well you look."

I didn't move, just stayed bent over like that.

She stepped closer. Her lips brushed my bare shoulder as if it were a relic. "Sometimes talking is a mistake. You mustn't take my words to heart, especially since I said everything wrong. It really is a good job."

She put her fingers through my hair and shook out the clear drops. "Com. Terskan is such a complex man. I don't know what to make of him." She rubbed the bar of soap, working the lather into my scalp. "I used an extra ration coupon for our meal, so there's some pork in the stew. If I pour some of it into the blue pot will you take it to him tomorrow? Thank him for me?"

Her fingers in my hair were loving, entangled. She had delicate hands, fine bones, as if she were a watchmaker's daughter, or a musician's. But her father had worked in an iron foundry. In 1934, when she was fifteen, a finished rod slid off a cart and hit him square in the chest. Gerda was the second of six children. She and Christoph, the eldest boy, were taken from school. Christoph went into the foundry and Gerda to a clothing factory. Her hands were used to guide fabrics under the needles of the huge, electric-driven machines. When we were courting, she'd tell me how it was to work there. Sometimes, she'd say, fights would break out. In the monotony and din, a girl would seize another girl's hand and try to push it under the chugging needles as if it were a piece of cloth. The fight rarely took long and it never ended in blood. In fact, the girls were usually giddy with relief as they returned to their stations. The work that only moments before had provoked them, became simple and clear, even, it could be said, joyful. The brown Nazi cloth flew beneath the workers' fingers.

I didn't like thinking of Gerda in there. Much better to see her, at seventeen, bending over the flats of nubby orange begonias and rangy spices in the plant nursery. She got that job just a week after we married. Neither of us could believe our luck, how saying "Yes" aloud changed our lives. Everything was new and moist. Everything smelled sweet, with a kind of deep thickness, like the soil in those square nursery flats, which never dries out and looks as dark and luscious as a seven-layer cake.

"Torgood, always," she'd whisper in my ear those first nights. "Oh, beloved." Enfolding her, my whole body would sting with the pleasure. So many nights are part of the first, it seems impossible to pry them apart, each from each. Of course, history can do that. History can separate the first from the second night, the first from the second fact. Memory, softhearted and perhaps not as shrewd as its more public relative, just wants to hold things intact.

With a shiver, I reached up from the washbowl and touched Gerda's wrist, damp from the drops of soapy water.

Her skin slid across my fingers. "The towels," she said. "I don't want you to get chilled."

She wrapped the short one, turban-like, about my head. The second, bulkier, went over my shoulders. "Stand up and you're done."

I turned around, damp-eyed, blinking. "All right?"

She gave the makeshift headdress an affectionate pat. "Much better. Very good."

"Maybe I'll keep wearing them. I can see you like me wrapped up this way."

Smiling, she tucked the second towel up under my chin. "That would be very silly."

Yet I did stay cosseted. While our kitchen stove sent

out waves of heat, a sultan waved his right arm, and his wife, laughing, obeyed every whim.

"How very kind," said Com. Terskan, when he saw the pot on his desk the next morning. Using thumb and forefinger, he plucked a pink-flecked bone halfway out. "I hope you have enough for yourselves or I couldn't accept such a gift."

"We're fine, Com. Terskan. There's only the two of us. Gerda very much wants you to have this."

He smiled and let the bone sink back under the curls of carrots and cabbage. "Her handiwork in response to my own? Please give her my warm regards. I wasn't expecting anything in return."

"I will."

He rubbed the dot of yellowish gravy between his thumb and forefinger as if it were a lotion, and shifted in the chair to take a handkerchief from his back pocket. "How is she, by the way? Well?"

"Why, yes. Why?"

"When she was here last Friday, she looked a little pale around the edges. As if she expected someone to leap out and grab her. She actually trembled." Marveling, Com. Terskan shook out the handkerchief. "I made her sit down in my chair and we talked. You were out, taking some letters to post. Obviously, she didn't mention it to you."

"She might have," I said, a little surprised.

"Well, I'm glad she forgot about it. Some people seem to find it hard, being in the station; I understand that. Unfortunately, the police can't protect everyone." He sat back in his chair with a thin smile. "Gerda's very sweet, but delicate. Does she know what goes on underneath here?"

"Most people seem to have their suspicions, Com. Terskan."

"They do," he said, "don't they? Which is why I wouldn't allow the outside world into the house. Work should be work, not part of the home; that's my understanding of it. When I take a wife, which I will, I'll make sure the two stay separate. She won't see anything that might shake her confidence, her sense of security." He paused. "Do you tell her anything?"

I felt my heart against my ribs. "I would never breach any security matters," I said. "But some days, because of how I look when I come home, the haircuts, I suppose, I have to say at least something. She can see the change, you know."

"You tell her." He shook his large head. "I thought so. You shouldn't, Torgood. It's weak."

"It's hard to keep things from your wife."

"Is it?" he mused.

"Besides," I said, "she wants to know."

"I didn't find that to be the case. When she was here, two prisoners were being brought to the basement. I heard the bulkhead door creaking. Gerda had just started to listen—you know how that is, don't you—so I took charge and distracted her. We talked about the most inconsequential things. Of course, when she left, it was with a much lighter heart than when she'd entered. It made me feel very good about myself, to relieve her of unnecessary concerns." He eyed me.

My scalp prickled as if the shears had come too close. "Thank you, Com. Terskan."

He paused and flicked his pencil at the cast-iron lid of the pot. He set up a kind of rhythm, then said, "There's some nasty business in front of you now. A change in orders. It came early this morning with the new prisoner." He withdrew an envelope from his middle drawer. "Read it at your desk."

I took one look at the top sheet and thrust my chair back. "Com. Terskan!" I leaned, palms down, on the blotter.

"I wish I could countermand them. But at this level, I can't."

"But, this." I jabbed at the paper. "Who would give this to me? I take down people's words."

Com. Terskan blew the air out of his lips, keeping a little back, so that even as he exhaled, his cheeks puffed out, saving some air, as a squirrel saves seeds, for a time when the supply might be scarce. "And from now on, you'll take down bodily details, too. Your duties have expanded from the mere taking of statements. You'll record head measurements, weights, partial and otherwise. You'll see, it's all written there."

Actually, I never even took direct statements. How could I, when I never saw the prisoners? Prudmann, the night clerk, probably never saw them either. Simply, the job involved stamping the papers forwarded to us: *Received on such-and-such a date, at such-and-such an hour; Kreiswald Police; Kreiswald Germany.* The statements, such as they were, had been given first to the police at the arresting station, and again perhaps to a clerk at the trial. By the time the prisoners arrived here, there was no more to say. All of us understood it: not only had their history preceded them, it had already absorbed them.

Com. Terskan walked over to the file cabinet against the back wall. "Come here, I'll show you something—that is, if Gruber's clerk hasn't mislaid it. Sharing information usually leads to some kind of mistake."

From the top drawer, he pulled out the first report. He showed it to me on the flat of his palm. "And this is just one case." Flipping open the cardboard folder, he rifled among the sheets until he found what he wanted. "Wendist, Herman, H.," he read in neutral tone. "Twenty-six. Aryan. Catholic. Social Democrat. Educated at

Hamburg University in biology. Do you know why he was beheaded? It was in January."

"I don't remember the statement."

"He was a traitor. He was overheard urging his fellow workers in a munitions factory to engage in sabotage. He said he could show them how to assemble weapons so they would misfire. You don't know the half of it, what that means. Mrs. Muller's boy, or maybe it's your cousin, he takes aim with that gun, in Czechoslovakia, or in France, and what happens? You with your medical discharge."

My mouth was dry. "I have a bad lung."

"I know." He put the file back and closed the drawer. "But should we keep a traitor housed and fed at the expense of helping our good people?" He gave me a measured look. "I know how generous Gerda was, to fill up that pot for me. She gave, from her own shelves, a real gift. I won't squander it."

He put his hand on my shoulder. "Listen to me. What happens to most people is their own doing. People commit unspeakable acts and someone, who they don't even know is watching, sees them doing it and saves them from doing it again by punishing them for it. The punishments vary according to the crime, but it all works out in the end." He gave me a gentle squeeze. "You'll see I'm right. It won't be as difficult to bear as you think."

"When?" I asked.

"Soon. Tomorrow, eight in the morning. Do you want to read his file?" Com. Terskan went over to his desk and picked up the stew pot; the folder lay beneath it. "There's only a confession in it. You'll add the other details." He hesitated a moment before dropping it into my hands.

I brought it to my desk. The pot had pressed its shape into the greyish cover and I couldn't bring myself to turn past it, as if by my tilting that set circle, cabbage and watery meat would actually spill out over the edge. My fingers slick, my pants and shoes spattered. So I didn't open it.

The morning went on. The station filled and emptied with people and their complaints. A vagrant was brought in and held for questioning since he could be an escaped Jew. A grocer named a neighborhood boy for stealing an apple. Two fistfights were reported. A dead mare was lying off Grubenplatz, and both its owner and identifying livery were gone. Citizens wanted the beast carted from their street as soon as possible.

It was noon when I looked up from the typewriter to see Gerda enter. She was wearing her good thick wool sweater and brown skirt and her shoulders were held at an angle that meant she was unsure but didn't want to appear to be. In her left hand were gloves and shopping bag. She came halfway in, then stopped.

"A pleasure," said Com. Terskan, scraping his chair back. He walked around to the front of his desk and greeted her with a short bow. "Now I can thank you in person."

She flushed and gave him a hesitant smile. "You're welcome, Com. Terskan. I hope you'll enjoy it, though it's little enough."

"I never expected it," he said. "So to me it is generous indeed. It looks delicious."

She colored even more.

"I plan to have it for my dinner tonight."

"No, don't rush. Please keep the pot until you're done."

"I'll do no such thing." He reprimanded her lightly. "I have too many pots at my house, more than one person can use. There's no need for you to go without. Tomorrow you shall have it back, personally washed."

"But I can't imagine you washing a pot!"

"Can't you?" He tilted his head. "Well, now you will have to, won't you?" And he held up his palms.

She glanced at them, laughing in a kind of pained delight.

"Gerda, what is it?" I called from my desk. "Come here."

She faltered. "Com. Terskan?"

"Go, of course." He waved her on.

"What do you want?" I kept my voice low.

She drew a roll and lunch meat from the bag. "You took the gift but forgot your own meal." She laid the sandwich directly on top of the folder I'd been trying to avoid.

I shook my head and moved the sandwich to the right.

She placed a wedge of Gouda on the folder. "I'm glad I came by. I didn't want you to go hungry."

"Stop putting things there," I said sharply. "That's not your tablecloth. You can see it's official business."

She looked at me, wounded. Whatever confidence she might have felt dissolved. "I'm sorry."

I picked up the file, wiped it off. "You'd better leave, Gerda."

She bent to kiss my forehead. Then she lifted her head, just the slightest, and looked toward the front desk, as if to see if she was being observed. I pulled away. "I'll be at home at the usual time." And flipping open the folder, I pretended to read.

"Com. Terskan," I heard her say on the way out.

"By tomorrow, remember." Rolf Terskan's voice came as a low rumble just before the door shut.

The letters, G T N, were stamped in red at the top of the page. That's all I saw. The confession was typed below, a block upon which, in three days, believing in his own sentence or not, a man would lay his head.

I looked over at Terskan. He was turned from me,

facing the window that fronted onto the street. The brown cloth of his shirt barely moved as he breathed, as if it floated just above his skin without ever needing to touch it. He must have sensed my eyes on him, because he swiveled around.

I shoved the prisoner's file away. "At least the death is quick, isn't it?"

"You believe that, too?" said Terskan, understanding immediately. "That's only the lie." He sat back in his chair. "There is a process, like anything. First, there's waiting to be caught—whether you want to be or not—then being arrested; then there's the imprisonment before the trial; the trial—you sit and listen to the sentence. Then there's another prison, usually in a different place. After that, you go to the room beneath this floor. No, it's rare, Torgood, if any death in life is ever quick."

He turned back to the front window. He leaned closer in to the pane, watching.

After a moment, he went outside and a few minutes later came back with something pressed in his hand. "Gerda's glove," he said, shutting the door. "You'll want to take it back."

Each time I touched the cool empty leather neatly folded in my pocket, I felt soothed. It was the only safe comfort I had in the station. But when I arrived home and saw how Gerda looked at me, her mouth set in a straight line, still angry about how I'd treated her earlier, I didn't admit to having the glove. If I did that, I'd be talking, and I didn't know what else I might start to say. That I was going to be a witness to too much? That I hoped she'd put my new job out of her mind so she could touch me each day when I came home?

I told her the edge of the truth, that I was tired. And I had no stomach for dinner. And I was going to bed. Later, when she came in, I appeared to be asleep, but all night long I lay listening to how lightly she breathed. Before the sun hit the crossbars of the window, I slipped from the warm sheets into my clothes. Not long after, I was down in the station's basement. There, I measured a man's head with a beige cotton tape, recorded the dimensions, and asked him to please step on the scale. He did as I asked, but spoke not one word to me. Then I watched him walk from the room. Fewer than five minutes later, the guards brought back a body and placed it on the scale and I weighed that. The head was weighed separately. I also recorded where, on the length of the neck, the blade did its work. At the end of the day, I took home our blue pot. Rolf Terskan, good to his promise, had washed and shined it. In it, too, he'd placed a small geranium with vibrant pink blooms. Its petals were perfect, like a baby's fingernails. Gerda was thrilled when she saw it. How thoughtful he is. Be sure to thank him for me, she urged. I said I would, but as for now, I had nothing I wanted to say. I was much too tired. The next morning, when Terskan informed me that two more beheadings were scheduled for Monday, he patted my back very gently; it was the same way Gerda's hands had patted the new cutting into its dark circle of soil, with just enough pressure for the shallow roots to grab hold.

Before and after each "body recording," as we referred to it, Terskan would walk over to my desk. Where once he'd trim my hair, now he smoothed the brown shirt over my shoulders. "Well-ironed," he'd say. Or: "You'll need another one soon, won't you?" Then, he'd pause and ask in a somber way: "Ready?" Knowing the question was coming, knowing it signaled that I'd go below while he'd stay at his desk, above, I came to dread the solicitude. His rituals only extended the tension. They became part of the elaborate maneuverings in which, in the bright basement, I played a part.

"Done?" I'd hear as I climbed back up the stairs. "There's a glass of water on your desk. Take your time. Last week, I think it was, you spilled it and only made more work for yourself. Or did you leave the retyping for Prudmann, to give him something for his stretch of clerking?"

On the day I took the body measurements of Ruth Kauss, I couldn't bring myself to go home. In the month I'd been at the task, she was the first female I'd had to hold a tape to. I felt unmanned, emotional, a dressmaker going about on trembling knees, wanting to clothe not strip her body. The perversion of this, of the thinness of her frame and the violation it was soon to undergo, unnerved me all the more. When the condemned were men, I could at least try to erase myself; but here, where the difference between the two of us was all the more marked because of our sex, where it was clear I was to live and she, already weak, was to be made even worse off, I could hardly bear my own shame. I finished the job; then I went outside behind the station, sat with my back to the wall that harbored the heat stove and, though it was now cold November, slept.

Terskan must have seen me; certainly someone took that blanket from one of the cells and doubled it over me. I had dreams only of the backs of people, dreams of coats flapping and blowing away in a gust. Or maybe they weren't phantasms at all and what I absorbed was true: vagrants, their chins tucked well into their collars, cursing at me as they passed as quickly as possible through this, the police's well-swept alley.

When I got home, the lights were out. I pushed open the hall door and, through the dimness, saw the bed. Gerda had the sheets up to her chin, the linens ghostly against the thin curves of her cheekbones and fingers.

"Torgood?" Her whisper was a mix of fear and

certainty.

"Yes." I unbuttoned my shirt and threw it on the chair, then I kicked off my shoes.

"It's so late, later than last night. Did you eat? I left some soup out."

Half-clothed, I sank onto the covers. "No."

She propped up on one elbow. Her teeth were bared; she was smiling. "And everything is still all right?"

I shut my eyes. "Fine. Don't worry."

"Aren't you going to wash up and come to bed?"

"I am in bed."

"You're like this again. I can't stand it."

I didn't answer.

The mattress shifted a bit, then Gerda slid her half of the covers over me and began to tuck the blanket tightly around my shoulders.

I pushed her away. "Stop it. You need all this swaddling, I don't. Leave me alone."

She was silent. She got out of bed. "I'll get you your dinner. At least I'm used to doing that by now." She threw a sweater on over her nightgown.

I followed her into the kitchen. She'd put only the small table lamp on, and had draped a blue cloth over that. The shadows were neither long nor short, but in the particular way they have at night, they were simply there, darker than anything else. In the center of the table, with its three heads of blooms nearly purple, was the pink geranium. I pulled out my chair and sat down.

Gerda took the lid off the soup pot and dipped in the ladle. There was something in that sound, in the slight suck as the metal broke the liquid surface and the broth was pulled in, that made me want to draw her to me and cry. That small sob called up all I had locked inside me. But she was so far away. "Gerda," I cleared my throat. "I have a surprise for you."

"Do you?" Her voice actually lifted. "What?"

I pulled her glove out of my back pocket and held it up, upside down.

Her eyes widened. "You have it? It's been so long. Where did you find it?"

"I didn't find it." Then I heard: "I don't know who did. But it was brought to the station, and here it is."

"That poor person was likely deciding whether to hold onto it forever. Well, now I don't have to get through the winter in your old gloves." She turned back to the counter. "I won't lose it again."

Reluctantly, I let it go.

"Maybe everything does return to us," said Gerda, placing a bowl of potato soup before me. "Who knows?"

I looked up and she smiled tentatively, touching her fingers to the nape of my neck.

"Your hair is long. I'm so glad he hasn't had to trim it again." She paused. "I want you to take Com. Terskan a little gift. I didn't tell you, but I made him something. It's not much, but since he's not expecting it, well, you know how he is. He thinks he knows everything about everything. That's why these little surprises mean so much to him."

I turned around in my chair. She stood at the sideboard, holding a folded white dish towel.

"What? That?"

"I know it might look silly," she said, embarrassed. "But I kept thinking about what he told me, about cleaning up after himself. I know he'll like using this. I embroidered the edges in two colors. And it's clean."

"Terskan doesn't want your dish towel."

"I worked on it," she said, her chin jutting out. "He will."

I stiffened. "Well, I'm not giving it to him. You think that these little things, the soup, and this bit of cloth, mean anything anywhere? You have no idea. You really don't. Do you want to hear what I do now? Why I hate coming home? Why Terskan doesn't bother anymore to cut my hair? A dish towel. You want to give him a prettied little rag. Unbelievable."

"How do you know what he wants?" She snapped the cloth at my head. "Be quiet!" In the dim light, the swathe of air spread like the palm of her hand, like the glove I'd harbored against all reason, and even when it

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hit, stroking the same skin a moment after, it didn't scatter, it only moved past.

I turned around. As I did, I heard her footsteps going to the back of the house. She could have come near, touched me, whispered: Tell me, tell me, tell me. I can't let us go on this way. I know what it is, oh, I have from the first, but you must tell me, too.

You must tell me, too. That was the other side of it—just as she had to ask. But as the bedroom door clicked shut and I sat methodically spooning that gutless white soup up to my lips, I knew that neither one of us would turn now. Neither wanted to bear hearing the other speak. For once we began it, we wouldn't be who we wanted to believe that we were. We'd be these two, instead. This man whose fingers held the tapes, this woman whose fingers still opened to his in the dark. These two people with eyes both staring and shut.

And knowing it, that this was who we were, that we were no longer who we had been, those who were innocent, who were sweetened by what they held onto, at that moment I ached for the blade's falling slice. I wanted it to end the life between us, to cut the tissue of our marriage so cleanly that our bodies would fall away, separate, and flood out into a single pool into which no one would dare dip a toe, much less dive, even one more time. But Terskan was right about that: the blade, primed, doesn't fall fast. That's only the lie. Instead, I understood, there would be only this tiny, day-by-day gnawing, with a burrowing animal's small, though sharp enough, teeth. Turning and turning it over in little dirty paws. Holding on to it as it got smaller and smaller and smaller.

The next morning, Gerda was tight-lipped and angry. She wouldn't speak to me. Secretly, I was glad; now she carried the blame for the silence between us. I drank some ersatz coffee, took the sack with my lunch, and though it was much too early, left.

The wind had a chill to it. I tried walking around the streets, but I only got anxious. So I headed for the station. As soon as I walked through the heavy door, all the tension flooded out of my body. I felt loose-limbed, clearheaded, as if I'd downed a shot of vodka. Everything around me was so clean and predictable, I felt like whistling.

Com. Gruber, Terskan's nighttime replacement, stood over the sink, splashing water onto his face. He gave me a sidelong glance, his eyes a blotchy red. "It's always too cold. I never take the time to heat it."

"You'd have to go downstairs to the stove for that."

"No need. Rather take it like a man. More bracing."

I sat back in my chair, looking around as if I'd never been here before. "Peaceful. Maybe I should clerk at night."

"It won't get you off the day shift." He reached for a limp towel. "We have our orders. That's true for everyone."

"Is it?" I mused, almost familiarly. "I don't think Prudmann has reported the last few nights."

He straightened up. "Yes, well," he said. "That's a sad state of affairs. His wife is in the hospital. He's afraid she's slipping away and, from what I hear, he's probably right." He paused. "He wanted to stay with her. I told him he could."

"Yes," I said. "I thought you must have told him that."

Gruber rubbed his chin with his sleeve. "I'll check about the shift," he said.

"Good." I put my head down on my arms and a while later I heard Rolf Terskan come in; his boots were loud against the floorboards.

"Tired? I thought you slept enough yesterday."

I raised my head and sat up.

He was shrugging off his winter overcoat. "Perhaps you should be at home."

"I'm fine, Com. Terskan."

"You don't look fine. To be blunt, you haven't for some time." He took a dark chocolate dobos torte out of a cardboard box and placed it on my desk.

"What's that?"

"A gift. Take it home with you."

Gruber came over. "He wants to clerk at night for me."

"Absolutely not," said Terskan. "Call in one of the regular patrolmen if you need companionship."

"I didn't say I needed companionship," Gruber protested. "I said Stella asked to clerk for me at night."

"I oversee his work, Walter. His job has already expanded in its duties."

"I've heard that," Gruber said slowly. His forehead creased. "Maybe he should go home at night, you're right."

"Com. Terskan, I asked to come in." I began to get up.

"No." His hand dropped onto my shoulder. "You're shirking your duty. A wife needs her husband. As for this beautiful layer cake, I won it in a bet with the head chef at Kaski's. Take it, with my compliments. I'm sure Gerda will be pleased. People need luxury when things are hard."

I stiffened. "Thank you, but you've already done enough for us."

"Don't be silly. It's a gift, Torgood."

"You know I can't reciprocate, Com. Terskan. I'll always be in your debt."

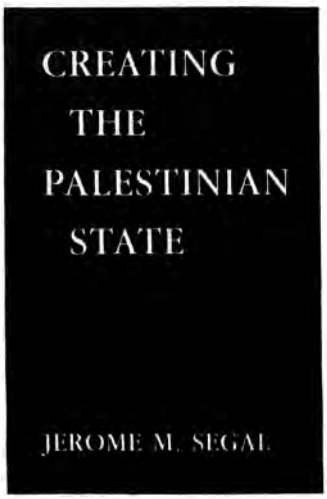
"Not in the least! And don't worry about me, I know how to bet. I'll have another sweet in no time."

"Will you be quiet," I growled. "I just said I won't take your stinking gifts."

"Now, just a moment, now," sputtered Gruber.

"Walter." Terskan tightened his grip on my shoulder.

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DEPT. TI

"I'm in charge. Leave."

I struggled to rise under his hand. "I'm sorry, Com. Terskan."

He gazed down at me with steady eyes. "It's not just a bad lung that makes you like this, is it? If you won't go home as I suggest, go to a back cell and lie down. No, go downstairs. Go to the cell in the basement. Put yourself out of my way."

I sank back into the chair. "Com. Terskan?"

"I gave you an order, clerk Stella. Are you disobeying?"

I stood shakily, pushed the chair away.

"You don't have to." Gently, he pushed me down again. "You told me what I wanted to know. The trial's over."

"I'm sorry, Com. Terskan. Believe me."

He turned his back. "I have some business to clean up, but when I come back, I expect you to be following routine. Don't make me put you down among the traitors."

He seized his coat and, shoving his arms through the sleeves as he walked, left without another word.

The door shut. I couldn't seem to move. Except for the prostitute in a back cell, there was no one else in the station. There was no one downstairs either—no one I knew about—living out the day next to the guillotine. It was morning, still early. I could hear Terskan whistling. I could tell just how far along the road he was.

I crossed over to the main desk, the one he and Gruber shared. I took the key from beneath the ashtray and unlocked the middle drawer, from which he had taken that envelope with my change of orders. Two pencils went rolling to the back. Empty. The two side drawers, then. The first opened without the key. On top, folded in thirds to cover from one edge to the other, was a copy of the town paper. I glanced at it. Worthless. Under it was a sheaf of letters. *Com. Terskan, This is to confirm* ... the top one said. I picked up the pile. The next: *Com. Terskan, We notify you that....* No, nothing. *Com. Terskan, Be advised as of your receipt of this letter.... Com. Gruber....* What was that doing here? I licked my thumb, flipped letter over letter. *Com. Terskan.... Com. Terskan....*

It took no more than a minute, perhaps less.... *We have approved your suggestion that such measurements might prove useful. As you point out, even the slightest fact can have impact when applied in the correct scientific manner. We will advise the appropriate personnel when our forms are complete. Certainly, we value your ongoing contributions....*

My hands began to shake. I skimmed the document again. But it showed the same facts, the ones I hadn't stamped as *Received,* but which were, in truth, there in my hands, awful, impossible.

Rolf Terskan had brought all this upon me. For what? For his good standing in the eyes of some distant judges? A secure place for himself, could that be true?

The bulkhead creaked at the back of the building. I heard footsteps going into the basement. I slid the letter back into the pile and hurriedly shut the drawer, relocked the middle one. By mistake, I almost pocketed the key, but it too went back where it belonged. From below came a man's clear voice; no, he was refusing to do something. Then I heard the cell door slam and a surge of rising laughter.

I went back to my desk. Terskan didn't return. Instead, he sent word he'd be at home the rest of the day, and into the night, too. I kept working in a kind of agitated haze, and when it was not quite dinnertime, Gruber appeared, shaking the wind from his muffler.

He turned around, his face blistered by the cold. "Awful. Winter." He sat down gracelessly at the main desk and pulled out one of the side drawers.

I watched him reach in.

"You can leave," he said, and took out a pencil.

"Com. Gruber?" I stopped, not knowing what next to say.

"Prudmann will be in tonight," he said sharply. "No need for you to stay, even if you wanted to. Go home."

"What?" The good news shook me, as much as if it were my own. "His wife is better? She's recovered?"

"Probably not, but he's coming in. Too many people seemed to know that he wasn't." He looked at me.

"I'll be glad for the company, even if he has a rough time of it."

My face flushed and I looked away. "Give him this, would you?" I shoved the layer cake across the desktop. Gruber's eyes glistened and he grinned at me. "That's very kind. I certainly won't tell anyone else about it. We can be sure that Prudmann, at least, will appreciate your generosity."

I felt sick to my stomach.

"Maybe I'll get a slice, too," he continued, gazing over at it. "Iced. And with all those layers. He's a real master. No one can get these things anymore. There's just not enough, is there? Not enough of anything sweet to go around."

* * *

As soon as I turned the corner from the station, I broke into a run. I cut through Grubenplatz, and the empty market. Gerda had the lamp on in the front room, though the other windows were dark. I fumbled with the lock at the door. Surely she heard how much trouble I was having opening it. I put the key in again, pushed harder.

I was standing in the hall. "Gerda, where are you?"

"Here," her voice floated happily toward me from the kitchen. My heart leapt. I could hear the forgiveness and love in her voice. We would talk. I should have insisted last night, and before that. No matter. I would explain what I'd seen and she would ask me, please, once more, to clarify: How did he think he could get away with all this? What are we going to do, now that we know? And now what? Tell me. Ask me. Hurrying down the hallway, I shed my guilt over the past months as easily as I shed my coat. "Gerda!"

But the kitchen was empty. From the twin pots on the stove rose columns of steam, but there was no smell of food in the air. I walked over to the burners. There was only water in the pots, bubbling away.

She came in from the bedroom, carrying a large, unwieldy box wrapped in the kind of fancy paper that used to be available before the war. She put it down on the table; it covered a good half of it. "This just came. You've made me so happy. I was waiting to unwrap it until you came back. Now I don't have to bear the waiting any longer."

"What is it?"

Her eyes went cold. "It's not from you?"

Mutely, I shook my head.

"Well, then," she said. She turned a little away from me, blocking my view, and ripped the paper along the seam. "Oh," she exhaled, the word mingled in her breath. "Oh, I never could have imagined."

"What?"

"The beauty of fur." Her back straightened and she didn't turn around. She put the round hat on her head, over her ears, and the stole about her shoulders. The wrap was so thick, her narrow shoulders seemed twice their breadth as they joined up with the plush of the hat. She whirled around. The tips of the brown furs glistened and her eyes, too, looked exceptionally bright. Her cheeks looked ruddy. It was as if Gerda weren't standing opposite me in our kitchen, but were suddenly outside, poised at the edge of something vast, facing a brisk wind. She saw what it was that was coming toward her. Her mouth dropped partway open, then she laughed. "I can't wait to show him."

She left the kitchen door ajar. To preserve the heat of what little coal burned in the grate, I closed it, not long after. I went to bed, and awoke, alone. The next day, Rolf Terskan didn't come into the station. I received my transfer to Passau, the last town near the eastern border, on Wednesday. It was just as well. It turned out they had no guillotine in Passau, though the laws were still the laws and traitors were still subject to the full extent of them. □

Nablus Schizophrenia

Shlomi Harif

Am I the same man
  loving you in bed
as the soldier in the photo
flailing baton and rage at faceless crowds

is it me in your arms
  nervously shy
after trashing a house
under moon's baleful glare

Who am I
  To cry from loving
or are my eyes wet from tear gas
and rage?

BOOK REVIEW

The Philo-Semitic Face of Christian Anti-Semitism

David Biale

The Wrath of Jonah by Rosemary Radford Ruether and Herman J. Ruether. Harper & Row, 1989, 277 pp.

Some books are part of the solution. *The Wrath of Jonah* is part of the problem. Under the pretense of trying to effect a reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians, the authors have only thrown more oil on the already burning tires of the Middle East. This is an anti-Zionist diatribe cloaked in the sweet light of Christian universalism; as such, it stands as a singular warning of how a Christian critique of Israel can slide unwittingly into the swamp of anti-Semitism. The question prompted by this dubious book is how it could come from the pen of Rosemary Ruether who, fifteen years ago, exposed the Christian roots of anti-Semitism in her pathbreaking *Faith and Fratricide*.

There is, to be sure, much in the Ruethers' polemic against the state of Israel with which progressive Jews might agree. Many, both in Israel and the Diaspora, have paid no small personal price for attacking Israel's occupation of the territories and the abundant human rights violations that have accompanied the occupation since 1967. Many have called for Israel to sit down at the negotiating table with the PLO in order to arrive at a two-state solution. Many would agree with the Ruethers that Israel bears a share of the responsibility for creating the Palestinian refugee problem in 1948 and for pursuing policies that have discouraged the emergence of Arab moderates. Many might even agree with the Ruethers' far-reaching calls for a restructuring of the State of Israel to make its Arab citizens truly equal.

But the Ruethers' criticisms of Israel are embedded in a subtext that is so lacking in balance and so unremittingly hostile to the very notion of Jewish national self-determination that their book loses all credibility. Despite gestures toward a two-state solution, the Ruethers clearly do not believe that the Jews have the right to a state. They fail the minimum litmus test for any progressive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by viewing the conflict as right against wrong rather than as a clash of two equally legitimate rights. By systematically denying the legitimacy of the Jewish position they become the flip side of Israeli rejectionists such as Yitzhak Shamir who believe that the Palestinians have no rights. Against such rejectionism from both camps, it needs to be asserted, again and again, that the only viable solution must rest on mutual recognition.

The Ruethers are so wedded to the Palestinian side of the story that they are unable to evince the barest sympathy for the historical experience of the Jewish people. In their cursory survey of Jewish history, they naturally mention the Russian pogroms and the Holocaust, but they fail to exhibit even the slightest understanding of why, after this recent history of oppression, Jews might feel the pressing need to achieve political sovereignty. Instead of empathizing with the instinctive response of Jews to the Nazi nightmare, the Ruethers regard the Holocaust as a "shock" that "made it possible for Zionists to capture control of Jewish organizations in the Diaspora and cement the official loyalty of world Jewry to the Jewish state." How can the author of *Faith and Fratricide* fail to grasp why most Jews have responded to modern anti-Semitism by demanding the right to defend themselves in their own state? Do the Jews deserve Ms. Ruether's sympathy only when they are down, not when they are trying to defend themselves?

The Ruethers make a series of tendentious and unsupported claims that often border on the conspiratorial or outright fanciful. They write, for example, that "it has been suggested that the Abu Nidal group has actually become a front for the Mossad [Israeli Intelligence]." The authors muster no evidence to support this grave allegation that one of the world's most ruthless murderers is an Israeli agent; the footnote that precedes the sentence refers to two works, neither of which corroborates the claim. Similarly, the Ruethers describe the assassination attempts on the Palestinian mayors in the West Bank as "incidents that have been officially blamed on settler extremists (but are *generally believed* to have been coordinated by the Israeli military and secret police.") [emphasis added] Generally believed by whom? On what grounds? The authors give no reliable source. Instead, they simply reproduce the kind of feverish rumor that has led many Palestinians to believe that the Mossad placed the bomb on the Pan Am plane that recently blew up over England.

But there is more. The Ruethers hold that Ben-Gurion devised a plan between 1944 and 1947 to terrorize

> the Arab towns and villages [in order] to encourage most of the middle-class leadership to leave. Once the British departed and the Jewish forces were fully in command, then there could be a more forcible mass expulsion of Palestinian villagers, either razing their villages or transferring their property to Jewish immigrants.

This alleged plan was put into effect in early December 1947, and it culminated

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with the Deir Yassin massacre. Later, the Ruethers describe the conquest of Ramle and Lod as a "blitzkrieg" (one wonders why they don't come right out and call the Israelis Nazis).

Go straight to the source



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There is no mention here of the widespread attacks by Palestinian guerrillas against Jews in the weeks after the United Nations partition resolution—attacks that resulted in hundreds of Jewish civilian deaths. The Arab side bears no responsibility whatsoever in their account for the civil war that engulfed Palestine between December 1947 and May 15, 1948. Moreover, the Ruethers' discovery of a prior Jewish "plan" to expel the Arabs has never been supported by a shred of evidence (and the Ruethers do not offer even a footnote). The Israeli historian Benny Morris, whose recent revisionist history of the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem contains material that is highly critical of the Haganah for inflaming the Palestinian-instigated civil war (see *Tikkun,* Nov./Dec. 1988), asserts that no such evidence exists. Even the left-wing Israeli historian, the late Simha Flapan, whom the Ruethers quote approvingly elsewhere, also found no evidence for such a plan. That the Ruethers continue to advance such a claim shows that they are on one side of the propaganda war rather than in the business of mediation.

But by far the most outrageous distortion with respect to modern Israel is their argument that, were it not for the Zionist transfer agreement with Nazi Germany, the Holocaust might not have happened. The Ruethers claim that, by trading with the Nazis as a way of utilizing the blocked accounts of German Jewish immigrants to Palestine, the Zionists effectively destroyed the boycott of Nazi Germany. Had the boycott succeeded, they argue, "the German economy might have cracked and Hitler's regime toppled." As a result of Zionist perfidy, "Hitler remained very much in power, rearmed Germany and embarked on the conquest of Europe.... The economy of Jewish Palestine thrived, building the infrastructures of the future Jewish state, while European Jewry was being murdered."

Needless to say, this preposterous claim not only inflates the economic power of the Yishuv (whose population was between 400,000 and 500,000 during the 1930s) but also ignores the intense moral dilemma posed by the Nazi regime. The transfer agreement, about which one may legitimately argue, made it possible for Jews to leave Germany at a time when the freezing of bank accounts effectively prevented many from emigrating. These Jews survived the Holocaust. No one who reads the Hebrew press from the Yishuv in the 1930s can doubt that the transfer agreement had as much to do with saving Jews as it had to do with building the Yishuv. Don't the early Zionists deserve some credit for saving these lives, or were the Zionist leaders motivated solely by political self-interest?

For the Ruethers, Zionism is a conspiracy designed to dupe the Jewish people, who otherwise would remain peacefully in the Diaspora. That Zionism might have the same deep roots in the Jewish people's historical experience as Palestinian nationalism has in the experience of the Palestinians seems beyond the Ruethers' comprehension. That the enmity between the Jews and the Arabs is the tragic result of a conflict between two equally legitimate nationalisms also has no place in their conspiratorial view.

Why, then, bother with this book, when it appears, on the face of it, to differ little from a whole library of pro-Palestinian propaganda? The story, however, is much more complex, for the Ruethers also propose an interpretation of Jewish history and of Judaism that removes the question of Israel's existence from the dusty battlefields of the Middle East to the ethereal realms of Christian theology.

The Ruethers believe that it is their role to "liberate the Jewish community [so that it can] regain its prophetic voice toward its own system of power." As Christians, the aspect of Judaism with which the Ruethers identify is the so-called voice of prophetic universalism. In their view, rabbinic Judaism is the genuine continuation of biblical prophetic Judaism because it is universalist and ethical, unlike the ethnocentric nationalism of the Zealots. They also claim that rabbinic law developed primarily in Diaspora settings rather than in Palestine. "True" Judaism is the Judaism of the Diaspora, the Judaism that renounces national exclusivism and presents itself as "a light unto the nations." Jews are not a nation, but a religion; the Zionists are the ones who try to impose alien nationalism on the Jewish people.

Much of this argument looks like nineteenth-century Reform Judaism. But it is scarcely history. The Rabbis were, in fact, part of the Palestinian

Jewish governing hierarchy and were strong nationalists who supported the first part of the Great Revolt against the Romans, as well as the later Bar Kokhba rebellion. Jews in the Greco-Roman Diaspora considered themselves, and were considered by Hellenistic and Roman law, to be an *ethnos* rather than a *religio*. The passage that the Ruethers quote (from Tractate Pesachim of the Babylonian Talmud) in order to support the view that the Rabbis wanted Judaism to be a "light unto the nations" is, in fact, a call for proselytism throughout the Roman Empire, hardly a product of pluralist universalism!

Throughout the Middle Ages, the Jews were not universalists, nor was Judaism purely a religion, either in the Jews' self-conception or in the view of the nations among which they lived (in medieval law, they were viewed as *foreigners*, not simply as non-Christians). In modern times, the definition of Jews as a religious group was an innovative construct that became untenable in Eastern Europe where, in fact, Jews constituted a nation long before the rise of Zionism.

But all of this history will hardly make a dent in the Ruethers' analysis. Their view of Jews and Judaism really has more to do with their own peculiar view of Christianity than with actual Jews and Judaism. They identify fully with the position of certain Arab Christian theologians, giving them totally uncritical celebration. In a curious argument, they hold that only anti-Zionist Christians can respect Judaism as an equal religion because their Christianity is based on universalist tolerance—"true Christianity" for the Ruethers. Such universalism has no place for ethnocentric nationalism. (Does this include Palestinian nationalism as well?). According to the Ruethers, the "only" Christians who, as a group, support the State of Israel are the evangelicals, but they do so out of a desire to convert the Jews.

It now becomes increasingly clear how the author of *Faith and Fratricide* could have written this book. The purpose of *Faith and Fratricide* was to divest Christianity of its own form of chauvinism, namely, anti-Semitism, so that it might become its true universalist self. The purpose of *The Wrath of Jonah* is to do the same thing for Judaism, the parent religion of Christianity. Christian universalism comes from the "true" Judaism, but the Jews have strayed from their calling by espousing tribal nationalism. The correct role for Jews is to fight for these universal, pluralistic values in the countries of the Diaspora, the true Jewish homelands.

Faith and Fratricide was a bold and welcome attack on "Christian imperialism" as well as a call for Christians to reexamine their very core beliefs in light of their culpability for anti-Semitism. With the publication of *The Wrath of Jonah,* however, it becomes necessary to ask whether Rosemary Ruether has in fact overcome the very anti-Semitism she so eloquently pilloried. She and her husband will no doubt indignantly protest that anti-Zionism is not the same as anti-Semitism, and on that score they are, in principle, correct. To object to the existence of a Jewish state on political grounds need not involve anti-Semitic myths: the acquisition of Jewish sovereignty has created real political questions that should not be confused with the fantasies of the anti-Semites.

But the Ruethers have gone far beyond a mere political critique of Zionism. Their wild and unsubstantiated conspiracy theories, which inflate Zionist power beyond recognition, smell suspiciously like the older myths of a world Jewish conspiracy. More important, their attack on the Jews' right to self-determination, while couched in universalist rhetoric, smacks of the old double standard; for they apply none of the same criticism to the Palestinians, whose nationalism they celebrate.

Here, in the final analysis, is Christian anti-Semitism with a philo-Semitic face. Having disposed in her previous book of the belief that the Jewish exile is a punishment for rejecting Jesus, Rosemary Ruether can now embrace the Jewish existence in the Diaspora as a positive vocation. *She,* after all, is willing to fight for Jewish rights in the Diaspora. But the Jews—that stiff-necked people—are (once again) ungrateful and prefer to defend themselves with their own arms in their own state. Having betrayed their calling to remain dispersed among the nations, Jews surely deserve the wrath of the righteous Christians.

As has been true for two millennia, the Jews are not allowed to be themselves. They are neither purely a religion nor purely a nation, neither strictly universalists nor solely exclusive nationalists. For Judaism is all of these things and more, and the struggles and tensions between these strands are the essence of Jewish history. The Ruethers' definition of true Judaism as the precursor to Christian universalism is exactly the same as the old Christian definition of Judaism as a *preparatio evangelica*—valid only as a precursor to Christianity. Theirs is the liberal version of the old Christian imperialism, that spiritual colonialism that presumes to tell the Jews who they really are.

Do the Jews deserve Ms. Ruether's sympathy only when they are down, not when they are trying to defend themselves?

The Ruethers have entitled their book *The Wrath of Jonah*. According to their interpretation, the Book of Jonah is a prophetic critique of Jewish ethnocentrism, represented by Jonah's anger upon hearing that God renounced His vow to destroy the city of Nineveh when its inhabitants repented. Jonah could not accept a universal God who loved the Ninevites as much as He loved the Israelites. This may or may not be a plausible interpretation of the Book of Jonah, but in taking it as the leitmotif and title of their own book, the Ruethers have repeated Christianity's oldest offense against Judaism: they have stolen a Jewish book and told us how to read it. They have turned the Hebrew Bible into a stick with which to beat the Jews.

There is, without question, a place for a prophetic critique of the State of Israel, just as there is a place for such a critique of all nation-states. But a Christian author attuned to the history of Christian anti-Semitism should be the first to exercise caution before assailing the Zionist barricades with Bible in hand. In a recent article in *Christian Century,* the Protestant theologian Robert McAfee Brown laid out a set of reasoned principles for how a Christian should criticize Israel if he or she expects to receive a Jewish hearing. Brown

does not shrink from invoking the prophetic tradition in opposition to the idolatry of the nation-state. But he makes it clear that such criticism must never be applied to Israel alone. And he understands that criticism will register only if it is presented as part of an affirmation of the Jewish right to self-determination. The Ruethers have failed on these counts, and they have consequently forfeited the audience they claim to seek.

Progressive Jews are engaged today in a fateful struggle over the future of Israel and, indeed, the future of the Jewish people. We desperately need all the allies we can get. But the last thing we need is modern versions of the medieval sermons that Jews were forced to listen to in Christian churches, or "well-meaning" attempts to "liberate the Jewish community." We wish to be neither oppressors nor victims, neither heroes nor puppets in someone else's theology. We wish, in short, to be a normal people. □

BOOK REVIEW

Thinking With the People

Casey Blake

The Company of Critics: Social Criticism and Political Commitment in the Twentieth Century by Michael Walzer. Basic Books, 1988, 288 pp.

In a famous battle cry against the America that had executed Sacco and Vanzetti, John Dos Passos wrote "All right we are two nations" (*The Big Money*). Such a declaration of independence is a familiar refrain in the history of modern American radicalism. In subsequent decades, Dos Passos's sentiments were echoed by celebrants of American pluralism and their critics within the New Left. The historian Richard Hofstadter, describing "the heartland of America" as "filled with people who are often fundamentalist in religion, nativist in prejudice, isolationist in foreign policy, and conservative in economics," betrayed the not-so-secret contempt for mainstream values that informed much of Kennedy liberalism in the early sixties (*Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*). So did those bitter radicals of the late sixties (including many ex-liberals) who raged against "AmeriKKKa" and separated the country neatly into "pigs" and "freaks." A cold, cruel disdain for anything smacking of convention and common sense has too often served as a badge of honor for both liberal and leftist critics of American society. To be capable of critical insight, to rise above the platitudes of one's fellows, has meant being distanced from the dominant culture. In this view, social criticism requires a truly dispassionate elite—a vanguard party, perhaps; or a professional corps of experts, an avant-garde, or a school of critical theorists possessed of superior insights and a vocabulary unavailable to ordinary citizens. Or it requires the heroism of a lone rebel, armed only with the weapons of criticism, who risks everything in a desperate private shoot-out with the authorities.

Michael Walzer's new book, *The Company of Critics,* is aimed directly at challenging these assumptions. For Walzer, both elitist condemnation and romantic rebellion obscure the way effective social criticism actually works in the twentieth century. Social critics succeed, he argues, only when they speak with their fellow citizens in a commonly understood moral language. The best criticism articulates the shared aspirations and grievances of people even as it painfully notes their shortcomings. "We criticize our society just as we criticize our friends," Walzer writes, "on the assumption that the terms of the critique, the moral references, are common."

Thus, reading in a Walzerian vein, one would say that the crucial passage in Dos Passos's novel is not the oft-repeated line about America's "two nations," but a preceding section that laments: "America our nation has been beaten by strangers who have turned our language inside out who have taken the clean words our fathers spoke and made them slimy and foul." *Our* nation, *our* language, *our* fathers—without this assumption of some shared moral decency and democratic heritage uniting Americans, Dos Passos's grim acknowledgment that "we are two nations" would hold no force. Dos Passos moves us because he speaks as Socrates or the Old Testament prophets did, as a voice of civic conscience that appeals to values that continue to shape many of our private practices and that may yet serve to renew our public life.

Walzer examines the careers of eleven Western critics, from Julian Benda and Randolph Bourne to Michel Foucault and Breyten Breytenbach, in order to defend a prophetic role for critical intellectuals on the left. His book is not a work in intellectual history or in the sociology of knowledge. It is rather a personal manifesto, a contribution to the long debate about the social position and function of the critic that assesses how "general intellectuals" have situated themselves in relation to the moral and political discourses of their contemporaries. From the start, Walzer makes clear his belief that commitment to some kind of local political or moral community is necessary for the practice of social criticism. "The most attractive picture of the true intellectual," Walzer writes, is not "as the inhabitant of a separate world, the knower of esoteric truths, but as a fellow member of this world who de-

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votes himself, but with a passion, to the truths we all know." His book is an argument for thinking about moral and political truths as embedded in "the structures and practices of everyday existence."

Consequently, *The Company of Critics* deserves to be read alongside *Habits of the Heart* by Robert Bellah and his associates, Russell Jacoby's *The Last Intellectuals,* Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice,* Norman Birnbaum's *The Radical Renewal,* and many of the contributions to this magazine. It is an example of a growing concern among liberals and leftists about grounding contemporary criticism in a public culture that would promote collective moral reasoning. Walzer's book shares with such writings a broader interest in renewing citizenship as a practice linking individual aspirations and civic obligation, a goal that not only challenges conventional understandings of the critic's social role but also undermines many assumptions about what constitutes progressive politics. If one agrees with Walzer that the best criticism grows out of what Clifford Geertz calls "local knowledge"—or what Walzer's hero, Ignazio Silone, considered "the ordinary sense of the relations between [oneself] and others, the ordinary sense of rights and duties, the ordinary standards of moral judgement"—then one has to challenge not only the Enlightenment model of the critic as "teacher" of the ignorant but also a good deal of conventional progressivism, from Hofstadter's assumption of the masses' superstitious stupefaction to the left's condescending complaints about "false consciousness" and a static "one-dimensional society."

Walzer's antagonists on the left are those who refuse to acknowledge their participation in the very communal practices they criticize. They are advocates of an abstract universalism who "miss the texture of moral life" in their blanket condemnation of a social group or an entire society. He is scornful of Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone De Beauvoir, and Herbert Marcuse, whose misanthropic portraits of the French bourgeoisie and the *pied noir* community of French Algeria, "unliberated" women, and the "moronized" working class of mid-twentieth-century America respectively allow those being described no legitimate response other than silent assent. According to these thinkers, the French bourgeoisie and the *pied noir* may undergo a conversion experience and remake themselves as dedicated revolutionaries engaged in a war to the death with their own friends and family; women may finally free themselves once they accept that "culture, civilization, and universal values have all been created by men, because men represent universality," as De Beauvoir claimed; and American workers might hold out for salvation from a technical elite capable of satisfying the "real needs" of the population through better technology. But such people may not draw on their own historical experiences, their own conventions, and their own ways of understanding the world in a collective project of which criticism is only a part. They certainly may not speak in their own voices.

Social critics succeed, Walzer argues, only when they speak with their fellow citizens in a commonly understood moral language.

In the most benign version of the position Walzer rejects, the one presented in Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks,* subordinate groups trapped in hegemonic "common sense" may aspire one day to live without teachers, but, in the meantime, they must take their lessons from those dissident "traditional intellectuals" who have cast their lot with the Communist party. What unites all such views of the social role of the radical critic is the assumption that, at this moment, there can be no productive dialogue with "the masses," whose historical situation prohibits them from speaking as political or moral agents. Even Michel Foucault's calls for local insurrections against the disciplinary systems of modern civilization founder on this point, insofar as his social theory addresses no "comprehensible antagonist" of a society organized on the basis of total surveillance. In Walzer's analysis, successful social criticism cannot take place outside of a public conversation—that is to say, outside of a polity. It is telling that the very worst thing Walzer can say about Marcuse is that he "has no faith in the linguistic creativity of the common people."

By contrast, the critics Walzer admires—Randolph Bourne, Martin Buber, Ignazio Silone, Albert Camus, George Orwell, and Breyten Breytenbach—generally practice what Gramsci called the "national-popular" version of criticism, closely connected to the linguistic, moral, and political idioms used by their fellow men and women. They speak to a potential democratic culture immanent in the practices of their society, as in Bourne's "transnational" ideal of a "Beloved Community," or they draw on the practical wisdom of their neighbors, as in Silone's evocation of the common decency of the Abruzzi peasants. When they attack their culture, they do so from within, as Buber did when he launched an internalist critique of Zionism and Breytenbach does when he challenges his fellow Afrikaaners to accept their identity as Africans.

Walzer's endorsement of such socially connected criticism leads him to defend Camus and Orwell from their

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supposed acquiescence to nationalistic imperatives during wartime. For Walzer, Camus's famous refusal to support the FLN during the Algerian War signifies not capitulation to the colonialist privileges he enjoyed as a member of the *pied noir* community, but his belief that justice abstracted from bonds of family and friendship is no justice at all. Similarly, Orwell's 1941 expression of his English patriotism, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, is for Walzer an appeal to a concrete democratic culture embodied in the minutiae of English working-class life. Like Bourne in the United States during World War I, Orwell spoke in the early forties for a patriotism of the left that gave the radical critic the opportunity to argue with other Englishmen on the basis of a shared love of land and values that was the very antithesis of a coercive state nationalism. "A family with the wrong members in control" was how Orwell described England in 1941, in a sentence that captures the spirit of "antagonistic connection" that Walzer believes essential to successful social criticism.

Clearly, Walzer has more on his mind than the social role of the intellectual. *The Company of Critics* makes a powerful argument for seeing radical criticism as part of a broader project of deepening and enriching democratic discourse. A defense of what might broadly be called "populism" emerges time and again in the book, in opposition to the various strains of Leninism, technocratic elitism, and social distancing Walzer decries. But such a political argument is never made explicit. Aside from urging critics to talk with their contemporaries in the vernacular and to appeal to their capacities for moral and political reflection on a democratic basis, Walzer is not clear about how committed intellectuals should proceed in the last years of the twentieth century. This omission is especially troubling because, as J. Peter Euben has observed in "Fanfare for the Common Complaint" (*New York Times Book Review*, Jan. 8, 1989), Walzer never identifies where he himself stands or how he locates his own project. At various times, Walzer directly draws his readers into the project, addressing us as "you and I." But whom exactly is he speaking to? Are "we" the twentieth-century, social-democratic successors to the "gentle readers" of the genteel Victorian literary tradition? If so, who is being excluded here, and why? Are "we" among the "friends in Jerusalem" to whom Walzer dedicates the book and to whom Walzer presumably speaks as an internalist critic of contemporary Zionism? If so, then wouldn't Walzer's Israeli friends benefit more from a book that used Buber's career as a starting point for a consideration of the current state of Israeli politics?

As a practitioner of "local knowledge," Walzer must situate himself somewhere, and this book suggests that he is most at home with Silone, Orwell, and Camus, those exemplars of socially connected criticism who provide the standard by which Walzer judges virtually everyone else he discusses. If Walzer himself has a cultural base, it is here, in the intellectual tradition that he shares with Irving Howe, his coeditor at *Dissent*. For someone advocating a "national-popular" criticism, as Walzer does, this is a remarkably select and cosmopolitan heritage. The conversation Walzer engages in is one involving other critics, most of whom are Europeans. Like earlier cosmopolitan intellectuals described by historian David A. Hollinger in *In the American Province*, Walzer seems more comfortable viewing local cultures "as repositories for insights and experiences that can be drawn upon in the interests of a more comprehensive outlook on the world" than he is in showing how his own intellectual project intersects with a particular set of local conventions. Despite his own intentions, Walzer's reflections on the critic's social role are unconnected to any project beyond criticism and unrelated to any specific vernacular idiom. One leaves Walzer's book, as one leaves much of the current discussion of "community" and "public culture" on the left these days, with the impression that the public conversation resulting from such recommendations will be short on substance and devoid of the inflections, accents, and rhythms of any particular community. It is fine to keep talking, but whom will one talk with, by what means, and in what way? Here, Walzer's hermetic community of critics proves maddeningly abstract and unhelpful. Whatever its appeals to the moral practices of local, everyday life, *The Company of Critics* never quite leaves the confines of the company store.

Walzer's lack of a concrete cultural or political reference point suggests that the problem of connectedness is simply a matter of one's critical intentions. But more than the critic's own will is required for genuinely democratic conversation to take place.

The political arrangements of modern cultural life have made it increasingly difficult for such a discourse to get started. Corporate control of the mass media may not involve direct censorship, but it certainly marginalizes writers, artists, musicians, and others who lack the financial means and connections necessary for the production and distribution of culture. Unusual and dissenting works rarely reach a large audience. Even if they do, they may have little effect if they remain distant from the everyday experience of most people.

The organization of the workplace since the late nineteenth century has consistently narrowed possibilities for creativity and autonomy on the job, even as it has increased the power of professionals and managers (who are themselves often constrained by corporate and bureaucratic hierarchies). Our political culture leaves little room for optimism about the possibilities for democratic conversation either, since politics has taken on the characteristics of the corporate advertising campaign. It is an odd conversation, after all, in which one participant insists on speaking through a bullhorn.

One reason for this problem is the ascendancy of languages of professional and administrative expertise, which has accompanied the rise of large-scale bureaucratic institutions. But another reason involves the increasingly central role of the university in modern cultural life. Walzer's book will likely find its widest audience among academics drawn from several disciplines. Given the expansion of the university since 1945, this is a sizable readership, far larger than that of the "little magazines" of the twenties and thirties. Yet, as Russell Jacoby and other critics argue, the academy's inclination is to discourage writing like Walzer's in favor of more specialized publications. This is hardly the terrain for the kind of socially connected criticism Walzer envisages.

These institutional arrangements have

exacerbated conflicts over questions of values—what Christopher Lasch has called our "cultural civil war." It has always been difficult for Americans living in a pluralistic society to reach any kind of consensus about the ends of a good polity or a good life, but the current divisions within our culture now make it increasingly difficult even to hold such discussions, let alone resolve them. One doesn't have to believe in a totally administered "one-dimensional society" to realize that the constraints on our cultural citizenship require more than plain speaking from our social critics. Without democratic spaces for public conversation, how can American culture provide the right setting for the type of criticism Walzer advocates? During the twentieth century, discussion of public issues has tended to fragment into separate specialized disciplines inaccessible to outsiders.

Walzer's reliance on the tradition of Silone, Orwell, and Camus has an additional drawback: it deprives him of the opportunity to examine American traditions of radical thought that are particularly appropriate to his enterprise. Walzer's theoretical writings are, in many ways, firmly in the American pragmatic tradition. Yet he makes no effort to address that tradition directly and ignores the career of John Dewey, the twentieth-century American who best embodies Walzer's own ideals. Moreover, where, in this brief for the prophetic role of radical intellectuals, are the prophetic voices of Jane Addams, Edmund Wilson, Lewis Mumford, Dwight MacDonald, the Lynds (Staughton, as well as Robert and Helen), James Baldwin, or the authors of the Port Huron Statement?

By sticking to Silone, Orwell, and Camus, Walzer stays on what is familiar ground for him. European critics of totalitarianism have provided the ethical underpinnings for the social-democratic perspective *Dissent* has articulated since its founding. Such critics have done for American social democrats what Reinhold Niebuhr did for "realist" liberals in the forties and fifties. They give a moral dimension to reformism that justifies itself in the administrative language of the welfare state rather than in the rhetoric of civic republicanism or Old Testament prophets. Perhaps the American radicals I mentioned are in the end too pietistic, too populistic, too libertarian for Walzer's brand of social democracy. They have less to say about the state as the center of reform activity than they do about the ways in which friendships and associations formed in the church, the school, or the protest movement link the quest for personal meaning to public endeavors. In their insistence that moral and cultural issues are at the heart of a democratic politics, they have embraced positions closer to the ambiguous tradition of radical protest that link Tom Watson to Jesse Jackson than to the rationalist socialism of Olaf Palme and Willy Brandt. The first tradition may be messier, more problematic, than the second. But it cannot be ignored by American social critics committed to the renewal of a democratic discourse. As Dos Passos understood, the "clean words" spoken by our fathers—and our mothers—may sometimes become "slimy and foul," but they are in the end the words we must use and try to make our own. □

BOOK REVIEW

Tom Hayden: The Waning of a Politics of Vision

Harold Jacobs

Reunion: A Memoir by Tom Hayden. Random House, 1988, 539 pp.

Articulate, intelligent, courageous, committed, energetic, and charismatic, Tom Hayden was the radical intellectual who, as a result of his leadership abilities, stood out among all his peers in the sixties. The publication of *Reunion: A Memoir,* a book he had been thinking about writing for over a decade, has been a long-awaited event for all those who have an interest in him as a political figure or in the New Left itself. While his recent separation from Jane Fonda, much like his March 1989 introduction of legislation to create a California Holocaust Commission, guarantees that he will remain a mass-media figure, Hayden's future significance transcends the hype: he is one of the few veterans of the movement against the Vietnam War who remains capable of playing a national leadership role in a revived left during the coming decade. It is, therefore, all the more important to understand his current attempts to distance himself from the New Left which he did so much to shape.

Hayden was at the cutting edge of the action during the pivotal moments of the movement's history. A brief synopsis of his political career highlights his presence through all the twists and turns of the New Left's evolution. He was active in the South during the early civil rights struggle; he was elected president of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in 1962 and drafted the organization's famous manifesto, the Port Huron Statement; he was a community organizer in the Newark ghetto from 1964 to 1967; he was among the first New Leftists to travel to North Vietnam and became a nationally known antiwar spokesman; he planned and helped lead the demonstrations at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968 and

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was one of the defendants in the Chicago Seven conspiracy trial; he participated in the uprising at Columbia University and helped found a revolutionary collective called the Red Family in Berkeley; he was instrumental in organizing the Indochina Peace Campaign in 1972.

In *Reunion: A Memoir* Hayden describes his childhood and adolescent years growing up in the Midwest; his estrangement from and eventual reconciliation with his parents; his two marriages and his relationships with other women; his friendships and encounters with Old Left, New Left, and establishment figures. These personal events are interwoven with an account of his political development from existential rebel and idealistic reformer in the late fifties and early sixties to radical activist and committed revolutionary in the late sixties and early seventies. By the midseventies, with the New Left in a state of collapse, Hayden's trajectory moved from left to right as he sought to reenter the political mainstream. He depicts himself today as "a lucky man" and a practical reformist who has been working since 1982 in the Democratic party as a California state assemblyman.

The drama of Hayden's life is characterized by his belief that he is a damaged survivor. What he survived was the social and personal breakdowns of the sixties. As he tells it, he started out early in the decade attempting to implement the democratic values he imbibed as a youth. Instead of receiving support from either the state or his parents, he experienced conflict and rejection. Indicted for conspiracy to engage in violence against the American government, he faced the prospect of prison, exile, or a life on the run as an underground revolutionary. In a self-critical revelation, he confesses that during this period in his life he "reacted in ways which compromised [his] best judgment," and he succumbed to the "temptation of hatred."

But a surprising series of reversals occurred in Hayden's life just at the point when he was tottering on the edge of the abyss: his accusers were driven from office in the Watergate scandals, he fell in love with and married Jane Fonda, he made great strides toward reestablishing his political legitimacy by getting elected to the California state legislature, he reunited with his family before his parents' deaths. From the depths of his alienation, his original idealistic values reasserted themselves. He once again found the will and energy to attempt to improve the world. On the personal level, the memoirs have an old-fashioned Hollywood ending that even Ronald Reagan, ideology aside, would appreciate. As for Hayden's admission, "I never expected to be where I am today," who can doubt it?

In spite of his new life, or perhaps because of it, Hayden feels the need to reevaluate his past political convictions and behavior. For all his present optimism and enthusiasm, Hayden considers the New Left a tragedy, not so much for its having failed as for the demoralizing manner in which the failure occurred. Although Hayden acknowledges that momentous things were accomplished in civil rights, antiwar work, university reform, and women's rights, he writes that the New Left was brutally and shamefully aborted, cut down at the time of its greatest impact, prevented from evolving and realizing its full potential.

In accounting for the demise of the New Left, Hayden stresses (as others have done) its self-inflicted wounds: "We ourselves became infected with many of the diseases of the society we wished to erase.... Claiming love as our motivation, we could not subdue hate. Questing for community, we met our egos." That the New Left's collapse was not brought about by outside forces as much as by divisiveness within its own ranks makes its end all the more poignant. Moreover, it is an anomaly that a movement that began as a moral crusade for civil rights and peace ended in moral disarray. Hence the guilt, the feeling of having been blocked and overcome in ways not totally understood. Hayden seeks to come to grips with this "inner absurdity" by recounting how the major political events of the sixties influenced and distorted his and other people's judgment.

Hayden's analysis, briefly stated, runs as follows: idealistic youth, aroused by the desire to live a committed life infused with high moral purpose, were moved to act against social injustice. In particular, the Southern civil rights movement and the struggle against the Vietnam War provided foci around which to organize, because both issues powerfully exemplified the evil underside of American politics. Rather than the country's responding constructively to the movement's legitimate demands for change, respected authorities, both liberal and conservative, defaulted. Nonviolent protest was "met by misunderstanding, mismanagement, and overreaction." The uncaring rigidity of officials politicized and radicalized the New Left and undermined its belief in the possibility of reform. This tendency was reinforced by the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy. Healthy protest, denied a constructive response, became subordinated to "aggressive impulses lurking in us all." State-supported violence and intransigence produced a revolutionary backlash filled with bitterness and despair.

The tragedy, as Hayden sees it, is that in the face of these and other pressures, the movement self-destructed in a frenzy of self-recrimination, revolutionary posturing, irrational violence, and sectarian squabbles. Contrary to the radical movement's belief that the society was evolving into a police state, the system actually was in the process of reforming itself. The war came to an end, and the protesters were eventually vindicated. High government officials who had abused their power were driven from office. In short, according to Hayden, "the system had worked." It was no longer unreasonable (if it ever was) to believe in the efficacy of social reform.

Hayden grudgingly admits that he became as caught up in the movement's "madness," that is, in its revolutionary fantasies, as were the Weatherpeople who later went underground. The Red Family, Hayden's Berkeley collective, to which I also belonged, was an aboveground version of Weatherman. Its political analysis was basically the same, emphasizing support for Third World revolutionary insurgencies abroad and for the Black liberation struggle at home. Tactically, however, its politics were implemented in a relatively rational manner, something that distinguished the Red Family and other collectives like it across the country from Weatherman. During this period, Hayden was publicly projecting himself as a Maoist or as Kim Il Sungian, largely as a result of the influence of Bob Scheer, a member of the Red Family

who had been a former editor of *Ramparts* magazine and who now writes for the *Los Angeles Times*. Hayden acted, no less than any other member of the collective, in an openly revolutionary manner. The issue for him, then, was not whether armed struggle against the American state was morally justifiable (for he certainly believed it was), but whether it was politically feasible.

While Hayden criticizes the Red Family for becoming a cult at the time of his expulsion from it, he never acknowledges his own responsibility for reinforcing those tendencies when he was a member—if not a leader—in good standing of that collective. For example, Hayden's idea of appropriate political education sessions in the collective was for the members to sit around in a circle and read aloud, line by line, Huey Newton's or Eldridge Cleaver's latest political pronouncements in the Black Panther party's newspaper. Once, when a member dared to make a mild criticism of this material, Hayden angrily scolded the person for being "stupid." These, no doubt, are moments that Hayden does not enjoy looking back on. In discussing this period of his life, he very selectively reveals what he actually said or did, thus minimizing both his revolutionary commitment and his doctrinaire inclinations.

Male power rivalries were as much a part of what went on in the Red Family as anything else. Hayden's lover, Anne Weills, was Bob Scheer's ex-wife. The three of them formed a complex emotional triangle that contaminated the interpersonal relationships within the collective. Weills, who became the de facto leader of the women, felt the need to demonstrate publicly her independence from Hayden in order to maintain her credibility with the radical feminists in the Berkeley community, many of whom were pressuring women to sever all relationships with male "heavies." During meetings of the collective, Weills would continually berate Hayden for the slightest nuances of behavior that might be construed as sexist. Hayden responded in a cowed and intimidated fashion.

Scheer, on the other hand, whom the women had defined as the most chauvinist male in the collective, was singled out for special, kid-gloves treatment. The women met privately with him in political reeducation sessions. Weills, seeking to establish her own independence from the two prominent radical men in her life, used Scheer to distance herself from Hayden. After meeting with the women, Scheer later met with the men and attacked them for not doing *more* than the women requested to overcome their male chauvinism! More often than not these meetings were veiled attacks aimed at Hayden who, fearful of losing Weills and guilt-ridden over his past behavior toward women, proved unable to defend himself from even illegitimate criticism.

This dynamic, which was never openly recognized or dealt with in the Red Family, exacerbated the difficulties involved in constructively overcoming the real vestiges of male chauvinism in the collective. For Hayden, it culminated in his expulsion from the Red Family. The members (his closest friends at the time) decided in his absence that he was "an oppressive male chauvinist" and that "the group's potential would best be realized without having someone of [his] character in its midst." In his memoirs, Hayden recounts his humiliation over being purged from the collective and the grief he felt over the loss of his relationship with Weills, as well as with Scheer's and her young son, Christopher, to whom Hayden had become a surrogate father. He makes no mention of his rivalry with Scheer, although he notes in passing that Scheer was "seeing" Jane Fonda shortly before Hayden took up with her. Hayden was never one to probe too deeply beneath the psychological surface of what he refers to as "complicated relationships [that] would not go away."

Hayden never recognized that the failure of the Red Family, including its inhumane treatment of him, was an outgrowth of an approach to politics that he himself had made central to the New Left. Rejecting Old Left ideologies that tended to view human beings as shaped by outside social forces, New Leftists adopted an existential politics of choice that saw no limits to the possibilities of transcendence. By personally transforming oneself, by pushing oneself to one's limits, one should have been able to overcome all forms of "bourgeois" conditioning and become an embodiment of the revolutionary values of the society of the future. Each person was to be judged on the grounds of personal authenticity: it was held as both necessary and legitimate for movement activists to criticize each other over how well or badly they were remaking themselves in accordance with their shared vision and values. If one did not embody the fullest personal transformation, one was failing to make an authentic commitment.

All over the country, hard-core New Leftists were putting each other "up against the wall" for their revolutionary shortcomings.

Hayden played an important role in popularizing this way of thinking about politics. His decision to live in Berkeley corresponded to his adoption of a theory that advocated "liberated territories" built from youth ghettos like Berkeley, Cambridge, and Ann Arbor. From these places, the revolution would spread to the rest of America. The Red Family, in turn, was to be an example of how revolutionaries should live. Inevitably, then, the demands within the collective reflected the same demands that Hayden advocated for the rest of the New Left, namely, that the movement's goals—a society free of alienating and oppressive forms of domination—become the movement's criteria for evaluating the moral integrity of its own inner life. It should come as no surprise that perfect embodiments of the future liberated society were hard to find.

In fact, the Red Family mirrored the relatively inhumane way that people were treating each other in the movement as a whole. Weatherman guilt-tripped people for not being militant enough; women denounced men as "pigs" for their chauvinism. All over the country, hard-core New Leftists, now functioning in small, tight-knit collectives like the Red Family, were putting each other "up against the wall" for their revolutionary shortcomings. The tone of the criticism was no longer comradely; it involved attacks on the personalities in question. "Trashing" people for their inability to transcend, almost overnight, twenty to thirty years

of contamination and distortion from classism, racism, and sexism was the late New Left's most crippling vice. The personal power struggles between Hayden and Scheer were not that different in style from struggles for corporate power; they differed from television soap opera only in that they were clothed in revolutionary rhetoric. Inevitably, human weakness and self-interest reasserted themselves in the very heart of the revolutionary venture.

"Inevitably," not because Hayden was not an exemplary revolutionary hero, but rather because he held and popularized unrealistic expectations of what any individual could achieve. Echoing the individualism inherent in the popular American belief that anybody could become anything through effort, courage, and hard work, Hayden's New Left insisted on pushing the idea of self-transformation beyond achievable limits. It was utopian, in the pejorative sense. Just as his fellow Red Family members turned on him, denounced him, and purged him for his revolutionary shortcomings, so too throughout the movement did a spirit of mutual intolerance turn a loving community into a cesspool of mutual recriminations and harsh judgments as each person found others inadequately antisexist, antiracist, antihierarchical, and the like. Though undoubtedly exacerbated by the presence of undercover agents who used this dynamic to accelerate disharmony, the self-destructive thrust of the New Left was an outgrowth of the philosophy of individual existential self-transcendence that Hayden had a large part in creating and reinforcing.

In ignoring the insights of both Marx and Freud, Hayden was oblivious to the social and psychological constraints that limited what could reasonably be expected in the way of individual self-transformation. Relying on individualistic fantasies deeply rooted in American culture, Hayden had no theoretical basis for developing a sense of compassion for individual weaknesses—his own or anyone else's. No wonder, then, that even today Hayden demonstrates a remarkable lack of self-understanding. In his memoirs he adopts a level of self-criticism carefully calculated to appear open, and calibrated to give the potential Hayden voter the impression that he has been self-reflective and has discovered his weaknesses. In fact, Hayden subtly defends himself from the kind of self-scrutiny that would allow others to really know him.

When Hayden does discuss his personality in terms that touch upon its psychodynamics, a number of problematic tendencies emerge: (1) a difficulty in maintaining long-term intimate relationships with others, including parents, friends, and lovers; (2) a strong aggressive drive to seek power and to "be in the center of things"; (3) a propensity to manipulate and use people; (4) a paranoid view of the world that tends to result in a flirtation with violence and martyrdom. These "narcissistic" tendencies no doubt derive from an oppressive and obdurate feeling of guilt Hayden picked up in his childhood years over not having lived up to his parents' expectations. Although Hayden tends to gloss over the vicissitudes of his earliest years so as to maintain the illusion of a "secure" young life, the facts attest to something quite different.

Hayden's father, a conservative Republican "who could not easily show emotion," began drinking heavily in the years just prior to divorcing his mother. While his father continued to cooperate in raising him after the divorce and spent weekends with him, Hayden points out: "My father and I were never closer than when there wasn't much to say but a lot to do together." His mother, a liberal Democrat who stalwartly devoted her life to taking "protective care" of him after his father left the household, "never even involved herself with another man" and was the type of person who never missed a single day of work in twenty years "even when she was sick." So Hayden's idyllic, "secure" childhood consisted of having a father who was rarely, if ever, there for him emotionally and a mother who had strong guilt-tripping, masochistic tendencies.

Is it any wonder that Hayden became an angry young man who sought to confirm in the larger world of political action his true identity? Morally committed and existentially risky behavior allowed him to achieve the recognition and meaning he so deeply craved. Although participation in the New Left met his emotional needs, it exacerbated his problematic relationship with his parents when he found himself in open rebellion against a political system that they loyally and patriotically embraced.

Worse yet, making revolution was not all that it was cracked up to be. Hayden's conviction in March 1969 in the Chicago Seven conspiracy trial terrifyingly brought home to him "how a seemingly 'democratic' system could actually be repressive." Faced with the possibility of seven years' imprisonment or going underground, Hayden found revolutionary leadership and martyrdom less appealing, whatever the emotional payoff had once been. Or as Hayden euphemistically puts it: "I soon realized that I could never survive underground because of my extrovert's need for individual expression."

Hayden's later reconciliation with his parents parallels his reintegration into mainstream politics. By the early seventies, he had gotten married and become a father. He also had been cleared on appeal of all charges stemming from the demonstrations at the Chicago convention. According to Hayden, in a moving moment in 1978, his father, from whom he had been estranged for over a decade, managed to blurt out, "Son, I'm proud of you." How Hayden must have longed to hear those words! All that remained was for the system to confirm his legitimacy. The judge in the Chicago conspiracy trial, Hayden notes, had told him, "Fellows as smart as you could do awfully well under this system." With Jane Fonda's money and his own political acumen, Hayden would put that theory to the test.

What followed was a period of anti-war lobbying efforts that culminated in the congressional defeat of supplemental military aid to the Saigon government in 1974; an unsuccessful but respectable (36.7 percent of the vote) run against John Tunney, an incumbent "orthodox liberal" senator, in the Democratic party primary election in 1975; a stint as a member of Governor Jerry Brown's political inner circle coupled with local political organizing campaigns in Santa Monica and elsewhere; and the holding of office in the California state legislature since 1982.

Throughout Hayden's return to the political mainstream, he has been plagued by his radical past, or what he refers to as the "political baggage" that he still carries today. His memoirs constitute a public-relations effort to convince the American people that

he has become a dedicated family man and a political moderate who can be trusted with whatever political office he chooses to seek in the future. As much as he professes "to tell the truth," he is more like the little boy he describes in the confessional wondering "how much truth to tell the priests" in order to avoid going to hell forever. Nowhere in his memoirs does his credibility seem more questionable than in his reconsideration of his political convictions.

The Vietnam War is a case in point. Although Hayden retains the essentials of his antiwar position and gives a moving account of the Vietnamese people under siege, he makes no serious attempt to relate the war to America's global, neocolonial ambitions or to its post-World War II counterrevolutionary foreign policy. Hayden claims the war was a tragedy and a mistake, but he never depicts it as an act of U.S. aggression or as an imperialist war, as he did on numerous occasions in the past. He skirts these issues by presenting worldviews (of his parents, of cold war liberals, of his generation, and so on) but no analysis of his own. He depoliticizes and personalizes the discussion of the war so that we are left with claims like this: "58,000 Americans died for false pride or, worse, for nothing." What he says is not false per se; but it is a half-truth that covers up what a more radical, structural analysis—which he has made elsewhere and has never publicly repudiated—would make preeminent.

Hayden feels a need to set the record straight on a number of errors of judgment he believes he made about Vietnam, but in doing so he distorts the historical record: he apologizes for being insensitive to "any anguish or confusion I was causing to U.S. soldiers or their families—the very people I was trying to save from death and deception." Actually, although the antiwar movement that Hayden led tended to view the American combatants as victims, and the men who sent them to Vietnam as war criminals, the movement was concerned primarily with saving the *Vietnamese* people from "death and deception," since they were doing a disproportionate share of the dying. Hayden even goes so far as to apologize for showing "minimal concern over NLF-inflicted atrocities on Vietnamese civilians, as at Hue during the Tet Offensive." But this is an event whose occurrence some historians of the war express doubts about and, if it occurred at all, view as, according to Frances FitzGerald, "the exception that proved the rule of Front behavior for all the previous years of war and in the other cities and towns it occupied during the Tet offensive." Finally, in recounting Jane Fonda's trip to Vietnam with him in 1972, where she made broadcasts on Hanoi radio urging U.S. servicemen to oppose the war, Hayden depicts the trip as an act of naiveté rather than what everyone in the antiwar movement knew it to have been: a sincere and brave attempt, from a platform within the victimized country, to influence U.S. pilots to stop participating in a criminal war.

The most twisted thought in Hayden's book lies in his claim that "the system had worked" because the antiwar movement prevailed, domestic fascism was prevented, and officials in the Nixon administration were driven from office in disgrace. Has Hayden forgotten the price that was paid in blood and treasure for these "reforms"? Aside from the American dead and wounded, consider the millions of Indochinese victims. Consider, too, Hayden's claim that Vietnam was left a "wasteland." And what of the unprecedented heroic resistance of the Vietnamese people? Do they, rather than the alleged responsiveness of the American political system, not deserve the bulk of the credit for ending (by winning) that barbarous war? And did the withdrawal from Vietnam put an end to America's military interventions on other, more advantageous fronts? Hayden's claim distorts the actual nature of American foreign policy and ignores America's extralegal, clandestine support for "low intensity" wars in the post-Vietnam War period and the enormous unnecessary pain and suffering such actions continue to produce in countries like Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Along with this kind of political obscurantism, Hayden uses his memoirs to obsequiously project himself as a "patriotic American." He has somehow managed to describe his first trip to North Vietnam as a "very American thing to do," thus inadvertently giving credibility to the defunct House Un-American Activities Committee's claim that there are un-American ways of expressing dissent. Moreover, there is not the slightest hint in his memoirs of any marital problems. He stresses not only close family ties, but also his interest in baseball and fishing. In other words, these days he is just an ordinary

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guy who also happens to want your vote so that he can work to apply "our ideals with a new maturity to our nation's future." With every turn of the page, he sounds more and more like a conventional liberal politician, speaking in platitudes, selling hope, and delivering, at best, token change.

Somewhere lurking in the identity of the Tom Hayden who was radicalized in the sixties must reside the yearning to make history rather than to ride it opportunistically to some pie-in-the-sky dead end. Although Hayden's memoirs show him to be a man of strong but at times wavering moral courage, there are new, practical reasons that might compel him to reassess his political drift to the right. Jesse Jackson, in his striking showing in the Democratic party presidential primaries this past year, and Bernard Sanders, the socialist mayor of Burlington, Vermont, for the last eight years, have demonstrated that you can attack some of the real problems in our society and credibly compete for political office. Moreover, the recent announcement of Hayden's separation from Jane Fonda will defeat his attempt to portray himself as a happily married man, thus making the political strategy tied to that public persona no longer viable. As a result, Hayden may elect once again to become the perennial outsider, the visionary spokesman of America's social conscience. He still remains one of the few individuals in this country who has the intelligence, ability, and following to play a critical role in the reconstruction of the left. In these times, that would be the "patriotic" thing to do. □

Current Debate: Is *Tikkun* Too Conservative?

Social Conservatism on the Left: The Abandonment of Radicalism and the Collapse of the Jewish Left Into Faith and Family

Jesse Lemisch

Secular and anticlerical radicalism are important and wonderful Jewish traditions. But *Tikkun* is about Judaism and religious commitment. Although Jews have a history of rebellion, *Judaism,* as it comes to us, is, by and large, authoritarian and patriarchal, and it celebrates obedience to a jealous and vengeful god. Nonetheless, I have no quarrel with believers who want to practice *any* religion. Any veteran of the sixties, with its powerful religious expression, would be foolish to invoke the old-time Marxist religion of militant atheism. But the collapse into Judaism by onetime sixties activists and the proselytizing of radical secular Jews mark a retreat from radicalism. The left's profamily position is part of the same package. This *is* the Big Chill, born of disillusionment and contempt for feminism, and emerging from a strategy that abandons the proud, radical idea of honestly presenting clear alternatives.

My critique focuses on *Tikkun.* My argument is that, although *Tikkun* may be *politically liberal,* it is *socially conservative.* For some of us, feminism, gay liberation, and the rejection of the romance of the family are crucial marks of separation between the old world and the new. By these standards, *Tikkun* is part of the old world.

Many of *Tikkun's* socially conservative articles come from editors of, and frequent contributors to, the magazine. In no way can these views be considered atypical, exceptions to the magazine's editorial stance. In any case, why does *Tikkun* rescind support for positions that should be part of our postsixties consensus? Why argue with the past when we should be struggling toward the future? Instead of questioning the validity of gay and women's liberation, we should take the accomplishments of these movements as givens and then argue about future directions. We don't need a "balance," which functions to revive such fifties social values as "togetherness."

Although the Jewish emphasis on social justice and the Prophets' radiant visions are magnificent, much of Judaism is patriarchal and authoritarian, and it smells of homophobia and contempt for women. Of course, this isn't what *Tikkun* is about. To forge links between Judaism and a left program, *Tikkun* must oppose these attitudes. How is this project going?

In *Tikkun's* first issue, Christopher Lasch found that he could not stomach the notion of gay marriage, so he put it in quotes and described it as merely a "living arrangement" for people who seek to "keep all their options open all the time, avoiding any constraints or demands of their own." After a while, Editor Michael Lerner understood how offensive Lasch's doctrine is, and, although his social views seem generally congruent with Lasch's, he took this one back—but only partway. "[G]ay families and alternate families," Lerner writes, "also deserve our respect," but only "insofar as they represent freely chosen alternatives and not simply ac-

Jesse Lemisch teaches history at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York, and writes American history "from the bottom up." This piece has been excerpted from a speech given at the Tikkun *conference.*
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commodations to a bad reality."

Tikkun had another go at this problem in an article on "Judaism and Homosexuality" by rabbinical student Bradley Artson. Striving for a "compassionate stance on homosexuality," Artson seeks to exonerate homosexuals from the crimes attributed to them in Jewish sources. He allays fears that acceptance of homosexuality will lead to an increase in the number of homosexuals, predicting, happily, that it will not. Artson also assures us that gays can still raise children through adoption or artificial insemination. Spilling seed "does indeed raise a legal issue of some significance," Artson argues, but he finds a way around the problem. He concludes that, although "anonymous or coercive" homosexual acts remain "abominations," others are OK —as long as they take place within stable, monogamous, loving relationships. A gay chorus cries out, "Thanks, Rabbi!"

Let's hope for something better as we look at *Tikkun* on women. Like Artson, Anne Roiphe—a *Tikkun* regular —wants to break with the more grotesque aspects of the past in her "The Jewish Family: A Feminist Perspective." But in this egregious and bizarrely named piece, Roiphe's obsession is the declining Jewish birth rate, and her goal is to have every married Jewish woman bear *four* children. "A truly feminist position," she writes, "does not mock the family." It's a strange brand of feminism that urges a woman to bear four children. Maybe it's Catholicism.

At the heart of *Tikkun*'s analysis is Lerner's claim that the left has lost the American people to the right. The solution? The left should "reclaim the family, religion, and ethical values, and [frame its] program in these terms." Christopher Lasch argues similarly: we've "lost touch with popular opinion," and we oppose "the traditional wisdom and folkways of the community."

But the left doesn't aim to organize people around repressive myths of who they are; it seeks to provide them with alternate visions of whom they *might* be. Our failure to identify Lasch as a conservative reflects the fact that, as long as people's politics are left, we ignore their social conservatism. Perhaps we have things upside down, and we might realign our definition so that adherence to socialism, for instance, would be seen as secondary to certain social and cultural values.

Feminism taught us that the nuclear family is oppressive to women, children, and even, in some ways, men. It is hierarchical and patriarchal, it inculcates submission in the young, and it institutionalizes inequalities of power, which inevitably result in barbarity. To *Tikkun*'s "New Traditionalist" romance of the family, Joel Steinberg and Hedda Nussbaum are an aberration; to feminists they provide a rare public glimpse of the underlying reality of the patriarchal family.

From the beginning, there was fierce opposition within the left to feminist insights. In the sixties many people on the left saw feminism as a petty bourgeois diversion. They sought to recruit a sometimes retrograde constituency on the common ground of sexism. After the movement came to a fiery end, saner people picked up the conservative banner, now bearing the code word, "family."

Today, twenty years after the movement, *Tikkun* expounds this ideology, asking us to reclaim the family from the right. It's there in *Tikkun*'s 1988 attack on NOW for being "stuck in a time warp" and for being insufficiently profamily. And all this comes when the entire range of the two-party system, Reagan-Bush-Dukakis-Jackson, agrees on the centrality of, in Reagan's words, the "basic values of faith and family." We're experiencing a wave of repression that should be thought of as social McCarthyism. *Tikkun* colludes with the powerful forces in American society that seek to repeal the sixties.

Tikkun's doctrine is not only wrong; it won't work. *Tikkun* says the left needs Judaism to be credible in addressing the American people's spiritual concerns. The idea of approaching the American people as family folk and believing Jews is another in a long line of tried and failed left strategies designed to conceal who we are and what we really want. Once again, some of us seem to think that the way to organize people is to *become* those people and to abandon the notion of standing up, in honest dignity, and holding out real alternatives. Isn't there in this attitude a touch of Progressive Labor, and before that the Communist party, claiming that communism was Americanism, Twentieth-Century-Style?

Why should we go off in retrograde pursuit of roots that most of us do not feel? Now we have a curious variation on the authenticity racket in which secular left Jews are urged to be religious in order to make themselves more acceptable to mainstream America. In other words: Judaism is Americanism, 1989-style. The whole package is so utterly and frankly instrumental that Americans have reason to see it as a plot. Americans *do* take religion seriously, and they won't tolerate seeing it used this way.

We do not need a conservatism that comes inevitably from immersion in tradition. We don't need systems of thought that are symptoms of fatigue, defeat, and isolation. We don't need a tired acquiescence to things as they are. We need a new movement, but *Tikkun* will not get us there. While respecting people's traditions, we need a movement that will make it crystal clear that we *do* indeed stand for alternative values, for things the likes of which the world has never seen. Sometimes we on the left *must* stand apart, as we did on Vietnam, which we opposed from outside the consensus for many years. Had we decided, in 1965, to accept what was then "common sense" about the war, there would have been no antiwar movement. And sometimes the best the left can do in hard times is to keep the door open for the future, to hold high a banner that presents clear alternatives, and to say that things as they are are not things as they have to be. We don't need a return to the tired, the tribal, and the old; but rather—not as liberals or progressives, but as *radicals*—we need the courage to pick up the great adventure temporarily left off and resume the difficult quest for the new, for utopia. □

Tikkun *Responds to Jesse Lemisch*

It is *Tikkun*'s policy to print alternative perspectives to ours. Hence we have printed Jesse Lemisch's attack, even though it so grossly distorts our actual positions. Were it similarly misleading about anyone else except ourselves, we would have rejected it on grounds of factual inaccuracy alone. In fact, not only do we *not* hold many of the positions Lemisch attributes to us, but we find those positions morally distasteful. The Lemisch attack forces us to prove that we are morally OK and that we really have the "correct line." That very dynamic is precisely what destroyed the social movements of the 1960s; it also ensures the continued isolation of the left.

Lemisch's covert message is that "no one is as morally pure as we on the sectarian left are." This message demands that potential allies "prove themselves" before they can be accepted as part of the left. This attitude makes people feel invalidated by the left at the very moment when the left should be embracing new friends. The right, meanwhile, has succeeded in convincing tens of millions of Americans that *all* liberals and progressives secretly hold the same contempt for them and their lives that Lemisch manifests in his wild assertion that the nuclear family creates dynamics "which inevitably result in barbarity"[!!!]. Because Lemisch's article is a fresh embodiment of this self-destructive leftist approach, it deserves comment despite its unfair characterization of *Tikkun*'s views.

First, to the distortions. Given that *Tikkun* has an editorial board of seventy people with widely different views on many issues, and given that we frequently print articles with which we partly or entirely disagree, it's easy to string together a set of out-of-context quotes and misrepresent the positions of the magazine (which are stated in our editorial policy). Lemisch has done that.

1. *Gays.* *Tikkun*'s editorials have shown full support for the gay liberation movement. In our two-and-a-half years we have printed several articles dealing with gay struggles and with AIDS. We have criticized the Jewish community for overt and covert discrimination against gays. Lemisch's insinuations to the contrary are outrageous.

A typical example of Lemisch's taking something out of context is his quotes from Rabbi Bradley Artson's article on "Judaism and Homosexuality" (*Tikkun*, Mar./Apr. 1988). Artson is a supporter of gay liberation, and in this article he takes on those who claim to base their opposition to gays on a careful reading of Jewish law (*halakha*). Artson's point is that *even* if one takes *halakha* seriously, one can provide a defense of homosexuality *within* that context of thought. We didn't expect all our readers to buy Artson's premises. But we were trying to do a service to those gays and lesbians who *do* take seriously the *halakhic* frame of reference and need support from it. To use our attempt to provide that support as proof of social conservatism is typical of the irresponsible way that Lemisch makes his argument.

2. *Family.* *Tikkun* has made it clear that our support for family does not privilege one kind of family over others. We are supportive of people's attempts to build single-parent families and gay families, as well as more traditional family forms. Before starting the magazine, both *Tikkun*'s editor and publisher worked for ten years with a wide variety of American working people. In our experience, most people use the word "family" to refer to the only institution in their lives that has as its explicit mission and ideal the unconditional provision of loving care to each of its members. The logic of the family ideal runs directly counter to the logic of the capitalist marketplace, where each person is valued only to the extent that he or she can produce something that someone else will buy. Consequently, when Americans are attracted to the ideal of the family, they are attracted to the notion of an institution whose goal is to support long-term, committed, loving relationships.

Most Americans don't have to be told that their families don't actually work in this way—too many people have been scarred by their family lives. This is precisely the point that *Tikkun* wants to make when it urges liberals and progressives to adopt a progressive profamily agenda. Our point is *not* to glorify the actualities of family life in America, but to help people understand that it is often *not their fault* that the legitimate things they want in family life (loving support and recognition) have not been available. A progressive profamily agenda would be one that helps people understand that the dynamics of the competitive marketplace, the ethos of self-interest and "look out for Number One," and the stress and powerlessness that people experience in their workplaces all help undermine the building of loving families.

Ironically, much that is associated with liberal culture has tended to reinforce self-blaming. Psychotherapy, for example, often encourages people to believe that if one can simply get one's own head straight, everything else will work out. Thus, it tacitly supports the belief that if things are not working out, one can blame only oneself. Even the struggle for equal opportunity has unintentionally had this consequence to the extent that it supports the notion that, apart from overt sexual or racist discrimination, the economic marketplace is fair and what one achieves therein is a reflection of individual merit.

Besides raising consciousness about this dynamic of self-blaming, a progressive profamily movement would also help people become aware of the ways they undermine the possibility of having loving, committed relationships—by sexist assumptions and behavior, by parents' invalidating children's experience, by family members' being emotionally phony in order to preserve family stability, and by other emotionally destructive family routines. These dynamics are likely to appear in *any* institution in which people raised in this society seek emotional intimacy, as can be attested to by the experience of those in alternative families and those who sought to build communes in the 1960s. It is silly to blame "the family" for these dynamics; it is more sensible to incorporate techniques for overcoming these dynamics as part of a progressive profamily program.

The right has been able to speak to the pain people feel about the failure of their family lives by talking about the external forces that it says undermine family: gays, feminism, and individual rights. The right has been able to get away with this position *only* because liberals and the left have ignored the family issue, or, worse, like Lemisch, have spoken about family life as though it were fundamentally reactionary, as though what people *want* from family life is the opportunity to support hierarchy and patriarchy. The left could make major advances in popular consciousness if it were to help people see that hierarchy and patriarchy—manifested in the way work is organized, the competitive marketplace, and the destructive legacy of sexist practices and assumptions—are in fact major obstacles to meaningful family life. To get that message across, the left should not start by telling people that what they want is bad or evil. It isn't. A progressive profamily program is the exact opposite of a glorification of the current realities of family life or a harking back to a mythical past in which families supposedly did better.

Tikkun's ideas about the family are clear in the magazine. For Lemisch to mischaracterize them requires either a willful desire to misrepresent our views or a spotty reading of our articles. Consider some of the specifics connected to our vision of profamily legislation: paid maternity and paternity leaves; a well-funded nationwide network of community-controlled child-care centers, as well as governmental funding of training programs for child-care workers; supplemental parental financial support during the first seven years of a child's life; a governmental mandate to ensure that workplaces provide additional sick days for children's illnesses and extra leniency when tardiness can be shown to be related to family health emergencies. Can anyone with the least familiarity with American society say that this is a position of "social conservatism"?

3. *Judaism.* *Tikkun* has been in the forefront of critiquing sexist practices within Judaism and in encouraging and supporting the development of Jewish feminism. But to reduce the entirety of Judaism to its patriarchal or oppressive aspects reflects a fundamental lack of familiarity with Jewish texts. To do so is to offer an interpretation of Judaism influenced more by traditional Christian slander than by a careful understanding of 2,500 years of midrashic interpretation.

It's not that there is no basis for a critique of Judaism, but rather that those of us at *Tikkun* who are wrestling with the Jewish tradition have incorporated that critique. Yet, in doing so, we insist on a more complicated and less rejecting interpretation of our long historical tradition—an understanding that places in historical context the various distortions that have emerged from that tradition. This, of course, is what leftists like Lemisch try to do with *their own problematic tradition,* the twentieth-century history of leftist barbarism. They try to explain the context for the tens of millions of people murdered in the name of socialism or communism in the Soviet Union, China, and Eastern Europe; the anti-Semitism that manifested itself not only in the writings of Karl Marx but in the actual practice of the Communist movement in the past seventy years; and the sexism and homophobia that have been a recurrent theme in those societies where leftist regimes have taken power. People like Lemisch say that this oppression should not be given too much weight, that there are underlying liberatory themes in the left tradition that can be separated from the actual historical distortions, and that a new and better politics can be built around these themes. Yet when *Tikkun* makes similar arguments about Judaism, Lemisch wants to place us in the same category as every reactionary that ever misused our tradition.

Tikkun does not argue that everyone must become religious—ours is not a missionary magazine. What we do argue, however, is that there are important truths and insights within the Jewish tradition from which secular Jews and non-Jews can learn and draw inspiration and guidance. Some of us at *Tikkun* are strongly secular; some of us are committed to a religious vision. The majority of our board is composed of secular Jews, but it also has representatives from every major approach to Jewish spirituality—from feminist perspectives, gay and lesbian perspectives, *havurah*-style Judaism, Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative, and Orthodox Judaism. While alternative approaches to these questions are often hotly debated in *Tikkun,* and secular voices often aggressively critique religious perspectives, we seek to reject the attitude that dominates so much of the secular left—that anyone with a religious sensibility must constantly be on the defensive against the kind of knee-jerk, know-nothing, antireligious prejudices that Lemisch's article exemplifies.

Yet no set of arguments can ever adequately offset the damage that Lemisch manages to cause by the tone and manner of his attack—the way it forces "the other" (in this case us) into a defensive posture so that we are required to prove that we are "politically correct." Lemisch provides a classic example of what destroyed the New Left of the 1960s. The verbal brutality of the left in the late 1960s was directed at every single person; every individual had to "prove" that they had adequately transcended their elitism, their racism, their sexism, their self-involvement, their loyalty to anything that might be shown to be inadequately revolutionary (their country, their people, their family, their profession, their religion, their friends). Those leftists who weren't baiting each other for not "picking up the gun" with the Black Panthers or joining the Weathermen in revolutionary violence were baiting each other for not being adequately revolutionary on "the social issues."

Perhaps Lemisch's insistence on the fundamentally reactionary nature of the family will remind our readers of the days when his type of leftist insisted that monogamy was slavery, marriage a revolutionary sin, and heterosexual coupling fundamentally oppressive to gays and lesbians. In the course of a very few years (1969–1973), these leftists managed to drive away the millions of people who were initially attracted to the liberatory ideals of a progressive politics. The left reverted to a tiny group of ideologues, happily distanced from the popularity the movement once enjoyed, embracing isolation and powerlessness as the badge of moral purity. As a result, the right has managed to undermine the credibility of all liberals, feminists, and social change movements. One important reason that millions of Americans agree with the left on specific programs but still don't trust it to govern is that they suspect that all liberals and progressives secretly hold them and their life choices (particularly their choice to try to build

a family and make a living in imperfect circumstances) in the same kind of contempt that Lemisch makes no effort to hide.

For these very reasons, it is politically important for liberals and progressives to dissociate themselves from the style of politics represented by Lemisch and others like him. *Tikkun* wants no part in Lemisch's kind of left. We have sought (so far unsuccessfully) to find a good word or phrase for our politics—a politics that emphasizes and validates the need of all people for mutual recognition and confirmation, love and ethically centered community; a politics that focuses its critique of the established order on the ways that this order frustrates the fulfillment of these needs; a politics that emphasizes compassion and caring; a politics that addresses our responsibility to preserve and protect our physical environment while simultaneously standing in awe and wonder at its grandeur; a politics that insists on the sanctity of human beings and the primacy of individual freedoms and human rights; a politics that repudiates the legacy of patriarchy and sexist practices; a politics that opposes economic exploitation; a politics that seeks to reconstruct the world of work so that it promotes the development of our highest human capacities; and a politics that advocates a radical reconstruction and democratization of our economic and political systems based on principles that help to maximize our shared humanity, develop our ethical sensitivities, and undermine the coercive power of entrenched elites. This is hardly a conservative politics—but if it does not fit as part of the left, so much the worse for such a left. All the more reason why we who seek to heal, repair, and transform the world need to build a very different kind of social change movement. □

LETTERS

(Continued from p. 7)

analyze bad psychotherapy at all but instead should see its frequent success as another expression of people's desire for connectedness. But then, how do we get rid of bad therapists?) It was not my intention, nor am I (or anyone else) able, to propose some radically new vision of how to combine symptom relief, psychological restructuring, and social change.

As for Rabbi Stone's claim that ACAs don't blame their "dysfunctional families" or emphasize "taking care of themselves first," I can only say that their books explicitly say these things over and over, and the dozens of friends, students, and patients that I've talked to who are involved in the movement say likewise. And the "society," within which they aim to function better, increasingly celebrates these very qualities.

Soviet Jewry

To the Editor:

Robert Cullen has written a compelling argument for altering American policy on Soviet emigration. He has noted some of the recent changes that have resulted in the USSR as a result of *perestroika* and *glasnost,* including those relating to travel and emigration, and he argues in favor of a "kinder and gentler" approach toward the Soviet Union as a reward for these changes. Essentially, the soft approach should consist of a more liberal trade policy and a benevolent attitude that would be expressed by a change in refugee status for Soviet Jews because there is no longer a unilateral presumption of persecution and suffering in the way that there is in Central America and Southeast Asia. To be sure, any and all changes in the Soviet Union should be acknowledged and even rewarded by the U.S. and the Jewish community. To imply, however, that the Iron Curtain is on the verge of crumbling seems a bit farfetched.

More important, Cullen has erroneously assumed that the question of how the U.S. should respond to change in the USSR is identical to the question of how the Jewish community should respond. He has based his assumption on the notion that "Jackson-Vanik" has the same meaning for the U.S. as it has for the Jewish community. For the U.S., Jackson-Vanik is a tactic within a larger geopolitical framework of East-West relationships. For the Jewish community, trade policy and Jackson-Vanik serve as a convenient and substantive tool in its arsenal of political leverage to liberate Soviet Jews.

The plight of Soviet Jewry is more than a human rights issue for the Jewish community. The effort to liberate Soviet Jews is a "redemptive" movement. The mission, to paraphrase an eminent Jewish communal leader, is to save a significant community from going down the memory hole of history and to enact the vital mitzvah of the redemption of captives. Twentieth-century Jewry has witnessed the devastation of one-third of the world's Jewish population in the Holocaust during World War II. It has seen Jews die defending the newly created State of Israel, and there is great fear that more Jews will be lost to assimilation and, in the case of the Soviet Union, cultural genocide. The backdrop of one thousand years of popular, state-sanctioned anti-Semitism coupled with the reality of a seventy-year spiritual wasteland underlies the fundamental urgency of the movement to free Soviet Jews.

Until the Yom Kippur War in 1973, more than 90 percent of the Jews who emigrated from the USSR went to Israel. Each year since then, greater numbers have chosen to go to countries other than Israel, mainly the U.S. Now more than 90 percent choose the U.S. It seems *chutzpadik* for American Jews to demand that others do what they won't do (move to Israel) and as a consequence restrict the free movement of Soviet Jews . It is a sad commentary if the American Jewish community believes that Soviet Jews will be "lost" to the Jewish community if they come to America just because we offer greater economic opportunity and perhaps a more peaceful existence. We do believe that every effort should be made to encourage *aliyah,* but if Soviet Jews would rather come to America, we should not consider it a "loss" to the Jewish people. The fact of the matter is that Soviet Jews *are* choosing America and may choose not to leave the USSR if that choice is all but eliminated. The American Jewish community must rise to the challenge of absorption and respond. Perhaps this new influx will spur our community toward self-examination so that we can not only find a solution to help these new immigrants identify, but also create innovative ways to strengthen our own Jewish identities. Soviet Jewish emigration could be for us what Eastern European Jewish emigration was for America in

the twentieth century. Granted, Eastern European Jews came here with a strong identity and vitality, whereas Soviet Jews may not necessarily have that baggage. Nevertheless, in our efforts to welcome those Jews into our community, we may find ourselves enriched and strengthened.

The Jewish community's perspective should remain constant. We can not be romanced by adroitly choreographed short-term geopolitical strategic objectives. Our measurements must be different.

To stay in power Gorbachev has also allowed the ugly face of anti-Semitism to show itself through anti-Semitic organizations like Pamyat and through the publication of anti-Semitic literature. With a thousand years of government-sponsored programs and popular anti-Semitism, the slate can not be wiped clean even though Gorbachev's intentions may be honorable. Moreover, with hard times persisting, Jews may become scapegoats once again, or Gorbachev may be replaced.

Perhaps the best evidence of this possibility is what we can learn from our brothers and sisters in the Soviet Union. Despite the relaxation during the *glasnost* period, our brethren have already reached a verdict by voting with their feet, as greater and greater numbers daily apply for exit visas.

We must remain consistent in our objectives, utilizing meaningful progress as the only barometer for political trade-offs. We should judge progress based on these issues: (1) free emigration in significant terms; (2) the right to freely practice religion; (3) free cultural opportunity and exchange.

We know so bitterly from five thousand years of experience how quickly clear windows of opportunity slam shut. Perhaps American foreign policy can take the gamble; we are not sure about the Jewish community.

Gloria Blumenthal
Joseph E. Langer

To the Editor:

Under *glasnost,* as the tide of state-sponsored anti-Semitism falls, there is a commensurate rise in popular anti-Semitism and threats of physical intimidation. Organizations such as the viciously anti-Semitic, neo-Nazi Pamyat function with state toleration. One need hardly go back to the times of Stalin to identify persecution of Jews; there is ample evidence in the 1970s and 1980s.

Given the history of Russia, it is a cruel argument indeed to suggest that, at the very moment when a window for emigration has opened, Jews are to be told that their safe havens are being closed until pogroms return and the doors shut again. Now is precisely the time to liberate and harbor as many Soviet Jews as possible.

It may indeed be a pragmatic policy to limit refugee status for Soviet Jews, but "wise" or honorable it is not. Robert Cullen is in error when he claims that the State Department and the INS are not presently denying refugee status to Soviet Jews. Since October, hundreds have been refused—up to the alarming rate of 20 percent in January.

He also erroneously suggests that Soviet emigration policies have never been better. In the late 1970s, under Brezhnev, nearly 300,000 Jews were set free—over fifty thousand in 1979 alone—before the Soviets invaded Afghanistan and cut the flow to nearly nothing. Nearly twenty thousand in 1988 under *glasnost* hardly compares. Cullen's assertion is based wholly on Soviet assurances to reform the emigration laws and practices. Unfortunately, the fulfillment of these promises continues to be postponed.

Cullen concedes that, "as far as economic incentives are concerned, there is no doubt that the Soviets would like the Jackson-Vanik amendment repealed." But in concluding that they have responded in the past only to arms agreements, he misses the central point. It is precisely in periods such as 1979, when the Soviets needed and sought improved relations, trade, and arms agreements with the West, that emigration levels rose under Jackson-Vanik. The Soviets respond to self-interest, and Mr. Gorbachev's primary interest now is to rescue his economy. We do not have to assist his economy by relaxing our demands; he has all the incentives he needs.

Changing our refugee policy regarding Soviet Jews is both improper and a non sequitur. And yet, we agree with many of Mr. Cullen's recommendations, insofar as they offer the Soviets measured concessions earned through emigration performance. Thus, we recently conceded that if Jewish emigration reaches 30,000 to 35,000 in 1989, as predicted, and if the institutional reforms and emigration of all outstanding refusenik cases are accomplished, consistent with the Helsinki Final Act and Concluding Vienna Document, as promised, we would agree to a repeal of the Stevenson Amendment. And, if progress continues, and the annual emigration level reaches a sustained 50,000 to 60,000, we would recommend a one-year waiver of Jackson-Vanik. In a period when popular anti-Semitism is rising and hundreds of thousands of Jews seek emigration, such a test should present no problem if true reform has been accomplished.

Beyond Jackson-Vanik, it is true that someday we will have to find other incentives to assure that the Soviets keep their doors open and improve the general conditions for Jews. But we hasten to note that Mr. Cullen's suggestion that Soviet access to high technology is an appropriate bargaining chip is wrong. The Soviet Jewry movement has never advocated trading peace, arms control, or sensitive science and technology explicitly for human rights gains.

Today's signals demand careful examination, monitoring, and verification of performance, not premature euphoria. Now is the time to watch, to measure, to verify that the assurances given at the United Nations in December and in Vienna in January are converted into high and sustained performance. A new American policy must be based on these premises.

Pamela B. Cohen, National President
Micah H. Naftalin, National Director
The Union of Councils for
Soviet Jews

To the Editor:

Gorby fever is infectious, and Robert Cullen's gotten it, too. Transmitted by an American media tired of cold-war

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tensions, the fever glazes our eyes to continued Kremlin violations of human rights. These rights have been repeatedly, cynically reaffirmed by Moscow for the past forty years, most recently on January 17, 1989, at the Helsinki Agreement follow-up meeting in Vienna.

To refuse to acknowledge that there's a change in the USSR is as foolish as to believe that the change is fundamental and institutionalized. The Soviet body politic now appears schizophrenic. On one recent day, a breakthrough article appeared in the reformist *Sovietskaya Kultura,* daring to equate the ubiquitous official "anti-Zionist" campaign with anti-Semitism. A day or two later, Gen. David Dragunsky, chair of the Anti-Zionist Committee of the Soviet Public—which is very much alive despite solemn pledges that it has shut down—bitterly attacked the widely promoted opening of the official, token Moscow Jewish Cultural Center as a Zionist subterfuge in *Argumenti I Fakti,* also supposedly a *glasnost* periodical, but with close KGB ties. Then KGB boss Victor Chebrikov declared in a speech reprinted by *Pravda,* "Independent, so-called informal organizations pose great harm to our mighty, positive social movement." The men in the trenchcoats aren't yet pussycats. The threat to the network of unofficial Jewish groups across the USSR tentatively spreading their wings is very real.

Compared to previous years, Jewish identification is slowly becoming more prevalent in Russia—a welcome change. But most officially sanctioned Jewish groups are controlled by the authorities, and the unofficial ones are infiltrated by them. The "yi-dee-die" of a mediocre Tevya play is not serious, systematic Jewish education. The edge is off some of the worst excesses of official anti-Semitism, but anti-Semitism in Russia is still alive and kicking. Three recent "anti-Zionist" (read anti-Jewish) books to roll off Soviet presses are *Zionism: Preaching and Practice, Zionism: Enemy of Peace and Social Progress,* and *Palestine in the Grip of Zionism.* One can hear almost daily attacks on Israeli "atrocities" and "concentration camps for Arabs" on Radio Moscow's English-language shortwave service. *Glasnost* has also given the green light to a witches' brew of anti-Semitic groups such as Pamyat to organize around the USSR, with only scattered criticism in the press.

Soviet street corners may not be swarming with evil KGB agents waiting to pounce on every Jew, but the lurking fear is there, spurring a large potential for Jewish emigration.

A "wise policy," as Cullen puts it, would dictate prudence, giving some thanks for positive steps, reminding Gorbachev that his regime has yet to meet minimal human rights standards enumerated in the very accords the Kremlin has signed, then moving slowly toward decreasing blocks to nonstrategic U.S.-USSR trade. We must remember that the Jackson-Vanik amendment is our trump card, given its highly symbolic importance to the Kremlin. Once a waiver of Jackson-Vanik is given, the horses are out of the barn, probably never to be rounded up again, given the well-funded muscle of the American business lobby.

Glen Richter
National Coordinator
Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry

ED KOCH'S NEW YORK

(Continued from p. 22)

course, real estate, which is to New York City what oil is to Houston. Koch succored this boom enthusiastically with enormous tax abatements and exemptions, but instead of meeting basic human needs, the new industries and their managers were parasitical and nonproductive, consolidating the nation's investment decisions in a few thousand big corporations.

The boom certainly didn't trickle down. Unlike the older Jewish and white ethnic entrepreneurial and professional middle classes, which had come up from the tenements to build the culture of progressive institutions, the new managerial and investment classes seemed remarkably self-contained. Most of the new revenue that they paid the city went right back into services and amenities for themselves. Upscale New York experienced the consolidation not only of investment decisions but also of a style lubricated by expense accounts and tax breaks which further robbed the public sector of vitality. It was a hedonistic and not particularly creative style, corrosive of familial and neighborhood obligations. Luxury conversions of lofts and tenements administered the coup de grace to most of the remaining blue-collar jobs and lower-income communities in Manhattan. Koch refused to use scarce housing subsidies to keep lifelong residents in neighborhoods that were being gentrified, yet he also refused to recoup the millions of dollars in tax abatements and exemptions he had given to accelerate the neighborhood conversions—tax dollars that could have helped house the homeless.

So deepened an apartheid that presidential commissions had warned about—enclaves of affluence amid seas of despair, an isolation of classes completed by segregated transit (limos, cabs, express buses) and segregated schools, which permitted upscale aspirants to ignore or even justify the suffering of those who, in their destitution and desperation, seemed to be members of a different species. Even before the October 1987 market crash put an end to the boom, a new wave of corporate departures was sweeping the city, with executives blaming not high taxes but the precipitous decline in the "quality of life."

What is happening in the city now is almost unbelievable, and the numbers one can cite do not begin to portray the disastrous situation. The chaos is boiling up in hospital emergency rooms jammed with the plague-stricken: as if AIDS and crack were not enough, tuberculosis, all but wiped out in the 1950s, is back, to the tune of some two thousand cases in 1988. One reason firms are leaving is that so few New Yorkers applying for six-dollar-an-hour jobs can pass drug tests. The ubiquitous drug economy, the collapse of the old criminal's

taboo against killing police officers, the proliferation of weapons in the schools, the almost weekly slaughter of innocents in free-fire zones—all these developments have transformed the city.

A recent story in the *New York Times* that described subway passengers stepping over a naked man lying unconscious on a station platform was neither alarmist nor melodramatic; one day last summer, as I walked with two visitors through lower Manhattan, we saw a completely naked man, white, around thirty, lying on the sidewalk across the street from the Cooper Union, talking to himself, masturbating. Throngs passed, looking away. Panhandlers are everywhere. I was recently accosted by a peddler waving roses in my face: "Why don't you buy one?" he challenged me as I waved him out of my path. "You married? You gay? Buy one for your faggot lover, asshole." The broad, democratic, impersonal affection of the city's promenading crowds is gone.

Tom Wolfe's *The Bonfire of the Vanities* angered me when I read it a year ago because its brilliant but selective vignettes of city life ignore and implicitly demean the hundreds of thousands of people of all races in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens who hold two or three jobs in order to pay mortgages on little row houses, send their kids well-scrubbed to school, read self-help books on the subways, and are courteous to a fault. "No wonder Koch keeps getting reelected," I thought. "Nobody else important sticks up for them, even rhetorically." But Koch has not protected them from the fiscal retrenchment, crack, corruption, and exploitation by the news and entertainment industries which are finally pulling them under. All we need is for Joan Didion to slouch back from El Salvador or Miami to chronicle the mayhem.

Certainly no mayor in America can provide public services without prostrating himself before investors and corporations that have the power to scuttle the tax base by leaving the city. But Koch has needlessly exacerbated New York's dilemmas and thus hastened the city's demise. Consumed with resentment of erstwhile liberal allies, Koch has wrongly blamed the city's social and economic problems on these liberal critics and their "coddled" clients. Though Koch has been refreshingly gutsy in shocking neurotic liberal wisdom, he has seldom missed an opportunity to confuse the city's legitimate grievances against minority hustlers with his own contempt for minority leaders, vitiating the genuine support his broader message has consistently won him among Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians.

Ironically, it is when the mayor defends certain elements of the liberal agenda that his racially tinged second thoughts slip out in the most destructive ways. Watch him, for example, at a community meeting of politically conservative religious Jews where a man is complaining about new hiring standards designed to increase female and Hispanic representation in police ranks. "Mr. Koch," the man says. "Why do you lower the height requirements just to include those people? We need policemen who are big and tall and command respect."

The speaker is barely finished before the mayor raises his eyebrows in mock astonishment and quips, "Have you ever seen a five-foot-four Puerto Rican with a gun?" The audience roars appreciatively as the mayor's aides wince; happily for them, the big media aren't present, sparing liberal New Yorkers the curious spectacle of a mayor using racism to defend affirmative action.

While Koch has worked hard for the city and is known to be quite decent to those who work hard for him, his own insecurities and boundless ego have rendered him so vulnerable to New York's glamorous seductions that he has stopped minding the store. Corruption has plagued the city for three years, and its recent association with half a dozen prominent Jewish political figures has been, at best, depressing.

In blaming the victims and tolerating corruption, Koch has misrepresented the Jewish community. Jews, who now number about a million in the city and constitute 15 percent of its population, still comprise approximately 31 percent of the city's registered voters, about the same proportion as Blacks. But there are two million Blacks in the city, and the Jewish electorate, while still powerful, is aging. Many Jews who made it out of the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie have moved to the suburbs.

Even the increasingly conservative Jewish community that remains in the city has no desire for acrimonious relations with Blacks, and some of Koch's excesses in this area have embarrassed its members. The prominence of Jews in the municipal scandals is embarrassing too. Then there have been Koch's *shondes,* Yiddish for the most shameful sort of disgrace. Koch campaigned for mayor in 1977 with Bess Myerson on his arm; they feigned a romantic companionship to shield the Greenwich Village bachelor against rumors of homosexuality. "Wouldn't Bess make a great first lady?" Koch asked elderly Jewish voters. "We'll have an announcement after the election." In fact, there was no romance, and in 1987 U.S. Attorney Rudolph Giuliani indicted Myerson for allegedly trying to bribe a judge to lower the alimony payments of her real companion, sewer contractor Andy Capasso. Myerson, the self-described "Queen of the Jews," was acquitted, but the picture of her that emerged in court was ugly. Soon afterward she was arrested for shoplifting.

There were other *shondes:* Koch's promise, made at the Wailing Wall, that he would never seek higher office—a promise he broke when he ran for governor; Koch's in-

vitation to his friend John Cardinal O'Connor to deliver a eulogy at his funeral; Koch's public likening of the tactics of mayoral opponent, city Comptroller Harrison J. Goldin, to those of Goebbels. "Obviously I do not enjoy being called a Nazi," Goldin responded, as Jews across the city winced.

In July, Andrew Cooper, editor of the militant Black weekly, *The City Sun,* told *New York Newsday*: "I do not believe that anyone Black can win [the mayoralty]. Jews have worked too hard and waited too long for that position. And they're just not going to vote for somebody Black and turn it over."

Whether or not Jews are "ready" for a Black mayor, Cooper is wrong to attribute to us a conception of our power so narrow that it rests upon having a Jewish one. Yet he can be forgiven his misperception precisely because of the way Koch has managed to identify his own ideological, political, and personal battles with those of politically conservative Jews, from Begin to Podhoretz.

What liberal Jews want passionately is not a Jewish mayor, but the assurance that the culture of progressive institutions we've struggled to create will thrive long after Jews have ceased to dominate it numerically or even politically.

Unlike Newark, Atlanta, or Detroit, New York will never have a majority of any one ethnic or racial group. The deluge of immigration from the four corners of the earth means that by the end of the century New York will hold three-quarters of a million Asians (Chinese, Koreans, Indians, Japanese); two million Blacks (American-born Blacks, West Indians, Africans); two million Hispanics (Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Colombians, Salvadorans, Cubans); a million Jews (including Israelis and Russians); and hundreds of thousands each of Irish, Italians, Greeks, Poles, and other ethnic minorities.

Will these newcomers find a stake in the city's institutions, organizing new coalitions to revive the public schools, rebuild the hospitals, uplift the fallen, pursue justice? It is too soon to know. But while liberal Jews still have the political strength, we'd best concentrate on passing the torch, not on making ourselves the center of attention, as Koch has too often done.

When the Yiddish-language theater died in New York some years ago after a long illness, a saddened Zero Mostel took comfort in the fact that its actors were still alive and performing in English. "We're getting even," he said. "We still *gesture* in Yiddish!" If somehow, after Koch's reign is over, the city's newcomers manage to take up where we left off, then perhaps New York will still gesture in the idiom of the garment workers, the New Deal, the Brooklyn Dodgers, the Jewish language of justice. □

NEW AGE MYTHOLOGY

(Continued from p. 26)

In short, ethics is a pale substitute for the experience of oneness with all life, which Campbell sees as the highest goal. Further, it is a substitute imposed by an external authority, violating the person's inner direction.

On the surface, it would seem that Judaism's clinging to ethics is one more illustration of its obsolescence. But before we jump to that conclusion, we should examine more closely Campbell's negative attitude toward discipline and authority. His bias against "laws of life" and pages of rules leads him to ignore many important features of religious traditions. The most obvious examples are the various monastic traditions. One would think they would offer prime examples of people seeking to get close to the divine, but Campbell does not discuss them. These people's extraordinary submission and personal discipline do not fit his ideal of extemporaneous, bliss-seeking spirituality. Likewise, submission to a teacher, common to virtually all religious elites, if not to the common folk, occupies a small space in Campbell's map of the territory. He comments that in traditional societies the teacher or guru provided spiritual guidance—but he also mentions, in another place, that such a teacher often guided the student through the steps of instruction in a patterned way that did not really allow the emergence of individuality. "I think," says Campbell, "that anyone brought up in an extremely strict, authoritative social situation is unlikely ever to come to the knowledge of himself."

Yet we know that the disciplines and austerities of the shaman or prophet, the monk or nun, deeply immersed in ritual and an archetypal framework produce intense and authentic experiences of the divine. Meister Eckehart and the Dalai Lama are certainly better known for their spirituality than are most modern Western seekers of freedom. We have a contradiction between Campbell's overall philosophy of spirituality and the data of comparative religion.

This point leads to the second difficulty between Campbell and Judaism. The presumably "external" authority of ethical systems is connected for Campbell with the "supernatural" aspect of religion, with what is beyond nature, with the "transcendent" aspect of God. For Campbell, everything spiritual is on the level of nature; speaking theologically, we would say that he affirms only the "immanence" of God. When Campbell speaks of the transcendent he does not mean what is called the supernatural; he prefers a conception, similar to pantheism, of "an undefinable, inconceivable mystery, thought of as a power, that is the source and end and supporting ground of all life and being." The source of life beyond the limitations of

our egos is our connection, largely unconscious, to life energy. More emphatically, he states:

> The idea of the supernatural as being something over and above the natural is a killing idea. In the Middle Ages this was the idea that finally turned that world into something like a wasteland, a land where people were living inauthentic lives, never doing a thing they truly wanted to because the supernatural laws required them to live as directed by their clergy.

In other words, even when Campbell speaks of the "undefinable and inconceivable," he does so still within the bounds of the natural: the "undefinable and inconceivable" must be accessible to everyone from within his or her own being or the religious system runs the risk of becoming "inauthentic."

This collapsing of divine transcendence into a metaphysics of life energy is a problem. Bible scholar Yehezkel Kaufman many years ago identified this problem as the fundamental difference between Judaism and paganism. It makes a great difference if "God" means the ground of being, the mystery of life as we know it, or if "God" refers to something more. What more? The kabbala points us to the greatness of God by observing that, for God, the creation of worlds is a minor preoccupation. Even if we hold that God continually supervises every rock, plant, animal, and human on earth, not to mention in the galaxies, we should not think that this keeps Him or Her busy. What else does God do? We can't imagine—which is exactly the point. Transcendence, by definition, is far beyond us, not only beyond our metaphors and myths, but beyond anything we can imagine; so much so that we must affirm that it goes beyond the life system as we know it. Campbell speaks of the "inconceivable," but he cannot allow that this "divinity" is really beyond life itself—otherwise it could become an "external" authority.

Judaism and Western religions based on it have insisted that the idea of transcendence points to something more than the mystery of protoplasm taking form, and more than an apparently coordinated intention behind life's movement. God's transcendence makes possible real novelty, revelation, "creativity" of the most profound kind. This notion comes not from the troubadours, as Campbell would have us believe, but from the Prophets. If one relies for the source of one's ideas only on life as given, one cannot help but remain in the pattern of circles and cycles, the eternal round of life. For this world is patterned from beginning to end, with each being, as Campbell points out, a reflection of every other. Novelty and creativity can come only from receptivity to that which is outside the realm of life as we know it.

The traditional ways to increase one's access to the transcendent have been to reduce distractions that come from ordinary life, to quiet the mind, to practice receptivity to that which is not nature. In this context, obedience has been a tool for learning humility and receptivity. Ethical systems teach obedience in two ways: they discipline people by making them observe given laws, and they help them practice humility in relation to their fellow human beings. In the West as well as the East (for example, the Hindu laws of Manu or Confucian ethics), ethics has little to do with the philosophy of oneness with all being; it is part of the disciplining of the ego. No matter how many great spiritual experiences one has, ethics and religious discipline cannot be replaced. In fact, a rigorous ethical practice is the continuing prerequisite for these spiritual experiences. In Jewish tradition, further, ethical laws ensure that we reconnect to ordinary life, that we come back from experiences of higher consciousness to enrich the life of the world.

Campbell speaks of the spiritual path as being "dangerous, like walking on a razor's edge." We may be reminded of the famous saying of Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav: "The whole world is a very narrow bridge; the main thing is not to fear." Campbell thinks the danger is that the individual and his or her creativity will be crushed by society; that dogma, credo, authority will kill the inner person and will interfere with the unity of all people. What he fails to incorporate into his understanding of spirituality is the *inner* need for discipline, humility, and obedience to balance the egoistic claims of the human soul with all its great creative potential.

How could a scholar of comparative religion miss this point, which runs through all religious tradition? The answer lies in part in the German intellectual tradition on which Campbell relies, but it also reflects a broader confusion common in our age: authority has been confused with authoritarianism, discipline with rigidity. Most of us, like Campbell, have a great fear of external structures imposing themselves on us—we fear for the survival of our inner life. Certainly, one reason for this fear is that our society is so outer-directed; we are oriented toward the social and natural worlds and, so far as we can tell, there is nothing else. We have not learned that we really do have an inner, inviolable life—our "soul," if you will—and that we can give as much time and energy to that inner reality as we do to the demands of the outer world. If, as in traditional Judaism and other traditions, that dimension of life is nourished, we need not fear authority. We can accept it because it is identical with the inner authority; the archetypes are one.

Is this other, "follow-your-bliss" spirituality dangerous,

then? It is not a politically dangerous philosophy, at least not in the short term. Many of its manifestations are intellectually sloppy, but that is true of most popular trends of thought. Inasmuch as Campbell points to a deeper archetypal level of reality and an inner life that needs to be nourished, he is encouraging people to live a nonmaterialistic life, a life that looks beyond short-term pleasures to the individual's true inner will. These are basically harmless features. But because, by eliminating ethics and authority, he diminishes the practical impact of the theological concept of transcendence, and thereby shortcuts the spiritual path, Campbell's approach undercuts Jewish values (and perhaps all serious spiritual traditions) in the long run. The Jewish path is rich and sensuous, intimately connected with the life energy that Campbell extols; but it is also deeply imbued with a sense of the transcendence of God. This means that humility is a primary value, a top-priority character trait. It also means that, through the path of receptivity and humility, true creativity and compassion can emerge. Jews affirm the wondrousness of life, as does Campbell, and we also stand in awe of something more. □

SLOUCHING TOWARD PRESSOLOGY

(Continued from p. 44)

in the state, and ancillary concepts such as propaganda, have been ignored by mainstream political philosophers. Yet various intellectual traditions—Marxism, American liberal sociology of the fifties and sixties, "mass-society" analysis on the Continent—offer insights into the system that Chomsky and Herman take for granted. It is precisely a thinker such as Chomsky, gifted at peering through to first principles, who can't be excused his shortcuts here.

Retooling Chomsky/Herman pressology requires recognition that in the study of journalism the citation of press stories is necessary but not sufficient reportage—and in no way a science. Because journalists enjoy enormously greater discretion in writing stories than informants (in linguistics) do in speaking standard sentences, the notion that the text alone can provide the data for pressology—as Chomsky assumes well-formed sentences can for linguistics—makes no sense. The whole sloppy background of intentions and values and history needs to be brought into play. Bad for science, perhaps, but good for truth. Thankfully, *On Bended Knee* and *A History of News* provide such sloppy background. Each repeatedly suggests why a "propaganda model" of the U.S. mass media is too simplistic.

On the surface, one would expect Hertsgaard's book to bolster *Manufacturing Consent* at every point. Based on some 150 interviews with key players from the national press and the Reagan administration, *On Bended Knee* documents Michael Deaver's and James Baker's attempt to manipulate press coverage, their frequent successes, and the response of journalists.

Officially, Hertsgaard echoes the line like a studio apprentice of one of the great Renaissance masters, instructed to paint a "School of Chomsky" miniature with persuasive detail. The Reagan "propaganda apparatus" comes out of "witless malevolence." Leading journalists "allowed themselves to be used." Hertsgaard contrasts the coverage of El Salvador and Poland and castigates the mass media's failure to emphasize that Salvadorans, in the controversial 1982 "showcase" election, didn't get their identity cards stamped if they didn't vote. He deems White House reporters a "palace court press" disposed to "confine its naughtiness within relatively narrow limits," and he goes so far as to say that "for the American press, truth was not truth, and fact not fact until the government said so."

Yet, unlike Chomsky and Herman, Hertsgaard plunges into the real world of journalism and government, coming across points of view that threaten to subvert his own. In one minor heresy against the propaganda model, Hertsgaard acknowledges that while journalists are "inclined toward obedience from the start," the lies of Vietnam and Watergate changed that, and "self-respect, if nothing else, demanded of journalists a more skeptical attitude toward what they were told." Thus the Reagan White House had to "engineer" mass consent by devising concrete strategies of a sort Chomsky and Herman never attend to.

One technique that the White House used was to repeat endlessly whatever theme the administration wanted to push. Another was the "smiling stonewall"—limiting access in order to foil undesirable stories. A third was to call the networks frequently in order to provide spins on the news, to push the administration's "line of the day." A fourth aimed to provide so much information and help (like phone banks and good visuals) on stories the White House wanted covered that reporters faced a choice between getting the White House's story quickly and struggling to do an alternate, almost certainly more critical story that would take much greater time and effort. Hertsgaard's attention to journalism's practical side, while corroborating the toothless quality of White House reportage, nonetheless undermines the Chomsky/Herman view of why such reportage takes place—often not because of ideological subservience to authority, but because of TGIF thinking.

Hertsgaard's attention to the formulas and techniques of reporting (objectivity requires reporters to "attribute all statements of fact to a recognized expert or authority") also shows that much of the problem Chomsky

and Herman ascribe to evil intentions results from unexamined habits and incompetence. As Hertsgaard writes, "Many journalists tend to regard strenuous challenging of the government as an improper violation of the rules of objectivity." Unless the opposition party or some private faction leads with criticism of government action, the press will not initiate it on its own. Ben Bradlee concedes to Hertsgaard: "[W]e have not developed a way to say to the reader, 'The President spoke last night, but he told a lie.'"

However, Bradlee's *Washington Post* colleague, Robert Kaiser, suggests that the way hasn't been developed because the equipment isn't there: "In the media at large there is no intellectual center of gravity. The practicing Washington press corps lacks intellectual self-confidence" to dig deep in its questioning. As a result, cagey officials like former presidential assistant Richard Darman (now heading the Office of Management and Budget for the Bush administration) can rest confident that mainstream journalists will emphasize personality over substance, and supply all the Teflon any president needs. A Hertsgaard quote from Darman shows how thoroughly administration officials recognize and condescend to the intellectual inadequacy of the press:

> The Teflon phenomenon is a function of the fact that when there's a problem with substance, the press doesn't say there's something wrong with Reagan's policies. They say party A in the White House is fighting with party B about the policy. It tends to insulate the President from substantive criticism and convert it into personality stories about conflicts between individuals within the administration beneath the level of the President.

In the end, the Chomsky/Herman propaganda model finds itself challenged by everyday realities of newspaper reporting and management. Did the *New York Times,* for instance, devote extensive coverage to Reagan's Bitburg visit because, as Joseph Goulden reported in his recent *Fit to Print* (1988), the president's decision to visit so irked executive editor Abe Rosenthal that he ordered incessant attention? Would the *Times* of the seventies and eighties have been a vastly different paper if Harrison Salisbury had beaten out Rosenthal for the top job? Chomsky and Herman's current propaganda model can't accommodate such minutiae, just as it can't accommodate the continuing mainstream presence of left-leaning journalists like Robert Scheer and Sydney Schanberg. Similarly, it fails to address another challenge voiced by mainstream editors and producers in Hertsgaard's book: the editor-in-chief or executive producer's insistence on keeping a paper or news operation in the "center," which means that if American culture moves to the right, the middle has to move as well.

In this regard, the sweeping perspective of Stephens's *A History of News* shows why the mainstream boss's attachment to centrism and service journalism, as well as Chomsky and Herman's despair with a press that expresses establishment values, need to be analyzed and evaluated in the broader context of political theory. Stephens casts his eye over journalism history and finds the same sensationalism, the same avidity for the new, the same attempt of the powerful to control the messengers and criers, the same need for attribution and stereotype when forced to report confusing events under pressure, the same expression of a society's common sense.

And while his fresh-from-the-press examples, from primitive word-of-mouth to cable, keep the entertainment level high (for example, news of important deaths traveled so slowly in the Middle Ages that people could impersonate deceased celebrities like Joan of Arc), a profound, unromantic honesty about the origins of the newspaper lends refreshing realism to his book and poses an obstacle for opponents of mainstream journalistic propaganda. As Stephens documents, newspapers owe their origins to the need for commercial news, for news of interest to businessmen and the elite. Hertsgaard may criticize "the American media's relentless, ahistorical insistence on focusing on what is new rather than what is important," but even he recognizes that the press, "for commercial reasons," will always treasure "the new above all else."

In fact, Stephens establishes, the mundane details of the Roman Empire's *acta diurna populi Romani* (daily transactions of the Roman people) and the Fugger newsletters of the sixteenth century came long before any notion of the paper as an aggressive social critic. Stephens extrapolates on this point in a compelling way. He defines news as "new information about a subject of some public interest that is shared with some portion of the public." A newspaper, he says, traditionally contains "what is on a society's mind," and "tends of necessity to be a temperate, if not conservative medium." Newspapers express the common view, the consensus, the "predominant values" of a society—not the social criticism that looks to the future. "To think a society's thoughts is to belong to that society," writes Stephens. "News provides the requisite set of shared thoughts" and "a kind of security."

Indeed, that's one reason news organs become mass. When Hertsgaard reports that new CBS officials sent a message to the troops, "Don't be negative about the President, people don't want to hear that," he adduces the item as knockdown evidence of how the media put ratings before responsibility. But placed in the perspective of Stephens's history, one can wonder whether the

mass media's responsibility isn't just that—*not* to get out of step with the people. "Art may dare to draw the unconventional out of the conventional," writes Stephens, but "news does the opposite.... The journalist's work ... is to squeeze raw reality into familiar, easy to comprehend themes." Whereas Chomsky and Herman savage the press for toadying to the government, Stephens accents the positive, noting how "a successful system of news can help keep a society oriented in the same direction." Newspapers that provide a consensus view of their society and the world can keep a society from tearing itself apart. Nor is this a new view. Melville Phillips, the literary editor of the *Philadelphia Press,* said as much in *The Making of the Newspaper* (1894), an anthology of essays he edited. "A popular newspaper," he wrote, "in its good and evil reports, is nothing more than the sufficient supply of a popular demand; it is, in a sense, the voice of the people, whether that be the voice of God or not."

If we accept Stephens's account of the mainstream press as historically accurate, Chomsky and Herman's castigation of the press for not serving as avant-garde critic of society's beliefs needs stronger support. Why shouldn't that role be played by the opinion press Chomsky and Herman refer to as "marginalized"? Their use of "marginalized," interestingly, betrays casual acceptance of an establishment view of what's central and what's marginal. What theory of the state obliges newspaper readers to swallow hectoring of their nation in local papers? Mind you, there may be one. But Chomsky and Herman don't provide it. They don't argue for why mainstream journalism should fit into their preferred division of labor rather than the present one.

Chomsky and Herman ultimately bypass Antonio Gramsci's important point that a society's established cultural views must be changed before its institutions reflect new ones. That means persuading the public of one's beliefs. Chomsky, Herman, and even Hertsgaard to a degree, tend instead to wring their hands and complain that their ideas don't leap full-sized into major media. (In fact, their side gets more access than it admits. During the campaign, on September 21, the *Times,* a bête noire of all three, gave Hertsgaard the largest part of its op-ed page to lambaste the "electoral press" for functioning "more as a rubber stamp than as a check and balance on President Reagan.") One can hardly imagine Gramsci expecting that kind of leap—he'd consider it leapfrogging. Here, all the traditional questions about the American left's real commitment to mass persuasion come home: whether the left cares more about talking to itself than about converting middle-class Americans, whether it suffers from the elitist view of the intellectual's role familiar in so many later strains of Marxism.

In an interview published two years ago in *The Chomsky Reader,* an anthology of his political writings, Chomsky sounds proud that virtually no one agrees with him. That's nothing for a committed intellectual to be proud of. Chomsky and Herman often excuse themselves for their failure to influence mass opinion by suggesting that their ideas—for example, that we were defending "nothing beyond our right to impose our will by violence" in Vietnam, that the U.S. "invaded" South Vietnam, that the U.S. committed genocide—are "completely beyond the range of the thinkable" in American culture. On the contrary, they've been thought about often, and often rejected. The failure of more journalists to accept the traditional Chomsky/Herman view of recent world politics constitutes a failure on Chomsky's and Herman's part, as intellectuals, to argue well enough to convince people. Moreover, Chomsky can't pretend that he has had no access to the inside players of mass journalism. As Harrison Salisbury reported in *Without Fear or Favor* (1981), Chomsky used to lunch regularly in Cambridge with a group that included then *Boston Globe* editor Thomas Winship.

So Chomsky/Herman pressology comes to an impasse. Yet the spirit of the times is on their side. Books and articles on the press now routinely take for granted the once fringe view that the press operates as an *agent* in the news, not as an outside observer. As critics of the press, Chomsky and Herman constitute an authentic vanguard, declaring by their extradisciplinary scholarship that American intellectuals must take the mass press seriously.

But a further obstacle remains to breaking mainstream American journalism wide open—the ongoing resistance of American intellectuals to *direct participation* in the mass press. Is it too fanciful to urge Chomsky and Herman to take leaves from their privileged professorial positions and do some enterprise reporting themselves? To prod Critical Legal theorist Roberto Ungar into writing for the law page of the *Times*? To demand that young intellectuals do something similar?

To be sure, mainstream journalism won't welcome them, let alone recruit them. More likely, it will frisk them, attempt to confiscate their ideological equipment, seek to shunt them into commentary rather than reportage. Systems of power don't endure without good gatekeeping. But neither do systems of power fall without a little courageous, pigheaded infiltration. And a truly trenchant pressology won't amount to anything until academic press critics understand deadlines, copy desks, telex debates, visa snags, and the vagaries of interviewing people in a foreign language. A truly trenchant press won't exist until intellectuals accept reporting as a worthy trade that bolsters rather than retards their interests.

The model for intellectual critics of the press should be Santa Cruz's Michelle Anderson, the beauty pageant contestant who played by the rules long enough to make it to the finals of her California competition, then unfurled a banner protesting beauty pageants as degrading to women. If such mole-like subversion can be accomplished without its double agents going down in flames, pressology will rightly triumph, and mainstream journalism will change sooner, and for the better, rather than later. In the end, freedom of the press belongs to those who work in it. □

VISITING THE BURNT HOUSE

(Continued from p. 47)

Of course we understand. Don't you see? It's not true what they say about us. Moved by the generosity of Krystyna and her parents, by the pleasure of our new friendship, I didn't ask the questions I might have asked. It would have been easier to raise those questions with people I knew much better—or not at all.

* * *

A few kilometers down the road from Auschwitz is Birkenau—Brzezinka in Polish—where larger crematoria were built after the small one at Auschwitz was found insufficient. This is the place where the railroad tracks ended, where selections were made at the ramp, where millions of Jews from all over Europe went directly to their deaths. We expected the route to Birkenau to be well-marked, but we couldn't find a single road sign, though we drove around for nearly an hour asking directions. Finally an old farmer piling clover into the trunk of his car guided us to the red brick guard tower that marks the entrance. The camp is enormous. Unlike Auschwitz, it has been abandoned. Nothing is left of the people, the bundles, the fear, the smoke. Nothing but empty barracks of brick and wood. And miles of grass.

At Point Reyes near San Francisco, not long ago, I visited the epicenter of the 1906 earthquake and walked along the fault line: here's where the earth shifted; here's where the ground opened. Birkenau is such a place. Grass is healing, says my husband, quoting a German expression he learned from his father: "*Lass grass darüber wachsen.*" I quote back Carl Sandburg, a poem I learned in grade school: "I am the grass; I cover all." (The grass covers his uncle Karl at Verdun, one of the European battlefields that Sandburg names.) I remember being disturbed by Sandburg's poem when I was a child. I hadn't yet realized adults could forget something that mattered; I used to think they remembered everything. A child's initiation into the adult world is a series of such awakenings. When I told my young son, as mothers do, never to take candy from a stranger, he replied, with genuine puzzlement: "I didn't know *grown-ups* be bad." The grass comes and covers what grown-ups would rather not remember. Is that what "healing" means?

* * *

More than forty years have passed since the Holocaust. Some people would like to file it away under "Atrocities, Twentieth-Century," where it seems less terrible. But for most people I know, the feelings aroused are still raw. I wonder how long the sensation of pain will last. Jews have a long memory, but even for Jews the destruction of the Temple has stopped hurting. We visit the Burnt House in Jerusalem, destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D., with a kind of historical curiosity. Imagine: you can actually see pieces of charred wood and pottery! The bones of a woman's hand! In two thousand years, Jews may look back and talk about Auschwitz as we talk today about the destruction of the Temple. But how shall we talk about it now?

We are still gathering the potsherds. In the State Jewish Museum in Prague, housed in a number of buildings that were once synagogues, you can see ceremonial objects, textiles, manuscripts, early printed books, Bohemian glass—the remnants of a thousand years of Jewish life in Bohemia and Moravia, confiscated by the Nazis. A millennium reduced to a handful of objects in glass cases. When you look at these relics, when you admire their colors or proportions, you forget for a moment that they are objects shorn of context.

The context is beyond recovering; we can only guess at it from scattered evidence. At Budapest's Jewish Museum, our Hungarian Jewish guide pointed to a photo of a fourth-century Jewish tomb with a knobby menorah and the inscription, "God is One," explaining with some pride: "There were Jews living here in the Roman period; the Magyar invasion didn't take place until the tenth century." The pathos of that claim: *We were here first.* And look at this photo: a Jewish delegation to the wedding of King Matthias in 1476, the Jews dressed like gentiles, like nobles, sword on hip. *We could look like them when we wanted to.* Jewish army officers in World War I, photographed in the field on Rosh Hashana in their uniforms and striped prayer shawls: *We were loyal citizens.* A rabbi blessing King Charles IV in 1918: *We were important; our blessing mattered.* Jewish athletes, a student choir, an ice cream vendor: *We led normal lives; we were like everyone else.* Those voices reverberate in the half-empty museum with their boast, their apology.

Yet with so much lost, one is grateful that something

still exists to say: *We lived here once*. A shadowy presence is better than none at all. In East Berlin's Museum of German History, the Nazi period is presented under two headings: 1933–39, "The establishment of the Fascist dictatorship, and the battle of the German anti-Fascists under the leadership of the Communist party"; 1939–45, "World War II, the war against fascism, and the liberation of the German people from fascism." You wouldn't know from the exhibit that the Jews had any part in this history; there isn't even the obligatory yellow star under glass. Just a list of famous people who were forced to leave: Albert Einstein, Arnold Zweig, Kurt Weill, Arnold Schönberg, the great names.

Down the street, at the Memorial to the Victims of Fascism and Militarism, a small crowd gathered to watch the changing of the guard: goose-stepping soldiers in helmets and boots. In the sobriety of East Berlin, their little ceremony provided a moment of diversion. They were absurd—and disturbing. We live by symbols, Krystyna had said. Inside the memorial, an imitation Greek temple with an "eternal flame," the Unknown Soldier and Unknown Resistance Fighter are each honored by a plaque; but the Jews, with a fine irony, are entirely invisible. The Germans themselves, we are given to understand, were the victims of fascism and militarism. The East Germans, that is. "Luther was persecuted in West Germany" is a sentence I heard in East Berlin.

The truth, or part of it, is in the keeping of a few who escaped to tell—but only for a little while longer. Outside the Dohány Street Synagogue in Budapest, a woman of about sixty-five found us looking through the fence at the Memorial Garden. "They shot men right here on this street," she began, without introduction. "And not only here. They lined up Jews near the Danube and shot them. Bodies floated on the river like fish. The Danube was red. They shot little children. 'Kill them in the name of Jesus!' they shouted. I heard it." She was dressed in a frilly white blouse and wore too much lipstick. "My father owned a jewelry store," she answered before we asked. "I took a gold cross from the showcase and put it on. I could hide behind that."

In America you don't hear stories like hers on the street. When you meet a stranger, you talk weather, traffic, cats. It takes a while till you begin to tell your nightmares. This Ancient Mariner had a story that couldn't wait. She held us at the corner of Dohány and Wesselenyi with her glittering eye: we must hear her out. Our need to hear was as strong as her need to tell. We had to receive her words exactly as she gave them to us. On the streets of Budapest at noon we performed this rite. When she dies, who will tell her story?

* * *

Everywhere we traveled in Eastern Europe, the ghosts of the past accosted us. Full of fury, they fastened upon us with a prophetic intensity, spoke their piece, and often vanished without even saying their names. They had something urgent to tell—the *real* truth, we say, to distinguish it from the false one. What does it mean to tell the truth about the past? Can it be done? Who is able to do it? I know how much I myself distort—by selection of detail, by emphasis, by tone of voice—even when I talk about something that happened yesterday. Even when I am trying to be truthful.

It takes an effort to be truthful about something that happened long ago, something that still hurts. What I found in Eastern Europe often seemed to me deliberate distortions of the truth. I returned home with a sense of outrage—and almost immediately started doubting the scratchings in my notebook. Did I *really* see what I thought I saw? After all, we spent only an afternoon at Auschwitz; perhaps if we'd spent a whole day there, we'd have come away with different impressions. There must have been a road sign pointing the way to Birkenau, though we didn't find it. Surely there was some corner of the exhibit in East Berlin that I missed. Back at home, I wavered between anger and doubt. The anger made me want to write down what I'd seen; the doubt made me hesitate.

What did I think I could learn, after all, by visiting the burnt house of European Jewry? To see an open can of Zyklon B and a crematorium oven is to understand less, not more about the Nazis. And the Jews whose lives were destroyed have also left us with questions we cannot answer. Forty years after the destruction, from a comfortable distance, we debate their actions, their inaction. I had often asked my husband, "Why did your parents wait so long before leaving? Why did your relatives stay?" In my confusion about what I'd experienced, the plight of the European Jews became, finally, a little more real to me. I could see them paralyzed by doubt; I could hear them assuring one another, "This isn't happening. This can't last." □

PROTECTING THE DEAD

(Continued from p. 51)

Everything has changed. The other documentary—the one by and about the young Canadian woman, the daughter of the Dachau survivor, who visits Germany and interviews the granddaughter of the Dachau Kommandant—is impossible not to watch. It asks the essential, crucial questions: questions about evil, about compassion, about the apparent presence and absence of a moral sense.

When the filmmaker asks the Kommandant's granddaughter how it is possible that a man who is kind to

his grandchildren could go to his job, day after day, the job of killing Jews, I—as I've said—hardly breathe. For me it is the question that everything keeps breaking on, like waves pounding and pounding the same unyielding rock. This question is tied to all I have been thinking about empathy and morality, about the ways in which suffering stops seeming abstract, glamorous, distanced, until others become so real to us that we could no more hurt their children than our own.

Interspersed with the interviews is footage of the camps and the war: two young men with the faces of skulls, an old woman being humiliated, pushed around on a street. I think I see something being hooked roughly behind the old woman's shoulder, a bayonet or just an umbrella. But this is just an impression, because I am not really looking. A grown woman, the mother of children, I am hiding my eyes like a child.

For me the knowledge that the suffering and the evil of the Holocaust were real (by which I mean not Hollywood, not glamorous) had to exist before I could truly understand that the issues the Holocaust raises are the most important there are. Everything turns on the question of how the Kommandant could take his granddaughter on his lap and the next day order the killing of children. The hope is: if this could be understood, it could somehow be changed.

I think of these questions obsessively, though I often try not to. I will not go to see *Shoah*. Some years ago, when I read D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel*, I skipped the chapter about Babi Yar. When a Holocaust film is on television—the one about the elderly Hungarian woman finding her parents' shoes—I ask my husband to keep switching channels. I say that I have enough of those pictures in my head. I don't want or need any more.

But the pictures are always present. Whenever I talk about history, the Holocaust is there. It is part of what I mean when I tell students to study history. When I tell them to take fewer writing workshops and more history courses, I mean the Holocaust, I mean the Middle Ages, I mean the empires and wars and shifting alliances through time and all over the world. I mean a sense of perspective; I would not want them to get out of school with an undeveloped sense of evil.

Clearly it is possible to live without scenes from Leni Riefenstahl flashing intermittently through one's mind, images of mass rallies, roaring crowds, Hitler's mad-puppet rhetoric. But it is not possible for me. So many things recall these images—the rhetoric of certain politicians and preachers, the flag-waving and chanting on the "Morton Downey, Jr. Show." It would certainly be more pleasant not to have these images in my head, but wanting that is like wishing for a different eye color, a different body, a different past.

Three years ago I agreed to cotranslate, from the Polish, *A Scrap of Time*, a book of stories about the Holocaust by a Polish Israeli writer named Ida Fink. After I agreed, I had many second thoughts, mostly about my reluctance to have "more of those pictures in my head." But often, as I worked on the book, it occurred to me that one of the things that art can do is to seduce us into hearing bad news, news we would rather not hear. The intensity of Ida Fink's short stories and something unique in their voice—a voice at once absolutely soft-spoken and absolutely urgent, totally accessible and yet charged throughout with that "strangeness" we recognize as art—were powerful and extremely moving and seductive enough to make me willing to work that closely with their painful (more painful for being quiet and exquisitely rendered) subject matter.

I found the work—the freedom to tinker with language, with the meaning and usage and cadence of words—enormously satisfying. But at times it was *very* hard work—winter afternoons when I worked on the couch, wrapped in a blanket, and the sentences I pushed word by word toward greater clarity and grace evoked a world of fear and sorrow that seemed suddenly so immediate that I felt as if it were some sorrow in my *own* life, one I was familiar with and that refused to disappear; and I'd feel unhappy, then weepy, then tired, and I'd close my eyes and fall asleep till my children came home from school.

One story, in particular, I could barely get through. I'd finish a sentence and then put the manuscript down and fall asleep and later try again, and again find myself nodding off into that borderline narcolepsy through which the panicky desire to flee becomes the heavy, compelling urge to escape into sleep.

In this story, a man and a woman wake to hear the rumbling of the trucks that will take them to the camps. While they wait, they talk about the possibility of saving their small daughter, the futility of hiding, their doubts about having brought the child into the world they find themselves in. Before long they are rounded up, and they set out marching, the father carrying the child. In a rush of pure instinct, the father puts down the child and tells her to run, run to safety; the child runs and is shot, and the father must march on bearing her body.

In 1978, when our first son was born, we named him after Bruno Schulz—a great genius, a Polish Jewish writer shot, almost on a whim, by an SS officer. I had read all of Schulz's work, starting with *Street of Crocodiles*, then his *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*. Reading Schulz, I felt that powerful admiration, that near-euphoria one feels in the presence of a Master, a feeling not entirely unlike the emotions of falling in love. I read everything of his I could find—that is, his

two books—and what little about him I could discover. When I think now of his unfinished novel, *The Messiah*, lost in the Holocaust, when I think that if not for the war, Schulz might still be alive—and who knows what he'd have written in the years since then—I feel a surge of what by now I've learned to recognize as real grief, adult grief.

Now our son Bruno is fishing. Our younger son Leon watches. We have all talked, a little solemnly, about not catching anything we won't eat. I am not crazy about the idea of my son fishing, but he enjoys it, and I tell myself that he probably won't catch anything, anyway. In fact he catches a bluegill, bony and too small, but colored—blue and orange and silver—like some tropical fish. As my husband removes the hook from its mouth to throw it back in the water, our younger son bursts into tears. "It's so beautiful," he keeps saying.

Some people (Chekhov immediately comes to mind) seem born with profound empathic imaginations. Others develop a moral sense when they are still children: they learn, without confusion and misinterpretation, what their well-intentioned parents are trying so hard to teach them. Others—the evidence of the Holocaust would suggest—never come to that knowledge, or else some monstrous parallel "moral" sense grows inside them and emerges at some later age, freakish and grotesque.

I learned very early not to do harm, but it took longer till I understood that those who are harmed bleed just as I do, that suffering is not glamorous, that death is only death. The lesson of the Holocaust was not that we were fortunate. I could not imagine the victims as me, born at the wrong place and time. In fact what I had to see clearly was that they were *not* I. The lesson (which other children, I am sure, learned faster) was that the pain and terror that the Holocaust victims suffered was precisely the same pain and terror we would have suffered in their situation—if we could imagine their situation.

Certain paths to knowledge are faintly embarrassing. I am acutely aware of the smarminess, the sentimentality of saying I knew nothing about empathy until I had children. I know how softheaded this sounds, this claim to some mysterioso maternal knowledge, although one might ask why. I can think of other experiences that are commonly accepted, without shame or question, as revelatory and illuminating—warfare, illness, even travel. No one would question the premise that a bad auto accident or a trip to China could change your life, but it seems somehow murky and suspect to say that about the experience of seeing a life come out of yours, one you love more than your own.

I do not mean to generalize or suggest that this is how anyone else might (or might want to) learn to apprehend the world directly. Mother Teresa has no children; many Nazi war criminals did. All I am saying is that this is what happened to me, that after my children were born I noticed a drastic decrease in my threshold for pain (that is, for the pain of others) and a parallel increase in my uneasiness and impatience with how little I actively do to relieve what others are suffering. I worry about what I read in the Americas Watch and Amnesty International newsletters, reports of the brutalized and disappeared, and I worry that I may be guilty of what Dickens called telescopic philanthropy: caring more about people in distant lands than about the homeless on my own doorstep and the people I come in contact with—supermarket checkers, students, other drivers on the road—and whom I mistreat through exhaustion and carelessness.

I remember very clearly, though it was years ago, reading, in a review of a novel, a description of a German soldier killing a child in front of its mother. How many times this must have happened, how many times I must have read similar descriptions. Yet by then my sons had been born, and I could not stop thinking of it. I kept imagining what it would be like to see your child killed—how could you go on living? The way I felt when I contemplated this possibility was entirely different from the way I used to imagine being Anne Frank, the way I used to think of the sufferings of Holocaust victims, the way that, as a child, I used to lie awake and think how my parents might someday die. Gone was the voluptuousness, the terror I used for sensation to cause myself pain. In the years that had passed since then, my father had died, and I'd learned that pain was sharper and deeper than the chasm of grief I'd imagined jumping into as a child. Real pain could not be tried out, tried on, explored like a tongue on a sore tooth; real pain sneaked up and seized you and shook you when you least expected it. And gradually I realized that something profound had changed, that suffering no longer seemed to me abstract, romantic, desirable, or voluptuous, but rather ugly, terrifying, deeply moving, and entirely real.

Of course the birth of true compassion need not come through the bearing of children, or the experience of loss; it can result—for those who come to empathy late—from any experience that ties one to life, that makes one see it as precious and fragile. Once one has had that strong sense of life, has apprehended it directly, one realizes the magnitude of what it means to destroy it. But once again everything founders on that Dachau Kommandant. He had children, he lost parents, he went off and did his work.

This question about the Kommandant could, if you

let it, infect everything, paralyze every action—including, I should say, the act of writing this. Because if love or loss, direct emotional experience, cannot confer empathy and morality, what can we expect historical knowledge to do? Pol Pot was well educated; he probably knew all about the Holocaust. And apparently that didn't stop him from staging one of his own.

The second half of the stories in *A Scrap of Time* concern memory and its importance. In one story, set years after the war, a Jewish couple visits the Polish farmhouse in which they hid in a tiny bunker throughout the war. Out of gratitude they have financed the remodeling of the farmhouse, which, they now see, includes a roomy hiding place so—as the Polish couple proudly tells them—the Jewish couple will be more comfortable should they need to be hidden again. In another story, a young Jewish woman, a survivor, leaves her American fiancé who, wanting to love and save her, urges her to change her name and forget her painful memories. The irony is that while we were working on the translation, my cotranslator kept looking in modern German dictionaries for the meanings of words in Nazi officialese—terms for specific army ranks, types of roundups, and "actions." And what she kept finding was that the words no longer existed; no definitions were listed for *ordnungdienst* or *aufseherin*.

The notion that memory and testimony are a moral and spiritual obligation goes beyond the question of what we expect them to accomplish. One burdensome by-product of a sense of evil is that some things seem wrong. Among them are sins of omission. It is wrong not to say: the Holocaust happened, and it was not glamorous or romantic. And it seems inexcusable to act as if no one will be changed by hearing these words, as if no one will be saved, as if evil cannot be struggled against. To say that evil is part of human nature, that the Dachau Kommandant went to work—why bother then to discuss it, better just to let it drop—is not only incorrect, but cowardly and dangerous.

Whenever I hear anyone using metaphors of the barnyard to describe human behavior, I steel myself for something suspect to come. But once again I ask the dead to forgive me, because I want to be very clear. What I mean by the necessity of action in the face of some possibly ineradicable strain of evil is this: if you put a flock of chickens in the barnyard, sooner or later the rest of the chickens will start pecking the weakest one. This is the mystery of cruelty and evil. But to know this is no reason not to try to stop it, not to try to save the chicken from being pecked. I could not live in this world without saying: look, that chicken is being pecked. Stop, stop pecking that chicken.

Because when you no longer say it, no longer feel the responsibility to say that it has happened and is happening, the words you use to say these things mysteriously disappear, and soon no one is saying them. It is important not to let the words vanish, to remember, to keep repeating: the Holocaust happened. It was not glamorous or romantic. It was not abstract. Six million men, women, and children died horribly, and the very impossibility of imagining so much needless, cruel death is precisely the reason why we must keep pushing ourselves to imagine. □

NELLY

(Continued from p. 54)

The next day, the people who were fit left the ghetto and marched under armed German guard toward the camp. Jewish militiamen helped organize the columns. They tried to calm frantic mothers by promising them that no harm would befall their children left behind in the ghetto. As a reward for their efficient help, the militiamen were entitled to the use of horses and carts in order to transport their possessions from the ghetto to the camp. They were even permitted to stop over in the city and make their final arrangements before the liquidation.

On the way, Kuba picked up Nelly's children, wrapped like bundles, and hid them in the bottom of the cart, thus transferring them into the camp.

Now they were there with Nelly, on the upper bunk, between the window and the door of the barrack—three small creatures alone among the adult population of the camp, which consisted of thousands of bereaved parents: the only males among the hundreds of women in the barrack.

We, the women without special privileges, left each morning at dawn after the roll call to work for the Germans, in their factories. Those who were responsible to the Germans for the productivity and efficiency of the work, ruled their slaves mercilessly. From time to time the Germans would storm the factories and take away people for outdoor work. The most common outdoor work in the camp was the digging up and desecration of graves (the camp was situated on the site of an ancient Jewish cemetery). The Germans delighted in forcing their prisoners to dig up the graves, remove the remains of the dead, pile them up, and burn them. A heavy, overpowering stench enveloped the whole camp. Trained dogs urged on the enfeebled workers; often, incited by their masters, the dogs would bite the living flesh of their victims. Those who could not continue would be removed, together with the remains from the graves, and burned.

Weeks and months passed, and the heavens grew dark

and wept long. But there was no salvation in the weeping heavens. We could not change our wet clothing nor warm our thin bodies wrapped in rags. One day the joints of my legs became swollen. I could barely walk because of the excruciating pain. My body burned with fever. I presented myself to the Blockälteste, who announced at the roll call: "sick one." I was sent to the barrack for the sick. Here, not only did our doctors and nurses fight against diseases, but they also devised all kinds of ruses to save their patients from the ever-present German threat to "liquidate" the hospital. Here, too, there were roll calls in the morning. When I stood on the parade ground, blurred images danced before my eyes and black spots seemed to separate me from the others. Leading the guards was an enormous, pathological being, in the uniform of an SS female officer, a kind of androgynous creature, dressed in a skirt yet his face shaven like a man's. His voice was masculine and on his head perched a female officer's hat. This strange, disturbed creature delighted in slapping people indiscriminately.

Once, toward evening, when a school friend arrived with a small pot of soup for me, I wanted to say something pleasant to her, but my mind was completely blank. I tried to remember what we had discussed before the war. What had we talked about? I could not remember. One evening I was warned that the hospital was to be "purged" the next day. My sister came and helped me escape. I struggled against the pain that had spread to the joints of my whole body. I crawled more than I walked. She led me to a different barrack, the one to which we had been transferred during my absence.

They often transferred us from barrack to barrack, from place to place, each new place a hundred times worse than the one before it. Nelly and her children were not there. I asked about her, but no one could give me a definite answer although everyone knew that Kuba had perished. One day the whole camp had been ordered to pass a long row of Jewish militiamen lying dead and disfigured on the ground. The Germans had grown tired of their Jewish helpers and had shot them all, and then—or perhaps before—they disfigured them with knives. They arranged the butchered bodies in a single row and forced all the prisoners of the camp to look at them. That was how Kuba met his death. But no one knew what had happened to Nelly and her children.

Finally, one day the war came to an end. Very slowly, unsteadily, damaged and marred, life acquired its civilized form.

Thirteen years later, I left the suburb of Neve Amal in Herzlia to catch the bus to Raanana. I was working at the neighborhood hospital on the outskirts of Raanana. Next to the bus stop was a kiosk where newspapers, cigarettes, cold drinks, bagels, and pastries were sold. As I was waiting for the bus, deep in thought, a van stopped next to the kiosk. A woman dismounted from the driver's seat and went quickly to open the doors of the van. She was dressed in a pair of casual pants and a sports shirt. My attention was caught by her red hair. She took an enormous pastry tray out of the van and handed it to the man in the kiosk. My bus arrived in the meantime, but I did not board it. I followed the woman, hoping it was Nelly. Her body was somewhat heavier, her hair a little thinner, her face less animated. But it was she—there was no mistaking her.

"Nelly," I said.

She turned and looked at me, startled.

"I was there too," I said. "I was one of those hundreds of faceless women, but you were different ... with the children ... up there, on the top." I stopped, confused. We were silent for a long moment, examining each other.

"What happened to them? What happened to the children?" I asked finally.

Nelly shrugged her shoulders faintly and shook her head.

"Not even one?"

"Not even one."

We grew silent. Nelly came to herself first.

"I live not far from here. My husband came to Israel with Anders's army. He organized everything for me. We have a little girl of four." A sad smile lit up her face. "Grisha always said that the fourth child would be a girl. And you?"

"I work here, at the hospital." I pointed in the direction of Raanana. "I have a little girl of two."

We stood in silence. Children wearing green shirts and carrying knapsacks on their backs passed by us. Their chatter was swallowed by the noise of the bus as it stopped again for the passengers at the station.

"Only thirteen years have passed since then," Nelly reflected aloud, "and imagine—a new life, unbelievable."

Nelly was about forty years old, but for me these thirteen years were almost half my lifetime.

"Yes, it's unbelievable," I whispered. "But all the same, there is no denying it."

After we parted, Nelly turned around and said: "I told my husband many things, but I did not tell him everything. I did not want to hurt him." Her face wore an expression of uncertainty, a mixture of shame and remorse. But she looked me straight in the eyes, testing my reaction.

"You did well, Nelly," I said. "Who can possibly tell everything? There is no need. Anyway, people would be incapable of understanding."

She smiled at me, relieved. I boarded the bus. Through the window I saw Nelly climb into the van, start the ignition, and drive off to deliver the rest of her pastries. □

תיקון

Tikkun (tē•kün) . . .
to heal, repair and transform the world.
All the rest is commentary.

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